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LORD'S—BOOKS

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### JUST PARAGRAPHS

A new prize novel contest has been announced by Houghton Mifflin Co. and the American Legion Monthly. It is for the best novel dealing with the period of the World War and the prize is the generous sum of \$25,000.

An advertisement for one of the flourishing new book clubs has persistently used the phrase, "Give you your books when the Insiders are getting theirs." We have been consumed with a desire to ask the question, "Inside of what?" And do you suppose they are forcibly detained there?

### AS WE ARE

#### "THE AMERICAN BAND-WAGON"

By Charles Merz  
The John Day Co.

To write about America is a large undertaking, one that is, to be sure, often undertaken, usually by our tourists. To write about it penetratingly, originally, and without venom, is something which is rarely achieved. I believe Charles Merz, not a tourist but one of us, in "The Great American Band-Wagon" has achieved it.

As a sub-title this book is called "A Study of Exaggerations," a good title, since we have a recognized genius in this country for carrying things to extremes. If a little is good it is the obvious conclusion that a lot is better. So we go in for movies, milk shakes, big business, golf, channel swimmers, and aviators, with a thoroughness which could only belong to youth and its enthusiasms.

Mr. Merz likens America to a great band-wagon, bands playing, pennants

flying, always in motion, everybody running to hop aboard. It is a good idea. It gives, too, the tone of light raillery without bitterness with which he discusses the aspects of American life from secret societies of which one-third of us are members, to the perils of the younger generation. Here is an example of his style: "The calendar has picked up Weeks. When Go to Church Week ends, Apple Week begins; when Apple Week is over, Safety Week begins. The conscientious citizen has his hands full. Beethoven Week follows on the heels of Brush Your Teeth Week, and when everybody's books are balanced at the end of Thrift Week it is time to Plant a Tree."

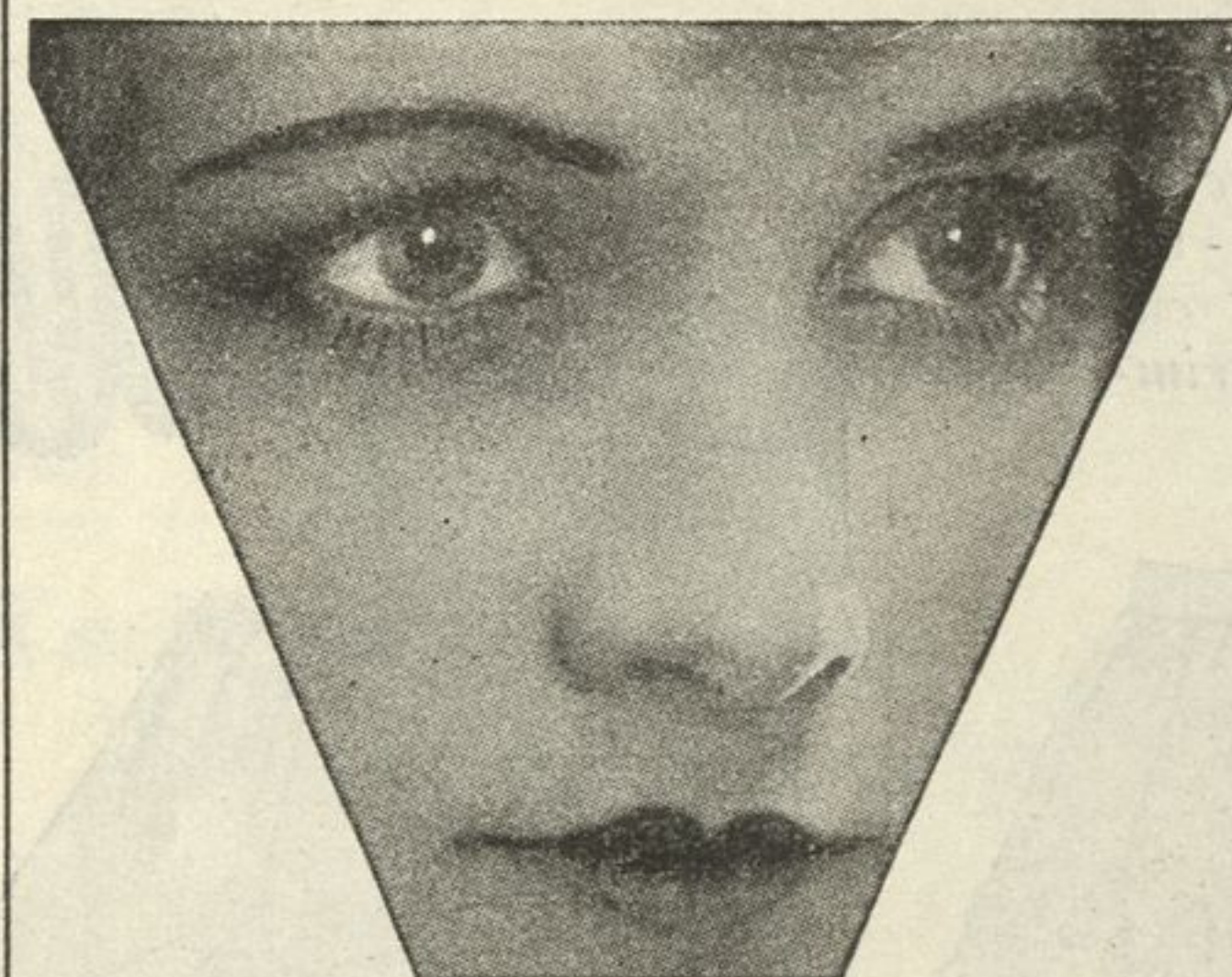
Mr. Merz has of course a theory of explanation for everything, that is the purpose of the book, and if we do not agree with him we find ourselves stimulated to think for ourselves, which is better. If we do not agree that America goes abroad every summer in order to convert Europe to American ways and customs we ask ourselves why they do go, and put it down to the newly awakened passion for education, or the curiosity of a provincial nation which has just wakened to the possibility of another yard to play in. In any case perhaps we have had a thought which in the midst of the fanfare of trumpets and the pace of the band-wagon is rare, so rare.

### "BLACK MAJESTY"

By John W. Vandercook  
Harper & Brothers

"Black Majesty" is a book so beautifully bound and colored, with such fascinating illustrations by Mahlon Blaine, that it impresses one at the first glimpse of a play of which Robert Edmond Jones or one of his like has made the scene itself sufficient reason for its being. Then John W. Vandercook in the person of the author and that amazing galaxy of negroes of Haiti of a hundred and more years ago, as the actors, quite satisfyingly fulfill their parts in the drama.

Mr. Vandercook who is by profession a journalist and an anthropologist has for some time been greatly inter-



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## Mrs. Merrill Names 3 Superlative Books of Fiction for Year

To the mind of Mrs. Anthony French Merrill, "The Bridge of San Luis Rey" by Thornton Wilder stands supreme among the books of the year.

This book, Willa Cather's "Death Comes for the Archbishop," and Ernest Hemingway's "Men Without Women," have been singled out by authorities whose choice she respects as the three superlative works of fiction which an unusually rich year has produced.

Wilbur Daniel Steele's "Meat" she holds "abnormal, repulsive, morbid and exaggerated — inexcusable." Ruth Suckow's "The Bonney Family," she rates "notable, vivid, true and amusing." Claire Ambler, in her opinion is "Booth Tarkington's cleverest"; Brand Whitlock's "Transplanted" "a story well-told, vivid and interesting; Susan Ertz' "Now East Now West" "very clever and notable"; Louis Bromfield's "A Good Woman" not worth regarding seriously—overdrawn, exaggerated, inartistic and morbidly melodramatic, a "commercial exaggeration" like "Elmer Gantry." "Jalna," the Atlantic prize novel, she holds disappointing except for a wonderfully drawn setting—"unpurposeful, unimportant and insignificant."

### AUTHOR TO SAIL

Early in April Katherine Mayo, author of "Mother India," will leave the United States for a short trip abroad. Her itinerary includes England, Germany, and Switzerland.

ested in the negro, and has visited every negro republic on the face of the globe. In Haiti where he spent many months he found this amazing figure of Henry Christophe, born a slave on a sugar plantation, died an Emperor, the only man who at one time had defeated Napoleon in war.

The author has treated his subject with restraint, letting the glamour and the romance of the story itself guide his pen. Not succumbing to the popular temptation of mixing fact and fiction he has "added nothing to the sparse records of old books and the fading memories that linger in the minds of men in his own country." The result is a record of almost superhuman achievement, a story of adventure more thrilling and more terrible than the mind of one author could conceive. And when "A shot reverberated, followed by sudden quiet. The King was dead. He had put a golden bullet, molded long ago through his brain," we know that a man of flesh and blood is dead.

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