BOOKS AND THEIR AUTHORS

THE UNDYING FIRE

By H. G. Wells, 229 Pages. Price $1.50, The Macmillan Company, Toronto, Publishers.

After groping laboriously for many years, through the stages told in his many novels, Mr. Wells has at last found his true conception of God. "The Undying Fire," is simply a long treatise giving his views to the reading public, who have by this time become used to the allegorical style which he has of late adopted in writing his novels. Therefore, it is evident from the start that the main purpose of this novel is not to amuse and entertain, but to teach and reform, and the thing he sets out to reform in this; his latest book, is the system of education. He follows a somewhat different line of argument from that used in "Joan and Peter," and the writer's ideas are told in a very different way.

Job Huss is a schoolmaster who at the beginning of the story has suffered many recent afflictions. Death has destroyed the good name of his school by pestilence, fire and accident, he himself is the victim of a lawyer and loses all his fortune; he is suffering from a malignant disease and is waiting for an operation, and finally the directors of the school desire to dispose him from authority, and to set up in his place Mr. Farr, who was head of the science department under Mr. Huss. The idea of Mr. Wells is really to portray a modern characterization of the old Biblical Job, with Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar and Elihu represented by the other characters in the story, in the guise of the governors of the school, Mr. Farr and a young doctor.

The whole substance of the story is contained in the arguments presented by the characters when discussing the removal of Mr. Huss from the headship of his school. The great theories of life, death and immortality are discussed from all points of view. Sir Eliphax Burrows, a wealthy manufacturer of building blocks, is represented as a believer in the simple faith combined with a feeling of sympathy for spiritualism; the young doctor, Elihu Barrack, is described as a mocking agnostic; Mr. Farr is an ambitious and self-centered cynic, and Mr. Dad, a wealthy engineer, is a business man who believes in only hard facts, and with no use for sentimentalism in the world. The four of them concentrate all their heavy artillery on Mr. Huss, seeking to destroy his simple faith by their arguments against the belief he cherishes in the spirit of God in the heart of man. Through his suffering, the modern Job gets a new conception of the true nature of God, and his faith is strengthened and confirmed. He holds unswervingly to the principle that "There is an undying fire in the hearts of men which will never go out," but which will carry humanity on to fresh conquests as long as faith and courage endure.

The main purpose of the book, which is to set forth Mr. Wells' latest ideas of education for men, becomes somewhat clouded by the theosophical discussion which ensues, but through Mr. Huss he puts forth his ideas in these words:

"What is the task of the teacher in the world? It is the greatest of all human tasks. it is to ensure that man, man the divine, grows in the hearts of men. For what is a man without instruction? He is born as the beasts are born, a greedy egotism, a clutching desire, a thing of doubts and fears. . . . I have been giving light to the blind. I have been giving understanding to thousands of boys. All those routines of teaching that had become dead we made live again. My boys have learnt the history of mankind so that it has become their own adventure. Science has played its proper part; it has taken my boys into the secret places of matter and out among the nebulae. . . . Some of my boys have already made good business men, because they were more than business men. But I have never sought to make business men and I never will. I have had dull boys and intractable boys, but nearly all have gone into the world gentlemen, broad-minded, good- mannered, understanding and unselfish, masters of self, servants of men, because the whole scheme of their education has been to release them from base and narrow things. . . . What has made my boys all that they are has been the history, the biological science, the philosophy. For these things are wisdom. All the rest is training and mere knowledge."

At a time when the Anglo-Saxon schoolmasters and teachers are arranging for a big international conference for the interchange of ideas regarding education, these views are well worth noting. They simply mean that Wells is a believer in the famous words of the tempted Christ, "Man shall not live by bread alone."

For so heavy a subject, "The Undying Fire" is exceptionally readable. Mr. Wells takes the reader from point to point with a continuity of argument that is irresistible, and the story never lags. The presence of a sufficient amount of humor helps to brighten the story, and to make it an appealing one. This latest book of H. G. Wells' will win for him many more admirers.

MUFTI

By "Sapper," (Cyril McNeile), 296 Pages. Price $1.50. Hodder and Stoughton, Publishers.

At last, with the cessation of hostilities, the name of that brilliant author who has been writing under the nom-de-plume of "Sapper," has been disclosed, and he is known to the world as Cyril McNeile, a young Englishman who served at the front throughout the war in the Royal Engineers. The latest addition to his list of successes is "Mufti," a long novel with a gripping and interesting plot to which he does ample justice. The beginning of the story finds a young officer in hospital in Etaples, going through the terrors of an air raid, along with a nurse who was at one time his fiancee. The danger over, he pleads with her to marry him, but she realizes that a long period of unbroken activity in the trenches is apt to make a man susceptible to the first attractive girl he meets, and she refuses him. The next day he is sent to England as an invalid.

In England he comes under the ministrations of another girl, and after squabbling and bantering, they decide that they love each other passionately. But there is in the distance the spectre of poverty on the part of her father, and she must needs find a rich husband. The story follows the usual lines of this kind of plot, until nearly the end, when the young officer reads that she is to be married to a wealthy old man in two weeks time. He rushes off to the house at which she is staying. Under the influence of his presence she decides that she cannot do without him, and during the night she goes to his room and asks him to make up her mind for her. His better nature is touched, and he sends her away, giving her a period of ten days in which to make up her mind as to whether she can really make the sacrifice marrying him would entail. He leaves her, and goes off to Ireland on duty the next day. Torn in her mind she appeals to him to come for her, but he is injured when his ship is torpedoed, and does not receive her letters until ten days have elapsed. He hurries off to see her, but is too late, for she has already married the other man. And so the curtain goes down on the young officer faced with a life of loneliness and with the knowledge that the girl whom he loves and who loves him belongs to another man.

Such is the thread of the novel, but underneath it all the writer has a purpose. The purpose can be well expressed in the words of Robert Service's poem,

"What are we going to do with ourselves,
When we get back home again."

Sapper realizes what the problems of settling back to normal life after four years of active service mean, and he tries to point out to his readers how the men from the front will be groping around, feeling for something worth while with which to fill their lives, and which will make them feel that their years of army life have not been wasted years. One can feel that "Sapper" is himself faced with these problems in a way, and his ideas are such as will be of great interest and no little help to many in the same fix.

For the rest, the story is written with his usual wealth of description and clever characterization. The love scenes are very well done, and the sensational climax is quite unexpected. This ranks as the best work so far for this author, who can be looked upon as one of the most clever and coming figures in the circles of the English novel today.

THE BRANDING IRON.

By Katherine Newlin Burt, 310 Pages, Price $1.50. Thomas Allen, Toronto, Publisher.

Rex Beach, in a telegram to the publishers, paid this novel a very high compliment, and his praise was certainly not misplaced. "The Branding Iron," is a story of the wild mountain regions of the west and of the bright lights of the New York theatre, combined in such a way as to make a thrilling and gripping novel. Joan Landis, who has left her father because he kept her shut up for eighteen years, marries Pierre Landis on a few moments' acquaintance. Her husband is a passionate cowboy, and he has a streak of jealousy, in which he brands his wife with a white-hot iron bar, just as he branded his stock. He is caught in the act by Prosper Gael, who shoots him, but not fatally, and carries away Joan with the intention of looking after the injuries inflicted upon her by the loving but jealous Pierre, whom she imagines is dead. Prosper Gael takes her up to a cabin in the mountains, and there she stays as his guest. He is an over-civilized city man, with great tastes in literature and music, and he sets himself the task of moulding the girl after his own pattern. He loves her passionately and she gives herself up to his attentions. Then one day he receives a letter from a former lover and he leaves her.

After many wanderings, in which Joan goes from place to place to avoid discovery by Pierre, whom she now learns is alive, she attracts the attention of a play-producer, who is looking for a heroine for a new play called "The Leopardess." He thinks Joan the ideal figure for the part, and after some hesitation she accepts it, but the play, written by an anonymous author, is exactly the story of her own life, and she makes the most of it and makes a splendid reputation for herself. Her heart has been sorely wounded by the thought of her own wrongdoing in living with Prosper Gael, when she learns that Pierre is alive, and when she finds that he is on her track, she is in a great dilemma. Afraid that he wishes to have his revenge on account of her desertion, she prepares to flee with Prosper Gael, who has again come into her life in New York. But at the crucial moment she hears an announcement that Gael is the author of the play, and in her hatred of the man who put her sufferings on paper, she has a breakdown. In her extremity Pierre finds her, and she discovers that all he has to say is to ask for forgiveness and to beg for her return to him. Thus the story ends happily, with the couple reunited, and Gael defeated in his plan to make Joan his own.

This is a novel which will appeal equally to those who love the best in fiction and who also crave the thrill of the untamed wilderness. The characters are splendidly drawn, that of Prosper Gael, the cultured man, who drives Joan almost desperate by his cold calculating methods, and at the same time draws her love, is especially good. Like Rex Beach, one can look forward with great confidence to its success as a book and a photoplay.

GEMS OF NEW VERSE

TWILIGHT

Twilight and a silent river,
Silver, fading into gray,
Lilac lights that burn and quiver,
Burn and glow and fade away
In the still heart of the river.

Cobweb spans and elfin arches
Looming strangely through the duck.
Breezes sighing in the larches,
Roses sweeter far than musk,
Stars that glimmer through the larches.

Twilight and a silent river,
Silver grey and veiled in mist;
Lilac lights that burn and quiver,
Sky of dusky amethyst
Arching o'er the mist spanned river.

Fairyland with strange lights gleaming,
Land of vision and of fream,
Strange, indeed, thy mystic seeming—
Strange thy fairy haunted stream,
Strange thy dim star's distant gleaming.

—From "The Fairy Islands, by Valley Flower. The Cornhill Company, Boston.

WHAT HAPPENED TO EUROPE

By Frank A. Vanderlip, 188 Pages. Price $1.40. The Macmillan Company, Toronto, Publishers.

Frank A Vanderlip went over to Europe in February, 1919, to look over the financial and industrial conditions in these countries in the interests of some United States firms. While there, he visited seven countries and interviewed representatives of fifteen countries. On the way back to America it struck him that it would be worth while to put his observations on paper and have them published, and so during the voyage he dictated all the matter contained in this book.

This book is one of great value to Canada, as well as America, in a commercial way. The writer has told very little of the physical changes which have come upon Europe, but concentrates upon the industrial and financial aspects of the aftermath of war. He discusses in an authoritative way the difficulties which lie in the way of a speedy return of normal trading conditions in European countries. The paralysis of industry, the chaos into which the railway systems have been thrown, and the great difficulties experienced in stabilizing currency are all treated exhaustively. Special chapters are devoted to the conditions in England, France, Belgium, Italy, Spain and other countries, and the writer sums up the whole story by pointing out to this country the enormous amount of trade that can be done in Europe if only the necessary credits can be arranged. He believes that the first step towards stabilizing conditions in Europe should be the furnishing of a huge international loan to the stricken countries so that they might recommend their industrial activities without delay. Regarding England, and we presume that he means Great Britain, he makes the following interesting statement:

"If the hope which was clearly expressed by some employers that a satisfied body of workmen, putting their brains into the job, will in the end produce on a scale which will make the present scale of production seem indicative of a period of the dark ages in industrialism,—I say, if that hope is realized, the future of England's industry is brought beyond anything ever dreamed of."

This book seems to be in the nature of a friendly business talk with its readers. Mr. Vanderlip has presented the facts regarding conditions in Europe fearlessly, and without favour, and his story is a comprehensive and beneficial one.

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Libraries' Part In History

You know libraries have played a great part in the history of the world. The great libraries of the world today are playing an enormous part in the education and improvement of mankind. There are the British Museum and the Bibliotheque Nationale of Paris, the most distinguished of modern libraries, and our own great libraries too numerous to mention, commencing with the great library in New York and the Congressmen Library in Washington, and the libraries of our universities and cities. You have now joined that movement which is centuries old; but you are not very late in doing it, for it is only in the last century that any long popular strides have been made in this direction. It is only within the past few years that many of our cities have had libraries. You have indeed done well.

Now what do we mean by the stimulus given by libraries. Why, we mean that a library will furnish a stimulus and a means of improving the intelligence and the taste of the community in which it is located. And what do we mean and refer to more particularly when we speak of intelligence. Why, we refer to science and philosophy and to history. These are all necessarily a part of the equipment of any well-informed man or woman. We do not mean a mere smattering knowledge of the fringe of science and history and philosophy, but a thorough acquaintance with some part of it; for knowledge which is a smattering knowledge is of very little value to anybody—and it is the curse of our American style of thought today, begging your pardon for criticism of this country in this respect. A little thorough knowledge is infinitely better than a wide smattering knowledge.

And what do we mean by taste? Why, we refer to art and literature and to manners and conduct and the like. And in the pursuit of these we may be assured that literature is the greatest. Without literature we cannot have the highest conduct; without literature we cannot have very much well worth living for in this life.—Address of Elon R. Brown at the opening of Antwerp Library.

Biographies of Well-Known Authors.

A New Indian Poet.

Three eminent Oriental poets—Rabindranath Tagore, Yone Noguehi, and Sarojini Naidu—have elected to use the English language as the instrument of their poetic expression.

Tarindranath Chattopadhyay is the latest addition to their company. In his recently published volume of verse "The Feast of Youth," we learn that he is still in his teens and that he is a brother of Sarojini Naidu. Mr. Chattopadhyay's youth is manifest on every page of this finely printed book. He riots in colour. In one poem he describes laughter as "a peal of blue and red and green." Indeed he has drawn upon all the colours of the rainbow, and seems to have a special fondness for roses and peacocks. Allowing for many faults, there is more than a grain of genius remaining. He is a minor poet today, but tomorrow, if he will use a little restraint and avoid such phrases as "a shimmering peacock in my flowering flush"; if he will value words as Lafcadio, Harn and Stevenson valued them, he is likely to become a poet that matters. He has the divine fire, but at present it is burning him badly. There is a kind of lyrical joy in most of his poems. Although he essays what he calls Sufi songs, they are far from being deeply mystical, much less are they steeped in Sufism. It is when he curbs his imagination and gives our own greater play, when his joy becomes less frenzied, that his poetry is most effective.—The Poetry Review.

Cora Harris.

Cora Harris was born on a typical southern cotton plantation owned by her father, Tinsley Tucker White, at Farm Hill, Georgia. She was educated at home and made occasional trips to town behind two white mules. At the age of seventeen she married Lundy Howard Harris, a young minister, who after a few years preaching, became professor in Emory College, Oxford, Georgia. Then Mrs. Harris began writing under the pen name of Sidney Erskine." She met with no success until she was twenty-five. Stories and articles then began to be accepted by newspapers and magazines and these were followed by her successful novel, "The Circuit Rider's Wife." Her husband died in 1910. She lives now on a farm in a Georgia Valley, and drives a stout team of mules with the modern literary appellations of Blythe and Cobb.

A Criticism of MacKenzie King.

At the present time, when great interest is being manifested in the doings of William L. MacKenzie King, the new leader of the Liberal party, it is interesting to note how some of his work is criticised by the review editor of "The Nation," a well-known New York periodical. Although this paper can have no possible interest in the political welfare of Mr. King, it gives a slashing criticism of his book "Humanity and Industry." Here is what "The Nation" says.

"The Hon. W. L. MacKenzie King has written a book of more than five hundred pages which he calls "Industry and Humanity." It was written throughout in the style Kingsley so joyously parodied in "The Water Babies," "one half bad Latin, the other half worse Greek, the rest what might have been English, if they had only learnt to write it." The timorous reviewer dreads being squashed by the words and strangled by the sentences of the Hon. W. L. MacKenzie King. If they contained ideas the professional book-taster might plough his way through the half-thousand dreary pages; but surely there are no ideas in such passages as these; "Moreover human nature is frail. Many begin with lofty motives and descend to lower ones. They come to mistake the means for the end. Especially is this true of the pursuit of wealth." (Page 61). Elsewhere he takes a page to explain the term "the sphinx," and to relate the brand new story of the sphinx's riddle. On the other hand he vouchsafes generous passages of autobiography. Humanity at large may learn how much Mr. King was impressed by Hull House, how he wrote articles for a Toronto paper, how he called on Mr. Mulock, how the Postmaster-General "walked the floor like a caged lion," presumably under the stimulating influence of the Hon. W. L. MacKenzie King. His various missions, his summer home, Kingsmere, his sun-dial, and his reflections thereon pad other chapters. The Rockefeller Foundation has paid for these lucubrations. Plainly it is a very rich foundation."

It sems quite plain that "The Nation" has a very poor opinion of Mr. King as a writer, and it would be interesting to know what their opinion of him as a political leader would be if he belonged to the country to the south of us.

Notes of Interest For Booklovers.

It is a fact not generally known that A. P. Walkley, the London Times Dramatic critic, is also assistant secretary of the British Post Office.

The publishers of France are in a pitiable plight. Scarcity of paper and ink, the high price of labour, and other things have caused them this month to raise their prices of books one hundred per cent. All three and a half franc books will hereafter cost seven francs, and the printing and binding is steadily growing worse.

The advance sale of the new Harold Bell Wright book, "The Re-Creation of Brian Kent," is almost 750,000 copies, which number comprises the first printing. Of the book, Mr. E. W. Reynolds, the publisher, writes, "The wonderful message it carries to me has been helpful and comforting." Most people who read the book will agree with him.

There will be published this autumn another novel by the author of "Helen of Four Gates," the English mill girl whose first novel, brought out in this country two years ago, was compared with the work of Poe and the Bronte sisters. The new story is called "The Taming of Nan," and the author's name is now revealed for the first time as Ethel Holdsworth.

"The Cactus Hedge," by Cecil Adair, is announced for early publication. The picturesque scene of the story on the northern coast of France, the tragedy which surrounds the owner of the old castle, and the love and happiness which ultimately triumph, go to make a romance full of charm.

Harper and Brothers will shortly publish "From the Life," by Harvey O'Higgins, a series of imaginary biographical portraits which have won much attention, as they have already had serial magazine publication.

Another novel by Pohan Bojer, whose "The Great Hunger," was published last fall, is promised for November publication. Its title is "The Face of the World," and its theme is the new revolutionary democracy. Dr. Bojer will visit the United States for the first time this autumn, and will lecture on Norwegian literature in a number of colleges.

"Avowals," the new George Moore publication, was issued simultaneously in England and the United States two weeks ago.

Miss Kathleen Burke, of the Scottish Women's Hospital, whose name is well known in Canada because of her capable work amongst the wounded, has engaged to write a series of four books for the Doubleday Page Company, dealing respectively with the the sufferings and the heroism during the war of the children of Great Britain, France, Belgium and Serbia.

It isn't what the publisher says about the book he is offering to the public, but what the reading public tell their friends, that makes a book a success or a failure, as the case may be.

"The Indian Drum," by William MacHarg and Edwin Balmer, is based on the legend that the booming of an Indian drum is heard whenever Lake Michigan takes a life. The heroine's belief in the legend enables her to save her lover and to wir happiness for them both.

Messrs. Butterworth are to publish in London, in September, a volume of biography which promises to be of peculiar interest from several points of view. Its subject is H. G. Wells—"Big Little H. G. Wells" is the title. Its author is another novelist. Edwin Pugh, and it is having a preliminary run as a serial in G. K. Chesterton's review, "The New Witness."

The Macmillan Company has issued a little circular on new books for the modern dairyman which is of great interest of anyone in that line. It includes a section on dairy books describing volumes dealing with milk, ice cream, cheese, butter and various problems of dairy feeding, and also a section on animal care and feeding.

A timely publication is Edith Elmer Wood's "The Housing of the Wage Earner," Never before in the history of Canada has the housing situation been of so critical a nature, and it is generally recognized that the problem must be solved and at once. Mrs. Wood's study of it should contribute largely to its solution.

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