

## AMONG THE BOOKS

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In the judgment of many, *The Touch of Abner*, by H. A. Cody (McClelland & Stewart, Toronto, 310 pages, \$1.50 net) is the best book yet produced by this gifted author. Abner, the hero, with his quaint and caustic humor, the hard, shrewd sense camouflaged by his easy-going, careless manner, and, above all, his genuine goodness of heart, will capture and hold every reader. The clever way in which he got the town of Glucom to erect a greatly needed orphanage, and his triumph in a battle of wit with the unscrupulous lawyer Rackshaw, in which the prize was a valuable gravel deposit, are interesting and amusing incidents in a tale which is full of amusement from start to finish. How Jess, Abner's daughter, who had been studying Social Service at the seminary, found an opportunity for the application of her theories nearer home than she had expected and the love story of this same Jess, are features which add greatly to the charm of the story.

Every lover of children will delight in Hugh Walpole's new book, *Jeremy* (George H. Doran, New York, McClelland & Stewart, Toronto, 304 pages, \$1.75 net). Jeremy, the hero of the tale, grows up with his two sisters, Helen and Mary Cole, in the quiet English cathedral town of Colchester. Other members of the household are Jampot, as the children call the nurse, who alternately spoils and scolds them, Hamlet, the stray dog,—what boy has not at least wanted to adopt a wandering canine?—Uncle Samuel, a painter of pictures and the oddest of oddities, Mr. and Mrs. Cole and Aunt Amy. Mr. Walpole is at once too wise and too much in love with childhood to make fun of the experiences through which Jeremy passes; but he has also too keen a sense of humor not to get fun out of them for himself and his readers. Indeed, the book is pervaded by a delicate and affectionate humor, which is altogether charming. It has been suggested that this is a book for lovers of children. But children themselves will read or have read to them with the keenest pleasure such incidents as the birthday in the Cole household, the Christmas pantomime, Jeremy's adventure at the circus and the family departure, when holiday time comes for the sea and the country.

American in its setting, since the characters

are the backwoods preacher, his family and his scattered congregation, in the mountains of West Virginia, is Albert Benjamin Cunningham's story *Singing Mountains* (McClelland & Stewart, Toronto, 315 pages, \$1.50 net). The story is a simple one of the struggles of this poorly paid preacher and his courageous, hard-working wife to bring up a straggling family and give the two boys, of whose doings and musings the story has much to tell, the education that will make them able to take their places in the world of men and affairs. The boyish love affairs of these two sons and the almost uncanny intuition of the teasing younger sister, Little Anne, have a large place in the book, while all through it runs the loving care and unselfishness of the gentle, delicate mother and the generous, understanding father who, longing often to take charge of a more lucrative parish in a more settled part of the state, bravely struggles along and makes life worth the living for those about him in the old manse at Barren Rocks.

Many "spy" stories appeared during the progress of the War, and not a few have been written since. It is safe to say that none of these has surpassed in thrilling interest and the skilful working out of an ingenious plot, *The Box with the Broken Seals*, by E. Phillips Oppenheim (McClelland & Stewart, Toronto, 300 pages, \$1.75 net). For coolness, audacity and resourcefulness, Jocelyn Thew has few equals in the fiction of adventure. The story of the transatlantic voyage, in a ship carrying the principal plotters and counterplotters, including Crawshay, the Scotland Yard detective, who having missed the boat at New York, overtakes it in a flying machine, is filled with exciting situations. How the arch-conspirator, an Irishman, filled with hereditary hatred of England, returned to his native land to find a full pardon waiting him for a political offence of which he had been convicted years before, was touched to the heart by this evidence of generosity and destroyed the papers, which, for an enormous reward, he had undertaken to deliver into German hands, forms a striking and unusual conclusion to a well told tale.

The central figure in Frederick Orin Bartlett's latest book, *Joan & Co.* (Thos. Allen, To-