

"THE RIDIN' KID FROM POWDER RIVER"

BY HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS. Toronto:
Thomas Allen.

AFTER reading a book like this it is interesting to do a little analysis of one's interest in it. Of course there may be high-brow persons, secure in their self-imagined superiority, who wouldn't read such a book; they would repudiate it loftily, maybe with a French shrug, and pass on. But most ordinary mortals do read such books as this, the type that Mr. W. A. Fraser has made peculiarly his own in his achievement through "Bull Dog Carney".

The "Ridin' Kid from Powder River" is a yarn about a waif lad picked up on the prairie, rescued from a cruel horse-trading master, and taken to live on a little farm with a man who becomes as a father to him. When the foster father is killed, the lad defending him, becomes the "Ridin' Kid" and has adventures of the typical Westernese variety, eventually marrying the girl of the story.

What is it about such a yarn that leads business men, teachers, preachers, lawyers and even professors to read it? For such do read it. Many such have been caught with this kind of book on them. In a word, people read these stories because they like them. And people like them because the imagination along one line of its exercise, the easiest, along the line of pell-mell physical eventfulness, is free as the prairie wind. People like to be able to travel (in imagination) with a good horseman along lines of prairie trail. They like to be in the room (in imagination) where the smoke wisps writhe and twist and where the gun play is quick—they like the picture of a man cowing a bunch of other men "by the sheer power of his personality and of his will". The thrilling thing dwelt upon is the strength of the one strong man, and somehow (the story is always so played) the debilitating and unpleasant

thing of the weakness of the ten cowards is always eliminated from any position of importance from which it could distress the reader.

Such books justify themselves. We don't want always to watch Hardy or Bennet or Conrad put the knife in. We even get tired of Wells's hilarious brandishings, ever on the edge of operating upon the body politic. When we get tired we turn to "The Ridin' Kid from Powder River" and his mates.

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UNCENSORED CELEBRITIES

BY E. T. RYMOND. Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons.

THIS is a book of light, entertaining sketches of big men in Great Britain, beginning with Lloyd George and including Asquith, Balfour, Earl Grey, Lord Milner, General Smuts, Horatio Bottomley, Lord Northcliffe, Walter Long, Lord Beaverbrook, Winston Churchill, Sir Edward Carson and Bonar Law. It will be noticed that the list contains the names of two Canadians—Lord Beaverbrook and Bonar Law. The sketches are more in the nature of sidelights than searching studies, but nevertheless they reveal the subjects in the light of an informed observer, and are altogether unusually entertaining appreciations of character and achievement.

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MARE NOSTRUM

BY BLASCO IBANEZ. Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons.

BLASCO IBANEZ drove into Canada behind "The Four Horse men of the Apocalypse". It is just possible that he may ride out again on "Mare Nostrum" (Our Sea). The first is a spectacular book. Its title alone evoked interest. Its great physical eventfulness fed and maintained that interest. As a character study it is negligible. The book is not a novel of life. It possesses neither subtle and revealing analysis nor fine gradations of insight. But