

Belgians Are Still In Dire Need Of Food And Clothing

Conditions Grow Worse rather than Better in the Martyr Kingdom

How our sensibilities have been dulled by nearly two years of war news! A few thousand men swept away by the "curtain of fire" in a frontal attack—a merchantman or a hospital ship torpedoed—a score or more fallen victims to the baby-killing Zeppelins—these no longer excite or impress us. Perhaps it is well, for our interest or sympathy could do nothing to prevent these horrors of war.

But are we becoming equally callous about sufferings which we could alleviate? Are we losing interest in the millions of hungry Belgian mothers and children, left in the power of the ruthless Huns, and becoming more dependent every day on our help? Is our sympathy for them evaporating?

God forbid that, grown familiar with tales of suffering, we should fail to respond to this urgent appeal from the Belgian Relief Commission to support the magnificent work they are doing.

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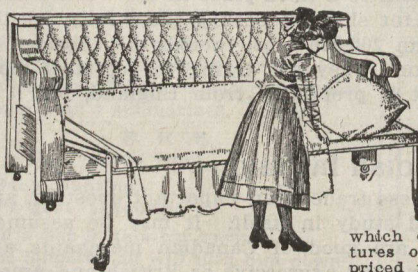


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AMONG THE NEW BOOKS

THE BLIND MAN'S EYES, by McHarg and Balmer (E. P. Dutton), is the sort of book one would much rather not have to review. It would be much more agreeable just to read it, lay it aside, chuckle and—end at that. For if you review a mere mystery story seriously the real literary folk—sad people—are at a loss how to employ their usual sets of comments, and they fall back on boredom, the one safe refuge of repentant drunkards and the resourceless. As a matter of fact good mystery and detective stories scarcely come in the classification of "literature," because that term has come to include all sorts of illogical and muddy-mooded trash by neurotics and neurasthenics. A good mystery story calls for more reasoning and more conscious art than nine-tenths of the wistful rubbish by men like John Powys and—but that list is too long.

Blind Man's Eyes is more like a piece of fine machinery than a book. It was evidently written after careful analysis by two skilful newspapermen, or one at least. They knew their business and they knew the story they wanted to tell. They told it well.

Far better to let Messrs. McHarg and Balmer fool you for a couple of hundred pages than read the horrid confessions of a dope-eating literateur with long hair and a yellow skin.

IN "The Spirit of France" (McClelland, Goodchild and Stewart, Toronto), Owen Johnson gives very readable impressions of that country in war-time. The style is rather more suited to journalism than book form, and the most interesting episode is an account of the author's interview with General Joffre, which, when it appeared in Collier's Weekly, was widely quoted in the French Press. The book will probably be widely read by Americans and serve a good purpose in giving them a better understanding of the great-hearted republic of France. It is profusely illustrated by photographs and a number of very charming drawings by Walter Hale.

"The Shepherd of the North," a novel, by Richard Aumerle Maher, author of "The Heart of Man," published by the Macmillan Co. of Canada, is full of action, well written and entertaining. It will undoubtedly find popularity among Roman Catholics. It is an admixture of religion and commerce, a defence of the confessional, and a demonstration of the omnipresence of the Catholic Church. The story is built up around the Shepherd of the North (the Bishop), and Jeffrey Whiting and Ruth Lansing, both of whom

were at first much opposed to the Catholic religion, but are finally won over by the irresistible influence on their lives of the Church and the Bishop. The grasping railway, with the New York State Government behind it, seeks to obtain at small cost, under the guise of furthering transportation facilities, the iron lands of the simple French-Canadian and English-speaking residents of a certain mixed settlement in the Adirondacks. After a political battle at Albany, when the Bishop comes out the victor, a trial for murder, at which Jeffrey is acquitted just as the reader had decided that he must be pronounced guilty, the story ends with the people triumphant. The diplomacy of the Bishop is victorious, as he is able to bring such forceful influence to bear upon the head of the railroad that he compensates the wronged people. Wedding bells. Finis.

"The Beloved Traitor," by Frank L. Packard. The Copp, Clark Co., Ltd. Apart from the fact that it is an interest holding tale in itself, this book has what is in these days an added attraction, that is, it deals with France: French life in a Mediterranean fishing village and in artistic circles in Paris before the war.

The story opens in the village inn, where sits the hero playing dominoes, but devoting his chief attention to the mutilation of a large French loaf. With the soft bread thereby obtained are evolved—thanks to the great dexterity of his fingers—life-like little forms and images. One is the less surprised then when, later, an American art critic, and millionaire withal, comes to the village, sees some of the work of this rough but clever artist, and ends by carrying him off to Paris, where this peasant fisherman rises to be the greatest sculptor in France. Artist though he be, he is cursed with an inordinate love for fame, and it is around this passion that the great drama of his life is played, after which only does he attain to the full stature of his own greatness. The story is well planned, artistically told, and the characters live. All one might cavil at is the excellence of an art which—to say the least of it—must have been rather untaught.

"God's Puppets," by William Allan White. The Macmillan Co. A collection of five short stories dealing with the saw of life in the growing American village of New Raynham. Each story, while complete in itself, has quite a distinct connection with the others, some of the characters being common to more than

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