

The Courier Among the New Books

PROMINENT in the excellent fall list of Hodder & Stoughton's offerings is "A Bookman's Letters." This is a collection of the letters of the Reverend Sir William Robertson Nicoll, M.A., D.D., written from week to week in the "British Weekly," under the nom-de-plume of Claudius Clear. There is probably no man in England who is so essentially a book-man as Sir Robertson, and those of us who have read his letters from week to week have a high enthusiasm and a great regard for the writer.

There are essays on "The Best Six Biographies," "The Troubles of an Essayist," "Seven Ways of Reviewing," "On Literary Gossip and the Eighth Way of Reviewing," "Why did Shakespeare retire to Stratford-on-Avon?" "Learning to Read," "The Pleasures and Advantages of Re-reading," "To Persons proposing to Write their Reminiscences," "Thinking and Talking," "That the Best Letters are written by the Mortally Wounded"; and those concerning famous writers include essays on Meredith, Carlyle, Emerson, Swinburne, Gissing, Mark Rutherford, Jane Austen, Lamb, Besant, Holmes, Ruskin, Shirley Brooks, Lever and Browne.

Sir Robertson is the litterateur wonderful to thousands of people. His political writings gained for him his knighthood. Incidentally he is the only Nonconformist minister thus honoured.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's new book, "The Poison Belt"; "Eldorado," the latest Pimpernel story; "Dodo the Second," and a host of other good books, are named in Hodder & Stoughton's list.

With the Canadian Northwest for his locale, Hulbert Footner has given us "Jack Chanty." (Toronto: Hodder & Stoughton. \$1.25 net.) It is an intensely interesting book with a plot much upon well-worn lines, but treated so freshly and brightly that the reader is sorry to see the last page come so quickly. It should have a good sale among all who love the out-of-doors.

Among the miscellaneous works of importance in the fall list of Cassel & Company is a book "What of the Navy?" by Alan Burgoyne. Mr. Burgoyne is a British member of Parliament, who has long been recognized as an authority upon naval matters, and who for some years has tried to put the plain case for naval defence before the British public. Grits, Tories and Canadian Leaguers alike would find it instructive. Another "big" book is Sir Herbert Tree's "Thoughts and Afterthoughts." Since Irving, Tree has been the acknowledged leader of the drama in England, and those who are familiar with his public utterances, are sure of a good time with "Thoughts and Afterthoughts."

Cassels cater for Canadians in their new list. "Two Shall be Born," by Theodore Goodridge Roberts (reviewed in the Courier for August 2); "Candlelight Days," by Adeline Teskey, and "Prairie Fires," by that popular British writer, Annie S. Swan, are all novels about Canada and Canadians. It would not be a platitude to say that everybody seems to be writing about Canada these days, though one hears that now and then Canadian publishers get cold feet. For instance, in a letter Mrs. G. Alec Tweedie says she had intended writing a book about Canada, but finding that the publishers regarded many books on this country as more or less waste paper, she decided to write on America instead.

"All About Engineering," by Gordon Knox; "The Boy's Book of Battles," by Eric Wood, and "The Air King's Treasure," by Grahame White, are the more important books for young people. They are all well written, and should have a good Christmas sale.

When Compton Mackenzie gave to the world, through the medium of a Toronto theatre, a dramatization of

his own novel, "Carnival," it was said, and rightly, that nothing but the acting of Grace George made the play at all tolerable. Nor was the book a very attractive effort. But "Youth's Encounter," by the same author, is at once a clever and interesting and original story. Mr. Mackenzie is the son of that fine English actor Edward Compton, and he seems to have an appreciation of the way to hold the attention of his audience.

"Youth's Encounter" sets the new fashion in school tales. It is the detailed and comprehensive history of Michael Fane, from the period of swaddling clothes to the time when he goes to Oxford. Rarely, if ever, has such an original work found its way to the bookseller's counter. There is no plot. The story is just a collection of all sorts of incidents and all sorts of ideas. Its peculiar pleasure to the reader is that he may find his own experiences expressed for him, and depicted so faithfully that often he wonders if he is reading his own life story. It must have taken a good deal of daring, as well as a long time, to write so truthfully of the things that are, but whose existence we tacitly deny.

Parts of the book are better than others. The description of the troops leaving for South Africa is consummately graphic, and is a picture the reader will remember. On the other hand, Mr. Mackenzie occasionally gets hold of the unsuitable word. To describe the feeling of pleasure which the boy feels when he plays rugby as "divine" seems a little far-fetched. Now and then it might be said that the author "indulges in slips of prolixity, and crosses the plain highway of talk." But these are only minor faults. The book is splendid reading. It is a book that ought to be a best seller—though it probably won't be. (Toronto: Bell & Cockburn. \$1.35 net.)

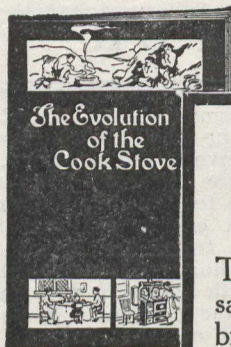
Kate Douglas Wiggin, the authoress of "Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm," has added one more to her list of books. In some ways Kate Douglas Wiggin has been to America what L. M. Montgomery is to Canada, for their writings have something in common. They both stand for the quiet delineating narration of everyday circumstances and happenings rather than the often unimaginable society novel.

"The Story of Waitstill Baxter" is a charming story of a New Hampshire village. Waitstill Baxter, the heroine, is a lovable girl, and stands out in marked contrast to her father, who is the villain of the piece. The story concerns itself partially with the course of Waitstill's love, which, though it doesn't run altogether smoothly, arrives at the desired harbour. The book is sweet and fresh, and is a good tonic for the gray days of November that are with us now. (Toronto: Williams Briggs. \$1.25 net.)

If a capacity for saying a few clever things in a clever way, and for painting pen pictures in bold colours, be all that is needed to make a successful novel, Mr. Schiff in "Concessions" is successful. But something else is wanted, which the author lacks. The book deals with the entanglements of four people, all of whom are married. (Incidentally, this idea has been worked to death.) They get entangled, and then they get out of the entanglement and that is all.

"Concessions" has two faults. First of all, it is written in a heavy, ponderous, serious vein, which does not become the plot. The reader feels inclined to tell his writer to get on or get out. Secondly, the characters are much overdrawn. The only place you could ever meet them is between the covers of a very insipid book. Still "Concessions" is readable. (Toronto: Bell & Cockburn. \$1.25 net.)

"T. Tembarom," by Frances Hodgson Burnett, has just been published by William Briggs. The publisher tells me this is THE book of the year. The author's name backs him up. A. PAPERKNIFE.



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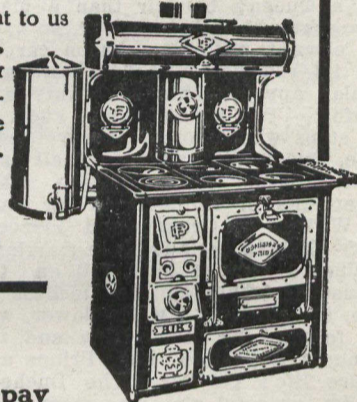
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