

Massey's Magazine

Fiction
Number

August

The British Army of To-day,

By MAJOR-GENERAL GASCOIGNE, Commanding Militia of Canada.

Illus. by A. H. Hider and F. H. Bridgen.

Cuba in War-Time,

By.....

FRANK L. POLLOCK.

Illustrated with Photographs.

The Camps of American Canoe Association,

By D'ARCY SCOTT.

Illustrated with Photographs.

Stories

By.....

Duncan Campbell Scott,
Clifford Smith, Byron H.
Basinia, Edward F. Slack

and many other stories of absorbing interest.....

BOOK CHAT.

There is no doubt at all that our own especial authoress, Mrs. Eward Cotes (Sara Jeannette Duncan), is very clever. Indeed, we knew it when her first volume of gaily-recorded travel appeared, to amuse and interest a world somewhat weary with stereotyped accounts of globe trottings. "A Social Departure" began a series of ventures into literature, each of which has won her a well-deserved measure of success, and in all of which—save one—the writer preserves and reproduces the style and method peculiarly her own. The exception is that delightful little story of "Sunni Sahib," whose pretty tenderness and naturalness achieves a result altogether charming.

For there is the lack in Sara Jeannette Duncan's novels. With a wonderful colour touch, vivid atmosphere, keen satire and pungent phrasing, they yet lack the touch of passion that, developing either in tenderness or tragedy, moves us to an impulse of kinship. Her books are beautiful transcriptions of Anglo-Indian pageantry, and we lay them aside at the closing page with the little wearied sense of one who returning from the brilliant spectacle, finds himself somewhat thirsty and dazzled.

But "His Honour and a Lady" is a very clever book and a decided advance upon either the simple "Adventures of a Mem-Sahib" or "A Daughter of To-day," chiefly in that it is less official and more human. The relationship between the Hon. Mr. Ancram and Mrs. Church is very cleverly depicted, while the pretty love scene between Phillip Doyle and Rhoda gives the touch of tenderness which we usually miss in Miss Duncan's writings.

It is easy to see that the writer herself loves her adopted country. We feel that she ascribes to Mrs. Church much of her own sensation concerning it.

"This India that lay all about her, glowing, profuse, mysterious, fascinating—a place in which she felt that she had no part, could never have any part but that of a spectator. The gesture of a fakir, the red masses of the gold-mohur trees against the blue intensity of the sky, the heavy sweetness of the evening wind, the soft colour and curve of the homeward-driven cattle, the little naked babies with their jingling amulets in the bazaar. . . . She felt the East to her finger-tips, and her mere physical life there became a thing of vivid experience, to be valued for itself."

Again she says:

"It's delicious to live in a place that hasn't any weather—only a permanent fervency. I like this old Calcutta. It's so wicked and so rich and so cheerful. People are born and burned, and born and burned, and nothing in the world matters. Their nice little stone gods are so easy to please, too. A handful of rice, a few marigold chains, a gnat or two; hardly any of them ask more than that. And the sun shines every day—on the just man, who has offered up his goat, and on the unjust man, who has eaten his instead."

Her characterisation is excellent also. Lewis Ancram John Church, Rhoda Doyle are clever studies of types. That they do not go beyond studies, that they fail to impress us save as lay figures, may be the fault of the type rather than that of the authoress.

The book abounds in clever quotable satire of Anglo-Indian officialism, a real humour betraying itself in various instances, such as that of the interview between the two native editors of Bengali journals.

"His Honour and a Lady" is replete with all the rich atmospheric colour, the keen observation and clever satire characteristic of this brilliant Canadian authoress.

"His Honour and a Lady," by Sara Jeannette Duncan (Mrs. Eward Cotes). McMillan & Co., London; Copp, Clark Co., Toronto.

* * *

"Where Highways Cross" carries us into a world so different from that of Anglo-Indian society, that it takes a few moments to adjust ourselves to our environment.

This is a tale of country life in Yorkshire. Only an incident in the life relationships of a woman and man, and the plot is by no means a new one, yet the method of telling is so well and wisely chosen that we are won to a very real interest in this simple story of a Yorkshire farmer and his serving lass.

The tale is like a series of etchings, and we appreciate the artistic instinct which sets it forth with so much of repose and restraint. In *Hepworth*—farmer, preacher, lover and hero—the author has created a character full of possibilities.

Readers of "Where Highways Cross" will look with interest for any further work by the same author.

"Where Highways Cross," by J. T. Fletcher. McMillan & Co., London; Copp, Clark Co., Toronto.

REVIEWER.

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