

LITERARY NOTES AND COMMENTS.

Jack London

WHEN Jack London died at the age of forty, he left a measure of personal achievement that has been equalled by few. He had won an acknowledged place in American letters, as well as a fame that went beyond his own land and language.

He was born in the working class at the bottom of society, and for the first years of his life was in succession newsboy, oyster pirate, sailor, longshoreman, roustabout, a worker in canneries, factories and laundries, between whiles doing odd jobs at mowing lawns, cleaning carpets or washing windows. Then sickened by the round of eternal toil he became a tramp and begged his way from door to door, wandering over the United States and wearing his life out in slums and prisons. But he kept the power of thinking that had been scared into him by what he saw in society's cellar, and remained awake and growing during the brutal actualities of such a life. When he was eighteen he realized he must rise or else he would die in the slime. He also saw that brain, not muscle commanded the higher price, so for several years he struggled for an education, working hard at the same time at manual labor to pay his way. His early work was written at this time, but it failed to bring in financial returns, and he had to go back to the trail.

His mental outlook was enlarged, his power of observation keener, and his zest for life sharper than ever. Up North the trail led, to the Klondike of peril, sudden death and as sudden fortune. From this experience came his first literary success. Fortune was kind, and Jack London had arrived.

To anyone who has read his books, this name conjures up vivid pictures of outdoor life, for it is in his portrayal of Nature's forces that Jack London excels. The element of strife that runs through all his work belongs