

# "JUST OUT"—BOOKS WORTH READING TO HELP YOUNG WRITERS

## A Review of Current Literature

Critical Notes

**"THE Practice of Auto-Suggestion By the Method of Emile Coué, by C. Harry Brookes.** London: George Allen and Unwin Limited.

The boundless possibilities of auto-suggestion for the happiness and welfare of the human race as re-discovered by Emile Coué, are very clearly indicated in this valuable little book.

Mr. Brookes, who made a special visit to Nancy last year, made a careful study of Mons. Coué's methods and successful results in his clinic. Here, every day, this kindly old man, now verging on his seventieth year, sees scores of sick, faint-hearted and depressed men and women, and sends them away an hour or so later cheered, uplifted, and in some cases even healed. He imbues them with faith, stimulates their imagination and will, and gives them a new hope to live and grow strong. Often he is busy seeing patients for sixteen hours a day, for he never refuses help to anyone who seeks it.

His method of treatment, Mr. Brookes explains, is by means of suggestion. He teaches the patient to use auto or self suggestion, for Mons. Coué says frankly that he does not heal. He is merely the agent calling ideas of health into the mind of his patient, who must do the rest himself.

Children and infants are treated in a similar way by his assistant, Mdlle. Kauffmann, and she secures the invaluable co-operation of the mothers as well, and thus obtains excellent results. In addition to this she visits the poorest tenements in the slums, and is regarded, with Mons. Coué, as a worker of miracles. Both have given their private means and dedicated their lives to the service of those who require their help, yet neither accepts a single penny piece for the treatments they give.

Coué's treatment—this auto-suggestion which he makes his patients treat themselves by, is a purely scientific method. We often use it ourselves. If we wish to awaken at a certain hour in the morning we can do it. We have only to give the order—to make up our mind to do so, and precisely at the minute we awake. How it is done we do not know, save this—the unconscious mind obeys the order which we have given it. There is no charlatanism in it. It is based on the discoveries of psychology—discoveries which point to the most stupendous possibilities in the future self-development of mankind.

It hinges on the recognition by the scientist of the Unconscious—"that vast area of mental activity which exists outside the circle of our awareness." The Unconscious supervises and controls the various physical processes, such as digestion, assimilation, the circulation of the blood, the action of the lungs, and all the vital organs. All this is taken into account by Mons. Coué. As our conscious thoughts pass into the unconscious they partake of its energy, and determine our physical condition. So, if our thought is of disease or depression, we are the worse for it. If the thought is a hopeful, buoyant, healthful one, we are so much the better. The wise mother, kissing her child's sore finger to make it well, is practising Couéism—the child is quickly made well and happy.

It is not claimed that induced auto-suggestion is a substitute for medical practice, nor will it make us live for ever, but it should make us keep disease out of our life. How far we can succeed in doing so depends entirely upon ourselves—the conditions from which we start, and the regularity and correctness of our practice.

Among the wonderful possibilities opened up by Mons. Coué's method



is that of the treatment and cure of moral delinquents by suggestion and auto-suggestion, and so confident does he feel on this point that he is moving the powers that be to permit his introduction of it into the French State Reformatories. But Couéism may possibly achieve greater things than these. They are foreshadowed in this wonderful little book, which will abundantly repay close study.

**"LIFE,"** by Johan Bojer. The Gyldendal Series. London, Christiania.

To Henrik Ibsen and his epoch-making novels in dramatic verse, Norwegian literature owes a debt of great magnitude. He was a moulding force, and he stamped upon it some strongly marked characteristics. Among these are his passion for sincerity and truth, his hatred of shams and all kinds of cant, and his fearlessness in uncovering them to the light of day. Above all, his clear comprehension of values has had a far-reaching influence upon his age and times. His work, forceful and dynamic in its serene strength, has given a great impetus and inspiration to the band of northern writers who are now coming forward into the world of literature.

It is not long since Björnson was busy tearing to tatters some of the hoary moss-covered superstitions that take strong hold of a people living much to itself, and, to a certain extent, isolated from their neighbours.

Quite a galaxy of Northern fiction writers has appeared since, followers of his—writers who produce fine studies of the peculiarities of the human mind, and set them in vividly distinct pictures with their country's blue fiords and magnificent snow-clad mountain peaks as a background. That they have greatly enriched the world's literature is undoubted. The award two years ago of the Nobel prize for literature to Knut Hamsun, the novelist, was a splendid recognition of the value of his work, and it is a striking commentary on the soul-destroying power of war, that this prize went to the nation that was least touched by the recent world upheaval.

In "Life," Johan Bojer tells a tale of human weakness and love, and a jealousy that destroys to the uttermost. He tells it so simply and with such delicacy that one can only wonder at the sureness of the artist's touch, and the vividness of the situation he portrays. But in this the Northern writers excel—they are prose poets always.

How a man, by feeding his insensate passion of jealousy, envy, and hatred for another can poison the atmosphere of his own home to the ruin and estrangement of wife, son and daughter, is told by a master's pen. And when the evil is complete, and the broken lives cannot be mended, the son sheds his fear, faces the old captain, and tells him the ugly truth—as he sees it. He wins belated freedom for his sister, and she marries the man of her heart—the son of her father's enemy. Her happiness then

seems complete—to others. From abject poverty she has become the beloved member of a proud family. Her heart is given utterly to her husband, and to him she is a peerless treasure. Her father, now reconciled and repentant, is a changed man. All she can desire is hers, but, like her mother, she has to pay dearly for what has been done in the past—when she was a sad and lonely child filled with a longing for the sympathy which her father had denied her. It is a story that will cause the reader to think to some purpose.

**"THE Girl on the Boat,"** by P. G. Wodehouse. Herbert Jenkins, Limited, London.

Miss Billie Bennett was a red-haired girl with the beautiful ivory skin that goes with that particular make-up. She was extraordinarily pretty, and most men who saw her straightway lost their hearts. Sam Marlowe, struggling in a crowd of travellers to reach the gangway of the steamer on his way from America to England, suddenly finds himself face to face with the bewitching maiden. He is a sudden victim. Never before had he encountered such a personality, and he faces the stupendous fact that he is in love. Swift on the heels of his discovery an opportunity for attracting the divinity's notice is thrust upon him, and they become acquainted. But Billie is full of romantic notions. Her hero must be a combination of Sir Galahad and the admirable Crichton. Sam Marlowe is sanely commonplace, and he has a rival. And through various laughable adventures and schemings, Marlowe and Bream Mortimer alternately win the smiles of the uncertain lady. Although the parrot-faced Mortimer seemed about to succeed in his suit, Fate in the end arranges otherwise. It is a capital book for a wet day, there is not a dull paragraph in it, and there are smiles in plenty.

**"AFTER Dinner Stories,"** by George Robey. Grant Richards, Limited, London.

This generous collection of anecdotes contains a few that are old friends, but there are quite a number that are new. To the after dinner speaker they will doubtless prove a mine of wealth, and to his audience a source of considerable amusement. And Mr. Robey can always be relied on to tell no story that can offend against good taste.

**"THE Snowshoes Trail,"** by Edison Marshall. Hodder and Stoughton, Limited, London.

The author of "The Voice of the Pack," and other breezy romantic backwood stories gives in his latest a thrilling tale of human endeavour and hardy courage. With the sure knowledge of the Wild West, which he depicts with such vividness as to make it intensely real, he unites a fine sympathy and an intuitive and reverent understanding of nature in all her moods. The romantic element is introduced in such a masterly way as to make the story grip the attention till the last word is reached. The keynote is the splendid endurance that is born of the wild places of earth, and the courage to meet emergencies in a manly way. One is brought face to face with the majesty and the unrelenting cruelty of nature in the earth's wild places. Here existence narrows down to essentials—food and warmth. All other accessories fade into uselessness, and man amid such conditions obtains a truer estimate of the value of things that matter.

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FORESTER CLARKE—"Sarah" has the makings of a good character sketch. It needs snap, however, and a climax more in keeping with the main idea. Need she be such a rabid man-hater? She is a lonely and very pathetic figure—scarcely one to be held up to ridicule. With a sympathetic treatment something good might be made of the material.

CINDERELLA, Mount Eden.—I realise that your pen runs away with you, but it is a good fault—provided you can criticise the result very severely later on. "With Nature" is a thank-offering to Nature's bounty and loveliness, but it is entirely personal, and has no appeal for the general reader. In writing of this kind—semi-descriptive, semi-meditative—the use of general terms produce vagueness. You speak of "a bird singing." It would bring a vivid picture if you named it a tui or a thrush. In "Feathered Visitors" your comparison of the seagulls and tern with the falling snow settling lightly on the grass is very apposite. Have you read and studied such works as Lamb's "Essays of Elia" or "My Garden Acquaintance," by James Russell Lowell—both of them collections of essays of deathless charm and beauty—models for all time. In them accurate observation is mingled with quaint thoughts and flashes of poetry, that lift them infinitely above writing that is merely emotional and descriptive. The point of the "Joy of possessing a cow" is certainly clear.

"MARY ASTOR."—"Baby's Great Aunt" has decided merit in style and workmanship, but the theme is somewhat hackneyed, and scarcely worthy of its setting. "Life's Colour in the Gray" is different. It is pleasing in subject and treatment, both of which show delicacy and an artistic sense of values. I shall probably use it in our journal.

D.M.N., Opoho, Dunedin.—You have not studied metre closely. In the lines:—

*"The pine-trees tap at my window,  
Their music has entered my room,  
Their voices are whispering and calling,*

*Calling me through the long night"*

you ignore rhyme altogether. There is smoothness of cadence in the first three lines which might pass, though end-rhymes are lacking, but you make a sudden change in the fourth. The accent alters from the second to the first syllable, and from that on the line does not scan. It is just plain prose, and the result is not pleasing. You would do well to study Prosody or the rules of verse writing and would find sufficient to help you in the chapter on metre which is included in our best English Grammars. Another point to watch is the meaning of your verse. Always have something to say when you write, and test the sense of it when written. Take the phrase "lady fairy" for instance. What is the "voice of lowering herds"—even "the voice of lowering herds" is a hackneyed expression—a reminiscence of Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard." Do not try to write *Vers Libres*. They are the refuge of the would-be verse writer who cannot or will not take pains. Your lines on "Night" are just prose cut up into short lengths. Verse—good verse—is not written with ease. Poetry is much more difficult, but with study and application much may be accomplished.