

THE NEWEST BOOKS

Golden Ladies and Black Virgins

New Book Which Deals With Rival Orders in a Merry Court of Long Ago
—A Duchess Who Didn't Like Draughts—"Crime Cargo," A Mystery
Story Concerning Gangsters and Ships

A "blurb"—as most publishers know and few laymen do—is the name for the "bit about the book" which appears inside the dust cover. Its exact purpose is not very clear. If it is intended to promote the sales of the book, it seldom achieves its object; if it is intended to be a precis of the story, it is usually so lamentably brief that one is given a wrong impression of the contents.

The snarling tone in this case has been caused by the "blurb" which adorns the dust cover of "The Golden Ladies of Pampeluna," a new book by Francis Cabochon. If one's mind has a slightly Rabelasian tinge, it raises one's hopes so unnecessarily. It says, to be precise:

Nell Gwynne, Dubarry and La Pompadour were demure dairymaids compared with the Golden Ladies of Pampeluna. Were they beautiful? Were they gay? Were they indiscreet? The King bestowed this coveted Order and somewhat naturally, the Queen looked upon its members askance. She had to protect herself... but how? By creating the rival organisation of the Black Virgins!

Mediaeval morality was, we fear, a little lax, but even in those happy-go-lucky days it was possible to go too far... even for a jovial monarch. Affairs came to a pretty pass and considerable scandal resulted.

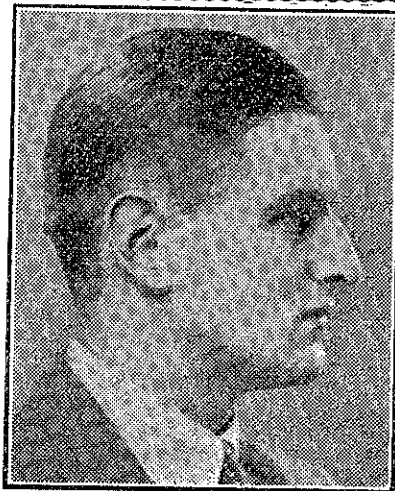
In the second part of the book an ancient Duchess, with a fine taste in alcoholic liquors, roysters through the pages, one of a riotous company of attractive sinners. When she and Duke Alain started on the tenth fagon, even the attendants took refuge! A gorgeous and glamorous picture of life in a gorgeous age.

Actually Nell Gwynne and the Dubarry had the Golden Ladies and the Black Virgins beaten from the start when it came to "go in" places and see in things. There's a tremendous fuss at the court over a piece of pink garter ribbon—and all for no reason in particular. The King, who has an eye for feminine beauty—in fact, one might say that he was all eyes—creates the Order of the Golden Ladies of Pampeluna, and the Queen, in retaliation, establishes the Order of Black Virgins, an order which is not nearly as unpleasant as it sounds. The Golden Ladies have their moments at court, the Black Virgins theirs when they retire once a month to the monastery of La Desira, the foundation of which was Her Majesty's gift, the novices being accepted only after a rigid examination by the Queen herself. According to Mr. Cabochon:

True it was that the air of La Desira was somewhat relaxing if one could judge by the lassitude which seemed to possess the Virgins when they returned to duty; but it was a happy lassitude, a pleasant weariness that testified to useful labour well accomplished.

One hundred and thirty pages farther on, we meet the Duchess of Bellehors, who introduces herself in the first paragraph by remarking, "What I don't like about this castle is that it's so damned draughty." To which her host, the Duke Alain, Lord of Champerac, re-

torts, "Then why the hell did you come here?" And so do merry quips pass between host and guest for several dozen pages—and the reader is entertained. As the book nears the finish, however, Mr. Cabochon drops his merry style and develops into a very serious and less successful writer. In fact, one might not be wrong in believing that the book



WELLINGTON AUTHOR.—Mr. J. Wilson Hogg, a master at Scots College, Wellington, whose first novel "Snow Man," has just been published, and has been given a very good reception. Mr. Hogg was for some years at Oxford University, and later he took a teaching appointment in England, returning last year to his present position. Reviewers are praising particularly the excellent character delineations in "Snow Man"; for a first novel, they are said to be unusually well done.

had been finished by someone else, Duke Alain proposes to the Countess Isabeau, not in the light-hearted tones that one would expect—had even come to hope for—from this irresponsible lord, but in the heavily sententious tones of a Prime Minister:

"Because"—and he bowed very slightly—"all my life I have had no one to help me, no one who cared at all for me, or who cared even to bring out whatever good there might be in me. Pere Gervais alone has stood by me, but he is more of a saint than a man. No woman has ever spoken to me otherwise than gallantly. My mother died when I was born. Pere Gervais once told me that she covered me with her tears before she died; if she did, it was the only time that anyone has ever shed a tear over me." Then, after a pause, he added: "Will you help me, Countess?"

And Isabeau, greatly distressed, bowed her head and said: "If it be God's will." But, if you don't take overmuch notice of the "blurb" you'll probably find "The Golden Ladies of Pampeluna" quite good fun.

"The Golden Ladies of Pampeluna," Francis Cabochon, Philip Allan. Our copy from the publishers.

A LOVE-SICK millionaire, a party of society friends, two hard-bitten British merchant marine officers, and a bunch of New York's toughest gangsters, provide a thrilling main theme in Maxwell Knight's new novel, "Crime Cargo." Julius K. Holland, a millionaire soft goods king, finding he is making little headway with the lady of his choice, a wealthy widow, hits on the idea of taking her on a pleasure cruise. Accordingly, he invites a party of society friends, and, for the cruise, commissions a cargo steamer belonging to a shipping line he owns. Captain Sandys and his first mate, "Tiger" Lilley, are highly disgusted to find their beloved old hooker is to be turned into a "floating night club," and the mate darkly predicts that no good could come of it. In the meantime, a scheme for capturing the ship at sea and holding her wealthy passengers for ransom has occurred to "Toad" Binetti, a notorious New York gangster. Some of his gang are ordered to apply for posts as stewards, and with three of his lieutenants, he stows away in the ship's forehold to await his opportunity.

The cruise begins, and for the first few days everything goes smoothly. Julius K. Holland is overjoyed to find his unceasing attractions to his somewhat coquettish lady-love are bearing fruit, and consequently the party goes with a swing. The first cloud on the horizon appears when Toad Binetti and his companions are discovered by one of the crew, and brought before the captain. The latter accepts their explanation that they stowed away in order to get across to Europe, and sets them to work under a guard. They are freed by a confederate among the crew, and from then on events move swiftly to a thrilling climax. After recovering their armoury of revolvers and Thompson sub-machine guns from the hold, Toad and his gang make a surprise attack on the ship, and after much ruthless bloodshed, capture it. How it is re-captured, largely by the audacity and good fortune of yet another stowaway, an enterprising young reporter, makes absorbing reading.

"Crime Cargo" can be recommended as an excellent book to tuck away in one's bag before leaving for a holiday, particularly for those who like plenty of action in their reading.

"Crime Cargo," Maxwell Knight, Philip Allan. Our copy from the publishers.

WHEN six economists gather together, there are seven different opinions.—*Mr. J. W. Beaumont Pease.*

YOU do not get a heat wave in the church when it is snowing in the vestry.—*Rev. T. T. James.*

LIBERALISM and freedom are the only alternatives to Fascism and tyranny.—*Sir Archibald Sinclair.*