

Books and Men

"Oh Dear! What a Bore," Says Balfour Hearing of War

Vanderbilt Writes a Book of Anecdotes

WHETHER one's pen drips satirical cruelties as did Beverley Nichols's when he wrote "Evensong," or whether it merely meanders a little wickedly through pre-war and post-war society, there's no doubt that the finished result—a book with a good seasoning of gossip anecdotes—will command a certain share of attention. The latest book of this kind is "Farewell to Fifth Avenue," by the well-known Cornelius Vanderbilt, junior.

In a review the "Christian Science Monitor" (Boston) says:

The no longer quite-so-young Mr. Vanderbilt does more than say farewell to Fifth Avenue in this series of anecdotal reminiscences. He comes perilously close to saying good-bye to good taste. He would not be blamed for his personal revolt against Society (with a capital S). But it savours of columnism for him to capitalise his knowledge of the petty foibles of this Society as rungs in his literary ladder.

And yet it must be admitted that he is a splendid raconteur. Whether it be one of his sallies at Rextugwellism, or Balfour greeting the declaration of war with the words: "Oh, dear, dear, what a bore!" he does it with a succinctness and verve that leave one wondering how on earth the Vanderbilt tabloid newspapers ever happened to fail.

He tells the story of his newspaper adventures, but the chronicle is more apologia than history. He cruises among crowned heads in the parental yacht, North Star. He excoriates American society with dozens of little incidents of the snubbing of everybody. And he chides Los Angeles society for its snubbing of Queen Marie, because it had "read too many cold cream testimonials." He takes pot shots at dictators, idealises the Roosevelts and is pleased with the English as a people, clear down to Queen Mary's hats, which represent "the triumph of history over fashion."

This is not social commentary. It is swift reading, but it remains only a record of the enthusiasms and dislikes which Mr. Vanderbilt takes so seriously. And these same personal, rather than objective, interpretations lessen the value of an assessment that the "golden age of railroad emperors . . . and coupon-clipping children" ended with the assassination of McKinley and that a less glamorous but more certain future opened with Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Perhaps the best talent Mr. Vander-

bilt displays is his ability to recall bright and interesting remarks by famous people. It may be invidious to select the best of these, but one could



QUEEN MARY'S HATS.
"Triumph of history over fashion."

do worse than to nominate the quoted phrase of Mussolini: "You seize power with one set of people, but you govern with another."

New Books From Two Publishing Houses

Here is comment on a few new and promising publications from two of the leading English publishers, Methuen and the Bodley Head:—

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS A KING.

Mr. John Drinkwater's book gives in compact form a survey of the King's reign. His Majesty's activities are considered in relation to various aspects of national life, politics, art, industrial and mechanical evolution, sport, and State ceremony. These considerations are based on principles defined in the first chapter of the book, which discusses the whole question of constitutional monarchy in England and the particular distinction that his Majesty has lent to this form of government in our democratic days.—(Methuen.)

LUST FOR LIFE

This is the life-story of the painter Vincent Van Gogh—a story of incessant

conflict with poverty, discouragement and ill-health. No painter has been more ruthlessly driven by the creative force, or more isolated by it from almost all ordinary sources of human happiness, and this violent, vivid, and tormented life makes a novel of extraordinary vitality.—(The Bodley Head.)

DICKENS

This new book is based on a series of lectures which Andre Maurois, the author, delivered in Paris on the life and work of Dickens. Though many English critics, among them Mr. G. K. Chesterton, had found the work remarkably interesting, the author had decided not to publish it in English until recent books on Dickens had led him to revise his original text in the light of the new documents which had appeared.—(The Bodley Head.)

GROWING OPINIONS

This collection, edited by Alan Campbell Johnson, of the views of British youth on subjects with which it is urgently concerned is of absorbing interest. Familiar names occur in the list of contributors: David Huxley, grandson of one great scientist and half-brother of another, is responsible for "Youth and Literary Appreciation"; Angela Milne, niece of A. A. Milne, provides a study of the family; Michael Matthews, son of the new Dean of St. Paul's, in "Youth and Music," denounces the sterility of modern musical modes and the influence of wireless; Sally Graves, a member of the well-known literary family, writes with style and knowledge of Ireland, while Crystal Herbert, daughter of A. P. Herbert shows distinct traces of paternal influence in her outspoken comments on the tyrannical demands of Fashion.—(Methuen.)

PRIVATE WORLDS

Miss Phyllis Bottome has given her new novel the unusual setting of a large hospital in the Midlands. The principal characters are a group of young psychiatrists attached to the hospital, and plot of great originality is evolved from their relations with each other, subtly influenced and complicated by the erratic destinies of some of their patients.—(The Bodley Head.)

THEATRE GUYED

A. E. Wilson, dramatic critic of "The Star" (London) is in a light and irresponsible mood in this highbrow book for lowbrows. Surveying the contemporary stage, he pokes fun at its fads and conventions, and at the vogues that seize it. First-nights, audiences, musical comedy, opera, foreign plays, the "intellectual" drama, are among the material for his parody and humour, with which the clever drawings of Tom Titt are perfectly in keeping.—(Methuen.)

AT 33

Richard Le Gallienne was one of that famous company of poets and writers who made literary history in the 'nineties. His daughter, Eva, struck out a different line for herself and took to the stage at an early age. Educated chiefly in Paris she describes in "At 33" her childhood, her first attempts at acting, her contacts with Sarah Bernhardt and Constance Collier, her holidays in her mother's country, Denmark, and her work at Tree's Academy.—(The Bodley Head.)