

... With ... BOOK and VERSE

By "John O'Dreams"

Our Fortnightly Book Review

DERMOTTS RAMPANT

By Stephen McKenna

THE demand for William Guy Carr's book, "By Guess and by God," has been so great that Hutchinson and Co. state that they have been compelled to order an eighth impression, while a ninth has been put in hand.

MR. CYRIL A. FAREY, A.R.I.B.A., a well-known English draughtsman, has collaborated with Mr. A. Trystan Edwards, M.A., A.R.I.B.A., on the production of an important work on "Architectural Drawing Perspective and Rendering." The book will be published immediately by Messrs. B. T. Batsford, Ltd., and is fully illustrated in colour and monochrome.

MR. SISLEY HUDDLESTON calls his recently published book by the intriguing title of "Between the River and the Hills," and tells us it is a Normandy pastoral. In it, with wit and wisdom, he sets in skilful juxtaposition the peaceful permanence of his life at Sainte Ursule and the blatant superficiality and unrest of existence in cities, and expounds with quiet and delicious intuition and humour the philosophy of the Norman peasant.

APROPOS of the wanderlust in man, and the resultant gossip and chat of woman, Mr. Julian Duguid remarks in his new and admirable book of travel, "Green Hell": "When a man yields to the urge of Ishmael, the voice of Sarah is raised at tea-parties, for there is more heartburning over one sheep that escapes than over the ninety and nine that catch the 8.15 to town every morning. So the wanderer takes care to explain that the whole glorious business of walking into the horizon is honestly rather a bore. Those who neglect this precaution are known to feminine critics as beach-combers."

MRS. BELLOC LOWNDES continues to exploit the fascinating fabric of crime with credit to herself and to the delight of her devotees. Murder stories are perennially fascinating to a very large class of humanity, and Mrs. Lowndes is a specialist in this particular branch of fiction. Since that blood curdling story, "The Lodger," held us in thrall, many of us have seized with avidity upon all of this author's novels. "Letty Lyndon," her latest work, is based on a famous trial known to the world many decades ago, and grips attention by its atmosphere of strange mystery and suspense, moving with compelling swiftness to unexpected denouement, and is quite on a par with the best work of the notable novelist.

MR. McKENNA comes of a family distinguished in the literary and political fields, and in his latest book, "Dermotts Rampant," he writes authoritatively anent social world of England for the past thirty years. Coming into his own as a novelist before the World War, with "Sonia," that widely-read and much-discussed analysis of society, its ways and its works, Mr. McKenna now displays the same imaginative vision, meticulous observation, grasp of political movements and lucidity of expression as captured admirers in his earlier book.

Briefly, this is a story of a noble Irish family, who, having fallen upon evil days in their own distressful country, find themselves, through stress of flood and famine, forced to seek haven in England. Without money or friends on their arrival, they yet eke out an existence, hoping for better days when they can return to Erin the Beloved. But the months and years pass, and the clan Dermott, with its wide ramifications, successfully establishes itself in Britain as men of commerce, and holds its own with the ruling class by virtue of ability, integrity, and faculty for holding on.

There is much political speculation and comment, Tory and Radical being sketched with truth and brilliance, without bias or acrimony, and nothing extenuated on one side or the other. The long years go by, he who was down goes up in the world, and the oppressor lies under the heel of the once-upon-a-time vanquished. At long last, in the curious ups and downs of life, the rebel Irish family becomes a pillar of the State and is happily assimilated into the great English civilisation which once it had so bitterly fought.

Several subsidiary love-stories are sketched, and Antony Dermott's recurring love for Rhoda, daughter of ducal house at feud with the Dermott, runs through the book from cover to cover.

THE Empress Hermine, second wife of the ex-Kaiser of the German Empire, has written a book entitled "Days at Doorn." It is a full-length portrait of the royal exile, written by wife, partisan and hero-worshipper. The author has plenty of material on

As a modern young woman, with bewildering changes of mood, casting of ancient shibboleths, insistence on "the impulse that governs the actions of men and women," Rhoda may be a truthful portrait, but she is certainly not an attractive one. Perhaps one of the most ably drawn characters is that of the crippled librarian, Maxstead, "a man of violence in his gestures, who took snuff as though he were ramming a breech-loader and dusted away the spillings as though he were grooming a horse"; and whose acute and critical mind and uncompromising philosophy exerted so great an influence on plasticity of youth.

There is trenchant criticism: "It is easy to say that Germans are ruled by their men, Americans by their women, French by their mothers, and Spaniards by their babies; but I think the English are directed, first and last, by their unique committee-spirit. From the family this has become a racial characteristic. If they have shown the ability to found Empires, they have also shown the ability to lose them as ineptly as any Spaniard, Dutchman, Portuguese or German. Their vaunted sense of fair play is confined to dealings with their own people, and their genius for compromise may be traced in part to indolence and in part to lack of logic."

The descriptions of Victorian era are fascinating, presenting a London of gas-lamps, muffin-bells, Punch and Judy shows, hot-chestnut ovens, knife-board omnibuses and one-legged organs grinding out Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay. From the Boer War onward up to the outbreak of the Great War we follow the fortunes of different generations of the Dermotts, who, living and dead, left their mark on the country they made their home. An immensely interesting panoramic view of the changes and chances of this world, the whole making excellent reading for the intelligentsia.

which to draw, as her chronicle ranges discursively over the past thirty years or so, making somewhat superficial comment on famous men and women of the day, the Great War, its disloyalty, treason and meatless days, and her childish adoration of the Emperor,

then in zenith of magnificence. There is meticulous account of first marriage and subsequent widowhood, and much philosophising anent the Empire that was to fall before her childhood's dream materialised when she visited her hero in exile. The main thesis of the book is glorification of ex-Empress Wilhelm II as husband, thinker, ruler and humanitarian. The writer's attachment and loyalty to the Royalty entourage is stressed, including passionate admiration for the Imperial consort, the Empress Augusta Victoria, whose death created the terrible loneliness that was a deciding factor in the espousal of the vivacious and egoistic chronicler of "Days at Doorn." "Can a man love two women, one dead and one alive, with equal devotion?" is asked to the point of weariness. There is catalogic account of the daily round at Doorn, meals, tree-felling, family prayers, the way in which the royal exile keeps his figure in check, and, incidentally, much trifling comment. For instance, why should we be informed that tendency to redundant figure was the bane of life of the late King Edward VII; or that the English Prince of Wales makes "incredible efforts" to preserve his slim outline? What interest has such a comment as this: "The Kaiser detests boyish cuts and tells ladies who favour them so." "Bobbled hair" he dubs "abominable." And he considers the pictures of Palm Beach beauties and film stars who make themselves look like boys are disgusting. Well, well!

As a chronicle extending over the past thirty years by an educated woman of high and unquestioned pedigree, the book has a certain quality of interest; but first and foremost, it is a highly enthusiastic, warmly laudatory portrait, not perhaps particularly sympathetic to British readers.

"THE Gardener's Year," written by Karel Capek, and illustrated by his talented brother Josef, is a book no lover of gardens should dispense with. And not only the gardener, but anyone with a sense of humour will find delight in its entertaining pages. The Czech original of the book was published two years ago, and now that English people have a chance of perusing its fascinating pages, they will find it compact of information and philosophy and humour. Truly a green oasis of wit in the desert of dim days of depression.

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