

# ... With ... BOOK and VERSE

By "John O'Dreams"

## Jottings

## Prize Poem Competition

IN "Most Women," by Alec Waugh, there are sketches and impressions, vignettes of people, stories heard and stories imagined, making a picturesque pot-pourri put together with considerable skill, with love as the connecting link between the chapters. Most of the stories have a tropical background, but there are some with heroines in Chicago, New York and London. Mr. Waugh has found a literary form which admirably suits him, and this new book of his, which is decorated with some admirable woodcuts by Lynd Ward, may be looked on as the fitting sequel to his "Coloured Countries."

MR. HUGH WALPOLE, the novelist, whose father was for many years the Bishop of Edinburgh, has recently given it as his opinion that the whole literary world is anxiously awaiting the arrival of a great Scots novel; he is himself convinced that Scotland will rise to meet this hope. It would be fitting if a novel of classical proportions were to see light during the centenary year of the great Sir Walter. Apart from the already successful work of George Blake and Neil Gunn—not to mention Agnes Mure Mackenzie, Edwin Muir and Eric Linklater—it is well known in Scots literary circles that four or five of the younger men have been at work on novels for some time.

UNDER the title of "The Caliph of Bagdad," two of his old associates, Messrs. Davis and Maurice, have written a life of that strange personality and brilliant writer, O. Henry. An equally unusual type of man, Lafcadio Hearn, has been biographed by Mrs. Jean Temple; and a life of William Archer, by his brother, Lieut.-Colonel Charles Archer, gives an interesting correspondence between Archer and Mr. George Bernard Shaw.

THOSE who remember the earlier books of Miss E. Arnot Robertson will know that she is a writer of distinction, and in her latest novel, "Four Frightened People," she again proves her quality. In her new book there are passages of vivid description which linger in the memory. Plague on board ship leads to the secret departure of four of the passengers. Escape from the ship is comparatively easy, but in the jungle, when they reach it, one misadventure follows another. Although the book sets out to tell a story, it is more of a travelogue than a novel, but none the less interesting on that account.

THE prize of half a guinea in the current competition is awarded to "O.E.H." for "Recompense," an artistic and graceful response to loveliness of day and night, sun and stars. We thank this contributor for charming, brief note accompanying entry. Selected for special commendation is the picturesquely-conceived and worded "Out of the Past," by "Ginger," which, by virtue of originality of conception and expression, runs the prize-winner very close.

"Karalia": "Rondeau of Villon" is a handful of verses exemplifying flair for unusual and attractive literary form.

"Sunrise": A lilting paean of morn and dawn, which unfortunately crashes to commonplace in last verse. Jingle of "A Sportive Spirit" is far indeed from poetry:—

Some often hear the wireless news  
From neighbours nobly kind;  
To leave their windows up they choose,  
Although they draw the blind!

"Merrie": Colour sense apparent, but expression at times slow-moving and unrhythmic, though artistic sincerity is present.

"Oh Macks" short love lines are poetic in feeling, the last wistful verse crystallising an eternally human note.

G.F.: We liked your letter, encouraging and kind. In our published paragraph regarding your poem, we regret the word "last" was omitted, as no doubt you noticed.

"The Prelude": Vision of beauty and ability to catch the vision as it flies are apparent in your work, which exhibits flair beyond ordinary for poetic comprehension. We reserve the second poem for further consideration.

J.A.: The Terrace: Many thanks for appreciation, so unexpected and delightful. "Little Green Apples" was lent by one of a literary coterie, as are many of the books reviewed in this column. Likewise, a considerable proportion are obtained from Public Library, which is found to be excellent for modern verse, biography and plays; while occasionally the work of a New Zealand author comes in for review.

G.O.P.: Interesting note received, with arresting enclosures. No wonder such communications are cherished. The short story good in its domestic genre, but it is to be feared that the art of the short story finds little encouragement in this country.

"Ferdinand": Control your emotions, or at any rate the expression of them.

"Felix the Cat": Banal to an unbelievable degree.

## ... Recompense ...

I met the Day at dewy dawn,  
She took my eager hand,  
And, laughing, led me thro' the  
morn  
To view the sun-washed land.  
She poured her treasures at my  
feet,  
And bade me take my choice;  
I chose a golden-headed flower,  
A bird with silver voice.  
We were so busy, she and I!  
So happy! until Day  
Turned pale, and slipped her  
hand from mine,  
And softly stole away.

I wandered lonely thro' the dusk;  
My golden flower died.  
My bird reposed in friendly bush:  
The solemn South Wind sighed.  
But Night came winging from  
the sky;  
Her dark hair floated long.  
The stars shone forth to welcome  
her;  
My heart perceived her song.  
She took me in her gentle arms,  
Upon her bosom deep;  
She stooped and kissed my tired  
eyes,  
And then she gave me . . . sleep.

—O.E.H., Blenheim.

MR. WILLIAM KAY WALLACE, a Yale man, who has been for several years in the United States Diplomatic Service, and has also done some journalism, has written a book, "The Scientific World View," in which he stresses the belief that science is daily making new discoveries, and in the process a new code of conduct is being framed that differs radically from the older religious code.

DR. ALINGTON, the headmaster of Eton, is justified in denouncing the kind of unpleasantness which some young gentlemen, fresh from the public schools, inflict upon the world. There are classics about school life, for example, "Tom Brown's School Days" and "Vice Versa," but modern young authors who malign their own seminaries appear to be convinced, if you wish to draw attention without especial exertion, you must assail honoured names and cherished institutions, and they find the great schools and colleges an easy target to hit.

MISS TENNYSON JESSE, part author of the play, "The Pelican," recently successfully produced by the Wellington Repertory Society, has written a new book entitled "The Solange Stories," which is a series of studies in crime. Solange, the clever woman detective, lands her quarry by a kind of sixth sense, an awareness of evil, rather than by logical deduction from material clues. At the last minute, dramatically she saves an innocent man from the gallows, and understands the significance of things, trivial and important, that are unnoticed by those who pass by. Clever studies, these, and quite out of the vein of Miss Tennyson Jesse's former novels, which we venture to predict will be remembered long after her latest essay in fiction is forgotten.

"ABOVE the Dark Circle," by Hugh Walpole, derives its name from Piccadilly Circus, and the most extraordinary adventures take place one night in a room high above the lights of Piccadilly. A book without a hero or a villain, the writer asserts, but with a heroine. One of the protagonists is led into the midst of the most terrifying incidents by consulting his favourite book, "Don Quixote," as to whether he should cut or shave with his last remaining half-crown, and reading "The knight was yet asleep when the curate came, attended by the barber," he decides on the shave; and from then on the action is fast and furious. A thriller to be recommended, though not quite up to the gruesome pitch of that sadistic novel "The Man with Red Hair."