

... With ... BOOK and VERSE

By "John O'Dreams"

A Wellington Playwright

PRIVILEGED to hear a reading of an original drama entitled "The Child of Destiny," much of literary and entertaining quality was apparent which intrigued one's interest and encouraged the hope that New Zealand ultimately will produce playwrights who will count in the world of letters. Stimulating dialogue, acute psychology, a background of political machinations, and romance suggested rather than described, are factors in causing the play to go with vim and vivacity, though somewhat over-lengthy in the second last scene. Or so it seemed, but possibly this would not be evident in presentation on a stage with essential appurtenances.

The protagonists are President Buckleigh, harassed by national graft abroad and domestic infelicity at home; Letitia, his wife, thin-lipped, soulless and ambitious; Hugh Pfaff, the bad man; and Senator Wiffen, a kindly cynic, whose frank comments on women in general and his friend's termagant spouse in particular add considerable wit and point to verbal construction. Skillfully limned concomitant of butler, housekeeper, and secretary round out the personnel, and there is a convincing soothsayer who foretells, with uncanny veracity, brilliant and tragic destiny.

More of wit than of humour in the play, and much straight-out melodrama, with a strong and surprising climax; Senator Wiffen being martyred for his good offices in the suppression of graft, and President Buckleigh poisoned by distraught wife, whose reason totters almost literally before our eyes. The final curtain descends on Cimmerian gloom in this arresting contribution to theatrical literature from the pen of Mr. Victor Lloyd, whose novel "Son of Peter," and radio plays have already quickened attention of appreciable circle of readers among the intelligentsia of this Dominion.

Jottings

ANOTHER thriller, and an excellent one, is "The Crime Without a Flaw." Several people may legitimately be suspected of killing Mrs. Britan down in the West, yet they all seem able to provide the two delightful slenths from Scotland Yard, with an entirely satisfactory alibi. Inspector Brock, however, is something of a psychologist, and capable of wearing down his quarry. Mr. Leslie Depard has been most successful in his latest essay in fiction, and we hope to see more of his very engaging detectives.

Prize Poem Competition

THE prize of half a guinea in the current competition is awarded to "Chris" for the poem "Maid Morning," which captures in graceful form something of colour and glamour of the hues of early hours of day of an unsullied world. Specially commended, and reserved for further consideration, is "Karakia's" "Sawdust," which is a deification of the apparently commonplace, written in the modern manner.

O.E.H.: Thanks for charming note. We like your liting "Sunlit Road," and lyrical lines on a broken friendship. The latter, with repetitive words omitted, would be delightful if set to music. No doubt at all concerning your imaginative and poetic flair.

"Caesar": Sorry we have not space for publication of your entrancing vignette of beauty, which has the elusive quality of poetry.

"Country Cornflower": Your poem is as sweet as your name.

M.E.G.: Of the two contributions submitted we prefer "Night Comes," which, though slight in theme and treatment, gives an effect of completeness and displays greater originality than the longer poem.

"Esbe": Your lyrical tribute is attractive in graceful spontaneity and awareness of spiritual balm bestowed by Nature the great Nurse.

"Rustic Spring" is in realistic vein, and bears stamp of faculty for recording impressions garnered by acute observation.

"Florentine": We think your inquiry has reference to Thomas Hardy, English poet and novelist, and author of "The Dynasts."

Nova Scotia: No doubt about the audacity, but is this poetry!

Fair Maid of Perth: Meticulous care is apparent, but not even a nodding acquaintance with the Muse.

Maid Morning

*I saw the fair Maid Morning pass,
Across a field of dewy grass,
Into a sylvan glade.
She beckoned and I followed on
Where round her feet bright diamonds shone,
Reflecting every shade
Of every scintillating gem
Adorning monarch's diadem—
Yet there so freely laid.
She led me to a bosky dell
Where primrose pale, sweet asphodel,
And blue forget-me-not
Wrought broderies beside the stream
That lulled my senses to a dream
In that enchanting spot;
Tho' 'twas to me so strange a thing
That there I should be lingering,
The world and time forgot.
But quietly beckoning again
Back to the haunts of busy men
She led me just on time;
And with me down a city street
The echoes of her fairy feet
Kept liting into rhyme
Like sweet bells' distant chime.*

—"Chris."

MR. YEATS-BROWN, who made a name for himself with "Bengal Lancer," has written a "true story," provisionally called "Eveline." It deals with the maze of plot and counterplot in Constantinople during the fateful years 1910-1920.

TO be successful to-day as a humorist, it would seem, you must lay about you with a pretty heavy bludgeon. In "By the Way," you have Mr. J. B. Morton in his role as "Beach-comber," reprinting a year's drolleries, and whether he is playing satirist, parodist, or maddest of hatters, he is attacking the shams and hypocrisies of present-day civilisation. There are those who find this author tiresome, but there are others to whom he is a joy, who love to read of the doings of Lady Cubstanleigh and Mr. Roland Milk. A delightful volume to pick up occasionally from that bedside table where are collected all sorts and conditions of literature.

RATHER unexpected to find Miss G. B. Stern writing a thriller, but she has done so, and quite an entertaining one too. Mrs. Framlingham has a party on the Riviera, and so has Lady Hummer. And Mr. Fred Poole, a comedian, is found dead one night in the former lady's villa. Was he murdered, and, if so, was that nice young Lal the villain? That is the problem, and it is set out with considerable verbal dexterity. For those who adore a mystery, combined with agreeable chatter of social doings, "The Shortest Night" will be most welcome.

IN "The English: Are They Human?", the author, Mr. G. J. Renier (by birth a Dutchman), narrates that he found the learning of our language "excruciatingly difficult," and that he looks upon us as a very peculiar sort of people. When he came to England, he says, he was convinced that nations differed from one another only on points of subsidiary importance. Soon he abandoned that theory, however, and has remained to this day an outsider and an alien. "The foreigner," he says, "only sees the perennial puzzle of an Englishman's face that guards the secret of his soul like a sphinx before a temple when mysterious rites are celebrated. And London itself presents the same immovable appearance; it is as inscrutable as it is immeasurable." As he learnt to know the English better his liking for them increased, but quite definitely came to the unshakable conclusion "that the world is inhabited by two species of human beings, mankind and the English."