

... With ... BOOK and VERSE

By "John O'Dreams"

Jottings

"I AM glad to know," writes Sir Sidney Low in an English paper, "that the British War Graves Commission is taking over the charge of the German tombs in the cemetery at Mons. It is a strangely affecting place, that burial ground of St. Symphorien on the slopes east of the little Belgian town where the greatest of all the world's wars began, and ended. I visited it not so long ago on a cloudy and rainy anniversary of Armistice Day. On the slippery paths and hillocks I stumbled among graves."

"I noted the obelisk which the German had erected to the memory of 'The German and British Heroes.' That was a magnificent gesture, and it is now fitly acknowledged by the arrangement under which our War Graves Commission will take charge of all the graves in the cemetery, and will see that those of our gallant enemies shall be as well cared for as our own are all along the old fighting front."

"I was shown the spot where the first Briton fell in the campaign, and where the last shots were fired four years and three months later. Some of the men pointed out to me the sloping field where they lay among the standing corn on that bright Sunday morning, hearing the church bells chiming in the town below, and waiting for the field-grey line to come over the ridge. There was not much time for praying when the rifle-blast flamed out a few minutes later."

A BOOK recently published, of the genus thriller, will commend itself to unnumbered readers of detective novels. It is an omnibus volume of stories of crime, selected by twenty-two authors as the individual best effort of each in the particular field presented. In "My Best Detective Story" are represented varying and highly intriguing examples of the work of Father Ronald Knox, Ian Hay, H. C. Bailey, Agatha Christie, Mrs. Belloc Lowndes, Chesterton, Belloc, and the rest of the detectable little list of purveyors of thrilling fiction. Truly a book to be sought for those who like this type of tale, and they total a large percentage of the population.

IN "Small Town," by Miss Bradda Field, the story is laid in a little town in Ontario, where a picturesque tale unfolds itself in leisurely fashion which arrests attention by reason of an atmosphere of elusive romance. This story of the girl Anne who, after many fluctuations and strivings of the spirit, forsakes the conventional path to live with the lover whose wife she can never be, is treated with delicacy and restraint, and bears the precious stamp of sincerity.

Our Fortnightly Book Review

GREEN MEMORY

By M. Barnard Eldershaw

BEARING in mind the high attainment of that epical tale of our sister Dominion, "A House is Built," by two talented young collaborators who write under the embracing cognomen of M. Barnard Eldershaw, another novel by this clever combination was awaited with interest. "Green Memory" will not disappoint. In some respects it is an advance on its predecessor, which, in spite of emotional interest and panoramic portrayal of colonial life, was somewhat over-meticulous in detail.

The new story chronicles the fortunes and misfortunes of an Australian family in the middle of last century. "Green Memory" concerns the Havens, who at the beginning of the book are prosperous and influential, moving as they do in what in those departed days was considered highly desirable society at Darling Point, which judged that money made from groceries was as bad, if not worse, than tainted. We become acquainted with each member of the family, from the pretty, somewhat foolish mother, entirely under the dominion of the debonaire head of the house, down to twelve-year-old dreamer, whose portrait is etched with subtlety and imaginative understanding of the heart of a child.

Disaster and dishonour crash upon the family, and the father—handsome, delightful, beloved—drops from lordly pedestal, and, seeking the easiest way out, ends his life with a pistol-shot. The rest of the book is largely a study of the reactions of his children to the changed conditions of their lives. Shabby gentility, lack of social amenities, dull and dreary economies are forced upon them, after removal from the flower-embowered home, when "they faced half-packed cases in dismantled rooms, dignified articles of furniture found themselves abandoned in grotesque attitudes, and the accretions of a lifetime of cultured acquisitiveness stood ticketed on shelves."

Charlotte, sweet and eighteen, marries "into trade" not entirely successfully, for the dead father's snobbish standards are curiously persistent; and the eldest of the family, the lovely Lucy, in determined pride, takes up the reins of management in the dingy home, refusing, in aloof defiance, to respond to the devotion of gallant Richard Temple, to whom she had been on the verge of betrothal when family ship of fortune foundered. Eventually the hard lesson is learned, and rather late in the day Lucy turns again to her persistent wooer, whom, one feels, she rather deserved to lose for sacrificing him on altar of indomitable independence and limitless capacity for self-immolation.

Much understanding is revealed of humanity's rank and file, and flickering through the pages are refreshing touches of humour, a little reminiscent in quality of that of a great woman novelist who also hid identity under masculine masquerade. For example: "The Lord in His thoughtfulness has provided a special class of people to be first arrivals at parties, and of these Mrs. Maxfield and her daughter were shining examples. It was said of them that they were born to be relations, and they arrived early at every function, from a deep-seated instinct to cement the family solidarity before the approach of visitors."

Throughout we are conscious of conditions, social and physical, of a land where the sky was like clear water, gardens lay enchanted in aqueous light, and friezes of lemon gums, strong and delicate, moved their fine leaves in inaudible rhythm against a changing sky.

Again: "Sydney, like Adam, had no childhood. Its beginnings were mean and sordid, and the continent offered no resistance to its invaders, who on the foreshores of the loveliest harbour in the world, scattered names giving the measure of their imagination. A rocky islet crowned with trees is Goat Island; a headland running out into still water is Long Nose Point; a group of rocks is the Bottle and Glass, another the Sow and Pigs."

And who will fail to recognise the fidelity of description, of Paddy's Market, which "came out in a strong breath of earthy and human smells, while thrifty housewives with lean purses and many babies, pinched dressed poultry and haggled for cheap vegetables; men heated saveloys and green peas in portable cans over a little furnace; bunches of zinnias and asters and little hard chrysanthemums waited in tins; trotters and sausages lay

LOVERS of verse will look eagerly for a small book of verse by Miss V. Sackville-West, entitled "Sissinghurst," which is in the main inspired by the emotions aroused in the gifted writer by the age-old beauties of the English countryside. Miss Sackville-West wields a graceful and poetic pen, as those who read her recently-published "All Passion Spent" do not need to be assured.

IT certainly is a far cry from the Sussex coast of Miss Sheila Kaye-Smith to that of the somewhat over-sentimental tale by Miss Irene Stiles, entitled "Seventeen Summers." Nevertheless this slight story of youth, its setting the Sussex Downs, is attractive in its gentle fashion, and will find many admirers among those whose fancy still turns to an innocuous narrative that can, without misgiving, be placed in the hands of sweet seventeen's grandmother.

"WHEN Churchyards Yawn" lives up to its title. It is a collection, gruesome indeed, by Lady Cynthia Asquith, who has chosen ghost stories of the occult and the macabre by such artists in this genre as Mr. Oliver Onions, Mr. Hugh Walpole and Mr. Arthur Machen. Mr. Blackwood is also represented, and there is a tale of a scholarly Frenchman who returns to earth, written in Mr. William Gerhard's best manner. 'Tis a creepy collection, and one calculated to be read at midnight with bated breath even by the most prosaic novel reader, and hasten the beat of the stoutest heart.

MR. C. J. S. THOMPSON, author of "Poison and Poisoners," is Curator of the Historical Section of the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons, and in that capacity has access to a wealth of data of which he has availed himself in the fullest measure in the book under review. Through past history, modern and mediaeval, poison has played its part, and the interest it excites in the human intelligence is unabated in modern times. In these vividly-told narrations of great historical poisoners and their exploits, the attention is enchaind by these over true tales of such human monsters as Nero and Laetitia, Cesare Borgia, La Voisin, and Madame de Brinvilliers.

grey and lifeless on boards; voices of showmen contended with roar of crowd, and a raucous voice near the entrance preached hell and repentance."

Not altogether for the story, though that is a good one; but perhaps primarily for the descriptions of Australia, its history and its people in years long past, will the book be read and read again.