

... With ... BOOK and VERSE

Book Jottings

PATRICK CAMPBELL, the author of "The Midnight Bell," has just written a little gem of a book. It is a short novel entitled "The Siege of Pleasure" (Constable), in which he tells the story of Jenny Maple, a girl of the streets. We see her first with two old ladies, who think they have secured a treasure in the place of an indifferent charwoman. Jenny, however, dislikes the drudgery of domestic service. She is pretty and knows the value of her good looks, and leads the boys a pretty dance. But how does she come to take to the streets? One evening, while out with Violet, two Hammersmith gallants introduce themselves, and when the right atmosphere is created they all repair to a public-house. Jenny has never been in such a place before, but she takes a glass of port, then another one, after that a third and fourth. Finally a motor-car ride and a queer adventure. A readable book that can be warmly recommended.

THOSE who read Carlton Dawes's book, "Leathermouth," will be thrilled by his latest story, "The Sign of the Glove" (Ward, Lock and Co.), which tells of more exploits by that clever detective. The novel is well written, full of crisp dialogue, tragic situations, and mysterious events connected with the death of the late Governor of Bombay. Colonel Gantian (Leathermouth) is called upon by his friend George Mayford, a Commissioner of Scotland Yard, to help him in elucidating the mystery, and although on the eve of his marriage, he reluctantly consents. In the course of his investigations he is landed in some tight corners, but eventually is successful in running the criminals to earth.

"TILL DOOMSDAY" is another of Ward, Lock and Co.'s latest publications. This novel, by Robin Temple, is full of drama. Gilbert Merrick, a musician and composer, finds himself in love with the girl who is to take the leading part in his new opera. His divorced wife, an actress, seeks with all the arts at her command to lure him back to her, and stops at nothing—a veritable female Mephistopheles. There is a tragedy contained in the book, but the story has a fine ending.

"LEGENDS and Mysteries of the Maori," by C. A. Wilson (Harrup). Mr. Wilson is an authority on the history of the Maori and his customs, and in this book he deals with these customs and the Maori folk-lore in an able manner. This book should prove of interest to all New Zealanders.

Prize Poem Competition

THE prize of half a guinea in the current competition is awarded to "In Remembrance" by "Merrie," whose work is appealing by virtue of its high level of wistful emotion and true and gentle expression of memories of those happy warriors who left "home, love, laughter and content" for the scarred battlefields of Flanders and Gallipoli. ("In Remembrance" appears on the opposite page.) Highly commended for inherent sincerity and grace of versification is "The Poppies," an elegiac poem by "W. H. McK," whose sheaf of attractive verses includes a felicitous Summer Song which is instinct with a sense of Nature's lovely continuity, and a poetic and reverential short poem entitled "Galilee."

"Thur": We congratulate our contributor on steadfast courage and remembering homage of her striking lines, beginning:—

High on Mount Cook the tall carillon stands . . .

Fit tribute to the men who bravely passed.

"Karakia": Your strong and grimly picturesque poem is held for further consideration.

"Song of the Sea" is faulty in technique, and "The Wind" somewhat over-reminiscent of a catalogue. Neither rises above the mediocre.

"R.B.C.": We thank you for an able and unusual contribution, with a strong impression of individuality. A more explicit dedication might possibly have been desirable.

"A.H.K.": Delightful indeed.

"Felix" reverts to the Stone Age, with scant success.

"Maid of Athens": Your verses point a moral, but they don't adorn a tale.

"Pierrette": Eloquent, but incoherent.

BUSHRANGING stories went out of fashion some time ago, but another addition to this class of fiction, published recently, will be welcomed by those who remember "Robbery Under Arms," one of the finest stories ever written. "The Bushmaster," by Ben Bolt (Ward, Lock & Co.), is an Australian story, and a real thriller from start to finish. The story opens with the "hold-up" of the Caldecott Station by a gang of bushrangers. Flora Caldecott, by stratagem, manages to leave the house and, mounting the fastest horse in the stable, rides for help. On the way she meets a young police trooper, who lays himself out to capture the notorious bushmaster. The book is full of stirring events and two love interests which hold the reader's attention throughout.

MR. H. G. WELLS has given to the world another of his valuable creations. This new book, "The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind" (Heinemann), is an attempt to do for the world's social and economic life what the "Outline" did for history and the science of life. We have now come, says Mr. Wells, to the beginning of a new order: we must either plan or perish. The present phase or system has to pass on to the phase of organised collective enterprise, or break down. Mr. Wells foresees a future when entire cities and regions will be built and planned as a unit. Contemplating some such world, he pauses to remark wistfully, of the night scene in its cities, "One will have to go far from the artificial

brightness of the roadways, to recall the clear softness of moonlight, or the glitter of the stars." His survey of the financial and economic madness that brought the world to its present crisis is a damning indictment of economic nationalism and absence of planning. Mr. Wells's inimitable style and wealth of knowledge will make this book widely read.

MISS SIMPSON, a Sydney girl, wrote a number of sketches of her school-fellows when she was nine. Miss Simpson hoped to win fame as a musician, but failed to secure her degree. Her first novel, "Aequittal," was completed in three weeks for a bet. She went to England in 1914 and acted as interpreter during the war. She is married to Dr. Denis Browne, a son of the late Everard Browne, who wrote the well-known "Robbery Under Arms" and other Australian novels.

IN "The Unequal Conflict" Mr. Godfrey Winn has chosen a large canvas on which to display his puppets. This story of two families in the Midlands of two decades ago is a thoughtful and illuminating contribution to fictional literature. In the story, as in life, the unexpected happens. The unattractive Elspeth marries an ordinary young man who to all appearance is a typical mediocre clerk. Yet the humble clerk drives his passage to influence and affluence, and his wife becomes metamorphosed into something of a society leader. Her beautiful sister Judith, on the other hand, marries into a rich country family, but the handsome Charles turns out

to be a rake and cad and taxing to the utmost the loyalty and courage of his sweetly forbearing wife. The time comes when her daughter grows up and falls in love with Elspeth's son, and the whole makes a most engrossing tale, the characters being skillfully set in juxtaposition, and the incidents and episodes bearing undeniable stamp of reality.

LIFE as it is lived in a coal mine is a fruitful topic for the spinner of tales, and one of the best in its genre is Mr. F. C. Boden's "Miner." With simplicity and sincerity the story is set down of young Dan, who starts out on his career as a miner when he is just fourteen. First he is a truck-boy, and goes through successive stages until he reaches the giddy height—or depth—of becoming a full-fledged expert in his trade. He is a nice lad, has a good father, a stepmother who is by no means the typical martinet of fiction, and a gentle sweetheart. In spite of all this, allied with youth and its high hopes, life brings disaster to himself and his mates, there are strikes with their concomitant hardships, and ghastly tragedies in the everyday life of the mine. The story is instinct with a poignant pathos, and the author, himself at one time a miner, contrives to enlist complete sympathy for and understanding of the hard lives and heroic endurance of the innumerable Dannys of the microcosm of the mine.

MR. FREDERICK NIVEN'S novels are not as well known as they should be. He is in the forefront of living novelists, and in his latest book, "The Rich Wife," he again demonstrates his quality. His topic concerns a successful writer—not an artist by any means, but one who has, by hook or crook, contrived to tickle the ear of the public. Byron Humphreys is something of a bounder, fond of notoriety, which he achieves by exploiting his wife's influence and his wife's money, and no one is sorry when he reaches the end of his tether. But his wife and daughter are deeply interesting characters, and the whole theme of the reactions of the wretched Byron is most skilfully worked out with a penetrative insight beyond praise.

MISS ETHEL MANNIN'S latest novel, entitled "Linda Shawn," is in exceedingly attractive vein, and a brilliant psychological study. Miss Mannin uses her material with subtlety and restraint, and the character of the delightful Linda is depicted with the touch of the literary artist, and commendable economy of description. Miss Mannin has some arresting novels to her credit, but in the opinion of many readers her latest is the most significant.