

# Comment About Books and Authors

## AN UNUSUAL NOVEL.

"Casualty of the Sea" by William S. McFee, is a story of a London family and that family's immediate associates so vivid, so real, that it reads rather like a biographical record than like fiction. But it is not dry reading, though the Gooderich family, whose fortunes are narrated, are by no means attractive as in-

dividuals. Yet they are strikingly differentiated. No two members in the least resemble each other mentally or in personal characteristics; no one of them is admirable in character, yet each one stands out so distinctly against the sort of background of their lives that their portraits are likely to be remembered. It is as if the author had selected the most unpromising and commonplace group he could find to set before his readers. But

if his readers know literary art when they see it they will follow the history to the end. For he gives a remarkable delineation of character and sets forth phases of life not by any means familiar to the reading public. A subtitle of the book is "A Voyage of a Soul," but it is not clear whether this voyage relates to the soul of Mrs. Gooderich or that of her daughter Minnie, born when the mother was Miss

Mary Higgs. After she married Herbert Gooderich, a mechanic, two sons, Herbert and Hambley, were born to her and these five are central figures in the tale. The elder son, a born fighter, finds school uninteresting, goes to work, then joins the army and dies gallantly in South Africa. The father, at 50, loses his job, can not find another and is found drowned with suspicious of suicide. Minnie deliberately goes wrong. Nobody could say that she is led astray; for though a man of wealth presents temptation to her, she is not greatly in love with the tempter and knows precisely what she is doing. For five or six years she leads an irregular life, more than one lover being in her train. At the end of that time she suddenly resolves to marry and settle down, which she does, her husband being a sea captain, and becomes a model wife and mother, with a knowledge of life however, that most wives and mothers fortunately lack. Hambley, a dreamer, but with no one to understand his dreams, drifts aimlessly about until he goes to sea and finds there, food enough for his imagination, but his life ends prematurely. The tragedy of it all is that the true capacity of none of these three children were ever fully developed. They did not have their chance. Fate, environment, heritage, perhaps, were against them. William McFee has written an unusual book—a vivid picture of common life, with much philosophy intermingled and a psychology that makes his people live. (Doubleday, Page & Co.)

## A FRENCH LOVE STORY.

William J. Locke, author of "The Beloved Vagabond," offers another pretty romance to the world—"The Wonderful Year." It is a story of France and one of its leading characters is more or less of a vagabond and also a loved one in the little circle of his friends. It is a story of France before the war, though the war is brought in before the close rather as a means of developing the plot than to be dwelt upon as war. It is a wholly improbable tale as to incident, but it does convey attractive pictures of French life and presents several well-drawn characters. It is a pretty love story and incidentally there is a good deal of interesting dialogue and a eulogy of French patriotism—a patriotism that has abundantly proved itself. (The John Lane Company.)

## A ROMANCE OF "THE STREET."

"The Wall Street Girl" as the title for a novel sounds very commercial, but it is in reality a pretty love story staged in a Wall street office. As it is a broker's office and the young man in the case has come in to learn the business and to learn how to make a living there is much talk of money. The young man is on a salary of \$1,200 a year and is engaged to a girl whose father gives her \$10,000 a year for spending money, the engagement having taken place when the youth's father was alive and supposed to be wealthy. Naturally complications arise when the girl who serves as stenographer in the office does him a service and arouses his gratitude and later a warmer feeling. The question is from the first, "Which girl will win?" The story is told by Frederick Orin Bartlett in a pleasant way and makes an hour's agreeable reading. (Houghton-Mifflin Company.)

## A GREAT MAN'S OPINIONS.

"A Prophet in His Own Country" is Henry Clifton Stuart of 2619 Woodley Place, Washington, D. C. At least that is the title he gives his book, and as the book is filled with his opinions on many public questions, particularly on finance, it may be assumed that the "prophet" is himself. He is not a prophet without honor. At least he has one admirer. Alister Crowley of New York gives him an introduction so laudatory that the reader must wonder how it comes that he never heard of Mr. Stuart before. After praising his writings, Mr. Crowley says: "It is really necessary to see Mr. Stuart rather than read him. When he speaks he is terrifying; before you can realize the power of the man gives place to elemental energy. Both aspects remind one of the sea. It seems almost as if he grew physically much bigger. His personality fills the room. I have heard many of the great orators of the day, never one with one tithe of the passion and power of Mr. Stuart. Ben Tillett comes nearest, but Ben Tillett wastes his power in furious gesture. With Mr. Stuart the thunder of his tread and of his voice shakes the house, but there is no loss of self-control. The words rush out like molten steel from a convert under the blast."

In conclusion Mr. Crowley says: "Let the reader understand that in Mr. Stuart we have not merely the wise man, or the strong man, or the good man, but the necessary man. The eyes are clear, the heart is pure and the hands work in entire harmony with them. When the anarchy which exists in this country becomes obvious to its people, and the dictator is required to bring order out of chaos, they have only to turn to the portrait at the commencement of this book and exclaim: 'Ecce Homo!'"

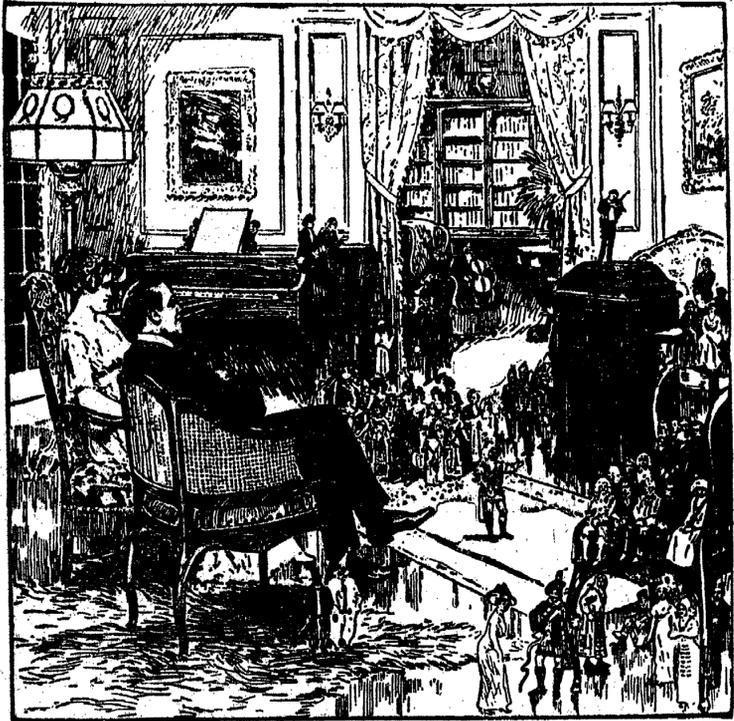
Mr. Stuart's opinions on men and things are expressed in a series of letters addressed to congressmen, to the President, to public and private citizens, to newspapers. Interspersed among them are pages of rhymeless and often verse; also with public questions as its theme. With Mr. Crowley's tremendous introduction in mind (nobody introduces Crowley) the reader will not doubt approach the lucubrations of Mr. Stuart with keen expectation.

## LIGHT ON MEXICO.

Casper Whitney, traveler and writer, knows Mexico as few know it and his little volume, "What's the Matter With Mexico?" is the most primitive and interesting account of conditions in that country of any work that has come to hand, and books on Mexico are numerous. He clears away much fog that has prevented a clear understanding by people in the United States of the actual situation.

Mr. Whitney describes the "submerged 80 per cent" in a way to make the reader comprehend the character of the Mexicans. He pictures them as a simple-minded, easily swayed people, ready to work when work offers, honest when it is a matter of trusting them with valuables, but ready for petty graft and as soldiers under lawless revolutionists, delighting in the opportunities for obtaining loot. They are hot-tempered, but easily managed, like good children, by men who are tactful and at the same time firm.

The account of what Americans have done to develop Mexico will be revelation to those who have been influenced by the insinuations of the present administration at Washington to believe that all business men who went down there were representatives of corrupt "interests" which were concerned only in bleeding the country and feathering their own nests. The undertakings of many individuals are mentioned, showing that they have not only established industries profitable to Mexico as well as themselves, but that they have made a systematic effort to benefit and uplift the workmen by teaching them better ways of living, by providing schools and engaging in a variety of welfare work. He explains that a "concession" which is used by Mr. Wilson as if it were a corrupt arrangement, is merely a national license to do business without the handicap of local extortion. Any and every government contract is a concession. "There are no concessions in Mexico granted to Americans," says Mr. Whitney, "that can compare with the franchises and grants our own country gave the railways from the Mississippi to the Pacific. In the sense of monopolistic privileges or government subsidy, concessions do not exist in Mexico for Americans or American companies." Mexico is filled to overflowing with conscienceless agitators who call themselves patriots, but their impassioned speech means nothing, he declares. "They are not sincere; they are not brave; no more than the average Mexican do they know the meaning of patriotism." A strong central government is needed in Mexico, Mr. Whitney believes; education is needed, especially in the vocational line, and vocational education is important, though there is no note of the "land hunger" so often referred to. There is but one issue in Mexico so far as Americans are concerned, he declares, and that is the defense and protection of American life and property. It was our sole and particular business to insist on the protection of our citizens. "Patrons should not have been recognized for the protection of foreign life and property by the United States. The book is well worth reading. (The Macmillan Company.)"



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