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BOOKS AND AUTHORS

New York, Nov. 22.—[Special Courier Correspondence.]—Authors as a rule do not furnish much material for the biographer, and when by good luck there is material it is pounced on by the harpies of the press with devouring fury. One man with a remarkable story seems, however, to have escaped for the most part. William O. Stoddard has five separate books on the market this season, brought out by as many different publishers, and all of them valuable. They are "Men of Business" (Scribner), "Guert Ten Eyck," the story of Nathan Hale (Lothrop), "The White Cave," an Australian story (Century), "Tom and the Money King," who is Jay Gould (Prince-McGill, St. Paul), and "Old Frontier," a western New York story (Appleton). All except the first are historical fiction and every detail has been verified by going over innumerable documents and examining the ground in person when possible. But we get out to tell his own story, which is very picturesque, even romantic.

He was born in western New York, lived in Syracuse, was graduated at Rochester university, and then went to Chicago to edit a daily paper. But immediately came the great panic of '57, when he says every bank in Chicago was suspended, so that it became impossible to get even the money to pay for the white paper his journal was printed on. Everything was stone dead in Chicago, just as it is now. So he said to a friend, "I have 400 acres of land down in Champagne county. Let us go down and farm it." So they went, built 'hem a shanty, and set to work. But the next year Mr. Stoddard was asked to edit the Central Illinois Gazette, and the following year he was the first editor to suggest the name of Lincoln for the presidency. His stirring editorial set the tide flowing toward that great man. As a result he was rewarded by being made President Lincoln's private secretary, a post he held for three years and a half. Then he was appointed United States marshal in Arkansas, where he remained a year and a half, to the close of the war.

But he did not escape a touch of army life, for he wished to serve for a time in the field before he took up the duties of the secretaryship which had been offered him. He enlisted in the first company of volunteers ever formed. The call for troops reached Illinois at 9 o'clock in the morning by telegraph and before night Company A was formed. It was also the first company to enter Virginia

as part of the Army of the Potomac, and first that captured a steamboat.

As Lincoln's private secretary he was one of the founders of the Union League of America, from which sprang the Union League club of New York, and which in those early days was the backbone of the republican party. Mr. Stoddard was corresponding secretary.

After the war he went into business, and was connected with a great many enterprises, such as Marshall O. Roberts' Florida ship canal; he was secretary of the company which financed the laying of the two Atlantic cables after Field's; he was a director of railroads, a partner in several manufacturing concerns, and interested in other enterprises, when the panic of '73 struck the country like lightning. At 9 o'clock in the morning men were worth their hundred thousands; by noon they were bankrupt. Of course Mr. Stoddard's business connections were wiped out with the rest, and in 1876 he turned to literature. Since then he has published forty volumes. He started with a volume of poems, wrote the first life of Lincoln after Holland's, and indeed the lives of all the presidents down to Cleveland. Yet he is still a young man with hardly a grey hair.

Marie Corelli and Her New Book.

In an article in the *Idler* last month (which she wrote herself) Marie Corelli says she owes no thanks for her success to any one, not even the newspapers, but that it is due to her saying just what she thinks regardless. When a young woman says "just what she thinks regardless" one simply cannot help making one or two strictures on her remarks. "Barabbas," distinctly the most daring thing Miss Corelli has yet attempted, must be looked at askance, for to make Jesus Christ the hero of a colloquial novel produces a slight shock on the sensibilities even of a hardened sinner like you or me. The author describes the trial of Jesus before Pilate in full, the scene of the crucifixion, and the resurrection; and the account of Barabbas is simply woven into this great theme, along with a few other original characters. Perhaps the most interesting personage is Judith Iscariot, sister of Judas, and a very remarkable young woman. She has an improper connection with Caiaphas, the high priest, and is the one who really tempts Judas to his treachery. Miss Corelli very decidedly defends Judas, and even Judith to some extent, and throws all the blame on Caiaphas. And as for Barabbas, who is the lover of Judith and much tempted by her, she makes him a good man at heart, though to be sure he is a robber and even a murderer. Yet after all one must admit that the writer's

spirit is reverent enough.

After reading such a book as this, one finds something incongruous in learning that the author "is a petite creature with a mass of fluffy fair hair, a bright, chubby, almost infantile face, and the sweetest expression in the world." Also one must recall the story of the handsome bible sent by Byron to Coleridge, in which Byron had made the text "Now Barabbas was a robber" read, "Now Barabbas was a publisher."

The Finest Art Book Ever Published in America.

Competent critics are expressing the opinion that Louis Morin's "French Illustrators" (Scribner) is the handsomest art book ever brought out exclusively by an American house. As only a thousand copies have been put on the market and the net price is \$15 a copy, a word about it may not be amiss. Perhaps the most charming feature is the title-page by Albert Lynch, which represents one of the most sweet and innocent young women one ever set eyes on. She is dressed in the simplest style with but a single straight-hanging garment, and only Albert Lynch could have drawn her. The original was a most exquisite water color which is said to have cost 1,200 francs, though the reproduction is a simple photograph. The next most striking feature is the six color plates, of which one by Flameng called "The Black Hussar" (a soldier standing by his horse), one by Kammerer called "The Riverside Inn," and one by Giacomelli, "The Bird Perch" (a row of birds fifteen inches long of the most varied and exquisite hues) are simply unique in color reproduction. Tints so soft, so harmonious, so natural, especially in the reproduction of nature (leaves, trees, animals) I, at least, have never seen before in color printing. The work could only have been done in Paris by Goupil et Cie.

Literary Notes.

How shall young people select the best books to read out of the thousands that are published each year? A common-sense English writer says, "Let them browse."

Olive Schreiner's new volume "Dream Life and Real Life" is a tiny book containing but three short stories in her usual vein, but the English edition was sold out before it was published. The most interesting of the three tales is the second "A Woman's Rose," which is an up-to-date love story, quite different from "The African Farm." The last one, "The Policy in Favor of Protection" is a reprint.

It must be regarded as a national misfortune that American literature is represented even in the slightest degree by such a spoilt

boy as Richard Harding Davis, who has done a great many things only less bad than the writing of his duelling letter. Still, the English had Kipling. But an American must draw his breath hard when he contemplates the fact that now we have both Richard and Rudyard. I would suggest that a national prayer be offered to the gods for their reformation. One may hope that in the case of Kipling it will be heard.

Hall Caine says he has been turning his mind in the same direction that Marie Corelli has in her Barabbas. He means to write a life of Christ. But he is going to be very careful about it and take plenty of time. In the same interview he very justly denounces his brother authors who undertake to criticise each other. It is not, says he, that the imaginative writer may not be also a good critic, but he has no right to be a critic at all. An actor, he reminds us, does not go about talking of his fellow actors, nor an artist of his fellow artists. Why should we tolerate it when one novelist talks about another novelist? He is sure simply to praise his personal friends and denounce his enemies.

A first-rate story is told by Hall Caine about Willie Collins. The most successful character in "The Woman in White" was not a woman but a man—Fosco, the fat villain. When the book was produced everybody was talking about the fat villain. While the author was staying with his mother a lady visitor came. This lady said to Collins,—"You seem to have made a great success with your villain in 'The Woman in White.' I have read the book, I have studied this villain, but he is not half a villain; you don't know a real villain, you have imagined this villain. I know a real villain, and the next time you want to do a villain, come to me. I am very close to one; I have got one constantly in my eye—in fact, it is my own husband." The lady, Mr. Caine says, was the wife of Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton.

The fierce picture of Mark Twain in the advertising pages of the Century does the good old gentleman a serious injustice. The past fortnight he has spent in New York, appearing at various clubs and making himself agreeable to his friends. I have had the good fortune to observe him more than once. It is true that his hair stands out all over his head in a most dishevelled fashion, but it is now a soft iron grey that the ladies think charming. His figure is a trifle bent and not very firm in its carriage, which shows that he is past his prime, and his voice is a little uncertain, especially as it is pitched at about the lowest note any voice is capable of. Still it is soft, and Mr.

Clemens' whole manner is so kindly that I heard one fashionable lady remark, as ladies will, that she thought him "just lovely."

The forthcoming number of the *Idler* contains an interview with George Meredith in which he says he "loves American institutions," "adores the people," and "deplores titles." "His somewhat late-in-life fame," we are reminded, "came largely at first in the land across the Atlantic." "Nations," Mr. Meredith remarks, "have an individuality, and their people salient characteristics. If I am going to meet an Irishman or a Frenchman I know I shall find certain traits, products of the finer nervous organization that comes from the Celtic blood. The Americans, too, have a finer set of nerves and a more refined apprehension than we have. There lies their hope. Their organization is more keen than ours. I discern it in some of their writings. And in some of their methods I foresee a great literary and artistic product there." This unusual praise has all the more significance in that it was spoken by one Englishman to another for an English magazine, and that the most thoughtful of English novelists said it. We cannot help believing that he spoke the simple truth.

A. S. CODY.

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