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## THE LIBRARY

The Youthful Enthusiast held a copy of "Casa Braccio" in his hands. "I think Marion Crawford is at his best in this book," he said.—"It is broader some how than 'Katherine Lauderdale' and 'The Ralstons.' It has more color, greater depth, stronger characters. It seems more important. Crawford in New York is like a good many other writers. Crawford in Italy is an altogether different and to some extent an unusual person. I have just finished 'Casa Braccio' and as I look back upon it I see a bright and moving picture of human emotions and movements against a background of Italian, Roman richness—sombre and yet vivid. The people, in their weakness and their strength, are very real, and the glimpses of Italian life are true photographs of the real thing. I never tire of Crawford when he is among his favorite haunts, when he lifts the curtain on this historic and fateful part of the old world, when he shows us with a master's art, the deep running passion of this dark skinned people, who love with life and hate with death; when he brings out in some dusky den the rich wine of Italy, and feasts as do the peasants; when he threads the by-ways and highways of the beautiful city of Rome, penetrating the palaces of the nobility and the humbler walks of real artists"—

The Cynic had been smiling ever since the Youthful Enthusiast began. Here he broke in with:

"Just stop a minute and catch your breath, my young friend. You talk as if you might, like Annetta, have been fooling with Dr. Dalrymple's drugs. It doesn't pay to get excited even over Marion Crawford."

"But can't you commend 'Casa Braccio?' I think I have seen you reading it"

"Yes, I have been reading it. Sometimes, after having seen a half dozen of what the managers and playwrights call 'refined comedies' I like to go to a play with black clouds and thunder and lightning and plenty of killing in it. That sort of thing is pleasant after repeated doses of 'refined inanity—'"

"And 'Casa Braccio'?"

"Is very melodramatic and that is why it is endurable. In 'Casa Braccio' there is a good healthy smell of blood. There is something besides the chatter and inanity of conventional life in the least picturesque city on earth. There is poison, and the dagger gleams in the dark. There is a touch of Dumas in the romance of Maria Addolorato in the Convent of Carmelite nuns, with a bit of Poe's horror in the ghastly performance of Dr. Angus Dalrymple."

"But there is much in the story that is beautiful that is not horrible or ghastly. Are you incapable of appreciating Crawford's fine touches?" asked the Youthful Enthusiast.

"About all we are getting in modern fiction nowadays is this 'fine touch' you speak of, this ultra refinement, analytical Howellsism, and I am incapable of appreciating it. Haggard and Kipling and Conan Doyle, more especially Kipling and Doyle, were welcomed because they brought us something besides the heated and perfumed air of the boudoir, something besides drawing room inconsequential chatter. They brought the breezes of the field, the sound of battle, an atmosphere of strong, rugged, not too civilized reality."

The Youthful Enthusiast was visibly hurt. "Well," he said, "I am glad you with your superior intellect find something in the book."

"Yes; there are so many books that

contain really nothing at all."

Arthur Peterson, author of "The Daughter of the Nez Percés," has written and McMillan & Co. have published "A Son of the Plains." It is a plain, straightforward story of adventure. The scene is laid twenty years ago in Kansas and New Mexico, chiefly the latter, and there is depicted, strongly, vividly, the rough exciting life that marked that section in the time of which the author writes. Nat Worsley, a sheepman, falls in with two young women on their way to join their father in New Mexico, and by the display of heroism and ingenuity that would have done credit to one of Cooper's most experienced backwoodsmen, saves them from an ugly fate at the hands of Indians. Nat is a manly, taciturn fellow. He sells his sheep and sees the girls to the end of their journey, which is enlivened by a good old-fashioned hold-up. Down in New Mexico—and in the meantime Nat has fallen in love with Maizie and Maizie has fallen in love with Nat; but there is a complication in that Maizie thinks Nat is in love with Bel, and there is another young man who loves Bel—there is no end of fighting and entanglements. Finally a whole town is sacked and the four young people are appropriately disposed of.

The story is not without color, and the easy, direct way in which it is told commends it to the reader.

A SON OF THE PLAINS, by Arthur Peterson, published by McMillan & Co., New York; price, \$1.25.

CASA BRACCIO, by Marion Crawford; published by McMillan & Co., New York; two volumes; price, \$2.00.

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