

Library Browsings

Edited by Glen F. Burch

"THIS MAD IDEAL"

NEITHER GOOD NOR BAD

"This Mad Ideal" is the title of Floyd Dell's latest novel. The word mad, used in this manner, carries to the average reader a sense of greatness—but a greatness that ends in futility. Mad is a strong word, in fact much too strong to apply to this novel. Perhaps the maddest thing about the book is Mr. Dell's idea that it will in any way convince anyone of anything, or prove anything to anyone. The author evidently wished to bring out the thesis that ideals are very mad things to have, and on the other hand, that the person without ideals is dull, prosaic and uninteresting. This of course brings one to the logical conclusion that only the mad people are worth knowing. Perhaps this is true—I am inclined to believe that there is something in it—but my opinion has in no way been influenced by Mr. Dell's novel. For this reason I feel a bit guilty because he seemed to want one to form ideas from his book, and like the average well-intentioned individual I like to live up to what is expected of me. This is particularly true when the expector happens to be a person that up to the present I have respected, and perhaps admired.

However this book is impotent. Neither good nor bad. It is merely a novel that will soon be forgotten, without scarcely having made a ripple on the surface of the literary lake. "Janet March," whatever one may think of it as a novel did create a good sized ripple. Perhaps the ripple was so large that it frightened Mr. Dell. "This Mad Ideal" may be a result of that fear. The moralists, the puritans have certainly done something to Dell. They have made him indefinite and fearful of taking a positive stand. The manner in which he evades risque scenes, in this, his latest novel, is little short of amusing. He seems to have been torn between a genuine impulse which has its germ in the eye of wisdom of experience, and on the other hand, by a desire to propitiate the Pharisees. He has accomplished neither thing.

Perhaps the book is impotent because it is about so many impotent people. Judith, herself, the idealist, is influenced in her desire to avoid marrying the man she loves, more by a chance remark made by her mother, than through any bed rock of conviction in herself.

Roy is ill. The illness has been brought on largely by Judith's refusal to marry him. She looks at his pale face. Then she thinks of her mother, but we know our Judith. The always thinks of her mother in any crisis. Therefore, thinking of her mother she remembers that the lady in question sent her husband away because she loved him too much to live with him. Judith says to herself: "If I marry Roy we will both stop striving." Judith wants to continue striving (at least Mr. Dell seems to think that she does), so she leaves Roy and goes to New York. Gloriana, the mother, had tried to live her life by singing in a vaudeville troupe. Perhaps Judith will go her one better and go into the Follies.

The above may sound unkind. It is not meant as unkindness. The book does not irritate to the extent of causing the desire to ridicule. It is not virile enough for that. It is the unfortunate brain child of an intellect which in some way has lost its vitality.

There are good bits in the book, especially among the characterization of the minor characters. The book as a whole, however, is vastly below the standard previously set by Mr. Dell.

DARRELL LARSEN.

THE WEEK'S BRIEF REVIEWS

THE CREATIVE SPIRIT, An Inquiry into American Life, By Rollo Walter Brown. This is one of the most interesting non-fiction books of the day. The fore part of the work contains an analysis of the "creative spirit, its forms and uses, and the remainder deals with the problem of releasing this spirit in America.

THE GUARDSMAN, By Franz Molinar. A light tale of theatre folk. An actor, jealous of his wife, resolves to try her affections. He disguises himself as a guardsman and makes love to her—successfully, much to his own discomfort.

LOTTERY, By W. E. Woodward. In this book, the author of "Bunk" attempts to show the place played in the life of the American by luck. This is the rollicking tale of a young chap who starts with nothing and finishes a millionaire at 30.

THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN IDEALISM, By Gustavus Myers. Cynics delight in pointing out that this same writer is the author of "The History of Tammany Hall," "The Great American Fortunes," etc. Just how

much of an authority Mr. Myers is on the subject of American idealism is not known. But who is?

SEA HORSES, By Francis Brett Young. "Conrad himself could not have written this thrilling story of the sea and Africa in more lovely fashion, nor imagined a more lovely story more moving." At least so say the press agents.

BEYOND THE UTMOST PURPLE RIM, By E. Alexander Powell. This is the first of two volumes devoted to a recent African expedition, and is one of the most interesting books of travel now on the market. The story of the author's wanderings across the dark continent—the discovery of a nation old when the book of Genesis was written—the meeting of a veiled empress who claimed descent from the Queen of Sheba and called herself the "Queen of Kings"—and the account of a wonderful zoological garden in Abyssinia. A veritable animal Eden—all these incidents and many others makes the book as fascinating as a piece of fiction.

THE STORY OF WILBUR THE HAT, By W. H. Van Loon. At the beginning of this book, the author has scribbled in "Written and published for the fun of it." After glancing through it and reading some of the most pertinent passages and looking at the pictures, we can well believe that it was.

THE PEASANTS, VOL. III, SPRING, By Ladislav St. Raymond. Yes SPRING is here at last, the third and last volume of a great work.

PROFESSORS SUGGEST PLANS TO STIMULATE READING

Increasing need has been felt during the last few years, of an adequate analysis of the reading situation in the universities and colleges of this country. Despite the many remarkable advances of civilization in the last decade, a knowledge of books is still more or less essential to the education of the individual.

The apparent inability of the average student to realize the importance of acquiring the reading habit has been the cause of much discussion both on and off of the college campus. Critics of the modern student assert that it is only indicative of his general intellectual ineffectiveness. The student himself, though somewhat bewildered, is inclined to believe it is not altogether his fault. "I'd like to read if I had time," is a common cry on every college campus.

The American Association of University Professors, a national organization of more than 5000 members, has attempted to discover just what, if anything, is wrong.

An article printed in a recent issue of the Publisher's Weekly reports that the association "has been making a study of the general read-and-of-the-various methods used in the different colleges to acquaint students with books other than those in the prescribed courses." As a result of this investigation the association found, as had already been suspected, that the "average college student does not read nearly as much as he should," and that the fault was not entirely his. Suggestions were made by various members of the association, and in the end

In the first place, the "choice of a program of possible action was mapped out consisting of 14 points. Instructors of broad reading and human interests" is emphasized. "The definite shaping of courses, as far as possible, toward the stimulation of interest and of outside, independent reading. . . . Making the primary aim of the course the development of those students who are capable and intelligent (not necessarily brilliant) and limiting of recitation or quiz sections to 20 or 25 students in order that individual reading may be encouraged," were listed as points 2, 3 and 4 respectively.

The teaching of methods of reading, study, use of reference books, and elementary hints on bibliography to freshmen. . . . reading for honors (somewhat after the Columbia plan). . . . general examinations at the end of the college course (the student to prepare himself by reading done independently). The introduction of "stimulating lecturers from on or off the campus to show the value and the necessity of good reading independently undertaken, were all included in the order given. Other suggestions included in the list are: the provision of "a comfortable and attractive reading room with about two thousand selected volumes; the cooperation of the faculty in the formation of student reading groups and in the development of fraternity libraries; the election to Phi Beta Kappa or to similar scholastic organizations at the end of the junior year or early in the senior year, in order that these organizations might function in a real way in university life;

the frequent issuance to students of good books within the means of the average undergraduate; the establishment, where practicable, of a bookstore like the Brick Row Book Shop of Princeton; the issuance to all students by a carefully chosen faculty committee of selected book lists.

—G. F. B.

THE ADDING MACHINE, A REVELATION

"What he has done with withering insight is to expose the starved and bitter littleness and at the same time the huge universality of the slave type." This is the estimate given in the foreword of Elmer L. Rice's play "The Adding Machine," written by Phillip Moeller, director of the Theatre Guild of New York. Mr. Moeller further explains the purpose of the expressionistic school of drama.

The play itself is a revelation. The characters are frankly symbolic not only in action but in name. The principal character is Mr. Zero, a bookkeeper for a department store for 25 years. He kills his employer when he is told that adding machines make him no longer necessary. The last three scenes are in the afterworld to where Mr. Zero shows himself too small to appreciate beauty or happiness and is condemned to return to the earth where he will "learn the wrong things, in the wrong way, eat the wrong food, wear the wrong clothes and live in swarming dens with no light and no air."

Mr. Rice sets forth the idea that the modern civilization, as exemplified in the Mr. Zero type, is doomed to an unending descent into un-

ending misery. Mankind of the adding machine type are "raw material of slums and wars—the ready prey of the first jingo or demagogue or political adventurer who takes the trouble to play upon their ignorance, credulity and provincialism."

T. M. G.

PICNIC WILL BE MAY 3 FOR CALIFORNIA CLUB

May 3 is the date set for the California club picnic, to which all students from California are invited. At a meeting held in the College Side Inn, last week night, preliminary arrangements for the affair were made. The party will leave the Inn at 9:00, the afternoon of May 3. The meeting next week will complete the plans.

IT'S ON THE RIVER

The GateWay Auto Camp, Restaurant and Confectionery. Get off the street car at West Springfield. Ice cream, all kinds of soft drinks and lunches. Open 6 a. m. Till Midnight. FRANK NETTLESHIP, Mgr.

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The constitution which been under the consideration of a committee for the past two meetings was accepted. Those on the committee were Stanley Tomlinson, Gussie Gottlieb, and James DePauli. Homer Fitzsimmons was elected treasurer, for the remainder of the year. The social committee for the term is composed of James Elliot, Wanda Plinez, and Homer Fitzsimmons.

CATALOGS FOR SUMMER SESSION NOW OFFERED

The catalogs for the 1925 summer session have just been bound and are now ready for distribution. They contain brief descriptions of the courses offered, the hour of the course, the instructor and the credit allowed for all courses given both on the campus and at the Portland branch. F. L. Stetson of the edu-

cation department, has charge of the summer session school on the campus, and Earl Kilpatrick of the extension division in Portland, will supervise the University summer school there. Students may obtain these catalogs at the registrar's office and at the extension division.

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