

Book Review

By Arden N. Pangborn

ART OF THE NIGHT, by George Jean Nathan. New York. Knopf. The super-critical Mr. Nathan has offered his super-critical best in "Art of the Night," a group of essays on the stage, dealing with subjects ranging from the laughter of the actor, which is as realistic as that of a horse, to the peculiar genius of Mr. Reinhardt, who proscribes his greatness by eating sausage for newspaper publicity.

Although many readers of Mr. Mencken and Mr. Nathan — for Mencken cannot be left out where Nathan is concerned — do not agree with their views, there are few who will not admit that the two have a discerning vision and a style that is striking. The subject matter of "Art of the Night" is a trifle less controversial than that usually dealt upon by Nathan and the style is a trifle less spicuous than usual, consequently, the wit contains more of real humor. "Art of the Night" does not necessarily limit its appeal to ardent playgoers; it is of interest to any cultivated reader.

THE CURSE OF THE TARNIFFS, by Edward von Keyserling, New York. Macaulay. An air of rather declassé sophistication marks the "Curse of the Tarniffs" by Edward von Keyserling, which has just been released by Macaulay.

The story which bears the book title is by far the best of the three stories included in the volume. It relates the amours of Gunther von Tarniff with admirable restraint and a surprising use of colors in the depiction of the three women whose hearts he breaks. His wife is delicately portrayed with white and cream tints, his potent sweet heart in vivid reds and browns and his mistress, beautiful Meger, in blues and golds. Their relationship with each other are well pictured.

"My Love Affair," the second story of the volume, is less convincing than the first and much less simply revealed. It becomes a boring trivium after a short time. The third tale, "Father and Son" is really a well-drawn character sketch and less of a narration than either of the other two stories. The adolescence of the boy is convincing and not over-emphasized.

THE IMPERIAL ORGY, by Edgar Saltus. New York. Modern Library. The burning pen of Edgar Saltus was aimed in 1926 at the Russian czars, whose long and almost unimpeded reign of horror and despotism has just recently—as history is calculated—weakened and toppled to earth with a crash that was heard throughout the world.

The Modern Library has reprinted the volume which was the result of Saltus' scathing attacks, "The Imperial Orgy." Saltus ruthlessly jerked the masks from the faces of those rulers whom modern historians, having been deadened by time to the terror and repulsion of human slaughter, have come to picture as great—Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great, Catherine the Great and the smaller "great" ones who fitted in between, stewing the land with their own poisoned despotism and their own subjects' heads.

Saltus, of course, tells only one side of the story; but it is a side that needs to be told and one that is seldom more than casually mentioned. "The Imperial Orgy" is a worthy addition to the mounting list of volumes between the limp bindings bearing the Modern Library Colophon.

THE TICK OF THE CLOCK, by Herbert Asbury. New York. Macy-Masins. The bloodthirsty Mr. Asbury has at last completed his second detective story—and he has surprised many of the readers of his first tale by his evident change of heart.

Asbury's first mystery novel, "The Devil of Pei-Ling," published a few months ago, was filled with gore and gehenna—so much of it, in fact, that Asbury must have himself become satiated. The present story is much less sanguine; what it has lost in blood, however, it has not lost in interest, for it is as readable or even more so than its forerunner.

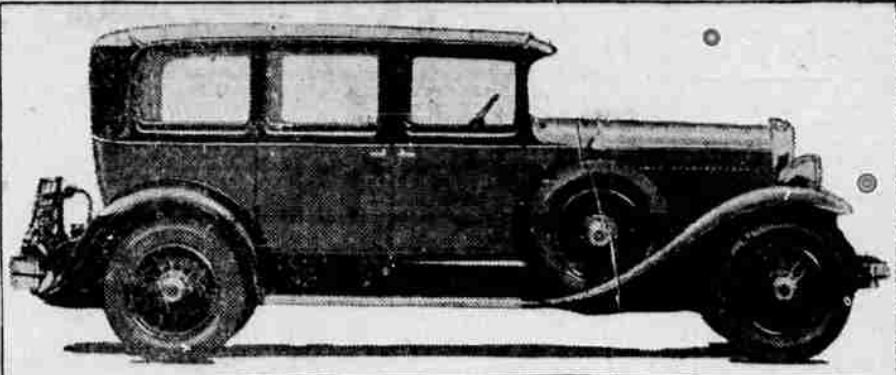
Inspector Conroy is given a better chance to solve the mystery of "The Tick of the Clock" than he was to solve that of the previous book. The mystery in this instance surrounds the murder of James H. Walton. The clues, as in all good detective novels, are slender, and the problem seems completely impossible of solution. The reader is introduced to the culprit and convinced that he could not have had anything to do with the crime until his denouement.

Asbury's literary prestige lies a considerable distance behind his entrance in the field of detective fiction. He will be remembered by even casual readers as the man whose article "Hatrack" in the American Mercury stirred Boston to ban the whole issue of the magazine from the city a few seasons back.

A DAUGHTER OF VENICE, by Isabel DeWitte. New York. Ray D. Henkle. Bianca Cappello was an outstanding character of the sixteenth century, a woman who "left her mark" on the histories of Venice and Florence. The her descendants are proud to recall her title of "A Daughter of Venice", not all of her escapades are recognized by her practical family, and possibly some of her "affairs" still are suppressed.

The story is a romance in the grand manner, full of action, running through a series of tavern brawls, abductions, midnight encounters, secret duels, garden romances and involving princes, and popes, cardinals, priests, patriots, plebeians, soldiers of state and soldiers of fortune and chief of all Bianca Cappello and Francesco de Medici, the great Duke of Florence. Miss DeWitte has captured the atmosphere of the period of her tale, and throughout its pages on glories in the achievements of her strutting characters.

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Where Moses Hed Forth

WASHINGTON, D. C., Mar. 17.

Discoveries which have led some archeologists to accept the view that the hidden city of Petra, near the Dead Sea, is the real "Mount Sinai" from which Moses obtained his laws, gives that mysterious and unique city a new interest. A bulletin from the Washington, D. C., headquarters of the National Geographic society tells of Petra and its unusual site.

"Petra is like a fairy city" hidden in a mountain," says the bulletin. "It is as though a huge peak had been dismembered and the ancient city set down in the chasm. Enter the canyon. The old entrance to the city, which was an important factor in its strength, can be used today. From a semi-desert plain one enters a narrow canyon which is a mere cleft in towering walls of red sandstone. Along the bottom of this canyon, little streams flow. The high, jagged walls, at many places overhanging, give the passage a gloom even at midday. At one point the floor of the canyon narrows to twelve feet, and at no place is it wider than 40 feet.

"After one has followed this tortuous chasm for two miles he comes out unexpectedly into an open plain, approximately a mile across, entirely surrounded by sheer cliffs and precipitous slopes. Through the center winds the little stream, a municipal water supply ages ago. On the level ground on each side of the stream rose the ancient city.

"Buildings Carved From Cliffs. "Nearly all traces of the ancient structures that rose on the plain have disappeared. But against the cliff walls remains a unique, and almost imperishable Petra. One-piece buildings have been carved out of the solid sandstone and are almost as well preserved today as when the chisels of their creators were laid down.

"One of the most striking of these creations is the so-called Treasury of Pharaoh, a product of the Greek period several centuries before Christ. The front of the edifice stands in deep relief, its pillars, capitals, pediment, and superstructure intact. A doorway leads into the cliff from which rooms were hollowed.

"Another carved masterpiece is

the rock-hewn Greek theater that seated some 5000 spectators. Temples also are carved in the cliffs; but the most numerous of the monuments are tombs. Thousands of them look down on the Petra plain, many showing the elaborate and exquisite carving.

Was Ancient Distributing Center

"Petra has been called by poets the 'rose-red city half as old as time.' Its deeply colored walls—rosy, purple, yellow, crimson—are indeed beautiful; and the skillful use of the colored strata in the carvings shows that the Petra artists made the most of the aesthetic possibilities. But Petra did not exist for beauty alone. If it had possessed a chamber of commerce in its heyday of importance, that organization could have boasted truthfully that Petra was 'the world's premier distributing center' and that its weekly 'bank clearings' ran into many hundreds of talents.

"The city was the Suez and Panama of its day, a meeting place for the chief trade routes. Incense, spices, and other treasures of the East came from India, Persia, and farther Arabia to this 'safety deposit city' of the desert. From there goods were distributed to Egypt, Palestine, and Syria, and through Tyre and Sidon to the Mediterranean countries to the west. An important special traffic of the city was the furnishing of Dead Sea bitumen to the embalmer of Egypt.

"How far Petra reaches back into antiquity is not known, but its history is at least known sketchily from about 600 B. C. It is now suggested that the more ancient town may have served as a distributing center for the religious ideas of the East as its successor served in forwarding Eastern goods."

A Flapper Goes to Housekeeping

There are those who will tell you the modern flapper has nothing beneath her slick bobbed hair except a vacuum, and that when a girl enters the business world her domestic instincts vanish forever, so it remained for one such to get

married and disprove this idea.

Transforming a modern five-room apartment into a home is no slight task, and to reproduce one of the vintage of '21 in those five rooms is nothing less than magic, but when two young heads with but a single thought start to accomplish such a transformation, something is bound to happen, especially when one of the two is a handy-man.

It seemed no trick at all for him to turn an old walnut washstand upside down, set it on its old wainscot legs, refinish the outside and produce a china cabinet for the dining room. There is the drawer for linen and two little doors to open, revealing old china. No trouble at all to tie an ancient, moldy gate-leg table to the back of the Ford roadster when one is vacationing in Illinois, especially if someone allows you to explore the depths of their cellar and drag it to the light. "What old thing?" they say. "Why, that has been down there for years, and it's a sight." The young couple are hoping they will not want it back when they come to visit and see it in their dining room.

The handsome old chest that had been in the carpenter's shop so long was a tough proposition,

especially the top drawer, where the old man kept his lunch, and the new it holds the family linen and is an imposing piece of furniture in the living room with the tapestry bought to hang above the expensive chest (it was a bargain, you know, because these young folks were economical), you say. Oh, no, the flapper shopped until she found a lovely gray-green moiré restaurant, with silver threads woven into it. She bought this with a wide strip of black satin, and the trick was, turned.

You are old-fashioned yourself if you think anyone with bobbed hair and short skirts would fail to think of putting a quaint old-fashioned clock on an apartment window sill for decorative purposes.

An inexpensive but comfortable overstuffed chair can be made to look very quaint when a business girl becomes a bride. With a yard or two of red and white tulle, she takes needle, thread and scissors to make a slipper for it. Then, too, you have no idea how fascinating a 1927 flapper looks curled up in the corner of an old Virginia sofa, stitching a fine seam by the light of two glass lamps with organic shades. These were placed on small tables at either side of the sofa. The background of two big windows curtained with gray-green theatrical gauze was perfect. These girls know a thing or two. They are smart enough.

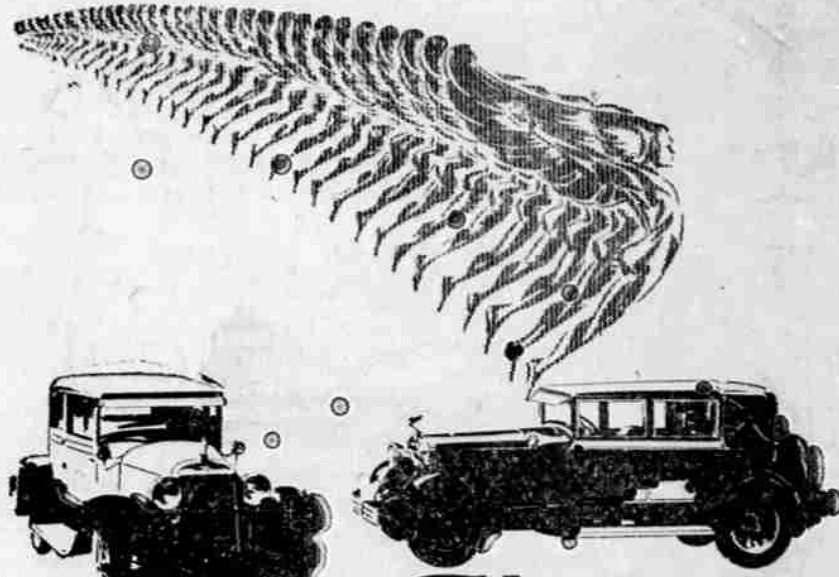
A little desk fashioned from another old washstand (the kind that has the handles) was standing in front of a lovely homemade screen, the original of which sells for a handsome sum, and even grandmother's old red tablecloth was in evidence as it blushingly tried to hide an ugly, modern radiator. The brass bucket which could tell many interesting tales of festal days had its corner, too, while rose-tinted chairs, quaint "quaint" old tables and pictures completed the living room furnishings.

Guests almost expect to hear someone call for the warming pan as the bride ushers them into the front bedroom with its four-poster bed covered with the candlewick spread. A dressing table had been made from a box and looked very quaint in its dress of printed calico

edged with organdie ruffles. There was a lamp shade to match and oval rag rugs on the floor. The old mahogany sewing table held its bit of sewing prudently and the ladies with full skirts in the Godby book prints on the wall seemed entirely at home in their surroundings.

Even the spare bedroom with its Zanny Lind bed covered with a pink "joced" quilt, and the old chest in process of restoration, brought forth exclamations of delight, and there remained only the kitchen to be seen. So by this evidence, see what home-instructed business woman and

a flapper. Everything was spick and span. The curtains were held back trimly with tie-backs of glazed chinix and the 1928 flapper talked about getting a cunning shelf to hold a bit of china. Can you imagine such a thing? Shades of our grandmothers—the modern flapper flapping right back home!



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