mendable in a young writer ambitious for distinction. Had he only a glimmer now and then of a saving sense of humour he would be very well equipped.

This short story of his comes to us after reading some of Mr. Risley's own comments on it—comments which he was kind enough to furnish to the public press in order that reviewers might approach the book with an intelligent and appreciative spirit. *The Sledge* is, if we remember Mr. Risley's observations rightly, the first book of a projected trilogy, the other two volumes of which are to be called respectively *The Anvil* and *The Candle*. We don't quite recollect the exact significance of these titles, nor have we been able to discover just why the present volume should be styled *The Sledge*. But Mr. Risley knows; so there is no particular reason why we should speculate on the subject any further. Mr. Risley says that in *The Sledge* he has settled the sex question; though just which sex question he has settled and just how it has been settled we are also unable to perceive; and as we have perused the pages very conscientiously it is obvious that this intellectual breakdown must be entirely our fault.

Finally, Mr. Risley has observed that in writing down this story he was himself "appalled by it." This statement led us to approach the reading of the volume with a certain amount of trepidation; yet, having finished it, we want to put on record the fact that we were not appalled. When we found Ivan Varoff, a Russian priest whose soul was "too fierce for fear," who was grim and wild and passionate and sensual, and like "a dormant volcano;" and when in the dark forest he came upon a gypsy girl shivering and moaning in the darkness, with lightning flashing all about and the smell of sulphur in the air, we began to feel that we were going to be appalled. Later, when the priest took the gypsy to his strange home and fed her, and the thunder crashed outside and the wind roared and the night was black and the priest began to yell that he was mad, and to cry, "Ah, hell! hell!" and the house rocked—then the thing looked still more promising. At last, however, when the priest forgot his religious vows and the obligations of hospitality, because of the beauty of the gypsy, then we might have been appalled except that by this time the strain had become too great and we experienced a reaction. The rest of the book tells how the gypsy afterward went to Paris and became a sublimated type of *horizontale* and accumulated large amounts of money and any quantity of clothes, and of how she always cherished a feeling of resentment against the priest, and of how finally she travelled back to his home in Russia and deliberately led him once more to violate his vows, so that he might have in his soul forever after the horror of his sin, and of how at the last, when she had taunted him, he proceeded to choke her to death and to bury her in an old vault of the adjacent church. We read all this, yet still we were not appalled. We don't know why we were not, but we desire to put the fact on record.

Seriously, Mr. Risley has a good deal of talent, and there is no reason why he should not go on and do better and better work. His exuberance is not a bad thing in itself, and he has an admirable collection of pictorial adjectives. If he would not take the attitude that he is going to supplant both Balzac and Victor Hugo at a single clip, one would have more patience with him. We might suggest to him also the purchase of a French dictionary, so that in writing the rest of his trilogy he would get the genders of his nouns satisfactorily straightened out; but this is a minor detail. *The Sledge* is an interesting book. But we weren't appalled by it. We really weren't.

H. T. P.

THE LADY OF DREAMS. By Una L Silberrad. New York: Doubleday, Page & Company. $1.50.

It is not often, unfortunately, that the work of a new writer inspires the veteran novel reader with a real wish to say something in print about it.

The Lady of Dreams is the second book of its author. Her work bears the stamp of a true experience; she has really something to say; she has gone down into the depths of her own heart and brought back a genuine message, and she has succeeded in incarnating this message in a form at once original and beautiful. And yet, as mere workmanship, it is not wholly above criticism; one does not quite see, for example, what the whole episode of Maurice has to do with the story; the incident of Dick wounding him with the dagger promised for him a closer connection with the tragedy; but the close of the story leaves his fate at a loose end, and ourselves uncertain even as to his professional career. And it is also with some little impatience that we read that Jim has a "crooked smile," not because of the smile itself, but because the crooked smile seems to have come permanently into the modern novelist's property box; Miss Cholmondeley's "Dick" wears one, and Mr. Barrie's "Grizel;" but to dress both Desde-

mona and Ophelia in the selfsame wig bespeaks a certain poverty of resource in the company.

Crooked or straight, Jim's smile is part of a very attractive personality; but it is Agnes, the Lady of Dreams, who seizes one's attention from the first. Her character is, indeed, a new and curious psychological study; the circumstances of her birth, which place her so sadly *en rapport* with Steele that, without a word exchanged between them, the weird visions of his diseased brain become hers also; her passive endurance of a life which, but for her half somnambulistic state, would have been worse than unbearable; the sudden waking, in defence of old Martha, the tragedy of that night—these things are told with as utter lack of striving for effect, in as simple and matter-of-course a manner, as if the author herself were dreaming. Therefore, the reader dreams also, he cannot wake if he would; the tale-teller's spell is upon him, but the horror of the dream is held at bay by the consciousness that one will presently wake and find it past; the sense of unreality makes it bearable.

Dream follows dream; but the life at Holmford was a dream of another sort. The section of Agnes's brain which alone had been active during her life in the House of Dreams was now, in its turn, unused; another portion had come into play, yet still she was not awake, as it were, to full normal consciousness; it was from the first inevitable that any serious nervous shock would arouse the old self—the self dominated by Steele, the self of the House of Dreams; one is almost inclined to think the final tragedy a deliverance from greater evils; for Agnes not the sins of the father, but the self-sacrifice of the mother, had been so visited as to make mental healthfulness congenitally impossible.

But why? This was Jim's question—Jim with his smile and his untidiness and his uncritical sympathy with all the world. Unorthodox, but with a firm belief in Providence; unable to preach or do good because he always saw so clearly the culprit's side of the question, it is probable that Jim's strong point as a doctor could never have been diagnosis, and that he worked to better advantage among the poor, whose diseases are patent to the most casual observer than as the physician, for example, of a clientèle of fashionable dames. For these two characters the story exists; Dick as a study of heredity fails to impress one, and the various thumbnail sketches of Jim's friends and patients have their chief value, spirited though in many cases they are, in showing us Jim's life—a life the embodiment of that message, which, as has been said, the author has thus transmitted to the world.

For at last comes the apparent tragedy, which is, in truth, a deliverance; and Jim sits alone in the House of Dreams, holding in his arms that other tabernacle, to which has come at last a full and perfect awakening; and in his agony his heart cries out silently, "God, why should it be!"

So he sat a long time. The beautiful lights died without, the day died in splendour. Still he sat there, still he cried out silently against merciless, inexplicable fate. Gradually there came into his mind an old thought, a familiar friend of bygone years—this—after all, it did not much matter why it should be; to understand the workings of things was no part of his contract; to do his share as far as he could see it was the only part he had in life's bargain.

It is the message of a sombre, powerful story, in which there is yet nothing morbid or unwholesome; on the contrary, the touches here and there of nature-love, the simple, sweet idyl of the Holmford episode, seem to show a heart which, though saddened, is unsoured by the pain of the world.

Katharine Pearson Woods.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A TOM-BOY. By Jeannette L. Gilder. New York: Doubleday, Page & Company. $1.25.

Miss Jeannette L. Gilder wields one of the readiest and most versatile of pens. She is the editor of the *Critic*. She is a contributor to various other periodicals. She has published a novel and dramatised a play. Now she has brought out *The Autobiography of a Tom-Boy*, a humorous sketch, which should be enjoyed by the adult as well as by the young person. It is to be presumed that this autobiography is reminiscent of Miss Gilder's childhood, and that many of the experiences of the tom-boy were the experiences of the author. At any rate, Nell Gilbert, the tom-boy, was born in a little town on Long Island, and her father, a minister, was at the head of a seminary for girls. Nell Gilbert has many of the same adventures, or rather misadventures, that other bad boys and bad girls have; but it is Miss Gilder's way of telling of them which makes them so amusing and which will move her readers to laughter. Wild Nell, as she was called, was fearless, ambitious and original; red-haired, freckle-faced and long-legged. During the few years that Miss Gilder writes of her she went through many phases in regard to her plans for the future. First