

For the Sophisticates

MICHAEL ARLEN'S "The Green Hat" (Doran) is unquestionably one of the most absorbing of sophisticated romances. It puzzles, it dazzles, it is embroidered with gaiety of color and of phrases — and its interest seldom flags. The story of the mysterious Iris Storm is told with multiple inversions of words and of method. The result is that a passionate, moving, almost melodramatic tale is made to seem highly specialized. Far be it from me to quarrel with Arlen's style. I find it, quite the contrary, fascinating; but his method of plotting a story seems

both annoying and unnecessary. He jumps from the future life of one character to the past life of another. His long digressions when he takes the pains really to describe are permissible only because they are magnificent examples of skill. About all that can be said for Mr. Arlen at the moment is that you must read him. He has become a fad both in England and America. You will enjoy him. You will doubtless quarrel over his merits or demerits with your friends. So far, in

my opinion, while his work has been exceedingly charming, it does not seem overwhelmingly important.

For those who like this type of story Carl Van Vechten's "The Tattooed Countess" (Knopf) will also bring respite — even though ever so slightly vulgar it be — from the realistic cares of today. This is not quite so good a book as "Peter Whiffle" but it has verve and audacity and is, in the main, well written.

—*J. F.*