

*Chicago and Business*

THERE is some brilliant characterization in "Joseph Greer and His Daughter" (Bobbs-Merrill). Joe, himself, is a figure of decision, vividness, and power. His battle against the conventions of society and business, and against the complexities of his own thoroughly bull-like emotions, is a story as intricate and as readable as that of the vagaries of his amazing daughter. Henry Kitchell Webster has never constructed his social fabric with such skill as he does in this latest novel. The numbers of his characters, the countless incidents through which he marshals them, the hundreds of little climaxes and the larger moments: all of these he handles with deftness. Perhaps he has not yet quite learned how to keep the swing of a larger idea, and perhaps, too, he forgets sometimes that a melodious style is considered by some persons as important as finesse of character portrayal. The spectacle of an electric and typically American business personality drawing various social forces to itself and changing them, is one we have all seen, one which is always a temptation to the novelist. I'm not sure that Mr. Webster hasn't touched the secret of power in his disclosure of the warmth which is the undercurrent of Greer's personality. Greer, however, is essentially *nouveau* and Webster makes him sympathetic as placed over against pseudo-social Chicago bankers and other somewhat picturesque snobs. How true a picture all this makes I have no way of knowing; but it has the elements of veri-

similitude and it is vastly entertaining. I don't want to appear to patronize but I do want to say that with a little more care for detail and vision a trifle deepened, Mr. Webster, it seems to me, might easily develop into one of our most important novelists.