

# Doran Book Chat



"The idea and the whole story came to me one day last summer," writes Arnold Bennett, respecting his new novel, *LILIAN*, "all in a moment, on board my yacht." Mr. Bennett's yacht is the Marie Marguerite; for other comments of his on the Marie Marguerite you will have to look up Bennett's account of Frank Swinerton in a volume called, curiously enough, *WHEN WINTER COMES TO MAIN STREET* (page 239). The author of *LILIAN* continues: "I wrote it on another yacht, the *Amaryllis*, belonging to my beloved friend, Herbert Sullivan, nephew of the composer of 'The Mikado,' at Monte Carlo, Nice, and Cannes, in December and January last. There is bound to be trouble over the ending of *LILIAN*. People will say that it isn't conclusive. A book has to end somewhere and if the book didn't end before the birth of



the baby, it would comprise the beginning of another book. The attitude of *Lilian* towards her life is clearly indicated. I can't go any further. I call the ending, a happy ending." *LILIAN* is one of the most readable Bennett novels I have ever struck—and I think there is nothing of his I

haven't read except certain earliest novels like *THE GATES OF WRATH*. *LILIAN* is spiced with the humorous wisdom that has kindled the enthusiasm of thousands for *MR. PROHACK*. It is, in fact, Mr. Prohack's honest and sympathetic observation of a young girl—a quite ordinary young girl with those astonishing good looks characteristic of young girls as a race.

Whoever originated the idea of *THE STAG COOK BOOK* has a head on him. The compiler, C. Mac Sheridan (no, it is *not* MacSheridan; "Mac" is his middle name) probably deserves the credit. At any rate, his is the credit for the execution of the brilliant plan whereby all our most conspicuous male citizens were asked to name their favorite dishes and furnish authentic recipes therefor. As a result we have Warren G. Harding and William Jennings Bryan getting together on a common platform that closely resembles a dining room table. We have Otis Skinner, Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr., Rex Beach, Bruce Barton, Irvin S. Cobb and Edward Bok, with some ninety other luminaries, all gastronomicalizing in happy accord. *THE STAG COOK BOOK* is not exactly devoid of humor—as in William Allen White's directions for assembling a vegetable salad—but it is a real cook book, despite everything (or despite everybody), and among the really valuable things in it are the hitherto undisclosed recipes from the kitchen of

India House; New York's downtown club famous for its cuisine.

I had the very great pleasure, the other evening, of hearing Hugh Walpole, who is just beginning what will be the most extended, and undoubtedly the most successful, of his American tours. A clear and interesting speaker, a speaker who kindles enthusiasm, he is helped by the possession of an unusually attractive personality. Walpole's extreme popularity



in America, as a person as well as through his novels, may owe something to his American boyhood. He understands us and is extremely sympathetic in his attitude toward American contemporary literature. By the most felicitous of coincidences, I find his new novel, *THE CATHEDRAL*, the most satisfactory book he has ever written. It is a vivid study of human personalities centered in a single family group and, while rich in the detail of many and varied lives, the novel has a unity and a roundedness entitling it to serious consideration as a work of art. The story is a very dramatic one. I should predict for *THE CATHEDRAL* a wider popularity than for any of Mr. Walpole's precedent novels — although *THE YOUNG ENCHANTED* went very big.

This new book of Thomas Burke's, *THE LONDON SPY*, is like a walk through the streets of London at night, with mistiness all about, the street lamps gleaming, and all sorts of things, sorrowful, brutal, lovely and tragic, taking place in the shadows just beyond the circle of lamplight. In fact, Burke names all his chapters

after London streets and neighborhoods. He does not neglect the Limehouse of his *LIMEHOUSE NIGHTS* but his range in these sketches and episodes and stories is a more catholic one. I call his book a beautiful thing because it expresses so perfectly the soul of a man to whom nothing is too mean or obscure or outwardly ugly to lack significance.

It may be bourgeois of me but I like humor. In my sub-bourgeois way, I enjoy lowbrow laughter. For me, then, Nina Wilcox Putnam's new novel, *LAUGHTER LIMITED*, is entirely satisfactory literature of its kind. The kind? Well, if you believe Nina Putnam, there was once or is now a motion picture actress named Bonnie Delane. The press agent wrote her autobiography out of the boundless resources of his imagination. When he brought it around, Bonnie admitted that it was a great surprise. She further announced that she preferred to write her own autobiography. This strange desire, though it was naturally horrifying to the press agent, she insisted on gratifying — with the result Nina Putnam offers us. Bonnie is readable all right; to me, however it may strike you, she is frequently funny. But the thing I like best about the book is the downright frankness of the whole performance. Hollywood is somewhat more than mentioned, as you may suppose, and Hollywood is not accorded any overdues in the way of respect. I like that. This book is going to be as popular as a Mary Pickford film.



Donald Ross