

GOOD AMERICANS. By Mrs. Burton Harrison,
New York: The Century Co. \$1.25.

Again it seems a question whether the celebration of the social trivial justifies an entire volume. Again it may apparently be protested that a long, sudden leap from New York to the Orient threatens dislocation of the spine of a story. Again it may be doubted whether the men and the women so confidently presented are really good Americans. At first glance they bear a strong family likeness to the personages originally introduced in *The Anglomaniacs*, but on closer examination small differentiating inelegancies appear. For example, none of that set would "shake" anyone, even though he were only an obstreperous guide. Let it then be admitted that in these little matters the genuine American ring may be heard, and the eagerness with which most of the characters seek newspaper notoriety must perhaps be conceded also. Moreover, possibly there may be something of the soil in Peter Davenant, the dominant figure.

It sounds American at all events to hear that "with all the energy of a nature that must have outlet for its strength, he believed in his life, efforts, ambitions, influences." It seems, however, less distinctive to be told later on that "a vulgar woman he could not endure or approach, and a commonplace woman wearied him thoroughly"—since that fact is probably true of the well-bred, intelligent men of several countries. The woman in whom he fancies he finds his ideal stands for the Feeble Fickle Feminine, and belongs as much to Europe as to America. If there were only a land where she did *not* exist!

The marriage between the ill-assorted pair does nothing to furnish the novelty that the rest of the story lacks. The outcome is the inevitable which follows all such folly. The only departure from the hard-beaten, narrow track is the concluding intimation that this light woman becomes a model wife after undergoing a desperate surgical operation. There are no details as to the character of the operation, but one who knows the type of woman must refuse to believe, even in fiction, that the utmost surgical skill can give a woman like Sybil Davenant a new head and a new heart. Toward the end of the story there are evidences of a wish, if hardly an intention, on the part of the author to ennoble the work through some definite, high aim of Davenant's. The feeling is created at the eleventh hour that he really scorns the pettiness by which he is surrounded, but the ennobling purpose is not evolved, so that there is again a large, long elaboration of the social trivial.