

The People One Knows

HERE are two naive and interesting performances, "People You Know" (Boni, Liveright) by Young Boswell, with a preface by Harold Stark, and "The Social Ladder" (Holt) by Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer (in collaboration with Frederic Van de Water). Both are products of snobbery — the one intellectual, the other

social. Mrs. Van Rensselaer regrets bygone days when social distinction *was* social distinction, but Young Boswell has no regrets, he simply wants to know and explore the minds of all the people who are doing things. This he does with what is really charming and naive egotism. His interviews are fresh, stimulating, eager. I think you will enjoy them. "The Social Ladder" is really a most readable performance. Its stories of old Dutch New York, its tales of coaches and balls, of customs and clubs, are delightful. There is nothing more interesting, in a sense, than snobbishness, and it is here with a capital S. Mrs. Van Rensselaer does not grant some of our most prominent families of the day real social position. She even misspells one of the most praiseworthy names, in mentioning it. She is a real aristocrat, and it is a joy to read her assured and secure periods. If there is anything in the world that I detest it is this attitude; but, curiously perhaps, I read every word of this book, which probably proves me subconsciously overcome by an inferiority complex, and a total snob. —J. F.