

# NEW BOOKS BY NEW WRITERS

## E. C. BENTLEY'S "THE WOMAN IN BLACK"\*

Although he just fails of making Philip Trent a personality, Mr. E. C. Bentley, in *The Woman in Black*, has constructed a detective story of unusual originality and ingenuity. An American multi-millionaire, a power in the world's finance, is murdered on his estate on the south coast of England. Half a dozen persons are presented to the reader as possible objects of suspicion—the dead man's young wife, the "Woman in Black," his American secretary, his English secretary, an elderly Englishman with whom he has had a violent quarrel, his butler, and a French maid. Trent, a painter, who on several previous occasions has shown decided talent in solving criminal mysteries, is sent to the scene of the crime by a great London newspaper. There is the inevitable foil in the person of Inspector Murch, of the official police, whose years of experience in the practical service of Scotland Yard avail him but little when pitted against the superior imagination of the brilliant amateur. Trent finds the key to a greater part of the mystery in a pair of worn patent leather shoes that had belonged to the dead American multi-millionaire, and in certain finger prints. But the story of the affair that he writes out but does not send to his newspaper lacks accuracy in one or two important points, the explanation that seems to cover everything when the book

has run less than two-thirds its course is not quite complete, and it is not until the final chapter is reached that the reader is in possession of the full account of the events surrounding the death of Sigsbee Manderson. In his use of Americanisms, Mr. Bentley is rather better than most English writers, which is not saying a great deal.

\**The Woman in Black*. By E. C. Bentley. New York: The Century Company.