

the gentleman will, of whatever subject his fancy chooses.

### *The Occasional Essay At Best*

RICHARDSON WRIGHT is an editor and a good one. Moreover, his own writing is delightful. Yet it is necessary to read a volume of his work to appreciate his really fine flair for the occasional essay, and to catch the rare flavor of a rare personality. "A Small House and Large Garden" (Houghton Mifflin) is a book for the personal shelf, a book that contains whimsies like "Looking into Windows", pieces of homy wisdom like "Spare the Side Roads!", pieces of unusual sentiment like "The Hilltop Garden". Mr. Wright has the irresistible gift of hitting on the rare idea and making it his own and the reader's in a homely, yet beautiful, way. I think he does this better than either Christopher Morley or Robert Cortes Holliday. Perhaps that is so only because he writes less and collects his essays seldom. At any rate, there they are — and they are good. I like these paragraphs especially:

The appreciation of side streets requires leisure. Not every one can spare the time to wander down them. It also requires discrimination. Not every one can gather the rich fruit of vision that grows on side streets alone.

Leisure and discrimination are gifts of the high gods. Leisure to seek; discrimination to appreciate; discrimination that recognizes beauty and romance in the picturesque, the sordid, and the drab; leisure which opens the mind to delicate impressions and the intriguing chiaroscuro of life, and affords time to mellow remembrance.

The average man chooses the main street because it is a movie street. Everything gets into the picture, whether he wants it or not. In memory these reels flick and flash across the mind's screen — and are gone forever. But a side street is as a time-exposed photograph, taken when and where

The English C. E. Montague is more sophisticated in his enthusiasms. He writes with a more special charm. "The Right Place" (Doubleday, Page) is really a travel book — a strange travel book, to be sure. Mr. Montague in his stories has already proved himself the artist. In these essays, he continues to show a prodigality of charm that, if it is at times wearing, is nevertheless refreshing; among the many odd twists of mind he displays is his annoyance at a too great clinging to old landmarks.

Yet it is all perfectly right. Let everything — almost everything — change with a will, in any city that you love. People gush and moan too much about the loss of ancient buildings of no special note — "landmarks" and "links with the past". In towns, as in human bodies, the only state of health is one of rapid wasting and repair. Wych Street, Clare Market, New Inn — they matter about as much as so many hairs or the tips of so many nails of some beloved person. The time for misgiving would come if the architectural tissues of London ever ceased to be swiftly dissolved and renewed. Woe unto her only when, like Ravenna or Venice, she buries no longer her architectural dead but keeps their bodies about her till they and she all mortify together into one great curio of petrification, like some antique mummy, a prodigy of embalment.