

## This Year

## It's Flannels

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trusting, perhaps, but uncertain, step away from home, out into the fullness of self-dependence among strangers. One begins to catch a glimpse of one's own limitations. Estimates of human nature change. One comes to learn not only the selfishness and the littleness, but also the breadth and nobility of others and of one's self. I despise the word "Life work," because it is so shiny, so threadbare from trite usage. But yet, in college, more than anywhere else, the vista of the future slowly but surely unfolds. And who will say that there is not a noble seriousness in the intense expectancy with which each one peers into the coming unknown?

College is not wholly comedy. There is a thread of tragedy in it all. College diversions and jokes constantly change. Yale Sixty-Nine used to cut all the buttons off the coat of every policeman who came on the Campus. Consequently, now, when two jolly policemen are stationed regularly on the campus, and are the best of friends with all fellows, a modern "policeman" joke would fall pretty flat to an old Sixty-Niner. But college effort, college ambitions, college hopes do not change. They are ever-living in the college, as well as in the outside world.

It is to this more serious, more permanent side of college life, that Miss Daskam's "Smith College Stories" (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York) unconsciously draw and hold attention. She attempts a complete picture of Smith and the ten stories are redolent throughout with the atmosphere of a delightfully serious college world of young women. Nevertheless, when one has closed the book and allowed the several pictures to lodge in their chosen places, it is such stories as "A Case of Interference" and "A Family Affair" that eclipse all others in depth and truth of insight into human nature. At last here is a writer who can create a college character that trembles with the anxiety and hope, joy and disappointment, which thrill and oppress earnest college men and women everywhere. With one stroke of the pen she reveals the intensity of yearning of a brilliant but lonely and disappointed girl. Her own words best express my meaning: "Under her touch the haughty, solitary figure of a scarcely known girl melted away before them, and they saw a baffled, eager, hungry soul that had fought desperately and was going silently away—beaten." The simple diction, the inexpressible longing, the deep but tender pathos, the sadness of it all, place this story far above the ordinary. It is a true picture of life, wherever men and women strive and suffer disappointment. In the book this story ends happily. but that is a play to the galleries; for in real life—college life—there is very little interference in social honors. The popular still are popular and the lonely geniuses

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are neglected. Afterwards, at the Triennials and Decennials things may readjust themselves somewhat, but in college the spoils belong to the apparent victors.

In the contrast between the poor retiring, talented Susan, and the tart, sociable, wealthy Sue, in "A Family Affair," Miss Daskam shows her greatest promise. I predict that, in time, she will add something of permanent note to American literature. One who has the grasp of human nature—its hopes and fancies, its sorrows and indefinable yearning, its joys and ecstasies,—to paint this scene; "Belated children were hurrying home; now and then groups of college girls, fresh-cheeked from their quick walk, swing by in haste for supper and their evening engagements. Over her heart, hungry and misunderstood, there passed a sudden flood of passionate longing for one hour of unconscious, happy comradeship with homes and girls like these; one hour of some one else's—anybody else's—life; one taste of dependence on another than herself"—one who has such power, I say, will give America something broader and more far-reaching than college stories if she remains true to her literary trust.

Other phases of college life are treated with less success. "The Evolution of Evangeline" is a would-be satire on the girl who succeeds with surprising ease. The author, however, disregards the latent, undeveloped ability that there is in hundreds of apparently stupid college girls, when they enter college. This is an unjust caricature on Smith. A real Evangeline of this type would be in a garret on Nowhere Street, until she graduated, unless she did really possess native talent. The author would do well to let satire alone. Her pen splutters; and, besides, it's a stub. "Miss Biddle of Bryn Mawr" is a lost opportunity. The plot is so available for exciting episodes and hair-breadth escapes from detection, that it is disappointing to see the whole affair go off on tiresome schedule time. The story should be re-written before the second edition appears.

As a fascinating story, skillfully told in all its details, "The Emotions of a Sub-guard" would probably be the most popular of any in the book. It has a dash, a swing, an expectancy, and yet a succession of surprises that are peculiarly pleasing. It is well for the sale of the book that this is the first story in the volume, for if the last one, "The End of it All," were first, that would be the end of it all.

The cleverest bit of realistic work I have seen among college stories is "The Education of Elizabeth." In other stories of these ten, one feels now and then an artificial coloring, a straining for effect, a hot-house heaviness, that does not go well with outdoor freshness and the robins and the call of Spring mornings to the sleeping buds. However, in this story, to the actors themselves, college is a serious piece of business, but to the on-lookers a farce-comedy. The anxious, solicitous parents; the intense, over-wrought, idealistic daughter; the desperate young man, in love, of course; the kindly matron, who knows everybody's affairs better than her own—they all stand out as distinctly as a gnarly oak among willows. It is satire without the sting. And yet one shifts uneasily in one's chair for fear of being hit because it is so true to life.

As a whole, "Smith College Stories" possess an excellence of literary work altogether unusual and unexpected in a volume of college stories. To be sure, in the handling of mass scenes, as for example, "At Commencement," the author falls into mediocrity; not from lack of ability, but because she does not select concrete individualities from the confused mass of a thousand chattering girls—plus mothers, fathers, brothers and other people. The story is a worse ejaculatory confusion than commencement itself. Besides it is lacking in sympathy with those precious memories of a last goodbye from college and college friendships.

In the analysis, or rather in the creation of character of a peculiar type—characters that have not had the advantages of tone, culture and refinement at home; characters that are lonely, through ignorance of the simple approaches to friendship and yet that are filled with a vague longing for companionship and with intense ambition to attain high ideals—such as Winifred Hastings and Susan Jackson, Miss Daskam has shown a depth of sympathy, a fancifulness of humor, a touch of realism and, withal, an insight into human motives and hopes that promise

an uncertain though brilliant future in permanent literary work.

MAURICE P. GOULD.

## A Standard in Class Books.

The Class Book of Yale Sixty-Two, a copy of which has recently come into the WEEKLY's office, is one to be consulted by all persons intending to get out a class book. It is a remarkably complete and well prepared book of over 250 pages, printed on excellent paper, bound in cloth and full of portraits and illustrations. The printing of two different pictures of each man, one his college picture and the other the last one secured when the book went to press, makes a very interesting result. The frontispiece is an excellent likeness of President Woolsey.

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## The Last.

As the horror-stricken crowd gazed helplessly into the dark water the drowning man came to the surface for the third time. His damp gaze turned wildly toward his audience, and making an effort, he spoke. "This," he said hurriedly, for it was apparent to all that his time was limited, "this is positively my last appearance before the public." Then he sank gracefully forever.—*Princeton Tiger.*

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