



# The Reading Lamp

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The vacation season is now over. We suppose that most, if not all of our readers have taken some sort of a rest and gotten some sort of a change. Did you read anything that impressed you as being worth passing on to a fellow chemist? If you don't feel qualified to write a short review, give us a paragraph naming the book, its author and what made you like it so well.

We went to Maine and as the trip is a long one, read quite a bit before getting once more to work. Several books read recently deserve reference. "Ole Man Adam an' His Chillen," and "Old King David and His Philistine Boys," both by Roark Bradford of New Orleans stand out as a new type of humor and a new way to explain the Bible. Old Testament stories as they come from the lips of a darky preacher are vivid, humorous and to the point. "Green Pastures," a play by Mark Connelly is based on certain of the stories. It is a success in the East, and when read, if one enjoys reading plays, gives a new seriousness to the amusing conception of the early Israelites.

One of the most impressive mystery stories we have read recently is "The Amazing Web," by Harry Stephen Keeler (Dutton), a Chicago author. It is an amazingly good mystery tale—written cleverly and originally. To arouse the reader's interest and curiosity, the story starts at a point just before its climax, then—the interest being assured—the Web's beginnings are described and a yarn is spun which goes back to Captain Kidd. Most of the interest revolves around the trial of an innocent man caught in a seemingly unbreakable web of circumstance and evidence and defended by a lawyer who will be made or broken by the verdict. In spots the tale is like a three-ring circus. The author is never sidetracked. Everything important or seemingly otherwise has its place and when the end has been reached, every stray end has been safely knotted into place. Considering that the book runs over four hundred pages, and that the interest never flags, it is quite an accomplishment in the mystery story field.

"The Green Jade Hand," also by Keeler, while tedious at times, is equally clever and has a most original plot.

"The Scarab Murder Case," S. S. Van Dine's latest, seems a bit padded, it reads just as easily, but the wily reader's suspicions are apt to fix on the real criminal when the story is little more than half finished. Vance talks entertainingly, but too often without saying much. The standard of these stories has been consistently high, so that a lessening in quality is quite reasonable.

"Rogue Herries," by Walpole, is a bluff (and at times boisterous) novel of England around about the time of Prince Charles. As in The Saga, the fortunes of a family are followed for a couple of generations dominated by its misunderstood head who has enough good in him to, in the end, redeem him to the reader. Parts of the story are unusually vivid and characters are convincingly drawn.

From outside comes the following:

"Machine Made Man, by Silas Bent (Farar and Rinehart—1930), is a non-technical survey of the effects of the Industrial Age upon man. It includes all the necessities, the luxuries, and institutions of our present complex life, together with their historical developments. Like the other summarized knowledge books which have been in vogue the last few years, this will appeal to the layman who is too busy to seek knowledge at its original sources. One pleasing point about this work, which is not usually true of books on this subject, is that the author is apparently prejudiced neither for nor against the Machine, and consequently is more fair in picking his data.

"The Whirlwind (Macmillan—1929), the latest novel by William Stearns Davis, is a story of the French Revolution, and it has for its hero a liberal noble quite similar to Mirabeau. It is another of those historical romances which the author writes so well. Those who like the historical novels Sabatini writes should get acquainted with William Stearns Davis. He was formerly a history professor at the University of Minnesota, and like Sabatini, wrote this kind of novels, which were a failure as far as sale was concerned, for years. Sabatini's success came with Scaramouche, and then

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