EVENING PUBLIC LEDGER-PHILADELPHIA, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1920

JOHN COURNOS'S

The Scene of Part of It Is in This City, but the Animating Spirit Is Not American

John Cournes lived in Philadelphia for more than twenty years, including the period between his tenth and thirtieth years, without losing the psycholegical twist of his native country. This is demonstrated beyond cavil in his first novel. "The Mask," just published in America. The book was written in Lon-

don. Cournes is a Russian Jew. He came to this city with his mother in 1801 sold newsnapers on the street, becam-in office boy in the editorial decartment of one of the local newspapers, and of one of the local newspapers, and rese to be assistant Sunday editor. H translated various things from the Rus-sian for multication in this country and in 1013 or thereabouts he went tr England. He became a member of the Anglo-Russian commission to Petro-grad, and arrived there three works be fore the Bo'shevik revolution. When he returned to England he served for the returned to England he served for he returned to England he served fo he retarned to England he served for a rear in the British foreign office. H will soon return to America to make

will soon return to America to make the lecture tour. His novel which is biographical in the sense that it tells the story of a Russian Jew from childhood to his four teenth year who passed through experi-ences similar to those which Cournos encountered, might have been written in Russia. It is altogether different in structure and point of view from the porels written by men who have become theroughly Americanized. It has little form, but proceeds chronologically and form, but proceeds chronologically and stons when enough has been written to fill a volume of a little more than 300 to fill a Volume is when the hero, after an unsuccessful experience in a factory insuccessful experience in a factory in New Jersey, returns to a house in a calde sac in this city. The book is the story of the effect of life on John Gom-baror, the hero. It is introspective and pessimistic. The hero is troubled with pessimistic for the hero is troubled for baroy, the here is troubled with pessimistic. The here is troubled with the problems of human relations for understanding which he can find no standards. The world somehow is out of joint and no one seems to know how to put it right. There is no plot in the story. It is merely a section of a life. Doubtless it is a true enough picture of the struggles of the Russian Jew family in America. But its value lies not in the story, but in the com-ments made by the hero, who tells part ments made by the hero, who tells part of the story to a friend in London after he has grown to maturity, or the remarks of some of the adults who surround the boy. Here is an example of the kind of thing with which the book is filled:

of the killed: Chemically speaking a drop of Jew-ish blood goes a long way. Ethically speaking, however, our Russian, or shall I say our Christian imagination is superior to the Jewish in the ratio that the quality of mercy is a more imaginative quality than instice, which is a purely logical quality. It was a materialist who said "an eye for an eye" and "a tooth for a tooth." It was a poet who said, "Excert ye be con-verted and become as fittle children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of Heaven." As a piece of stark realism the book

As a piece of stark realism the book splendid. But the shadow on the al of the hero is too heavy for there to be any lightness in the story. Those who read it for amusement will be disappointen, but it will repay those the wish to discover how the Russian sychology persists in a mind set a

years. THE MASK. By John Cournes, New York George H. Doran Co.

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