

THE BOOKLOVER'S

CORNER

ONCE on a time W. L. Alden became famous in virtue of certain humorous contributions to the New York Times. They had an agreeable play of wit, together with a certain kindness of humor that made them delightful reading. Today Mr. Alden exhibits no decline, albeit many years have passed since first his gifts became known. In his latest effort, "Drewitt's Dream", issued by the Appletons, there is the same pungent comprehension of human nature, combined with the same cherry optimism as of yore. It is not much of a novel, as novels go, and yet you will read it and like it.

There isn't much of the thread of the story; you might almost call it a raveling. A young Englishman, attracted by curiosity to the scene of an approaching fight between the Greek and Turkish armies, is caught in a panic of scared fugitives and swept along while a Turkish detachment follows in pursuit. A beautiful young woman, using perfect English, is a companion victim in the mad stampede and he rescues her. They fall in love, or he imagines they do, and he dreams of a desperate fight in which he and she alone defy for a time the entire Turkish army only to fall together in a grand climax of resistance. The next thing he knows he is lying in a hospital, convalescent from wounds and a fever, and the lady of his dreams is not ext inventus. As soon as he gets well enough he starts out to look for her, and the story tells the incidents and issue of his search. We may as well say without further delay that he finds her in the last chapter, and while part of his presumed acquaintance with her in Greece was the working of brain fever, he managed before he got through with the case to give her his name.

But all this is incidental. In the course of Drewitt's travels he meets an American named Gallagher. Gallagher is Mr. Alden's piece de resistance; a shrewd and kindly son of the soil who had evolved into that distinctively American product, a political boss; made a million or two in ways which we shall see, and was flourishing around in Europe with a steam yacht, all the luxuries of the season

and nobody congenial with whom to share them. Gallagher picks Drewitt up and helps him find the maiden of his dream. They get shipwrecked together and have a variety of other experiences far out of the ordinary, but never does Gallagher lose his equanimity or ready adaptability to changing circumstance. He is a born genius for producing results and some of his sayings are as wroth as his doings.

For example, when Gallagher first met Drewitt—it was in the hospital, an institution which Gallagher financed and took secret pride in—he frankly told why he was in Europe:

"They told me that Greece was the place where culture was invented, and I said, that's the place for me. You see I've been a hard working man all my life, and when I made my pile I said to myself: 'You've never had no advantages to speak of, and what you want is culture.' So I started in to get it, though I don't mind saying that I haven't collared much of it yet."

At this point Drewitt inquired what Gallagher's business had been, and this was the reply:

"Politics, sir! I was a leading politician in the state of Iowa for thirty years. Did you ever hear of Sallust City? Well, I was the boss of that city for ten years, and having made a fortune I thought I ought to retire from business and live like a millionaire ought to live."

"Politics seem to be profitable in your country," suggested Drewitt.

"So they are, sir, if you know how to look after your own interests, and don't go in for mere honor and glory. I worked hard and no man can say a word against my honesty. I made my money in a perfectly straight way. Nobody ever dared offer me a bribe, and nobody ever caught me in a crooked transaction for my own benefit. But, you see, in my position I naturally had the earliest information about any intended proceeding of the common council, let alone the fact that their proceedings were generally dictated by me. Consequently, when the council started in to improve any particular part of the city I knew it beforehand, and bought up the most eligible real estate and held it for a rise. No man could find fault with that, and the fact that I gave up politics just for dreams."

Later Drewitt told Gallagher of his dream.

"Dreams interest me some," said the millionaire. "I dreamed one night that the common council of Sallust City were going to build a market at the junction of Twenty-first street and Washington avenue. The next morning I sent a bill to that effect to the council, and bought options on all the real estate where the market was going to be. I realized \$60,000 on that one deal, and ever since then I've felt a good respect for dreams."

Gallagher would buy votes, manipulate ballot boxes and do some other

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things which in the judgment of the fine New England or Scotch Presbyterian conscience would not pass muster; but he had his good points. When a boy he once cheated on a fifteen-cent trade. Twenty years later he remembered the incident, hunted up the victim of his juvenile sharp practice, paid him the fifteen cents with compound interest to date and had the satisfaction of hearing the victim, then a minister, roast him from the pulpit the next Sunday morning. Drewitt once said to Gallagher that he had always supposed that American politics and honesty were rather wide apart. Here is Gallagher's naive reply:

"That's only British prejudice. I've been an active politician all my life, and I can say that I never did a dishonest act. 'Honest John Gallagher' was what they used to call me. Whenever I bought a majority in the common council, or hired a man to do a political job, I never gave him a line in writing or made a bargain, in the presence of witnesses, but there isn't a man living who can say that I ever refused to pay what I promised to pay."

"Then bribery isn't considered objectionable in America," said Drewitt.

"My rule," replied Gallagher, "used to be never to buy a vote unless it was necessary. If it's necessary to do a thing it must be right to do it. Now, I consider that the only way to carry on a government like ours is by the judicious use of money. When I was boss of Sallust City the Republicans who were the opposition party, were the worst gang of thieves I ever knew; worse, if you'll believe it, than the New York Tammany ring. If they'd got into office they'd have robbed the city right and left. I kept them out by buying the necessary votes, and I paid the common council to pass measures that were for the benefit of the city. When men of property saw that I kept the city from being robbed, and consequently kept down the taxes, they supported me through thick and thin. If I'd had your notion about the dishonesty of buying votes, real estate in Sallust City wouldn't be worth a quarter of its worth as it is. I believe in honest politics, and it's just as honest, and a sight more practical, to give a councilman \$50 for his vote, than it is to promise him an office in the custom house. I'll go further, and say it is a good deal honest, for the chances are that when he gets that office he'll steal from the government, whereas, when he has the \$50 there's an end of his transaction, and there's no opportunity for him to steal."

On one occasion Drewitt and Gallagher fell to talking about religion.

Said Gallagher in his old-fashioned way: "All religions are the same to me. I used to contribute regularly to every religion in Sallust City, and we had a full line of them. I half built the Jewish synagogue, and I built the whole of the Baptist church, besides giving a chime of bells to the Roman Catholics. Just before every election all the churches seemed to be in financial difficulties, and they used to come to me to help them out. I used to treat them all alike, for if I'd shown any favor to one it would have cost me the votes of all the rest."

Anyone reading only these barefaced paganism would be at a loss to realize the secret of Gallagher's hold on people; but it comes out in the course of the story. He is always equal to the successive emergencies; he thoroughly understands human nature; he is sympathetic with those about him and is misfortune, and he puts his sympathy into substantial form; he doesn't worry over things that can't be helped nor fuss and fume when a smile and a joke would do just as well; he is witty, keen and kindly; and altogether in a delightful way Mr. Alden has explained better than could be done by a shelf full of books from the Reform club the secret of the power which such men—and Gallagher, though somewhat overdrawn, is an accurate type of the prevalent misanthropic politician—sway in the public affairs of a majority of American communities. There is no particular moral to the story. It is just a picture of life in certain phases drawn with humor, skill and sentiment; and wrapped around enough of a plot to carry it.

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AMONG THE MAGAZINES.

There are several notable pictorial features of peculiarly timely interest and also others of an artistic flavor in the magazine number of the Outlook for May. In the first class may be named that describing District Attorney Jerome's official home on the East Side of New York, and that on the king of Spain, who this month becomes king in act as well as in name, by General Stewart L. Woodford, formerly United States minister to Spain. Art and music are respectively represented by an article on the great Spanish painter Sorolla, written by one of his pupils and illustrated by reproductions of paintings and original sketches, and by a thoughtful critical and personal article on the work of Grieg by Daniel Gregory Mason. Western interests and commercial interests are brought to the front in Ray Stannard Baker's "The Commerce of the Great Lakes," which is as well informed as it is readable, and is made picturesque by a dozen original illustrations relating to the shipping and commerce of the lakes. Articles relating to the spring season are, John Burroughs' little out-of-door essay and poem called "A Spray of Arbutus," and J. H. McFarland's "A Story of Some Mayflies," which is illustrated with many exceedingly beautiful photographs of trees and their flowers, taken by the author.

The great feature of the May McClure's is the first instalment of Miss Ellen M. Stone's account of her six months' captivity among Macedonian brigands. Miss Stone has risen splendidly to an opportunity that every writer of adventure—true or fictitious—may well envy her. She has written a rattling good story, which you will enjoy whether or not you are interested in foreign missions. In the most approved serial style the first paper is concluded with the announcement by the brigands that their captives, when the first appeal for aid has failed, that they have but nine more days to live. Every incident is narrated with enthralling vividness, and yet with no stretching after sensation. The best parts are those which relate the terrible flight across the mountains immediately after the capture, and the episode in the lonely shepherd's hut when the brigands disclosed their plot to Miss Stone and Mrs. Tsilka. It is her reticence concerning her own physical sufferings and mental anguish in all this that lends power to the narrative. The brigands themselves, ruthless and indifferent to their captives' comfort as they were, could not refrain from complimenting them on their pluck. Of the remaining papers, that on the birth of Mrs. Tsilka's baby, and the council of the brigands to determine its fate, will be written by Mrs. Tsilka herself.

Edgar Fawcett's novelette in the May Smart Set, entitled "The Vulgarians," is a capital study of the introduction into swell society of a western young man and his two sisters after a windfall in the financial fortunes of the family. These vulgarians are not bad at heart, only crude and in the first instance unconsciously pursue profit. They get over all of these drawbacks, thanks to the efficient tutelage of a conveniently disclosed young and sympathetic widow in need of a job.

The April issue of the Current Encyclopedia maintains the high standard of excellence which this publication has established and, if possible, exceeds it. It is especially strong in its biography of the world's workers and in its portraits, maps and diagrams. We know of no other periodical that covers the field occupied by this one, and we should not know what to do without it.

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