

THE NATIONAL ARTS CLUB

15 GRAMERCY PARK

New York

N. Y.

April 2, '31.

Miss Ida M. Tarbell,
120 East 19th St.,
New York City.

Dear Miss Tarbell,

Enclosed find reports from ten manuscripts which have been submitted in the Soul of America contest. I am sorry that I am compelled to give these books such adverse criticism, but by the wildest stretch of the imagination, I cannot say anything more for them. Perhaps, as we proceed, we shall have better luck.

Sincerely,



Jane Scates

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No. 21 Life to the Hilt

An essay which is a series of biographies of outstanding Americans, such as Thomas Jefferson, Buffalo Bill, Roosevelt, Bryan, John Wanamaker, Jay Gould, Ford, et., et. The writer sums up all by saying that the Soul of America is the seat for life to the hilt. This essay is a decidedly mediocre bit of writing, and I feel certain that it would not interest the Committee.

No. 22 COARSE & GOLD

A typical adventure-novel, pseudo-dramatic, though fairly well told. It is a story of the California gold rush of 1849. The author holds the view that the story of a single American city reveals the true soul of America, and he chooses San Francisco as the means to this end. In my opinion, this choice is poorly made, for the days of '49 were too distinctive in their basic elements to be indicative of general American characteristics. The book, however, is entertaining.---The story opens with an "Innocent Arden" background. Philip Mateliffe, having been wounded in Mexico, remains away from his "home town" of Charleston, S.C. so long that everyone thinks he is dead. Anna Page, the girl he loves, waits no longer, but marries another man. Philip returns, and on finding this out, joins a group of "forty-nine-ers." With the party, is a man named Streicher, a leader of a secret Brotherhood. He and Philip become friends. At Panama, a Spanish singer, Charnian, who is also a woman of great beauty, joins the party. After a thrilling sea-trip, the boat sails through the Golden Gate. San Francisco is running wild. The usual "adventure types" enter into the story here,---a man named Charley, whose half-sister, Little Nan, is the blond, pure type so worshipped by the "strikers,"---a man named Gryme, destined to be one of the builders of Greater San Francisco, et., et. Gryme becomes engaged to Little Nan. The plot is intricate and long. Streicher elopes with Gryme's Little Nan, and is killed later by the wronged sweetheart in a street duel. Then Gryme marries Charnian out of pity for her lot. All through this, runs the history of the growing city, a long series of exciting episodes which mark the best writing in the book. It ends by many deaths, violent and otherwise, and with the happy marriage of the grandson of Nan and Streicher and the grand-daughter of Charnian and Gryme. In time, Philip, too finds happiness, for he marries the widowed Anna Page.

No. 24 AMERICA AS IT IS

An essay written in high-school style, which deals with the achievements of various Americans,--Lindberg, Carrie Chapman Catt, an unknown Texas passenger-train conductor, et. With Democracy as the ideal of America, the writer praises America in general and lauds the spirit of American youth. The work reveals only "surface-thought," and much mis-information. It could be of no possible interest to the Committee.

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No. 26 WATERS OF LIFE

A novel which is an extremely poor and overly-sentimental account of the search for the "Waters of Life." Strange to say, there are a few isolated passages in the book which are well written, but the novel as a whole, is mawkish and uninteresting. Prof. Montelaire is a "materialist." His son, Dale, is an "idealist." As they stand at the top of the Great Divide, the guide tells them that if water could be brought down the western side of the slope, the desert would turn into a verdant garden. The father begins to dream of harnessing actual water to accomplish this great thing, but to the son, it means "spiritual water," what-so-ever that may be. The father dies, leaving the son to "carry on." Dale searches through many years and in many lands for the Secret, and it ends not only in his carrying out the practical dream of his father, but the ideal dream of his own vision. His love for Ruth, a semi-servant in his mother's house, is totally without interest.

No. 29 HAPPY-GO- LUCKY

An inexpressibly poor novel, describing the experiences of one "Happy" and his companion, "Goody." Happy tires of riches and his deaf and dumb wife. He runs away, and after various happenings such as air-plane accidents and shots through the lungs, he returns to home and wife. Of no possible interest to the Committee.

No. 30 AN AMERICAN

To all appearances, an authentic biography of Charles Drake. At the outset, the book, which is largely an historical biography, looks promising, though one does grow a little tired of the long genealogy of the Drake family. But as the work advances, the writing grows more and more immature in style, and the dramatic interest deteriorates into unimportant reminiscences which might be of interest to members of the Drake family, but not to the general run of readers. It is too bad, for the writer has possibilities within his grasp. ---Charles Drake, who moves in wooden fashion through the many pages, graduates from a medical College. He marries, begets children, one of whom is afflicted. His first wife dies, and he re-marries a neighbor girl. She, too, bears him sons and daughters. In time, some of the children die, one is killed in an accident, etc. Drake's writings are discussed, one chapter being devoted to a work of his called "Theodicy," in which he lays forth his views of the physical and meta-physical. Though the first part of this book is well told, I do not believe it worthy of the time and consideration of the Committee.

No. # 31 THE SOUL OF AMERICA, the story of Patrick Henry, an Irish-American boy.

A novel which bears all the ear-marks of immature writing. It is the story of a boy, Patrick Henry Kelly, who forges his way

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through poverty, only to be needed in the World War. Thornburg, his rival with Patricia, the girl he loves, is killed in battle. Patrick Henry, thinking Patricia still in love with Thornburg, will not ask her to marry him. A Jewish girl, named Hanne, comes to the rescue and sets things straight. She reaps a rich reward, for on realizing her worth, Dale Hansen, Patrick Henry's best friend, asks her to marry him. Of no particular literary value, I feel certain that this manuscript could not possibly interest the Committee.

No. 32 THE GREATEST OF THESE

A most uninteresting, hackneyed account of the World War as seen through the eyes of a young girl, left at home, whose sweetheart goes across to perform heroic deeds. At home, Millie, the girl, sees patriotism displayed on all sides. The sweetheart returns, they marry, and their children are also quite patriotic. At a school benefit, The Star-Spangled Banner is followed by an address in which the speaker of the evening says that -- "now abideth faith, hope and love, and the greatest of these is love." This work is mediocre in every respect.

No. 33 THE SOUL OF AMERICA

A wild, irrational article, dealing in a vague way with the "Soul of America." Totally devoid of literary merit. Typical of its pages is an inserted poem entitled "Et tu, Brute, with apologies to Kipling."

No. 34 CARRY ON

A hackneyed story told in a hackneyed way. Literary style quite poor. Don, engaged to Ruth, goes to war. Ruth's brother also goes, and is in the trenches with Don's best friend, Ed Myers. Ruth teaches school to while away the time. At last, she, too, goes across as an entertainer. One wild night, Ruth assists in the hospital. Her brother is brought in wounded and dies in her arms. Don suffers shell-shock. The doctor thinks that the sight of Ruth may restore his mind, but the strain is too much for the sick boy, and his heart fails him. After eight years, Ruth receives a letter from Ed Myers, and the implication seems to be one of good import, for the reader infers from it, that Ruth and Ed may marry.