

## When the World was White with May

**I**N his notable preface to "The Nigger of the 'Narcissus,'" Joseph Conrad has given a very enlightening thought to both the writers and the readers of books. For the novelist, he declares, "to snatch in a moment of courage, from the remorseless rush of time, a passing phase of life, is only the beginning of the task. The task approached in tenderness and faith is to hold up unquestioningly, without choice and without fear, the rescued fragment before all eyes in the light of a sincere mood. It is to show its vibration, its color, its form; and through its movement, its form, and its color, reveal the substance of its truth—disclose its inspiring secret: the stress and passion within the core of each convincing moment." It is this clearness of sincerity that most delightfully characterizes the work of Mother M. Germaine "When the World Was White with May." She has successfully touched history with romance, and woven carefully through all, the thread of a higher purpose—a lofty and grand emotion of reverence for sacred things. Though we are not awed, perhaps, by vivid display of style of opaline bursts of erudition, we take from this book all the satisfaction that comes of a pleasant story ingeniously told. In art, it is ever the aim that justifies the work; and in the light of a noble motive, things mediocre or imperfect in themselves are overlooked, faults are not justified but forgotten, criticism dies unuttered, and the eyes are fascinated wholly by glimpses of sublime ideals, monumental and enduring.

We hesitate to call this work a romance, since it might with more truth be analyzed as a series of sketches linked together by the slightest attempt at a love motif. Cedric de Ganis, a young knight newly-dubbed at the court of King Arthur, receives as his first mission the task of bearing Queen Guinevere's jewels to the Patriarch of distant Jerusalem. From the castle of Camelot our youthful adventurer makes his way to Rome,—only there to discover suddenly that the jewels have been stolen or lost.

How Cedric finally recovers his treasure and makes his way to the Holy Land and the happy completion of his mission is a problem for the interested reader to solve. It is indeed refreshing to dream through, page by page, these charming

sketches of place and custom throughout the Holy Land. One chapter, for instance, is entitled "In Nazareth," another "At the Sea of Gallilee," another "On the Way to Jericho." One can draw thence a certain peacefulness of soul, and satisfaction, and restfulness—the kind that comes with the white May moon and musk-laden zephyrs of summer eves.

—PAUL J. KETRICK.

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## That Eternal Excuse

**I**T would be difficult to find a more striking strategem than the age-old excuse. Surely no other device has averted so much tribulation from the human race. Who can tell what man was the first to escape the stone rolling-pin in the paleolithic age, in lieu of the polished mahogany instrument of today? What head was the first to go intact after an all-night poker game? Recently, Professor X. Cavate discovered a couple of boulders which he thought would settle the question for all time. Oddly enough, they were discovered in the vicinity of the spot where the missing link was said to have had his summer cottage. These rocks, therefore, were found to be especially worthy of interest. One of them was thought to have been thrown thru the missing link's cottage window by a roistering crowd of missing linklings. The other turned out to be a petrous note from some Johnny's mother asking the teacher to kindly excuse him from school.

Did Adam and Eve originate this custom, or did it begin after their era? We beg to be excused from answering this question. Nevertheless, our research work has brought to light a story about Nero which may throw some long-sought light on the subject.

When Nero was asked why he played "Bananas" on his fiddle while Rome burned, he replied that he had mislaid his lyre. A more reasonable excuse, it will be observed, could not be found. Tablets which have come down to us from Mrs. Caesar reveal that the favorite excuse with Julius was the old gag about being detained at a meeting with the consul.

Whoever it was that initiated the custom, whether it was one of the knights of the Round Table asking to be excused