

CYPRESS BEACH

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649219209

Cypress Beach by Wm. H. Babcock

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

WM. H. BABCOCK

CYPRESS BEACH

OPINIONS OF THE BRITISH PRESS.

It is said to be well to "see ourselves as others see us." Reviews and other press notices commonly result in showing that others see you in a bewilderment of different lights and from many points of view. Here are parts of several critical articles which reached the author of *Cypress Beach* very soon after the first publication of this book in London. One, the best in every way, is given at full length. The reader will find it easy to skip the double columns if they weary him.

There is undoubtedly very considerable power in *Cypress Beach*—ill-regulated power, perhaps, but still it is unmistakably there. It is a story of life in one of the American Southern border States, and the writer seems to have equal skill over character as in description of scenery. He has a strong sense of both humor and pathos, and, although there is unevenness of execution, we can pardon this where there is so much promise in other respects.—ACADEMY, LONDON.

It is interesting enough in its materials to have occupied two ordinary volumes of fiction.—ATHENEUM, LONDON.

The scene, personages, and, it may also be said, the style of Mr. Babcock's story, *Cypress Beach* are entirely American, and they belong to a type of Transatlantic fiction which will be unfamiliar to most English readers. Mr. Babcock is not wanting in boldness of conception, and his method of treatment is correspondingly broad and sketchy. * * * The action of the story is so hurried and crowded that the reader finds difficulty in keeping pace with it. * * * There are cleverness and vigor in it.—SCOTSMAN, EDINBURGH.

It is impossible to mistake *Cypress Beach* for anything else than American in origin, and, indeed, our insular views of propriety and *les convenances* rebel against any suggestion that an

English young lady of respectable position could find herself so unfortunately situated as did the very charming and independent damsel of this story. Mr. Roger Armstrong and the young gallant, Cousin Prince, are admirable portraits of Southern gentlemen, full of noble impulse, impetuous, but the souls of honor and generosity. Utterly disbelieving as we do in the existence of any such noxious power of one individual over another as is here represented, we merely state the plot of this wild romance without according it the slightest approval. Vamper almost succeeds in a vile attempt to carry Jessica away with him. This improbable story touches upon topics innumerable, glancing lightly over the question of freed negroes in their social and political relation to the United States, the labor question, and others. This story strikes us as being of doubtful utility, even if harmless.—LITERARY WORLD, LONDON.

Most novel-readers exclaim with Blanche Amory, "Il me faut des émotions!" And however reprehensible the craving may have been in that heartless young lady—whose emotions were supposed to be caused by realities, and were, nevertheless, mere shams that flare-up vehemently for an instant, and then subside to give place to the next—yet it is evidently a very different matter in regard to emotions which *can* only be unreal inasmuch as they are dependent solely upon the fuss, sound,

and fury of a world whose denizens and events are known to be creations of fancy. It is, therefore, with no thought of censure that we attribute Miss Amory's sentiment to our readers, and give them the comfortable assurance that the author of the book now to be considered is not one of those who treat the aforesaid innocent desire as a thing to be ignored and snubbed if possible. *Cypress Beach* occupies only two extremely thin volumes of about 200 pages each; but there is in that small space sufficient material to have been expanded easily into much larger proportions. It is a tale of the labor revolt in America in 1877, and, if a first performance, is a book to raise high expectation as to the rank which its writer will hereafter take amongst novelists. That it should be sketchy is an almost inevitable consequence of the small compass which limits its full development. But though the picture may not be a complete one, yet the strokes that outline it are broad and vigorous; though the figures make but a brief stay on the stage, yet their appearance produces a vivid impression on the spectators; and Mr. Babcock shows himself capable both of forcible conceptions and also of caustic humor.

The two most striking characters may, not inaptly, be compared to St. George and the Dragon,—for one of them is a sort of hideous and foul moral reptile, leaving a poisonous trail on whatever it comes in contact with; and the other is a valiant and chivalrous gentleman, who fights the monster in order to deliver a fair lady from its leathsome clutches. Vamper, as the human dragon is called (a name whose similarity to vampire seems to indicate the propensities of its bearer), is a truly Mephistophelian, and in some ways unique specimen of a villain. An agitator by profession, his life is a perpetual stirring-up of strife and flitting from place to place to organize and make profit out of turbulence and discontent, wherever they may be found. Thus at one time he is at Washington practising extortions amongst the Congressmen, and meeting any attempt at resistance with the regretful inquiry, "Must I then play Lucifer among your

constituents?" followed by a meditative remark of, "I like to play Lucifer." And at another time he is in the country inciting the free negroes to make war upon capital, though, as he says with cynical frankness, "What in Tophet do I care for these dogs of laborers? I want an office." Delighting in evil for its own sake, he is himself a very incarnation of it; yet in him the grotesque element is so cunningly blended with what is repulsive, that the reader is amused at his quaint fantasticality even whilst shuddering at his wickedness, and it almost seems as if he must have regarded existence from first to last as a sort of infernal practical joke. Not only is he endowed with abundance of brains and energy, but also with great mesmeric power, by means of which he enralls the heroine. Hence the necessity of a St. George, a gallant knight to break the spell; and Hawksley, who plays that part, and is a model of chivalrous honor, valor and loyalty, seems rather to belong to some mediæval romance than to a nineteenth-century novel. Proud, loving, true to the backbone, unyielding, aristocratic, clinging to old beliefs and ways, hating the advocates of anti-slavery with a holy and scornful hatred, he is "a man not devoid of sympathies truly, but with a deal of iron in his convictions and his methods of enforcing them, an exalted theory of what was due to himself, and hardly more than an incidental estimate of the value of human life." His sole idea of argument is the revolver, to which he has recourse on all occasions without the faintest distrust of its universal efficacy and applicability. And this grim trait, joined to the firm and undoubting faith with which he believes in the absolute righteousness of all his opinions, makes one fancy him to have been cast in something the same mould as that Walton, nephew of Cromwell's, who fell at Marston Moor, and whose one regret in dying was "that God had not suffered him to be any more the executioner of his enemies." Altogether, Hawksley's character is that of a stern, but noble, high-principled, and knightly gentleman, in whom is shown how narrow-mindedness and prejudice are beau-

ful when they spring from and are inseparably connected with unselfish loyalty, courage, love of honor, and fidelity to principle.

A complete contrast to this unbending and bigotedly faithful nature, to whom its convictions are far dearer than life, is presented by that of the heroine's other suitor. He is a type of modern, easy-going nonchalance, lazy, kindly, sceptical, incapable of earnest purpose, taking life lightly and jestingly, and never approaching nearer to any kind of definite belief than an idea that "some old and settled things really seemed as though they might be left without periodical investigation and readjustment." The damsel for whose good graces these two candidates contend is, it must be confessed, a rather disappointing little personage,—coquettish, volatile, helpless, weakly impressionable, and quite unworthy of, and incapable of rightly appreciating, the unchanging devotion of Hawksley. She is always ruled by the caprice and impulse of the moment; has not the strength of mind to try and break her own fetters and raise a finger to defend herself from the deadly peril which, nevertheless, she sees and dreads; is hardly grateful to her champion and

deliverer; is generally childish and silly; and altogether gives an unsatisfactory feeling that she in no way deserved the homage she received or the final happiness assigned to her. Early in the story, an ill-omened ring is introduced and a bundle of hidden old papers discovered, with as much pomp and circumstance as though they were destined to play a prominent part in subsequent events and give a flavor of supernaturalism. Nothing particular comes of them after all, however, so that one is inclined to imagine the author may have changed his original intention in the middle of his work, without heeding the weakening of structure which would naturally result from such alterations. But, be that as it may, there is art and power enough in *Cypress Beach* to make it interesting and attractive independently of the plot. And though it is rarely that a reviewer complains of a book for too great brevity, we close this one with a sincere regret that Mr. Babcock should not have allowed himself room to give fuller expression and development to the conceptions that occupied his brain when he wrote.—SPECTATOR, LONDON.

FIRST AMERICAN EDITION.

CYPRESS BEACH

BY

WM. H. BABCOCK.

"A PLACE FOR IDLE EYES AND EARS,
A CORNERED NOOK OF DREAMS."

"AND A WIDE WORLD OF WILD REALITY."

"WELL MAY SLEEP PRESENT US FICTIONS,
SINCE OUR WAKING MOMENTS TEEM
WITH SUCH FANCIFUL CONVICTIONS
AS MAKES LIFE ITSELF A DREAM."



WASHINGTON, D. C.:
WM. H. BABCOCK.

1890.

66718

COPYRIGHTED
By Wm. H. BARCOCK,
1884.

R. BERESFORD,
PRINTER,
WASHINGTON, D. C.



PREFACE.

Now a preface is a thing of many uses. It may serve to convey a man's ideas of most problems in the universe; but I prefer to reserve the main body of my text for that, and even then there is generally something left over. It may be in itself a delicate and original piece of art in the humorous vein;—if one were only a Nathaniel Hawthorne to make it so. Or it may turn benevolent and save the "chorus of indolent reviewers" all trouble of looking farther.

It certainly did seem to me when once upon a time I set before the public an unpretending structure of verses, that in some way I had made the vestibule too seductive. Most of my newspaper friends who did not devote their energy to contradicting each other were well content to lie down in it, after the fashion of a man coming home very late indeed to a doubtful welcome. Any foot-rug of a quotation from my preliminary prose would serve them for a covering. But this was long ago, and there were things in that poetry which may have merited worse treatment.

However that may be, I wish to have the present story read, a little of it at any rate—and it is not very long—even by the running journalist. It probably will not hurt him; for I know well the capabilities of that tribe, having sinned and suffered in my time, as one of them, although not for long. And "an enduring mind have the destinies appointed to the children of men."

For this present I have in view nothing worse than a brief explanatory chat with my hypothetical readers that are to be. My American readers, for the book, first published in England