

Cabochon Emeralds

GENTLEMEN PREFER BLONDES.

By Anita Loos.

Illustrated by Ralph Barton.

New York: Boni and Liveright.

\$1.75.

Reviewed by
RUTH GOODMAN

MISS LOOS has written an amusing book. "It might have been even more amusing with more salt in the dialogue and fewer diamond braceletz in the plot. Her idea is artful. She gives us the diary of the Blond-Haired Knockout that is forever hanging around the Ritz awaiting with haughty impatience that escort who, when he finally turns up, must always begin the conversation by telling her his name, and who also, according to Miss Loos, invariably ends up the afternoon by doing a little shopping at Cartier's with his new girl friend. What a number of cabochon emeralds these young ladies are able to peggy-joyce!

However, jewelng aside, there is some pleasant larking in the book. We see our heroine in the midst of her New York season, and then, through the kindness of the gentleman who is taking so much interest in her education and intellectual broadening, Gus Eisman, the Chicago Button King, she sails to Europe and new fields. With great intelligence and brilliant divination, she finds out in just one day that London is really nothing. England, however, is not a complete waste of time, since she leaves it with her jewel case the heavier by one tiara. Paris and the Parisians are "devine, because, when a girl can sit there in a delightful bar and sip champagne cocktails and look at the Dolly Sisters and Pearl White and Maybelle Gilman Corey and Mrs. Nash it is beyond words. Because when a girl looks at Mrs. Nash and realizes what Mrs. Nash has got out of gentlemen, it really makes a girl hold her breath." Paris is heaven, though this sweet girl graduate finds it "rather depressing" that they make paste jewelry so perfectly that a gentleman (but would such a man be a gentleman?) could easily deceive a girl. The whole chapter on France and the French contains much sly mockery that is amusing. But how can Miss Loos write about the Eyefull Tower? I thought that that one had caught its death of cold in the winter of 1902. Also, is it either funny or plausible that the heroine should spell Montmartre Memart?

From Paris she goes on to Vienna, where she attaches unto herself one Henry Spoffard, the young millionaire reformed. She cannot decide whether or not she wants to marry Henry, but in the mean time she keeps all of Henry's letters, because if she ever decided that she did not want to marry Henry they might come in very handy. The trip comes to an end, and we find the young woman back in New York making plans for her ambitious marriage and a happy ending. Both are achieved, but not before she has given herself a hilarious debut into society.

It is a droll book and a merry one, and it is just because of her very facility in funmaking that one resents all the more Miss Loos's straining for "mis-spelled words for comedy. Certainly the chorus girl who knows how to use the word reciprocity will know how to spell it, and not since the bad and very early

days of Ring Lardner have I seen sen-shure for censor.

A good deal of the book's intelligent fun is derived from the illustrations of Ralph Barton. And the mention of Mr. Barton's name gives rise to a query: When is this fine artist going to give us a book of caricatures? To the few who know his as yet unpublished jibbly etched things, notably his Shaw and Conrad, the lack of a collection is downright irritating. Mr. Barton's greatest misfortune, of course, is that he lives in America, where the taste for caricature will take a long time to surmount the native complex of fear born of social and intellectual insecurity. In England he would have made Max Beerbohm sit with the curiosities of the 1890s, for, matching Beerbohm's wit and drollery and surpassing Beerbohm's draftsmanship, he would have added that final, essential touch of the caricaturist, criticism. For Barton is both artist and critic.