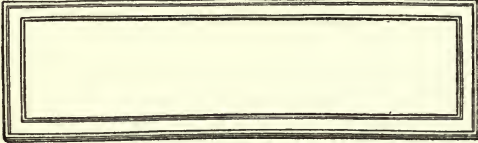


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LITERATURE AND INSURGENCY

BY JOHN CURTIS UNDERWOOD

THE IRON MUSE

AMERICANS

LITERATURE AND INSURGENCY

LITERATURE AND INSURGENCY

TEN STUDIES IN RACIAL EVOLUTION

MARK TWAIN, HENRY JAMES, WILLIAM
DEAN HOWELLS, FRANK NORRIS, DAVID
GRAHAM PHILLIPS, STEWART EDWARD
WHITE, WINSTON CHURCHILL, EDITH
WHARTON, GERTRUDE ATHERTON AND
ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

BY
JOHN CURTIS UNDERWOOD



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PREFACE

Criticism of literature *per se* is a lost art in America to-day. To-morrow or the day after it will come back as an exact science and part of a constructive insurgent revolt against machine-made and slipshod conditions in literature and in the life that literature interprets.

Any American criticism that is fit to survive or worthy of the name, must recognize that authors, editors, publishers, malefactors of great and lesser circulation and all their works, are to be classed essentially as products of environment and forces that react on the same, and so dealt with.

The fact that muck-raking has been made profitable and that our muck-raking magazines have proved their fitness to survive and to adapt themselves to American needs and ideals of to-day, represents the most important economic advance of the last fifty years.

Sooner or later in the present campaign of education, in the new reorganization and realignment of our mental and moral assets and liabilities, our present system of literary and journalistic production and distribution is due to come in for its full share of muck-raking and constructive criticism.

The series of articles on *The American Newspaper* by Will Irwin, published in *Collier's Weekly* during the summer of 1911, sufficiently foreshadows this tendency. A similar series of articles on *The American Magazine* by an author of equal reputation, in-

spired by an equal passion for speaking the truth without fear of favor to anyone, might prove quite as much to the point.

If our journalism, like the machine politics that it represents, is our most crying national disgrace to-day; if numbers of our yellowest yellow journals and the smuggest and most conventionally respectable of the American press "higher up" are the mouth-pieces of Big Business, and directly or indirectly its paid prostitutes and liars, the very cynicism of their open immorality has served to divert public attention from other vital factors in the formative processes of American thought and literary and social morality, that in the long run cannot and will not be disregarded.

Any man in the street, in any one of fifty or more of our largest American cities, can tell you facts about the rottenness of American politics that might well make Benjamin Franklin's or George Washington's hair stand on end.

Any child that reads and reflects, that has any adequate sense of literary values in the up-to-date output of the American public library and magazine world, can, if so inclined, frankly characterize and criticise the woman-produced-read-and-catered-to-literature of the day and hour in America, in terms that might well make Washington Irving, Lowell, Lanier, Emerson and Hawthorne turn over in their graves and gasp.

At the same time it takes a social and literary vivisector of the first order like David Graham Phillips to reveal the pretenses and the posturings of the "good" women of America — the conscious and un-

conscious literary and artistic snobbery of the socially eligible and refined partners, wives, mothers, daughters and sisters of our most prominent male-factors of great wealth, and their subordinates and trade rivals — for exactly what they are worth.

It takes a poet and a prophet like Frank Norris to write an epic like *The Octopus*, or a book like *The Responsibilities of The Novelist*, the only volume of American criticism during the past ten years that has proved its fitness to survive beyond the lifetime of the present generation; and to tell us that the genuine interest of the district messenger boy in his *Deadwood Dick* is of more significance and vital importance to the future of American literature than the pretenses and the posturings of the most select inner circle of literary *illuminati* and dilettanti.

If either Norris or Phillips had lived to carry the logic of their criticisms to the bitter end, we might have had some very interesting revelations of their attitude of mind toward our most expensive and useless, most fashionable and sterile, American magazines, and toward the publishing houses and vested interests represented directly and indirectly by them.

It is a sufficient commentary on the attitude of these two men and the logic of accepted facts, to state that the only two world novelists of acknowledged power that Twentieth Century America has so far produced, rose to their present prominence in spite of rather than by the aid of the "best people" in our American literary world and their backers and abettors; and that these two men, were no more con-

tent to be exploited financially than to be lionized socially by the sort of people to whom our most cosmopolitan and dilettante advertising mediums for special interests in American life and literature naturally appeal.

It is not too much to say of certain periodicals, published simultaneously in New York and London, and read chiefly by women of the class that Phillips vivisected, that, together with the business interests and commercial methods they represent, they have become something less than sources of supreme sweetness and light to their own readers and to the American people at large.

Under their unbeneficent rule and leadership the clutch of the machine has tightened perceptibly on the intellect and the sense perceptions of the millions and of the dilettanti alike, while free literary competition has been minimized in their columns, and debased elsewhere. American illustration, like the American short story during the last ten or fifteen years, has shown a distinct retrogression; American essays and critical articles in magazine acceptance have become a minus quantity; American fiction serialized has been sacrificed to fashionable and generally uninspiring literary importation from abroad; the ethics of commercialism and cheap mediocrity have infected the earlier ideals of inspiration and service in which these magazines were conceived and founded; and, last and most conclusive and damning proof of all, American poetry in many of our leading "literary" magazines has reached an irreducible minimum of slush and near-slush over names wholly or comparatively unknown, that is as much a living

lie and denial of the racial temper and smothered aspiration of the American people of yesterday, to-day and to-morrow as any Wall-Street inspired, bought-and-paid-for prostitution of our Metropolitan newspaper press.

Poetry that is real, that is fit to survive through the centuries, needs no defense. Like truth, the very vital color of whose voice it is, it rises triumphant from each defeat to summon men and women to greater heights of aspiration, to greater intensities and charities of common humanity shared and exalted. Such poetry is ready for the making in America to-day. Great poetry like all great literature is born of storm and stress in the individual or the community.

There never was a time in the history of the world when the material of such poetry, so rich and complex in its color scheme, so potent and vital in its content and inspiration, lay so close at hand beneath the eyes too blind to see it, as in America, the melting pot of the nations, to-day.

And there never was a century in the history of man's long struggle upward from the brute, when the heart and soul of a great nation were so restlessly expectant of some spiritual message, something of lasting and significant value in prose or verse, to give charm, color and power to the dreariness and debauchery of everyday, workaday existence, as the beginning of this Twentieth Century and the present month, week, day and hour of this year of grace in conventionally Christian America.

Poetry and prose of this order of distinction the System that dominates literary America has denied

us; and it is not too much to say that if our three most misrepresentative American magazines, and some ninety per cent. of their parasites and prostitutes, their numerous head-line contributors by request, editors, sub-editors, business backers and exploiters, could be blotted out of existence to-morrow, the American people as a whole would be better rather than worse off.

This is said in all charity to people who (like Wall Street-inspired editors, reformers in politics who become mere masks for the machine, and other gentlemen and ladies of still more questionable morals and social antecedents) have not the brains, the courage and the capacity to free themselves from false positions, and who remain equally the victims of the machine rule that to-day dominates every department of American life.

Outside the slum and the university, the misdirected and ineffectual energies of our conventional churches, the defective working of our free public educational system, and the tentative efforts of a few public libraries, mental and moral conservation of the individual and the race is an undiscovered country to the mass of the American people to-day.

✓ Men like Norris and Phillips have begun to unmask its vistas. The muck-rake magazines have revealed the exceeding grimness of its frontier.

But in general we remain as we have been since the American pioneer learned to dominate the forest, the prairie, the desert, the mountains and the rivers by machinery, and in turn suffered the machinery that he had evolved to dominate him; and we exist to-day a machine-made people, conventionalized, standard-

ized, commercialized as to our food, clothes, houses, homes, offices, factories, theaters; amusements, social wants, pleasures and obligations; working plans; civic and social responsibilities; local and national pride, and its absence or perversion.

Europe has called us with some reason a nation ✓
of white Chinamen.

The typical American of to-day rises by machinery, to the sound of a factory whistle or a fifty cent alarm clock. He gets himself into clothes made by machinery, whose fabric in nine cases out of ten, to a greater or less extent, is infected, shoddy, and the product of sweated labor and an iniquitous tariff system.

He consumes a breakfast made by machinery and the cold storage warehouse, whose staple products are invariably trust-made or controlled.

He rides from breakfast to his place of work in a public conveyance owned or controlled by another ring of franchise robbers or profit parers at the community's expense. As often as not he stands up all the way, and reaches his destination in a frame of mind that makes beating the conductor and the company out of his fare seem something like an act of civic virtue.

On his way he reads the news of the day as machine politicians, yellow journalists and others "higher up" see fit to hand it out to him.

Arrived at his shop, factory or office, he goes to work according to the routine of his machinery of existence; for a trust, for a concern dominated, influenced, threatened by a trust, or by a labor organization whose tyranny is as direct and uncom-

promising, as much an outgrowth or phase of machine politics.

On his way home he finds the rush for and in the cars even more inhuman and demoralizing. He sees young men, conventionally gentlemen, stealing seats from working girls or older men. He sees women shoppers of the same order proving themselves similarly the machine-made barbarians that their gowns, hats, feathers, furs and miscellaneous and assorted trinketry indisputably advertise them to be.

If he is able to read at all, he repeats in his evening paper the tale of American civilization's faults, follies, immoralities, treasons, infamies, and deceits as the incidents or direct results of machine rule.

Home or its mechanical equivalent reached, he meets his wife who is a still more artificially machine-made product than himself; they consume their cold storage dinner to the accompaniment of a discussion of the machine-made fads, fashions, infidelities and other popular diversions of the day; they go out to see machine-made drama, or to play the most mechanical and uninspiring of social card games with the neighbors; or they settle down to an evening of equally uninspiring and mechanical literature in magazine form or between covers, till exhausted nature claims its own, and mind, soul and body relapse in slumber.

This is the sort of thing (plus the everyday household, shopping, gossiping and bridge playing experience of the woman who is not driven out of her home into business life) that happens three hundred days and nights or more a year in the experience of the average American off the farm, whose in-

stinctive reaction against the mechanical monotony of American life for the millions does not lead him or her spectacularly into drugs, drink or other vices and excesses.

Literature higher up formerly did something to counteract this deadening and dehumanizing tendency to reduce American home life to a dead level and the lowest common denominator, expressed in terms of money and what money can buy most directly: in the shop, in the theater, in the lobster palace, in the divorce court and all that leads to it.

To-day American literature "higher up" finds itself as machine-made and soulless a product as every other phase of the American life it has helped to distort and to misrepresent.

And for this too, for the good that they have left undone as well as for the evil that they have committed and condoned, our literary malefactors of great influence and circulation are going to be called to answer in one way or another, sooner or later: they or their children.

It does not take any vast amount of culture, education or initial brain capacity to discover that, if a large fraction of the American people are systematically sweated and underfed, underpaid and overcharged, crowded into cars like cattle, and housed in dwellings where noise, dirt, infection and the extremes of heat and cold are variable quantities, always to be met and fought with, not in the slums alone, then the physical stamina and morale of the race must in the long run suffer, while the mental and moral level must at the same time be brutalized and debased.

Consequently we have at last our pure food law and its evasions, demonstrations of one sort or another against the meat trust and the coal trust, and the present perplexities of our public utilities commissions.

Similarly, corporate aggressions against the public domains and organized looting of water, forest, and mineral rights have finally resulted in a national programme of conservation in things material.

We have not yet reached the point of demanding a pure thought law, a legal restriction of the yellowest phases of our yellow journalism, or a national movement for the conservation of literary opportunity and reward, and of the comparatively small proportion of his or her time that the average American can or will devote to any printed matter that is not mere journalism or the news of the day.

Obviously such a movement is bound to come sometime. It will depend when it does come far more on the canons of sound and scientific criticism of literature and life in the largest sense, than on any possible or impossible arbitrary legal enactment.

At the same time, if any protective tariff is at all desirable or legitimate at any period of American growth, some of us may yet come to see the desirability of an American tariff on literary and dramatic importations from Europe before we find ourselves fit to compete with the rest of the world in these lines on an equal footing.

The details of an amendment to our national copyright law exacting a national tax in the form of a cumulative royalty on every copyrighted foreign book and serial publication of recent date, and

the requirement of copyright registration and similar cumulative royalties in the case of foreign plays produced on the American stage, might be arranged easily enough, once the mass of the American people made up its mind that such a state of things was desirable, and determined to have it.

Such a remedy might be far from ideal; at any rate it could hardly leave American literature and the American stage in a worse state than that in which we find them both to-day.

It would at least relieve us of the commercialized immoralities and hysterics of the Elinor Glyns and the Marie Corellis, and leave us the power to deal adequately with our own Chamberses and McCutch-eons.

It might reduce local consumption of Maeterlinck, Shaw and Chesterton. It might at the same time stimulate the production of American playwrights, critics, *litterateurs*, who are somewhere if not quite in the same class.

It would at least help to stimulate our racial sense of ultimate destiny in the world of thought and of literature, and our national acceptance of the fact that literature like all other human phenomena is distinctly a product of environment in the material as well as the spiritual sense.

With this fact in mind the following essays have been written. To this end this preface, such as it is, however extreme and far-fetched it may seem to many, has been gotten together and addressed to all impartial and progressive Americans, readers and thinkers, doers and critics of literature and life.

1912
In view of a recent trip around the world by the author, detailed final revision of these essays, which were prepared for publication two years ago, has been considered inadvisable. In his estimation, neither *The Inside of the Cup*, *Gold*, *The Reef*, *The Custom of the Country*, *Perch of the Devil*, *De Gar-mo's Wife*, or any recent publication of Mr. Howells, Mr. James or Mr. Chambers has seriously affected, or is likely to affect, the respective places of these writers in literature.

It is perhaps worth while calling attention to the fact that Calvin Winter is the name used by Doctor Frederic Taber Cooper for many of his magazine articles.

New York, August, 1914.

LITERATURE AND IN- SURGENCY

I

DEMOCRACY AND MARK TWAIN

"One of the characteristics I observe in him is his single-minded use of words, which he uses as Grant did to express the plain straight meaning their common acceptance has given them. He writes English as if it were a primitive, not a derivative language. The result is the English in which the most vital works of our language are cast, rather than the language of Milton, Thackeray or Henry James. . . . You will not have in it the widest suggestion — what you will have in him is a style as personal and biographical as the style of anyone who ever wrote. . . . in fact what appeals to you in Mark Twain . . . is his common sense." William Dean Howells in the *North American Review*, Feb. 1901.

ONE of the things that most appeals to us in Mark Twain's whole career and attitude towards life is that he came of the same great generation and river valley, and remained essentially a type of the same breed and make of man that Grant did. Each paid debts incurred in the latter part of his life, through no fault of his own, in practically the same way; each led an adventurous and by no means successful career (as the world recognizes success) before he settled into his stride and achieved greatness; each

was the soul of honor in his private and public dealings with his fellow men; each bore the highest honors heaped upon him by his fellow citizens, by the crowned heads of the world and the leaders of the world's thought; each remained to the end as modest and unaffected, as helpful to others, as kindly and sincere in all essentials, as the best of the breed of American fathers and mothers, democrats, and pioneers, that produced him.

Each voiced in his own way, and very much to the point, the deep and lasting convictions of a generation of Americans whose place in the world has yet to be filled. Each did his work in his own way, supremely well, considering the time and place. Each was essentially American in this, that what he wrought he wrought with all his might, less with brilliancy than with vital staying power. Each in his own way sounded unmistakably the key-note of strenuous and American democracy that has endured and will endure; that rises to the crisis when the crisis comes, that achieves its greatest triumphs under its greatest handicaps; and that keeps its head both before and after success or temporary failure, with the aid of national humor and a racial philosophy as big and broad, as deep-seated and as vital as the sadder and sterner instincts of the race that march and that labor with it.

Such was the humor and the temperament, at bottom, of Lincoln himself; and it is more than probable that if Lincoln had had time and occasion to preach his gospel in words rather than in deeds, he would have written in practically the same way that Mark Twain did.

Essentially the same evolutionary factors and forces produced them, and, in more ways than the world yet recognizes fully, bore the same fruit. ✓

There was the same primordial love of freedom, of justice and of charity to all, in both; the same deep racial sadness underlying the racial levity; the same lasting hatred of pretense and of sham; the same simple and kindly affection towards the vital things of nature and of family life, that make up the bed-rock of human character on this planet. And to all these things, to anyone who reads them between the lines and below the surface, the writings of Mark Twain bear witness unmistakably.

Here we may quote Mr. Howells again in "My Mark Twain," 1906, as he looks at his friend's face for the last time. "I looked for a moment at the face I knew so well; and it was potent with the patience I had so often seen in it; something of puzzle, a great silent dignity; an assent to what must be from the depth of a nature whose tragical seriousness broke into the laughter which the universe took for the whole of him . . . all the rest of our sages, poets, seers, critics, humorists; they were like one another, and like other literary men; but Clemens was sole, incomparable, the Lincoln of our literature." ?

And again,— "He disliked clubs. He showed his obsolete content with his house. . . . Clemens pointed out the scenery he had bought to give himself elbow room. Truly he loved the place, though he had been so weary of change and indifferent to it that he never saw it (Stormfield—his last home) till he came to live in it. . . . He was the most un-

literary of literary men. He did not care much to meet people, as I fancied he always went to bed with a cigar in his mouth."

Here we learn, too, that while Mark Twain did not care much in his old age to meet new people, he believed with Emerson, quite as consistently as Mr. Howells did, that "The ornament of a house is the friends that frequent it." He had the pioneer virtues of hospitality and of loyalty, to the limit. His was the breed of men who literally share their last dollar with their friend, and make no bones of it; and Mr. Howells tells us that he was quite as informal in going to find his friends at all hours, whenever he cared to see them, as in making them welcome at his own home when they cared to see him.

We may learn from the first part of his friend's book, as elsewhere, that Samuel Langhorne Clemens was like Mr. Howells an itinerant printer before he became a Mississippi Pilot and rigorously earned his *nom de plume*.

We may read between the lines that he was the typical native born American of the generation before this one, restless, surcharged with energy that seeks an adequate outlet, unsatisfied till he finds it, always pushing farther and farther West or striking back East again as the trail zig-zags; crossing the plains over-land, "Roughing It," to be secretary to the lieutenant-governor of Arizona; going into mining ventures and coming out of them richer only in experience; drifting to San Francisco and doing newspaper work there; traveling further West still, to Honolulu as special correspondent on

the typical American journalist's sole capital of brains and energy; drifting back to 'Frisco again and living there in the reduced circumstances that inspired the story of the friend who met him with the cigar-box under his arm and learned that he was "moving again"; until he was sent to Europe to do the newspaper letters afterward published as "Innocents Abroad," and the way was made plain for his later journalistic and literary career.

In those days the trail to higher distinction in both fields frequently zig-zagged back and forth across the lecture platform. Authors read from their own books as Mark Twain and Bret Harte did together from theirs. People who were not immersed to their ears and eyes in the strenuous pursuits of social or financial leadership, found time to meet the readers after the reading, informally. Men who were far from given to levity fundamentally, often eased the tension all round by the same methods that our after dinner orators still attempt. Reputations were made and solidified, and the average keen-witted busy American man or woman was afforded an opportunity once a month or a year as the case might be, to fix on her or his favorite author or authors, or to estimate the relative values of newcomers in the field, by the direct methods of personal inspection and appraisal.

On the whole, this system of personal and intuitive criticism, in default of a better one, worked well while it lasted.

Nowadays we have changed all that, and in many ways our last state is worse than our first.

6 LITERATURE AND INSURGENCY

Professor Münsterberg has recently told us that in Germany the literary center is still the book store. In France, Paris and the Academy are still dominant. In England the college don, the trained critic and journalist, and the old-fashioned subscription library are still recognized as authorities.

With us to-day, Boston, Harvard College, the older New England systems of free schools and academies, free libraries, and the Lyceum lecture bureaus no longer dictate to literary America in the molding. In their place we have New York, Chicago, Indianapolis and San Francisco, and the commercialized magazines, publishing houses, book-sellers, and book-selling and advertising methods of all four places and many more, to reckon with.

In two words, our present literary center, as it affects the people at large, is the news-stand. And we who live in this dawn of the century-transition period, have to suffer for this state of things in one way or another, as we do for the economic forces which have conceived and perpetuated it.

It was not so in Mark Twain's early and middle period; but the revolt of good humor and sound sense that he led against the New England hierarchy of special interest, of dogmatic culture, pretense and the Bostonian Brahmin's point of view with regard to life and art in general, has not failed, as its leader himself, in common with Mr. Howells and many another of the older generation, fancied it had failed during the last years of his life.

After the downfall of any oligarchy and priesthood of culture and inherited privilege, there inevitably follows a period of something like anarchy be-

fore the foundations of a true democracy, of an adequate art and literature of the people, for the people, by and about the people, may be laid lastingly.

Academic purists in art and literature, ultra-patricians of the type of Mr. Henry D. Sedgwick — who contends from the typical Harvard point of view in "The New American Type," 1908, that we are all careering to perdition through mob rule in literature and elsewhere, as fast as our motors and our other machines can speed us up — try to tell us that art at its best has always been the peculiar heritage and privilege of a specialized and patrician class. This we deny *in toto* and *seriatim*, and later we may proceed to prove our point in detail.

For the present we will simply point to the commercialized democracy of Athens; to the Doric simplicity and crudity of patrician Sparta; to the Corinthian and ultra-Corinthian degeneracy that followed democracy's fall in Greece and Rome; to the commercialized republics of Mediæval Italy, and the names of the great masters of plebeian and middle class blood that we can readily identify, from Giotto's time to Rodin's; finally to Elizabethan England after the strangle-hold of Roman Catholicism on free thought and free speech was loosened by Henry the Eighth, and Shakespeare and his compeers had voiced the new ideals of free speech and free thought shared by them with the Anglo Saxon free men and fighting men on land and sea: merchants, sea-captains, yeomen, peasant proprietors, adventurers, men of letters and of action, ultimate consumers and

original producers, (whose blood and whose spirit survive in us to-day),

Shortly after the New England oligarchy, backed by the gold of California and the centralized money power of New York and Pennsylvania, and commanded in the final struggle by Western men cast in the mold of Lincoln and Grant, had broken the strangle-hold of the slave trade and slave labor in the South and the states and territories yet to be settled and organized, Mark Twain and his fellow pioneers of free thought and free expression began to go back and forth organizing the criticism of local and individual initiative into something like coherent and representative form: the genesis of a new campaign of education to take the place of the older Abolitionist measures. And a more highly organized revolt against a more subtle form of wage and chattel slavery and intellectual oppression was already in the air.

In all this Mark Twain was consistently the typical American pioneer, the typical American journalist, who keeps his hands clean and remains his own man to the last, till he reached an eminence where he was enabled to speak as the first great prophet of democracy and of literature, of the people, by the people and preëminently for the people, in this country and in the modern world.

And the modern world, in one way or another, has recognized this fact. He was no college man, yet college and university men on both sides of the Atlantic have united to do him honor. He was no literary man till he had hewn out and refined his own technique, but literary men at home and abroad have

received him into their midst; some, like Mr. Howells, with life-long friendship; some at first with patronage, later as an equal and more than equal.

He was no business man or politician, yet he has been the one striking and significant figure in our whole literary history up to date who could mix with business men and politicians, as with all other sorts and conditions of men, women and children, on something like absolutely equal and human terms, giving as much as he got, and — what is more to the point in our dealings with business men and politicians nowadays — getting as much as he gave in the long run.

Before going on to analyze the secret of this power and the progress of the revolt that he led, let us pause a moment to take testimony by the way. William Lyon Phelps, senior professor of English literature at Yale at this writing, says in his Essays on Modern Novelists, 1910: “Although Mark Twain has the great qualities of the true humorist . . . common sense, human sympathy and an accurate eye for proportion; he is much more than a humorist. His work shows high literary quality, the quality that appears in first rate novels. . . . He has done something which many popular novelists have singularly failed to accomplish . . . he has created real character.”

He has done more than this: He has done what innumerable first or second rate literary men and women have failed and will fail to do till the end of time. He has immortalized an epoch and a locale in the South-western Mississippi Valley portraits of *Tom Sawyer*, *Huck Finn*, *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and

other characters in these three books. Professor Phelps calls the first two of these novels, prose epics of American life.

He goes on further to differentiate: "The creator of Tom exhibited remarkable observation, the creator of Huck showed the divine touch of the imagination: Tom is the American boy. He is smart . . . he displays abundant promise of future success in business. Huck is the child of nature, harmless, sincere and crudely imaginative. His reasonings with Jim about nature and about God belong to the same department of natural theology as that illustrated by Browning's Caliban. The night on the raft when these two creatures look aloft at the stars and Jim reckons the moon laid them is a case in point. . . . Nearly all healthy boys enjoy reading *Tom Sawyer*. Yet it is impossible to outgrow the book. . . . The other masterpiece is not really a child's book at all. . . . It is a permanent picture of a certain period in American history; . . . Mark Twain gives us both points of view; he shows us the beautiful side of slavery, for it had a wonderfully beautiful patriarchal side — he shows us also the horror of it.

"The living dread of the negro that he would be sold down the river, has never been more vividly represented than when the poor woman in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* sees the water swirling against the snag and realizes that she is bound the wrong way. That one scene makes a peculiar impression on the reader's mind and counteracts tons of polemics."

And again, briefly, "Mark Twain may be trusted to tell the truth, for the eye of the born caricaturist

always sees the salient point. . . . Mark Twain is through and through American . . . is our great democrat. Democracy is his political, social and moral creed. His hatred of snobbery, affectation and assumed superiority is total. His democracy has no limits; it is bottomless and far-reaching."

So much for Professor Phelps. To come back to Mr. Howells again, in an estimate written a good many years ago, "There is nothing lost in literary attitudes, in artificial 'dialect.' Mark Twain's humor is as simple and direct as the statesmanship of Lincoln and the generalship of Grant. . . . When I think how purely and wholly American it is I am a little puzzled at its minor exceptions.

"We are doubtless the most thoroughly homogeneous people that have ever existed as a great nation. . . . In another generation or two perhaps it will be different; but as yet the average American is the man who has risen; he has known poverty and privation, and now in his prosperity he regards the past (his own and the world's) with a large pitying amusement; he is not the least ashamed of it; he does not feel that it characterizes him any more than the future does.

"Our humor springs from this multiform experience of American life. It is not of a class, for a class . . . its conventions, if it has any, are all new and of American make. When it mentions hash we smile because we have each somehow known the cheap boarding-house or restaurant . . . the introduction of the lightning-rod man or book agent, establishes our relation with the humorist at once, . . . I suppose that Mark Twain transcends all other hu-

morists in the universal qualities — there is a poetic lift in his work even when he permits you to recognize it as something satirized. . . . There is always the touch of nature . . . the companionship of a spirit that is at once delightfully open and deliciously shrewd.

“Elsewhere I have tried to persuade the reader that his humor is at best the foamy break of the strong tide of earnestness in him. His powers as a story teller he proved in *Tom Sawyer* and *The Prince and the Pauper*. . . . I can think of no writer living who has in the same degree the art of interesting the reader from the first word.”

Mark Twain has done more than all this. He has lightened our hours of stagnation and spiritual ebb with the jumping frog of Calaveras, with the episode of Peter and the pain killer, with his wrestlings with the German language and other tales of travel at home and abroad, following the Equator and the more customary transatlantic tracks. According to Mr. Howells, writing while *The Gilded Age*, both as book and play, was still a recent memory, he had a large share in the production of the most successful American play up to date.

He has created characters immortal in literature. Through them he has immortalized an epoch; and he has made them voices of a new world gospel of freedom and fair play, of charity and humor, of the most simple and direct appreciation of the every-day things of our workaday life, and the commonest and most precious heritage of us all.

This spirit speaks in all his works. It makes *The Prince and the Pauper*, dedicated to two of

his daughters while still children, the best book for girls and boys alike, ever written in America. It irradiates and inspires the pages of his *Jeanne d'Arc*; it speaks most to the point, most searchingly, most uncompromisingly and most poignantly in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*.

Of this book Mr. Howells has said: "Since *Don Quixote* there has been nothing to compare with *The Connecticut Yankee*. . . . At any moment the scene amuses, but it is all the time an object lesson in democracy. . . . Here he is that Connecticut man, foreman of one of the shops in Colt's pistol factory and full . . . of the invention and self-satisfaction of the nineteenth century at the court of the mythic Arthur. He is promptly recognized as a being of extraordinary powers, and becomes the King's right hand man with the title of the Boss. . . . He starts a daily paper in Camelot, he torpedos a holy well. . . . It all ends with the Boss' proclamation of the Republic after Arthur's death and his destruction of the whole chivalry of England by electricity. . . . Arthur has his moments of being as fine and high as the Arthur of Lord Tennyson. . . . This book is in its last effect the most matter of fact narrative, for it is always true to human nature, the only truth possible, the only truth essential to fiction. . . . We must all recognize him here as first of those that laugh, not merely because his fun is unrivaled; but because there is a force of right feeling and clean thinking in it that never got into fun before except in *The Bigelow Papers*."

Very early in the book, published in 1889, Mark Twain strikes the key-note of fifty-three years of American simple living and high thinking. "Any kind of royalty howsoever modified, any kind of aristocracy however pruned, is rightly an insult. . . . It is enough to make a body ashamed of his race to think of . . . the seventh-rate rich people that have always figured as its aristocracies . . . the rest were slaves in fact but without the name; they imagined themselves men and freemen, and called themselves so.

"The truth was the nation as a body was in the world for one object and one only, to grovel before king and Church and noble, to slave for them, to sweat blood for them, sweat that they might be fed, drink misery to the dregs that they might be happy, go naked that they might wear silk and jewels, pay taxes that they might be spared from paying them, be familiar all their lives with the degrading language and postures of adulation, that they might walk in pride and think themselves the gods of this world."

Here we may pause for a moment to let this picture of England in the third century of its Christian era, this seamy side of the romance and fine distinction of chivalric and patrician pretension, first immortalized by Mark Twain in world literature, focus itself in its grim and naked essentials as presented here.

After that we may turn to our own conventionally Christian America of to-day and to-morrow, and mark the contrast — and the likenesses.

We are told that we have robber barons, captains

of industry, emperors of oil and beer, of steel and coal, of beef and wool, and all the prime necessities and staples of human life as we still live it. We know that we have special interests, millionaire and multi-millionaire tax dodgers and rebaters. We know that we have a rising cost of living and a rising age of marriage.

We know that we have child slaves in our factories and mines, and white slaves in our streets and Red Light districts. We begin to suspect that the story of our twenty million wage slaves in our factories, in our department stores, in our banks, in our clerical and business offices from New York to San Francisco, is something more than a journalistic lie.

We know that the language and postures of adulation and of cynical or subtle corruption do not represent a dead issue in America to-day. We know that our press is prostituted and subsidized directly and indirectly. We know that our literature, like our journalism, is to a large extent a literature of lies and of false pretense, of false values and ideals; a literature like our journalism of loudness and of extravagant impressionism; an impressionism that is at once cynically snobbish and brutally superficial, heartlessly indifferent and commercially debased.

We know this and we stand for it. What is more, we pay for it, we are taxed for it in one way or another, directly or indirectly. We profit by it, or think we do. We advertise and are advertised in it and through it, to the world and ourselves, as a new world nation of white Chinamen and decadent and indiscriminating barbarians.

When we are in the mood for it, we laugh at it all,

Notes
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and at ourselves as a part of the Great American Joke. Not so Mark Twain. To some extent, in his old age, he misread us and the drift of conditions that had evolved beyond his grasp and that of the generation he spoke for. He developed, as Mr. Howells tells us, the theory of the damned human race.

To some extent he was sufficiently justified in this, and in the pessimism which clouded and weakened the last years of his life. As his wife and daughters died, as the circle of his older friendships contracted, he began to follow the way of all flesh — save those few who formerly by the double happy accident of good fortune and fitness of temperament, or the many of to-day who through the widening sweep and scope of applied science in modern human relations, are able, through all trials of flesh and spirit, to see life steadily and to see life whole till the last.

To many the publication and the perusal of his autobiography has come as a shock and as a disappointment. Mr. Howells tells us that he never succeeded in engaging his friend in anything approaching a sociological discussion. Mark Twain was too essentially a product of his own age — that period of American history which began with the anti-slavery protest of the Boston Abolitionists and ended ingloriously in the anti-imperialist agitation of the late '90's, when the United States assumed definite obligations as a world power in both hemispheres — to find himself in sympathy or in close intellectual touch with the period of national expansion that followed.

With him the American frontier halted at the

Pacific coast; or at Hawaii at furthest; and the meaning and purpose of the wider frontiers of to-day's science and racial impulse, and our modern march by machinery towards wider and better issues, was in its broadest and highest aspect lost to him.

At the same time it stands written to his eternal credit, that so far as he did see he saw clearly; and when he spoke for publication to his own people and to all humanity, he spoke with no uncertain voice.

In the main what he tells us below is true to-day, as it was two thousand years ago, when Augustus Cæsar caused all the world to be taxed, and a Child was born in a manger in Judea. For all we can say definitely pro or contra, it may be as true, in the main, for the masses two thousand years from now on this planet. None the less, we are at liberty to believe that in his heart of hearts, Mark Twain had faith to the last with Carlyle, that "The first of all gospels is that a lie cannot endure forever." We may call it pardonable exaggeration or literary color in the utterance of a fictitious character, of which he himself was conscious, when he tells us:

"We speak of nature; it is folly; there is no such thing as nature, what we call by that misleading name is merely heredity and environment. We have no thoughts of our own, no opinions of our own. All that is original in us and therefore fairly creditable to us, can be covered up and therefore hidden with the point of a cambric needle, all the rest being atoms contributed by, and inherited from, a procession of ancestors that stretches back a billion of years to the Adam clam or grasshopper or

monkey, from which our race has been so tediously and unprofitably developed.

“And as for me, all that I think about in this plodding and sad pilgrimage, this pathetic drift between the eternities, is to look out and humbly live a pure and high and blameless life; and save that one microscopic atom in me that is truly *me* — the rest may land in Sheol and welcome for all I care.”

None the less throughout the book this needle-point of individuality speaks for all time and all humanity as well as for himself. In him democracy and his faith in it becomes a surgeon's tool for the pricking of all inflated pretensions and the lancing of to-day's and to-morrow's suppurating and insufferable sores.

Morgan le Fay stabs her page because he stumbles against her. The Boss, who holds a larger power of life and death in his hands, reproves her for the murder. “‘Crime’ she exclaimed, ‘how thou talkest! Crime forsooth! Man, I am going to pay for him.’”

Here we may pause again for the deadly parallel. Nowadays we do things with more apparent delicacy and indirection. Mrs. Le Fay of Newport and New York does not stab her page or her small hand-maid when the child stumbles against her. She is very careful to see that they do not. Any chance contact with them, in trolley or subway car, in the streets or public play-ground, in the wooded and well-watered square miles of private domains that her husband or her father has bought up and fenced in, in the house of God (least of all), or in her own town and country mansion or château would ap-

proximate a state of promiscuity and possible contagion equally unspeakable and incredible for the most refined minds and the fine flower of American Plutocracy up to date.

Morgan le Fay murders her own page with her own hand in her own house, and says that she is willing to pay for him. It is true that she was a lady of highly dubious reputation, in more ways than one. The Boss tells her bowing, "Madam, your people will adore you for this." None the less he tells us, "I meant to hang her for it some day if I lived."

Mrs. Le Fay (of New York and Newport) murders indirectly not one but a dozen or a hundred children, not once but every year she lives, in sweat shops, in department stores, in factories, in mines, on the streets where her motor passes; she denies to hundreds more every year the right to be born of American parents under a paper Constitution which proclaims life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness and free and equal opportunity for all. Consciously or unconsciously she pokes her jeweled fingers through it as she fondles her pet dogs; and we and the children she murders pay for it — and we do *not* adore her for it; though some of us still profess to have our doubts about the desirability of capital punishment — except in the case of negroes in a race war, or in the case of any of us who commits the civic crime of riding on railroads over-capitalized and unguarded by that eternal vigilance which is the price of freedom and life itself for individual and for race alike.

On the whole, we may go fairly far with Mark

Twain to look with some reasonable doubt on the result of our one hundred and thirty-six years' experiment in freedom for the masses that was guaranteed on paper. We may agree with him absolutely where he says: "The repulsive feature of slavery is the *thing*, not the name. One needs but to hear an aristocrat speak of the classes that are below him to recognize . . . and in but indifferently modified measure . . . the very air and tone of the actual slave holder . . . the result of the same cause in both cases, the . . . old and inbred custom of regarding himself as a superior being."

We may be present with him in spirit when the Boss empties the dungeons that Morgan le Fay has filled and sets free such of her captives as have left in them one spark of any further capacity for freedom than mere brute endurance of life.

We may or we may not take the parable to ourselves. We may or may not realize the Boss' unfitness to repair and re-animate those wrecked and wasted lives. We may or may not decide on how close or how vast a symbolism Mark Twain himself was conscious of in all this.

We may marvel at the malignity and refinement, at the ingenuity of hatred in the chatelaine who causes one man to be imprisoned on the edge of the cliff where he thinks he sees the successive funerals of all but one of his family through a long term of years; and at the comparative indifference with which he finds that they are all alive still when he is at last set free.

We can refuse to believe in all this. We can say that we have outgrown it all to-day. We can forget

or refuse to see the intangible prison of one law for the rich, another for the poor, that begins at the nation's borders with the iniquities of our protective tariff system, and dominates more or less absolutely the people of forty-eight free and sovereign states; which exists, long before he is born, in the life of every American child of the submerged tenth, or the wage earning classes, on which the increased cost of living falls hardest; and which never looses its grip on him till the day of his death, or till he rises above the level of his father and mother, or till he emigrates from the land or the slum that gave him birth and the right of the strongest to survive at the expense of the rest.

We can say that such hatred as Morgan le Fay's is impossible here to-day. We can disregard absolutely the blind greed and hatred of corporations, of shareholders and executive officers, against all who, directly or indirectly, stand in their way, and the malign ingenuity of corporation lawyers in making their transgressions judge-and-jury-proof — as absolutely as we disregard the suffering and injustice caused by a strike of electricians in Paris, a famine in China, a massacre of the Jews in Russia, or the sufferings of the prisoners in this story of Mark Twain's, that for the time being may be considerably more real and vital to us in this year of grace and land of freedom than the sufferings of our fellow countrymen and the rest of the world — provided our own pockets are not pinched and our skins remain unpunctured.

It is true that there are exceptions to prove the rule; that science in the medical profession and out

of it; and sociology, in the universities and social settlements, in the public play-grounds and recreation centers, in the institutional churches, in the Boy Scouts' movement, in the chemist's laboratory, in the inventor's workshop, in the passing and enforcement of pure food and pure drug laws and all laws that deal directly and effectively with the problems of humanity in the mass, are literally and progressively making the world over: the human and physical side of it, the moral and emotional, the intellectual and material sides as well; on the broadest and most lasting foundations in the individual and in the race; in ways that neither the race nor the individual dreamed of coherently fifty years ago, or in all the centuries of civilization or of barbarism before that.

It is true that Mark Twain, like most of the men of his generation, missed the point of all this. His fanatic intolerance of vivisection and vivisectionists may be cited here. At the same time he realized and expressed in the words of the Boss certain elemental laws of economics that are worth quoting.

"A man who hasn't had much experience and doesn't think, is apt to measure a nation's prosperity or lack of prosperity, by the mere size of the prevailing wages; if the wages are high the nation is prosperous; if low, it isn't. Which is an error.

"It isn't what sum you get; it's how much you can buy with it that's the important thing; and it's that that tells you whether your wages are high in fact or only in name. . . . There's a good many curious things about law and custom and usage and all that sort of thing — and about the drift and

progress of human opinion and movement too. There are written laws — they perish; but there are unwritten laws — they are eternal. Take the unwritten law of wages. It says that they've got to advance, straight through the centuries."

II.

So far we have heard the assertions and the estimates of this man and his friends, the friends of democracy.

We have worked out his own elementary political economy, up to the stage of the political economy that used to be taught in our schools and colleges forty or fifty years ago, when the drift of the law of wages was regarded chiefly as a problem in applied mathematics, an arbitrary law of social physics like the law of rent; when our elementary social consciousness was crudely expressed in unenforceable Blue Laws, in sentimental proclamations on paper of the rights of man, and by force of arms at a pinch; when the practical working out of these concepts in the lives of the practical American man or woman of the generation of Mark Twain and Mr. Howells was the condition and social aspiration of the climber, the strenuous hustler and unrelenting striver for success under a deficient theory of free competition, with the odds on the man who forcibly controlled, and the woman who advertised by the most lavish spending, the greatest aggregate of capital; when our democratic creed, cynical or humorously good natured, too often amounted to this: "Keep up with the procession — get to the top and stay there — and the Devil take the hind-

most — poor devils”; and when the evolutionary idea of the modern nation as a social and biologic organism that reacts on its environment progressively, and fits itself for survival and for wider usefulness only by a scientific observance of the laws of physical and moral health — an organism where the chronic malnutrition or diseased state of a considerable part becomes progressively a menace and a handicap to all — was still confined to the minds of a few of the world’s leading scientists.

Apparently this vision of the world of to-day and to-morrow, and the newer opportunities and obligations of its capitalists in thought and in concrete wealth, was no more granted to Mark Twain than it was to the majority of the American men and women who lived and died in the period ending with the publication of *A Connecticut Yankee*, and beginning some fifty years before.

Mr. Howells tells us, “He did not care much for money itself, but he luxuriated in the lavish use of it; and he was as generous in the use of it as ever a man was. He liked giving it but he commonly wearied of giving it himself. I believe he found no finality in charity, but did it because in its provisional way, it was the only thing a man can do.”

There are a good many people in America to-day whose point of view in this respect is about as mediæval and reactionary as Mark Twain’s was. They are not confined to those whose acquisitions and disbursements are of material wealth alone. Many of them are people of considerable culture and refinement, educational and intellectual force. Many of them will tell you that they are good Ameri-

cans, or that they try to be, so far as modern conditions will let them. Most of this class instinctively range themselves, openly or unconsciously, with the classes against the masses. Out of the fullness of their own culture, they dole out intellectual charity to others (when the mood strikes them), so far as they find those others fit for the reception of their preferred stock of artistic expression — within their own narrow experience — and through their own superficial study of the causes and conditions that affect us all.

Of these Mr. Henry Dwight Sedgwick, whose book *The New American Type*, and whose essay on *The Mob Spirit in Literature* sufficiently characterize his point of view, is typical. These people nowadays do not claim that they know it all. They do not even pretend to literary or artistic omniscience. Science has widened their point of view to that extent. But they do represent the point of view of the Bostonian literary Brahmin who believes that all he or she knows or feels, or cares to know or feel, is all that there is worth knowing or feeling. Apparently to this critic the literary product, the art and tendencies, of Miss Anne Douglas Sedgwick is of more significance and moment to America in the making than that of David Graham Phillips — to go no further.

Such men and women seem to have forgotten, or never to have grasped the fact that art of the people, by the people, for the people, in the great masters of all art and in the final popular appreciation of them and their works, is the only art worth while in the long run, the only art that proves its evolu-

tionary fitness to survive, and that will continue to prove it here and hereafter.

They have mistaken temporary roughness and inequality in the mold, temporary confusion and cluttering of scaffolding, temporary slowness and negligible mistakes in the laying of the foundation on the broadest possible basis of culture and humanity by the masses, of the masses, and for the masses of America, as final indications of democracy's defeat in the applied arts and sciences, cultures and inspirations of life.

In so far as their ideal is microscopic and searching as regards crudeness in the national fiber and defects in the national psychology, it is worth considering. In so far as it is partial and limited in its application to the wider national and racial viewpoint, it is negligible. Within these limitations Mr. Sedgwick is a fairly acute and significant critic.

He says of Mark Twain: "At the mention of his name the drift toward a depreciation of the democratic influences in literature is arrested. Democracy at once takes the offensive and roundly asserts itself. In his books Mark Twain has set forth, and in himself he embodies, the traits, the humors, the virtues, of a distinct people. This is the explanation of Mark Twain's fame. There are few things as interesting, as attractive, as instructive, as the man who without sacrificing a jot of his own individuality, stands out as the type of his country. He has in him one source at least of the fascination that a great work of art possesses, the embodiment of the type in the individual."

This is all very well as far as it goes. But Mr.

Sedgwick misses the essential point, as critics of his type and class are bound to miss it: that Mark Twain embodies and typifies not America alone, but humanity at large,—up to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century; up to the new era, the modern Renaissance and Reformation, the new heavens and the new earth, that science and the campaign of education generally, the muck-rate magazines, to be specific among other forces that Mr. Sedgwick and his fellow Brahmins apparently have neither use for, nor comprehension of, are making for the classes and the masses both in America and in the rest of the modern world. It is not enough for Mr. Sedgwick to say of Mark Twain that “the genius of America guided him through life,” or that “we know his high character, his courage, his sense of duty, his energy, his patience, his kindness, his chivalry, his adventurous temperament, and his morality; and we feel a sense of satisfaction to think that, fall as far behind and below as most of us do, he is the type to which most of us belong.”

It is not enough that he discriminates sanely when he says of Mark Twain's *Joan of Arc*: “He is not a professed historian. His *Joan of Arc* is an expression of noble enthusiasm. Here we find our self-confident American impatient with half-tones, shadows, uncertainties. To Mark Twain, the story of Joan is not the resultant of many forces working together, pushing from many points, all self-asserting but subservient to the final accomplishment, those antagonistic as necessary to her beauty as those that directly support her; to him

the story is a miracle of glory on a scaffold of badness."

In other words, Mark Twain has not succeeded here, with the labored patience of the literary artist, in creating an illusive atmosphere of the mediæval France of the fourteenth century, of her English and Burgundian invaders and pillagers, and of the French and Italian autocracy of ecclesiasticism that pulled the wires and swayed the issues on either side, behind the scenes and before them, to the Maid's final defeat and death. She is not shown as a product of evolution toward democracy's final triumph, like the forces that suppressed her.

Mr. Howells sees this in part when he tells us: "I suspect that his armor is of tin, that the castles and rocks are of pasteboard, that the mob of citizens and of soldiers who fill the air with the clash of their two up and two down combats have been hired at so much a night. . . . A very jolly thing about it, and a true thing, is the fun that her people got out of the affair. It is a vast frolic in certain aspects, that mystical mission of the inspired Maid, and Joan herself is not above having her laugh at times."

It may not be a vast frolic, but Mark Twain has made us see that life in fourteenth century France was not all unmixed shadow and unmitigated hell for children and for grown-ups both. He is artist enough to give us the effect of contrast, to develop the lighter sides of his theme before working up to the black horror at the end. More than this, Mark Twain, with his usual directness, has struck at the heart of the whole matter. He has shown us the heart of childhood, and the maiden soul of France

and of all humanity, led by visions and sustained by an ideal that perishes not; overcoming, while its hour lasts, greed and hatred, licentiousness and abject indifference, the lust of power that fattens on the world's wretchedness, and the cynicism that holds itself secure and aloof from the rest of the world. He has shown us the rise and fall of a reform movement in French politics, and the inevitable loss of faith and of fervor that culminates, when this unorganized reform wave has reached its limit, in the shameful abandonment and betrayal of its leader to the organized powers that prey.

So it was in the days of Gethsemane and of Calvary. So it always will be as long as it is expedient that one man or one woman shall die for the people and shall rise again enthroned forever in the deathless memory of all mankind.

Truth stands on the scaffold to-day, and toils in its shadow much as it did in the days before the Civil War when Lowell wrote, or in the dark ages when the Maid led her armies. Wrong is on the throne in twentieth century America as it was in the year when the fagots were lighted in a certain square in Rouen, or the year when the cross was raised on a certain hill outside Jerusalem.

The world is both better and worse now than it was then, as a strong man who is far from a saint and not altogether a devil is both better and worse than the average growing boy.

One thing insurgent literature, starting with the Old Testament prophets and the Gospels, and insurgent humanity everywhere have won, and hold securely through the centuries. Evil may do evil still

on a larger and more wholesale scale than ever. It does not raise its scaffolds; it does not make its martyrs in the open as it once did five hundred or nineteen hundred years ago.

And it is to men like Mark Twain, of Mark Twain's type, of Mark Twain's courage and directness of vision, of Mark Twain's intolerance of evil, of cruelty and of sham, of every invasion and perversion of truth — to men of Mark Twain's democracy and Mark Twain's racial inheritance — that the world to-day owes most, and of whom America and the world expect most, in the world's battle for freedom and the square deal now and forever.

There is another side of Mark Twain's life and personality as a pioneer of the days that are past that we cannot afford to forget. It may be epitomized in the following quotation from *Life on the Mississippi*. "The face of the water became a wonderful book . . . a book that was a dead language to the uneducated passenger, but which told its mind to me without reserve, delivering its most cherished secrets as clearly as if it uttered them with a voice.

"And it was not a book to be read once and thrown aside, for it had a new story every day. Throughout the long twelve hundred miles there was never a page that was void of interest, never one that you could leave unread without loss, never one that you would want to skip, thinking you could find higher enjoyment in some other thing.

"There was never so wonderful a book written by men, never one whose interest was so absorbing, so unflagging, so sparkingly renewed with every perusal.

“The passenger who could not read it was charmed with a peculiar sort of faint dimple on its surface (on the rare occasions when he did not overlook it altogether), but to the pilot that was an *italicized* passage; indeed it was more than that, it was a legend in the largest capitals, with a string of shouting exclamation-points at the end of it; for it meant that a wreck or a rock was buried there, that could tear the life out of the strongest vessel that ever floated.

“It is the faintest and simplest expression the water ever makes and the most hideous to the pilot’s eye . . . a day came when I began to cease from noting the glories and the charms which the moon and the sun and the twilight wrought on the river’s face; another day when I ceased altogether to notice them. Then if that sunset scene had been repeated, I should have commented on it after this fashion:

“‘This sun means that we are going to have wind to-morrow, that floating log means that the river is rising . . . that silver streak in the shadow of the forest is the “break” of a new snag, . . . that tall dead tree with a single living branch is not going to last long, and then how is a body ever going to get through this black place at night without the friendly old landmark?’ No, the romance, the beauty, were all gone from the river. All the value any feature of it had now was the amount of usefulness it could furnish towards compassing the safe piloting of a steamboat.”

There is a clarity and a distinction about the English and the thought of most of this that is hard to match, just as there is a clarity and distinction about the life and the character of the author that we

must look far to find the fellow of in twentieth century America.

Mark Twain, like most of our own great men, like most of the great men of all times that the world remembers longest, was above and beyond common humanity, chiefly in virtue of the essential largeness and simplicity of his interpretation of life and of the work that remains to bear witness to that interpretation. Largeness and simplicity in his case is democratic and American, as it is of all time and of all humanity in the best and highest sense.

Such simplicity, such directness in his case, is by no means as commonplace, as utterly devoid of subtlety and richness of meaning as the superficial and the unschooled are wont to imagine. It is the higher simplicity which is the simplicity of humanity at large and in the mass forever, that wears away or overruns all obstacles in the course of the centuries; that fuses and sublimates the indeterminate sources of wealth and strength, and makes them elements in the end of the one eternal purpose it was put here on earth to perform. It is like the flow of the great river whose pages he has pictured for us.

Near that river he was born. On its waters, through its varying currents, the larger lessons of his life came to him till he learned to read the hearts of men and of children as he learned to read the face of the waters. Of women he knew and cared to know comparatively little. The type that appealed to him most, as to the other Pioneer fathers of his generation and breed, was the simple and direct type that had its spiritual kinship with him and with the Maid herself. One other such

he epitomizes in the mouth of Huck Finn. "She had the most grit of any woman I ever seen. . . . She would have prayed for Judas himself."

Mark Twain for all his wanderings, for all his long residence abroad after the year 1890, was essentially a home body. He had his own women folk, his own wife and daughters, as he had his own homes where his soul took root. And when the last and nearest of these died, he died too. No one can read the lines written immediately after the death of his daughter Jean, and published later in the *North American Review*, without seeing how his last hold on life loosened, and his last interest on earth became in truth dust and ashes.

Human nature at its best, as we know it, has its inevitable limitations of age and partial discernment. If Mark Twain had been a man of another type; if his beliefs and affections had been less inseparably rooted in their narrowness and intensity; he might have been alive to-day, and more or less honored in his survival, as the world honors or fails to honor those who hold the mirror to it.

If he had been more of a psychologist, more of a portrait painter after the manner of certain lady novelists and of Mr. Robert W. Chambers, he might have analyzed more or less mercilessly the modern American woman of whom we are least proud, the type that advertises us at home and abroad most loudly and most extravagantly; and he might have set her off more effectively than our most widely read American novelists have done or tried to do, by contrast with the type of women that he did know and did love, and who exist to-day as women

of the type of Jane Addams and of Clara Barton, or of the wives and mothers of most of our great men, from Grant and Lincoln down to the present hour, to give birth to the Great Republic's great ideals, and to the children and the grand-children that shall secure them.

However, being such as he was, the typical American of his time, these things did not tempt him to put his pen on paper; his fame rests secure as it is; American and world literature may be the poorer in actual product; it remains the richer potentially.

If Mark Twain had been more of a scientist, as science applies itself to-day to the every-day, workaday life of mankind in the mass; if he had been more of a sociologist, more of a discerning and progressive patriot, as America is making such patriots to-day — slowly, and with infinite pains and labors by the masses, and with an infinity of mistakes by all, high or low, who misuse and misapply power and opportunity — then he might have written greater books still, of even larger human application and great insight and sympathy; he might have died happier and even more beloved; or hated, misrepresented, vilified, hounded to his grave and beyond it, as no literary man and prophet of democracy, outside of Russia, ever has been in modern times.

As it is, he enjoys the unique distinction of typifying his country and his century up to a certain point, of immortalizing an epoch like himself, and of being made to recognize what such immortality, and what the world commonly sees in it, are worth to-day, before his death.

It is said that the gods are jealous of any man

to whom so much is given, who wrests so much from them. Certain it is that the higher a man or a nation rises in the scale of existence on this planet, the more that man or that nation has to pay for it, in one way or another, sooner or later. Certain it is that the few last years of Mark Twain's life were in many ways a tragedy, relieved by few gleams of hope.

Certain it is that none the less he remained, to the last, a free man, born and bred of a people once free, of a nation that won the last great war for freedom in modern history — to the last an inveterate foe of tyranny and corruption, of monopoly and of special privilege, of cruelty and of lies in every form which the machinery of government and of ingrained prejudice and superstition hangs on the necks of high and low alike.

This has been exemplified already in various extracts from his books. One extract more from his speech made before the organization committee of the Order of Acorns in New York City, published shortly afterwards in the November number of the *North American Review*, 1901, will recall to many what they would not willingly forget; and will define the man's temper and his public spirit unmistakably.

Here he draws a parallel, destined to become historic, between Warren Hastings' misrule in India and Tammany's in New York. He uses the words of Edmund Burke to denounce Croker and Tammany, as Burke denounced Hastings and East Indian misrule. He tells us: "The Calcutta Tammany — like our own Tammany — had but one principle, one

policy, one moving spring of action — avarice, money lust. So that it got money it cared not a rap about the methods. It was always ready to lie, forge, betray, steal, swindle, cheat, rob; and no promise, no engagement, no contract, no treaty made by its Boss was worth the paper it was printed on or the polluted breath that uttered it. Is the parallel still exact? It seems to me to be twins.”

It seems to me that if we draw another parallel, still more modern, and for “our own Tammany” read “our own System,” we have still another family likeness in the long history of Anglo-Saxon and American aggression and fraud that can give us no just cause for national or individual pride.

It is well that we should not forget these words of Mark Twain’s nor those that follow. “The most of us know no Hastings but Macaulay’s, and there is good reason for that. When we try to read the impeachment charge against him we find that we cannot endure the pain of the details. They burn, they blister, they wrench the heart, they drive us out of ourselves. . . . We realize that Tammany’s (the System’s) fundamental principle is monopoly — monopoly of office; monopoly of the public feed-trough; monopoly of the black-mail derived from protected gambling hells; protected prostitution-houses, protected professional seducers of country girls for the New York prostitution market, and all that; monopoly all around, ‘in some sense or other.’ . . . We know (if Edmund Burke were here in New York to-day) that he would paraphrase his majestic impeachment of Warren Hastings and say to the voters of New York (America)—

“ ‘ We know that we can commit safely this great metropolis (nation) into your hands.

“ ‘ Therefore it is with confidence that, ordered by the people I impeach this man (these men “ higher up ”) of high crimes and misdemeanors. I impeach him in the name of the people whose trust he has betrayed.

“ ‘ I impeach him in the name of all the people of America whose national character he has dishonored.

“ ‘ I impeach him in the name and by virtue of those eternal laws of justice which he has violated.

“ ‘ I impeach him in the name of human nature itself, which he has cruelly outraged, injured and oppressed in *both sexes, in every age, rank, situation and condition of life.* ’ ”

All other things aside, this is journalism, and journalism of a very high order, such as one seldom sees in the press of New York nowadays. It is the kind of journalism for which the demand nowadays is unrepresented or spasmodic. It is so immediately and adequately to the point, that one wonders instantly why no one had thought to draw the same parallel before. It is true that the calling of a journalist in New York nowadays does not demand as essential part of its equipment any practical acquaintance with the writings of Macaulay and the other great English, American and world classics that deal with the concrete facts of history and evolution in their relation to the eternal principles of right and wrong, of destructive and constructive statesmanship and commercial growth.

It is also true that Mark Twain as a journalist, in the intensity and uncompromising quality of his con-

victions, as well as in his world wide acceptance, was a man apart.

It is only one more count in the long catalogue of lies, injuries, treasons, indecencies, inadequacies and failures of New York journalism during the last fifty years — the Wall Street-inspired perversion of truth and justice that has made the metropolitan press of to-day, directly or indirectly, prostituted or subsidized, the most cynically immoral press in the world's history — that Mark Twain as a journalist has never received from it the employment, the opportunity, the encouragement, the recognition of talents of a supremely high order like his own, that journalism in New York has so long owed to the metropolis, to the nation and to itself. Such journalism as we have there to-day will pay one hundred thousand to five hundred thousand dollars a year gladly to the man who can increase the circulation of its yellowest yellow journal, by the yellowest yellow journal methods, and hold the pace that he has set. For a man who can and will write as Mark Twain did, it has offered, it offers, it will offer nothing.

There is a certain type of mind in America to-day, largely represented by the newspaper press of New York and our other cities, to whom this kind of thing appeals solely as verbal fireworks and erratic rhetoric. Even at that, fireworks frequently lift the eyes to the sky and the stars, if there is any inclination and capacity to look up; and rhetoric still has its place, and will continue to have, in the making of America.

It was the rhetoric of William Travers Jerome — of his avowed and reiterated belief that you can't repeal the ten commandments, and that "Thou shalt

not steal” and that “Thou shalt not commit adultery” or cause it to be committed, by wholesale and through machine organization — no less than Edmund Burke’s and Mark Twain’s own rhetoric in the latter’s last important public preachment, that had an incalculable effect in New York’s successful revolt against Tammany and machine rule in the year of grace 1901.

It is true that the next revolt, four years later, failed, and that during those four years and the rest that followed, the grip of the System and the machine has tightened, superficially, on us all; and that America, as a nation and the world’s last great experiment in democracy, seems to have less and less to be proud of every year we live.

It is true that this sort of thing inevitably tends to affect the lives of our literary men and to cripple and degrade their literary output. It is true that certain aspects of the evolutionary transformation through which this country is now passing helped to sadden and embitter Mark Twain’s last years.

Just how far he was able to see that behind the big political boss stands the big business boss; behind the vote trust, the meat trust, the flour trust, the wool trust, the oil trust, the steel trust, the money trust, the news trust, the thought trust; just how far he was able to forecast the commercialization and the falsification of the news columns of our metropolitan dailies, and the attempted increase in postage rates on second class advertising matter aimed at our muck-rake magazines — this we shall never be able to know.

All that — his private view of the case, as he has not expressed it — concerns us comparatively little.

What does concern us are the conditions which we as fellow Americans of this man have to face here and now.

What does concern us, what we cannot afford to forget and never shall, is the spirit of the man and of the men and women of his generation, which is still alive in us and ours, all superficial and machine-made considerations to the contrary.

Taken in their bulk, the life and writings of Mark Twain, like the life and work of Lincoln and Grant and the men nearest to these three, may be regarded as a permanent national asset beside which all the millions of Wall Street stand like the toy savings-banks one gives to children to play with.

Regarded as mere literature and works of art, *Tom Sawyer*, *Huck Finn*, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, *Joan of Arc*, *A Connecticut Yankee*, remain not alone as permanent contributions to world literature, not merely as high water marks of American literary character and American artistic achievement up to date, not merely as the older generation's inspiration and trumpet call to the new in an hour of trembling for the purblind and weak-hearted, but as partial promises of the American literature that is yet to be, and lasting written guarantees and charters of democracy's final triumphant march to heights unwon, undreamed of, unsurveyed, equally by the men and women of to-day and the ages and the literatures that have gone to to-day's making.

II

HENRY JAMES: EXPATRIATE

“The human machine is what interests me most. . . . Save for three or four big buildings, most of them *affreux*, it (Washington) looks like a settlement of negroes. You go into the Capitol as you would into a railroad station . . . no functionaries, no door-keepers, no officers, no uniforms, no reservations; . . . nothing but a crowd of shabby people circulating in a labyrinth of spittoons.” *The Point of View*, 1882.

“My figures are studied from life. I have a little menagerie of monkeys whose frolics I contemplate by the hour. As for the cats, I have only to look out of the back window. . . . What do you say to my types, *signore?* Cats and monkeys—monkeys and cats . . . all human life there.’—He took up the little groups . . . they consisted each of a cat and a monkey, fantastically draped in some preposterously sentimental conjunction. They exhibited a certain sameness of motive, and illustrated chiefly what in delicate terms may be called gallantry and coquetry . . . they were strikingly clever and expressive—I confess that they failed to amuse me.” *The Madonna of the Future*, 1879.

THE attitude towards America and life at large of our most misrepresentative and un-American novelist of contemporary cosmopolitan life is sufficiently indicated by the first quotation. It is true that, with his usual indirection, he puts his own words into the letter of one Bostonian and expatriate temporarily on this side of the Atlantic, who is writing to a sympathetic soul in Paris.

It is true that in the same loosely novelized collection of letters, Mr. James tries to suggest the Ameri-

can point of view, caricatured, through a medium as uninspiringly evasive as the contents of ninety-nine per cent. of the eight thousand pages in twenty-four volumes collected in 1909 in the New York edition of his novels and tales. Any superficial study of his life and work will convince the earnest seeker for truth on which side of the Atlantic his interests and sympathies have lain for half a century — and still lie.

The quotation from *The Madonna of the Future*, obviously directed against the conventional Parisian and Continental treatment of “the eternal triangle” and similar sexual problems, has come in time’s revenges to be a sufficiently pointed characterization of his own later manner and point of view, as exemplified notably in *The Sacred Fount*, and in shorter selections of de-naturalized fiction smelling of the moral dissecting-room, such as may be found in *The Better Sort* and *The Finer Grain*.

Possibly “decadent” is sufficiently Transatlantic, sufficiently vague in its implications, to define him sufficiently for all practical purposes in a single word for the vast majority of contemporary Americans, of both sexes and an average amount of culture and natural critical acumen, who for one reason or another — curiosity, original research, intellectual and social snobbery, the power of literary suggestion, and sheer self defense — have been led, are led to-day and may still be led in generations still unborn to interest themselves in him and his productions.

To suggest that he is, and always has been, superlatively patronizing in his attitude towards the world at large, and towards all literary art save the pro-

ductions of his own pen and those of recognized masters of his own point of view, is to venture no further than the titles already quoted and the abysmal difference between pretension and achievement fully justify.

Henry James at his best is a brilliant critic and an incisive social observer and chronicler, within the narrow range of his own temperamental limitations and literary and social instincts. One may call him a good critic gone wrong and be fairly within the truth; but even as critic alone, his capacity for seeing life (and art) solidly and seeing it whole is, to say the least, limited.

Mr. William C. Brownell has something to say about Mr. James's curiously narrow critical and appreciative range, in time and in method as well, in *American Prose Masters* (Scribner's '09). Those who for one reason or another are content to study in detail Mr. James's art and artistry as novelist and critic both, will find much that is interesting and suggestive in Mr. Brownell's long and closely knit essay.

Mr. Brownell handles Mr. James elaborately — with gloves on. To my mind he wastes considerable time from the point of view of a literary precisian in trying to prove or suggest just how and why Mr. James has developed his peculiar idiosyncrasies of artistic and vital expression.

From the point of view of the average American reader of some education and culture, and of more brains and active benevolence, busy with a thousand more vital interests at home and abroad, I may apparently be about to do the same thing.

Such men and women may say, if they care to take the time:

“Admitting that Henry James at his worst is as bad as you think or would have us think; admitting that he may be, at his best, at least considerably better than you seem inclined to rate him; how does this all concern us?”

“Why break, or try to break, a butterfly on a wheel for our benefit who must read while we run, in trains, ferry boats, trolley cars and on subway and elevated platforms? Why not choose some novelist and some subject of more intimate and lasting interest to us all if you hope in any way to secure our interest and active coöperation in your main object?”

To this the more obvious answer is that this book was not written for busy people alone; the less obvious one, that simian and anti-social pretense and self-sufficiency, literary and journalistic scandal-mongering and snobbery, and the purveying of false ideals of culture and special privilege are worse than symptomatic: they are epidemic to-day in a large and increasing mob of Americans by birth, on both sides of the Atlantic. As such, in their causes and evolutionary origins and survivals, and with reference to such twentieth century American civilization as we have so far evolved, they deserve to be studied here to-day quite as much as the qualities that are their exact opposites and partial correctives.

Henry James (plus the increasing class of American women, briefly characterized by David Graham Phillips as possessed of the souls of fog banks, whose

false prophet of sterile and reactionary culture this author seems to be) is by no means a negligible quality in the America of to-day and of to-morrow.

And America and the rest of the world has begun very widely to recognize this fact. We can't afford to break a single butterfly on the wheel too often, not even to encourage the others. We can't pay too much attention to the withered leaves and the blighted buds of the tree of culture and of life — without looking further into the conditions and the causes of the insect pests and parasites that attack the roots and infest the trunk and branches of the tree — if we are to initiate or carry forward progressively such a sound policy of literary and critical conservation in things American as the day and hour calls for.

If we are to do any really useful work along lines of moral and emotional conservation, we can't waste too much time trying to draw the comparison too closely between Mr. James and the rest of his "intensely" egotistical and microscopic-minded tribe and the mosquito. We may merely remark in passing that this insect is intensely disagreeable as an individual whenever and wherever it insists on poking its nose into our nerve centers and the *lingerie* of our private lives; and that, as a class, it becomes increasingly dangerous and pestilential as a carrier of disease as the world's population spreads, until the progressive modern community is roused to begin a systematic campaign for the final rooting out of the species and its breeding places.

However far-fetched and unjust to Mr. James as a single writer and literary snob and false prophet of curiosity for the sake of curiosity, and of pretense

for the pride of pretense, this comparison may seem to some, the fact remains that the method of science in all constructive and progressive modern criticism in all the arts is to go back to the origins of things and to follow nature's own analogies, when no better formula is at hand, in the consideration of any problem worth serious thought or discussion.

To understand just "Why *is* Henry James?" in the slang of the hour, we need not go back farther for the purposes of this brief survey, than the last three hundred years of Anglo-Saxon civilization in New England.

Treated as an evolutionary product of the New England conscience supremely misdirected and misapplied along its own narrowest line of least resistance in cosmopolitan society and in hotels and pensions of greater or less social pretensions in England and the continent, the development of this son of a Swedenborgian clergyman, brother of a Harvard professor and one of America's most distinguished psychologists — educated chiefly in France and Switzerland, domiciled for the greater part of his life in or near London, and misunderstanding and misunderstood by his country-men and country-women for more than half a century — becomes an epic in little of human error and intellectual futility beside which the most elaborately depressing of his own eight hundred page novelizations subsides into comparative insignificance.

Hardly even the most minutely patient and painstaking Germanic critics could or would find time to work through the ten thousand or more close pages

of Mr. James' complete works, after the severely accurate manner of modern scientific research, in the hope of rousing the world to listen to the detailed result of his investigations.

The present writer has no such wild ambitions. Such novels, tales, criticisms and dramatizations of Mr. James as he does mention, however, he does know something of, from more than hearsay. In effect he claims the right to generalize, as well as to particularize, constructively as well as destructively.

Mr. James, like the rest of us, deserves to be studied first and last as a product or by-product and partial factor of environment. As a product or by-product of several spiritual and intellectual generations of New England old maids in trousers and petticoats, transplanted to foreign soil and forced to adjust themselves to the changed conditions of their environment with indifferently neuter results, Mr. James in the earlier years of his career gave to the world a series of human documents of more or less lasting value.

Mr. Brownell calls them contemporary sociological studies of cosmopolitan interest.

This may be to over-estimate their importance as such. We have no evidence that Mr. James has ever been widely translated, or ever will be.

We may pause in passing to pity the translator of anything conceived in his later manner, and note such futilities, infelicities, mannerisms and perversions of an originally admirable and lucid natural style, as: "She nevertheless condescended further to mention . . . he disingenuously asked . . . she quite gloriously burst forth . . . he drove it in-

timately, inordinately home . . . he disposed of a curtailed murmur . . . I quite literally mean that . . . her lovely silly eyes"—comparable only to the temperamental or conscientious fussiness of New England old maidenhood or the premature senility of the weakly uninspired male.

Doubtless short stories like *Daisy Miller*, *The Madonna of the Future*, *Mme. de Mauves*, *The Last of the Valerii*, *The Passionate Pilgrim*, *The Chaperone*, *The Pension Beaurepas*; novels like *The American*, *The Siege of London*, *The Europeans*, *Washington Square*, and *The Spoils of Poynton*; later brief efforts like *Mona Montravers* and *The Bench of Desolation*, and intolerably long and diffuse dissertations and exemplifications of Mr. James' peculiar theories of intense personality and indirect values, will continue to have a certain lasting interest to the literary antiquarian and technical critic who can find time for them, and to readers of a certain type of mind corresponding most closely to the author's own.

Unpartisan criticism may eventually decide that certain of the literary products listed above, like minor masterpieces in all the arts, are worthy of examination in detail, and of a permanent place in literature *per se*, and may determine for posterity's delectation, if not our own, just how far Mr. James' theory and practice has accelerated and retarded the development of the short story, the novel, the closet drama, the volume of literary travel notes, and rational literary criticism and appreciation within specialized literary limits, both in America and elsewhere.

Sound literary criticism, in all ages since literary criticism had a voice and insight of its own, has sooner or later learned to view a masterpiece like the *Odyssey*, the *Ædipus Tyrannus*, the *Antigone*, the *Æneid*, the *Inferno*, the *Paradiso*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, Balzac's *Cousin Bette*, Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, Turgenev's *On the Eve*, Tolstoi's *Anna Karenina*, Zola's *Germinal*, Meredith's *The Egoist*, Norris' *The Octopus*, with reference to the epochs and the localities that produced them. It has learned to criticise the great masters, who have spoken characteristically as the voices and souls of all these various times and places, with reference not only to their place technically in art, but rather with a view to their attitude towards life and human activity at large.

Just so long as Mr. James himself and his most fanatic admirers challenge comparison with the great masters of all literature on something like an equal footing, it becomes the privilege and obligation of every sincere and scientific critic to apply the same ultimate standard of measuring up or down to him — and inferentially to the disciples of fog bank culture who claim through their extreme devotion, real or apparent, to this author, to be exalted above all other literary standards, human and divine, and to be capable of interpreting what they presume to tell us something like ninety-nine per cent. of the human race, as it exists to-day, is unfit and unable to understand and enjoy.

As to the sum total of pure enjoyment to be had from reading, more or less leisurely, any book like *The Golden Bowl*, *The Awkward Age*, *The*

Wings of the Dove, or *The Sacred Fount*, ninety-nine per cent. of the human race is probably willing to waive the point. Science has sufficiently demonstrated for us the literal truth of "what is one man's meat is another's poison." It does not necessarily demonstrate my own physical, mental and moral superiority to my neighbor, or *vice versa*, if I prefer my own racial appreciation of rare tenderloin steak, Chambertin '89 and lobster à la Newburg (when I'm in the mood and have the money for them) to his or her vegetarian ideal of Educator crackers, Postum Cereal coffee and an assorted diet of uncooked fruits and nuts. Similarly with our literary tastes and predictions, provided those of both are sincere and fit for us in our varying stages of growth.

Scholastic literary criticism in America to-day does not concern itself greatly with this varying standard of tastes where Henry James is to the fore. Professor William P. Trent of Columbia University, in the revised edition of his *History of American Literature*, may be taken as typical of this point of view. Condensed from a bare page about Mr. James in a volume that devotes many pages to men that were his contemporaries in and near Boston when he saw fit to abandon it, we have these sentences: "If it were necessary to describe Mr. James in one word, that word would be subtle. . . . Although his style has become involved beyond measure, he has an audience of intense admirers. That this audience is limited, and that its members are regarded with sympathetic solicitude by their friends cannot be denied;—and whatever we say of Mr. James' fiction, there

should be but one opinion of his exceptional brilliancy as a critic."

Professor Trent remains sufficiently on the fence to state in passing that Robert Browning also was appreciated, in the early stages of his career, only by a limited circle of admirers.

Professor Harry Thurston Peck, formerly of Columbia University and editor of *The Bookman*, fixes Mr. James' place in the universe still more felicitously. In *The Personal Equation*, 1898, he says — "Mr. Henry James no doubt is also in his way a critic of life; but his little corner of observation is so very little, his lenses are so carefully adjusted to one particular focus, and his instrument is so obviously an opera-glass and not the telescope as to make his books the impressions of a first-nighter rather than the accurate and cosmic view of a sociological astronomer."

If any reader needs further proof of Mr. James' inveterate tendency to ignore the real values of life in favor of the artificial and theatrical ones, he is invited to turn to *The Tragic Muse* forthwith, and to observe how easily Professor Peck might rest his case on the testimony of this one book alone.

Amateurish feminine criticism in the person of Elizabeth Luther Cary — also author during the last dozen years of *Browning, Poet and Man*; *Tennyson, His Home, His Friends and His Work*; *William Morris, Poet, Craftsman, Socialist*; *The Rossettis, Dante Gabriel and Christina*; *Ralph Waldo Emerson, Poet and Thinker*; all published at an average price of \$3.50 net "beautifully illustrated . . . paper and typography superb," if one of the

largest New York manufacturing houses of books for the Fog-ridden are to be fully relied on — is not on the fence at all, though she appears to affect a temporary attitude of broad-minded non-partisanship in the first few paragraphs of her introductory chapter.

Later in the same section she tells us that “the patriot must inevitably welcome, almost with a sense of pious gratitude, a long series of impressions made upon a mind prepared to receive the fine, elusive, imperceptible seed of English and European influences, to nourish it with the substance of a rich intelligence, and bring it to a luxuriant fruitage of ripe reflection. Perhaps it is indeed necessary to belong to the disinherited in order to look on the overwhelming complicated social spectacle of London with a gaze at once interested and detached, . . . The novelist of manners, to use again a phrase commonly limited to half its meaning, is of necessity a person dedicated to his occupation. . . . What he personally stands for in his criticisms, and what he indefatigably acts upon in his novels and stories is this simple and supreme idea of combining what a critic of painting would call tactile values with the greatest possible amount of spiritual truth. . . . This interrogation of the invisible, united to an unremitting effort towards completeness of evocation constitutes his extraordinary distinction.”

In all this it is possible that Miss Cary thinks she has a definite and logical conception of what she and Mr. James are driving at. It is possible she may be perfectly sincere in her attitude of commercially interpretative hero-worship. It has been characteristic of women in all ages to worship, think they worship,

pretend they worship, and in one way or another to exploit and be exploited by things and people they fail to understand.

Leaving the women to themselves and their idols for the time being, let us put Mr. John C. Hervey on the witness-stand with reference to Mr. James.

In the *Chicago Evening Post* weekly book review for December 9th, 1910, he states: "When he was last 'in our midst' for a few shuddering fortnights, I recall the loathing that he expressed at the face of the American business man, 'the American business face' as he expressed it. The attitude, the remark, were alike significant. For the typical American business face — oftener than not is an admirable one, a face of fine lines and superb contours, devoid neither of nobleness nor strength. Possibly it is its strength that revolts Mr. James — that quality is so remote from him — when confronted with the builder of cities and controller of men. . . . There is still another aspect of Mr. James — his attitude of patronage. No writer of our time has dispensed so much of it. Whether his subject be a mediæval cathedral, Niagara, or a minor poet, if he approve, patronize he inevitably must and will — no completer egotist has ever put pen to paper. And that explains his success as critic — for criticism is only the reaction of things criticised upon the adventurous soul that has discovered them."

Mr. James has rarely ventured farther in his public utterances, writings and ponderable soul experiences, than from Boston to Italy via London and Paris; or backward in time, through certain restricted literary and artistic vistas during the last

three hundred years. Consequently he finds himself not at all at home in twentieth century America, and very much at home in seventeenth and eighteenth century London and Paris as still preserved to us.

Mr. Hervey concludes: "It is, I understand, a fact which he has himself admitted, that the great majority of the readers of Mr. James are women, which is again a testimony to his cat-likeness. . . . Men I think, find it difficult to admire Mr. James because his work is all texture and no fiber. . . . Of real manliness there is no more in him than in an androgyne. . . . Some of his women are convincing, but his men never are as men."

Mr. Carter Irving in a signed criticism of *The Finer Grain* in the *New York Times* of November 5th, 1910, has this to say: "Mr. Henry James imputes to 'refined'—and therefore morbid and inconclusive—persons, delicacies of apprehension and intricacies of sensibility which they probably do not in fact possess. . . . It argues Mr. James' naïve consciousness of his essential inadequacy that the person who most largely in any one of these sketches shares the qualities which, in a literary sense, are Mr. James' own, is reduced to a rôle of more or less ignominious passivity. . . . The result in Mr. James' case, is not merely to terrify the indolent, but to blur the meaning for the precise, and to shock the fastidious. . . . The impression to the more robust is that of a mincing fop with a monocle. . . . It seems almost impossible not to accuse the novelist of having dazzled himself with a vision, which pre-supposes in the seer of the vision an abyss of snobbishness

which one is reluctant to admit as even possibly existent in Mr. James."

On the strength of the evidence so far submitted, and Mr. James' known attitude as writer and expatriate towards the land of his birth, and towards progressive democracy in art and in life, insurgent literary criticism in America is well within its rights in characterizing him as an essentially parochial intellect, degenerating in the course of his long residence abroad into a still more microscopic observer of a still more contracted sphere and function of art and life; a gradually clouding mirror of the characteristically feministic culture that befogs itself, and a highly unprofitable vivisector of vacuums, of the last vacuities of human folly, pretense and pretentiousness.

This is not to say or suggest that Mr. James is consciously all, or most of these things. There is a conscious snobbery of money, of clothes, of all that money buys or takes to itself, that needs no further advertisement in America and the rest of the world to-day. There is an equally insolent snobbery of birth and blood, of heredity and environment based on past performances alone, that is as much an object of mirth and charity to gods and men, when men and gods are not otherwise better employed.

These snobberies, one and all, are as satellites to planets before the more intense, the more insidious, the more inveterate, self-sufficient and virulent snobbery, conscious or unconscious, of the intellect, and of the class that considers itself cultured beyond all others at the expense of the rest of the world—whether directly or indirectly in alliance with royalty,

with aristocracy, with craftsmanship, with ecclesiasticism, with plutocracy and with the special interests and peculiar privileges that such *mesalliances* bring into the world.

When David Graham Phillips tells us that snobs and snobbery are made not so much by those higher up as by those lower down, he states a truth that leaves Mr. James a loophole of escape from the full consequences of the defects of his qualities.

Evolutionary literary criticism may go a step farther still — backwards and forwards both.

After the manner of the conventional tracer of literary pedigrees, one might speculate, if one had the time, on the comparative values of men like Emerson and Hawthorne, and French masters of fiction like Flaubert and Balzac, in the resultant of forces that has evolved Mr. James' peculiar moral slant and individual intellectual squint. We know, from his own critical confessions, that he has hated Thackeray as he hates Whitman; and that Balzac seems most admirable to him in his creative love for a character like Valerie Marneffe, who still — in spite of the utmost efforts of Continental fiction from Paris to Naples, and of the lady novelists of Anglo-Saxon heredity on both sides of the Atlantic who go to Paris and Naples for their literary styles — remains the most artistically vicious woman yet enshrined in world fiction.

This kind of thing is a sufficiently wide remove from the Puritan New England and the mid-Victorian Boston that are partly responsible for Mr. James' past and present. To fix the exact responsibility for the present deplorable state of things demands a deeper and wider psychology than anything yet at-

tempted by the novelist's own dabbings in psychic criticism, or his brother's more legitimate attainments in the science of the mind and soul. Any satisfactory solution of the New England conscience — its suppression for centuries under the rigors of the frontier and the no less rigorous Puritan hierarchy; its later provincial discipline under the rule of the New England schoolma'am and the preacher of predestination or Unitarianism; its final triumph under the leadership of the men from the West in our last great war for freedom; and its eventual enlargement and dispersion in Europe and in things European during the latter years of the nineteenth century — would require the energy and the scope of an epic poet or of a monographist in many volumes.

We may note in passing, however, that Henry James was not prominent, either as an active participant or a celebrant in prose or verse, of what must even to him have seemed a continental struggle and a trial by fire of New England and national ideals of freedom and fair play.

That he did have some more or less subtle sense of the national crisis is evident from his unsigned review of Whitman's *Drum Taps*, published in *The Nation* November 16th, 1869.

There he says: "You must respect the public which you address, for it has taste if you have not. It delights in the grand, the heroic, the masculine. . . . This democratic liberty-loving people, a populace stern and war-trying, is a great civilizer. It is devoted to refinement. . . . You must be possessed, and you must strive to possess, your possession."

The whole trend of his attempted tongue-lashing

is distinctly antipathetic to Whitman and Whitman's genius; and never since has he gone on record to correct his first impression of all that Walt Whitman (and the wider extra-Bostonian movement of American life and thought during Mr. James' single decade, 1859-69, of continuous American residence) meant, still means, and must always mean to America and to human history.

Having freed his mind so far, having given us this single side-light of essentially Jamesian psychology as regards the great world of thought and action, Mr. James continued to tarry on this side of the Atlantic for a few more years. During this period, he studied, briefly, at the Harvard Law School; for some reason or other he was received at Mr. Lowell's; he contributed stories and critical articles to the *Atlantic Monthly* and the *Galaxy*; and we are told by Miss Cary that he was "prepared to probe deeply into the spiritual essence of humanity — 'striking matches' — for us to see the finer facts surrounding us; facts of spirit wherever the human comes into play, and in the case of inarticulate landscape, exquisite facts of surface, recognitions of composition and color in the external world that make in his work a series of pictures so expressively painted as to constitute in themselves a definite achievement for art."

In the case of inarticulate landscape Miss Cary need go no further than Mr. James' *Autumn Impressions* of our own Berkshires to prove her point, and ours, that Mr. James shows at times an exquisite perception of exquisite facts of surface.

Glimpses like this, "the rocky defile, the sudden

rest for wonder, and all the splendid reverse of the medal, the world belted afresh as with purple sewn with pearls — melting, in other words, into violet hills with vague white towns on their breast"; or "the maker of these reflections betook himself in any case to an expanse or rock by a large bend of the Saco and lingered there under the infinite charm of the place. The rich, full lapse of the river, the perfect brownness, clear and deep, as of some liquid agate, in its wide swirl, the large indifferent ease in its pace and motion as of some great benevolent institution smoothly working; all this . . . gave to the scene something raising it out of the reach of the most restless of analysts. . . . This on September Sunday mornings was what American beauty *should* be; it filled to the brim its idea and measure — the great gay river singing as it went, like some reckless adventurer, good-humored for the hour and with his hands in his pockets — carried everything assentingly before it," suggest that if Mr. James ever could have got away from his consuming and egotistical curiosity, ever could have felt and sounded one natural and lasting note of human emotion, he might, within his limitations, have been a poet of some distinction and minor power instead of an emasculated critic and a novelist of the unessentially inane.

As it is, he sees in America the Berkshire hills, the Saco valley, the spittoons and the absence of uniformed functionaries in the Capitol, and (in an address on "The Lesson of Balzac" before the Contemporary Club in Philadelphia, January 12th, 1905) the following state of things:

"Our huge Anglo-Saxon array of producers and

readers presents a production of uncontrolled prose, untouched by criticism, unguided, unlighted, uninstructed . . . on a scale that is really a new thing in the world. . . . It is the biggest flock straying without shepherds — the shepherds have diminished as the flock increased . . . quite as if number and quantity had got beyond them, or even as if their charge had changed by some uncanny process into ravening wolves.”

Later in the same address he tells us that Balzac's faults were mechanical — “the absence of saturation with his idea. Where saturation fails, no other presence really avails. . . . Who shall declare that the severe economy (of modern writers of fiction) proceeds from anything worse than the consciousness of a limited capital? This has had terrible results for the novel. Its misfortune, its discredit, what I have called its bankrupt state among us, is the not unnatural consequence of its having ceased for the time being to be artistically interesting . . . showing on every side the stamp of the machine.”

II.

All this is to take a leaf out of Mr. James' own book *Views and Reviews*, 1908 (*The Novels of George Sand*, first published in the *Atlantic Monthly* October, '66), where he says: “The critic's first duty in the presence of an author's collected works, is to seek some key to his method, some utterance of his literary conviction, some indication of his ruling theory,” and to endeavor to deduce from this what he values most in life and art, consequently what he expresses best, or worst.

During Mr. James's last visit to America, when he came to us as a third rate notability, from foreign parts — to be wined and dined as such, with all the more or less cultured and exquisite snobbery that a certain part of our population is apt to display in such cases, during his travels and observations from Newport and New York as far west as Chicago, (later collected in *The American Scene* neither more nor less justly than any third rate foreign critic's snap-shot impressions from social and material rapid transit, of what America looks like to-day, what it really means and is going to mean) — the only other public utterance of Mr. James considered by him of sufficient importance for revision and publication was an address before the graduating class of Bryn Mawr College on *The Question of Our Speech*.

Of this, the first twenty pages is about as extreme an example of how not to speak as anything Mr. James, or anyone else, has ever written. Later he compares the English language, as he finds it here to-day, to a strip of cheap oil-cloth laid down in a dirty kitchen or a back entry and tramped on by the native born and the foreign emigrant alike. Finally he concludes: "Imitation, yes, I commend to you earnestly and without reserve — imitation of a formed and finished utterance wherever that music steals upon the ear."

This, aside from *The Lesson of Balzac*, is his sole suggestion — not only to the graduating class of a women's college which deservedly holds high scholastic rank, but to the American people at large — as to measures and methods most desirable and practicable in preserving and developing not only the

best English, but the most important tendencies in American literature of to-day and to-morrow from the critic's point of view.

The fact taken in its various bearings reveals not only Mr. James' essential inadequacy, as man and critic, but contemporary recognition of this as well, at Harvard and elsewhere.

It is natural that Mr. James and other precisians of his own microscopic order of mind should have grave fears for the future of the English language here and abroad. It is a signal instance of how far the mind of the specialist that has followed the line of least resistance through a single dimension of penetration and growth can be at once microscopic and superficial through failing to focus the cosmic perspective and point of view.

One need not indulge profusely in the somewhat windy rhetoric that the mind and soul of Mr. James and his fellow idolaters abhor, to assure them that the future of the English language and of literature in America is bounded on the north by Alaska, and on the south by Panama and beyond, on the east by Europe, and on the west by Asia; that it is as boundless, as rich and exhaustless as the great plains and the world's harvests that are raised there; as high and as deep as the Rocky Mountains, the Great Lakes, the Eastern and the Western Oceans, the heavens above us and the minds and souls of the men and women beneath them.

This is a plain statement of fact that certain of the writings of Frank Norris, Stewart Edward White, Jack London, Owen Wister, Winston Churchill, James B. Connolly, George W. Cable, Henry B.

Fuller, John Luther Long, John Fox, Jr., Brand Whitlock, Weir Mitchell, Norman Duncan, O. Henry, David Graham Phillips, and divers other Americans who are delimitating our national geographical and spiritual frontiers, will sufficiently bear out for the day and hour.

We may not believe nowadays, in common with obsolete and obsolescent Fourth of July orators East and West, that the charter of liberties and our rights to free speech, free thought and its most lasting interpretation in our language, is founded immutably on Plymouth Rock and the Constitution, the New England conscience and the New England version of life and art in prose and verse. We may have quite as serious doubts of all this as Mr. James ever had or professes to have.

At the same time it is possible for us to believe that one American novel like Mr. Churchill's *Coniston*, which deals directly with the partnership between "big business" and corrupt politics, and which sounds the literary and human note of revolt truly and effectively; or one book of American short stories like Mr. Connolly's *Out of Gloucester*, salt with the brine of Atlantic storms, and eloquent of the virile men who ride them out, and the mothers and wives of heroes who wait at home for them; has done more, and will do more, in this century and the centuries to come, to preserve to us those sources of pure English undefiled that best embody the Anglo-Saxon ideal of fair play and efficient words and deeds in these United States of America, than any or all of Mr. James's two score and more collected volumes of any sort of literary work whatever.

Like Mr. James we have grave and lasting reasons for doubt as to just what the years to come shall yield us, or shall take away. Our future as a world power in the fields of literature and of action is doubtless threatened by dangers from within and from without.

Expatriation, superficiality, scholasticism, race suicide, extravagance in thought and material expression; failure to conserve adequately our material and spiritual resources as a nation and as individuals; the tendency to "stand pat" and to live on our income or on our capital, in the world of facts and in that of ideas and ideals; the disposition to stand still and to mark time, tending more and more toward national retreat and apathy, recklessness or cynicism, evidenced in the urgent need for a new American merchant marine, the rising cost of living and age of marriage; the commercialization of divorce, of literature, of journalism, of the drama; the trustification of almost every primary necessity of life, money included, and the resultant growth of unrest, of lawlessness, of all the forces making for anarchy and industrial chaos: all these have to be met and reckoned with, by all good Americans, literary and non-literary alike, of the next two generations, within our own sphere of influence.

These are the vital issues, that are going to make, that have already begun to inform and inspire an American literature of to-day and to-morrow, which will in no small degree be worthy of the name.

Mr. James and his tribe have apparently never even dreamed of the beginning of these things. He

calls us crude and barbaric, lithographers in fiction and bunglers in the finer arts; he shakes the dust of America from his feet once more; he speaks of the tragic futility of Newport and upper Fifth Avenue; and makes Newport and upper Fifth Avenue, apparently, his chief criterions of this country's progress since his last visit.

Here we touch a wider field and a larger audience than any that reads and is directly influenced by his writings.

It is of comparatively little importance to us and to the rest of the world that Mr. James calls our fiction poverty-stricken, and thereby displays supremely his own poverty of spirit and lack of depth and discernment as a literary and social analyst.

It is however of considerably greater importance that he and thousands like him — expatriates in place or in spirit, for the moment or for a life-time — should so far mis-read the meaning and the message of America as to mistake hopelessly temporary crudenesses in execution, transient disputes and compromises as to the details of the day's work, for anything like ultimate failure or racial defeat in the building of the house of life that evolution and the power informing it has planned for us.

Mr. James is enough of a critic of literature not to judge of an author's finished volume from his first rough notes; he knows enough about art not to pronounce finally on a sculptor's conception when the marble is but half blocked out or the clay is in the molding.

We may imagine him carried back in spirit to the

Italy that he raves about when Giotto's Campanile was a-building, to Venice when St. Mark's and all the rest of the wonder city began to rise from piles planted in the mud of the lagoons.

Probably, if he had seen the architect's plans in the first instance, he might have envisioned some forecast of the completed work through stages of scaffolding, beds of mortar, heaps of sand and piles of rubble and unshaped stones. Whether he could ever have imagined half or one-tenth of the splendor and nobility of *Cinque-cento* Venice from its first rude beginnings is extremely doubtful.

If he had not only imagined it, but had seen it and lived in it outside of a monastery or the palaces of the ruling class, even Mr. James' limited intellect might have perceived in time that the Venice of his dreams to-day was then quite as full of graft and greed to the square inch, of superficial polish, hollowness, rottenness and coarseness of fiber within, of newly rich barbarism and cultured pretense, of crude and transient literary and artistic experiments and failures, as New York or San Francisco is at this moment.

If not in Venice, certainly he might have seen this in the England of his idolatry, that went to the making of those great feudal houses that he celebrates — houses that rose from the ruins of the Wars of the Roses and the gold that the eighth Henry squeezed from plundered monasteries and the dismantled machinery of the ecclesiastic graft of the sixteenth century; from the tainted money of the time that endowed Oxford and Cambridge and the great English public schools; from every contribution by contempo-

rary malefactors of great wealth that went to the making of the birthright of the younger sons and daughters of our race.

Certainly he might have failed to see there the England and America of to-day, which have evolved from the mediæval state of mind that Mr. James condones and flatters, in so far as he condones and flatters himself; from the fires that the special interests of the day kindled at Smithfield and at Oxford; from the royal wrecks and titled profligacies of the Restoration and the Regency; to all that Anglo-Saxon hegemony and government of the people, by the people, for the people, progressively in virtue of the square deal and free competition, means and must mean in the world of to-day and to-morrow.

These are a few of the larger values and deeper intensities of the life of the past as it survives to-day in Mr. James's minsters and ivy-clad colleges, in his town and country houses of a titled nobility and aristocracy of inherited wealth and privilege, that he consistently neglects or fails to detect in what Miss Cary calls the "admirable liberality of his theory of the world's wealth, of the gold that should be made to 'drip color.'"

And the shortness and dimness of sight, the moral myopia and astigmatism with which he views the resources of his own chosen field and art treasury in *Spoils of Poynton*, *The Golden Bowl*, *The Wings of the Dove*, *The American*, *The Tragic Muse*, *The Awkward Age*, and *The Ambassadors*, is no more startling and unpardonable, perhaps, for a person of his limited resources who has lived for half a century in and near the capital of the

world's greatest empire, than his utter failure and refusal to grasp the whole meaning and purpose of nineteenth and twentieth century life from London and Paris to Pekin and Tokio, from Berlin to New York, from Rome to Rhodesia, from Madrid and Lisbon to Melbourne and Buenos Aires.

Doubtless in all this Mr. James is more to be pitied than blamed. Impartial American criticism to-day cannot hold him wholly responsible for the faults and defects of his early training and education; nor for the weakness and insufficiency and the temperamental bias that unfitted him for the harder environment of New England, and drove him abroad to make the first and most facile use of such literary and critical equipment as time and chance, nature and evolution, bestowed upon him.

No more do we wholly blame the Hungarian gypsy or the son of sunny Italy, whom nature and evolution carry across the Atlantic to play rag-time for a sufficient consideration in the coin of the realm, in the palaces of the great or the palatial hotels and lobster palaces that outshine them.

No more do we blame the lady novelist or newspaper woman that racial or individual unrest allures from the farm and the home, to come to the great city, there to chronicle the doings of High Society between covers, or in the columns of our yellowest yellow journal.

Doubtless in this best of all possible worlds, all these human and artistic types have to exist, and serve some cosmic purpose that is more or less futile or mysterious to the average eye.

It is possible that many such artists have some-

thing like the same degree of pride in their work and art that Mr. James has.

Certainly few of them are as well equipped by conventional education and culture for a true and lasting interpretation of life through a temperament, artistically, as Mr. James was when he left Boston in 1869.

In his case it seems to have been the story of the seed falling on stony ground, and failing to realize that essential fitness, for one purpose or another, may have lain quite as much with the ground as with the seed. It is possible that Mr. James has found London and Oxford, in the long run, no more stony than Boston or New York would have been to him.

In any case the seed has sprung up comparatively quickly, and it has withered in a last state that is worse than the first.

It takes a fairly strong and vital nature, rich in insight and sympathy, to pierce beneath and beyond the pavements and the brown-stone fronts of any great American city to-day, and to flower forth therefrom with any lasting literary color and fragrance, interpretative of the essential common and divine ambitions and activities, patiences and imperfections of the many millions.

Possibly it takes quite as great an art and a heart to set forth London and Paris, Rome or Venice to-day adequately on paper, save in the most superficial and spectacular aspect.

At any rate, Mr. Henry James, the most perfect type the world has ever seen of the literary old maid of New England heredity and Britannic and Continental vicissitudes, neither makes to-day nor ever

has made any single-hearted effort to do as much or as little.

After the first starved art sense has satiated itself, after the first fairly legitimate curiosity about new manners and customs, social developments and decadences has worked and written itself out, life begins to bore him as it bores the Massachusetts old maid who knows Europe from the point of view of the cheaper pensions of every capital and art center; who is continually on the move in the spirit or the flesh, and who finds each new point of departure more depressing than the last.

For the literature of Henry James from start to finish, with an inconsiderable number of exceptions, is in plot and in purport a story of more or less tragic futilities and failures. His people seem occasionally to start for somewhere with something like a definite end in view. But they never get anywhere.

Miss Cary herself admits in *The Novels of Henry James — The Question of Wealth*, page 139 — *Failure and Success*: "It is indeed hardly too bold an inference to draw from the mass of his work that he prefers the former to the latter."

Reading one of his novels has been compared to climbing a mountain of sand. We may be in doubt about the height and the reality of the mountain. There is very little doubt, however, about the lack of vista and perspective when we reach the jumping off place — save in the minds of the most inveterate symbolists and obscuratists of Miss Cary's type.

Such states of mind remind us that we are fearfully and wonderfully made, and that as to the why's

and wherefore's of any modern and emancipated woman's mental processes, no man on earth may rashly predict or predicate too far. A wife or mother by nature or adoption may transfer her affections temporarily or permanently to the vainest man or the weakest and worst tempered brat in the community; and we may go so far as to say that all this does credit to her heart rather than her head, without considering her in all respects a fit candidate for a lunatic asylum.

Similarly when fashion decrees that our women shall parade in Broadway and Fifth Avenue in hobble and harem skirts and other works of art and survivals of barbarism made in Paris and not yet suppressed at home; when lovely woman in our midst for more than fifty years has spent our income freely, and consistently cried for more; when the result of her last half century's patronage, appreciation and partial production of things artistic in America is spectacularly and inconveniently in evidence everywhere: we are entitled to reserve our own conclusions, where we do not speak them out.

And we do. For the last thirty or forty years Anglo-American fashion has decreed that Henry James shall be fashionable because obscure — as Browning, Ibsen and Bernard Shaw were once fashionably obscure in the hands of professional and expensive exploiters and interpreters.

It may be a waste of good Anglo-Saxon words, as wanton as to solemnly proclaim that a spade is a spade, to suggest that now and then the fiction of Mr. Henry James is the dryest of the dry, and that it occasionally exerts the properties of a soporific

and enervating drug upon those who trifle too long with it.

However, Miss Cary has evidently done her level best to gild the pill and to sugar the sand, and she shall be given full credit for it here, before we revert to our former proposition that Henry James is dull frequently in print and out of it — that he began to be dull and heavy like the typical New England spinster who elects to live abroad, as soon as he had gorged to repletion on the art life and social history of the Old World, so far as he or his followers are capable of taking it in.

That he is bored, frequently, he admits in his own preface to *The Point of View* (New York edition), where he says: “*The Point of View*, in fine, I fear, was but to commemorate punctually enough its author’s perverse and incurable disposition to interest himself in his own (always so quickly stale) experience, under certain sorts of pressure, than that of conceivable fellow mortals, which might be mysteriously and refreshingly different.”

In another man, in a bed-ridden cripple perhaps, all this might be interpreted as nothing worse than a natural longing for adventures of the mind and spirit when adventuring of the flesh was denied him. We know what Stevenson did in the last years of his life — under what handicaps *David Balfour* was written — and we have merely to compare not alone the grace, the color, the essential fiber and warm humanity of Stevenson’s style and method with the tenuous “intensity” and wordy effusiveness of Mr. James’ later experiments, but simply to set up side by side the hero of *Kidnapped* and its sequel and

the brave loveliness of *Catriona*, with *The American* (perhaps Mr. James' most ambitious and most futile male portrait) and the "special psychological charm" of *Maggie Verver* in *The Golden Bowl* (concerning which Miss Cary tells us "that it is the American type, is hardly to be made a matter of pride with us, is much more to be made a matter of shame in the degree to which we manage to depart from it"), to get some fair standard of the degree to which Mr. James continually fails to reduce abstract problems of unusual human relations to concrete and effective, interesting and inspiring form.

One may state one of Mr. James' commonly decadent and curiously morbid themes, that of *The Golden Bowl* — attenuated by this master spinner of cobweb sophistry into more than eight hundred pages — in a dozen words more or less. According to him and the critic last quoted, it is highly laudable for an American girl, daughter of a retired multi-millionaire, herself married to a Roman prince, to enter into a conspiracy of silence with her husband and his mistress, who is also the wife of his own wife's father, simply that the retired multi-millionaire's problematic peace of mind may be preserved.

It is true that Adam Verver goes back to American City and takes his wife Charlotte with him after Maggie's discovery of the relations between Charlotte and the Prince. It is true that Maggie is suggested to us, rather than represented, as a girl who has literally known no evil till she makes the discovery outlined above, nearly a year after her marriage.

This book, published in 1904, is supposed, so far

as one can gather from Mr. James' chronic evasiveness, to deal with contemporary international social conditions and relations. On this ground Mr. James does not succeed in making Maggie (Miss Cary's ideal American type), like most of his other characters, much less than incredible — when the American theory and practice of to-day, as to the education of young girls and the relative values of frankness or subterfuge in all family relations, is taken into consideration.

Opinions will differ, just so long or so short a time as the book continues to be read, as to the essential heroism or immorality, higher wisdom or superficial idiocy, pardonable and feminine duplicity, or outright deceit and injustice to all concerned, in Maggie's final decision to permit her mother-in-law to take her father away without any other noticeable reparation or repentance than that involved in escaping from a situation intolerable to all concerned, and in departing into apparent exile in the country of her birth, of which we are led to infer she also is typical.

Consciously or unconsciously, Mr. James seems to be continually trying to suggest that Italian Princes and English lords (provided they do not have to masquerade as valets and barbers) are or ought to be irresistible to American girls of the type that he and Miss Cary admire most: those possessed of more money than brains, more sentiment than sound morality, more impracticality and futile effervescence than anything like an efficient and consistent grasp of life.

We may admit to our sorrow that such American types do exist. We may also admit that a com-

paratively small proportion of international marriages with American millions on one side and European titles on the other have, so far as the world knows, turned out at least as happily as the average marriage in America to-day. We may even admit that a Russian grand duke, an Italian prince, a French marquis, an English earl, may now and then be no more consistently brutal in his sexual aberrations than some of the present generation of malefactors of great wealth here at home.

Here in America, however, we have not yet reached the stage of training our sons and daughters to believe that such malefactors should be paid, that they should be dowered with millions of other people's dollars, for the results of similar sexual excess in themselves or their ancestors. Apparently, however, if such a state of things could be brought about permanently here, it would provide a legitimate field for literary expression in Mr. James's and Miss Cary's scheme of spiritual intensities and those higher uses of wealth that should be made to drip color for the delectation of the titled parasites of the world and the untitled snobs and charlatans who cause them to exist.

Here is where we take issue squarely with Mr. James, unconscious charlatan though he may be, and with all who consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, favor or foster him. We can forgive him the temporary perversion of style and method in the work of his disciples and imitators. Edith Wharton's single emergence from a temporary tendency of this sort would fully atone for that. Joseph Conrad, too, we perhaps owe to him in part.

We can explain, if we cannot wholly admire, his essential old-maidishness, his narrowness and superficiality of outlook and sympathy, his inveterate tendency to be bored by all he neither tries nor cares to understand, and his essential incapacity to focus life fairly either under or away from his astigmatic hand lens.

As to his curiosity for curiosity's sake, persisted in and exploited till it has become a habit and a disease, we may quote Mr. Brownell once more: "What we chiefly perceive is his own curiosity. Of this indeed we get I think a surfeit. (!) *The Sacred Fount* for this reason is an unpleasant as well as a mystifying book. . . . From this story we might infer that the close observation of a squirming and suffering woman could really occupy the leisure of a scrupulous gentleman. . . . The amount of prying, eavesdropping, 'snooping' in that exasperating performance is prodigious."

Nor is *The Sacred Fount*, not to mention others of the later books and tales, alone in the exploitation of scandal, old or new, embryonic or defunct, suppressed or scented out. In spite of the morbid plot and the final futility of the principal character as well as of the book itself, Mr. James in many ways is very nearly at his best in *The American*.

Here we have: "She is poor, she is pretty, she is silly — it seems to me that she can go only one way — I am curious to see just how things will go." It may be that, with Mr. James' peculiar order of mind, the development of this character was essential for the working out of the plot he has chosen. We do not find the highest artistic reticence in the way

she is worked out, or in the inclusion of remarks like the following:

“This horrible Paris hardens one’s heart, . . . To see this little woman’s drama play itself out, now, is, for me, an intellectual pleasure. . . . When one has nothing to think about, one must think about little baggages. I suppose it is better to be serious about light things than not to be serious at all. . . . She is a very curious and ingenious piece of machinery. I like to see it in operation.”

This reference to human machinery, taken in connection with the initial caption of this essay, may fairly be viewed in the light of a self-revelation.

Mr. Brownell does not explicitly say that Mr. James is absolutely heartless; I am not aware that Mr. James’s tendency towards “simplification” has ever claimed quite as much or as little for itself. But the inferences are all on one side.

Thus Mr. Brownell: “He rather pointedly neglects the province of the heart. Are we to be interested in fiction without liking it? And are we to savor art without experiencing emotion?” Here he quotes Scott in a dispute with Lockhart where the latter holds that life should be considered as mere material for art. Sir Walter says: “We shall never learn to feel and respect our real calling, unless we have taught ourselves to consider everything as mere moonshine compared with the education of the heart.”

Scott’s views here quoted may be extreme in this day or any other day. Certainly he did not always carry them out consistently in his own work. Many of the Waverley novels contain page after page of

prolix description or dissertation, almost as trying to the gentlest reader as Mr. James' own most diffuse tenuosity.

These defects of construction, or mere marginal notes and appendices not indicated as such, have not helped the Wizard of the North to fix indelibly in our mind the life of his own time, or of any century he undertook to paint, as Flaubert's *Salammbô* or Thackeray's *Henry Esmond* are capable of doing.

At the same time Scott triumphed as Stevenson did (and will continue to do as long as English is read), first and foremost by the spirit and vivacity natural to himself and reincarnated in his characters, which make us feel and live, love, hate, suffer, endure and triumph with them and through them and him; and compared to which Mr. James's most finished or fussed over productions are as obscure shadows in a mist, or dry point etchings in black and white or dingy monotone beside the work of a great master and colorist.

It is undeniable that Mr. James was influenced by Manet, Whistler and the finer impressionists in oils and in dry point, as he was by Balzac and the later French impressionists in print, in constructing his theory, in working out his practice of the short story culminating in later productions like *Mona Montravers*, of which Mr. Irving says: "She is a marvelous impressionistic sketch, but if you look at her closely you cannot see her. Her aunt is as definite as Mr. James will let anybody be."

It is true that he made some suggestive advances in his early tales (occasionally in his later ones), certain of which may be compared to short stories like Ste-

venson's *A Lodging for the Night* and *Providence and the Guitar*, not absolutely to the complete technical disgrace of the American expatriate. Art owes him that much. Literary ambition and industry owes him something for his attempt to apply the same theory and methods to the construction of the longer novel of manners. It is true that he continued to forward evidences of his literary theories to Turgenev during a period covering several years of the later part of the great Russian's life. It is not true that Turgenev ever evidenced any marked appreciation of such attentions on the part of Mr. James.

Literary criticism owes him, among other debts, his appreciations of natures and ideals as far alien to his own as those of Turgenev and Rudyard Kipling. We have yet to learn that Mr. Kipling has shown any tendency to reciprocate. Mr. James' introduction to *Mine Own People*, proclaiming his own discovery of a youthful phenomenon in his own art, and not wholly devoid of patronage and of discursiveness, is largely technical in its appreciation. It ends characteristically:

"We don't detect him stumbling; on the contrary he steps out quite as briskly as at first and still more firmly. There is something zealous and craftsman-like in him which shows that he feels both joy and responsibility.

"A whimsical, wanton reader, haunted by a recollection of all the good things that he has seen spoiled; by a sense of the miserable, or, at any rate the inferior, in so many continuations and endings, is almost capable of perverting poetic justice to the idea that

it would be even positively well for so surprising a producer to remain simply the fortunate, suggestive, unconfirmed and unqualified representative of what he has actually done. We can always refer to that."

Passing by the obvious deduction in the case of Mr. James himself, we have never learned that Mr. James has ever expressed any marked admiration for the later, broader and higher aspects of Kipling's work, expressed in verse in *The Song of the English*, *The White Man's Burden* and *The Recessional*; and in prose in *Judson and the Empire*, *William the Conqueror*, *The Brushwood Boy*, *They*, the story of the American prisoner in South Africa, and other instances too numerous to mention.

This failure, like his other failures, may be due to wanton whimsicality: it is probably due to temperamental and critical qualities which, as Mr. Brownell says, make his critical method agglutinative, not synthetic, and his general point of view unpractical, impracticable and, in the long run, barely worth considering.

For all this perhaps (as in the degeneracy of his style and product, from "He had the typical vagueness which is not vacuity and that blankness which is not simplicity, that look of being committed to nothing in particular, of standing in an attitude of general expectancy to the chances of life, of being very much at one's own disposal, so characteristic of many American faces" in *The American* to "'The thing is don't you think — for us not to be so awfully clever as to make it believed that we never can be simple. We mustn't see to tremendous things' — She quite lost patience with the danger she glanced at. 'We

can be simple. We can by God ' Mitchy laughed " in *The Awkward Age*)—for all this, perhaps, Mr. James is to be pitied rather than blamed. It is not wholly his fault that he has reached the awkward age of something like second childishness in his literary endeavors, or that a diseased state of mind bordering on insanity with regard to the imputed cleverness of himself, his literary puppets and abettors, has taken firm hold on him.

It is not wholly his fault that Boston and London have brought literary and social snobbery in him to a pitch of perfection rarely (if ever) witnessed before; that hardly a single one of his later more ambitious productions can be instanced in which there is not some hint or elaborate exploitation of an aristocratic scandal or degeneracy, or some glorification of patrician unearned increment and uninspired wealth.

It is not wholly his fault that, in *The Outcry*, 1911, this conscious or unconscious pandering to patrician pretentiousness and self-sufficiency remains equally inveterate with the author's hopeless tendency to ingrowing mannerisms of style such as: "She cheerfully added . . . 'you'll get beautifully used to it' . . . Oh, he now said it all lucidly . . . if not rather luridly — and thereby the more tragically. He described me in his hasty rage as consistently — well heroic. . . . 'His rage,' she pieced it sympathetically out. . . . Lord Theign was more and more possessed of this view of the manner of it." All these occur on page 254 — and page 254 is not wholly or staringly exceptional among the rest of the two hundred and sixty-odd.

Mr. James has been encouraged in his production

of literature for the spiritually illiterate by publisher's critics and readers who have axes to grind in giving the public what part of the public assumes that part of the public wants, and by people who really believe that the "spoliation" of English ducal houses, French chateaux and Italian *palazzi*, of old masters for the American market, as depicted in *The Outcry*, is one of the capital crimes of history.

It is not wholly Mr. James's fault that he, like his friends, has been led by their immediate environment to lay stress rather on the shadow than the substance, on the letter rather than the spirit of the law; and that his point of view with regard to art and life at large is curiously reminiscent of the antics and psychologic states of newly initiated members of college fraternities and high school sororities, or the attitude of the "Futuristic" cult of painting and sculpture in decadent Paris and Manhattan in this year of the eternal human comedy.

It is not really his fault that neither America nor the rest of the world has taught him to teach others that a man is a man for all that, and that a woman may be a success and honor of her sex and race in spite of all handicaps, whether she be born in the purple, in the upper middle class mediocrity of the culture that apes the patrician, in the sweat shops of New York, or in the slums of Whitechapel.

It is not wholly his fault that his mind, for all its superficial modernity, remains of that essentially mediæval order that fails to differentiate between an English duke, a continental royalty or near-royalty, a king's son from Zanzibar or Fiji, a Gravesend dock laborer, a retired merchant traveling abroad from

Oshkosh or Oklahoma, a Parisian *roué* or playwright of greater or less prominence, a London bank clerk or cashier, a multi-millionaire from South Africa or South Brooklyn, and their feminine counterparts — not in virtue of any hereditary or acquired handles to their names, any transitory and artificial trappings of rank or harness of fashion, any accidental reflection cast by the gold that drips color, or any vicarious obscurity in the shadow of that aureate light, but simply and solely as human beings: products and factors of evolutionary environment and the elemental rise of man; tenants and stewards in great or in little of the earth and its fullness that belong to us all; and of the fruits of the labors, the sufferings, the warfares and aspirations, the arts and the sciences, the joys and the sorrows of humanity through the ages.

Just how far Mr. James has failed to realize and remember this, just how much or little he has done, consciously or unconsciously, to cherish and affirm the errors and superstitions of the past, and the pretenses and the perversions of the present, must be taken into account in any final estimate of his life and work.

Obviously the time for that has not yet come. However, we may suggest in closing, that if he had devoted more time and attention to the results of modern science and applied sociology in America and in London itself during the last twenty years, and less to those features of the great London pageant that our country women of whom we are least proud have helped in no inexpensive degree to vulgarize during the same period, the result in his critical and

literary output alone, might have been at least a little less disastrous.

London as the seat of empire, as the heart and brain of half the English-speaking world, Mr. James has evidently found too crude for his taste. Obviously the fault lies not in and with London alone. English politics and English diplomacy abroad, he informs us seriously in *The Tragic Muse*, are of comparatively little consequence beside a doubtful London stage success or a career as a fashionable London portrait painter. All of which, like the rest of the book by many considered his best, is interesting as indicative of the exceptional obliquity and opacity of a temperament rather than as throwing any real light on the academic questions at issue.

The trouble with Mr. James is that first and last the women have spoiled him as they continue to spoil the majority of his adorers and imitators; as they inevitably spoil, sooner or later, any man who takes himself over-seriously, whose relations with them are elaborately artificial, who is willing and able to pose as a prophet or a false prophet among them.

If nature and education had pitchforked Henry James at a tender age into a Middle West public school, a Far West mining camp or cattle range; or even into their most strenuous parallels in Eastern America: Henry James, if fit to survive, with his unquestioned natural abilities, might have become something like a literary light of the first magnitude. Or — like the majority of his fellow countrymen, he might have concluded that his energies could be more profitably employed along some other line of activity.

As it is, the women read him, or pretend to read

him. They buy or ask for his books at the public libraries — when they are bought or asked for at all, save by the more adventurous or idle spirits, young or old, who have time, patience and money to employ in the collection of literary curiosities. To such we may safely recommend, in addition to many of the works already named, *The Two Magics*, *In the Cage*, *What Maisie Knew*, *The Soft Side*, *The Better Sort* and *The Outcry*, as sufficiently curious — and inconsequential.

Henry James has been spoiled by the women who have used him directly and indirectly, consciously and unconsciously, to exploit and advertise their own shallow literary and social pretensions. With the American women of the class of which America is least proud we will deal more directly in our consideration of David Graham Phillips. In the meantime we shall venture to suggest that we Americans of both sexes have a false and perverted pride in going the limit, in making world's records in all things, good and bad.

Our business and political corruption is abominable: it is also abominable on the most wholesale and progressive scale that ever happened. Similarly with our divorce court statistics, and those of preventable deaths and injury in our mines and factories, on our railroads and our public streets.

This may all be a part of our great national joke that helps to keep us sane in the midst of such perils.

Certainly, when we turn to the more distinctly feminine perversions of the American progressive intellect — like the absurdities of X Science; the super-

lative idiocies, in detail, of the agitation for Votes for Women in New York; the barbarities of fashions for women on Broadway and Fifth Avenue, and the incongruities of culture for culture's sake, as proclaimed by Mr. James and his most extreme American adherents — the minds of gods and men may be moved once more to something like cosmic and Lincolnian laughter.

III

WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS AND ALTRURIA

“Science is the emancipator, the deliverer, the mighty equalizer and leveler—equalizing and leveling *up*. Not down but up, always up. Not by making the rich poor, but by making the poor rich. Not by making the wise foolish, but by making the foolish wise. . . . For signs of the world’s tomorrow, look not in the programmes of political parties, not in the plottings of princes or plutocrats, but in the crucible of the chemist.” David Graham Phillips, *The Reign of Gilt*, 1905.

HERE is where Mr. Howells has missed his chance and that trend of the whole world movement of the last sixty years, which his limited artistic creed has tried faithfully to represent and foreshadow in the kind of fiction that he considers American and realistic; in the novelized dreams of an ideal that he finds unattainable here and to-day; and in letters from a land that he surrounds with the shadowy mists of uncertainty and of a spirituality dissipating itself in vague longings that never lead its interpreter or his readers to any permanent, practicable or constructive *point d’appui*.

The trouble with Mr. Howells is that, though his method is realistic under limitations that *A Hazard of New Fortunes* permanently defines, he remains from start to finish incurably a sentimentalist of a type that is passing as inevitably in America as the idle rich are passing: the type drawn to the life in

many of his own books, in the Massachusetts family of Mr. Henry James's *The Europeans*, and innumerable short stories and novels of rudimentary American environment of the school exemplified by Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, Sarah Orne Jewett, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, Margaret Deland and others who have farmed out the rocky and barren soil of literary New England by methods equally intensive and unscientific, to the verge of exhaustion — after our prevalent national tendency to penny wise and pound foolish measures in agriculture and other cultures.

This kind of thing has produced in its time notable individual growths and characterizations, but never, save in the exceptional instances of Hawthorne and *The Scarlet Letter*, the best of Emerson and a little of Lowell, anything of world permanency in literature. At present the soil of literary New England — which to-day extends in one way or another from Gower Street and the South Kensington Museum, the "Quartier Latin" and the Sorbonne, to Seattle and Los Angeles, via Boston, New York, Washington and other cities and towns farther West — has been harried and curried, raked, screened, sifted and resifted, sowed and reaped, realized and idealized to the point of exhaustive monotony.

New materials, new fertilizers, are in process of application however; Irish and French Canadian immigration has been reënforced by forty or more indiscriminate European, African and Asiatic factors in the New England of to-morrow; and on the whole, as the general level of intelligence and good will, applied, unapplied, and misapplied, still remains rather

higher there than on many less favored portions of the planet's surface, the future of literary New England may safely be left to itself, save in so far as it affects the interests of the nation at large, and save in so far as it continues to produce men like Mr. Howells and Mr. James, who in one way or another — in one case with the best will in the world — contrive to misrepresent themselves and us on something like a national or international scale.

It is true that Mr. Howells was born in Ohio, that he has lived much abroad and in that suburb of European misapprehension and expenditure, that province of pretense, which the world knows as twentieth century New York.

For all this, the dominant influences in his life have been Boston plus Tolstoi. He remains to this day, like most of the men and women in his books, an upper middle class New Englander by spiritual descent, enlarged indeterminately, softened and ennobled and the same time relaxed in fiber — at once refined and blunted in application, by the wider horizons and the haze of idealism emanating from the great plains, West and East, that, in one way or another, have entered into his life and possessed it.

To the evolutionary historian and literary biographer of the future one of the most fascinating fields of original and human research is barely opening up to-day. Such a student, given time and scope in his chosen study, might very well devote a lifetime to showing how far we are products of climate and environment, and representative types of the same — higher as well as lower; spiritually as well as physically; in our material conformation, in our index and

formula of character, in our success or failure at focusing life and its meaning and purpose, in detail and in the mass.

It might show that the man of New England, of its mountains and hills, like all mountaineers that have figured largely in history, is naturally direct and tenacious, nimble of wit, prone to make up his mind quickly, or to act inflexibly on inherited convictions, and acutely conscious of the value of time and money and all that he believes to be his lawful rights and privileges to the last cent, second, and minor sub-division of parliamentary and ecclesiastic procedure.

He sees a height to be scaled, a tree to be cut down, a crop to be harvested; he sets out to scale it, to achieve results under handicaps and limitations imposed partly by nature, partly by himself; he succeeds, or he fails and starts again: if he is typical of the best of his breed, he succeeds, within his limitations, sooner or later, in nine cases out of ten.

Environment and heredity combine to mold him in the habit of mind that sets a definite goal and ideal before him, and that understands imperfectly, and has scant sympathy, with all who fail to focus things as he and his do.

In the narrower duties and obligations of life he is apt to respect his neighbor's landmarks and holdings as his own. The narrowness of forest clearings and of hillside farms, and mutual binding together for protection against the tyrannies of weather and man-made aggression, have combined to cultivate this frame of mind in him from the start.

At the same time nature and racial heredity, the

intense stillness and whiteness of the northern winter, the sublimity of his White Mountains, the silences and the murmurs of the forest and the sea, have bred in him a sense of the world unseen, which, softened from its first Puritan rigors of predestination and infant damnation, diffuses itself in the transcendentalism of Emerson and the Swedenborgians; escapes across the Atlantic into the vacuous elaboration of Mr. James's later microscopic studies; and culminates at home, superficially, in the superstitions of malicious animal magnetism, and the rest of the effeminate and woman-fostered trend of thought for more than two centuries, to which Christian Science with all its ills is heir.

It would be unjust to Mr. Howells to compare his social philosophy and its indeterminate application to the system of pseudo-theology elaborated by Mary Baker Glover Eddy in *Science and Health* and in her later revelations; but there is the same pathetic tendency in both — more prevalent in America yesterday than to-day, but characteristic of a certain type of people conventionally "good" in all centuries and civilized lands: the temperamental need to believe everybody and everything better than they really are; the temperamental softness which, when confronted with the crude brutalities of human existence, compromises by evading the direct issues that confront us as men, as citizens, and as free intelligences; by refusing to look life squarely in the face, by drawing aside from it as much as may be, by blinding one's eyes and those of one's disciples to the concrete problems that humanity must meet and solve, somehow, here and now; by drugging itself with

shadowy dreams and illusive hopes of a hereafter, of a heaven and a home, whose streets are paved with gold, and whose walls are builded with jasper, onyx, chalcedony, chrysolite and sapphire; the physical existence of which in the exact form symbolized by the author of the "Apocalypse" is, to say the least, problematic, and characteristic of the Israelitish racial concept that inspired it.

This kind of weakness develops strength of a sort. It did when it filled the eremites' burrows of the Thebiad and the monasteries of mediæval Europe. It does when it fills such of our churches as are still filled to-day, once a week or once a month, with well-meaning people who devoutly believe that New York and the rest of America is going to the devil for the time being, and that neither they nor all their prayers, nor God and all His angels apparently, can prevail to-day against the powers of darkness here on earth.

Neither their faith nor that of Mr. Howells is of that sterner fiber that moves mountains literally; that tunnels them through; that shreds them away under its stamp mills and its steam shovels; that justifies itself through its public works like the Panama Canal and the standardizing of transcontinental railroad systems, sure that whatever the faults and mistakes of means and methods, this too is service in the broadest and highest degree acceptable to humanity and the great first cause that inspires it.

All this is not to say that we should interpret too narrowly Mr. Howells's *Traveller from Altruria*, *Letters of an Altrurian Traveller*, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, or the spirit that informs most of

his later books. But these great public works and services, engineered, financed and managed on a trans-continental and national scale, are some of the things, like the social, political and economic problems underlying them, which his faith did not find time or means to grasp or to graphically present at any period of his career. He did not find the time, he did not find the patience, even to try to grasp and present them.

All this is less the author's own fault, doubtless, than that of his environment. Mr. Howells was born at Martins Ferry, Ohio, in 1837, on that frontier of indecision between East and West, between yesterday and to-morrow, which Ohio and the class that Ohio stands for have come to represent in American and in World Politics. The same State which produced him, evolved also William McKinley and William Howard Taft, to go no farther into the list of men of the same type who have been represented of late, from time to time, in the attitude popularly described as lying with one ear to the ground.

In his younger days Mr. Howells worked as assistant to a country newspaper editor who happened to be his father, and in other country newspaper offices. Here it is possible that he gained something of the breadth of the men of the plains without having forced upon him, ground into him, schooled and disciplined in him by the stress of circumstance, the strength and the faith that moves mountains, and the energy that is impelled to go ahead and never let up till the mountain is removed.

For the plains build largely, as their horizons and

their ample resources are large. History has been made, on the surface, by the men of the mountains and of the sea. The tide moves and turns, eastward, westward, north or south, at Thermopylæ, at Marathon, at Tours, at Chalons, at Waterloo, at Gettysburg. Certain surface currents and greater or lesser eddies and eminences of the moment delude the older historians into defining epochs arbitrarily, as nations used to make maps, in terms of certain eminent men, certain dynastic changes, emergencies, subsidences.

Modern evolutionary history, exemplified in books like Brooks Adams's *The New Empire* and *The Law of Civilization and Decay*, is teaching us to look for the evolutionary causes, for the primary reasons why the tides in the affairs of men and nations turn and waver when they do, as they do.

We cannot blame Mr. Howells any more than we can blame the men and women of his generation indiscriminately, because they have been blind to this new science and application of science. But we can blame him and others who have done as he did, when he took the line of least resistance, when he drifted to Europe and renounced the greater part of his birthright for a mess of Transatlantic culture, when he remained there as United States consul at Venice from '61 to '65, when he drifted to New York to edit (or help edit) *The Nation*, to Boston to edit the *Atlantic Monthly*, and back to New York to help edit *Harper's Magazine*, and in one way or another to act as corporation counsel to the policy of the great publishing house, with which in one way or

another he has been so long and so intimately associated.

We can hardly blame him more than the other American men and women of his type and the class that he represents, for remaining consistently throughout the Quaker rather than the Puritan reformer in art and ethics, for making of *Harper's Magazine* and the whole surrounding atmosphere a literary old woman's home, and a nursery for girls and boys whose sense of literature and of life has been considerably more effeminate than virile, to put the case very mildly indeed. So far, to a large extent, Mrs. Atherton has right and reason on her side in her dispute with him.

The exact merits of that contention do not interest us greatly here or hereafter. What does concern us is the fact that Mr. Howells has so far misread, and tried so long to misinterpret, the meaning and purpose of history, of evolution, of civilization, of democracy, of science: in the land that produced him, and in the rest of the world at large, and under advantages that for some men might have been found exceptional, if not ideal.

Though history on the surface seems to have been made by the men of the mountains and the sea, by the aristocracies, by the summits and the outer eddies of the great human tidal wave that began to sweep round the world from East to West more than eight thousand years ago, and which is still sweeping on with periodic regressions and resurgences in the direction in which it started, history in its essence, in its deeper and controlling currents, depends upon the men and women of the great plains and

major river valleys of the earth's surface; and upon the industrial development of the great masses of men, forced by their environment, whatever their temporary political or ecclesiastical formula, to be democratic and neighborly at bottom in their social attitude. And so it always will.

So the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates were irrigated till the desert blossomed like the rose. So the Pyramids were built, and later the great wall of China. So the racial destinies of the future are to be settled, unless all signs fail, on the high seas, in the crucibles of the chemist, in the minds and hearts of the world's highest and lowest evolutionary types; on many a mountain pass and height of vision doubtless; but, in the main, on the great plains and pampas of North and South America, on the plains and steppes of European Russia, in the great river valleys of China and Africa, and in the varying degrees and intensities of industrial civilization, efficient, scientific, making for righteousness and the square deal in the long run, that these localities are capable of evolving and of fitting to survive.

Civilization is not all a failure and a retrogression and a tragic procession between two blank eternities, though men like Mark Twain and Tolstoi and Mr. Howells himself have thought otherwise. The very newsboy who rushes ahead of his nearest trade rivals to sell the dean of American literature the yellowest yellow journal, or the most hide-bound and prostituted Wall Street sheet that his hands have been known to touch, knows better, in his minor message and service, than our pessimistic prophet of Altruria Absolute.

The great men of the plains, moral and material, whose natures grow and flow and widen slowly and surely as their rivers widen; that rise slowly from the mass as a pyramid rises; that become despots, yet servants of the masses through force of circumstance and environment; the robber barons of yesterday, of to-day and of to-morrow; the Alexanders, the Cæsars, the Justinians, the Napoleons; the bringers of order from anarchy, the captains of industry, the reorganizers, the conquerors and codifiers of all time: these know and realize, after their varying capacities, the fact that civilization has neither failed nor succeeded finally; that it is neither a funeral mass nor a triumphal procession; that it is at once a pilgrimage and a truceless war, never to be ended while human life exists on this earth. They demonstrate through their life and work that one essential appetite and one persistent passion of the spirit of dominance and service, of nature and the elements, of one's fellow men and women, and of life itself, remains, and must remain, to be curbed and disciplined by the mind of man that exists in and through, and rises to mastery by virtue of, its appetites and passions.

It makes comparatively little difference here just how far Leo Tolstoi in his more recent writings has diverged from this theory of evolutionary and historic truth. Tolstoi in his later years, in his attempted simplification of life as he found and saw it, was as much an evolutionary product of the soil and the century that bred him, as the Nihilists, the Terrorists, the Russian grand dukes, the peasant proprietors and the Greek Church ecclesiastics higher up, the black hundreds, the Pogroms, the Doukhobortsi,

the Jew baitings and killings, the troops of peasants whose theory of religious simplification was to discard their clothes and go stark naked at any and every opportunity, and all the rest of the emotional and reactionary factors that have made life in Russia and Siberia hell on earth, before and since the war with Japan; and which, since the Convocation of the first Duma and its dispersion, have apparently put back the clock of Pan-Slavic civilization fifty or one hundred years, when compared with the rest of the world.

There is a certain likeness between the practices of the Doukhobortsi in shedding their clothes and similar practices of George Fox and his friends that scandalized our own Puritan ancestors in Colonial times, on one side, and Mr. Howells's attempted simplification of his inherited surroundings, on the other, which redounds wholly to the credit of neither.

We may say of Tolstoi that in his later years he was a necessary voice of protest against intolerable conditions in Russia—the modern equivalent of a major Hebrew prophet in a generation that failed to understand him as conclusively as he understood it.

We may say of Quakerism and passive non-resistance in general, that Pennsylvania has been for years the one state in the Union where machine rule is worse than in New York, and where the political hierarchy of the machine is largely controlled, operated and officered by the native born.

It is not so easy to dismiss Mr. Howells and the class of Americans that has formed and still forms his most sympathetic reading public, in a single sentence or a single page.

To begin with, the work of Mr. Howells, like that of other well-known writers who have written for half a century or more and have manifested during that time a certain capacity for growth, may be divided into at least two distinct periods. During all this time, as he changes, or fails to change, his readers and the rest of the world change or fail to change with him.

There have been many marvelous eras of expansion before the last fifty years, some of them pyrotechnically rapid in the history of the human mind and its activities: periods, to go no farther back, as the Reformation, the Renaissance, the Revolutions in America and France. But never since literature began to be written have literary men been privileged to live through the end of one epoch and the beginning of a new one, so crucially reconstructive, or to see science literally reforming and rebuilding the earth and the richness thereof, with the bodies, the minds and the souls of men, as those of Mark Twain's and Mr. Howells's race and generation have been privileged.

If men of Mark Twain's essential integrity and keenness of vision, in literature and out of it, have not been permitted to focus things as many of us to-day begin to focus things — if comparatively few of the world's great literary men and interpreters elsewhere have gone on record publicly as Mr. Howells has not — obviously we must not blame him and his disciples too far.

And yet he has known something about sociology, or tried to, and he tells us that he never succeeded in drawing Mark Twain into a sociological discussion.

He does not tell us that he never entered into scientific discussion or serious study of sociology's problems himself, but we do know that science as a serious factor, or evolutionary element, is distinctly negligible and neglected in his books. He has written about business life and journalism in *A Modern Instance*, *Silas Lapham* and *A Hazard of New Fortunes*; he has touched on medical life, on sociology and the ethics of defalcation, in *Dr. Breen's Practice*, *Annie Kilburn*, and *The Quality of Mercy*; he has made tentative sallies into the world of art, literature and the stage in *The Coast of Bohemia*, *The World of Chance* and *The Story of a Play*, while the travel motive of Americans abroad and at home has been material for him from the days of *Their Silver Wedding Journey* and *Lady of Aroostook*: but science as an inspiring and informing factor and feature of American life, in the laboratory, in the clinic, in the slum, in its larger and lesser commercial developments and aspects, in its cruder and more subtle organizations and re-organizations, has been a sealed book to him.

The man himself has suffered for it. The majority of his readers, many of his warmest partisans, have suffered similarly consciously or unconsciously; and we who have been privileged to see him at his best — and his worst — as novelist and as critic of literature and of life, have a just cause for complaint at this blind side of what in many other respects is an admirable type of the sterling Americanism of mind and character that we still instinctively associate with the word American viewed in its most admirable light.

II.

Here we may quote, with minor reservations, Professor William Lyon Phelps of Yale in his book, *Essays on Modern Novelists*, 1910: "The personality of Mr. Howells as shown both in his objective work and his subjective confessions . . . a simple, democratic, unaffected, modest, kindly, humorous . . . healthy soul, with a rare combination of rugged (?) virility and extreme refinement"; and at greater length Professor Harry Thurston Peck, formerly of Columbia University, in *The Personal Equation*, 1898 — "A quick eye for what is striking in individuals or in life, a wonderful photographic instinct for detail, a shrewd insight into human motive, a truly American perception for the ludicrous, a natural gift of language, a talent for crystallizing in a phrase or an epithet the essential attribute of any subject, a Frenchman's reverence for *le mot juste* . . . all these superimposed upon an experience so broad as to be national rather than sectional, and with the advantage of an international point of view, may surely warrant one in saying what has just been said; that if Mr. Howells has not written the American Novel then no one else has written it . . . the limitations that have prevented Mr. Howells from attaining supreme success as a fiction-writer, and that have made his general theory of criticism and of life inadequate are to be traced directly to . . . his long residence in Boston, and . . . his subsequent identification with New York. . . .

"Boston shows us . . . a community not directly in touch with anything beyond its own borders, but

very self-centered and compact, and taken up wholly with its own concerns. Its colonialism stands out all over it with both the virtues and the defects of its qualities. There are all the integrity of purpose, all the anxious uneasiness about 'duty,' the intense self-respect and self-reliance of the New Englander, the love of truth and justice, the independence and the rectitude; but there can also be found all the intolerance, all the narrowness, all the impenetrable complacency and all the intellectual myopia of the provincial Englishman. . . . Mr. Howells, to be sure, as well as others is a critic of literature, and he is a very searching and suggestive critic, too, but one cannot even touch upon his literary criticism without feeling that in reality it is but a part, and a comparatively unimportant part of his wider criticism of life, and that the same is true of every phase of his intellectual activity when regarded separately and alone. . . . This is the true New England temperament, rooted in individualism, pushing self-analysis to the point of torture, regarding details as of infinite significance, teaching that the part is greater than the whole, and robbing its possessor of a sense of true proportion. But to the literary artist as to the philosopher the sense of proportion is everything; for it is the one sovereign antidote to provincialism, philistinism and morbidity."

This brings us back to Professor Phelps again. "His artistic creed is narrow, strict and definite. He has expressed it in his essays and exemplified it in his novels. His two doctrinal works, *Criticism and Fiction* and *My Literary Passions*, resemble Zola's *Le Roman Experimental* in dogmatic lim-

itations. The creed of Mr. Howells is realism, which he has not only followed faithfully in his creative work, but which he uses as a standard by which to measure the value of other novelists, both living and dead. . . . Mr. Howells's literary estimates of other men's work are far more valuable as self-revelation than as adequate appraisal. Indeed, some of his criticisms are bizarre. . . . Broadly speaking he has not the true critical mind."

Mr. Howells begins well in *Criticism and Fiction* by quoting from *The Renaissance in Italy*, by John Addington Symonds: "Our hope is that all sentimental or academical seekings after the ideal having been abandoned . . . nothing accepted but what is solid and possible, the scientific spirit shall make men progressively more and more conscious of these eternal relations . . . we shall come to comprehend with more instinctive celeritude what is simple, natural and honest. . . . The perception of the enlightened man will then be the task of a healthy person who has made himself acquainted with the laws of evolution in art and society."

Mr. Howells, in common with many other milk-and-water, or fire-and-sword Socialists, in art and in life, has not made himself fully acquainted with these same laws of evolution, and shows no signs of trying to. He goes on to tell us about the strangeness of the charm that fashion has had at one period or another, in woman's clothes for example. Later he suggests that the literary fashions set forth by Scott, Dickens, Thackeray & Co., should be in our eyes to-day as grotesquely obsolete as the feminine finery of the early and mid-Victorian eras. He says: "I am in

hopes that the communistic era in taste . . . is approaching." He denies that literature and art are anything but the expression of life, that they are to be judged by any other test but their fidelity to it. He declares: "The time is coming, I hope, when each new author, each new artist, will be considered, not in his proportion to any other author or artist, but in relation to the human nature known to us all which is his privilege, his high duty to interpret."

This is all very well as far as it goes. We do need more naturalness, more simplicity, more honesty, in our literature as well as our life, in America to-day. But the arbitrary literary criticism and racial criticism of the past has needed measuring rules and scales of value as well as a mirror; and the most advanced evolutionary literary criticism of to-day and to-morrow is not going to consider any author anyone cares to name, simply in his relation to the axioms of spiritual mathematics and his æsthetic reaction on the normal (in Mr. Howells's acceptance, to most of us the rather bromidic) palate. Such criticism is going to consider such an author, as well as his works, in his evolutionary relation to the time and place that produces him and his most significant likenesses and dissimilarities compared with his nearest contemporaries of importance, and with other types, species and individuals, distant or remote in time and space, worthy for one reason or other of being drawn into comparison.

And as long as literature exists, as long as human nature and the fiction that is its most modern and adequate representative, continue substantially what they are and always have been; just so long will the

types that Mr. Howells proceeds to rail against in his criticism of Scott, Dickens, Thackeray *et al.*—of the passionate, the heroic, the grotesque, the perverted, the vicious, the adventurous qualities of the human mind and soul — remain in literature and in life to prove humanity's greatest handicaps and stepping-stones on its way through life as well as its greatest inspirations and its greatest temptations to push onward and upward inevitably.

People who do not get this kind of thing in their life want it in literature or in the stage; and Mr. Howells would very quickly find that, if he could suppress utterly the habit of novel reading of adventure and the seamy side (which he stigmatizes as the emptiest dissipation, and considers about as useless and pernicious as horse-racing or card-playing), together with all dramatic representation of all that is not simple, honest and natural from his point of view, men and women both would begin then, as they did in cruder eras, to seek adventure at first hand in ways equally or even more reprehensible to him, but also equally simple and natural, if not always more honest.

Mr. Howells seems to forget from time to time that New York and the rest of America is not a New England village community, denaturalized to some extent by centuries of the Puritan conscience and the New England an-æsthetic attitude.

He complains with something of the naïve indignation of a child whose ears have been boxed unjustly for the first time, that critics nowadays in New York seem to have no sense of responsibility; that, with or without orders by the people that pay and own them,

they actually seem to enjoy — sometimes — going gunning for certain authors, or groups of authors, and any or all of their works that venture into the open.

He might, about as justly and to the point, complain about the tactics, with few exceptions, of the whole newspaper and journalistic profession; of corporation lawyers and their clients; of society leaders and climbers; of ward politicians, and men and women higher up, everywhere in our social, legal, political, industrial, journalistic and literary system of life by machinery for the millions — everywhere where the misrepresentation of truth can be made a source of commercial profit, or otherwise effectively used to serve and exploit a special interest.

Such things we know, when we care to think of them, are a part of life as it is lived in America to-day, like mosquitoes and rattlesnakes. Occasionally, when they crowd it too far, society puts an end to a part of its reptiles for the time being. It takes longer to abolish the insect pests. And Mr. Howells shows something of the same kind of pertinacious futility in his own critical intolerance as certain of his critics have done.

The truth is that life, as he sees and misapprehends it, frequently bores Mr. Howells to-day, as it habitually bores Mr. James, as it is apt to bore most men who grow old with the edge of their vital ambitions and curiosities blunted by failure to adjust their own temperamental mental and moral processes, variable or inveterate, to the rapidly changing conditions of nineteenth and twentieth century environment.

Such was the case with Tolstoi himself; and while his most notable American disciple is very far from being the conventional septuagenarian *laudator temporis acti*, nature has had its way with him: while he finds little in the American present and future, to praise, little hope or promise, he finds, or seems to find, little more in the past.

If the vital criterion of all literature that lasts is a strong and inspiring joy in life that survives triumphant through all struggles and transient defeats, then Mr. Howells, like most men and women writing in America or England to-day, falls very far below this test.

Something of this spirit and inspiration of America, unlettered and unsung adequately so far, seems to have escaped the doubtful scrutiny of his New England consciousness and conscientiousness in *A Modern Instance* and *The Rise of Silas Lapham*.

Concerning the former, Professor Phelps remarks: "It seems to me in every way a greater book than *Romola*." Professor Peck: "Altogether, one cannot say too much of *A Modern Instance*. It bears the true stamp of genius, and it will live as long as anything that American literature has to show; for in it the writer stands aside and lets the action evolve itself before the reader's eye. . . . Nearly all its characters are living, human beings and not mere psychological studies. . . . Bartley Hubbard for example is as real as Mr. Howells himself."

Bartley Hubbard is, in a very real way, a very typical American — not strictly confined to New England. As Professor Phelps diagnoses him, he "is just

like thousands of clever young American journalists . . . quick-witted, enterprising, energetic, with a sure nose for news . . . he actually has at heart no moral principle, no ethical sense, no honor.

“The career of such a man will depend entirely on circumstances, because his standard of virtue is not where it should be, within his own mind, but without. Had he married exactly the right sort of girl, and had some rich uncle left the young couple a fortune. . . . He would have remained popular in the community and died both lamented and respected. . . . No one who has read the book can possibly forget his broad back as he sits in the court room, and the horrible ring of fat that hangs over his collar . . . yet as one looks back over his life, every stage in the transit is wholly natural. . . . Squire Gaylord is a person of whose creation any author might feel proud.”

Professor Peck states that Marcia, Kinney and Wetherby are living beings, too. “Mr. Howells has drawn them with more freedom and boldness than he often shows, and has given himself far less concern about accumulating mere details. He has, moreover, in a manner, cut loose from his pet theory of fiction writing. He has not scrupled to give us some fine dramatic touches after the manner of the Romantics, and has even led us up to an intensely powerful climax (in the final court room scene).

“*The Rise of Silas Lapham* is, as a whole, below the level of *A Modern Instance*, but it is still a masterly and memorable book. The character of Silas Lapham himself is by all odds the most remarkable piece of portraiture that Mr. Howells has ever

done, and it is the only one that attains to the proportions of a broadly national type. The self-made man who works his way up the ladder of material prosperity was never more convincingly depicted; and the portrait is one that is true of the native American everywhere, East as well as West. . . . The opening chapter where Lapham is interviewed by Bartley Hubbard for *The Events*, in the office of the 'mineral-paint' manufactory, is a miracle of condensed pictorial power, in which each word goes with swiftness and precision to the mark."

Here we see something of the joy of the true artist in his work, convincingly and on a broad virile scale. Both books are marred more or less by the pessimism that culminates in *Stops of Various Quills*, and that enfeebles *A Hazard of New Fortunes* and most of the later books.

This pessimism — partly temperamental, partly acquired; partly sentimental, partly bred in the bone through the man's Welsh and New England ancestry; partly enforced by machine rule in New York — appears also in the earlier novels. Here Mr. Howells seems to have the instinct of inadequacy that chooses to sing, within its limitations, in a minor key. He does so charmingly at times; but again the charm is submerged by gloom, as in *A Foregone Conclusion*.

Of this earlier period Professor Phelps declares — "The earlier novels are more purely artistic; they are accurate representations of American characters, for the most part joyous in mood, full of genuine humor and natural charm. A story absolutely expressive of the author as we used to know him is *The Lady of the Aroostook*. The story is

full of observation, cerebration and human affection. As Professor Beers has remarked, if Mr. Howells knows his countrymen no more intimately than does Henry James, at least he loves them better."

According to Professor Peck — "In *The Lady of the Aroostook* we have the most perfect story that American literature has yet produced. It is the height of literary art, for its finish is as exquisite as its design . . . the book is more than a perfect story; it is a concrete illustration of a phase of American civilization . . . it depicts social conditions that to a foreigner are quite inexplicable . . . the last three or four pages would alone be sufficient to make a lasting reputation for their author."

Something of the same charm of cultured middle class New Englanders on their travels is found notably in *Indian Summer* and *Their Wedding Journey*. In the latter book Mr. Howells begins to strike the note of pessimism that later puts him out of court as an artist and impartial witness to life. This pessimism is an outgrowth of the New England conscience plus sentimentality. As travel sketches of an undiscovered country of New England psychology, as sociological notes of an acute observer gradually unfitted by temperament and environment for doing the big work he once promised to do, certain portions of these books have their permanent value.

The following is from *Their Wedding Journey*. "She wondered that the happiest women in the world can look each other in the face without bursting into tears, their happiness is so unreasonable and so built upon and hedged about with misery. . . . They

particularly derided the idea of New York being loved by anyone. It was too vast, too coarse, too restless . . . endless blocks of brown stone fronts with their eternal flights of brown stone steps oppressed them like a procession of houses trying to pass a given point and never getting by. . . . They said that the daily New York murder might even at that moment be taking place. . . . It was four o'clock, the deadliest hour of the deadly summer day . . . far up and down the street swept a stream of tormented life. . . . It was a scene that possessed the beholder with a singular fascination, and in its effect of universal lunacy it might well have seemed the last phase of a world presently to be destroyed."

Travelers of Mr. Howells's type might have seen something more, something less insane, something more vital, more inspiring, more significant, even in Broadway, on a hot summer afternoon in 1871, if their eyes had not been blinded by Boston blue glasses and moral myopia from a Puritan past. People like Mr. Howells have a mental spectrum of their own that tends increasingly toward the ultra-violet rays. They may not be literally color-blind to all the rest, but the harsher primary hues of America in the making cause them to blink and recoil, to turn their heads away and tell themselves that it really isn't done, shouldn't be done, couldn't be done in the restricted circles where they find themselves most at home.

So he views life on the night-boat to Albany, not as an evolutionary shuttling of diverse existences, but as a crude and indigestible mess similar to the

dinner "on the American plan" that he finds served there.

"Since they could not help it they watched the public provision which, leaving no interval between disgraceful squalor and ludicrous splendor, accommodates our democratic *ménage* to the taste of the richest and most extravagant plebeian amongst us . . . it is this ruthless imbecile who will have lace curtains to the steamboat berth into which he gets with his pantaloons on . . . it is he who will have for supper that overgrown and shapeless dinner in the lower saloon . . . it is he who perpetuates the insolence of the clerk and the reluctance of the waiters."

However, our two Bostonians who married late in life and put off so obvious a thing as a wedding journey for years, finally reach Niagara and, on the whole, approve of the place.

Not altogether: the episode of Isabel and the bridge from the island is one of the scenes of lively humor and super-feminine insight that has helped to preserve Mr. Howells and his stories to us through all the changes and chances, the weariness and depressions, of this mortal life. His two married lovers are still young enough to feel the effect of moonlight on the rapids and above the falls. "The moon . . . is of lucent honey there from the first of June to the last of October . . . I think with tenderness of all the lives that have opened so fairly there; the hopes that have reigned in the glad young hearts; the measureless tide of joy that ebbs and flows with the arriving and departing trains. Elsewhere there are carking cares of business and of

fashion, there are age and sorrow and heart-break; but here truly youth, feasts, rapture, I kiss my hand to Niagara and for that reason I would I were a poet for a quarter of an hour."

Mr. Howells has become a poet at considerably greater length in *Stops of Various Quills*, but not as he has here. He takes his travelers to Quebec before they turn towards home. On the way they have a brief encounter. "Why did you let that old wretch bore you and then pay him for it? . . . Oh, it reminded me so sweetly of the swindles of other lands and days, that I couldn't help it . . . and straightway to the eyes of both that poor, whiskey-fied Irish tatterdemalion stood transfigured to the glorious likeness of an Italian beggar."

At Quebec they visit a convent of the gray nuns. "But indeed since there must be Gray Nuns, is it not well that there are sentimentalists to take a mournful pleasure in their real pallid existence? It seemed to him that the two prettiest girls might well be the twain that he had seen there so many years ago, . . . would it be too cruel if they were really the same persons? Or would it be yet more cruel if every year two girls so young and fair were self-damned to renew the likeness of that youthful death?"

Basil March and his wife arrive safely in Boston at last, for all their forebodings, and very glad they are to get there again. And on the whole this is a book that it is very good for most of us, not Bostonians, to read at least once in our life. In it, as in *Their Silver Wedding Journey*, *The Kentons*, *Annie Kilburn*, *The Quality of Mercy*, *The Coast of*

Bohemia, Ragged Lady, The Landlord at Lion's Head, The Story of a Play, and the distinctively Altrurian series, we learn to love Mr. Howells still for all his faults; but we do not (unless we are very young and confiding, or old and limited in our range of thought and experience) learn to trust and follow him as an accurate and impartial critic of life, a prophet of democracy and of America, who proves his faith by his works.

He begins to disprove, in spite of himself, that faith which Tolstoi inoculated and New York inforced in *A Hazard of New Fortunes* and in *The World of Chance* — two books dealing with journalistic and literary life in various social and economic relations, as he found it in the metropolis shortly after his removal from Boston.

Professor Peck stands the typical Bostonian on Broadway (as Mr. Howells stood Basil and Isabel March before Grace Church) and suggests that he “resembles a small mouse that has crept timidly out into a vast hall, and then, appalled by the unwonted vista, scuds back to its hole with squeaks of genuine dismay.” He also says in *A Hazard of New Fortunes* and *The World of Chance* — “He has become melancholy, and with the true New England sense of duty he has begun to feel that he has a ‘mission.’ Who can recall anything of the two books just named, except squalor, and unhappiness, and cheap eating houses, and commonplace characters of all grades of fatuity, and a general feeling that the author evidently thinks the times are out of joint?”

This may be unduly severe, but the general im-

pression produced by these books and others of the later Tolstoi-New York period, remains in effect what Professor Peck suggests. There is very little in the whole New England scheme of obligation that has to do with the duty of helping to make others happy by being happy one's self. There is very little that helps to this end in the dreary futility of life in New York as Mr. Howells chooses to represent it. If he had shown us any masterly handling in his tentative analyses of social discontent there; much more if he had shown us a single practical remedy for what he considers the world of chance in literature, or the hazards of journalist or commercial life, not in direct alliance with "the system"; if he had shown us one single practicable point of attack on the tyranny of the machine; or if, having determined to represent life in New York to-day as a tragedy, he had made it an inspiringly and unsparingly noble one, we might easier have forgiven him this negative absence of joy and the urge to joy.

But when he dips his pen in the very gall and bitterness of hopeless pessimism; when he poetizes it; when he makes the philosophy (such as there is) of *Stops of Various Quills* a direct negation of all joy in life, all the will to live, of all reason for living and believing in life itself; when he tries to rub in the idea that all pleasure in America to-day, harmless or otherwise, rests on a quivering foundation of communal murder, of suffering, of madness, of disease and shame, then we are led to believe that either he is allowing himself indefensible poetic license, or else to fear that the ancestral New England conscience has become ingrowing to the extent of torture

too great for human endurance and mortal sanity.

Certainly we see no good reason to torture ourselves by reading or re-reading his darkest pages. We rebel, and he rebels too, at times. The same mind that could produce the characteristic American humor of *The Sleeping Car*, *The Elevator*, *The Mouse Trap* and other farces acted by our fathers and mothers in their private theatricals, achieved *The Kentons* like a benediction of his old age.

And here we have an Indian Summer of his own by the same hand that many years before wrote — “She was herself, in that moment of life when, to the middle-aged observer at least, a woman’s looks have a charm which is wanting to her earlier bloom. By that time her character has wrought itself out more clearly in her face, and her heart and mind confront you more directly there. It is the youth of the spirit which has come to the surface.”

Obviously a man who writes with such felicity was born to be happy himself and to make others so by his writings. In those days he could tell us “It will come out all right sometime. You preach the true American gospel. . . . Of course there is no other gospel. That *is* the gospel . . . men fail, but man succeeds. I don’t know what it all means or any part of it.”

In *Annie Kilburn* and the *Altruria* books he seems to think that it never can or will come out all right in this world. *A Traveller from Altruria*, which is a fabulous region in the Atlantic somewhere between America and Europe, comes to New England to make a social survey of American social and economic inequalities, from a land of pure reason and

brotherly love which has evolved beyond all capitalistic and capital fostered distinctions, and he finds our social inconsistencies at once mystifying and abominable.

He begins at the railroad station in Boston by insisting on handling his own trunk and helping the porter with the others. He pursued the same tactics toward waiters, waitresses and other servants. He tells us that in Altruria no one would think of taking any exercise of the sort that we indulge in here for various reasons, and that they regard there as viciously artificial, while others lay sick and helpless or starved in misery; to be saved, in one way or another, by the manual labor which he seems to regard as the prime requisite of salvation both to the individual and the community at large.

Doubtless this view of the case has much to commend it from more points than one.

At the same time we are given to understand that there is no such thing as starvation or helplessness from the physical point of view in Altruria. Mental and moral suffering have also evidently been scaled down there to an irreducible minimum. Just how, why, where and when irreducible or the contrary, we are not told in detail. To expect a stranger from Altruria to prescribe adequately for a sane New Yorker's athletic diet seems to us something like expecting a chronic vegetarian to regulate a confirmed meat-eater's *cuisine* solely in the light of his own experience.

We may go as far as most with Mr. Howells's theory of what society owes to the individual, the child at least, in one way or another. But when it comes

to a communal simplification and regulation of tastes, we are inclined to inquire of Mr. Howells what he knows about modern athletics from direct personal experience. We should like to ask him if he ever emerged triumphantly from a hard-fought championship foot-ball game, or a lively bout of high class scientific boxing or wrestling, or a rattling run across country in something close to record time, and found occasion to think himself seriously the worse for the exercise of such qualities of mental and physical strength and alertness, of grit, of comradeship, of team play, of chivalry and endurance, as go to the making of our best type of athletes — simply because there happened to be a good many other people in the world who could not or would not avail themselves of such facilities for individual and racial fitness.

We should like to ask our Altrurian if a man's (or a woman's) first duty to himself and everyone else, in this best of all possible worlds, such as it is, is not to make and to keep himself as fit (in the highest and widest modern acceptance of the term) for work and for play as he can, and to get as much joy out of work and play both as the exigencies of his environment will permit. We should like to inquire whether, while there is no accounting for tastes, if we choose to take our pleasure hilariously in cold baths at morning (while for all we know he bathes more sadly in hot ones at night), either or both of us ought to feel ourselves seriously discommoded at the time by the reflection that there aren't yet enough porcelain bath tubs or out-door bathing places to go round?

Finally, we should like to suggest that athletics may be regarded, from one point of view at least, as a safety valve for the normal individual capable (or indisposed) of winning his own way in the world and earning a living or a surplus; and that in New York to-day, wood-splitting, ditch-digging, doctoring, nursing, sick-bed watching, district visiting — in spite of present deficiencies — had better, on the whole, continue to be left in the hands of specialized talent than turned over indiscriminately to the theories of well-meaning and incompetent amateurs.

However, Mr. Howells has no use whatever for New York and the rest of our big cities as he sees or thinks he sees them to-day. He evidently wants them, as Mr. Bellamy did, abolished *instanter* and *in toto*, or preserved in part, as national chambers of horrors and relics of the darkest age of our most modern barbarism, which, in some miraculous manner not vouchsafed to us by him, we are to outgrow and shed completely as a child outgrows and sheds a suit of its father's made over clothes.

Just with what we are to cover or constrain the nakedness of elemental passion and inert brutality when the conventions and safety appliances of our present system have been simplified out of existence is not apparent. His Altrurian traveler arrives in Boston via Great Britain. Naturally he objects to English society as it exists to-day. He says:

“It seemed to me iniquitous, for we believe that inequality and iniquity are the same in the last analysis. . . . I see that my word voluntary has misled you. . . . The divisions among us (Americans) are rather a process of natural selection. . . . I say

simply that you are no more likely to meet a working man in American society than you are likely to meet a colored man. . . . The American ideal is not . . . to change the conditions for all, but for each to rise above the rest if he can."

He says that we are no longer a Christian nation, and he evidently lays the foundations of his Utopia on the Beatitudes and Christ's reduction of the ten commandments to two.

Without meeting Mr. Howells directly on dogmatic grounds, we should like to ask Mr. Howells what he thinks Christianity in America to-day means to him and those who sympathize with him—or think they do. Mr. Howells does not call himself a Socialist outright. He does not say the eighth commandment is both iniquitous and obsolete because it forbids theft, whether by confiscation and process of law or not. He does not say, as many say the New Testament says, that all property, like all inheritances of special talents, special opportunities, special inequalities and interests, is a trust (in the older sense of the word) and a stewardship, or ought to be.

He does not say outright that the tenth commandment must be done away with because it affirms property and social distinctions, because it tells us not to covet our neighbor's house (his whole hereditary environment and opportunity), his wife (and her social environment and obligations), his servants, his cattle and the rest of his goods and chattels.

We may think, many of us, that this patriarchal view of hereditary and social grades and of domestic service, is about as cumbersome and obsolete, in deal-

ing with many of our social and economic problems in New York to-day, as an establishment of the patriarchs in Westchester County or in the middle of Brooklyn would be. At the same time, neither the Altrurians nor anyone else have proved to us beyond peradventure and dispute that the law of Moses and of Sinai does not contain in itself the fundamental essentials of all such civilization as the world has yet evolved.

Christianity comes as an afterthought. It tells us "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." It does not say "Thou shalt love him as you have persuaded yourself (not him) that he might like to have you love him—in an impossible state of non-inequality of mind, body, and spirit, absolutely removed from the sound racial common sense which conducts, successfully and progressively on the whole, the inevitable compromises of life."

If I happen to have acquired, by heredity or achievement, certain possessions, certain facilities, certain opportunities of wealth, education, talent, culture, I may, if I be the one exceptional man or woman in ten thousand that proves the rule, achieve successful and efficient martyrdom as Father Damien did; or I may prove a fanatic prophet of discontent like Tolstoi in an environment where that special brand of discontent is emphatically and immediately called for.

But if I am that exception, according to our more searching modern standards, I must be no half-way or half-hearted martyr; I must be a successful one, either as a medical missionary whose loss will be felt, or member of a mission that supports itself; or if

I am a prophet, my works must advertise my faith efficiently: if I make shoes, my shoes must prove their fitness to compete in the open market with their closest competitors, hand-made or machine-made.

This, many of Mr. Howells's later books have failed to do; and on the whole they have helped considerably less to level America up instead of down, than they might have done if he had laid more stress on art and on accurate interpretation of the world as it is to-day, and less on doctrinal fanaticism.

Science, Mr. Phillips tells us, is leveling the world up, and science has its martyrs and fanatics too; but the notes that these men take when they condemn themselves to lingering extinction with all their faculties at their command to the last, knowing perfectly the chances they take, and exactly what they aim at, add to the sum of human science and sanitation and are not wasted.

Mr. Howells hates science, or shuts his eyes to it, because it affirms and demonstrates beyond cavil the essential inequalities in human, animal and inorganic growth, as well as the evolution and survival of the spiritually and physically fit that result therefrom.

It affirms, far more liberally than he does, that physical unfitness, whether caused by poverty, by heredity or accident or temporary self-abuse and neglect, may ultimately be a source of spiritual fitness in the individual or the community. It neither condones nor blames such unfitness, or any other sort, over-much. It goes steadily about its business! it works with its head, and with its hands too, as neither Mr. Howells nor Count Tolstoi, nor any day laborer ever worked in his life, slowly eliminating the unfit of

all sorts and degrees and conditions that make for waste in the mass or in the unit.

It shows us, as Mr. Howells and his school fail to show us, as the world in general failed to see till very recently, that there is justice in human relations, in the present conflict between labor and capital and the ultimate consumer in America to-day, if you strike the average large enough: for the future, if not for us; in sociology as well as natural science; in surgery and sanitation, as well as in that branch of psychology specialized as Christian ethics, theoretical or applied.

It shows us, as no book of Mr. Howells or his school of denatured realism has ever done, that unfitness and inequality not only form the material and ground-work of the life that we live and interpret to-day, but that they also furnish, directly or indirectly, its most complex and fascinating problems, its greatest inspirations and heroisms, its most solid and substantial gains.

Riches, like the love of women and the friendships of youth, may take to themselves wings and vanish; art in its ultimate stages, however loved, prized and acclaimed at its inception, may prove as much of a failure in the world's eyes as a son that goes wrong; but so long as a man keeps his sanity and self-respect, once he has proved his essential inequality, his superiority in service to the masses of his time by adding to the stock of the world's useful knowledge and efficient inspiration, remains one to be envied by the majority of his fellow men. And the world is taking such inspiration to itself eagerly to-day. It is advertising it broadcast through the medium of jour-

nalism of the newspapers and the magazines of the people.

Inspiration such as this — of the democracy and the science that achieves, that makes good, that comes to stay — sooner or later is going to sound the keynote of our greatest and most distinctively American fiction and poetry of the future.

In the meantime, though science, *per se*, no more than art, *per se*, is regarded as an *open sesame* to the retreats of our social forty thieves and four hundreds of high finance, Mr. Howells is about as far wrong when he says that a working man is as rare a sight in American society as a negro is, as when he says that the American ideal is not to change the conditions for all — where we are convinced that they need to be changed.

The surgeon works, the educator works, the journalist and the social surveyor works, the millionaire and the multi-millionaire works, the master builder of the transcontinental railroad system works, quite as hard and generally quite as honestly, *mutatis mutandis*, as the walking delegate or labor grafter higher up or lower down that he has to dicker with, or the literary man that consciously or unconsciously misrepresents him. The idle rich are not gaining prestige, save in the minds of silly women and parasite trades-people. On the contrary, they are passing, slowly but inevitably. The American leisure class continues to be confined to women, children, college boys, critics, degenerates, incompetents, hoboos and the unemployed.

And the men who do work, whether with their hands or their heads or both; the men who do things

and who help others to do them, whether they are interested directly or the contrary in New Nationalism, Insurgency, child welfare, factory and tenement legislation and sanitation, municipal ownership, social surveys and settlements, education that really educates, and art and literature that really inspire and interpret, are all helping in one way or another to organize and re-organize the whole movement of our national life, to level up — not down.

Meanwhile — if we can find the opportunity for it — there is much that is shrewd, much that is suggestive, much that is noble and inspiring, within its limitations, in the *Altruria* series and others of Mr. Howells's books that are conceived in the same spirit. The literary sociologist and the contemporary historian of manners cannot afford to pass him over to-day or to-morrow. Types like Annie Kilburn herself, Lawyer Putney, and the chief merchant and church autocrat of the little New England town where Annie's story is laid, are as ineradicable and racy of the soil as the New England conscience itself in its more pronounced moods and manifestations.

Putney gives us the whole man at a stroke, and much of the speaker as well, when he says: "Well, Brother Gerrish has got a good many ideals. He likes to get anybody he can by the throat and squeeze the difference of opinion out of him." Somewhat modified, we have here an unconscious suggestion of Mr. Howells himself. Equally graphic are: "I presume the Almighty knows what He is about; but sometimes He appears to save at the spigot and waste at the bung-hole like the rest of us. He let me cripple my boy to reform me"; and the whole

delineation of the village drunkard's character and the part that he plays in Annie's tragedy of misdirected and well meant futility.

There are occasional croppings out of the same vein of close and not unkindly observation and appraisal of character and social tendencies in the Altrurian himself, in *The Hazard of New Fortunes*, *The Coast of Bohemia*, *A Woman's Reason*, and other books of both periods.

"The time has passed when a lady could look after the dinner and perhaps cook part of it herself, and then rush in to receive her guests and do the amenities. . . . The nicest kind of a fad is charity. . . . I sometimes think they use it to work up with. And there are some who use religion the same way. . . .

"By American of course I mean a town where at least one-third of the people are raw foreigners or rawly extracted natives. . . . Think of a baby in a flat! It's a contradiction in terms; the flat is the negation of motherhood.—It's made to give artificial people a society basis on a little money—too much money of course for what they get. So the cost of the building is put into the marble halls and idiotic decorations. . . . None of these flats have a living room. What house in New York has? No, the Anglo-Saxon as we know it in the Anglo-Saxon home is simply impossible in the Franco-American flat, not because it's humble, but because it's false. . . .

"Mrs. March was one of those wives who exact a more rigid adherence to their ideals from their husbands than from themselves. Early in their mar-

ried life she had taken charge of him in all matters that she considered practical. She did not include the business of bread-winning in these. . . .

“Other men said these many millioned millionaires were smart and got their money by sharp practice to which lesser men could not attain, but Dryfoos believed that he could compass the same ends, by the same means, with the same chances; he respected their money, not them . . . and though Dryfoos’s soul bowed itself and crawled, it was with a gambler’s admiration of their wonderful luck. . . . If it was not distinctive, it was not for want of distinguished people, but because there seems to be some solvent about New York that reduces all men to its potent level, that touches everybody with its potent magic, and brings to the surface the deeply underlying nobody.”

In other words, it’s harder to be, and to appear, a big frog in a big puddle than in a smaller one. Mr. Howells felt this and suffered. He saw other men and women of his own type feeling this and suffering from it. And this, plus the more obvious social and financial inequality and iniquity that flaunts itself on the streets, added to the narrowness of his own intellectual and professional circle, and to the questionable social philosophy of a Russian novelist and reformer, caused him to rush into print and to revert to a pessimism that the world on the whole takes little heed of, and has less use for.

This is not the kind of thing for which we are most grateful to Mr. Howells or the soil that produced him. In his case we prefer to remember touches like “her father pressed her cheek closer against his,

and she felt the smile that she could not see in the dark," and "But when he wakes in the night he likes to reach out and touch his father's hand. The child looked mortified. 'I wish I could reach out and touch *my* father's hand,' said Annie. - The cloud left the boy's face. 'I can't remember whether I said my prayers, mother. I've been thinking so!' 'Well say them over again to me'"; and the charm of the earlier books which is evanescent and intangible in its first effect, like all charm, like all youth, and yet capable of infinite renewal by the world where the author sees so little joy to-day, when the world finds time to turn the pages back, or to start its own new life stories.

More credit than is immediately apparent, must be given Mr. Howells in his effort to turn and start a new page in the world's history. The evil that he has done, the false estimate of reaction that he has tried to deify, like his misapprehension of what America means and is going to mean, may be held inconsiderable in the long run. It will be buried in his grave or before; the good that he has done, that irradiates his writings like his life, will live after him. In so far as he has preached (as he has practiced) that simplicity, naturalness and beauty are bed-rock characteristics in American literature and life, which none of us can long afford to lose sight of; in so far as he has made war on injustice, or pretentiousness and deceit; in so far as he has charmed us and opened our minds and our hearts, we owe him a debt that we shall not lightly pay. And we shall continue to be indebted to him as long as his books are read, as many must be, by our children and theirs after them.

In so far as he has fallen short of a just estimate and an adequate portrayal of the problems that confront us here to-day, our regret is for him and the men and women of his generation, rather than for our own. For just so far as he and men like Mark Twain, like Whitman, like Lanier, like Lowell and the rest of the New England school, have fallen short, they have in reality raised the standard higher and left us the more to do.

Literary men of to-day may or may not out-rival or equal them: time and posterity will settle that. It will be enough if we understand them and do them justice, if we criticise and interpret them constructively.

For the achievement of the past and the criticism of the present, together, make the promise of the future. And it is in that promise and prophecy, rather than in any retrospect or survey of present material and authorship, that the American literature which shall last, based on a wider and higher interpretation of our national character and destiny, our national wealth, obligations and opportunities, presents its most alluring and inspiring aspect.

IV

FRANK NORRIS

"Literature is of all arts the most democratic. It is of, by and for the people in a fuller measure even than government itself. . . . It is the people who after all make a literature. If they read the few, the illuminate, will write. But first must come the demand, . . . from the people, the Plain People, the condemned bourgeoisie. The select circle of the élite, the 'studio' hangers-on, the refined, will never, never, clamor they never so loudly, toil they never so painfully, produce the Great Writer. . . . The more the Plain People read they will discriminate. It is inevitable, and by and by they will demand something better. It is impossible to read a book without formulating an opinion about it. . . . The survival of the fittest is as good in the evolution of a literature as of our bodies, and the best 'academy' for the writers of the United States is after all the judgment of the people exercised throughout the lapse of a considerable time." *The Responsibilities of the Novelist*, 1901. *Salt and Sincerity*.

THE rise of *The Saturday Evening Post* is a case in point. So with the rest of the muck-rate magazines and the new school of virile out-of-doors fiction — for men and boys first, women and girls incidentally, patriots and progressive critics of American literature and life, first last and all the time — that is gradually letting light into our dark places.

The democracy of Frank Norris is as genuine and uncompromising as that of Mark Twain. At the same time it is more progressive.

It was not for nothing that Frank Norris was born

in Chicago. It was not for nothing that his family took the trail westward and that he emigrated to California while he was yet in his teens. It was not for nothing that he followed still farther afield the call of the vanishing frontier which he has himself delimited in one of the strongest and most suggestive essays of the book quoted above; that he saw his share of the world — the white man's and the Anglo-Saxon's share; that he saw it steadily and saw it whole; that he found his theory of life in the open, in the wilds and in the great grain fields of a continent, as well as in its great cities, before he set himself to realize it on paper, and to interpret America to itself and the rest of the world as no other twentieth century writer has yet begun to do.

And in his later interpretation of life, in *The Octopus* and the rest of the unfinished Trilogy of the Wheat it is the voice of the Plain People, of the American business men, of Big Business in its broadest and highest range, of the Anglo-Saxon adventurer, merchant, trader, farmer, manufacturer, banker, common carrier, seaman, yeoman, trailsman, statesman, through the centuries, that strikes the keynote decisively, successfully, representatively and with increasing power.

One does not have to read *The Responsibilities of the Novelist* to realize that Frank Norris, like the best and biggest of the men and women he represents, is for the Square Deal progressively on the broadest possible basis. There is an epic breadth of scope and power of purpose in *The Octopus* and *The Pit* that reduces life to its prime factors, that transcends national and racial as it does mere in-

dividual and local interests, and that is a new thing in literature.

And in the earlier work as well, in *Blix*, in *Moran of the Lady Letty*, in *McTeague*, in *A Man's Woman*, there is an elemental insistence on the reality of Romance in the modern world, on its immanence in the workaday lives of the millions, for all who have eyes to see it, that is equally characteristic of the man and of his origin.

In this as in most things he is his own critic. He writes so he who runs may read and be moved to come and read again. The following quotation from his last book of critical essays states in set terms what his whole life and life work exemplifies:

“Lately we have been taking Romance a weary journey across the water. . . . Would you take her across the street to your neighbor's front parlor (with the bisque fisher boy on the mantel and the photograph of Niagara Falls in glass hanging in the front window) would you introduce her there . . . she might be awkward . . . and knock over the little bisque fisher boy. Well she might. If she did you might find under the base of the statuette, hidden away, tucked away — what? God knows. But something that would be a complete revelation of my neighbor's secretest life.

“So you think Romance would stop in the front parlor and discuss medicated flannels and mineral waters with the ladies? Not for more than five minutes. She would be off upstairs. . . . She would find a heart-ache (maybe between the pillows of the mistress' bed) and a memory carefully secreted in the master's deed box. She would come upon a great

hope amid the books and papers of the study table in the young man's room and perhaps — who knows — an affair, or, Great Heavens! an intrigue, in the scented ribbons and gloves and hair-pins of the young lady's bureau . . . and this very day in this very hour she is sitting among the rags and wretchedness, the dust and despair of the tenements of the East Side of New York. . . .

“You will not follow her to the slums for you believe that Romance should only amuse and entertain you, singing sweet songs and touching the harp of silver strings with rosy tipped fingers. If haply she should call to you from the squalor of a dive . . . crying, ‘Look! Listen! This too is life. These too are my children! Look at them, know them and knowing help!’ . . . you would answer: ‘Come from there, Romance. Your place is not there.’ And you would make of her a harlequin.”

And again he says: “There is more significance as to the ultimate excellence of American letters in the sight of the messenger boy devouring his Old Sleuth and Deadwood Dick and Boy Detectives with an *earnest serious* absorption, than in the spectacle of a ‘reading group’ of dilettanti coquetting with Verlaine and pretending that they understand him.”

And again: “I have no patience with the theory of literature that claims that the Great Man belongs only to the cultured few. You must write, so the theorists explain, for that small number of fine minds who because of education, because of delicate, fastidious taste, are competent to judge.

“I tell you this is wrong. It is precisely the same purblind prejudice that condemned the intro-

duction of the printing press because it would cheapen and vulgarize the literature of the day. A literature that cannot be vulgarized is no literature at all and will perish just as surely as rivers run to the sea. The things that last are the understandable things . . . understandable to the common minds, the Plain People."

In any general and detailed consideration of the literature of insurgency — insurgency against machine-made conditions and tendencies and methods of thought and action — practically the whole of *The Responsibilities of the Novelist* might be quoted. Next to *The Octopus*, *The Husband's Story* and *The Reign of Gilt*, there is hardly a book published in America during the last ten years, that has so direct and inspiring a message for the Plain People of America of all sorts, sexes, classes, present or previous conditions of servitude, for whom Frank Norris and David Graham Phillips wrote.

Norris had the training of a newspaper man in a generation later than Mark Twain's, when life in this country had evolved itself into a more complicated machinery of existence than that of the days when the older man crossed the continent before the Civil War.

Both men lived in San Francisco at formative periods of their lives and literary careers. Both felt, and sooner or later realized, the transcontinental energy, the primitive democracy, the intense and uncompromising hatred of shams and conventional tradition, that still characterize in many ways the world's greatest mining camp and seaport. Both were fitted by temperament and by training to see life as it is,

here and to-day, on broad-gauge lines, and to concern themselves with the most direct and vital view of it.

Norris was the better trained journalist, largely because journalism in America, from New York to San Francisco, has specialized itself during the last fifty years, as journalism has never been specialized before.

During the same period journalism, beneath its superficial sensationalism and vulgarity, throughout the Anglo-Saxon world has managed to realize its kinship to the literature that lasts, and to develop itself accordingly. The work of Norris, Phillips and Kipling alone testify sufficiently to this.

Stress has been laid on the influence of Zola on Norris's method and cosmic grasp of his subject. It is highly probable that if Zola had never existed, Norris would nevertheless have written *The Octopus* and *The Pit* much as he did elect to write them.

The influence of Kipling and of Stevenson in waking up the modern world to the fact that Romance is alive, here and to-day, for each and every one of us who has eyes to see it, is less evident, superficially, in these two books. Spiritually and intrinsically it is far more to the point.

Point of view and method both, in both these books, as well as in the rest of their author's work, is far more Anglo-Saxon than Latin. More than either, in the last analysis, it remains essentially and triumphantly American and democratic.

Norris worked out his own literary salvation and immortality beginning as an American and a newspaper man. This is evident in his own words, also from *The Responsibilities of the Novelist*.

“Hard to be original — Great Heavens! when a new life comes into the world for every tick of the watch in your pocket — a new life with all its complications and with all the thousand and one other complications it sets in motion! Hard to be original! when of all those billion lives, your own is as distinct, as individual, as original as though you had been born out of season in the Paleozoic age and yours the first human face the sun ever shone upon.

“Go out into the street and stand where the ways cross and hear the machinery of life clashing in its grooves. Can the utmost resort of your ingenuity evolve a better story than any one of the million that jog your elbow . . . turn your eyes inward upon yourself down, down to the heart of you; and the tread of the feet upon the pavement is the systole and diastole of your own being . . . different only in degree. It is life, and it is that of which you have to make your book — your novel — life, not other people’s novels. Or look from your window and a whole literature goes marching by clamoring for leaders and a master hand to guide it.”

Norris failed to find leaders here at home, and like the Americans that crossed the plains to the Pacific and the pioneers of all time, he made himself one. With him American fiction and American literature definitely crosses the great plains and the Great Divide and assumes lasting transcontinental proportions. Bret Harte was as local as regional, as provincial in his point of view as was Joaquin Miller, or as Sophie Orne Jewett and Mr. Howells. Not so Norris.

He traveled, he prospected, too keenly, too widely,

in the flesh and in the spirit, before he reached his full power, to remain as those others remained, representative of a section or a sectional point of view; and the story of his genesis and his evolution is as intensely and representatively American as the best of his completed works.

Blix, first published as a serial in *The Puritan* in 1899, when its author was still unknown to the American reading public at large, is not only a thoroughly charming idyl of modern American and Californian life; it is also a remarkably interesting study in origins.

It begins at the breakfast table of Travis Bessemer and her father, near the top of the Washington Street Hill in San Francisco. Condry Rivers, associate editor of the San Francisco *Daily Times*, Sunday supplement, drops in unexpectedly for tea that night; unexpectedly, because, though he is a newspaper man, he is at the same time a promising writer of short stories, afflicted with a temperament of the absent-minded brand, and he has seen Travis three or four times already during the week just passed, like every other week for the last year and a half.

Condry is twenty-eight; Travis (later christened Blix by him, because she has always been "just that — bully and snappy and crisp and bright and sort of sudden") ten years younger. Condry has been a little brother of the rich for years; he has a weakness for poker and generally loses more than he wins on the rare occasions when he is in funds.

Blix is about to come out socially and is not at all eager to do so. They have flirted mildly for some time. On this particular Sunday evening flirtation

has lost its savor. They begin to discover that they are in deadly danger of boring one another.

Blix makes up her mind definitely and on the spot about something that has happened recently. She also lets Condyl know about it. She announces that she is not going to come out. "It's not . . . that I'm afraid of Jack Carter and his dirty stories; I simply don't want to know the kind of people that have made Jack Carter possible . . . as for having a good time I'll find my amusements somewhere else. . . . And whether I have a good time or not, I'll keep my own self-respect . . . the whole thing tires me . . . I'm not going to break with it because I have any 'purpose in life' or that sort of thing. . . . I'm going to be sincere and not pretend to like people and things I don't like." . . .

As an initial step in the banishment of pretense they stop flirting, and find that they are beginning to have a much better time than they ever had before.

Blix interests herself in Condyl's work. She sees things the way he sees them, and they both see them as Kipling does. He takes her to the docks and aboard ship when he goes to write his Sunday specials, and he writes better short stories than ever.

They discover Chinatown, they go fishing in the country, they take long walks together. Blix learns to play poker and makes Condyl promise to play with her and no one else when he feels that he must play.

She wins all his money, whenever he has any to spare, till his appetite for the game wears off. They manufacture a romance in real life from two adver-

tisements in the personal column of a San Francisco paper; they personally conduct it to Luna's Mexican restaurant through the medium of the mails; later they see it come true, and become very good friends with both parties.

One of them has been boat steerer on a New Bedford Whaler, has ridden in the Strand in a hansom with William Ewart Gladstone, has acted as ice pilot on an Arctic relief expedition, has fought with the Seris on the lower California Islands, and sold champagne made from rock candy, effervescent salts and Reisling wine, to the Coreans — among other phases of a checkered and adventurous career.

Out of these experiences Condry pieces together the frame-work of his first novel. This leads to an offer of a sub-editorship by the Centennial Company of New York at the time when Blix has completed preparations to make her home for the time being with an aunt of hers in New York, and to study medicine there.

“ There in that room, high above the city, a little climax had come swiftly to a head, a little crisis in two lives had suddenly developed. The moment that had been in preparation for the last few months, for the last few years, the last few centuries, behold it had arrived.

“ ‘ Blix do you love me? ’

“ Suddenly it was the New Year. Somewhere close at hand a chorus of chiming church bells sang together. Far off in the direction of the wharves where the great steam-ships lay, came the glad, sonorous shouting of a whistle . . . from point to point, from street to roof top and from roof to spire,

the vague murmur of many sounds grew and spread and widened, slowly, grandly; that profound and steady bourdon, as of an invisible organ swelling, deepening and expanding to the full male diapason of the city aroused and signaling the advent of another year. . . .

“It was the old year yet when Condy asked the question; in that moment’s pause while Blix hesitated to answer him, the New Year had come . . . only for a moment. Then she came closer to him and put a hand on each of his shoulders.

“‘Happy New Year, dear,’ she said.”

Here is democracy in excelsis, and some initial suggestion of that cosmic breath and truth of imagery which, in *The Octopus*, has never yet been equaled in fiction.

In *Moran of the Lady Letty* the influence of Stevenson is more noticeable; in *McTeague* and *A Man’s Woman*, that of Zola. The first book starts, as Jack London’s *Sea Wolf* does, with the adventures of a San Francisco club man, a weakling physically, who finds himself shanghaied on board a Pacific trading schooner. Moran and the Lady Letty come into the tale as the captain’s daughter of a Norwegian timber bark that lies dismantled in mid-ocean. Moran is emphatically a man’s woman. She is neither beautiful nor romantic in the conventional sense of the two words. She is six feet high, and broad in proportion, with a mane of yellow hair, a personality that is in some respects suggestive of a young Valkyrie, and a keen eye for the main chance.

Her father dies from injuries received during the storm that disabled his ship. Thereafter she makes

it her business to make a real man out of the club man; and after various adventures with a crew of Chinamen and other hard characters, she succeeds reasonably well.

The book does not conclude with the conventional happy ending any more than Stevenson's *Treasure Island* does. It is considerably shorter than *The Wrecker*, which may have inspired it in part, and may be compared to both the other books without disparagement to any or all concerned.

In *A Man's Woman*, 1900, like *The Pit*, Norris scored a partial failure. The book begins with a relentlessly realistic account of the sufferings of an American polar expedition. The leader comes back crippled as a result of exposure, and the rest of the story is concerned with his unsuccessful efforts to avoid a marriage with the girl with whom he was in love before he started.

Even in his crippled state the hero retains characteristics of the frontier and the rough stone age from which he hails; there are single episodes in the book that take us back directly into the primitive and the elemental, and that demonstrate conclusively the author's growing power to hammer his material into shape, and to drive the impression of it indelibly into the minds of his readers.

In *McTeague*, 1899, he begins to hammer in the impression on the first page, with the first sentence. "It was Sunday, and, according to his custom on that day, McTeague took his dinner at two in the afternoon at the car-conductor's coffee-joint in Polk Street. He had a thick gray soup; heavy, under-done meat, very hot, on a cold plate; two kinds

of vegetables; and a sort of suet pudding, full of strong butter and sugar. On his way back to his office, one block above, he stopped at Joe Frenna's saloon and bought a pitcher of steam beer. It was his habit to leave the pitcher there on his way to dinner.

"Once in his office, or as he called it on his sign board 'Dental Parlors,' he took off his coat and shoes, unbuttoned his vest, and, having crammed his little stove full of coke, lay back in his operating chair at the bay window reading the paper, drinking his beer, and smoking his huge, porcelain pipe while his food digested, crop full, stupid and warm. By and by, gorged with steam beer, and overcome by the heat of the room, the cheap tobacco, and the effects of his heavy meal he dropped off to sleep. Late in the afternoon his canary bird in its gilt cage, just over his head, began to sing. He woke slowly, finished the rest of his beer — very flat and stale by this time — and taking down his concertina from the book-case where in week days it kept the company of seven volumes of Allen's Practical Dentist, played upon it some half-dozen very mournful airs."

Of this concertina and this canary bird we shall hear more later. They are at once symbols and vital phases of McTeague's nature, and parts of the plot.

Superficially the resemblance of Zola's method and material is apparent, but there is more than mere realism for realism's sake here. One may justly compare the portrait of McTeague in his operating chair to any in Rembrandt's gallery of scenes of squalor, and find more in it, as life to-day means

more than it did in Rembrandt's time, and as fiction in a master's hands transcends painting in its breadth and depth of suggestion and appeal.

There is atmosphere of more than steam beer, cheap tobacco and coke fumes in these first thirty lines. It is possible for the reader of some experience to feel immediately that here is life in a very real and significant aspect, that the apparent grossness of material and statement is only the sign for something significant that the book promises to reveal.

For the rest of the Plain People for whom Norris wrote — anyone competent to say "Why I know, or I've lived with people just like that" — the interest grips one from the first chapter to the last.

In the next two pages one learns that McTeague is a primitive product of an artificial environment. Ten years before he had been a car boy at the Big Dipper mine in Placer County. He goes away as the assistant of a traveling dentist, and makes himself also a dentist by main strength. "McTeague was a young giant carrying his shock of blond hair six feet three inches from the ground; moving his immense limbs, heavy with ropes of muscle, slowly, ponderously. His hands were enormous, red and covered with a fell of stiff yellow hair; they were hard as wooden mallets, strong as wires, the hands of the old time car boy. Often he dispensed with forceps and extracted a refractory tooth with his thumb and finger."

It was in the nature of things and the exigencies of dental practice that McTeague should fall in love with Trina Sieppe. This comes about through the intervention of Marcus Shouler, the dentist's one in-

timate friend, who occupies a room on the floor above. Marcus is the assistant in Old Grannis's dog-hospital, just off Polk Street, four blocks above. His cousin Trina has fallen out of a swing at a picnic and broken off a front tooth.

She comes to McTeague to have the damage repaired and we hear much about proximate cavities, hook broaches, corundum burrs, dental necrosis, palatine surfaces, dowels, bayonet forceps, hoe-excavators and other minutiae of the dentist's art.

In the midst of this unromantic setting a romance in real life develops. McTeague keeps one of Trina's teeth wrapped up in a bit of newspaper in his waistcoat pocket. The time comes when it is a positive anguish to him to hurt her.

"Trina was very small and prettily made. Her face was round and rather pale; her eyes long and narrow and blue like the half open eyes of a little baby; her lips and the lobes of her tiny ears were pale, a little suggestive of anæmia; it was to her hair that one's attention was most attracted. Heaps and heaps of blue black coils and braids, a royal coil of swarthy bands, a veritable sable tiara heavy, abundant, odorous. All the vitality that should have given color to her face seemed to have been absolved by this marvelous hair."

McTeague kisses Trina while she is under the influence of ether. When she comes to, he asks her to marry him off hand, and she becomes violently sick. The dental sittings come to an end, he goes to a picnic with her and her family and Marcus. Marcus, who has been sweet on Trina himself, decides to be magnanimous and pull out when he sees how his

friend is affected. McTeague can neither eat nor sleep. Trina becomes impressed with his primitive masculinity, and their marriage becomes inevitable when she learns that she has won a lottery prize of five thousand dollars on a ticket bought by chance.

Shortly after her marriage Trina begins to become a miser. Her money is invested at six per cent. with her uncle Oelberman who owns a big toy store in the Mission district. She begins to earn three or four dollars a week by making toy animals for Noah's arks. At the cost of severe mental and moral agony she deducts two hundred dollars from the five thousand to pay for her trousseau and the other initial expenses of housekeeping. Thereafter her one aim and purpose in life is to keep her five thousand intact and to add to it.

McTeague quarrels with Marcus about her. After a time he learns that he can no longer practice as a dentist because he has not graduated from a dental college, and the law forbids. He fails to find employment with a firm of dental manufacturers; his instruments and his few household goods have to be sold. So is the huge gilded tooth that hung outside his window and which was Trina's wedding present to him.

Trina refuses to let a cent of her five thousand dollars be touched; they move into poorer quarters; she develops a talent for concealing from him the truth about the smallest and most necessary expenditures; she refuses to allow him car fare when he is looking for work; she continues to save little by little, while they are both living on her interest and her earnings as a toy maker.

McTeague begins to drink, and Trina begins to turn her savings into gold and to play with it and fondle it as the miser of tradition does. McTeague develops a habit of putting the ends of her fingers into his mouth and biting them till the blood comes when he wants money. When she has amassed more than four hundred dollars, he steals it and runs away.

He comes back when it is all gone and he is starving. Trina refuses to give him a cent. She has sold his concertina in his absence. He finds himself absolutely without resources. Unexpectedly, through an accident which he witnesses, he gets a job as piano-handler for a music store at six dollars a week.

He lives alone with his canary bird for some months and misses his concertina. He finds it by chance in the second hand department of the store. He knows that Trina has sold it. He pays down as deposit the four dollars that he has in his pocket and sets out to get the balance of the eleven dollars needed to buy it back from Trina.

Meantime Trina has gone from bad to worse. The "non-poisonous" paint that she uses for the toy animals causes blood poisoning in the fingers that McTeague has bitten. When she comes out of the hospital with only a claw left in place of her right hand, she secures employment as a scrub woman for a slum kindergarten. She draws her money gradually out of her uncle's business and keeps the gold in her rooms. She becomes a slattern; she loses interest in all but the actual sight and feel of the gold.

McTeague comes to her after his day's work, for his seven dollars. On the way he drinks many

whiskeys and decides to have the whole five thousand. Trina pleads with him and fights him till her strength fails. Towards morning she dies.

In the meantime McTeague has carried off the gold and his own small belongings in a blanket roll, with the canary in its cage on top. He harks back by blind instinct to the wild and the Big Dipper Mine. On his way he passes through the woods.

“The day was very hot, and the silence of high noon lay thick and close between the steep slopes of the cañons like an invisible, muffling fluid. . . . The vast, moveless heat seemed to distill countless odors from the brush — odors of warm sap, of pine needles, and of tar weed, and above all the medicinal odor of the witch hazel. As far as he could look, uncounted multitudes of trees and of manzanita bushes were quietly and motionlessly growing, growing, growing. A tremendous immeasurable life pushed heavenward without a sound, without a motion. At turns of the road, on the higher points, cañons disclosed themselves, far away, gigantic grooves in the landscape, deep blue in the distance, opening into one another, ocean-deep, silent, huge and suggestive of colossal primeval forces held in reserve. . . . The entire region was untamed. In some places east of the Mississippi nature is cozy, intimate, small and home like like a good-natured house wife. In Placer County, California, she is a vast unconquered brute of the Pliocene epoch, savage, sullen, and magnificently indifferent to man.

“But there were men in the mountains like lice in mammoth’s hides, fighting them stubbornly now with hydraulic ‘monitors,’ now with drill and dyna-

mite, boring into the vitals of them or tearing away great yellow gravelly scars in the flanks of them, sucking their blood, extracting gold . . . one heard the prolonged thunder of the stamp mill, the crusher, the insatiable monster, gnashing the rocks to powder with its long iron teeth, vomiting them out again in a thin stream of wet gray mud. Its enormous maw, fed night and day with the car-boy's loads, gorged itself with gravel and spat out the gold . . . growling over its endless meal, like some savage animal, some legendary dragon, some fabulous beast, symbol of inordinate and monstrous gluttony."

McTeague gets employment, unrecognized, at his old job. The life pleases him beyond words. After a few weeks the instinct of the animal to avoid the hunters warns him; he goes wide around sharp corners; he wakes suddenly and prowls about the bunk house by night; finally he disappears two days before the sheriff and the deputies from San Francisco reach the mine.

McTeague heads south for Mexico. For a time his suspicions are dormant. He makes a deal with an old miner and they prospect for gold near Death Valley. They find it, and again the instinct of flight gets the best of the dentist. He leaves the mine and his partner by night. He heads south along the western side of the valley. Suddenly he decides to evade pursuit by crossing it.

Here Marcus Shouler who has been working on a ranch in the neighborhood and who joins the sheriff's force as a volunteer comes up with him.

Marcus gets the drop. McTeague who has neither knife nor gun with him puts his hands up.

McTeague's mule which has eaten loco weed and which carries the last food and water left to the two men breaks away. The two men run after it. Marcus fires his last shot, the mule falls and bursts the canteen. The two men come to blows over the division of the money, Trina's five thousand dollars, the canvas sackful tied to the horn of the saddle.

"Suddenly the men grappled, and in another instant were rolling and struggling upon the hot white ground. McTeague thrust Marcus backward till he tripped and fell over the body of the dead mule. The little bird cage broke from the saddle with the violence of their fall, and rolled out upon the ground, the flour bags slipping from it. McTeague tore the revolver from Marcus's grip and struck out with it blindly. Clouds of alkali dust, fine and pungent, enveloped the two fighting men, all but strangling them.

"McTeague did not know how he had killed his enemy, but all at once Marcus grew still beneath his blows. Then there was a sudden last return of energy. McTeague's right wrist was caught, something clicked upon it, then the struggling body fell limp and motionless with a long breath.

"As McTeague rose to his feet he felt a pull at his right wrist; something held it fast. Looking down he saw that Marcus in that last struggle had found strength to handcuff their right wrists together. Marcus was dead now; McTeague was locked to the body. All about him, vast, interminable, stretched the measureless leagues of Death Valley.

"McTeague remained stupidly looking around him, now at the distant horizon, now at the ground,

now at the half-dead canary chittering feebly in its little gilt prison."

There are few novels that end as effectively, as inevitably, as much to the purpose and with as little apparent waste of technical labor and ingenuity.

The symbolism of the huge tooth has been variously commented upon. The same symbolism appears as the parallel story of Maria Macapa, a Mexican woman not quite right in her head, who talks about a service of gold plate that her family once owned, and who is married and murdered by Zerkow, a Jew junk dealer, on the chance that she may have hoarded and hidden it somewhere in their tenement as Trina hoarded her own gold.

Norris never appears primarily as a preacher. He tells us in his own words: "People who read appear at last to have grasped their own precept, the novel must not preach, but the purpose of the story must be subordinate to the story itself."

At the same time he says: "As though it were impossible to write a novel without a purpose even if it is only the purpose to amuse." And it is sufficiently evident to anyone who takes time to reflect, that his purpose here is not to achieve a literary *tour de force*, realistic and symbolistic at once, but to put conclusively and unforgettably before the mind of the average reader the result of the commonest crime of civilization on two or three obscurely typical lives in San Francisco as the plain people see it to-day. Norris does not preach in the obvious and restricted sense. He makes us see unmistakably here and later that life is greater than its accidents. Still less does he pretend, through any worship of sham refinements

or false heroics, that the civilization most written up and gilded over is greater or better than the result of its everyday failures and crimes.

II.

The Octopus was published in 1901. At that time Norris unquestionably felt his powers and his responsibilities as he voiced them later in the initial essay of *The Responsibilities of the Novelist* (published in 1901).

“More than all others the successful novelist . . . more even than the minister and the editor, he should feel his public and watch his every word, testing carefully his every utterance, weighing with the most relentless precision his every statement, in a word possess a sense of his responsibilities.

“For the novel is the great expression of modern life. . . . Each age speaks with its own peculiar organ and has left the Word for us moderns to read and understand. . . . To-day is the day of the novel. . . . If the novel was not something more than a simple diversion . . . a means of whiling away a dull evening, a long railroad journey, it would not, believe me, remain for another day.

“If the novel then, is popular, it is popular with a reason, a vital inherent reason; that is to say it is essential. Essential . . . because it expresses modern life better than architecture, better than painting, better than poetry, better than music. It is as necessary to the civilization of the twentieth century as the violin is to Kubelik, as the piano is to Paderewski. . . . It is an instrument, a tool, a weapon, a vehicle. It is that thing which in the hand of a man

makes him civilized and no longer a savage, because it gives him a power of durable, permanent expression."

That the work of Frank Norris is durable because it deals with the material of our common national life, that his expression is permanent because it is the expression of truth itself, is one of the things that his fellow countrymen and country-women are gradually coming to see.

The Octopus has belonged to America and to the world for eleven years. Norris is still a prophet without honor in some sections, some classes, some literary, scholastic, cultured and educated circles of his own country. At the same time the book and the ideal of racial expression, of obligation and service that it represents, have come to stay in America as surely as the Rail Road, the Octopus of steam and steel, the capitalistic aggression and responsibility that it pillories, that it interprets, that in its broad results it justifies.

Norris has been a pioneer of America and tomorrow not only in his racial inheritance, in his spirit, his material and method of work, but in his partial acceptance of the fact, that the novel of to-morrow, in America of all countries, must be built on broad-gauge lines; that it must be a vehicle or a train of vehicles fit for all; that its right of way must be made permanent in its possession of elemental and universal truth; that sham and false pretense must be as abhorrent to it as false work, unstandardized, in the construction of a steel bridge; that jerry building in the work of any novelist, who is able to write for an audience of millions or hundreds of thousands, must in time come to be looked upon with the same

abhorrence as jerry building in the foundation piers of the permanent way over which millions travel yearly.

Novels like *The Octopus* are coming to be the great bridges of thought, with their trains and equipment, that bear any chance way-farer who may connect at any point on the line to the great centers of human thought and striving. The public has a right to demand that they be strongly and securely built. It has a further right to demand that they be built purposefully; that they connect with main terminals or junction points, themselves; that they do not waste its time and delude it with false hopes and vain assumptions, only to leave it stranded in the wilds or at some insignificant way station.

“Because it (the novel) is so all-powerful to-day, the people turn to him who widens this instrument with every degree of confidence. They expect, and rightly, that results shall be commensurate with means . . . the fact is indisputable that no art that is not in the end understood by the People can live, or ever did live, a single generation. In the larger view, in the last analysis, the People pronounce the final judgment. . . . Is it not expedient to set it forth fairly? Is it not, in Heaven’s name, essential that the people should hear not a lie but the Truth?”

The first thing noticeable about *The Octopus* is that it is a True Story. It is true in its viewpoint and its method, which have the directness and the elemental insistence of nature itself. The story of the fight of the Ranchers of the San Joaquin Valley with the Southern Pacific railroad over the re-valuation of the lands leased to them by the Corpora-

tion, and the tendency of the Octopus to charge invariably all the traffic will stand, is absolutely verifiable in the history of the State of California.

It is true in its epic sweep and broadening intensity of interest; true technically and spiritually; true as poetry and as prose; true in its comprehensive knowledge of life in the mass and in little; true in its feeling for human nature, in the individual and the aggregate; true in its revelation of something more than mere humanity — something to which all human personalities, all human laws and desires are subservient — that inspires and sustains it.

For years, people here and abroad have been looking for The Great American Novel. *The Octopus* is great. It is as essentially national as the theme and the democracy that it interprets is great and American. It is more than national; it is racial. It is more than a novel; it is an epic: *The Epic of the Wheat*, complete in itself without *The Pit* and the third unpublished member of the unfinished trilogy.

Like all human productions it has its faults. They are essentially and typically the faults of the people that it portrays. They count for little beside its more virile and lasting qualities. In the last analysis they make the book more truly representative of the racial temperament that has produced it.

Norris has said himself: "For the novelist the purpose of the novel, the problem he is to solve, is to his story what the key note is to the sonata." Condensed into five words the problem of *The Octopus* is: "Why is the railroad?" And the key-note of the book is sounded on the first page and in the first

sentence by the blowing of a steam whistle that Presley, the "lunger" and minor poet, knows must come from the railroad shops near the depot at Bonneville.

Presley is the medium through which much of the story is told.

Presley symbolizes minor literature here and everywhere. He wants to write the Song of the West in hexameters. At first, life as he sees it around him on the great Magnus Derrick wheat ranch, seems crude and unsympathetic. Later he becomes tremendously interested and a warm partisan in the losing struggle of the ranchers and the people against the railroad. He writes one successful poem, *The Toilers*, which is read and copied everywhere. With this one exception he continues incapable as writer and as man, from first to last.

The book begins in the last half of September, the very end of the dry season. "The harvest was just over. Nothing but stubble remained on the ground. . . . The silence was infinite. After the harvest, small though that harvest had been, the ranches seemed asleep. It was as though the earth after its period of reproduction, its pains of labor, had been delivered of the fruit of its loins and now slept the sleep of exhaustion.

"It was the period between seasons when nothing was being done, when the natural forces seemed to hang suspended. There was no rain, there was no wind, there was no growth, no life; the very stubble had no force even to rot. The sun alone moved."

Presley stays to talk with various ranchers on his

way from the home ranch of Los Muertos, where he is living as the guest of Magnus Derrick. He hurries on on his bicycle at last, to Guadalajara, for a Spanish dinner at Solotari's. There he meets an old Mexican who tells him stories full of local color of the life of the past. He meets Vanamee, a sheep-herder, with his herd; he stops at the old Spanish mission; he chats there with Sarria the priest, and a wider sweep of his epic of the West and the past unrolls itself before him.

"It was in Vanamee's flight into the wilderness, the story of the Long Trail; the sunsets behind the altar-like mesas, the baking desolation of the deserts, the strenuous fierce life of forgotten towns down there, far off, lost below the horizons of the southwest, the sonorous music of unfamiliar names — Quijota, Uintah, Sonora, Laredo, Uncompahgre. It was in the mission, with its cracked bells, the decaying walls, its venerable sun-dial, its fountain and old garden, and in the Mission Fathers themselves, the priests, the padres, planting the first wheat and oil and wine to produce the elements of the Sacrament — a trinity of great industries, taking their rise in a religious rite."

As he crosses the railroad on his way home after nightfall, a loose engine shoots by him at full speed. Just beyond it cuts through Vanamee's flock of sheep which have strayed upon the track.

"It was a slaughter, a massacre of the innocents . . . to the right and left, all the width of the right of way the little bodies had been flung; backs were snapped against the fence posts, brains knocked out; caught on the barbs of the wire, wedged in, the bodies

hung suspended. Under-foot it was terrible. The black blood, winking in the star-light, sank down into the clinkers between the tracks with a prolonged sucking murmur.

“ Presley turned away, horror-struck, sick at heart. . . . The hideous ruin in the engine’s path drove all thoughts of his poem from his mind. . . . Then faint and prolonged, across the levels of the ranch, he heard the engine whistling. . . . Again and again at rapid intervals in its flying course. . . . Presley saw again in his imagination, the galloping monster, the terror of steel and of steam, with its single eye, cyclopean, red, shooting from horizon to horizon, but saw it now as the symbol of a vast power, huge, terrible, flinging the echo of its thunder over all the reaches of the valley, leaving blood and destruction in its path . . . the monster, the Colossus, the Octopus.”

Before the fall plowing begins, we become acquainted with S. Behrman, agent of the railroad in Bonneville, banker, real estate agent, grain dealer, mortgage holder, local political boss. His portrait drawn in a dozen lines — his huge paunch and jowl, his invariable highly varnished hat of brown straw, the light brown linen vest stamped with innumerable interlocked horse shoes, the heavy watch chain of hollow links that clinks, as he breathes, against the vast buttons of imitation mother-of-pearl — discounts that by Howells of Bartley Hubbard.

From him Magnus Derrick and Harran, his younger son, learn that the improved plows ordered by them from the East have to go through to San Francisco and be reshipped to Los Muertos at pro-

portionately extortionate freight rates before their owners can lay hands on them.

Annixter, a neighbor of theirs, sees the plows go by on their way North. He begins plowing on one division of his own ranch after the first heavy rain. There are thirty-five plows ranged *en échelon*, each with ten horses and five shares. Vanamee gets a job as driver of one of the teams.

“ He heard the horse hoofs by the myriads crushing down easily, deeply, into the loam, the prolonged clinking of trace chains, the working of the smooth brown flanks in the harness, the clatter of wooden hames, the champing of bits, the click of iron shoes against the pebbles, the brittle stubble of the surface ground, crackling and snapping as the furrows turned, the sonorous, steady breaths wrenched from the deep, laboring chests strap-bound, shining with sweat, and all along the line the voices of the men talking to the horses. Everywhere there were visions of glossy brown backs, straining, heaving, swollen with muscle; harness streaked with specks of froth; broad, cup-shaped hoofs, heavy with brown loam; men’s faces red with tan, blue overalls spotted with axle grease; muscled hands, the knuckles whitened in their grip on the reins; and through it all the ammoniacal smell of the horses, the bitter reek of perspiration of beasts and men, the aroma of warm leather, the scent of dead stubble; and stronger and more penetrating than everything else, the heavy enervating odor of the upturned living earth.

“ It was the long stroking caress — vigorous, male, powerful — for which the Earth seemed panting; the heroic embrace of a multitude of iron hands grip-

ping deep into the warm brown flesh of the hand that quivered responsive and passionate under this rude advance, so robust as to be almost an assault, so violent as to be veritably brutal. There under the sun and under the speckless sheen of the sky, the wooing of the Titan began, the two world-forces, the elemental Male and Female, locked in a colossal embrace, at grapples in the throes of an infinite desire, at once terrible and divine, knowing no law, untamed, savage, natural, sublime."

In the meantime the ranchers hear that the land they have leased from the railroad is to be revalued and graded higher, after they have borrowed to the limit to harvest their crops, anticipating a bonanza year. They decide to fight fire with fire, and to use money to secure the nomination and election of two of the three members of the state railroad commission that fixes the valuation. One of the two members that they feel they can count on is Lyman Derrick the eldest son of Magnus, a corporation lawyer in San Francisco. Magnus who is a statesman, a politician of the old school, holds out against bribery till word comes to him and his friends that the railroad intends to raise the new valuation, at which the land can be bought in, to something like ten times the original one.

This happens at a dance given as a house-warming for Annixter's new barn, and after a Homeric combat between Annixter and Delaney, a discharged cowboy, who rides into the middle of the dancing floor to shoot the place up.

Delaney is disabled by a shot in the wrist and put to rout. Trouble between him and Annixter has

arisen over Hilma Tree, a girl employed by Annixter in his dairy. Annixter, a confirmed bachelor and woman-hater, finally decides to marry her after she and her family have run away from him.

“Abruptly there was presented to his mind’s eye a picture of the years to come. . . . He saw Hilma his own, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, all barriers down between them, he giving himself to her as freely, as nobly, as she had given herself to him. By a supreme effort, not of the will but of the emotion, he fought his way across the vast gulf that had for a time gaped between Hilma and the idea of his marriage . . . in that moment into his harsh, unlovely world a new idea was born . . . Out of the dark furrows of his soul, up from the deep, rugged recesses of his being, something rose, expanding . . . all the great vivifying eternal face of humanity, had burst into life within him.

“By now it was almost day. The east glowed opalescent . . . Overnight something had occurred . . . as the light spread he looked again at the gigantic scroll of the ranch lands unrolled before him from edge to edge of the horizon. The change was not fanciful; the change was real. The earth was no longer bare, the land was no longer barren — no longer empty, no longer dull brown. All at once Annixter shouted aloud.

“There it was — the Wheat, the Wheat . . . It was there before him everywhere—illimitable, immeasurable . . . Once more the force of the world was revived. Once more the Titan, benignant, calm, stirred and woke, and the morning abruptly blazed into glory upon the spectacle of a man whose heart

leaped exuberant with the love of a woman, and an exulting earth gleaming transcendent with the radiant magnificence of an inviolable pledge."

The same pledge is foreshadowed and finally fulfilled in the experience of Vanamee, whose first love died sixteen years before in giving birth to the child of another man, and in Padre Sarcia's quotation from Paul's epistle to the Corinthians, where he says: "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die. . . . It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body."

In sharp contrast to the mysticism of Vanamee, the man of the deserts, and his all-night vigils at the cemetery of the old Mission, close to the flower ranch where the girl that he loved had lived, we have the portrait of Lyman Derrick at his office in a San Francisco skyscraper, at the moment that the commission's official railroad map of California for the current year arrives.

"The whole map was gridironed by a vast, complicated net-work of red lines . . . a veritable system of blood circulation, complicated, dividing, and reuniting . . . laying hold of some forgotten village or town, involving it in one of a myriad branching coils, one of a hundred tentacles . . .

"The map was white, and it seemed as if all the color which should have gone to vivify the various counties, towns, and cities marked upon it had been absorbed by that huge, sprawling organism, with its ruddy arteries converging to a central point. It was as though the State had been sucked white and colorless; and against this pallid background the red arteries of the monster stood out swollen with life

blood, reaching out to infinity, gorged to bursting, — an excrescence, a gigantic parasite fattening upon the life blood of an entire commonwealth.”

We get a specific instance in this in the story of Dyke. Dyke is an engineer. He quits the railroad, because they lower his salary at the time of a general cut in wages. He puts all his savings into hop growing. S. Behrman lends him money on mortgage. The freight rate on hops is low at the time, two cents a pound in car load lots. After his crop is contracted for, it goes up to five cents. Dyke sees himself ruined.

“And this was but one instance, an isolated case. Because he was near at hand, he happened to see it. How many others were there the length and breadth of the State? Constantly this sort of thing must occur — little industries choked out in their very beginnings, the air full of the death rattles of little enterprises, expiring unobserved in far off counties, up in cañons and arroyos of the foot hills, forgotten by everyone but the monster who was daunted by the magnitude of no business, however great; who overlooked no opportunity of plunder however petty, who with one tentacle grabbed a hundred thousand acres of wheat, and with another pilfered a pocketful of growing hops.”

Dyke demands of S. Behrman why his rate was increased, what the rule is if there is any. He is told that the railroad charges consistently all the traffic will stand. He goes away and begins to drink. Later he holds up a train in which Annixter and his wife are making their bridal journey home from the city; and his subsequent pursuit and capture serve to

bring the story along thrillingly one step nearer to the final catastrophe.

The ranchers form a league of six hundred members to resist the railroad's attempts to drive them from the land that they have leased and improved. Magnus Derrick goes to San Francisco. He talks with one of the largest manufacturers there who has himself no cause to love the railroad. Cederquist suggests that the ranchers' trouble is not unique.

"Every State has its own grievance. If it is not a railroad trust, it is a sugar trust, or an oil trust, or an industrial trust, that exploits the People *because the People allow it*. The indifference of the People is the opportunity of the despot. . . . The People have but to say 'No,' and not the strongest tyranny, political, religious, or financial that was ever organized could survive one week."

This takes place at one of the leading clubs in San Francisco on Ladies' day. A picture by a popular society artist is to be raffled off, and a Million Dollar Fair is to be subscribed for.

"It was the Fake, the eternal irrepressible Sham, glib, nimble, ubiquitous, tricked out in all the paraphernalia of imposture . . . marshaled by 'lady presidents,' exploited by clubs of women, by literary societies, reading circles and culture organizations. The attention the Fake received, the time devoted to it, the money which it absorbed was incredible. It was all one that impostor after impostor was exposed, it was all one that the clubs, or circles, the societies were proved beyond doubt to have been swindled . . . the women rallied to the defense of their *protégé* of the hour. That their favorite was prose-

cuted was to them a veritable rapture. Promptly they invested the apostle of culture with the glamour of a martyr."

There is talk of a famine in India, and of raising funds to send a relief ship to the sufferers. Cederquist has his own plans for exporting California wheat to the Far East. He believes that the time for an American commercial invasion of the Orient is at hand. None the less, he has his doubts of its success; doubts which events during the last ten years have abundantly justified. He sums up the situation in seven words as he leaves the club: "Not a city, Presley, not a city, but a Midway Plaisance." Therein San Francisco may be to some extent exceptional among other American towns. At the same time, it is to some extent typical.

In the meantime Vanamee finds Angéle, the daughter of the Angéle that had died. He sees the Wheat, too, as Annixter had seen it on the morning of its birth. He recognizes definitely, as Annixter failed to do, the spiritual truth of the life that is sown in corruption and is raised in incorruption, that is sown in weakness and is raised in power. Angéle was not the symbol but the *proof* of immortality.

Presley goes back to the ranch and Annixter formulates his new creed for his friend.

"Pres," he exclaimed, "she's made a man of me; I was a machine before, and if another man or woman or child got in my way, I rode 'em down, and I never *dreamed* of anybody else but myself. But as soon as I woke up to the fact that I really loved her, why it was glory hallelujah all in a minute, and, in a way, I kind of loved everybody then, and wanted to be

everybody's friend. And I began to see that a fellow can't live himself, any more than he can live *by* himself. He's got to think of others. If he's got brains, he's got to think of the poor devils that haven't them . . . if he's got money, he's got to help those that are busted, and if he's got a house, he's got to think of those that ain't got anywhere to go.

"I've got a whole lot of ideas since I began to love Hilma, and just as soon as I can I'm going to get in and help people, and I'm going to keep to that idea the rest of my natural life. That ain't much of a religion, but it's the best that I've got, and Henry Ward Beecher couldn't do any more than that. . . ."

"Beside this blundering struggle to do right, to help his fellows, Presley's own vague schemes of glittering systems of reconstruction, collapsed to ruin, and he himself, with all his refinement, with all his poetry, culture and education, stood a bungler at the world's work-bench."

Annixter has already given a home to Dyke's mother and his little daughter. Dyke is given a life sentence in the penitentiary, and in the meantime the wheat grows ripe for the harvest.

The people gather for a jack-rabbit drive. The description of this and of the barbecue that follows, like that of the dance and fight in Annixter's barn, is an epic in brief.

Word comes to Magnus Derrick and his friends, while they are still at the barbecue, that the railroad has stolen a march on them, that S. Behrman, the United States Marshal from San Francisco, Delaney

and the rest, have already taken possession of Annixter's house and are now on their way to Los Muertos.

Magnus and his party can only muster eleven men. They line an irrigation ditch on the road to the ranch house and take up the bridge over the road. They are met by as many men on the railroad's side. Magnus goes forward unarmed to parley, part of his side leave cover to support him, the first shot is fired by accident, after that the guns seem to go off by themselves. When the smoke clears, Harran Derrick, Annixter and three other ranchers are dead and another dying, besides Delaney and one more of the railroad men. Active hostilities cease then and there. The dead are carried back to Annixter's, and the country roused. The United States marshal goes back to San Francisco and an indignation meeting of the whole Ranchers' League gathers in the opera house of the nearest town.

Here Presley, who has become an Anarchist for the time being, speaks in the midst of a profound stillness.

“They own us, these taskmasters of ours, they own our homes, they own our legislatures. We cannot escape from them; there is no redress. We are told that we can defeat them by the ballot-box. They own the ballot-box. We are told that we must look to the courts for redress. They own the courts. We know them for what they are — ruffians in politics, ruffians in finance, ruffians in law, ruffians in trade, bribers, swindlers and tricksters. No outrage too great to daunt them, no petty larceny too small to shame them; despoiling a government treasury of

a million dollars, yet picking the pockets of a farm-hand of the price of a loaf of bread.

“They swindle a nation of a hundred million and call it Financiering; they levy a blackmail and call it Commerce; they corrupt a legislature and call it Politics; they bribe a judge and call it Law; they hire blacklegs to carry out their plans and call it Organization; they prostitute the honor of a State and call it Competition.

“And this is America!”

He closes with an appeal to the Red Terror. A prolonged explosion of applause follows. Presley quits the opera house weak and nerveless.

Magnus Derrick rises to speak. Men in the gallery accuse him of bribery. He attempts to answer them.

Suddenly the house is literally snowed under by copies of the local paper whose editor has blackmailed Derrick and then sold him out, containing a full account of the work of the League's corruption fund, which has been up to this time secretly administered so far as the vast majority of the League members is concerned. Derrick quits the stage in the confusion. Some of his remaining friends follow him and urge him to give the lie to his accusers. The house is shouting for him. In the soubrette's dressing-room, in air heavy with the smell of sachet powder and stale grease paint, he is forced to confess that he cannot.

That night Presley throws a bomb into S. Behrman's house. The house is wrecked, but the man is uninjured. Presley escapes undetected and goes back to San Francisco.

The widow of one of the dispossessed ranchers and her two daughters also come there. They have neither friends nor money. The mother dies in the street of hunger and exhaustion the night of a dinner party at which Presley is told that his poem, *The Toilers*, has started the movement to send the relief ship to the famine sufferers in India. Before this he has met and recognized the widow's elder daughter, who has already become a prostitute.

Presley manages to interview Shelgrim, the president of the railroad, in the latter's office.

"Believe this, young man," exclaimed Shelgrim . . . "try to believe this — to begin with — that *Railroads build themselves*. Where there is a demand, sooner or later there will be a supply. Mr. Derrick, does he grow his wheat? Wheat grows itself. What does he count for! Does he supply the force? What do I count for? Do I build the railroad? You are dealing with forces, young man, when you speak of Wheat and the Railroads, not with men. There is the Wheat, the supply. It must be carried to feed the people. There is the demand. The Wheat is one force, the Railroad another, and there is the law that governs them — supply and demand. Men have little to do in the whole business. Complications may arise, conditions that bear hard on the individual — crush him, may be — *but the Wheat will be carried to feed the people* as inevitably as it will grow. If you want to fasten the blame of the affair at Los Muertos on any one person, you will make a mistake. Blame conditions, not men."

Presley interposes an objection. Shelgrim cuts him short: "Control the road! Can I stop it? I

can go into bankruptcy, if you like. But otherwise, if I run my road as a business proposition, I can do nothing. I can *not* control it. It is a force born out of certain conditions, and I — no man — can stop it or control it. Can your Mr. Derrick stop the Wheat growing? He can burn his crop or he can give it away, or sell it for a cent a bushel — just as I could go into bankruptcy — but otherwise his Wheat must grow. Can any one stop the Wheat? Well then, no more can I stop the Road.”

Presley is not a specialist in railroad economics. He goes away dazed and overpowered; unable to discriminate between the essential truth of this statement in the main and its fallacy in detail.

He takes passage on the ship *Swanhilda*, which Cederquist is sending to India loaded with wheat. He goes back to Los Muertos to say good-by to the Dericks, Hilma Annixter and Vanamee. He finds Magnus Derrick broken and half imbecile, packing up and about to leave. S. Behrman comes to take possession of the ranch house before he leaves. In Presley's presence he offers Derrick a job as a clerk at fifty dollars a month in the local freight manager's office. He warns Magnus that he will have to turn "Railroad," that he will have to take orders from him. Magnus accepts and Presley goes away.

S. Behrman gets the contract for filling the *Swanhilda* with wheat. He goes to the ship to see how the work is progressing. He stands over the hatch by the chute that connects with the elevator. He trips over a rope and falls inside. No one notices him or hears his cries. He is buried in the wheat. This episode, his dance of death, that covers four

pages, is too long to be quoted complete. Partial quotation cannot do it justice. As one reads it, it seems as inevitable as the rest of the book, as Mrs. Hooven's progress with her baby through poverty and the streets of San Francisco to death.

"Ah, that *via dolorosa* of the destitute, that *chemin de croix* of the homeless! Ah, that mile after mile of granite pavement that *must* be traversed. Walk they must. Move they must; onward, forward, whither they cannot tell, why they do not know. . . . Death is at the end of that devious, winding maze of paths crossed and recrossed and crossed again. There is but one goal to the *via dolorosa*; there is no escape from the central chamber of that labyrinth. Fate guides the feet of them that are set therein. Double on their steps though they may, weave in and out of the myriad corners of the city's streets, return, go forward, back, from side to side, here, there, anywhere, dodge, twist, wind, the central chamber where Death sits is reached inexorably at the end."

And the reason and the purpose of it all is found in the author's own summary on the last two pages of the book.

"Yes, the Railroad had prevailed. The ranches had been seized in the tentacles of the Octopus; the iniquitous burden of extortionate freight rates had been imposed like a yoke of iron.

"The monster had killed. . . . It had slain Anxiter at the very moment when painfully and manfully he had at last achieved his own salvation and had stood forth resolved to do right, to act unselfishly, and to live for others. It had widowed Hilma

in the very dawn of her happiness. It had killed the very babe within the mother's womb, strangling life ere yet it had been born, stamping out the spark ordained by God to burn through all eternity.

"What then was left? . . . suddenly Vanamee's words came back to his mind. What was the larger view, what contributed the greatest good to the greatest number? What was the full round of the circle whose segment only he beheld! In the end . . . good issued from this crisis, untouched, unassailable, undefiled.

"Men — motes in the sunshine — perished. . . . *But the WHEAT remained.* . . . Through the welter of blood at the irrigation ditch, through the sham charity and shallow philanthropy of famine relief committees, the great harvest of Los Muertos rolled like a flood from the Sierras to the Himalayas to feed thousands of starving scarecrows in the barren plains of India.

"Falseness dies; injustice and oppression in the end of everything fade and vanish away. Greed, cruelty, selfishness and humanity are short-lived; the individual suffers but the race goes on. Annixter dies, but in a far distant corner of the world a thousand lives are saved. The larger view always and through all shams and wickedness, discovers the Truth that will, in the end, prevail, and all things surely, inevitably, resistlessly, work together for good."

Concerning *McTeague* and *The Octopus*, Mr. Howells writes in *The North American Review* for December, 1902: "*McTeague* was a personal epic, the Odyssey of a simple semi-savage nature adventuring and experiencing along the social levels

which the story kept. . . . I wish now to affirm . . . to testify to the value which this extraordinary book has from its perfect simple fidelity, from the truthfulness in which there is no self-doubt and no self-excuses.

“But with all its power *McTeague* is no such book as *The Octopus*, which is as the Iliad to its Odyssey.

“It will not be suggesting too much for the story to say that there is a kind of Homeric largeness in the play of the passions moving it. They are not autochthons these Californians of the great Wheat farms, choking in the folds of the Railroad, but Americans of more than one transplantation; yet there is something rankly earthy and elemental in them which gives them the pathos of tormented Titans. The story is not less but more epical in being a strongly interwrought group of episodes.

“The play of an imagination fed by a rich consciousness of the mystical relations of nature and human nature, the body and soul of earthly life, steeps the whole theme in an odor of common growth. It is as if the Wheat sprang out of the hearts of men in the conception of the young poet who writes its Iliad, and who shows how it overwhelms their lives and germinates anew from their depths. His poem of which the terms are naked prose, is a picture of the civilization, the society, the culture, the agricultural California which is the ground of his work. It will be easily believed that in the handling nothing essential to the strong impression is blinked; but nothing, on the other hand, is forced.

“As I write and scarcely touch the living allegory

here and there, it rises before me in its large inclusion, . . . the breadth, and the fineness, the beauty and the dread, the baseness and the grandeur, the sensuality and the spirituality, working together for the effect of a novel unequalled for scope and for grasp in our fiction."

In *The Pit* (1903), the second volume of the unfinished trilogy, we have the story of Curtis Jadwin, who tries to corner wheat, and who succeeds for a time, till the demand that supply invariably breeds, and the growth of the wheat itself, break him. After his failure he goes back to the country and begins life over again. He wins back his wife, who has married him more for his money than himself, and in the end he is a better man than before. Jadwin himself and Page Deanborn, his wife's sister, another man's woman of the type that Norris, like Mark Twain, liked and understood, are done excellently; and with the Cresslers, Landry Court, Gretry and Mrs. Wessels, Page's aunt, they represent a part of the actual life of Chicago to-day that any American who has lived in Chicago six months cannot fail to recognize.

With Laura Jadwin and Sheldon Corthell, the artist who is in love with her, the author has less sympathy and less success.

The technical side of the making and breaking of the wheat corner, the whole atmosphere and movement of the Chicago stock exchange, is presented with an admirable clearness and an intensity of interest that has never been equaled in fiction here or abroad. Beside this phase of *The Pit*, Zola's

L'Argent and minor American novelizations of the workings of Wall Street are inconsiderable.

At the same time, *The Pit* must be reckoned as a comparative failure. By itself, if published before *The Octopus*, it might or might not have attracted notice as an unusual book and a remarkably effective handling, with realism within its province. Published, as it was, in the natural order of the trilogy, it is completely overshadowed by *The Octopus*, as any story of mere traders and trading must remain inferior to an epic that deals adequately with cosmic forces; and it serves its purpose chiefly as a connecting link between the actuality of what Norris lived to accomplish, and the vision of what he was not destined to do.

There is no great loss without some small gain. The comparatively restricted interest among Frank Norris's own countrymen in his life and work up-to-date has spared the world much of the literary post-mortem gossip, private letters and other material immature and insignificant, in one way or another unfit for publication, which morbid curiosity and commercialized journalists and publishers combine to inflict on long suffering humanity.

A Deal in Wheat (Doubleday Page & Company, 1909), *The Third Circle* (John Lane Company, 1909), in which the title story and "*A Caged Lion*" are especially notable, "*Yvernelle*" a narrative poem in three cantos (Lippincott's, 1892), "*The Joyous Miracle*" (Doubleday Page & Company, 1906) are all that the family and the friends of Norris permitted us to see until the publication of "*Vandover and the Brute*" in the Spring of 1914.

Concerning this novel, written in 1895 at Harvard while "*McTeague*" was still under way, similar to the latter in general tenor and method, almost equally strong in remorseless realism in spots, suffering in many places from the lack of revision that the better known book received; concerning its romantic history; its supposed loss in the San Francisco earthquake and fire, its recent discovery and final identification, Charles G. Norris, the novelist's brother, has told us all that is essential and much besides in the preface to the book and in a biographical pamphlet published at the same time by Doubleday Page & Co.

From these sources those interested in Norris as man as well as artist, may learn much about his personal qualities, his manner of work, his intense preoccupation with reality and its adequate interpretation in the modern novel, that has hitherto been denied them. Any careful reading of these two foot notes to this author's life will go far to confirm the impression that among the mob of modern writers of American fiction who are frankly out for quick profits and small returns in the literary sense, and beside the inner circle of novelists of culture that prides itself on its barren exclusiveness and false pretense, Frank Norris stands, in this new century of American literature, so far unrivaled, unassailed and unassailable.

His ideals and his power, his broad and deep humanity, his intimate and specialized acquaintance with life and its meaning in America to-day, are set forth unmistakably in *The Responsibilities of the Novelist* and *The Octopus*. The world has achieved few

or no works of literature in the first decade of the twentieth century of its Christian era that it can less afford to spare. In the recent history of American art and letters, America and the world has lost much in the comparatively early deaths and unfinished careers of Wolcott Balestier, Stephen Crane, Harold Frederic and David Graham Phillips. The same may be said of Frank Norris without reserve and with even greater regret.

Summarized briefly from a two-inch article in a contemporary encyclopædia, we learn that Benjamin Franklin Norris was born in 1870 and died in 1902, that he studied art at Paris in 1887-89, that he was a student in literary courses at the University of California and at Harvard, that he was a correspondent of the *San Francisco Chronicle* in South Africa at the time of the Jameson raid, that later he was a war correspondent in Cuba, and that he was the literary adviser of a New York publishing house at the time of his death.

It is evident from the mere summary of this brief and stirring career, from the accounts of the few who were privileged to know him personally, and from the literary work that he had already achieved at the time of his death, at the age of thirty-two, that the making of a master in world-fiction was here. That he did achieve one masterpiece is unquestionable. That he was in the very flood-tide of his powers when he died, that he had fitted himself into the environment best suited for the further development of his talents, seems equally beyond dispute.

That he stands as he is, a personality in American

literature only comparable with Walt Whitman and Mark Twain, will be freely debated. Time will tell. It is only ten years since his death, and even in France, that home of Latin lucidity and startling frankness of artistic expression, an equal lapse of time, or longer, is required to admit a dead painter or sculptor to the comparative immortality of the Louvre.

One thing about Norris is unmistakable. In his hatred of sham, of pretense, of special privilege of any sort, he is fully as democratic, as sincere, as American, as Mark Twain. At the same time, his hatred is less partisan, less prejudiced, less handicapped by the bitterness that clouded the latter days of the great humorist. Norris, as one reads him, seems almost absolutely devoid of the sense of humor, but his interest in life and his sense of proportion are so vast, so comprehensive, so intense, so true that one reads him without missing this. For it is the province and the essence of the humorist to express contrasts; of the master novelist to harmonize and interpret the law that lies beneath them.

One feels instinctively, as one reasons with the full possession of one's reasoning powers, that Norris sees life quite as clearly as Mark Twain does: clearer in the mass and as uncompromisingly in all essentials; in the aggregate more fully and progressively, as he is himself the product of a later generation and of conditions equally characteristic of the American at his best.

As a product of more modern and, in many ways, more reactionary conditions, and as a progressive

optimist to his last day and hour, Frank Norris deserves to be ranked slightly higher in the human scale than Mark Twain; and it is quite possible that in the long run his work will be remembered longer.

V

DAVID GRAHAM PHILLIPS AND RESULTS

"The literature of a people should be the record of its joys and its sorrows, its aspirations and its shortcomings, its wisdom and its folly, the confidence of its soul. We cannot say that our own as yet suffices us, but I believe that he who stands a hundred years hence where I am standing now, conscious that he speaks to the most powerful and prosperous community ever devised, or developed by man, will speak of our literature with the assurance of one who beholds what we hope for and aspire after, become a reality and a possession forever." James Russell Lowell, 1889.

"The institutions of society are to be judged by their fitness to place the right men in the right places." Joseph Jastrow, *Qualities of Men*, 1910.

NOT only the right men but the right women. Judged by this criticism, Society in America, as it differentiates itself by the capitalized first letter to-day, is the most extravagant in money and material; the most pretentious, the most vulgar, the most inefficient; the least inspired and inspiring; the most brainless, the least fit; the most barbaric, the most tragi-comic failure of twenty centuries of civilization.

Europe has realized this for years.

And the brains and energies that have made and advertised America during the last half-century are gradually waking up to the facts which *The Husband's Story* sets forth comprehensively. They begin to realize that competition in clothes and social

display is at present a national liability, not a national asset; and that whatever may or may not have been expedient in the past, to-day national sandwich women and multi-millionairesses, whose personal expenditures exceed from fifty to one hundred thousand dollars yearly, are not needed in our present line of business.

It is significant that in the year of this present writing, the story of the passing of the idle rich has been told by a man from their own ranks. It is an admitted fact that of the idle rich and near-rich in America, fully nine-tenths are women, many of them with fathers or husbands risen from the ranks. It is still more significant that, among the mob of more than five thousand women writers of some note in America to-day, not one has seen fit to enlarge upon this state of affairs successfully; and that it has been left to a novelist like David Graham Phillips to demonstrate conclusively the spiritual and mental poverty of the women of our conventional upper class, and to make both money and a lasting reputation through the most unmistakable and uncompromising handling of this phase of our national life.

There is very little evidence that Mr. Phillips began of set purpose to specialize on this theme. The conviction has been gradually forced on him, as it has been forced on the majority of his male contemporaries. He has been one of the few strong men in American fiction who have consistently had the courage of their convictions and the fitness to make these convictions carry through. He has at one time or another attacked and exposed successfully other

special interests that the American people as a whole feel least proud of to-day. It was left for him, in two of his most notable and most mature novels, *Old Wives for New* and *The Husband's Story*, to settle once and for all the pretensions of American femininity "higher up" to the unearned increments of sweetness and light, and the fine flowering into nothing of the culture, which he has stigmatized as that of a fog bank.

Few will be found to dispute the fact that Mr. Phillips has been, from first to last, consistently a radical in politics, in journalism and in literature. Like all successful radicals, he struck at the roots of things; he hewed to the lines, he never ceased to strike till his axe went to the mark and stayed there.

In spite of his early and tragic taking off, he attained success in his main line of attack, he made an indelible impression on the minds and hearts of his country men and country women while he was still a comparatively young man. The very suddenness and spectacular nature of his death deepened and fixed this impression while it was still in the fixative state. His loss remains the nation's gain. The negative suspensions of indifference and reaction towards the issues raised by him have been in innumerable cases developed into a positive appreciation of the man's sincerity and strength. In the racial advertising programme and cosmic scheme of things, the account has been already balanced; the picture of the Truth as he saw it and set it forth has been already, in less than two years, permanently developed and enlarged in the gallery of our national literary and temperamental types.

It is proper to speak of Mr. Phillips in the terms of photography. His likenesses were so life-like that there was no getting by them. His art was no more that of either the miniaturist or the pastellist, than it was that of the genre or mural painter of classic tradition. He dealt in essentials, not nuances; in facts, not conventions. At times he transcended the range of the ordinary social camera of fiction and achieved the very X-ray of photography of the American mind and soul of to-day. Like the big business men who are his strongest male characters and most successful masculine portraits, he was out for results, and he got them.

Never in the history of fiction had there been a series of books — literary in the sense that much of the most virile parts of the Bible, Shakespeare and Ibsen are literary; popular and *sui generis* as a great modern railroad bridge or a skyscraper are popular and unmistakably distinguished — containing so many paragraphs, so many pages, of unmistakable truth, truth that hits one between the eyes, and makes one say, "I always knew that" or "Why didn't I ever see that before?" as Mr. Phillips achieved at the height of his powers, in half a dozen of the more notable and readable novels.

It was stated at the time of his death that he had decided to shift his attack from fiction to the stage. If *The Worth of a Woman*, which was produced at the Madison Square Theater, New York, in February, 1908, is any criterion, there is little doubt that before long he would have won the same success in the new field as in the old.

The time was ripe for it just as it was ripe for the

extension of Colonel Roosevelt's policies during the seven years that our greatest living ex-president held the center of our political stage. Phillips may justly be called the Roosevelt of American literature.

Both have, at their best, been the product of a will power and an energy specialized to the limit by the individual, and reënforced consciously or insensibly by the unparalleled intensity of the American character and the American social and political conditions that have made themselves heard and felt through them. Both have been characteristic products of American environment. Both have as characteristically reacted on the environment that produced them.

Phillips, like Mark Twain, Howells, Frank Norris, Harold Frederic and Stephen Crane, was in the beginning a newspaper man. Like the first three, he was born in or near the middle West.

He came to New York in 1896 from Princeton, the most democratic of our typical Eastern Universities, with a point of view differing little in essentials from that expressed in 1905 in *The Reign of Gilt*.

It may be news to many that this book is not a novel. It is a brief and comprehensive statement of his social and political creed, and the evolutionary reasons on which he bases it. It is as unsparing in its denunciations of the things he sees fit to denounce as any of his later or earlier books; at the same time, like the rest of them, it is constructively and inspiringly optimistic.

It tells us: "It is as exact a truth as any in chemistry or mechanics that Aristocracy is the natural, the inevitable sequence of widespread ignorance, and

Democracy the natural, the inevitable, sequence of widespread intelligence. . . . New conditions may produce new and subtle tyrannies that seem stronger than the old. All in vain. As well might a concourse of parliaments and tongues resolve that the heat of the sun be reduced one-half. . . . The story of history, rightly written, would be the story of the march of Democracy, now patiently wearing away obstacles, accelerated there, now sweeping along upon the surface, again flowing for centuries underground, but always in action, always the one continuous, inevitable force. There has never been any more danger of its defeat than there has been danger that the human brain would be smoothed of its thought-bearing convolutions and set in retreat through the stages of evolution back to protoplasm.

“ Because of these spectacles of sloth, incompetence and corruption in public officials, it is charged by many persons of reputation as ‘ publicists ’ that Democracy is a breeder of public corruption ! The truth is just the reverse. Democracy drags public corruption out of its mole tunnels where it undermines society, drags it into the full light of day. . . . The truth is, steam and electricity have made the human race suddenly and acutely self-conscious as a race for the first time of its existence. They have constructed a mighty mirror wherein humanity sees itself, with all its faults and follies and diseases and deformities. And the sudden, unprecedented spectacle is so startling, is in such abhorrent contrast with poetical pictures of the past, painted in school and popular text books, that men of defective perspective shrink and shriek : ‘ Man has become monstrous ! ’ But not so,

Man, rising, rising, rising through the ages, is not nearer to the dark and bloody and cruel place of his origin than to the promised land toward which his ideals are drawing him. . . .

“What our grandfathers regarded as the natural and just demands of employers upon employé are now regarded as rigorous and tyrannous exactions of a brute. . . . False weights were found in the ruins of the oldest city that has been exhumed. . . . It is no new thing for a man to be admired and envied for wealth and station, regardless of how he got them. But it is a new thing in the world for the public conscience to be so sensitive that a man in possession of wealth and station, got not by open and outright robbery — methods not long ago regarded without grave disapproval — but by means that are questionable and suspicious merely, should be in an apologetic attitude, should feel called upon to defend himself, and to give large sums in philanthropy in the effort to justify and rehabilitate himself. . . .

“And more than ninety per cent. of our business is done upon credit. Under the old order the very laws and customs, the very morality taught by the church was grounded upon the justice of the unjust distribution of the products of labor; under the new régime, under business enterprise, law and custom and religion teach only value for value received.”

Mr. Phillips believed in value received, and practiced what he preached in literature as well as in journalism and other walks of life.

He left the *New York Sun* after he had made good on it as a reporter; he was made London correspondent for *The World*, and later became an editorial

writer for the same paper, before he began to devote himself exclusively to muck-raking magazine articles and to fiction.

In literature, as in journalism, he was out for results from start to finish, and he invariably got them. His native dramatic sense and his newspaper training taught him to specialize in stories of strong human interest, told in the kind of English that appeals lastingly to the better sort of newspaper readers in every large American city. In the course of time, from the plainest kind of statement of the plainest kind of facts, he evolved a technique that began to be big enough for his own art and the problems he handled; his last and best books are not only admirable examples of the art that conceals art, but they are veritable advances in the progress of constructive fiction, evolved and adapted to meet the literary and vital needs of the greatest number of readers on the broadest and firmest possible ground of inspiration and interest.

The art of Mr. Phillips grew with his life, and modern literature grew with it in no inappreciable or insignificant degree. In a widely quoted interview shortly before his death he said: "I have no mission, no purpose, no cult; I am just a novelist, telling as accurately as I can what I see and trying to hold my job with my readers."

Stories of his untiring industry, of his habit of writing for hours standing up, of writing at night and turning out 6,000 or 7,000 words between ten p. m. and daylight, are commonplace and characteristic. In the interview quoted above he went on to say:

“Symptoms of the artistic temperament should be fought to the death. Work, work, whether you want to or not. I throw away a whole day’s work sometimes, but the effort of turning it out has kept my steam up and prevented me from lagging behind. You cannot work an hour at anything without learning something.

“The matter of giving life to the pages of a novel is the result of industrious study of human beings. Writing is the result of thinking about things to write about and studying the details of contemporaneous life, so that you may set them down, not imaginatively, but accurately.”

In the interval of ten years between his death and the publication of his first work of fiction, besides numerous short stories and special articles, *The Worth of a Woman*, *The Treason of the Senate* and *The Reign of Gilt*, he managed to turn out nearly twenty novels. The majority of these average at least 100,000 words.

It is questionable if in the whole history of modern fiction since Balzac’s time and Zola’s, ten years’ product of such solid, concentrated, comprehensive, far reaching and inspiring work has ever issued from the pen of any one man.

There is a closer kinship between the greater Frenchman and the American than mere passionate concentration in the work in hand year by year that Zola shared with both.

Phillips did not set to work of fixed purpose to construct a “Comedie Humaine,” as did Balzac. None the less, in his novels viewed as a whole, he has achieved almost as comprehensive and constructive an account

of early twentieth century American fundamentals as Balzac did of early nineteenth century life in France, in twice the number of volumes. Both have the same artist's and craftsman's conscientiousness, the same love of truth and its portrayal, the same directness of vision and clarity of style. Phillips, like his century, has the truer sense of cosmic proportion and the keener eye for essentials. Balzac wrote as an artist for aristocrats. Phillips wrote for the people as a trained newspaper man, in whom the science of journalistic and literary construction rapidly developed into an art and artistry of his own.

Any examination of the mere titles of his books — *The Great God Success*, *A Woman Ventures*, *Golden Fleece*, *The Master Rogue*, *The Plum Tree*, *The Deluge*, *The Cost*, *The Social Secretary*, *The Fortune Hunter*, *Her Serene Highness*, *The Second Generation*, *Light-fingered Gentry*, *Old Wives for New*, *The Hungry Heart*, *White Magic*, *The Fashionable Adventures of Joshua Craig*, *The Husband's Story*, *The Grain of Dust*, and *The Price She Paid* — will go far to substantiate a part of these claims.

He began with the newspaper life that he knew from the inside out and the bottom up. His first novel, *The Great God Success*, 1901 — which, in freshness, vigor, sincerity, literary finish and general human interest, ranks not only among the author's best books, but stands on its own merits as one of the important novels of late nineteenth century fiction in America — tells the story of a young newspaper man who went through the mill much as Mr. Phillips himself did. It is said that many of his own personal professional experiences are woven into the story.

Aside from the book's merit as mere literature, we recognize for the first time, as a new force in fiction, the author's sincere and uncompromising hatred of snobbery, of pretense, of conventional lies, of plutocratic and machine-made social distinctions, which in its intensity and breadth of scope is only rivaled in American letters by that of Mark Twain and Norris.

In this book he states clearly his own literary and social creed: "I must learn to write for the people, he thought, and that means to write the most difficult of styles. . . . That story of yours reads as if a child might have written it. I don't see how you get such effects without any style at all. You just let your story tell itself. . . . Temperament — that's one of the subtlest forms of self-excuse. . . . Unadulterated truth always arouses suspicion in the unaccustomed public. It has the alarming tastelessness of distilled water. . . . Freedom's battles were never fought by men with full stomachs and full purses. . . . I wonder, he replied slowly, does a rich man own his property or does it own him?"

The keynote of the book is in the last sentence. The young reporter eventually becomes editor and owner of one of the most important papers in New York. The girl he should have married dies while he is still young. Later he marries into the New York Plutocracy, which in time owns him as it owns his wife. Gradually he manages to divert the policy of his paper from the cause of freedom to that of reaction. As a reward for his services he is finally made American Ambassador to the Court of St. James. There he has his portrait painted by an artist famous for his moral vivisections on canvas.

Howard, the ambassador, and his wife hear two strangers telling the truth about the man and this portrait in the gallery where the picture is exhibited. They depart in haste, and the story ends with the words: "He caught her glance in the little mirror at the side of the hansom — caught it and read it. And he began to hate her, this instrument to his punishment, this constant remembrance of his downfall."

It is enough to say of this conclusion that it parallels and deserves to rank with that of Norris's *McTeague*. Equally forcible, it is reached with less effort.

A Woman Ventures is written around a newspaper woman born and bred to a life of fashion, and two newspaper men. Two of them the author takes abroad in the course of the story before he brings them home again.

"I think the strongest desire I have is to see my country shake off the English influence — the self-righteousness, the snobbishness. In England, if a man of brains compels recognition, they hasten to give him a title. Their sense of consistency in snobbishness must not be violated. They put snobbishness into their church service and create a snob-god who calls some Englishmen to be lords and others to be servants."

"But there is nothing like that in America?"

He has something to say here about literary snobbishness as well:

"She spoke the precise English of those who have heard a great deal of the other kind and dread a lapse into it. She was amusingly a 'literary person,' full of the nasty-nice phrases current among

those literary folk who take themselves seriously as custodians of an art and a Language.”

The action of the story till its final inspiring and unexpected climax is sufficiently indicated by the following quotations:

“The real tragedy of life is not the fall of splendid fortunes, nor the death of those who are beloved, nor any other of the obvious calamities, but the petty, inglorious ending of friendships and loves that have seemed eternal. . . .”

“But when one is starving, he doesn’t look at the Ten Commandments before seizing the bread that offers.

“Not at the Ten Commandments — no. But at the one.—‘Thou shalt not kill thy self-respect.’ . . .

“If you ever make up your mind to do wrong . . . don’t lie to yourself. Just look at the temptation frankly and at the price. And if you will or must, why, pay and make off with your paste diamonds or your gold brick or whatever little luxury of the kind you went into Mr. License’s shop to buy. What is the use of lying to one’s self? We are poor creatures indeed, it seems to me, if there is not one person that we dare face with the honest truth.”

This book, while well above the average of current American fiction, is comparatively unimportant as a literary product and a new indication of growth. In some ways it strikes one as younger and cruder than its predecessor; at the same time, it is significant of the author’s point of view, the intense sincerity of his purpose and the effective democracy of his literary and personal standard.

For some time after this Mr. Phillips was at a loss

to find himself. However, one feels instinctively as one reads book after book of his middle period, that the man's one aim is to tell the truth simply and effectively as he sees it; that sooner or later he is going to convince his readers that the real tragedies of life are not its melodramatic ones, but the tragedies of character and of economics: infinitely little, or infinitely degrading in their wholesale effect, which, consciously or unconsciously, are forming the very pattern and fabric of the lives of us all, through every waking and sleeping hour.

This period in the author's life coincided with one in the lives of his contemporaries, when the literature of the muck-rake got its name and its first intelligent and sympathetic hearing at the bar of public opinion.

If *Golden Fleece*, *The Plum Tree*, *The Master Rogue*, *The Deluge* and the rest of Mr. Phillips' muck-rake novels were temporarily symptomatic of the period and the campaign of popular education in things that concern us all; if as literature they were no better and no worse than *The Thirteenth District*, by Brand Whitlock, *The Memoirs of an American Citizen*, by Robert Herrick, *The Henchman*, by Mark Lee Luther, *The Minority*, by Frederic Trevor Hill, *The Boss*, by Alfred Henry Lewis, *J. Devlin, Boss*, by Churchill Williams, and dozens more of the same period and phase of American fiction, they would none the less deserve a more serious and extensive study both as literature and as human and sociological documents than there is space for here.

Considered separately, some of them, both as literature and as journalism, fall below the highest stand-

ard of the books by other authors quoted above; taken as a whole, they exhibit admirably Mr. Phillips' supreme capacity for getting hold of the essential facts in contemporary American life and translating them into a readable and stimulative popular language in the form of fiction.

It is easy to pick flaws in these books; it is easy to condemn them in one way or another on purely literary grounds; but when one considers that they form primarily a series of text-books for beginners in practical politics, it becomes plain that they are admirably adapted to their purpose.

The author is as sure of his facts as he is of the interest of the majority of his readers. He does not overstate diseased social and political conditions. He does not have to. He does not make his grafters and snobs in chief impossible or unconscionable variants of the average human type in America to-day. He makes them like his other characters, natural, human, interesting, and essentially characteristic products of a modern American environment for which the people in the mass are quite as much responsible as the men and women higher up.

The moral of the whole series, reiterated by Mr. Phillips, his contemporaries and predecessors from Lincoln down, is that the people in the long run get the kind of government they deserve; that snobbery is far more the product of those below, who look up to artificial standards, than of those above, who look down from them; that graft is the price that the people pay as a whole for individual indifference and inefficiency in public affairs.

In some ways, in these political novels, Mr. Phillips

makes us out a pretty hard lot of citizens. At the same time he draws us true to life in our capacity to wake up to the facts that he sets forth, to appreciate them, and to act on them progressively. And the fact that this series of books, few of which showed any perceptible literary or sociological advance on the main arguments of their predecessors, were able to interest the American book-buying public so far and so long as they did, may be taken as fairly conclusive evidence of the man's own power of writing straight from the shoulder and the carrying force of the insurgent movement in American literature, which he as much as any man helped to start.

✓ X According to Mr. Calvin Winter, in *The Bookman* for February, 1911, "one gets quite effectively the whole range of Mr. Phillips' powers and also his weaknesses in the volumes that belong to the period of his mature development, the volumes produced within the last four or five years."

It is indicative of Mr. Winter's point of view that he attributes the real fault of Mr. Phillips' method of work, the real weakness of even his best achievements, to the fact "that he is not merely the clear-eyed and impartial observer of life; he is always a partisan and reformer . . . of course, when you take one of Mr. Phillips's novels to pieces you discover that in its essence it is a problem novel; but this side of his work he has learned to disguise pretty cleverly. It is not so much the way in which he twists the lives of his characters in order to point a moral, but rather . . . the somewhat annoying fact that he is trying to do our thinking for us. . . ."

It does not take the experience of a critic like Mr. Winter to discover that the majority of Mr. Phillips's books are problem novels. A child could see it; and one of the facts that has probably escaped Mr. Winter's notice is that Mr. Phillips is writing not only for adults whose knowledge of the best fiction, ancient and modern, is inferior to that of the average well-read child of fourteen or fifteen, but also for the young Americans of to-day and to-morrow who are born to be partisans and reformers, in literature and out of it, as inevitably as men of Mr. Winter's type are born to be mildly pretentious spectators of life and art, sitters on the literary fence, and ineffectively destructive critics and cumberers of the earth.

Mr. Winter, in an essay of several thousand words — written shortly before the author's death — in which he finds himself forced to admit the novelist's breadth and depth of interest in the serious problems of life, and his outspoken fearlessness in handling them, shows small signs of appreciating Mr. Phillips' cumulative growth in power and fineness of craftsmanship.

He does suggest that Mr. Phillips must have learned something about the best French realism at the fountain head. He tells us that the author's whole conception of what a novel should be is French rather than Anglo-Saxon; that he insists on seeing every human story as a cross-section of life — not as a little local cross-section, but as a part of a big inevitable and all-pervading human relationship stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific. He says that the writer who sees each little human happening not

as an isolated incident but as a detail, necessarily communicates to his readers an impression of bigness and vitality.

At the same time he asks why it is that so many of Mr. Phillips's books, starting with big ethical problems and a broad epic treatment, are so apt in the end to leave the impression of an isolated and exceptional human story instead of symbolizing some broad and universal principle.

He is inclined to quarrel with Mr. Phillips because he fails to symbolize, as Zola does in *L'argent*, *Le ventre de Paris* and *L'assommoir*, "vast symbolic monsters wreaking their malignant pleasure upon mankind." He suggests that Mr. Phillips reverses the usual process followed by writers of the epic type; that he finds his germ idea in a single character or incident, and builds from these, instead of starting with some ethical principle or psychological problem and then searching for characters and incidents that would best illustrate it. He complains that the novelist quite frequently pictures not what average people are doing under existing conditions, but what somewhat unusual people would in his opinion do under conditions just the reverse of those that exist. He instances, in support of this, the development under pressure of the heirs of the rich middle Western Manufacturer in *The Second Generation*, who disinherits his children (his son conditionally), for their own good; and the daughter of the New York capitalist who insists on marrying the young artist who has made up his mind to let no woman interfere with his work till he has reached a certain definite measure of success in his art.

It is possible that types like the young artist in question are more common even in New York than Mr. Winter seems to imagine; that girls like the one he eventually marries are on the increase there and elsewhere, and that rich men farther West who disinherit sons and daughters in a fair way to become worthless are not yet wholly obsolete.

Mr. Phillips was enough of a scientist to know that the type is sometimes best defined by its variants.

Mr. Winter is not yet enough of a critic to realize that Mr. Phillips's books are primarily novels of character and of American human nature evolved under contemporary economic storm and stress.

In his later books he has very little use for the more commonplace and subordinate types that go down, or barely hold their own in the struggle; or that remain stagnant on the surface of the social crust, as hopelessly slaves to conventions and artificial social distinctions as those that never emerge from below.

Quite as justly, both as man and artist, he has no more use for those Zolaesque "epic" themes, tending to emphasize an inevitable page of existence and an artificial fixity of social and economic conditions, which even to-day are still more characteristic of Europe than of America.

There is something about the atmosphere and the spirit of America to-day, outside New York and the adjacent Atlantic seaboard, that still justifies the proverb: "From shirt sleeves to shirt sleeves in three generations."

Mr. Phillips has seized upon this force and for-

mula of the racial smelting pot, and has made it his own in his stories of the struggle to break through the barriers of caste and artificiality from below upward, and from above down.

Many of his characters begin as the victims of caste. Frequently we find these products of an environment of elaborate uselessness. Quite as frequently circumstances and their own desires force them to assert and develop themselves. The women that he chooses for his heroines go to work. The men that typify his heroes learn eventually that money, like the pursuit of it and its most obvious results, is not the only thing in life, and never can be. In the long run the stronger characters rise superior to their environment. In direct contrast, each book that follows this formula delineates other weaker and slighter personages who remain submerged, and the author's cross-section of life, in spite of apparent abnormalities to the superficial reader's mind, remains constructively true to life as the great majority of the plain people of America still see it to-day.

Mr. Phillips is here far more than an accurate and painstaking artist, handling with commendable thoroughness and increasing power the raw material of the life closest to him. He is a pioneer of that new movement in fiction of which Arnold Bennett in England and Herman Suderman in Germany are also notable examples. Such men deal with life directly and freely as an elementary fusion of environment and character, unhampered by any ultra-realistic, romantic, classical, epic or academic tradition or preconceived scheme of any sort, fostered

or thrust upon them by third-rate critics or fourth-rate producers.

Such men, from Rabelais and Cervantes down to the present day, aim to get at the basic facts of life in the way most essential to the comprehension of the vast democratic majority of their readers, present and future. If they live, they evolve eventually a technique fit for their task, and the world stands eternally the richer for their works. If they die before the full fruition of their powers, as Frank Norris and David Graham Phillips did, none the less they have served to pioneer the way for others: their loss may be the world's gain by leaving their ultimate achievement not too hopelessly far in advance of the majority of their readers, the academic critics and partisans, and the young men and women who write, born to follow in their steps.

When Mr. Winter tells us that *The Second Generation*, 1907, is probably the best book to recommend to a reader approaching Mr. Phillips for the first time, because it is less likely to arouse antagonism than many others, and because it illustrates his strongest qualities, "his ability to give you the sense of life and action and the clash of many interests," we may have our reasonable doubts of the facts of the case and of Mr. Winter's appreciation of them. Similarly, when he says that the book "is to all practical interests a grown-up version of the story of the bad little boy who went fishing on Sunday and was drowned and the good little boy who went to church and was rewarded with plum pudding."

It is true that before this he admits that the "graphic truth, rugged strength and sure swiftness

of movement of the first part of the book show one that Mr. Phillips is one of the few contemporary American novelists that deserve to be taken seriously."

The theme of the book is stated in the language of the older generation ten or twenty years ago: "It is the curse of the world, this inherited wealth. . . . Because of it humanity moves in circles instead of forward. The ground gained by the toiling generations is lost by the inheriting generations. And this accursed inheritance tempts men ever to long for and hope for that which they have not earned. God gave man a trial of the plan of living in idleness upon that which he had not earned, and man fell. Then God established the other plan, and through it man has been rising—but rising slowly and with many a backward slip, because he has tried to thwart the divine plan with the system of inheritance. Fortunately the great mass of mankind has nothing to leave to heirs, has no hope of inheritance. Thus no leaders have ever been developed in place of those destroyed by prosperity. . . . No wonder progress is slow when the leaders of each generation have to be developed from the bottom over again, and when the ideal of useful work is obscured by the false ideal of living without work."

Stated in more modern language we have here the biological truth that the fittest survive only through struggle, and that man, like all other animals, makes his best records under handicaps. Where the necessity for struggle is removed, the species or the race degenerates and inevitably falls a prey to those that are still struggling. This is as true in the world of character as in that of material things.

Mr. Phillips does not announce this as a new discovery. He makes us realize that men and women have long realized it in their lives as well as in their thoughts, in certain sections of this country; and that their children, under favorable conditions, are still fit to do as their fathers have done.

This is in some respects the most sectional of his books. Hiram Ranger, self-made man and millionaire manufacturer, makes flour and barrels in a small Western town. His children have been educated in the East; and long before sudden failure of strength warns him of approaching death, he has had reason to feel dissatisfied with the typical products of Eastern universities and girls' finishing schools. He takes his measures accordingly, and in the end they are justified, though he does not live to see it. His son falls in love with a girl who has a profession of her own, and is alternately shamed and encouraged into making a man of himself and taking his father's place. The bulk of the estate is left in trust to be administered for the benefit of a Western university. The daughter marries the son of one of the trustees, who eventually becomes president of the university, and who comes very close to proving that a man wise enough to administer a big modern university successfully may fail to save his own household affairs from disaster.

Incidentally we have an attempt to discredit Ranger's son, after he has been made manager of the company, by illegal depreciation of the company's stock. Young Ranger rises to the occasion. " ' You understand how to manage men ' his wife tells him, ' and you understand business.' "

“ ‘ But unfortunately this is not business.’

“ He was right. The problem of business is in its two main factors perfectly simple — to make a wanted article and to put it where those who want it can buy. But this was not Arthur Ranger’s problem, nor is it the problem of most business men in our times. Between maker and customer nowadays lie the brigands who control the railways — that is the highways, and they with equal facility use or defy the law according to their needs. When Arthur went a-buying grain or stave timber, he and those with whom he was trading had to placate the brigands before they could trade; when he went a-selling flour he had to fight to the markets through the brigands.”

None the less Arthur and Dory Hargrave, his brother-in-law, fix things in the end so that the factory and the university can be made to interlock their working schedules with profit to both.

“ He’s going to establish a seven hours working day and if possible cut it down to six. . . . The university is to change its schedules so that all its practical courses will be at hours when men working in the factory can take them. It’s simply another development of his and Dory’s idea that a factory belonging to a university ought to set a decent example — ought not to compel its men to work longer than is necessary to earn an honest living for themselves and their families. . . . Working people have had to work so hard for others . . . they’ve had no chance to learn how to spend free time sensibly. But they’ll learn, those of them that have capacity for improvement. Those that haven’t will soon drop

out. . . . The factories can't make money on such a plan as that.

" . . . No, not dividends . . . But dividends are to be abolished in that department of the university, just as they are in the other departments. And the money the university needs is to come from tuition fees. Everyone is to pay for what he gets. Someone has to pay for it; why not the person who gets the benefit? Especially when the university's farms and workshops and factories give every student, man and woman, a chance to earn a good living. I tell you, Adelaide, the time is coming when every kind of school except kindergartens will be self-supporting. And then you'll see a human race that is really fine, really capable, has a real stand of self-respect."

This sort of thing does not pervade the volume. The conversation in which it takes place is towards the end of a long book, and the section covered by this particular phase of the discussion consists of less than three pages.

To people of Mr. Winter's point of view this may be bad art and worse literary construction.

Anyone who sees American life of to-day as directly as David Graham Phillips did, with the same absence of superficiality and hereditary prejudice, ought to be able to recognize that America is full of people who are makers of plans — in some cases working them out successfully — for the reorganization of education and industrial life in this country on a fair working basis of profit and a square deal to all concerned.

Men and women in this country to-day do talk so at times to one another. They do mean what they

say, and they do at times make good their words by their deeds. Anyone who has written as fully and freely, as sincerely and forcibly, of conditions in this country to-day as Mr. Phillips has, must inevitably, sooner or later, have included men and women like those in his gallery of national types.

The Second Generation is unmistakably and successfully a novel with a purpose. It is neither the novel of a doctrinaire nor a mere attenuated sociologic-political tract. Its interest holds from start to finish even when the author provides such obvious truisms as the following: "I've been thinking . . . a good deal lately, and I've come to the conclusion that there is really a rotten streak in what we've been getting there in the East — you at Harvard, I at Miss Spenser's Select School for Young Ladies. There are ways in which mother and father are better educated than me . . . Still mother and father are narrow-minded . . . Isn't everybody about people who don't think as they do?"

"I don't stand for the notion that marriage is living in luxury and lolling in carriages and showing off before strangers. . . . The girl that wants my son only if he has money to enable her to make a fool of herself ain't fit to be a wife and a mother. . . . The man that looks at what a woman *has* will never look at what she *is* — and my daughter's well rid of him."

"That *damned* East! We send it most of our money and our best young men; and what do we get from it in return? Why, sneers and snob ideas."

"Europe is full of that kind of place. You can't glance out doors, without seeing a house or a ruin

where the sweat and blood of peasants was squandered. . . . You might have told her that scandal isn't history, that history never was made in such places. As for the people who live there now, they are certainly not worth while — the same pretentious ignorance that used to live there, except that they have no longer fangs. . . . It's impossible for me to forget that every luxurious idler means scores who have to work long hours for almost nothing in order that he may be of no use to the world or himself."

"But *my* father was a working man. That was a long time ago. That was when America used to be American."

"He himself disliked servants about, hated to abet a fellow-being in looking on himself or herself as an inferior; and he regarded as one of the basest as well as subtlest poisons of snobbishness, the habit of telling others to do for one the menial, personal things that can be done with dignity only by oneself."

"Whenever the world has got a fair start toward becoming civilized, along have come wealth and luxury to smother and kill. It's very interesting to read history from that standpoint instead of taking the usual view that luxury produces the arts and graces."

It is doubtful if Walt Whitman himself, or any one else in American literature, has pushed plain speaking, in the mouths of plain men and women or in his own, to the point that Mr. Phillips has. Any impartial survey of these quotations will at least show that he is consistent and sincere in his point of view and the use he makes of it. Much of his doctrine is simply sublimated common-sense.

“Common-sense — absolute common-sense — always sounds incongruous in a conventional atmosphere. In its milder forms it produces the effect of wit; in stronger doses it is a violent irritant; in large quantity it causes those to whom it is administered to regard the person administering it as insane. . . . When you think of all that the human race has been through, you realize that everyone that has survived must be very superior, the less sheltered the more superior.

“Fate does sometimes force mischief on men and women. . . . But usually fate has nothing to do with the matter. It’s we ourselves that course for mischief, like a dog for rabbits. . . . His was not the knowledge that enfeebles, but the knowledge that empowers. . . . Judge Torrey once said, ‘You’ve only got to look at him to see that he’s the kind that does things, not the kind that tells how they used to be done or how they ought to be done.’

“Nobody’s born wise and mighty few take the trouble to learn.

“There never was a man as timid as you that wasn’t honest. What a shallow world it is! How often envy and cowardice pass for virtue.

“No imagination, that’s the secret of the stupidity and the horror of change and of the notion that the way a thing’s done to-day is the way it’ll always be done. . . . The ability absolutely to trust where trust is necessary is as essential to affection as is the ability to withhold trust until its wisdom has been justified; and exceptions only confirm a rule.

“Adelaide felt sorry for the poor, but she had yet to learn that she was of them, as poor in other and

more important ways as they in money and drawing-room manners. Surfaces and things of the surface obscured and distorted all the realities for her as for most of us; and the fact that her intelligence laughed at and scorned her perverted instincts was of as little help to her as it is to most of us.

“He had become what the ineffective call a pessimist. He had learned the primer lesson of large success — that one must build upon the hard pessimistic facts of human nature’s instability and fate’s fondness for mischief, not upon the optimistic clouds of belief that everybody is good and faithful and friendly disposed, and everything will come out all right somehow. . . .

“He was an illustration of the shallowness of the talk about the loneliness of great souls. It is the great souls alone that are not alone. They understand better than the self-conscious posing mass of mankind, the weakness and pettiness of human nature; but they also appreciate its other side. And in this pettiness of the creature they still see the greatness that is in every human being, its majesty of mystery and of potentiality, potentiality of its position and source of ever-ascending forms of life. From the protoplasmal cell descends the genius; from the loins of the sodden toiler chained to the soil springs the mother of genius or genius itself. And where little people were bored and isolated, Dory Hargrave could without effort pass the barrier to any human heart, could enter in and sit at its inmost hearth a welcome guest.”

Few men have written the literature of democracy more convincingly. Altogether *The Second Gen-*

eration is a big and inspiring book. Its one apparent defect in construction, the tragic and uncalled for death of one of the most lovable characters through the act of a madman, has a curious and convincing parallel in the life and death of the author himself. Mr. Phillips wrote of life not according to any artificial and pre-arranged literary or social scheme; but of life as it actually happens everywhere around us, day by day, in an America that the greed and negligence of the American people have filled with by-products of fanatic hatred and irresponsibility; products that the people of America are forced to-day, in one way or another, to pay for and reckon with.

II.

This is the theme of *Light-Fingered Gentry*, 1907, which deals with the recent investigation into the scandals connected with the great insurance companies of New York City.

The story is that of Horace Armstrong, a young man brought from the West and made president of the Mutual Association against Old Age and Death by Fosdick, that big business boss who dominates the company's affairs; and of Neva, his wife, separated from him in the first chapter by common consent at the moment of his removal to New York, and reunited to him in the last, after he has thoroughly exposed the whole system of graft focussed in the central office, and ramifying throughout its various branches, and after he has triumphantly refuted all charges against himself before an investigating committee of the company's shareholders.

In the meantime Neva comes to New York and decides to make a career for herself. She is aided in this by Narcisse Siersdorf, a woman architect, and by Boris Raphael, a painter who is in many ways quite as much of a dominant personality as Armstrong is.

“But for Boris, Neva might have gone through life, not indeed as stunted a development as she had been under the blight of her unfortunate marriage, but far from the rounded personality presenting all sides to the influences that make for growth and responding to them eagerly. Heart, and his younger brother, Mind, are two newcomers in a universe of force. They fare better than formerly; they will fare better hereafter; but they are still like infants exposed in the wilderness. Some fine natures have enough of the tough fiber successfully to make the fight; others, though they lack it, persist and prevail by chance — for the brute pressure of force is not malign; it crushes and spares at haphazard. Again there are finer natures — who knows? Perhaps the finest of all, the best minds, the best hearts — that either cannot or will not conform to the conditions. They wither and die — not of weakness, since in this world of the survival of the fittest, the fit are often the weak, the unfit the strong. All around us they are withering, dying, like the good seed cast on stony ground — the good minds, the good hearts, the men and women needing only love and appreciation and encouragement to shine forth in mental, moral and physical beauty. Of these had been Neva.”

Such she continues to the end, once she begins to get her growth.

Armstrong, like most masters of men, has rather more toughness than fineness in his make-up. By a lucky chance at the beginning of his incumbency, he gets hold of documents that show him how far the former incumbent had been Fosdick's slave; and the struggle to free himself from captivity, and at the same time to keep the reins of power in his hands, is told as only a trained journalist, equipped equally with the tersest and most graphic newspaper English and the facts of the insurance situation from the inside, could have told it. Armstrong meets his wife, who has been divorced from him, after Narcisse and Boris have wrought wonders with her. He makes up his mind to marry her again when he discovers that Boris has a similar end in view, and the story of his own spiritual regeneration follows this discovery.

In Armstrong and Neva, Mr. Phillips has symbolized the American business man at his best, as we find him to-day in charge of the nation's big business, and the woman who is best fitted by temperament and experience to be his wife and the mother of his children.

Narcisse Siersdorf is a fine type of the successful New York professional woman, sympathetically and convincingly delineated.

Boris Raphael, cynic and rake, possessed none the less of a noble genius in his art, is less sympathetic, slightly less convincing; at the same time he remains essentially human like the other characters of the book. Fosdick, the master rogue, Joe Morris, his Corporation Counsel in chief, Hugo, his superlatively useless and self-complacent son, and the wives and other women of their respective families, are all of

them drawn to the life with a few rapid touches: they are inevitably the product of the social and financial conditions that the book represents.

Mr. Phillips postulates as his first principle of life and art that, in order to write a literature of contemporary American life which shall be real and lasting, one is forced to study and to represent the industrial conditions and the economic forces that have that life in the making. In this book he puts it in this way:

“To understand a human being in any or all of his or her aspects, however far removed from the apparently material, it is necessary to understand how the man or woman comes by the necessities of life — food, clothing, shelter. To study human nature either in the broad or in detail, leaving these matters out of account, is as if an anatomist were to try to understand the human body, having first taken away the vital organs and the arteries and veins. It is the method of the man’s income that determines the man; and his paradings and posturings, his loves, hatreds, generosities, meannesses, all are either unimportant or but the surface signs of the deep, the real emotions that constitute the vital nucleus of the real man.

“In the material relations of a man or a woman, in the material relations of husband and wife, of parents and children, lie the ultimate, the true explanations of human conduct. This has always been so, in all ages and classes, and it will be so until the chief concern of the human animal, and therefore its chief compelling motive, ceases to be the pursuit of the necessities and luxuries that enable it to live from

day to day and that safeguard it in old age. The filling and emptying and filling again of the purse perform towards the mental and moral life a function as vital as the emptying and filling again of the heart and lungs perform in the life of the body."

The following quotations will give some idea of how this theory is worked out:

"Like most women . . . Neva was densely ignorant of and wholly uninterested in business — the force that has within a few decades become titanic and has revolutionized the internal as well as the external basis of life as completely as if we had been whisked away to another planet. She still talked and tried to think in the old traditional lines in which the books, grave and light, are still written and education is still restricted — although these lines have absolutely ceased to bear upon our real life, as have the gods of the classic world. It had never occurred to her that what the men did when they went to their offices involved the whole of society in all its relations, touched her life more intimately even than her painting. But, without her realizing it, the idea had gradually formed in her mind that the proceedings downtown were morally not unlike the occupation of coal-heaver or scavenger physically.

"We tried marriage once on the basis of husband and wife being absolute strangers to each other and at cross purposes. . . . I shall never try that kind of marriage again. . . . I couldn't be merely your mistress, Horace. I'd want *you*, and I'd want you to take me, all of me. I'd want it to be our life and not merely an episode in our life. Can't you see what would come afterwards — when you had

grown calm about me — and I about you? Can't you see how you'd turn back to your business and prostitute yourself for money, while I'd turn perhaps to luxury and show, and prostitute myself to you for the means to exhibit myself? Don't you see it on every side there in New York — the traffic in the souls of men and women — viler than any on the sidewalks at night — the brazen faces of the men flaunting their shame, the brazen faces of the women, the so-called wives, flaunting *their* shame. . . . As strong women as I, stronger, have been dragged down, no human being can resist the slow, insidious deduction of his daily surroundings.

“Armstrong was expelling himself from his own class — into what? Except in finance, high finance, what course was there for him? He would be like a politician without a party, like a general without an army, like a preacher without a parish, like a disbarred lawyer. His reputation would be gone — for morality is a relative word, and by his conduct he was convincing the only class important to him that he had not the morality of his class, that he could not be trusted with its interests. Every one, every race, every class, has its own morality, its own practical application of the general moral code to its own peculiar needs. The class financier, in the peculiar circumstances surrounding life in the new era, had its code of what was honest and dishonest, what respectable and what disrespectable, what loyal and what disloyal. Under that code his new course was disloyal, disrespectable, was positively dishonest. It would avail him nothing should other classes vaguely approve, if his own class condemned he was damned.

“This country is full of that kind of generosity now-a-days — generosity with other people’s money. The women don’t think about that side of it. . . . They think that as pretty much everybody’s doing that sort of thing — everybody, that is, anybody — why, it must be all right. . . . Sometimes it seems to me I’m a fool, a dumb one, to stick to the old-fashioned ways. Why be so particular about not taking other people’s property when they leave it around and don’t look after it themselves, when somebody else’ll take it if I don’t — somebody who won’t make as good use as I would.

“‘It seems to me,’ said she, ‘the question always is, Does this property belong to me? and if the answer is No, then to take it is —’

“‘To steal,’ he said, bluntly.

“‘It would be dreadful enough for the intelligent and strong — for men like you, Horace — to take from the ignorant and weak to buy the necessities of life. But to snatch bread and shelter and warmth and education from their fellow-beings to buy vanities — it isn’t American — it isn’t decent — it isn’t brave!’”

There are other passages that are worth quoting for various reasons:

“The stillness had the static terror of a room where a soul is about to enter or leave the world. It was not her words and her manner that moved him, direct and convincing though they were; it was the far subtler revelation of her inmost self, and, through that of a whole vast area of human nature which he had not believed to exist. Suddenly, and with a look

in his eyes which had never been there before, he reached out and took her hands.

“She was an interesting and much-admired representative of the American woman who goes in *seriously* for art. To go in *seriously* for art does not mean to cultivate one’s sense of the beautiful, to learn to discriminate with candor between good, not so good, not so bad, and bad. It means to keep in touch with the European dealers in things artistic, real and reputed; to be the first to follow them when a particular fad, having been mined to its last dollar, they and their subsidized critics and connoisseurs come out excitedly for some new period of style or school.

“. . . Egotism! . . . a mere word. It simply means human nature with the blinds up. We are all egotistic. How is it possible for us not to be? Does not the universe begin when we are born and end when we die? Certainly you are an egotist. But you are very short-sighted in your egotism, my friend.

“. . . A truly noble character moves so tranquilly and unobtrusively that it is often unobserved, perhaps rather taken for granted, unless a startling event compels attention to it. Neva was appreciating her father at last. . . . No human being can live in one place for half a century without indelibly impressing himself on his surroundings . . . in the very atmosphere of the rooms that he frequented a personality . . . revealed itself altogether by example, not at all by precept; a human being that loved nature and his fellow-beings, lived in justice and mercy.”

It is by occasional little quiet, subtle touches like

this that Mr. Phillips reveals the other side of himself and his theory of life, and makes us realize that New York is not all of America. If *The Second Generation*, 1906, is a big, a significant, and an inspiring book, *Light-Fingered Gentry*, 1909, is on the whole a bigger, a more significant, and a more inspiring one.

Mr. Winter passes over *White Magic* as "simply an innocuous little love story told with rather more explosive violence than the theme warrants."

The book's publishers have different views. According to them, Mr. Phillips shows us in his grim, humorous way some sketches of a portion of society life that many people fail to see the humor of at all.

Similarly with *The Fashionable Adventures of Joshua Craig*. Mr. Winter calls it a piece of cheap caricature. The publishers suggest that when Margaret Severance, reigning society beauty of Washington, marries her untamed Western politician, partly because she can't help it, and partly with the idea of civilizing him, and quite unexpectedly goes West with him to live, the *denouement*, while not pleasant from one point of view, is absolutely true. There is no doubt that here, as elsewhere at times, Mr. Phillips' social satire is both pointed and pitiless. It is no more than fair to suggest that as such it is on a par with the social commonplaces of the people that he attacks; and that to make an attack of the sort at all effective at headquarters, some such vigorous method was necessary to prick the thick hides and the insufferable self-complacency of the people at whom the satire was aimed.

Mr. Winter considers *The Hungry Heart* like

The Husband's Story, one of the two books that exhibit Mr. Phillips' ripest powers, possibly because it is conceived and executed more in the conventional French style and method of the eternal triangle, than in the manner that Mr. Phillips has made distinctively American and his own. According to Mr. Winter, this book deserves high praise as a piece of careful construction. Later he proceeds to quarrel with the author because, unconventionally, in the French sense, the husband takes his wife back after she has proved the worthlessness of the other man.

As a matter of fact, this book is one of Mr. Phillips' comparative failures, because the careful construction, which Mr. Winter praises, cramps the author's talent for large effects and restricts the action of a long book to a little rural world of four characters. The drifting apart of the husband and wife through his absorption in science, and his failure to see that she needs some vital interest in her life beyond dress and housekeeping, is carefully worked out — too carefully. The reader is inclined to sympathize with the wife's monotony and impatience through the early part of the book. The climax and the reconciliation are admirably executed. The husband, contrary to Mr. Winter's opinion, is less "a conventional, conservative type" than a man of science. As such he has sense enough to see that what has happened has been quite as much his own fault as his wife's, and to realize at the end that they have both grown stronger and better for the experience.

This book, while hardly fitted in itself to appreciably increase Mr. Phillips' popularity or rank in the

literary world, forms an interesting connecting link between *Old Wives for New*, 1908, and *The Husband's Story*.

The former book is not a pleasant one. It is frankly realistic, at times brutally so. According to Mr. Winter, the real importance of this book is that "it sets forth quite pitilessly the gradual estrangement that arises between a husband and wife in the course of long years through the woman's sloth and selfishness and gratification of all her whims. . . . What he has done is to show us first in a brief prelude the sudden ardor of a boy-and-girl attachment, each caught by the mere physical charm of youth and health and high spirits and rushing into a marriage with no firm basis of mutual understanding.

"Then he skips an interval of about twenty years and takes us into the intimate life of this same couple, showing us with a frankness of speech and of thought that is almost cruel in its unsparing realism, the physical and mental degeneration of the woman, fat and old and slovenly before her time, and the unspoken repulsion felt by the man who has kept himself young, alert and thoroughly modern in outward appearance as well as in spirit.

"The situation is complicated by the presence of two grown children, a son and a daughter, who see unwillingly the approaching crisis and realize their helplessness to ward it off. Such a situation in real life may solve itself in any one of fifty different ways.

"What Mr. Phillips has chosen to do is to bring the husband in contact with a young woman who represents everything in which his own wife is lacking. And although the man fights for a long time against

temptation, in the end he obtains freedom from the old wife through the divorce court and promptly replaces her with the new.

“There is probably no other American novel that gives us with such direct and unflinching clairvoyance the sordid, repellent, intimate little details of a mistaken marriage that slowly but surely culminates in a sort of physical nausea and an inevitable separation.”

Mr. Winter is inclined to feel that there is a heartless immorality in the story of the husband's deliberate and unrelenting progress towards freedom.

Judged by the modern test, that the difference between morality and immorality is that between construction and destruction of power, the wife in question is quite as immoral as the husband, if not more so. Their eventual separation, in one way or another, is inevitable; and here again it is evident that Mr. Phillips has meant to symbolize by these two characters an increasing class of American husbands and wives. Mr. Phillips tells the story with the terse impartiality of the star reporter on a conservative sheet. He recognizes that certain causes produce certain results, and that it is his business to make us see this. And he does make us see it, in this case as well as in the case of the husband's business associate, who is murdered in a Tenderloin resort as a result of a life of periodic licentiousness, carefully calculated and concealed.

The story of the decline and fall of the cast-off wife is focussed in two words: candy and corsets. Here again one is forced to realize that this woman is typical of a large and increasing class of American

women who may be briefly characterized as home breakers rather than home makers. When not on dress parade, she slumps and slouches inevitably. She is slovenly, she is gluttonous, she is helpless and inert, in mind, body and soul.

When at last, warned by threats of her husband's desertion, she rouses herself feebly to try to win him back, the account of her own, her maid's and her *corsetières'* maneuvers with an impossible cage of silk and steel that is a very straight-jacket of torment to her, is at once ludicrous and tragic. Perusal of this part of the book is far from pleasant: people who enjoy the doubtful felicity of living in the part of the world here portrayed have ample reason to know that the reality is still less so.

Old Wives for New is Mr. Phillips' strongest piece of realism. For concentrated and consistent power in this respect, outside of Frank Norris's *McTeague*, there is not another American novel to equal or rival it. In many ways it is a far more artistic book, judged from a purely literary standpoint, than may appear superficially on a first or a second reading. It ranks easily among the three or four best and strongest of his books.

The same may be said of *The Husband's Story*, 1910, though here the realism is modified and colored by its telling in the first person in the mouth of a New York captain of industry, the father of an American duchess, and the former husband of an Italian princess.

Mr. Winter says of this book: "A large part of the merit of this undeniably big novel lies in what it merely implies, instead of what it says. To conceive

a story of this sort is something in itself to be proud of, but to conceive of telling it through the husband's lips was a stroke of genius. . . . It is a ruthless indictment of the unfitness of a certain type of American woman to undertake the duties of wife and mother and housemaker . . . the whole intimate drama of a pushing, climbing couple, who start from sordid beginnings in an obscure little town in New Jersey . . . is given from the husband's point of view with a grim and unsparing irony."

Mr. Winter thinks that the irony lies in the husband's unconscious portrayal of himself. He believes that Mr. Phillips thought so too, and considers this a point that few readers detect. He considers the husband equally responsible with the wife for the failure of their marriage, and thinks this was the impression that Mr. Phillips intended to convey.

The fact is that Edna Loring typifies a class of American women who have become impossible to everyone who is not content to take them at their own valuation, or to pretend to. Her husband typifies a class of American business and professional men who have become guilty, through contributory negligence, of the supreme uselessness and artificiality displayed by their wives and daughters, and who are rapidly waking up to the fact.

In this case Mr. Phillips chooses to represent Godfrey Loring, a man who outgrows his wife and his own early standards, who is shrewd enough to see through them both, who is acute enough to realize that anywhere short of a desert island Edna Loring, New York society leader and mother of her American duchess, is hopeless as a life companion for him, who

is sane enough after this realization to appreciate the advantages of a real wife and a real home and children, and who is determined enough, once his wife has given him a legitimate excuse for seeking them elsewhere, to hold her to the bond of the contract of separation she has herself proposed.

In this section of the book, before and after, there is abundant room for irony. Most of it, however, is irony of which the author, the man who tells the story, and the average reader are equally and at once aware. It is impossible to mistake it in passages like the following:

“‘On the contrary,’ said I. ‘You speak like a woman accustomed to deal with men according to her own good pleasure.’

“‘How shrewd that is,’ said she, with an admiring glance. ‘How shrewd you are! That’s what I miss in other men, in these men over here who have so much that I admire. But they — well, they give me the feeling that they are superficial. Do you think that I am superficial?’

“‘How could I?’ said I.

“‘That’s an evasion,’ laughed she; ‘you do think so. And perhaps I am. A woman ought to be. A man looks after the serious side of life. The woman’s side is the lighter and graceful side — don’t you think so?’

“‘That sounds plausible,’ said I.

“‘But I grow tired of superficial men. They give me the feeling that — well, that they couldn’t be relied on. And you are so reliable, Godfrey. I feel about you that, no matter what happened, you’d be

equal to it. And that's why I don't want to give you up.'

"I sat with my eyes down as if I were listening and reflecting.

"'Since you've been over here long enough to — to broaden a little — you don't mind my saying you've broadened?'

"'It's true,' said I.

"'I've fancied perhaps you might be seeing that I wasn't altogether wrong in my ideas?'

"'Yes,' said I, as she hesitated.

"'Margot was telling me about some plans you had for living, on the other side. You weren't in earnest?'

"I looked at her gravely. 'Very much in earnest,' said I. 'I shall never again, in any circumstances, live as we used to live.' She sank back in her chair, slowly turned her parasol round and round.

"'Then it's hopeless,' said she with a sigh that was a sob also. And the look in the eyes that she lifted to mine went straight to my heart. 'I simply can't stand America,' said she; 'it reminds me of —' She rose impatiently. 'If you only knew, Godfrey, how I *loathe* my origin — the dreadful class we came from — the commonness of it!' She shuddered.

"'Europe is the place for you,' said I."

In the whole range of fiction there are few scenes, few conversations, that compress so much higher comedy and tragic irony at once, into so few words.

Mr. Winter has tried, inconclusively, to interpret *The Husband's Story* from a woman's point of view. Later we see what a woman has to say about

it. In a letter to the *New York Times*' Literary Supplement for January 29th, 1911, Mrs. Annie Nathan Meyer declares:

"Here are three quotations from David Graham Phillips's latest novel, *The Husband's Story*. I could cull any number like them. In fact, there are so many, and they are so trenchant, so searching, that one almost wonders that the shot which cut short the career of the brilliant author was fired by a man:

"Probe to the bottom of any of the present-day activities of the American woman — I care not what it may be, church or lecture, suffrage movement or tenement reform — and you will discover the bacillus of society position biting merrily away at her.

"The cruellest indictment of the intellect of woman is the crude, archaic, futile, and unimaginative way in which is carried on the part of life that is woman's peculiar work — or, rather, is messed, muddled, slopped, and neglected.

"It may be that woman will some day develop another and higher sphere for herself. But first she would do well to learn to fill the sphere she now rattles round in, like one dry pea in a ten-gallon can."

"How the American woman is taking what is to me the most poignant arraignment of her that has yet appeared I do not know. Private mutterings of wrath I have heard, but no more. . . . Unflinching, mercilessly, Mr. Phillips has exposed the absurd pretensions of the American woman. His heroine and her kind are held up as bungling housekeepers, callous seekers after their own pleasure, ignorant mothers, slave-drivers to their good-natured, indifferent, woman-worshiping, woman-despising, money-making husbands. Furthermore, they are empty-headed and frivolous, both vain and colossally conceited. Of course, it is easy to call names. But Mr. Phillips

does much more than that: he gives us a living, breathing woman, clean-cut in outline, yet amazingly subtle. He is not content, for instance, with painting his heroine as lazy, for the American woman is anything but lazy. He is penetrating enough to know that she is lazy only where she is indifferent. He does not paint her as hopelessly stupid, for he knows that in her own little line of social activities she is a general — Napoleonic even if Lilliputian. How well he hits the nail on the head:

“‘It was impossible to interest her in anything worth while. But as to the things in which she was interested, none could have thought more clearly or keenly, or could have acted with more vigor and effect.’

“In nothing else does he show better his skillful handling of the queer contradictions of woman than in making his wife at the beginning utterly indifferent to the food she provides for the bread-winner of the family, reducing him to the tender mercies of the delicatessen dealer, tackling the intricate problems of cooking with the serene cocksureness of complete ignorance, and yet strangely capable of self-denial and a devoted, conscientious study of nutriment for herself and daughter when she discovers that both complexion and figure depend on it. . . .

“In one way the book is peculiarly impressive. If it dealt with one stratum of society alone, it would be easy to let it pass as an indictment of a small number of women only. But the first chapter starts with the squalor of Edna Wheatlands' childhood, shows her jilted by an eight-dollar-a-week clerk, takes her through the period of her honeymoon in the 'forty-dollar flat,' gorgeous with 'its brave show of red

plush,' carries her along through middle-class gentility, thence by the leaps and bounds of a successful business man to the lower fringe of society, painfully working up to the upper crust, and finally bursting through into the aristocracy of Europe. And in each setting it is undeniable that the strictures on the 'eternal feminine' ring equally true.

"The characterization is superb. Difficult as it is, he has made us feel that the slatternly, down-at-the-heels bride of the early chapters is the same woman who later relentlessly carves the resplendent future of herself and daughter. The husband's cynical wonder at the extraordinary incompetence of women is the same whether it is aimed at the servantless mistress of the stuffy flat or the elegant dame of the fashionable mansion, helpless under the sway of her thirty-five minions. 'A wife,' he cries, 'no more fitted to be a wife than the office-boy is fitted to step in and take the president's job.'

"Into one tradition after another he has charged with his gall-steeped pen. The woman is no homemaker, only a brazen schemer to achieve a more and more costly environment of discomfort. She is no mother; she knows nothing about the real needs of children, she is keen only for their world success. She is not the inspirer of her husband; she likes to pose as such, but she is interested in his business only for what there is in it for her, and in a crisis she is the last person to whom he would appeal for comfort, idealism, or even plain, business honesty.

"And, finally, he boasts that he 'has pricked the bubble of the American woman's pretense of superior culture.' This undoubtedly took more courage than

anything else he has done. Strangely enough, women are not so ashamed to admit that they are poor wives, and worse mothers; but when you take from them the glory of upholding the tradition of refinement and culture, then the blow hurts. How he laughs at those 'expert smatterers,' 'with a little miseducation befogging their mind.' But the deepest sting is here:

"The American woman fancies she is growing away from the American man. The truth is, that while she is sitting still, the American man is growing away from her."

"Of course, as I intimated at the beginning, this is not pleasant reading for smug women, bursting with self-praise and scorn of the other sex. It is certainly much pleasanter to be assured (as they will find plenty of books to assure them) that the American women are the most wonderful women in the world, than to be told the plain truth that they are the most spoiled, the most incompetent in the things that count, and the hardest on their husbands, demanding more and giving less than any other women in the world."

These are the views of a woman that is well known in New York, as an anti-woman-suffragist and educator of prominence.

Granting that the type of woman against which Mrs. Meyer fulminates is at least a little more common in various classes of American society than Mr. Winter would like to believe, we may remark that Godfrey Loring finds, at last, one woman in his own class, and Edna's, who is in all essentials an antithesis to his first wife.

Mary Kirkwood has been married before, and divorced as well, through no fault of her own other than the ignorance of a child. She considers herself a normal woman. She lets Loring know while they are still friends, and after he has told her that he thinks he makes money for the same reason that a hen lays eggs or a cow gives milk, because it is his natural function, that what she wants most in the world is love and children.

“I am thinking of selecting some trustworthy man with good physical and mental qualities. I have had experience. I ought to be able to judge — and not being in love with him, I shall not be so likely to make a mistake. I shall marry and the children will give me love and occupation. You may laugh, but I tell you that the only occupation worthy of a man or a woman is bringing up children. All the rest — for men as well as for women — is — is like a hen laying eggs to rot in the weeds. . . . Bringing up children to develop us, to give us a chance to make them an improvement on our own lives. That’s the best.”

None the less, Mrs. Kirkwood is sufficiently susceptible to the traditions of her environment to become engaged to a German Count some time after this, and the interest of the story is thus sustained to the last chapter.

There are few works of fiction so eminently quotable in the form of truth that is not merely contemporary but universal. There is hardly a page without a paragraph or sentence that challenges consideration in this way.

Mrs. Meyer has very vigorously demonstrated the most obvious and purposeful side of the book from her

point of view. A few more characteristic touches remain to be added, however.

“The dear child has been elected to the most exclusive fraternity (sorority). Every girl in it has to wear hand-made underclothes and has to have at least a father, or a grandfather, and a great-grandfather. . . . You know all the genealogies are more or less faked, and I’ve no doubt hers is every bit as genuine as those of half the girls. . . . Are the hand-made underclothes faked too? . . . Oh, no. *They* had to be genuine. I’ve never let Margot wear any other kind since I learned about these things.

“There’s nothing that gives a girl such a sense of lady-likeness and superiority as to feel that she’s dressed right from the skin out.

“‘She’s the most conspicuous female in sight,’ said I. ‘She’s a credit to us.’

“American husbands have the reputation of being the most docile and the most henpecked men in the world. All foreigners say so, and our women believe it. In fact, nothing could be farther from the truth. The docility of American husbands is the good nature of indifference.

“The fact is, my dear, people are all tiresome. That’s why they can’t amuse themselves or each other, but have to be amused — have to hire the clever people of all sorts to entertain them. Instead of asking people here to bore us and be bored, why not send them seats at a theater, or orders for a first-class meal at a first-class restaurant?

“I made inquiries into how their wives spent the money that went for food — the most important item in the spending of incomes under ten or twelve thou-

sand a year. In every case the wife or the mother did the marketing by telephone. All the men except one took the ignorance and incompetence of the management of the household expenses as a matter of course.

“I had not then waked up to the fact that as a rule women systematically lie to their husbands about big things and little, and that those women who profess to be too proud to lie, do their lying by indirections, such as omissions, half-truths, and misleading silences . . . those of them who profess to be the proudest are either the most ignorant of themselves or the most hypocritical.

“Another mistake I made — the initial mistake was in giving her a fortune . . . there’s something worse than the more or less sentimental aversion to being loved and considered merely for the money they can get out of you, and can’t get without you. . . . It’s worse to give a foolish woman the power to make a fool of herself, of her children, and of you.

“Margot rather liked me I believe. Not as a father. As a father I made her ashamed like everything else American about her. Men are habitually fools about women — not because women make fools of them, but because they enjoy the sensation of making fools of themselves. This is a sensation much praised by poets, romancers, sentimentalist of all kinds. . . . Men have flung away their fortunes, their lives for the sake of a pose; martyrs have been burned at the stake for pose.”

There are a few axioms of Mr. Phillips’ philosophy in this book that do not bear directly on the question of marriage:

“ It is the instinct of big men to be big and simple and natural in their dealings with their fellows. The mass of little men with big vanities compels them to suppress this instinct. . . . Be polite to a man and he will misunderstand. Be cool to him, and he, thickly enveloped in his own good opinion of himself, will not feel it. Rudeness, overt and unmistakable, is often the one way to reach him and to save not only yourself but him from the consequences of his own vanity.

“ I don't ask advice to have someone to blame if things go wrong.

“ No one who has not the faculty of analysis ever gets anywhere; no one who has that faculty ever escapes the charge of cynicism.

“ To the man of large affairs, the average . . . biography or novel about a great man reads like the attempt of a straddle-bug to give his fellow straddle-bugs an account of an elephant.

“ Of all its stupidities and follies none so completely convicts the human race of shallowness and bad taste as its notions of what is romantic and idealistic. The more elegant the human animal flatters itself it is, the poorer are its ideals — that it is the farther removed from the practical and the useful.

“ A fool is a grown person who has never grown up.

“ To be regarded as thoroughly sane and sensible, you must be careful to be neither, but to pattern yourself painstakingly upon the particular form of feeble-mindedness and conventional silliness current in your time.

“ I don't see that it takes any more brains or any better brains to paint a picture or sing a song or

write a novel, than it does to run a railroad — or to plan one. If you'd try to understand business . . . you might find it as interesting and as intellectual as anything that doesn't help us to make a living.

“I am a business man, not a smug, shallow-pated failure teaching an antiquated college. I abhor the word culture as I abhor the word gentleman or the word lady, because of the company into which it has fallen.

“Material conditions force upon men inexorable modes of life. And every mode of life breeds a definite, distinct set of ideas. . . . I saw that he had even reached the pose where a man of property regards a new idea as a menace to society. . . . And of course when a man speaks of a menace to society, he means a menace to himself.

“Little people ought always to be optimistic. Then, their enthusiasm — if directed by some big person — produces good results. . . . But big people must not be — and are not — optimistic, whatever they may pretend. The big man must foresee all the chances against success. Then . . . the courage of the big man will enable him to go fairly ahead, not blunderingly, but wisely. The general must be pessimist. The private must be optimist.”

It is evident to anyone who has read so far that Mr. Phillips' hero has developed considerably since he married the Paterson undertaker's daughter and emerged from obscurity. And the fruit of his experience, like his creator's, may be summed up in a very few words:

“As we grow older and rise in the world, there is always a deterioration both in disposition and char-

acter. A man's disposition grows sharper through dealing with, and having to deal sharply with, incompetency. The character tends to harden as he is forced to make the unpleasant and often not too scrupulous moves necessary to getting himself forward towards success . . . but the whole object in having a home, a wife, a family, is defeated if the man has not there a something that checks the tendencies towards cynicism and coldness, which active life not merely encourages but compels.

“Friendship is divine, but intimacy is the devil himself — unless it is the intimacy of the family. To love your neighbor as yourself, he must be and must remain your neighbor; that is to say, within hail but not within touch. Husband, wife, and children are the only natural intimates — intimate because they have the bond of common interest. The family that looks abroad for intimates has ceased to be a family. A man who has his wife and children for intimates has neither time nor need for other intimates; and unless a man's wife and children are his intimates, he has, in fact, no wife and no children.

“My theory, or rather my philosophy — for it is more than a theory — my philosophy is that the family is the *unit of happiness*.”

III.

It is this same philosophy that *The Grain of Dust*, 1911, helps to exemplify.

The sale of this novel, published as a serial in *The Saturday Evening Post* at the time of the author's death, already threatens to equal or exceed that of any of Mr. Phillips' former works. Dramatized by

✓ Louis Evan Shipman, its success as a play in Chicago has been immediate and meteoric.

Save *The Worth of a Woman*, Mr. Phillips has never written anything that appeals more directly and dramatically to all sorts and conditions of Americans of both sexes than this story of a New York corporation lawyer who comes within an ace of wrecking himself hopelessly through his infatuation for a stenographer in his own office, and who "comes back" after his long deferred marriage to her with increased power and usefulness in both harsher and more humane business and social relations.

Opinions, critical and commonplace, may vary considerably about the character of Frederic Norman, and the possible exaggeration of the faults and virtues of the type that Mr. Phillips has focussed in this extremely interesting and individualized American.

There can be but one verdict, however, as to the author's success with Dorothy Hallowell. In all his long gallery of American women of to-day she shines supreme. It is hardly too much to say that in all American fiction since Hester Prynne there are few women in the same class with her as a masterly example of character-drawing, reflecting perfectly the environment of which she is herself a part.

One may go further and suggest that, as a literary creation, she challenges comparison with Becky Sharp and the best of Balzac's women, or those of any novelist with whom accurate fidelity to life is the first and the final motive and accomplishment.

Almost equally admirable are the character-drawings of Norman's sister and his fiancée in his own class at the beginning of the story. The men in the book,

with the exception of Norman himself — Dorothy's father, who bears a striking resemblance to the father of Neva Armstrong in *Light-Fingered Gentry*, and Fred Tetlow, Norman's partner and financial lifeline — are little more than sharply delineated figures in the background or middle distance. Tetlow, like Dorothy, is wonderfully human, and an admirable example of the pressure of Broadway and Wall Street environment upon human material commonplace in its strength and weakness to-day.

Just how far or how much Mr. Phillips intended to symbolize in him, in Norman, in the women of Norman's class, in Dorothy and her father, does not concern us intimately at present. The story as a story stands by itself. As such it is Mr. Phillips' most fascinating and brilliant effort since *The Great God Success*. At the same time, in common with *Old Wives for New* and *The Husband's Story*, it affords an adequate vehicle for the diffusion of the author's ideas of human nature under pressure in New York and elsewhere in Twentieth Century America.

With the single exception of *The Husband's Story*, it is quite as quotable from cover to cover as any of Mr. Phillips' novels. Space is lacking for any adequate transcription of Mr. Phillips' facts that hit one between the eyes and get into one's gray matter to stay. A few of these facts, however, may be instanced:

“Some men . . . never realize that their rare passions working upon the universal human love of the mysterious, are wholly responsible for the cult of women, the sphynx and the sibyl. But the men . . . have been let by them into their ultimate secret — the

simple humanness of women; the clap-trappery of the oracles, miracles and wonders. He had discovered that the 'divine intuitions' were mere shrewd guesses where they had any meaning at all; that her eloquent silences were screens for ignorance or boredom — and so on through the list of the legends that prop the feminist cult . . . 'besides, a love marriage that fails is different from a mercenary marriage that fails.' 'Very — very,' agreed he. 'Just the difference between an honorable and a dishonorable bankruptcy.'

"As we grow older, what we are inside, the kind of thoughts we admit as our intimates, appears ever more strongly in the countenance . . . the look of respectability, of intellectual distinction becomes a thinner and ever thinner veneer over the selfishness and greediness, the vanity and the sensuality and falsehood. . . . Evidently Hallowell during most of his sixty-five years had lived the purely intellectual life. The result was a look of spiritual beauty, the look of the soul living in the high mountain, with sincerity and vast views continually before him. Such a face fills with awe the ordinary follower of the petty life of the world if he have the brains to know or suspect the ultimate truth about existence. It filled Norman with awe.

" . . . The Martin is gay enough. The truth is, there's nothing really gay any more. There's too much money. Money suffocates gayety. . . .

"I don't know anything worth knowing except how to dress and make a fool of an occasional man. I'm not a housekeeper nor a good wife — and I'd as lief go to jail for two years as to have a baby. But *I* ad-

mit that I'm n. g. Most women are as poor excuses as I am, yet they think they are *grand*.

"A man's home ought to be a retreat, not an inn. . . . Of the girls growing up nowadays very few are fit to be American wives. They're not big enough. They're only fit for the shallow, showy sort of thing — and the European aristocracy is their hope and their place."

The Grain of Dust is a big book, a true book, a brilliant exemplification and argument of the author's Americanism; at the same time, treated as literature simply and severely, it is literature of a very high order of distinction and lasting value.

Beside it *The Conflict*, 1911, judged as literature and a contemporary document of wide human appeal and assisting human interest, is inconsiderable. As a sociological tract, where the author, violating his own published creed of an impartial interpreter of life as he sees it, preached flatfooted Socialism in everything but the name, it reminds us uninspiringly of the later literary failures of Zola and Tolstoy.

The old sincerity is there still. The old dexterity in adapting situations and evolving characters to voice the author's views is still apparent. The old shrewdness and directness in unmasking the social and political shams of America in the making may stimulate and divert us by the way.

But at the end of the long journey of nearly four hundred close pages, we find ourselves, if we reach the end at all, at practically the same place where we started from in the first quarter of the book; and there is a disposition to ask ourselves whether the author has not wasted his time and our own.

As a piece of special pleading, his apparent intolerance of every phase of modern life, save those represented directly by the work of scientists and the manual labor that he tends to deify, defeats itself; and to any candid mind, disposed to accept gradually the sort of Socialism that evolves and proves its fitness to survive and to adapt itself to Twentieth Century conditions, Mr. Phillips' social criticism and philosophy, as voiced in *The Conflict*, displays itself as far more destructive than constructive; far more characteristic of the intolerant and unbalanced fanatic than of the shrewd and penetrating critic and interpreter of life that he has proved himself in the best of his earlier books.

Characters as pronounced as that of David Graham Phillips are certain to have the defects of their qualities. The man's characteristic and intense hatred of injustice, snobbery, pretentiousness, cruelty and falsehood was ingrained in the very fiber of him and was inevitably constrained to color everything that he wrote.

If in *The Conflict*, whose keynote is "Civilization means property as yet. And it doesn't mean men and women as yet. So to know the men and the women we look at the property"; the author's sincere and militant passion on behalf of the fundamental human rights and the Square Deal for those who are farthest from it, has led him to overstate his case. No such fault can be found with *George Helm*, 1912, first published as a series of short stories in *The Cosmopolitan*.

The following extract from the publisher's announcement is sufficiently to the point: "The book

is, on the whole, quite up to Mr. Phillips' higher level.

George Helm is the novelization of a man of Lincoln's type. A politician with a dangerous, incurable hankering to be a *man*, self-owned and self-bossed — a speaker who inspires his followers with a passionate loyalty — the greatest force in the world of action."

The Price She Paid, 1912, is the story of an American girl who raises herself from fashionable obscurity to success as a singer of grand opera in the high places where sex and the world's applause are mere incidents in the day's work. It is a modern version, intensely interesting and readable from cover to cover, of "many are called, but few are chosen"—and fewer still choose and sustain themselves.

Mildred Gower of Hanging Rock, near New York, is forced at the age of twenty-five, through financial losses in her own family and the pressure of environment, to marry for money.

Her father-in-law, who takes the case in hand, produces at the psychologic moment a peculiarly pernicious specimen of egotist and multi-millionaire, who manages to repress some of the hardest and crudest manifestations of his ego till about a month after the marriage ceremony.

By this time Mildred's small remaining supply of her own money is exhausted, and she discovers that she is up against a system practiced by very rich men towards their wives more commonly than is often admitted: that of giving them unlimited credit everywhere (within certain restrictions) and no cash at all in hand, or next to none.

Mildred objects strenuously. She talks to the General's factotum before appealing to her buyer himself.

Both interviews proving profitless, she leaves her hotel in Paris with the understanding that once she sets foot outside Bill Siddall's door she shall never set foot inside it again.

She manages to sell a gold-net hand-bag for a fraction of its former value, and on the steamer back to New York she meets a former millionaire admirer of hers who is about to be divorced and who at first is in mortal terror lest his wife and her lawyer should hear of his meeting with Mildred.

They have sailed from a Southern Mediterranean port, and no one on board seems to know them or to have heard of them. Stanley Baird offers to grub-stake her while she studies for her grand opera career, at the rate of five thousand a year at six per cent. interest, till she is prepared to pay his money back.

Mildred accepts; she becomes a pupil of the most fashionable and expensive teacher of singing in New York; Baird disappears for the time being; she finds refuge from General Siddall's detectives and a home in the flat of Cyrilla Brindley, the widow of a professional musician and a musician herself; she has a good, natural voice, not yet spoiled by incompetent teaching and practice as a fashionable amateur; and for nearly a year she deludes herself (and is encouraged in the belief by her teacher, Eugene Jennings, who has a genius for making the goose that lays the golden eggs lay as many as possible) into the frame of mind which assumes that she is making satisfactory

and substantial progress when various details of health, temperament and bank account suggest the exact opposite.

Baird gets his divorce, comes back before the following summer is over, and after the exercise of considerable delicacy and self-restraint for some time, begins to make violent love to her.

Mildred develops colds, complicated with indigestion, partly as a result of late hours and too many cocktails and cigarettes.

At the summer-place where Baird finds her and Mrs. Brindley, she becomes acquainted with Donald Keith, a New York lawyer, who generally contents himself with taking over other lawyers' hardest cases and making only twenty or thirty thousand a year when he might easily make ten times as much.

Keith regards her first with much the same lack of interest that he displays towards most things in the summer colony.

Mildred is drawn to him by the man's atmosphere of power; she is piqued by his real or apparent indifference and makes desperate efforts to break the ice of his reserve.

Keith, whose mother has been a great opera-singer in her time, finally shows Mildred what a fool and fraud she is; how little there is for her to pride herself upon in her willingness to take everything from Baird and give nothing, on the bare chance that some day she may be able to pay his money back with interest if she makes good. He rubs in the fact that the reason her voice cannot be depended upon is nothing more or less than the result of physical and moral self-indulgence. He tells her that sooner or later the

time will come when she must rely on herself and no one else, or go to the wall.

She wants to rely on him. He will not let her. He informs her that her husband is a bigamist. He presides at a brief interview in which Bill Siddall is sent definitely about his business.

He gives her a paper embodying a Spartan régime of daily and nightly discipline endured successfully by his mother for years; and a stormy interview with him is followed by a still more stormy interview with Baird.

Something inside herself that she can neither understand nor withstand forces her to refuse to marry the latter.

She goes back to New York in the fall with impaired health and a rapidly diminishing bank account.

She goes back to her first landlady there, Agnes Belloc, who has since graduated from Bohemia to respectability, and whose warm humanity and hard New England common sense give Mildred sufficient courage and capacity to enable her to make a strong bid for success as a comic opera star.

Crossley, the producer, and Ransdell, his right-hand man, are up a tree when she appears. They put her in rehearsal to be used as a temporary stop-gap, and find that she promises to score a hit.

All goes well till Ransdell starts to make love to her. As she won't give him what he wants, he begins to break her, just as he has made her.

Mildred's nervousness and throat complications return and she is laid off. She forces herself to try to get to Crossley and lay the truth before him, less with

hope of reinstatement than as a mere matter of justice.

Crossley tells her to come back later if she can ever trust her voice. She goes to see Moldini, the accompanist in the theater, who had helped her to make good at her first appearance, and tells him that her voice is gone or going.

He tests her, and tells her that there is hope. She shows him Keith's mother's régime, and they begin laboriously to work it out.

The last twenty pages of the book are devoted to a brief and dramatic account of Keith's final interview with her, and a still briefer notice of the night that she set New York mad over the birth of a new lyric soprano star of the first magnitude.

From the first she has been in love with Keith. He knows it and loves her in his own way. He tells her to do her best to succeed, and if she fails — but only if she fails after making her utmost effort — to come back to him.

He comes to her and makes this plain while the certainty of success is being born in her through Moldini's training, his mother's régime and something in herself that she cannot yet learn to understand or control, which forces her to go on and live a life which she still loathes.

Keith gets his sentence and goes away. She slaves on for more than a year. For more than a year she lives singing; eats it; drinks it; breathes, drives, walks, sleeps, studies and detests it; and begins to love it at last.

Then, as before, she unexpectedly gets her chance to substitute. This time she is ready, and she begins

to make good. She realizes that her *début* is at best a new beginning, that the great fear of all is lest she should fail to hold success once she has grasped it.

She realizes more than this that lasting success in grand opera, in all the arts, in all life, is built up on common sense and self-denial in the most commonplace and prosaic details of every day or night we live or pretend to live, fail or conquer, or compromise with life.

Mildred Gower, like the other characters in the book, does not cover the whole ground; she does not answer every demand; she does not solve or throw light upon every problem of the women with careers and without them, in New York and elsewhere, of whom and for whom Mr. Phillips wrote.

At the same time, she comes nearer perhaps to doing all this than any character in any twentieth century novel. The author has made of her not only a very exceptional and inspiring heroine, but also a tremendously and intensely natural and interesting character, and a human personality far more real, far more vital, far more modern and American in the best sense of the words, than nine-tenths of the women of flesh and blood who fail or succeed, or seem to succeed, at her own or any other calling or profession.

From first to last, even more than in his other books, he is absolutely merciless to every shred and symptom of hypocrisy, of self-deception, of self-excuse and self-indulgence.

It is more than the very X-ray photography of truth, warped and disguised in a welter of human meannesses, human prejudices, human intolerances and human ineptitudes: it is a virtual vivisection of

human motives — the muscles of the mind and the soul, their underlying bony structure and basic instincts, and their overlapping and superficial adipose tissue of habit and impulse. It is sordid and revolting in some details at first. Later it is less and less brutally compelling, more and more intellectually satisfying and fascinating, as wider areas and more and more intricately ramifying networks of social and individual motor and sensory nerves are exposed. Finally the book becomes illuminating and ennobling in greater or less degree, according to the capacity of the reader to bring much or little to the reading of this modern masterpiece.

Through Mildred and the rest; through her mother, who is weakly and pretentiously ladylike in the most superficially snobbish acceptance of the term *lady* that Mr. Phillips has always abhorred; through Presby, her father-in-law, who is weakly and maliciously masculine; through General Bill Siddall, who knows no limits beyond which his egotism will not go when anyone or anything stands in its way, and who is at least made to seem possible if not probable; through Stanley Baird, who is a fair example of New York clubman and snob, naturally rather fine than coarse, rather adequate than futile, with too much money and too little incentive; through Agnes Belloc, who is one of the best characters in the book and a very significant sign of the times in New England and New York to-day; through Cyrilla Brindley, who is about as near perfect in the human and literary sense as any character one meets or reads about; through Jennings, Crossley and Ransdell, all admirably conceived and executed types and products of

their peculiar environments; through Donald Keith, who at first, like Bill Siddall, seems keyed a bit too high, conceived in extremes a bit too glaring and impossible for mere flesh and blood, and who yet, like the little general of the sky-blue pajamas and the needle-sharp mustache and imperial points, is somehow made to compare with the others and blend admirably in the general grouping; through Mildred herself; through the three Mildreds: the first Mildred that we know and read about (or do not care to know and read about) everywhere in American life and literature and journalism to-day; the Mildred of the reconstruction period — inconsistent, capricious, luxurious, idle, industrious, determined, panic-stricken and trembling, eminently impressive and successful at moments in the reaction from sheer terror and despair and in the peculiar blend of knowledge and ignorance that carries her blindly past certain pitfalls and makes light of others; the Mildred of the last two chapters, as she emerges and stands the acid test of seeing and feeling fully how life may be good though it may seem to be based on evil, how it may be ideal and idealized through the translation of the most prosaic details of the home and marketplace into inspired and inspiring action and aspiration: in these the author strips off all masks, bares the meanest and most remote of motives, shows us human and bestial nature in all its blindness and deformity, its inveterate and ineradicable vanity and slant towards self-deception and self-excuse.

He handles self-conceit and self-sufficiency, pretense and plausible egotism as a great surgeon does a cancer. He dissects its widely branching roots

and rootlets to the limit. And then, when he has demonstrated, step by step and inch by inch, the nature and the full extent of the disease, with a logic, an intuition and a human sympathy that no novelist has ever shown before; when he has shown all this to all whose gray matter, whose nerves, whose vitality, are still sufficiently unimpaired to render hope of a cure possible or probable, then he shows them what may gradually be done in the way of building up new tissue to take the place of that which has been diseased and excised.

Mr. Phillips's style and general method has been sufficiently commented on already. Here, as in many of his other books, one might start at the first chapter and quote through to the last, paragraph after paragraph and page after page of shrewd common sense, sound philosophy and social insight that, standing alone, sufficiently explains and justifies itself; that, read in the ordinary course of the narrative, fits into the general design as a gem into its setting, as a pregnant mouth or eye into the vital expression of a strong and noble face.

Thus: " 'Quite enough for New York,' said she. 'It is not interested in facts. All the New Yorker asks of you is, "Can you pay your bills and help me to pay mine?"' . . . 'I've got a very clear idea of what a woman ought to do about men, and I assure you I'm not going to be *foolish*. And you know a woman who isn't foolish can be trusted where a woman who's protected only by her principles would yield to the first temptation or hunt a temptation . . .'

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"The best that can be said for human nature at its best is that it is as well behaved as its real tempta-

tions permit . . .” “We cannot convince ourselves . . . that a human character is never consistent and homogeneous, is always conglomerate, that there are no two traits, however naturally exclusive, that cannot exist in the same personality, that circumstance is the dominating factor in human action and brings forward as dominant characteristics, now one trait or set of traits, consistent or inconsistent, and now another — may it not be that the characters that play the large parts in the comedy of human life are those that offer to the shifting winds of circumstance the greatest variety of strongly developed but contradictory qualities? For example, if it was Mildred’s latent courage that rescued her from Siddall, was it not her strong tendency to vacillation that saved her from a loveless and mercenary marriage to Stanley Baird? Perhaps the deep underlying truth is that all unusual people have in common the character that centers in a powerful aversion to stagnation; thus, now by their strong qualities, now by their weak ones, they are swept inevitably on and on and ever on. Good to-day, bad to-morrow; good again the day after; weak in this instance, strong in that, now brave and now cowardly, soft at one time, hard at another, generous and the reverse by turns, they are consistent only in that they are never at rest, but incessantly and invariably go.”

Perhaps the characters that fit themselves best to play the large parts in life, and certainly the minds of something like the first order, are those that react best on environment as they move and grow; those that have the Cosmos in themselves most highly

evolved and sensitized in an infinity of directions as a planet has sides; that are superficial in their sensory impressions and more or less immediate reactions to sense only in so far as such sudden reactions serve to inform and stimulate the larger forces lying latent beneath into transient stages of growth.

Minds and characters of the first order of effectiveness, ancient and modern, like Cecil Rhodes and Theodore Roosevelt, Cæsar and Alexander (whom Mr. Phillips instances), and the notable women who have had at once the most feminine and masculine egos of all history, may be cited in this category.

The mind of David Graham Phillips was of this order, at least in its deep and broad humanity and in its vital and immediate response to certain of the most pressing and appalling problems of the life of his day in Twentieth Century America. Within his limitations, he fashioned for himself and for others the supremely efficient art and the instrument that Frank Norris has defined the novel in the hands of a modern master to be; and to this task he gave himself according to the best traditions of his country and his time; strenuously, unsparingly, humanly, justly, freely, fairly and effectively in the service of his art and the larger service of life that art interprets.

He learned to write through long toil and methodical daily and nightly application, very much as he makes his latest heroine learn to sing — as the birds sing naturally, freely with a vital fullness and intensity of tone that can appeal at once to the ear and heart of child and savant, of musical or literary critic, of tired business man and worldly woman, of

ideals of service to his country and his century that has yet been published.

✓ X
 In an article published in *The Saturday Evening Post* of October 21, 1911, Mrs. Walling tells us: "He was a radical. Yet, living among radicals as we did, I found him different from them in that he was objective and held himself aloof from clique, party or even movement. His radicalism was a thing apart from his life, and not life itself. Where they were merged in their cause, abandoned without reserve to the exigencies of the movement, he was always himself, with a programme of his own, one not dependent on any outside force. But his individualism was not of the kind that made him put his ambitions before his ideals. He was an idealist, as are all radicals. One could say his work chose him, so great was his devotion to the ideas he promulgated. Unlike some other writers who go farther than he and call themselves Socialists, but whose subjects are conventional or in contradiction to the basic principles of progressive thought, he in all his work had one aim — to unmask his time and to pursue it to the bitter end."

Concerning *The Grain of Dust*, she has this to say: "He told me he was engaged on a novel of which he had already written about four hundred thousand words, and in which he showed that the respectable men and women of society were literally responsible for the horrible degradation of the barter in women. 'The public will not soon forgive me this book,' he said. In *The Husband's Story* he has already risked much. Here he was willing to risk everything for his ideal — the truth.

“I thought how natural it was to his big, direct nature to go out to master America, to learn her by heart, inspired by the task of expressing and interpreting her, and to do so in the sledge-hammer method she herself employs, caring only to be true to the truth. I saw how the courage of his work rose from the courage of his character. If I could have at that time read *The Grain of Dust*, I should have realized how there was a leap in his power which bore out the feeling he himself had, that he was just learning, just beginning, that his years of sustained and concentrated effort were beginning to fulfill themselves, that his voice was about to be lifted in greater strength and inspiration than ever before.”

Such criticism may not be wholly impartial. It is none the less inspiring and illuminating.

Such was Phillips' own interpretation of the America of his time.

Certainly, since the days of Emerson, no American writer of wide circulation has spoken with so inspiring and so searching a voice to the hearts and minds of his fellow-countrymen and women.

During his lifetime he got his grip unmistakably upon the pulse of our national consciousness. Though he is dead, his grasp on it still remains.

And it is probable that Emerson himself will be ranked no higher by posterity, as a prophet of America and democracy and a regenerative force and stimulus, than this trained reporter and journalist and middle-Western product of Princeton and Park Row, who made himself a world novelist by main force, and who, true to the best ethics of his breed and profession, went for legitimate results and got them.

VI

STEWART EDWARD WHITE AND ALL OUTDOORS

"The intellectual and spiritual interests of the nation equally with its natural resources of forest, mine and stream must be conserved and fostered." Joseph Jastrow, *The Qualities of Men*, 1910.

FRANK NORRIS, Jack London, Owen Wister, Rex Beach and James Hopper have shown us that the frontier is vanishing from the borders of the United States proper, that it is shifting to the Philippines and Alaska, and farther still, West, North and South.

Stewart Edward White has proved that it still remains to us in Michigan logging camps and Arizona ranches, where the primitive savagery of red men and white is reënforced by the incursions of capital; where sheep wars and cattle wars have taken the place of the old border warfare between settlers and red-skinned raiders; and where the service of the Government's forest rangers to-day, in times of peace, may justly be compared in its occasional perils and frequent privations — all accepted as a part of the day's work — to that of Uncle Sam's regulars on the trail of hostile bands of Indians twenty or thirty years ago.

Mr. White knows the wild and the frontier, its dangers and its hardships that tempt men of his type more than they repel, because he was born to it. At

this writing, he is in Africa, hunting big game. By temperament and by heredity, he belongs to the blood and the mental temper of the pioneers. No less than Norris and London, he saw life first — he went out into the wild places of the earth in search of adventure before he came back and went to Harvard to learn to write English as English is written there.

On both counts he is competent to write of the frontier as he does on the first page of *The Blazed Trail*, 1902: "When history has granted him the justice of perspective, we shall know the American pioneer as one of the most picturesque of her many figures. Resourceful, self-reliant, bold; adapting himself with fluidity to divers circumstances and conditions; meeting with equal cheerfulness of confidence and completeness of capability both unknown dangers and the perils by which he has been educated; seizing the useful in the lives of the men and beasts nearest him, and assimilating it with marvelous rapidity; he presents to the world a picture of complete adequacy which it would be difficult to match in any other walk of life.

"He is a strong man, with a strong man's virtues and a strong man's vices. In him the passions are elemental, the dramas epic, for he lives in the age when men are close to nature and draw from her their forces. He satisfies his needs direct from the earth. . . . We feel that his steps are planted on solid earth, for civilizations may crumble without disturbing his magnificent self-poise. In him we perceive dimly his environment. . . .

"Like the nature that he has fought until he understands it, his disposition is at once kindly and

terrible. . . . Relieved of the strenuousness of his occupation. . . . instead of pleasure, he seeks orgies. He runs to wild excesses of drinking, fighting and carousing. . . .

“This is not the moment to judge him. And yet one cannot help admiring the magnificently picturesque spectacle of such energies running riot. The power is still in evidence, though beyond its proper application.”

Here is evidently a partial statement of the problems, not alone of material conservation, but of mental and spiritual as well, on the vanishing frontier that is left to us. *The Blazed Trail* is a story not alone of timber thieves and thievery on the wholesale scale; not alone of the material and technical side of the life in Michigan logging camps, and the intensely interesting and picturesque phases of the life there; not alone of cut-throat methods of business competition between two big logging firms engaged in a struggle to the death: it is the record of a strong man's evolution towards the goal of success that he has set, down the trail that he has blazed for himself, to his final recognition of the fact that no man can afford to live alone for himself and in himself too long.

With success at hand he tempts failure to serve a friend; with victory once more wrested from the wilderness, he lets it go to save a life; and the love and the loyalty that he has unconsciously inspired makes good his fortunes in spite of him and turns his hard-hitting shanty men and white water daredevils, at the season of their annual outbreak, from border ruffians into the stuff of which heroes are made.

The Blazed Trail is a big book. It is an intensely American one. It chronicles an era and a *locale* which are passing. But above and beyond this it embodies a spirit that has not died, and never will, as long as men like the writer, and the men and women he represents, are born and bred on American soil.

The Blazed Trail is a story of late nineteenth century big business on the frontier in Michigan. It is essentially Western in its directness and singleness of purpose. Such was the mental and moral make-up of its chief character.

Harry Thorpe is the son of an embezzler. He is thrown on his own resources at the age of twenty-six, with a sister to take care of, and with practical resources limited to the clothes he stands up in, three dollars in his pockets, and the high-powered brain and body that make the man.

We make his acquaintance on a logging railroad in the Lower Michigan peninsula on his way to one of Morrison and Daly's camps in search of work and experience. Just what had been his experience before this we are not told, beyond the fact that his knowledge of the woods is purely theoretical — and once the action of the book begins we forget to ask.

“ ‘Ticket, Jack,’ repeated the conductor, ‘come on now.’ The big bearded man leaned uncertainly against the seat.

“ ‘Now look here, Bud,’ he urged in wheedling tones, ‘I ain’t got no ticket. You know how it is, Bud. I blows my stake.’ He fished uncertainly in his pocket and produced a quart bottle nearly empty. ‘Have a drink?’

“ ‘No,’ said the conductor sharply.

“ ‘A’right,’ replied Jack, amiably, ‘take one myself.’ He tipped the bottle, emptied it, and chucked it through the window. The conductor paid no apparent attention to the breaking of the glass.

“ ‘If you haven’t any ticket you will have to get off,’ said he.

“ The big man straightened up.

“ ‘You go to hell,’ he snorted; and with the sole of his spiked boot delivered a mighty kick at the conductor’s thigh.

“ The official, agile as a wildcat, leaped back, then forward, and knocked the man half the length of the car.”

After that he is unceremoniously thrown off the train. Three of his friends start to take a hand in the game, but are easily subdued by the conductor and one brakeman, and conclude to pay. Ten miles further on at the first station, the first man’s “turkey,” or canvas sack, is put off for him. Thorpe continues on in the smoker till he reaches his station and proceeds to fit himself into the environment already outlined with efficiency and speed.

Before the winter is over, he has been promoted to the position of cant hook man under John Radway, who has taken a contract from Morrison and Daly to cut and deliver five million feet of timber, with the understanding that if he fails to deliver the whole of it by a certain date he gets nothing for his winter’s work. Radway gets in three million and a half; the rest, though cut, is hung up in the woods for lack of water to “drive” it down.

Thorpe effects a compromise by which Radway

gets nine thousand dollars. Radway makes him take a thousand of it. And after arranging to send his sister to school for the next winter, Thorpe plans to spend the summer as a landlooker, or timber prospector, in the northern peninsula. This part of the book was originally published as a serial in *McClure's Magazine* and is a small epic in itself. Thorpe finds that Morrison and Daly are here, too, before him. They have built a pier at the mouth of the river Osawinnamakee, as well as dams for driving the logs farther up stream, with the intention of eventually logging the whole river basin. To this end they have bought from the government three sections near their dams and, without cutting the trees on these, have begun to steal the timber on sections far more remote. Later, when the country had been opened up, they would buy in the rest of the standing timber as soon as they were forced to.

Thorpe determines to block their game. To this end he establishes himself, for the summer, as a hunter and trapper near one of their dams. He makes friends with one of the Woods Indians, and later with Wallace Carpenter, a young man from Chicago, who appears on the scene in the course of a hunting expedition. Carpenter has more money and time on his hands than he knows what to do with. He becomes Thorpe's partner with the prospect of buying and working all the best timber in the river basin, and goes south to raise the necessary capital. Shortly after his departure, Thorpe's purpose is detected by Morrison and Daly's timber scouts, and Thorpe beats Morrison to the Detroit land office by a hair's breadth after crossing the upper Michigan peninsula

on foot, guided by Injin Charley, in less than two days and two nights.

Thorpe and Carpenter secure title to all the timber they care to handle, the trail is blazed, and the real action of the book begins. Thorpe demands success of his men and his overseers, as a general and a conqueror demands it of his subordinates. He makes his outfit, his various camps, the way his men are recruited, fed and housed, and the morale of the force that has become a by-word for achieving the impossible, a machine of the first order of efficiency.

The time comes when he demands success against odds as rigorously of himself as he has for years from others. His partner is tempted into unfortunate speculations in stocks, by operators subsidized by Morrison and Daly. Thorpe and Carpenter's credit as a firm has to be pledged to the limit to protect Carpenter's margins. Thorpe contracts with himself to take out thirty million feet of lumber in a single year without the logging railroad that he has planned to build.

Morrison and Daly's men dynamite one of his dams when Thorpe's logs are jammed above it at the height of the best spring freshet. Finally a forty-day drive has to go out in ten days and Thorpe and his men, against all obstacles, achieve the impossible.

Just before this Thorpe has fallen in love with Hilda Farrand, a friend of Carpenter's sister. His wooing is brief, elemental and successful, till Hilda objects to his cutting the pine grove near Carpenter's summer camp in which they first met. Thorpe tells her that he needs the money, but refuses to tell her how and why he needs it, and why in the firm's hour

of need it is imperative that that particular growth of pines must go, instead of other timber further off and less accessible.

Hilda, who has a million or two of her own and a highly patrician scorn of money for money's sake, leaves him and goes back to her home in Michigan Avenue, Chicago. There she learns later the reason for Thorpe's struggle against time through newspaper accounts of the final rounds of the fight.

Thorpe gets his logs down to harbor at the mouth of the river. The river continues to rise, and one of Morrison and Daly's men succeeds in partially filing the chains that hold together the log boom surrounding the bulk of the timber. Wallace Carpenter detects him, is held up at the pistol's point, and gets away by diving and swimming out of range. Thorpe and one of his men go out toward the middle of the boom to strengthen the weakened chains. The man falls into the swift current outside the boom. Thorpe knocks the last chain loose, the boom sways out towards the man, he is saved and the logs are lost.

Thorpe leaves his partner and his men, and without changing his clothes or sleeping, goes direct as fast as the first train can carry him to the house in Michigan Avenue. Hilda understands his elemental need of her: after some trouble she makes him understand that he needs her help, and the help of her money, too, in protecting Carpenter's margins. He remains in Chicago all summer and finally succeeds in putting the firm on a sound financial basis.

At the end of the summer, Wallace Carpenter and his sister, Thorpe's sister, Thorpe and Hilda start back for the north; and Thorpe finds that his men

have put in the whole summer at work for him, and have succeeded in retrieving three million feet of the logs that had been lost.

“ ‘Men,’ cried Thorpe, ‘I have been very fortunate. From failure success has come. But never have I been more fortunate than in my friends. The firm is now on its feet. It could afford to lose three times the logs it lost this year. . . .’

“ He paused and scanned their faces.

“ ‘But,’ he continued suddenly, ‘it cannot, now or ever, afford to lose what those three million feet represent — the friends it has made. I can pay you back the money you have spent and the time you have put in.’

“ Again he looked them over, and then for the first time since they had known him his face lighted up with a rare and tender smile of affection. ‘But, comrades, I shall not offer to do it; the gift is accepted in the spirit with which it was offered.’

“ He got no further. The air was rent with sound. . . . Hilda was weeping with excitement. Through the tears she saw them all looking at their leader, and in the worn, hard faces glowed the admiration of a dog for its master. Somehow this was especially touching in them, for strong men rarely show it. She felt a great wave of excitement sweep over her. Instantly she was standing by Thorpe, her eyes streaming, her breast throbbing with emotion.

“ ‘Oh!’ she cried, stretching her arms out to them passionately, ‘Oh! I love you. I love you all!’ ”

Here is another man’s woman, and a book of the people, by the people, for the people, from start to

finish, from the first page to the last. We may summarize the whole book as the author does an early section of it in his own words: "Such is the drama of the saw log, a story of grit, resourcefulness, adaptability, fortitude and ingenuity hard to match. Conditions never repeat themselves in the woods, as they do in the factory. The wilderness offers ever new complications to solve, difficulties to overcome. A man must think of everything, figure on everything, from the grand sweep of the country at large to the pressure on a king bolt. . . . His wits must help him where his experience fails; and his experience must push him mechanically along the track of habit when successive buffetings have beaten the wits out of his head. . . . Without a thought of expense he must abandon, as temporary, property which other industries cry out at being compelled to acquire as permanent. For this reason he becomes in time different from his fellows. The wilderness leaves something of her mystery in his eyes, that mystery of hidden, unknown, but guessed power. Men look after him on the street as they would look after any other pioneer, in vague admiration of a scope more virile than their own."

In this book Mr. White, like his hero, has very little time for the mystery of the wilderness. He realizes that it is there. Otherwise he could not write as he has written in the first chapter of the "Forest Runner" section:

"In every direction the woods. Not an opening of any kind offered the mind a breathing place under the free sky. Sometimes the pine groves — vast, solemn, grand, with the patrician aloofness of the

truly great; sometimes the hard wood — bright, mysterious, full of life; sometimes the swamps — dark, dank, speaking with the voices of the shyer creatures; sometimes the spruce and balsam thickets — aromatic, enticing. But never the clear, open sky.

“And always the woods creatures, in startling abundance and tameness. The solitary man with the pack straps across his forehead and shoulders had never seen so many of them. They withdrew silently before him as he advanced. They accompanied him on either side, watching him with intelligent, bright eyes. They followed him stealthily for a little distance, as though escorting him out of their own particular territory. Dozens of times a day the traveler glimpsed the flaunting white flags of deer. . . . Hundreds of birds of which he did not know the names stooped to his inspection, whirred away at his approach, or went about their business with hardy indifference under his very nose. Blasé porcupines trundled superbly from his path. Once, a mother partridge simulated a broken wing, fluttering painfully. Early one morning the traveler ran plump on a fat lolling bear taking his ease from the sun, and his meal from a panic-stricken army of ants. . . .

“And all about and through, weaving, watching, moving like spirits, were the forest multitudes which the young man never saw, but which he divined, and of whose movements he sometimes caught for a single instant the faintest patter or rustle. It constituted the mystery of the forest; that great fascinating, lovable mystery which, once it steals into the heart of a man, has always a hearing and a longing when it makes its voice heard.”

But Mr. White and the men that he interprets are busy with big business. They realize, some of them, that their time is short; that after them must come the settlers and the farmers, the towns and the cities. And they go about their work with speed and efficiency, till the old problems of the world's two greatest ideals arises and Hilda states the woman's side:

“‘I have seen a vision,’ said she simply, and lowered her head to conceal her eyes. Then she looked at him again. ‘There can be nothing better than love,’ she said.

“‘Yes, one thing,’ said Thorpe — ‘the duty of success.’

“The man had stated his creed, the woman hers.”

Both of them learn better before the end of the book — that the broadest and highest humanity makes due allowance for both. Later Thorpe tells her: “‘I used to imagine I was a strong man, yet see how little my best efforts amount to. I have put myself into seven years of the hardest work, working like ten men to succeed. . . . Three times my affairs have become critical. . . . I have been saved first by a mere boy; then by an old illiterate man; now by a weak woman. . . .’ ‘Harry,’ she said soberly when he had quite finished, ‘I agree with you that God meant the strong man to succeed; that without success the man has not fulfilled his reason for being. But, Harry, *are you quite sure that God meant him to succeed alone?*’

“‘And why,’ she went on after a moment, ‘why is not that too a part of a man's success — the gathering about him of people who can and will supplement his efforts?’”

In other words, it is the democracy of success and a fundamental part of the success of democracy that Mr. White has demonstrated here — the same story that Booth Tarkington has told in *The Gentleman from Indiana* and *The Conquest of Canaan*.

In *Conjurer's House*, which was published the next year, he deals with more primitive and autocratic conditions. Concerning this Churchill Williams says in *The Bookman* for May, 1903: "*Conjurer's House* exhibits a growing sense of proportion, and in general an advance in literary method. Mr. White certainly is one of the few men now writing to whom we may look for fiction that will continue to be read for its convincing representation of American life.

". . . *Conjurer's House* is a Hudson Bay trading port. Within the confines of the little half-civilized community of a few whites and some score of half-breeds and Indians, and all in two days, revenge; common allegiance to an employer, grown into a sort of fierce sentiment; obedience akin to fear; the inborn sense of independence, an elemental discrimination between right and wrong; a love which casts everything else aside; work out their own ends. It is all boldly done, intense, rapid; there is no wasted word.

"In these two days a daughter of the Company meets a young free trader who has been caught on the forbidden ground and brought a prisoner to the post; . . . by his physical vigor, his half-scornful courage, his moveless will, and his almost hopeless situation she is swept from the moorings of her convent training and worship of her autocratic old father,

the head of the station; in contact with the threat of slow and horrible death which hangs over the young man's head she furnishes him with the means of escape and then proves that she loves him . . . a dramatic and decidedly abrupt crisis brings the strength and weakness of the three principal characters into high relief . . . the perfection . . . of . . . austere yet always picturesque life, of the romance of its adventure. . . . Done eagerly in outline the characters are definite, individual, suggestive.

“One might go so far as to say that they are inspiring.”

Mr. Williams complains that the book is too short, that it is little more than a short story. But the action is so intense that it is better so. It is a book easily read at a sitting and not easily forgotten. Those who do not know what it means to go on the Long Trail in the language of the Hudson Bay Country and how what is now a common metaphor made its first definite impression on the men who first used it in all seriousness, may find out here if they choose. And once they have found out, the knowledge will stay with them.

A year later *Conjurer's House* was succeeded by *The Silent Places*. Of this Mr. Williams writes in *The Bookman* for May, 1904: “He sets himself the task of picturing the Long Trail into the north, the Long Trail in winter, with its grim terrors and giant vistas of white. It is a deliberate and serious attempt at tragedy, and, judged by the impression of intense suffering which it creates, it is a successful attempt. . . . It is from the post of the Hudson Bay Company that the two runners of

the Company start on their hunt for Jingoos, the defaulting Indian trapper. . . . His trail must be found and he be hunted down and brought back to be punished as an example of what happens to a dishonest Indian. The men who volunteer to find him are a weather-beaten and scarred veteran of the Company's service and a younger man, Dick Herron, lithe, strong, determined . . . in a canoe they paddle away, on the great waters of the Moose; the chase is on . . . he has introduced at the very opening of his story the Ojibway girl, May-may-gwan (the Butterfly).

"The study of character and temperament offered in the persons of May-may-gwan and Dick Herron . . . is sane, consistent, sincere. With the temptation strong upon him to allow Herron to surrender to the silent pleading of the woman for her lover, the novelist has refused to allow the man to be false to his prejudices and ambitions. . . . The story affords at once a contrast and a comparison of the qualities of two persons representing two races — the white and the Indian. . . . May-may-gwan trudges through the snow, silently, ceaselessly, in the footsteps of Herron, because, as she tells Sam Bolton, she has found Herron 'good in my sight and he looked on me.' Because of this she endures his rebuffs, nurses him alone for three months when his leg is broken, makes his fire, cooks his food . . . follows him till weakness brings her to her knees in the snow."

Here Mr. Williams quotes:

"'Do not grieve; I am happy —' she whispers. 'There must be a border, I will be waiting there. I will wait always. I am yours, yours, yours! You

are mine.' She half-raised herself and seized his two arms, searching his eyes with terror, trying to reassure herself, to drive off the doubts that had suddenly thronged upon her. 'Tell me,' she shook him by the arm.

" 'I am yours.' Dick lied steadily. 'My heart is yours. I love you.' He bent and kissed her on the lips. She quivered and closed her eyes with a deep sigh. And so she died."

Herron's is not an agreeable figure, according to Mr. Williams, "yet in his indomitable will and splendid physical power there is something so tremendous as to compel admiration despite his sullenness and brutal fury. He is of a piece with his environment and his task, as in a less dramatic sense is his companion Bolton. Only the wilderness, with its vast distances, its snow, its bleak winds, and its icy grip is big enough for his figure. Of what this wilderness of the North means, Mr. White comes nearer to giving us a conception than anyone who has yet written of it. . . ."

Quotations almost at random substantiate this. The following passage, describing the first attack of the polar cold upon the travelers, is perhaps sufficient:

" 'And now the North increased, by ever so little the pressure against them, sharpening the cold by a trifle; adding a few flakes' weight to the snow they must lift on their shoes; throwing into the vista before them a deeper, chillier tone of gray discouragement; intensifying the loneliness, giving to the winds of desolation a voice. Well the great antagonist knew she could not thus stop these men, but so, little by little, she ground them down, wore away the ex-

cess of their vitality, reduced them to a grim plodding, so that at the moment she would hold them weakened to her purposes. They made no sign, for they were of the great men of the earth, but they bent to the familiar touch of many little fingers pushing them back."

And again—"After the dense forest . . . low thickets of spruce and poplar, followed in turn by the open reaches planted, like a park with the pointed firs. Then came the Land of the Little Sticks and so on out into the vast whiteness of the true North, where the trees are lilliputian and the spaces gigantic beyond the measures of earth; where living things dwindle to the significance of black specks on a limitless field of white, and the aurora crackles and shoots and spreads and threatens like a great inimical and magnificent spirit."

From this viewpoint the book, short as it is, is more than epic; it is elemental; it has the force of a Greek tragedy cast unconventionally on a wider stage, where the hearts and souls of men and women in the end mean infinitely more to us than dots on the vast expanse of polar snow.

There is something more than mere poetic justice in the end of the chase, when Bolton and the girl lost by the way, and Herron at the end of his own strength, the latter sees Jingoos, the Indian trapper and thief, staggering back straight towards him, snow blind and doubling on his trail. There is an element of something more than fate here that strikes home irresistibly to the reader's consciousness; and that ends the final tableau, as simply, as forcibly, as inevitably as innumerable actual dramas of the vast

silences of existence must and do end. Up to the present writing, in a strictly literary sense, this is far the best of Mr. White's books. It deserves recognition as a memorable achievement of American literature.

One may go so far as to say that it is more than American; that it is cosmic; and that equally with *The Octopus*, it belongs indisputably to the irreducible medium of human interpretation through fiction that the centuries retain in the literature of the world at large.

Besides this, several of Mr. White's other novels, excellent as they are in their way — like his outdoor books for boys and men about *The Mountain*, *The Pass* and *The Forest* — are inconsiderable, treated as literature. *The Claim Jumpers*, one of his earliest efforts, is amusing and readable. *The Westerners*, which was published shortly before *The Blazed Trail*, takes the reader into territory that Owen Wister, Clarence Mulford, George Patullo and Eugene Manlove Rhodes have made more effectively their own.

In *The Mystery*, written in collaboration with Samuel Hopkins Adams, we have a story of adventure with a modern scientific twist to its construction, which, in places, may fairly be compared to *Treasure Island*.

In *Arizona Nights*, 1907, Mr. White comes back to the West again, and shows himself quite as much at home there, briefly, as anyone who has written of the locale staked out in the title. To particularize no farther, short stories (later woven into coherent novelization) as widely divergent in material and treatment as *The Rawhide*, *The Honk Honk Breed*

and *The Remittance Man*, rank with Bret Harte's, Wister's and London's best novels as little stories of the West that is passing and Anglo-Saxon pioneer and frontier life.

II.

In *Blazed Trail Stories* — brief, sharply cut episodes in the lives of the Michigan woodsmen and river drivers — and in *The Riverman*, 1908, Mr. White returns to the woods and big business again. In the latter book he goes back to the year 1872 and once more chronicles an epoch that has passed and a distinct species of men that is passing. The best picture of the riverman is in *The Blazed Trail*: “His eye was distinctly humorous and the smile of his face was a challenge . . . in the last month he had faced almost certain death a dozen times a day. He had ridden logs down the rapids where a loss of balance meant in one instant a ducking and in the next a blow on the head from some following battering ram; he had tugged and strained and jerked with his peavey under a sheer wall of tangled timber twenty feet high — behind which pressed the full power of the freshet . . . he had pried at the key log in the rollways on the bank until the whole pile had begun to rattle down into the river like a cascade, and had jumped or ridden or even dived out of danger at the last second. In a hundred passes he has juggled with death as a child plays with a rubber balloon. . . .

“No wonder that he fears no man, since nature's most terrible forces of the flood have hurled a thousand weapons at him in vain. His muscles have been

hardened, his eye is quiet and sure, his courage is undaunted, and his movements are as quick and accurate as a panther's. Probably nowhere in the world is a more dangerous man of his hands than the riverman. He would rather fight than eat, especially when he is drunk, as, like the cowboy, he usually is when he gets to town."

Obviously a man who can control men like these must be a man himself in the full sense of the word. Jack Orde fills the bill. He is about thirty years old when we first make his acquaintance at a dam on a northern river, where a moss-back farmer and religious fanatic has hung up his drive of logs at the height of a spring freshet with the help of a shotgun, a sheriff's posse and a company of state troops. Orde sends his men in squads of six to break down the dam and keeps the main body and himself out of sight. When the jail is full and the sheriff tired of arresting non-resisting workers on the instalment plan, the troops arrive and find they have no legal standing. They go home and Orde clinches the matter by building a dam of his own and threatening to flood out the farmer and the grain stored in his mill.

In this way he meets Joseph Newmark, a young man from New York, who knows something about stock exchange transactions, and who has come West to invest a small fortune recently left to him. It occurs to Newmark that if he and Orde can get the contract for driving all the logs on the river, the big manufacturers can materially reduce their working forces, and money will be made or saved by all concerned. The proposition looks good to Orde, and within a few days they manage to secure the majority

of the contracts for the next year. About this time Orde meets Carroll Bishop, also from New York, whom he marries six months later.

At the end of the summer's preliminary work in the woods, he goes to New York and calls at the Bishop's house on the evening of his arrival. The next morning he gets a note from Carroll asking him to come early that same morning. He arrives at nine o'clock, waits three-quarters of an hour and meets the family at breakfast. It presently appears that Mrs. Bishop, who is equally interested in society and church work, is the pivot around which the house and all in it revolve. Her husband, a retired army officer, is inclined to like Orde from the start. Carroll's oldest brother, who has money of his own and doesn't do much beside live on it, also goes over to Orde's side after an impromptu boxing match at his Athletic Club in which the professional trainer is knocked out by the river man.

About two weeks later Orde and Carroll are married in the presence of her brother and two girl friends at a neighboring rectory. Just before the ceremony, Gerald Bishop makes a brief address to the prospective bride and groom which embodies succinctly the author's views with regard to matrimony as he sees it:

"There comes a time in the affairs of every household when a man must assert himself as the ruler. In all the details he may depend on the woman's judgment, experience and knowledge, but when it comes to the big crises where life is deflected into one channel or the other, then, unless the man does the deciding, he is lost forever, and his happiness, and the hap-

piness of those that depend on him. . . . The general would have made a name for himself in the army, — his wife demanded his retirement; he retired; and his career ended.”

Mrs. Bishop, who is in the habit of becoming hysterical when it serves her purposes, refuses to see Orde or Carroll. They pack up and go back West to work.

Orde and Newmark have their business enemies. Nature as well as man keeps them at work fighting hard and successfully for eight years, during which Newmark, who controls the business end of the firm, plays fair with Orde.

Orde foresees the end of logging in Michigan. He decides to buy a large tract of timber in California in order that his son may take up his father's work before the latter lays it down. He has to borrow money from the firm to buy this tract. Newmark sees his chance. He gets a hold on Heinzman, one of the firm's largest business rivals, and arranges with him to wreck the firm and Orde's private resources, and to save a correspondingly large stake for himself.

Carroll Orde nurses Heinzman's daughter through an attack of smallpox. Her father dies of the disease, but not before Orde has learned of the plot against him. Orde gets Newmark alone, convinces him that he is able to send him to the penitentiary, and then lets him off with the worst thrashing of his life.

In the volume thus barely skeletonized we have the strongest and most convincing statement of the association and final falling out of two business partners

that has yet appeared in American fiction. Henry K. Webster's *Roger Drake, Captain of Industry* and Will Payne's *The Losing Game* may be mentioned in the same class; but the character of the work described, and the intensity of the interest in the things that are done as well as in the men who do them, makes *The Riverman* immeasurably the more significant and important book. There is less freshness of interest, less reliance on description for description's sake than one finds in *The Blazed Trail*, but at the same time the average reader comes to feel that the author has got closer to life.

Considered technically, it shows a comparative absence of artifice that denotes a corresponding advance in the writer's art.

In other respects *The Riverman* may be considered chiefly as a prologue to *The Rules of the Game*, 1910. This last, and in its scope and significance most important of Mr. White's novels, runs to over six hundred pages, and readily repays a second careful reading of fully five hundred and ninety-nine of them.

As in *The Blazed Trail*, the trees stand so thick at a first approach that we cannot see the forest. The first impression may be that the book is too long; the second that it is not long enough. The book deals with the theory and practice of conservation, and with the national forest service in our national forests of California. It transcends noticeably the scope of Hamlin Garland's *Cavanagh, Forest Ranger*, which entered the same territory slightly earlier.

It is distinctly polemic in its tone and purpose. In this sense it may be compared with the most suc-

cessful of Zola's series of the Four Gospels; it is more educational, more inspiring, and far more human and intimately interesting than any of the later works of the French master; it interests us for their own sake in the people who are the mouthpieces and interpreters of the author's ideas; it makes us want to know more of them and of the work on which they have enlisted; it makes us hope that before long we shall.

It is divided into five parts. In the first we meet with Orde, Junior, first introduced to the reading public in a book for boys, *The Adventures of Bobby Orde*. Bob Orde gets into the game shortly after Thanksgiving in the year 1898, after he has coached his university football team, captained by him the year before, to a victory as overwhelming, in spite of the scarcity of seasoned material, as that achieved by his own veterans in '97.

He goes to the Chicago office of a business associate of his father, is given interminable lists of timber descriptions to copy and verify, and finds himself a round peg in a square hole from the start. He is given a second trial in an office nearer the scene of operations in Michigan. This time he loses his job unconditionally through an inherent inaptitude for office work.

He goes into the woods and meets Welton, his father's partner, on a lumber trail. They take to one another from the start. He is invited to go up with Welton to oversee the nearest drive, and to find out how the work of getting out the logs is actually done. During Welton's absence the woods foreman gets drunk, and the drive is about to be hung up at a mo-

ment when the loss of a few hours' time means the possible failure of the whole work for the year.

Bob Orde jumps into the breach, roundly thrashes the drunken foreman on his return from his debauch, secures and keeps the loyalty of the men in spite of his ignorance of local conditions (through experience gained on the football field), brings temporary order out of chaos, and is given a permanent place on the payrolls of the company when Welton reappears. Before long he is put in sole charge of the last cleaning up operations in Michigan, and, during his last two years there, manages to show a fair profit on the credit side of the balance sheet.

In February, 1902, he and Welton start for California, where he is not aware that he owns 400,000,000 feet of timber purchased for him by his father thirty years before. On the train he meets Baker, '93, who has seen him play football on a visit to their Alma Mater, and who is the head of one of the largest water and power companies in California.

Baker is a new type of big business men and comparatively honest grafter of the sort more superficially and less successfully illustrated in *Get Rich Quick Wallingford*.

On their arrival in California Welton goes direct to the logging camp. Orde takes a few days off in Los Angeles with Baker; gets an inside view from that worthy exponent of the get-rich-quick methods of psychics, clairvoyants, painless dentists, wave motors, water motors, solar motors, promoters, stock jobbers, real estate agents and others of the tribe; receives Baker's parting estimate that for all its tall buildings and other modern improvements the city is still noth-

ing more or less than a frontier town; cruises round by himself through the orange country of Riverside, Redlands and San Bernardino; visits San Diego and Santa Barbara, and within the month rejoins Welton at headquarters in the high Sierras.

On the night of his arrival at Sycamore Flats he becomes acquainted with Henry Plant, Forest Supervisor. Plant is a product of the old conditions, when the forest service was a refuge for consumptives, incompetents, loafers and grafters; and he is himself a distinguished representative of the last three classes.

Plant has just heard of a forest fire near Stone Creek. Three of his rangers are playing poker in the nearest saloon. One of them grumbles at having to cross the range at night on what may prove to be a false alarm. Plant says he will send instead California John, an old ex-soldier and former prospector, if he can find him. He is found and rides away. Orde meets Welton and learns that their own timber is in the neighborhood threatened. They go together to interview Plant. Plant insists that he hasn't enough men to fight fire properly, and that one thousand dollars will pay for the services of a good many for a long time. The bribe is not forthcoming from Welton at that particular time.

Later, when their flume and logging rights are disputed, and Plant threatens to practically shut down the work for the whole summer because it is too late to communicate with Washington and to comply with official red tape at headquarters, Baker appears. Welton is induced to bet Baker a thousand dollars that the matter can't be squared immediately. Welton writes his check, hands it to Baker, and gets his

temporary permit soon after, without asking further questions.

In the meantime the lumber company has rented the grazing rights for sheep on its own land to one Peter Lejeune for the current year. Lejeune has had trouble with Plant before. This year he refuses to hand over the petty graft that Plant demands. Plant refuses him a permit to cross government land on the way to the Wolverine Company's holding. Acting on instructions from Welton, who has no sympathy with Government forest restrictions of any sort, Lejeune runs his sheep across by night.

At first Orde is inclined to take Welton's view of things unreservedly. Later, in the course of his own work, he becomes better acquainted with California John and others of the new element among the rangers, and his views begin to change.

Injustice to the local cattle men, who are all comparatively small owners, has much to do with this. Plant stands in with the large owners from the plains below, who fatten their cattle in the winter and send them up into the mountains to live through the summer anyhow. The mountain men, on the contrary, have been accustomed to getting their cattle into condition for the market on the upland pastures during the hot weather on the plains below.

Heretofore there has been room and forage for all. Now, through the illegal entry of sheep on permits sold by Plant at ten dollars apiece, conditions have materially altered, and the local men are driven to something close to desperation.

The law states plainly that local small holders shall be favored in such cases at the expense of larger cat-

tlements from farther off. Its enforcement rests, however, with Plant, who continues to follow the line of least resistance and largest graft.

Before the year is over, he is shot by George Pollock, whose cattle are unfit for sale, whose wife dies because he has no money to get a doctor up from below at fifty dollars a visit, and who firmly believes that Plant has murdered the woman and her child as surely as if he had done it at the pistol's point.

Orde sees the shooting by chance and helps Pollock to get away. He is himself seen by Oldham, who is in Baker's employ, and who was previously known in the East as Newmark, Orde Senior's former partner.

In the meantime Thorne, inspector in the forest service, who has made a reputation by running down graft and grafters in Oregon, arrives. California John and others, including Plant himself, help him to size up the situation. He sends a report to Washington demanding Plant's discharge. This report is sidetracked for political reasons; and Thorne, convinced that he can do nothing further as long as the present head of the Service at Washington is in charge, resigns and goes back to Oregon as a landlooker.

After Plant's death, California John is made supervisor in his place. Orde gets to see more of the man, who begins to be looked up to as Supervisor Davidson, and from him and others he gets various interesting details of the old régime.

"Ross Fletcher is a ranger because he loves it and believes in it. . . . Why, let me tell you that last spring Ross was fighting fire all alone, and he went out for help and they docked him a day for being off the reserve. . . . And they sent him in after sheep in

the high mountains early, when the feed was froze, and wouldn't allow him pay for three sacks of barley for his animals. And Ross gets sixty dollars a month, and he spends about half of that for trail tools and fire tools that they won't give him. What do you think of that? Charley Morton was ordered to Yosemite to consult with the military officers there. He was instructed to do so within a certain number of days. To keep inside his time limit he had to hire a team. . . . Item refused.

“One of the inspiring things in the later history of the great West is the faith and insight, the devotion and self-sacrifice of some of the rough mountain men in some few of the badly managed reserves to truths that were but slowly being recognized by even the better educated of the East. These men, year after year, without leadership, without encouragement, without the support and against the covert or open hostility of their neighbors . . . had no wide theory of forestry to sustain their interest; they certainly could have little hope of promotion or advancement to a real career; their experience with a bureaucratic government could not arouse in their breasts any expectation of a broad or liberal or even an enlightened policy of conservation or use. They were set in opposition to their neighbors without receiving the support of the power that so placed them.

“Nevertheless, according to their knowledge, they worked faithfully. . . . Each was given the inestimable privilege of doing what he could. Everything had to be reported on enormous and complicated forms. If he made a mistake in any of these, he heard from it, and perhaps his pay was held up. This pay

was somewhere about sixty dollars or seventy dollars a month (later raised to ninety dollars), and he was required to supply his own horses and to feed them. . . . The Government supplied next to nothing. In 1902, between the King's River and the Kaweah, an area of somewhere near a million acres, the complete inventory of fire-fighting tools consisted of two rakes made from fifty cents' worth of twenty-penny nails."

In the long run, his monthly reports get the best of California John. Before the order comes from Washington superseding him as supervisor, he puts an end to the raids of the sheep men. His instructions permit him to put any flock caught on government land off the reservation. They do not say where he shall put them off. After he has driven several flocks out on the barren eastern side of the mountains into what is equivalent to destruction, the sheep men begin to seek pastures new elsewhere.

Thorpe, who has rejoined the service and who has been appointed supervisor in his place, persuades Davidson to stay on as head ranger under him. Thorne brings a sister with him, who serves as his clerk without wages; also as his housekeeper, cook and gardener when other help is not to be had, which is most of the time.

Shortly after Orde becomes acquainted with her, he decides to join the service himself. "The charlatan had babbled; but without knowing it he had given Bob what he sought. . . . Why had he been dissatisfied with business opportunities and successes beyond the hopes of most young men? . . . What right had he to condemn as insufficient nine-tenths of those in the

industrial world, and yet what else but condemnation did his attitude of mind imply . . . ?

“ He was dissatisfied because it was not his work. The other honest and sincere men, such as his father and Welton, had been satisfied because it was their work. The old generation, the one that was passing, needed just that kind of service. Bob belonged to the new generation. He saw that new things were to be demanded. The modern young men of energy and force and strong ability had a different task from that which their fathers had accomplished. The wilderness was subdued, the pioneer work of industry was finished, the hard brute struggle to shape things to efficiency was over. It had been necessary to get things done. Now it was becoming necessary to perfect the means and methods of doing. Lumber must still be cut, streams must still be dammed; railroads must still be built; but now the pioneers, the men of fire, had blazed the way, others could follow. Methods were established. It was all a business like the selling of groceries. The industrial rank and file could attend to details. The men who thought and struggled and carried the torch — they must go beyond what their fathers had accomplished.

“ Now Bob understood Amy Thorne’s pride in the Service. . . . Thorne was in the current. With his pitiful eighteen hundred dollars a year he was still swimming strongly in new waters. His business went the little necessary step beyond. It not only earned him his living in the world but it helped the race movement of his people. At present the living was small, just as at first the pioneer opening the country had wrested but a scanty livelihood from the stubborn

wilderness; nevertheless . . . Bob looked about the mill yard with an understanding eye. This work was necessary; but it was not his work."

Thorne understands how he feels. He had worked out the same line of thought for himself long before. To California John the matter had been one to take for granted. Orde joins the Service as a supernumerary, for the summer. He is set to painting the office roof, and to stringing barbed wire fence. He cuts down dead trees, saws them into lengths and splits them by boring holes in them and setting off giant powder in the holes.

After that he learns to fight fire. When he has become proficient in this and has passed his entrance examinations in the fall, like others of the best men he is taught to specialize. At the business of estimating the value of the lumber on Government land he needs little teaching. While engaged in this work he runs across George Pollock, who has returned from Mexico, and who has been living for some time in hiding near his old home.

Orde gives him money to pay for the best lawyer in the neighborhood and advises him to go home and either give himself up, or settle down again as if nothing had happened. There is no direct evidence against him. One supposition is that Pollock left the place after his wife's death without knowing anything about the shooting of Plant. The result is that he is allowed to live in peace in his old home for the time being.

One result of Orde's survey is his discovery that Baker's power company has unlawfully acquired many of its holdings. Shortly after this he is sent to

see what diplomacy can do with a squatter by the name of Samuels, whose title to an old homestead claim has been found defective. Samuels has threatened to shoot at sight the first ranger that approaches his house.

Orde rides up to the house towards sundown and asks for supper and a night's lodging. He reminds his unwilling host that the Wolverine Lumber Company has frequently done as much for Samuels and his friends. After supper Samuels is gradually lured from a position of armed fanaticism to a statement of his wrongs as he sees them. He is willing to talk about graft in San Francisco as well as in the forest service.

Orde sums up: " 'Graft,' he concluded, 'is just the price the people are willing to pay to get their politics done for them — while they attend to the pressing business of development and building. They haven't time or energy to do everything, so they are willing to pay to have some things taken off their hands. The price is graft. When the people have more time, when the other things are done, the price will be too high. They'll decide to attend to their own business.' "

Orde argues with Samuels till sunrise, and wears him down gradually. Finally Samuels signs a renunciation of his claim. Something warns Orde to get away as quickly and noiselessly as he can. As he rides into the forest he turns back and sees the old man with a gun looking for him.

Baker meets Orde in the woods near the latter's camp and asks what Orde is going to do about prosecuting the case against Baker's Company. Orde says

he has no right to talk about Government business and Baker goes away drawing his own conclusions. Baker sends Oldham to interview Orde. The former states the case for big business against Government restriction fluently and persuasively. Orde remains obdurate. Oldham offers him a bribe of one hundred thousand dollars of the Company's stock, and a salaried position in the field. Orde refuses, and Oldham finally asserts that much of Welton's own timber holdings have been acquired fraudulently, and departs, leaving the papers that seem to justify his claim.

Later Orde is told that if he does not recede from his stand, Welton will be indicted for bribing Plant, and that he himself, by fair means or foul, will be prevented from testifying at the trial — if necessary will be indicted as an accessory after the fact in the murder of Plant by George Pollock. Shortly after this Orde is lassoed by a professional gun man who has been seen in Oldham's company more than once, and taken to a deserted mining camp in the heart of the Sierras. After a captivity of five days and nights he manages to escape by a trick that convinces his captor that he has been drowned. On his way back to camp he meets Oldham and repeats his father's words to the latter: "*I'm going to give you the worst licking you ever heard tell of.*"

Hitherto Oldham has balked at instructing the gun man to shoot to kill. He gets away, meets his assassin and revises his instructions. Two days later Orde, Amy Thorne, and Ware, one of the rangers assigned to him as a body guard, take a walk in the woods. Suddenly Ware knocks Orde down, and fires

two shots from his revolver. They follow the gunman's tracks till it is evident that he has got away, and come upon Oldham lying dead with a bullet through his head.

It does not take them long to decide that Orde is now in no further danger of his life. Baker has always drawn the line at murder, and Oldham's agent has evidently decamped at the moment of his realization that there is no longer any profit for him in murder without a paymaster. Moreover, Orde has reason to believe that Oldham is the only one who knows of his connection with the shooting of Plant.

Orde Senior arrives from the East with the assurance that the titles to all his son's timber holdings are perfectly sound. Baker gives up his mineral claims, illegally acquired for the purpose of cutting the timber on them, and agrees to leave Welton alone. At the time of Oldham's shooting, Bob Orde discovers that Amy Thorne is the one woman in the world for him; and by her advice he consents to resign from the Forest Service and to take up his profession of lumberman again without restrictions from his father or Welton, on the one condition that the work shall show a fair yearly profit, thereby to demonstrate to them and to the world at large that lumbering can be made at once as profitable in America, and as free from waste and danger from fires, as anywhere else in the world.

On the last page Welton claps Bob on the back and wishes him success. Previously he has expressed his opinion to Orde Senior that the kid can't break them in two years anyhow.

“ ‘I'm too old at the game to believe much in new

methods to what I've been brought up to, Bob,' said he, 'but I believe in you. If anybody can do it, you can; and I'd be tickled to see you win out. Things change, and a man is foolish to act as though they didn't. He's just got to keep playing alone according to the rules of the game. And they keep changing too. It's good to have lived while they are making a country. I've done it. You're going to.'"

It is possible that Mr. White had in mind the revision of the rules of football from conditions that worked to the advantage of heavy close formations to those favoring more open play when he chose the title of this book and ended it with these words. From the first page to the last, he is eminently just to the claims of capital and the big investors.

"'I'm a Forest officer,' said California John, . . . 'there can't nobody beat me in wishing a lot of good forest land was under the Service instead of due to be cut up by the lumber-man. But I've lived too long not to see the point. The United States of America was big gainers because those old fellows had the nerve just to come in and buy. It ain't so much the lumber they saw and put out where it's needed — that's a good deal, and it ain't so much the men they bring into the country and give work to — though that's a lot too. *It's the confidence they inspire*, it's the lead they give. All the rest of these little operators and workmen and store-keepers and manufacturers wouldn't have found their way here in twenty years if the big fellows hadn't led the way. . . . And while it's the big fellow that gives the lead, *it's the little fellow that makes the wealth of the country . . .*'"

“ ‘The Government gives alternate sections of land to railroads to bring them into the country,’ went on California John. ‘In my notion all this timber land in private hands is where it belongs. It’s the price the Government pays for wealth.’

“ ‘And the Basin,’ cried Bob.

“ ‘What the hell more confidence does this country need now,’ demanded California John fiercely; ‘what with its mills, and its trolleys, and its vineyards and all its big projects? What right has this man Baker to get pay for what he ain’t done?’

“The distinction Bob had sensed, but had not been able to analyze, leaped at him. The equities hung in equal balance. On one side he saw the pioneer, pressing forward into an unknown wilderness, breaking a way for those that could follow. . . . On the other he saw the plunderer grasping at a wealth that did not belong to him through means he had not made.”

Bob and Amy have a discussion as to the details of waste in lumbering just before he joins the Forest Service. Bob is inclined to do full justice to the professional and commercial side of the argument:

“ ‘We’ve got to have lumber, haven’t we? And somebody has got to cut and supply it. Men like Mr. Welton are doing it by methods that they’ve found effective. They are working for the Present; we of the new generation want to work for the Future. It’s a fair division. Somebody’s got to attend to them both.’

“ ‘Why don’t you log with some reference to the future then?’ demanded Amy.

“ ‘Because it doesn’t pay,’ stated Bob deliberately. . . . ‘Yes,’ said Bob mildly, ‘Why not? The lum-

ber-man fulfills a commercial function, like anyone else; why shouldn't he be allowed freely a commercial reward? You can't lead a commercial class by ideals that absolutely conflict with commercial motives. If you want to introduce your ideals among lumber-men you want to educate them; and in order to educate them you must fix it so your ideals don't actually spell loss! Rearrange the scheme of taxation for one thing. Get your ideas of fire protection and conservation on a practical basis. It's all very well to talk about how nice it would be to chop up all the waste tops and pile them like cord wood. . . . It would certainly be neat and effective.'

" 'But can't you get some scheme that would be just as effective, but not so neat?'

" 'It's the difference between a yacht and a lumber schooner. . . . We've got to make it so easy to do things right that anybody at all decent will be ashamed not to. Then we've got to wait for the spirit of the people to grow to new things. It's coming, but it's not here yet.'

" 'But you can educate people, can't you?' asked Amy. . . . 'Some people can,' agreed Thorne. . . . 'But Mr. Orde is right; it's only the spirit of the people that can bring about new things. We think we have leaders, but we have only interpreters. When the time is ripe to change things, then the spirit of the people rises to forbid old practices. . . . There's sure to come a time when it will not be too much off balance to *require* private firms to do things according to our methods. Then it will pay to log the Government forests on an extensive scale; and private forests will have to come to our way of doing

things. . . . 'Never kick a pup for chasing rabbits until you're ready to teach him to chase deer,' put in California John."

As a conservation tract, the book's circulation has already demonstrated its success. It claims frankly to be educational and it is so; simply, forcibly, convincingly, in the most obvious and restricted sense. It is educational and inspiring in a larger and a national sense; it may fairly be considered so in a literary one. Mr. White, like the men and women he has to do with, is too much concerned with the work in hand to indulge in the extravagance of fine writing.

The Los Angeles episode, which may seem to many an excrescence judged from a purely literary point of view, serves to clinch the author's point, made with less detail later, that it is the little grafters that make the big ones, quite as much as the reverse.

The whole book is national in scope, the same considerations that have to do with the people's interest in the work of the lumber-man may with equal force be applied to railroading and all public utilities. Judged broadly — in order to make the rules of the game apply, in order to secure a square deal in their interpretation — the Los Angeles section is quite as necessary as the rest.

So with Part One, which deals with Bob Orde's first formative period in Michigan and which sets forth conclusively for the benefit of those who do not know *The Blazed Trail* and *The Riverman*, the conditions and the forces which have evolved men of the older generation like Welton and his father.

A page or two from this part of the book merits

quotation merely for reasons of local color and literary quality:

“ But now suddenly his sauntering brought him to the water-front. The tramway ended in a long platform running parallel to the edge of the docks below. There were many little cars both in the process of unloading and waiting their turn. The place swarmed with men, all busily engaged in handing the boards from one to another as buckets are passed at a fire. At each point where an unending stream of them passed over the side of each ship, stood a young man with a long, flexible rule. This he laid rapidly along the width of each board, and then as rapidly entered a mark in a note-book. The boards seemed to move fairly of their own volition like a scutellate monster of many joints, crawling from the cars, across the dock, over the sides of the ship, and into the black hold, where presumably it coiled. There were six ships; six many-jointed monsters creeping to their appointed places under the urging of these their masters; six young men absorbed and busy at the tallying; six crews panoplied in leather, guiding the monsters to their lairs. Here, too, the sun-warmed air rose sluggish with the aroma of pitch, of lumber, of tar from the ship's cordage, of the wetness of unpainted wood. Aloft in the rigging, clear against the sky, were sailors in contrast of peaceful leisurely industry to those who toiled and hurried below. The masts swayed gently, describing an arc against the heavens. The sailors swung easily to the motion. From below came the quick dull sounds of planks thrown down, the grind of car wheels, the movement of feet, the varied, complex sound of men working

together, the clapping of waters against the structure. It was confusing, confusing as the noise of many hammers. Yet two things seemed to steady it, to confine it, to keep it in the bounds of order, to prevent it from usurping more than its meet and proper proportion. One was the tingling lake breeze singing through the rigging of the ship; the other was the idle and intermittent whistling of one of the sailors up aloft. And suddenly, as though it had but just commenced, Bob again became aware of the saw shrieking in ecstasy as it plunged into a pine log."

There is very little about modern business in American fiction where so much is defined and suggested in as many words. There is a reminiscence of *Calumet K*, by Merwin and Webster, where the business life of the Great Lakes is set forth picturesquely with equal vigor and more concentrated detail, but Mr. White's is immeasurably the bigger and more significant book.

To many *The Rules of the Game* will come as a new revelation, not of the problems confined to forest conservation alone, but of the theory and practice of "big business" in the largest and finest sense. It attempts to suggest a practical working compromise between immediate efficiency and the ultimate square deal in a single detail of our national expression of material energy. To the lay mind, so far as the lumbering business is concerned, it has gone far to make this attempt successful.

It has done more than that. It has advertised a current national problem interestingly and compellingly. It has helped to create and inspire new ideals

of national responsibility and personal devotion. It has traced the mental and spiritual evolution of Bob Orde from a college boy, whose chief asset is his football training and reputation, to a recognized leader in a new national and racial movement for the good of mankind at large. It has accomplished this result interestingly, readably, and fairly; in the simple and direct manner with which the nature (human and inanimate) dealt with in the book, goes to work to accomplish its largest results.

The Rules of the Game has something of the strength of the mountains and forests that inspired it.

It has something of their loftiness and permanency as well. Great literature of the first rank, it does not claim to be. As a human document of a far higher degree of artistry than the average reader or conventional critic would naturally credit it with on a first reading, the book is so big that, like the mountain, we need time and a second glance to begin to take it all in.

The most obvious and natural method is to set up something else as a measuring post. *Clayhanger* by Arnold Bennett, the work of a contemporary British novelist of deserved reputation, which was published at approximately the same time, happens to be of almost identical length. *Clayhanger* is admitted by recognized critics to be the work of a rising master of English, and to be admirable, technically and otherwise, though both in material and method it is sharply distinguished from academic English fiction, as academic English fiction continues to be written in England and elsewhere.

Clayhanger is a distinct and concentrated study in middle class English personalities. It has the one great merit of holding the reader's interest from cover to cover while dealing with material that seems at first glance to be the most commonplace in the world. As a work of limited and effective art, it challenges and deserves limited interest and admiration.

This sort of thing is all very well in its way. In the case of *Clayhanger* it is democratic in a sense. Other novelists, before Henry James and after, have helped to teach us that a microscopic study of human nature and inanimate life in any environment at extreme length may be profitably studied if one has the time to spare.

At the same time it is probable that Dickens, Thackeray, Daudet and Balzac at their best have done this sort of thing quite as well and even better. On the whole, in *Clayhanger* and the rest of his projected trilogy, Mr. Bennett gives a partial impression of reaction rather than progress, both as a man and as a writer. Any book that claims to be a novel of the first or second rank must be judged not alone by its spirit and inspiration, or the absence thereof, but by the resultant lasting impression in the memory, and the vistas that it succeeds in opening up or fails to open.

It must be a very conscientious and retentive reader of *Clayhanger* who remembers more of the book after a few months than the two chief characters, a brief dissertation on the superficiality of British lower middle class education, a frustrated accident in a printing office, a clog dance, certain aspects of Nonconformist religious hypocrisy, certain unpleas-

ant details of softening of the brain, an impressionistic sketch of Brighton by night, and a detailed description of Clayhanger's bedroom.

It may be, indeed, a triumph of art to do so much with so little, but whether this is the sort of art and the kind of fiction that is best suited to the capacity and the needs of the American reading public of to-day is highly questionable.

If beside Clayhanger and his father we place Orde Junior and Orde Senior; if beside Osmead we place Baker; if beside incidental figures like Big James and Clayhanger's aunt we place Roaring Dick of the Woods and California John; if beside Hilda Lessways we even place Amy Thorne, then we begin to see how far in characterization alone the American holds his own with, and transcends, the British novelist.

When it comes to a question of general scope and power, the impartial critic and firm admirer of Mr. Bennett may fairly conclude that the significance of *The Rules of the Game*, compared to that of *Clayhanger*, is in something like the same proportion that the life and interests of lower middle class England, from printing offices and potteries of The Five Towns to Brighton boarding houses, bears to the life and work of the men and women of the high Sierras and the country tributary to the same.

The Rules of the Game appears as the unadvertised third volume of the trilogy of American lumbering begun by *The Blazed Trail* and continued in *The Riverman*.

In this field Mr. White has shown himself a pioneer fit to continue the traditions of the men and methods he interprets. It would seem that he has

covered this particular field fairly thoroughly in his third book.

As a pioneer of the interpretation of Big Business in other fields of endeavor, ultimately for the greatest good of the greatest number, unlimited opportunity is still waiting for him elsewhere. The rules of the game still wait to be explained and applied in railroading, manufacturing, mining, finance, journalism, politics and the law, and in various phases of municipal and national ownership and operation.

Mr. White has shown himself conclusively one of the younger generation, who have already demonstrated their fitness to explain and apply them. And if we have read his heredity and his temper right, he belongs to the same breed that rarely pauses to live on past performances or premature and incomplete literary reputation; that, in other words, carries each contract through to a finish, while there is work that requires to be done. The probabilities are that he will continue on the job, with more power to his pen from longer practice, and that we shall continue to hear from him even more inspiringly in the future than we have in the past.

VII

WINSTON CHURCHILL AND CIVIC RIGHTEOUSNESS

"The ideals which for three hundred years America and Europe have cherished, alike yet apart, are ideals of morality and of government, . . . of right and of rights. Whoever has lived his conscious life in the terms of our language so saturated with the temper and the phrases of both the English Bible and of English Law, has perforce learned that however far he may stray, he cannot escape the duty that bids us be right and maintain our rights." Barrett Wendell, *Literary History of America*, 1900.

"In the long run in small things as in large wrong choice leads to death. Death is simply the inevitable result. No republic can live, no man can live in a republic in which wrong is the repeated choice of the people or of the State.

"The best care and culture of man is not that which restrains his weakness, but that which gives play to his strength. . . . There is no virtue in democracy as such, nothing in Americanism as such, that will save us if we become a nation of weaklings and fools with an aristocracy of knaves for our masters." David Starr Jordan, *The Care and Culture of Men*, 1896.

HOWEVER his method may differ from theirs, Winston Churchill has one thing in common with Mark Twain, Frank Norris, David Graham Phillips and Stewart Edward White: he hates a sham and a fraud with the same uncompromising sincerity that they do. There are signs of this in *Richard Carvel* and in his later books. In *The Celebrity*, published in 1905 — which he is said to have achieved shut up in a hotel room in the course of hours rather than of days — the fact is self-evident.

It is equally self-evident that the Celebrity in question, one Charles Wrexel Adams, represented a contemporary literary malefactor of great circulation, who wrote novels raved over by the young women of America from Maine to California; whose affairs of the heart were almost as well known as his works of fiction; and whose self-conceit equaled his genius for keeping himself prominently in the public eye.

The story is told in the first person by a middle Western lawyer who has known the Celebrity from the time that he wore kilts, and through a period of adolescence when he gave no evidence of his later startling efflorescence.

The portrait of the Celebrity is a triumph of art and of realism. Crocker, the lawyer, and his friend Farrar are equally, though less obtrusively, done to the life. The same may be said of two young women, Marion Thorne and Irene Trevor, who form an integral part of the plot.

But the chief achievement in the form of pure fiction that the book presents is the character of Farquhar Fenelon Cooke, multi-millionaire and turfman, formerly of Philadelphia, but domiciled during the action of the story in Mohair, a country place laid out and elaborated according to specifications eminently of his own choosing, in the immediate vicinity of a conservative middle western resort of fashion on the Great Lakes.

Farquhar Fenelon Cooke is one of Nature's great originals, in his own way a celebrity himself, and equally with the counterfeit hero of the book, a product of artificial social conditions which Mr. Churchill

has seen fit to satirize inimitably. At the same time the man is real in essence, and an effective foil to the mass of egotism and pretense about whom the action of the book is centered. Crocker succeeds in winning an important suit for Cooke against a Western railroad company, and the latter is Crocker's friend for life. Farrar, the landscape gardener, who has laid out the grounds of Mohair, is almost equally in the owner's good graces at the time when the Celebrity appears on the scene.

" 'Crocker' said he, 'it's the very deuce to be famous, isn't it? . . . I am paying the penalty of fame. Wherever I go I am hounded to death by the people who have read my books, and they want to dine me and wine me for the sake of showing me off at their houses. I am heartily sick and tired of it all. . . . It was becoming unbearable. I determined to assume a name and to go to some quiet little Western place for the summer. . . . My man boxed up, and we were off in twenty-four hours and here I am. . . . You won't tell anyone who I am, will you,' he asked anxiously.

" He even misinterpreted my silence.

" 'Certainly not,' I replied; 'it is no concern of mine. You might come here as Émile Zola or Ralph Waldo Emerson, and it would make no difference to me.'

" He looked at me dubiously, even suspiciously.

" 'That's a good chap,' said he and was gone leaving me to reflect on the ways of genius."

Mr. Cooke and the Celebrity join forces at once. So do the Celebrity and Miss Trevor, daughter of one of the more important cottagers at Asquith, the

resort in question. To her the Celebrity confides the secret of his real identity. There is to be a house-warming at Mohair, and the Celebrity promises to lead the cotillion with Irene.

Marion Thorne, Mrs. Cooke's niece, arrives in time for the party. So do ten of Mr. Cooke's friends from Philadelphia and New York. Concerning them Mr. Churchill has this to say:

"I shall treat the Ten as a whole because they did not materially differ from one another, in dress or habits, or ambitions, or general usefulness on this earth. . . . Likewise the life of any one of the Ten was the life of all, and might be truthfully represented by a single year, since each year was exactly like the preceding. The ordinary year, as is well known, begins on the first of January. . . . Theirs began in the Fall with the New York Horse Show. And I am of the opinion, though open to correction, that they dated from the first Horse Show instead of from the birth of Christ. It is certain that they were much better versed in the history of the Association than in that of the Union, in the biography of Excelsior rather than that of Lincoln. The Dog Show was another event to which they looked forward, when they emigrated from New York and put up at the country places of their friends. But why go farther?"

We would like to hear more of the Ten, but unfortunately they fall into general disfavor after they and their host have succeeded in getting themselves and certain of the quieter cottagers hilariously drunk, on the night of the dance; and six of them return in haste to the place whence they came. The

luster of the Four that remain is considerably dulled, but the Celebrity is left to supply all deficiencies, and for a time he succeeds spectacularly.

Before Miss Thorne's arrival, he also succeeds in getting himself engaged to Miss Trevor, and in inducing her to keep the engagement, like his identity, a secret. Under cover of this, he proceeds to make just as violent love to Miss Thorne, whom he has met before, as Miss Thorne will permit.

The moral of the Celebrity's latest book is that inconstancy in woman is sometimes pardonable because of present social conditions. In man there is nothing more despicable. This the Celebrity is made to quote before an admiring group of girls.

Before long the two heroines manage to get together and to understand one another thoroughly. In the meantime, Farquhar Fenelon Cooke installs a party of his friends on his yacht for a short cruise. The Captain deserts at the last moment, and the Celebrity volunteers to take his place as sailing master. When a squall comes up, he is displaced by Farrar and is violently seasick. They reach a small island, and here Crocker discovers from a newspaper sent on board that the real Charles Wrexel Adams has recently absconded with a large sum of money. His description is given, and it fits the Celebrity to a hair's breadth.

Farquhar Fenelon Cooke is all for getting his guest away safely to Canada. There is a judge on board who takes a diametrically opposite view. A man who is believed to be a detective appears, and the Celebrity passes the night in an exceedingly damp and uncomfortable cave. Later there is a

visit by the police, and he lies concealed in the hold of the yacht while search is made for him.

The final elucidation of the plot may safely be left to the reader's imagination. At times it borders on hilarious farce fit for gods and men. At times it rises to something more significant; and the series of remarkably clever character drawings is continued successfully to the end of the book.

All of which goes to prove that Mr. Churchill has a sense of humor of his own, and occasionally shows himself remarkably fit to handle it. Humor, in the ills of the body politic, is only the point of the surgeon's probe. One may poke a bubble with it in passing, when not better engaged, where bubbles help to obscure the real issues at stake and to advertise themselves inordinately to people who choose to see life as children do. Left to themselves, bubbles collapse quickly of their own infinitesimal weight.

The temporary vogue of the creator of *Van Bibber*, *The King's Jackal* and *Soldiers of Fortune* has passed as quickly as that of the Gibson girls who read and thrilled over the books and who figured in their pages.

There are those who will accuse Mr. Davis of a certain pathetic Mid-Victorian quality of self-delusion in the most ambitious parts of his literary output.

There are also those who strongly suspect Mr. Churchill of the Mid-Victorian temperament. Dr. F. T. Cooper suggests as much in an article in *The Bookman* for May, 1910, since published in book-form. Of Mr. Churchill's books he says: "They aspire to be Literature spelled with a capital L; they are carefully fashioned upon the great Mid-Victorian

models; one almost questions whether the author did not deliberately draw his dividing line at Thackeray and refuse to regard any subsequent developments of technique in fiction as deserving of notice."

Judging from the generally superficial and cursory manner in which Winston Churchill and his books are handled by Dr. Cooper in this article of some four thousand words, his criticism is about as sound as a suggestion that Winslow Homer and Augustus Saint Gaudens are characteristically and hopelessly Mid-Victorian because they have taken their own lines and held to them, and have not felt constrained by recent artistic developments of technique to duplicate in their work the last cry in modern impressionism, the ballet girls of Degas, the color rhapsodies of Monet, the wildest vagaries of Whistler, or the senile sculptural abortions of the last and worst period of Rodin and his most partisan admirers and imitators.

In the mouths of many, the term Mid-Victorian, like the word bourgeois, is anathema. In the mouths of more, at its best, it is a badge of honor. In this sense it may be defined as elemental, strong, sincere, sure of itself, with the stability of big foundations, concerned more with the main issues of life than with any purely academic or wildly impressionistic exploitation of individual or esoteric points of view.

In this sense Winston Churchill is Mid-Victorian; he is frankly and uncompromisingly bourgeois. Mr. Henry D. Sedgwick has instanced him, in several quotations from *The Crisis*, 1904, as an exponent of the mob spirit in American literature.

Dr. Cooper admits: "There can be no question

that he has succeeded admirably in handling big backgrounds . . . making us feel the relative value of our own modest holding . . . our individual interest, our brief hour, as contracted with mankind and with eternity. It makes small difference whether he is describing a drunken broil in a Colonial tavern, an Indian massacre in Kentucky, or a political riot in a New England State Legislature — in either case his trick of characterization is as graphic and almost as indefatigable as that of the camera lens. You see face after face, figure behind figure, each drawn with fewer and swifter strokes as they become more blurred by distance, yet every one individualized and recognizable. And back of these you still feel the presence of a crowd, shoulder jostling shoulder, tongue answering tongue full of the rough virility of conflict.”

On the other hand, Dr. Cooper asserts that, “in taking up the separate volumes, they give the impression of wandering aimlessly along the highways and byways of life, with no clear structural reason for turning to the right rather than the left, no preconceived goal toward which the various tangled threads of the story are converging.”

The critic concedes, however: “And yet any fair estimate of Mr. Churchill must necessarily recognize that his favorite formula narrowly misses that of the epic novel. He uses, as we have already seen, a double theme; first the big, basic idea underlying some national or ethical crisis; and, secondly, a specific human story standing out vividly in the central focus with the larger, wider theme serving as background. Where his stories fail to achieve the

epic magnitude is in lacking that essential symbolic relationship between the greater and the lesser theme."

This conclusion of Dr. Cooper's is, to say the least, questionable. Passing by his *ex cathedra* definition of the epic novel and the precise moment of geometrically exact symbolism necessary in any modern work of broad-gauged historical fiction to favorably impress readers of Mr. Cooper's own limited intellectual capacity and ingrowing æsthetic sense, it is apparent in the whole character and purport of this critic's criticism that he quarrels with Mr. Churchill because the latter fails to write fiction as a limited class of critics and readers would have it written, preferring (as Mr. Churchill does) to interpret life as it is seen and felt by the majority of plain people and representative American intellects of every social and financial class for whom he has always consistently written, and will continue to write.

This we have in his own words in the mouth of Abraham Lincoln in the last few pages of *The Crisis*: "‘I say to you, Brice,’ he went on earnestly, ‘the importance of plain talk can’t be over-estimated. Any thought, however abstruse, can be put in speech that a boy or a negro can grasp. Any book, however deep, can be written in terms that everybody can comprehend; if a man only tries hard enough. When I was a boy I used to hear the neighbors talking, and it bothered me so because I could not understand them that I used to sit up half the night thinking out things for myself. I remember that I did not know what the word *demonstrate*

meant. So I stopped my studies then and there and got a volume of Euclid. Before I got through I could *demonstrate* everything in it, and I have never been bothered with *demonstrate* since.’”

There is small evidence that Mr. Cooper has sat up half the night, or anything like it, trying to get at the vital significance of *The Crisis*, which he dismisses thus briefly: “Passing over *The Crisis*, that story of the Civil War which is at best a less vigorous repetition of the qualities and the shortcomings of the *Richard Carvel*, 1899, we come to *Coniston*.”

There is small evidence that Dr. Cooper has studied *Richard Carvel* any more accurately. Here is his complete account of it: “To begin with, *Richard Carvel* concerns itself with the life history of an orphan boy in the province of Maryland reared by his stern old grandfather in strict Tory principles, but, little by little, imbibing Revolutionary doctrines from associates of his own generation. An unscrupulous uncle, scheming for the family inheritance, has young Carvel waylaid, kidnapped and flung aboard a private craft to be later dropped over the rail at a convenient time. The pirate boat, however, is scuttled by the famous naval hero, John Paul Jones, and Carvel is the sole survivor. Subsequently, fate lands him in London, penniless and without friends, where he spends some weary months in the debtor’s prison, knowing all the while that the girl whom he loved back in America is also in London, courted by dukes and earls, and that his present predicament is known quite well by the girl’s father, who is only too glad to have a persistent suitor out of harm’s way.

“The rest of the story consists of some swift changes of fortune, some well-drawn pictures of fashionable English life in which Horace Walpole, Charles James Fox and other historic personages take part; a few stirring naval battles and finally peace between the two countries and Carvel happily married and settled on his ancestral acres. It is to be noticed that this plot is merely a string of episodes governed for the most part by the intervention of chance. It is little more than a highly developed *picaresco* type with rather less cohesion than the average Dumas romance. Whatever literary quality it possesses is due not to plot but to individual portraiture and a pervading sense of atmosphere.”

Much the same criticism may be made of *Don Quixote*, *Tom Jones*, *Henry Esmond*, *The Cloister and the Hearth*, *Lorna Doone*, *Tom Sawyer* and *The Virginians*, to go no farther — with many of which in the last analysis *Richard Carvel* may fairly be ranked. It is quite true that in this book Winston Churchill frankly imitates Thackeray, notably the latter's *Henry Esmond*. It is equally true that in this book Churchill, more than Thackeray did in *Esmond*, more than Cervantes did in *Don Quixote*, more than Blackmore did in *Lorna Doone*, more than Fielding did in *Tom Jones*, fixes the soul of an epoch and a people. In this one detail and phase that permeates it, it remains an imperishable part of our Anglo-Saxon heritage of literature and life. It has much of the atmosphere, the grace, the tenderness, the dignity and intimate personal charm of *Esmond*, but at the same time it digs deeper, it represents more, it is more American.

It is not, as Dr. Cooper asserts, a mere string of episodes governed by chance, and a picaresque account of an orphan boy's wanderings and rise to fortune.

For one thing, it is a story of the genesis of the American Navy. It contains one of the most thrilling accounts in all fiction of a sea fight second to none in all history for heroism on both sides. Because of the unique atmospheric charm that Mr. Cooper himself cannot wholly disregard, it cannot be quoted with justice in sections, but the account of the fight between the *Bonhomme Richard* and the *Serapis*, with the immortal "*I have not yet begun to fight*" of John Paul Jones as the keynote, should alone go far to make the book a new American classic of a very high order and a permanent national asset and inspiration.

The book has other qualities of permanence, merely as literature. The characters of John Paul, of Charles Fox, of Horace Walpole, of Lord Comyn, of Lord Chartersea, of Grafton Carvel and his father, of Patty Swain and hers, of Dorothy Manners and hers, of the rector of St. Mary's, and of Richard himself, stand out clearly and convincingly as indicative of their era on both sides of the Atlantic. The action at the start is not laid by chance, without intention, in Maryland, the most patrician of the thirteen colonies. The lawyer from the North does not come there by any freak of fortune.

He sees a business opening there, takes advantage of the opportunity and makes good there. He rises by sheer force of hard work, of shrewd sense and square dealing, to ultimate social recognition

for himself and his family, and to an intimate place in the revolutionary counsels and on the executive committee of the leading men of the province. Richard himself, though of patrician blood to begin with, evolves into one of the most democratic as well as one of the most human of heroes. Thackeray himself has said that he considered Henry Esmond a bit of a prig; no one can consistently accuse Richard Carvel of as much or as little.

Richard proves his fitness for democracy equally in his friendships with John Paul and Lord Comyn; in the friends and the enemies that he makes, and in his manner of dealing with both throughout the book. He is not naturally brilliant, but nevertheless he is nobody's fool. He fits naturally, and with success up to a certain point, into the brilliantly vicious life of court circles in London, because he is to the manner born — young, handsome, generous, discreet; an excellent horseman, swordsman, sportsman; possessed of a steady head and an iron nerve where drinking and gambling are two of the main issues of life. He is boy enough to enjoy this sort of a thing for a time, human enough to go the pace successfully with Fox and his associates, and to have the time of his life while he is doing it.

He is man enough to stand up for his rights, to become the spokesman of America to Fox and his crowd, to win respect from them, where respect is an unknown quality; man enough, when he is wrongfully cheated out of his inheritance by his uncle, to go home to Maryland and to make a career for himself by hard work and native shrewdness, on his native soil, as the majority of his ancestors and com-

patriots have done before or since in the land of their birth or adoption.

He shows himself, among other things, an excellent man of business and affairs, as well as an inspired and inspiring patriot and lover.

The book is broadly and intensely democratic in far more than the delineation of its central character and the minor characterizations of John Paul, Lawyer Swain and other lesser figures and personages. It is characteristically American in the best sense: in its hatred of snobbery, pretense, treachery and injustice. It preaches at the same time by indirection and very much to the point. It is true to life. It transcends the ordinary historical romance of considerable literary pretensions in that it makes its major and minor villains, Chartersea, and his fellow-duelist, Grafton Carvel, Richard's old rector and tutor, and Dorothy Manners's father, more the products of untoward environment than of the evil in their own natures.

Similarly the more reputable part of its population are people that most of us would be proud to know and to have for friends. They are what they are not so much in virtue of any inherent graces of blood and breeding, though these things too are added to some of the most prominent of them, as because circumstances in the hands of the author conspire to bring out strongly the best that is in them.

In Richard's case this has been sufficiently dwelt upon. In that of Dorothy Manners, who is characteristically an American girl of yesterday, to-day and to-morrow — in her parent's desire to make a brilliant international marriage for her, and in her

own careless acceptance of the situation — it takes time and an intimate acquaintance with the seamy side of aristocratic life abroad to effect the beginnings of her cure.

After Richard has gone back to America impoverished, and unwilling to ask her to marry him so while his memory persists in sharp contrast to the life around her; after his own father has shown her the depths of dishonor and treachery to which snobbery and the love of money can and will pledge itself; after he has impoverished himself and his wife and daughter; after she and her mother have learned to support themselves and him by the work of their own hands; after she has experienced a veritable and lasting change of heart, Richard comes back to her wounded and like to die as a result of the fight with the Serapis, and she rises to the situation as the women of her race have always risen, and still at times show the capacity to rise.

The book ends happily in the manner of the older novelists, with their marriage and the birth of their children and grandchildren. At the same time we are made to feel, as no mere romance can make us do, that they have earned their happiness — not as the spoiled favorites of fortune, nor through the interposition of some symbolically conceived and divinely appointed plot of destiny; but that they have made it out of the common everyday working material and stuff of life and of character, in the only way that is natural and inevitable to the great mass of successful men and women of all sorts and conditions, ranks and classes of civilization.

Dr. Cooper himself partially admits as much when

he says Winston Churchill's novels possess "one element which every reader of them must feel to a marked degree: namely, that sense of the unexpected and inexplicable; that infinitude of daily happenings of accidents and coincidences, the meaning of which in the ultimate pattern of life must always baffle us."

The meaning of American history, of its share in the making and in the interpretation of civilization and of evolution at large, will continue to baffle people like Mr. Cooper for some considerable time to come, so long as they continue to apply the minor canons of fiction for fiction's sake to books like *The Crossing*, *The Crisis*, *Coniston* and *Mr. Crewe's Career*. It is true that the former two fall considerably below the level of *Richard Carvel* and the rest as consistent works of art and fiction. It is true that all four of them have the defects of their qualities, structural and technical, in detail and in finish, all the more noticeable — like the ugliness of Lincoln and the military bluntness of Grant — because they embody the national directness and concentration of aim along the lines of least resistance leading to one definite goal so eminently characteristic of the generations that have passed and are passing.

These books were born of the people, by the people, for the people. They set forth unmistakably the author's convictions of the way our theory of the greatest good for the greatest number, guaranteed by law and frequently disregarded in practice, has worked and is still working itself out during the course of the past century and the present one.

Taken singly and collectively, they are optimistic in tone with the hard-won optimism that has to fight hard for what it holds fast.

One by one, or all together, they are big and vital enough to be judged first and last not as mere works of fiction and more or less successful products of literary art and artisanship, but as human documents and national studies in men and events of a very permanent and distinctive value.

Consequently, when Dr. Cooper tells us that "the specific story of David Ritchie in *The Crossing* has even less cohesion than that of *Richard Carvel*. Throughout the greater part of it Ritchie is a mere lad, and as drummer boy accompanies the expedition of George Rogers Clark from Kentucky northward to the Wabash River and Vincennes. It is a chronicle of border warfare, of Indian treachery and of ghastly massacres. It is scarcely fiction in the strict sense of the term. . . . Now it is the lot of a good many human beings, both in childhood and in later years, to drift along the stream of life . . . and it often happens that somewhere or other in the course of such drifting they meet a woman whom they wish to marry. It does not, however, usually occur to a novelist that this is the stuff that books are made of . . . the trouble with *The Crossing* is not that it lacks completeness, but that it fails to be a novel"—we find his conclusion to some extent inconclusive.

If *The Crossing* does so fail in Dr. Cooper's estimation of novels that are novels, it stands in good company with *The Pathfinder*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, *The Prairie*, *The Virginian*, Sienkiewicz's *Fire*

and Sword, *The Deluge* and *Pan Michael*, Gogol's *Taras Bulba*, Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, and most of the big epic stories or panoramas of military and frontier life that have set forth successfully a national movement or the life of a period too big and too free to be caged within the nicely filed and finished proportions of a conventional plot in the hands of a conventional craftsman.

More than this, *The Crossing*, though capable of improvement and far from measuring up in all details to the movement that it seeks to chronicle, is, in an essential sense and in its very fluidity of plot and treatment, far more true to the life of the period and to the individual lives of America's foremost scouts and tippers, prospectors, traders, pioneers, backwoods men and leaders known and unknown to history, than the conventional, academic, nicely modeled, perfectly balanced, artistically composed and constructed, denaturalized and devitalized product of literary tradition that Mr. Cooper would choose to make of it.

It has one or two primary virtues characteristic of the people it deals with. It is true to the conditions it sets forth. It is strong, simple and sincere. It is eminently readable and intensely interesting as the life that its hero lived was interesting. With greater artistry, it might have been made so to the more sophisticated.

Such as it is, it is a characteristic product of environment. Such as it is, it sets forth adequately, for the plain people of America, the story of the impulse westward of their own ancestors and the imitation of a world movement which is even now carry-

ing the course of empire still farther westward to Alaska and the Philippines.

Continuity of plot it may lack in some degree; the continuity of the national impulse and the race pressure that is making America it sets forth admirably. Equally admirable are its characterizations; and to the gallery of national portraits begun by Mr. Churchill with Washington and John Paul Jones in *Richard Carvel*, it adds imperishably Davy Crockett, Daniel Boone, George Rogers Clark and the rest of the pioneers of that period.

In *The Crisis*, which centers in St. Louis, his own birthplace and former residence, Mr. Churchill has added Lincoln, Grant and Sherman to the list. Here we find the focus of two distinctive national and racial types.

“Two centuries before, when Charles Stuart walked out of a window in Whitehall Palace to die; when the great English race was in the throes of a Civil War; when the Stern and the Gay slew each other at Naseby and Marston Moor, two currents flowed across the Atlantic to the New World. Then the Stern men found the stern climate and the Gay found the smiling climate. . . . After cycles of separation, Puritan and Cavalier united on this clay-bank in the Louisiana Purchase, and swept westward together. Like the struggle of two great rivers when they meet, the waters for a while were dangerous.”

The South is typified by Virginia Carvel, granddaughter of Richard, her father a typical southern colonel of the old school, and Clarence Colfax, her cousin and lover; the North, by Stephen Brice, who

comes to St. Louis from Boston to study law with a friend of his father's; by his mother and by other men and women of his breed, together with Carl Richter and his friends, who represent the great German emigration to America after the failure of the German Revolution of 1848. Brice arrives in time to be sent by Judge Whipple to hear Lincoln's Freeport debate with Douglas in August, 1858.

The chapter named "The Crisis" occurs early in the book. Here Lincoln puts a question on the Freeport platform: "*Can the people of a United States Territory, in any lawful way, against the wish of any citizen of the United States, exclude slavery from its limits prior to the formation of a State Constitution?*"

This question Douglas, the great compromiser of his period, can neither answer nor evade. Lincoln goes his way, saying that the United States cannot continue to exist half slave and half free; and the soul of patrician and exclusive Boston in Stephen Brice has a new birth.

Before this he has distinguished himself, at the moment of his arrival in St. Louis, by buying at public auction, with all the money that he has in the world, a quadroon girl who is in danger of being sold down river — after he has heard Virginia say that she wants the girl for a household servant.

It takes Virginia, and Colfax who is doing the bidding for her, a long time to get over this. It takes Brice a long time to make a success of the law, but by the time the war is at hand, he is recognized as a man of strength and standing in the community; and neither Virginia nor Colfax himself fail to give

him in the end the half reluctant admiration and loyalty that his nature demands.

Stephen Brice is not a prig and an impossible hero, though he does go to war as a mere lieutenant, when he might have gone as a lieutenant colonel. Lincoln and the men like Lincoln whom he knows save him from that. He is typical of the men of the time who rose to meet the Crisis, who saw the issues involved clearly, who hewed to the line and refused to shrink from the logical results of their own deeds and those of others. Among these men is Judge Whipple, who through sheer force of character remains friends with Comyn Carvel and his daughter to the last. The Judge is a radical and an Abolitionist. He never pretends that he is not. In the minds of many to-day he would be classed as a dangerous fanatic.

“The conservative classes! I am tired of hearing about the conservative classes. Why not come out with it, sir, and say the moneyed classes, who would rather see souls held in bondage than risk their worldly goods in an attempt to liberate them?”

Which prompts the further question whether the United States of America can any more continue half slave and half free in the twentieth century than it could in Lincoln's day.

Mr. Churchill evidently meant this question to be asked. There is no doubt in his mind whatever as to how Lincoln and the Judge would answer it, if they could speak to us in the flesh to-day. As it is, he makes them speak to us in the spirit unmistakably.

The judge dies after the fall of Vicksburg. Mr. Churchill has been sufficiently old-fashioned to in-

dulge in a single death-bed scene. It is true that this same death-bed scene is an integral part of a plot that Mr. Cooper has seen fit to pass over in silence; that it brings Colonel Carvel into the Union lines in danger of betrayal and death at the hands of his own head clerk, and that it gives Virginia an opportunity to find out that she is in love with Major Brice in spite of herself.

The Judge sends for Stephen for the last time and tells him:

“ ‘ You have been faithful in a few things. So shall you be made ruler over many things. The little I have I leave to you, and the chief of this is an untarnished name. . . . In the days gone by our fathers worked for the good of the people and they had no thought of gain. A time is coming when we shall need that blood and that bone in this Republic. Wealth not yet dreamed of will flow out of this land, and the waters of it will rot all save the pure, and corrupt all save the incorruptible. Half-tried men will go down before that flood. You and those like you will remember how the fathers governed — strongly, sternly, justly. It was so that they governed themselves. Be vigilant. Serve your city, serve your state, but above all, serve your country. . . . When I had tried you I wished your mind to open, to keep pace with the growth of this nation. I sent you to see Abraham Lincoln — that you might be born again — in the West. You were born again. I saw it in your face.’ . . .

“ ‘ O God,’ he cried, with sudden eloquence, ‘ would that his hands — Abraham Lincoln’s hands — might be laid upon all who complain and cavil and criticize,

and think of the little things of life! Would that his spirit might possess their spirit!’”

If this and the final chapters, where Lincoln and Grant are seen at City Point before the surrender of Richmond; where Lincoln enters the captive city unheralded, with a guard of ten marines — not as a conqueror but as a peacemaker; where in the furtherance of the same high office he pardons Colonel Colfax (as he pardoned hundreds of others), who has been captured out of uniform within the Union lines: if all this, like the rest of the book, be literature of the mob, it remains for Mr. Sedgwick, Dr. Cooper and their like, together with several millions more of their fellow-countrymen whose views radically diverge from theirs, to make the most of it.

It may seem at first reading that certain parts of these chapters are keyed too high. It may seem on a cursory survey that a certain manifestation of the passion for freedom and the republic that inspired our own parents and grandparents fifty years ago in the Middle West has very little to do with us twentieth century Americans of Boston and New York to-day. If this be so, it is very possibly quite as much our fault as theirs.

If it be not so, if we are not in reality as ultra-civilized, as hypercritical or cynical and superficially worldly-wise as certain critics and their followers would try to persuade us, then Mr. Churchill has done well to wake us up to the fact that the spirit of '76 and of '61 lives on in this nation to-day, imperishable and indomitable, beneath our superficial faults and failures, as it did in the days of Richard Carvel and Stephen Brice.

The Crisis, like all novels that treat a great theme greatly, is far from perfect. But its very faults, its very fluidity and shapelessness of construction in a purely literary sense, help to make it more intimately representative of the temper and spirit of the times it represents than any novel treating of the same period, however artistically planned and elaborated that we have had yet, or are likely to have for a long time to come.

Consciously or unconsciously, Mr. Churchill has made of *The Crisis* a cross-section of the American mind and heart of the Civil War period on both sides of Mason and Dixon's line. He has thrown the searchlight of truth thrillingly and accurately on certain personages and phases of the great conflict. More than that, he has made the vast majority of his readers feel intensely that these personages, real and fictitious, are indissolubly a part of the people of America. In the light of this he has added a notable achievement to the permanencies of American literature. More or less enlightened critics of the letter, not the spirit of the law, to the contrary notwithstanding, the book stands and will continue to stand.

Mr. Cooper himself is able to say a good word for *Coniston*, 1906. He considers it a book which deserves rather careful consideration, "not merely because it shows us people no longer through the veil of romantic glamour, but face to face; but more especially because it is the one book he has yet written the plot of which will bear careful dissection. *Coniston* may not unfairly be called a prose epic of political corruption as it existed in New England

a generation or more ago. . . . What is important is that we get a sense of life and of conflict, of impulses to do right, clashing with the instincts of self-protection; of a grim political battle for the political survival of the fittest, and the entire State, its banks, its franchises, its governor, its legislature, all reposing in the pocket of one man, the undisputed party boss. This man, Jethro Bass, simple farmer by origin, taciturn, inscrutable, with his streak of sardonic humor, and his slight unforgettable stammer, is easily the most important single figure that Mr. Churchill has drawn. . . . It is not too much praise to say that in the annals of fiction a Jethro Bass deserves to stand for as definite a figure as a Pecksniff, a Micawber, a Becky Sharp."

As a matter of fact, he stands for more. He stands definitely for a national and a social type of power perverted to evil uses through the influence of a characteristically national environment that no one of the other three characters instanced more than remotely suggested.

Mr. Hamilton W. Mabie says of this book in the *North American Review* for September, 1906: ✓
"Coniston was a community of this sort. It was made up of men and women who were descended from English-speaking ancestors. . . . There were great hills, and there was that reach of the sky which no New England community ever lacked; and there was an abundance of human nature. The word 'American' means a good deal more than it did even a generation ago. . . . Coniston was a very pleasant place because there the word had its old meaning . . . when the novelist who understands his busi-

ness begins work in one of these communities, he stands in small need of foreign capital.

“Mr. Churchill always has had a decided list towards what may be called ‘Americanism,’ . . . he has an instinctive feeling for the underlying and definitive forces in this country; and it is no assumption to say that he carries the map of the continents in his imagination and memory. It is easy to find flaws in *The Crisis* and *The Crossing*; they would gain by condensation and by greater sensitiveness to diction; but no one can read them with an open mind and fail to recognize the presence of the historical imagination on an unusual scale and the power of treating incidents of national significance in a dramatic way.

“In these stories of national scope there is in places a lack of sharp individualization; the stage dwarfs the actors. In *Coniston*, on the other hand, there is close, detailed and exact definition of personality; by localizing his story Mr. Churchill has gained in concentration, sharpness of outline, convincing clearness of characterization. Of this old time American rural life, Jethro Bass, the central figure . . . of *Coniston*, is the impersonation . . . This self-made politician who has never lost his guileless innocency of manner, becomes the master of a State and deals on even terms with the heads of great railroad systems. . . . His habit of winning without showing his cards, his original and individual humor, and his loyalty to persons if not to principles, make him a companion of whom it is impossible to approve but who never for an instant becomes uninteresting or ceases to appeal to our sympathies.

“ So much human nature has rarely been put into one person as Mr. Churchill has put into this old-fashioned country ‘ boss,’ and reformers will do well to study this exponent of the Andrew Jackson conception of politics.”

Coming back to Dr. Cooper again, we learn that “ *Coniston* gives us the entire childhood of its heroine; in fact, it goes further than that and shows us the youth, the marriage and death of the heroine’s mother. . . . In *Coniston*, the focus of interest is not Cynthia Wetherell, but Jethro Bass; and her childhood is in quite a masterful manner a study of a man’s slow transformation under the influence of affection and trust. Jethro Bass once hoped to marry Cynthia Wetherell’s mother. . . . He chose . . . to take the first step towards the conquest of his own town, the first step towards the bossism of the whole State; and the girl’s clear, fearless eyes looking into his read him aright and knew that there could be no happiness for him where there could not also be honor. Afterwards when Jethro befriends the dead woman’s orphan daughter . . . his one great wish is that she may always be spared the knowledge of his knavery, the secret of his wealth, the sources of his power. To the reader all the under currents of dishonest politics are exposed naked and unashamed.

“ Mr. Churchill has nowhere else approached in sheer narrative power the graphic vigor of the best scenes of this book; that for instance of the wonderful ‘ Woodchuck Session ’ in which the Truro franchise is jammed through the legislature by a bit of unparalleled trickery; and the equally remarkable

interview with President Grant, in which Jethro saves the power almost wrested from him by forcing the appointment of his candidate for a second-class post office. Scenes like these . . . belong to the memorable situations in the annals of fiction. And the climax to which the story inevitably works up is a fitting conclusion to an exceptionally good piece of constructive craftsmanship; . . . the life happiness of Cynthia can be purchased by Jethro only at the price of his political downfall; and the sacrifice he makes freely. . . . To the world at large he is defeated and dethroned . . . to Cynthia he is . . . a man in whom her affection has worked a great and wonderful reformation."

In the end, after the obstacle of political war to the hilt has been removed, Cynthia marries the son of Jethro's bitterest enemy, who is himself a malefactor of great wealth. Worthington Junior is not a chip of the old block. He and his father differ vitally as to individual and corporate rights and wrongs. Cynthia refuses to marry Bob as long as his father withholds his consent. This consent Jethro manages to force from Worthington Senior before he himself abdicates the reins of power.

Coniston is more than the story of a strong man whose strength becomes his weakness; it is more than a study of Jacksonian politics and the life close to the soil of a rural New England community; it is more than a charming and inspiring love story and a series of narrative passages of unusual strength and intensity and a very high order of literary merit.

It is a serious and convincing study, almost in words of one syllable, of the genesis and rise of the

Boss in American politics; beginning in the days when his neighbors voted in Jethro Bass as head selectman of the town of Coniston because he and his lieutenants held mortgages over the heads of a majority of its qualified voters; up to the time of his decline and fall and the final subjection of his successors to the big business boss and the interstate corporation that in the evolutionary nature of things came to have progressively a larger power of patronage and reprisal.

Jethro like other successful politicians of his earlier type made himself a machine of his own. This he ruled with a rod of iron. How he did it, is sufficiently set forth through a period covering more than the middle third of the century just passed. How in turn this machine went down before a still greater one, Mr. Churchill has not chosen to show us definitely. Possibly he thought that the later demonstration was hardly necessary. Possibly he thought that others have handled the same subject sufficiently of late, in literature and journalism alike. Possibly he thought that such an attempt would stretch out the book to unmanageable length and draw the story too far afield from the localized intensity of interest that is at once its distinctive strength and charm.

Mr. Churchill is aware, as most of us are aware, that the campaign of education in those common interests that affect us all directly in America today is inevitably under way. He is aware, as many are not, that this is no fruit of a sudden growth; that it is the result of a periodic and ineradicable movement forward by lasting reform waves of the

soul of the Anglo-Saxon peoples of the world. He tells us:

"Self-examination is necessary for the moral health of nations as well as men, and it is the most hopeful of signs that in the United States we are to-day going through a period of self-examination. . . . McCaulay said in 1852, 'We now know by the clearest of all proof that universal suffrage, even united with secret voting, is no security against the establishment of arbitrary power.' James Russell Lowell a little later wrote, 'We have begun obscurely to recognize that . . . popular government is not in itself a panacea, is no better than any other form of government except as the virtue and wisdom of the people make it so.'"

Mr. Churchill in this book has helped some hundreds of thousands of his countrymen and women to realize this more than obscurely. He has done this by the most simple and direct means; by a story of the way the lust and the possession of power, wrongfully gained and abused, turns to dust and ashes in a strong man's hands by the embitterment of everything else that he holds dear in life.

Jethro Bass is a man of the people. At the same time he is very much of a Man, and the Man of the Hour in the period portrayed. And the story of his rise and fall, and of his relations with Cynthia and her lover, has a human interest about it that appeals irresistibly to all sorts and conditions of readers.

"She had left him standing there alone in the cold, divining what was in her heart as though it was in his own. How worthless was this mighty power

which he had gained, how hateful when he could not bestow the smallest fragment of it upon one whom he loved? Someone has described Hell as disqualification in the face of opportunity. Such was Jethro's torment that morning as he saw her drive away."

Mr. Churchill has chosen to accentuate silently the fact that the inevitable result of aggression, of growth like Jethro's, is to make some woman or women suffer. It does not always happen in their own families, within their own knowledge. It did less in Jethro's day than in ours. Books like *Coniston* help us to realize the fact, to diagnose the evil, and to take steps to cure it.

Coniston is a story not merely of the temptations and the failures of the strong. Will Wetherell, Cynthia's father, is a type of the ineffectual man of culture and education who washes his hands of American politics because they are too dirty for an American gentleman to mix with, and whose hell of disqualification in the face of opportunity is more chronic, if less acute, than that of Jethro Bass.

He and Cynthia enter the state capitol for the first time at the beginning of the "Woodchuck Session." "They stood hand in hand on the cool marble-paved floor of the corridor, gazing silently at the stained and battered battle-flags behind the glass, and Wetherell seemed to be listening again to the appeal of a great President of a great Nation in the time of her dire need—the soul calling on the body to fight for itself."

Wetherell feels the thrill. He goes away; and nothing comes of it. It was because of his very

lovable weakness that Cynthia's mother married him. Cynthia inherits the instinct of protectiveness and responsibility. None of Wetherell's neighbors and acquaintances after his removal from Boston to Coniston are of his own type. His daughter grows up among men and among mountains and the soul of outdoor New England passes into her. She becomes self-contained and self-reliant. She values learning for learning's sake; she reads the best books that are to be had; she teaches school as a matter of course as soon as she is old enough. Contrary to Dr. Cooper's assertion, she is distinctly a product of environment up to the time when under Jethro's guardianship she goes to town to complete her education.

Here she fails to find herself at home. "Cynthia will always remember the awe with which the first view of New York inspired her. . . . There entered into her heart that night a sense of that cruelty which is the worst cruelty of all—the cruelty of selfishness. Every man going his own pace, seeking to gratify his own aims and desires, unconscious, heedless of the want with which he rubs elbows. Her natural imagination enhanced by her life among the hills, the girl peopled the place in the street lights with all kinds of strange evil doers of whose sins she knew nothing . . . adventurers, charlatans, alert cormorants who preyed upon the unwary."

It is evident that Mr. Churchill has no great love for certain characteristic aspects of the twentieth century American city. It is characteristic of him that he has steered clear of the tempting intricacies of

metropolitan high finance; that he has continued on ground of his own choosing, which he knows as he knows the space within the four walls of his home, to set forth the common everyday results of individual and corporate greed and shirking of responsibility in words and in incidents that a child or a negro could understand.

Coniston has its faults. It adopts Thackeray's attitude — less *ex cathedra* than that of the showman who steps aside with us to show us how the wires are pulled — a little too freely for the highest literary distinction.

The same tendency is even more noticeable in his next book which Dr. Cooper passes over in silence — merely remarking that “it would be an anticlimax after *Coniston* to examine in detail *Mr. Crewe's Career*, 1908, which treats of the same order of corruption in State politics, but deals with a later generation and in a spirit of lighter comedy” — to devote some four or five hundred words to *A Modern Chronicle*.

Mr. Crewe is a new force in politics: the millionaire or multimillionaire who is not a big business boss; who has inherited money and made more; who makes up his mind to appear in the middle of the political arena as he would on the tan bark of the Horse Show; who is determined that nothing shall keep him from breaking into the lime-light and becoming a Celebrity; and who has his ancestral millions, the approval of the women of his own social circle, the unformulated demand of the masses for reform and for efficiency in public affairs, and the help of a hired army of small grafters and

malcontents of the big party machines, to back him.

In this case equally with that of *The Celebrity* Mr. Churchill has adopted the same method with equally admirable results. In the latter book, which deserves to be ranked on many counts in the same class with *Coniston*, the portrait is evidently that of a sufficiently well-known politician and newspaper proprietor of the present day. Further than this *Mr. Crewe's Career* is a very serious and effective study of the domination of the Railroad over the native state of Jethro Bass (incontestably New Hampshire) of the methods of its organized control of power and plunder, of the failure of one badly planned and worse executed revolt against it, and of the gradual rise to power of a man and a type, trained and fitted to survive and ultimately to contend on equal terms with it.

We learn in the beginning: "Jethro Bass has been dead these twenty years and his lieutenants shorn of power. An empire has arisen out of the ashes of the ancient kingdoms . . . there are no generals now, no *condottieri* who can be hired; the empire has a paid and standing army, as an empire should."

Hilary Vane, life-long friend and chief corporation counsel of Mr. Flint of New York, New Hampshire and several other states, czar of the empire in question, is commander-in-chief of the empire's legal and political forces. Hilary is one of the last extinct examples of the old school of honest grafters. His private life is above reproach. He lives alone with an elderly New England housekeeper, in an old New England house in an old New England town.

which happens to be the state capital, till his only son Austin, who has drifted West after the close of his college days, and drifted East again after being forced to shoot a man for reasons not of his own choosing, comes back to live with him.

Austin Vane, like Stephen Brice, decides to study and to practice law. He does not study and practice law and politics, however, as his father did before him. Nobody could rightfully accuse Hilary Vane of profiting dishonestly, according to his own private code of honor, by the practices by which the railroad gained and retained its ascendancy. None the less, he believes with all his heart and soul that the empire of the railroad is necessary for the preservation of law, order and satisfactory business conditions.

Austin comprehends his father's point of view perfectly, and is unwilling to accept it without reservations. He takes and wins a case against the railroad for a farmer who has been injured by a train at an unflagged crossing.

After the split comes, the two men continue for some time to live together in the same house after the manner of New England — outwardly composed, inwardly irreconcilable.

In the meantime, Humphrey Crewe has gone into politics. He decides to run for the State legislature. Concerning this Mr. Churchill remarks in passing: "For years a benighted people with a fond belief in their participation of republican institutions have elected the noble Five Hundred of the House and the staunch Twenty of the Senate.

“ Noble Five Hundreds (biggest legislature in the world) have come and gone, kicked over the traces, and even wept — to no avail. Behold that political institution of man: representative government.”

Mr. Crewe desires to be elected to the assembly on a platform of progress. He has a good roads bill, he has a forestry bill, he has bushels of others, all of which he has duly typewritten or printed and mailed to everybody of importance in the state. He sees Mr. Flint's head man of business in politics and in his residential district; somewhat unwillingly he puts up the equivalent, in U. S. currency, for political preferment; he gives garden parties to his rural neighbors, at which he displays the tact of a rhinoceros and the diplomacy of a steam locomotive; and eventually he takes his seat among the other noble 499. Here, during the course of the session, he finds his bills pigeonholed one by one, and himself regarded as a joke where he is not a source of revenue.

Victoria Flint, who has known him from childhood, is not inclined to take him over-seriously; though some months later, when he has made up his mind to run for governor on a popular anti-railroad platform, he decides that she will make exactly the kind of a wife that he needs to round out his political career.

Victoria does learn to take Austin Vane seriously, as the result of friction between him and her father and his own. Eventually she comes to discuss the question of the railroad in politics with Austin himself.

“ Conditions as they exist are the result of a revolution for which no one man is responsible. That

does not alter the fact that the conditions are wrong. But the railroads, before they consolidated, found the political boss in power, and had to pay him for favors. The citizen was the culprit then, just as he is now, because he does not take sufficient interest in his government to make it honest. We mustn't blame the railroads too severely when they grew strong for substituting their own political army to avoid being blackmailed. Long immunity has re-enforced them in the belief that they have but one duty — to pay dividends. I am afraid," he added, "that they will have to be enlightened somewhat as Pharaoh was enlightened."

Mr. Churchill, here as always, is fair and no more than fair to every factor in the problem. The main issue, the definite moral of *Coniston* and its successor, is that most of all this condition of affairs is the people's fault because they permit it. In other words, graft is the price that they pay for political negligence. Austin Vane thinks that a change is coming.

" "I believe such practices are not necessary now. . . . A new generation has come . . . a generation more jealous of its political rights, and not so willing to be rid of them by farming them out. A change has taken place even in the older men. . . . Men of this type who could be leaders are ready to assume their responsibilities, are ready to deal fairly with railroads and citizens alike. This is a matter of belief. I believe it. Mr. Flint and my father do not."

" "And the practices are — bad?" " Victoria asked.

" "They are entirely subversive of the principles of

American government, to say the least,' replied Austin grimly."

None the less, *Mr. Crewe's Career* is far from grim. There is delicious comic relief in Humphrey's dealings with all and sundry, including Alicia Pomfret (whom he finally marries after Victoria has declined the honor of rounding out his career) and other women of her class, who think that Dear Humphrey's effort to bring politics up to the level of the gentleman is only to be compared to that of titled Conservatives in England, and whose efforts to do some electioneering for him on their own account, in the vicinity of the New Hampshire summer colony where he lives, are neither highly appreciated nor brilliantly successful.

Austin refuses a practically unanimous nomination for governor against the railroad's machine candidate, when he finds that his father, whose life hangs in the balance as a result of overwork and the trouble with his son, has set his heart on winning this final victory for the empire with which he is about to sever relations.

Mr. Crewe's boom collapses like a pricked bubble after a sufficient number of ballots have been taken at the nominating convention, and after the delegates instructed to vote for him have earned and received their pay. After the machine has won for what is possibly the last time, Austin Vane goes to see Mr. Flint to deliver papers entrusted to him by his father, who is in bed, in danger of his life.

"It does not matter," said Austin, "whether the New England Railroads have succeeded in nominating and electing a governor to whom they can dic-

tate, and who will reappoint the Railroad Commission and other state officials in their interest. The practices by which you have controlled this state, Mr. Flint, are doomed.

“However necessary these practices may have been from your point of view, they violated every principle of free government, and were they to continue, the nation to which we belong would inevitably decay and deserve the scorn of the world. Those practices depended on a condition . . . which is in itself the most serious of ills in a republic — the ignorant disregard of the voter.

“. . . You have asked me what in my opinion would happen if you ceased . . . to take an interest in the political affairs of this State.

“I believe . . . that the public opinion which exists to-day would protect your property, and I base that belief on the good sense of the average American voter. . . . On the other hand . . . the corporation will suffer much more if a delayed justice is turned into vengeance.

“You ask me what I should do. I should recognize frankly the new conditions . . . I should announce openly that from this day onward the New England Railroads depended for fair play on an enlightened public . . . and I think your trust would be well founded and your course vindicated.”

From which it may seem that Austin Vane in his political beliefs was somewhat in advance of his time. Readers may judge for themselves if he and Victoria both were not in other ways equally above the average of people that one is apt to meet any day in

New Hampshire or New York or any one of forty more free and sovereign states.

In the end: "They spoke quietly of places they had both visited, of people whom they had known in common, until they came to the hills . . . the very threshold of Paradise on that September evening. . . . 'I sometimes wonder,' she said, 'whether happiness and achievement go together.' . . . And yet would the eagle ever attempt the great flights if contentment were on the plains? Find the main spring of achievement and you hold in your hand the secret of the world's mechanism. Some aver that it is a woman.

"Do the gods ever confer the rarest of gifts upon him to whom they have given pinions? Do they mate him ever with another who soars as high as he, who circles higher, that he may circle higher still? Who can say?"

For those who like their stories to end unfinished, with their problems unsolved, *Mr. Crewe's Career* presents an excellent study of America in solution, and on its way — somewhere — to-day and to-morrow. Austin Vane and his wife are obviously representatives of the little leaven that is taking its time about leavening the whole lump; quite as obviously as they are, like Cynthia Wetherell, children of New England and its mountains. Just how far Austin is also symbolic of the new leadership that comes from the West and Middle West to-day is doubtful. Stephen Brice was born again through contact with men like Lincoln. Austin and Victoria Vane have to find their inspiration in one another and the open air. Austin and his closest followers are as obvi-

ously of the new order as Mr. Flint, Austin's father and the rest of the mercenary forces of the empire are of the old. And yet Austin and his friends and clients, Jabe Jenney, Zeb Meader, John Redbrook and all the rest, are of the common people. They are of the soil; they have the strength of it; they are real and vital, as their interests and personalities are the common every-day experiences of the great democratic and inevitable values of life.

They have the grim humor and shrewd foresight of their race. They see through the pretense and self-exploitation of Mr. Crewe. They are able to make a huge joke of his downfall. At the same time they are equally ready to realize that the movement that Austin Vane represents has come to stay; and there is no doubt whatever about their intention to stay with it.

It is probable that if *Mr. Crewe's Career* had been published anonymously by the same firm, and had had its fair share of luck at the start, it would be better known and esteemed than it is to-day. At present it suffers temporary and partial eclipse from the inevitable comparison with *Coniston*, of whose author it may justly be said that no American novelist since the days of *The Scarlet Letter* has so finely and inspiringly set forth the soul of New England on paper.

Mr. Crewe's Career, like the author's earlier books, is admirably adapted in subject and method to represent the period of which it treats. If in its diversity of modern interests and means of approach to its central problem, it lacks the dignity and classic severity of *Coniston*, the fault is quite as much

the period's as the author's. As it is, there is probably no American novel of anything like the first rank that is so successful, in so many ways, in handling the hardest (and the most complex) period of the world's history to handle in fiction or any other art — that in which we are living to-day.

Mr. Crewe's Career, like *Coniston*, shows a sustained growth of power and flexibility of equipment in Mr. Churchill's art that should, some day, if he lives, go far to reconcile achievement with his admittedly high ambitions and his notoriously painstaking method of work, which has caused him more than once to devote periods of two, three or four years to the production of a single volume.

In *A Modern Chronicle*, 1910, Dr. Cooper thinks it is rather exasperating to see by how narrow a margin Mr. Churchill has missed doing a big piece of work. He also wonders that no one has taken the trouble to point out that in all his earlier books the portrayal of women was one of Mr. Churchill's serious deficiencies. He also calls Dorothy Manners colorless, and Cynthia Wetherell an impossible symbol of all the virtues at once. He is surprised to find in Honora Leffingwell "a woman who is really alive, a woman full of illogical moods and caprices (not a man's woman like the other two), a woman who, take her from start to finish, is very nearly, though not quite, a consistent piece of characterization. . . . Her second marriage for love proves as great a failure as her first marriage for ambition. . . . Then Peter Erwin, her childhood friend, drifts into view again, and we leave her on the brink of a

third matrimonial experiment. Just a succession of episodes, you see; the story of a woman who does not know her own mind. The disillusion and unrest of the first marriage is good workmanship; so is also the dragging weariness and heartache of that year in the divorce colony. But the book lacks finality. There is no good reason for supposing that the third marriage, the marriage of sympathy and pity, will turn out one whit better than the other two."

Dr. Cooper stands self-convicted on more occasions than one in his series of *Some American Story Tellers*, 1911, of writing down or up to his particular section of the literary grandstand; of carelessness, slovenliness in literary finish, superficiality, and of conscious or unconscious misrepresentation. In this particular instance it is no more than charitable to suppose that pressure of work prevented revision.

In conclusion, under the head of *HIS FUTURE*, he gives Mr. Churchill between three and four hundred words to the effect that he is popular, that his popularity remains a constant quality, that he builds his books solidly, with a scrupulous regard for truth — qualities that Mr. Cooper professes to admire even where he fails to exemplify them himself.

He further suggests that Mr. Churchill "has been taken rather too seriously by the present generation in the same way that Mrs. Humphry Ward has been overrated by her contemporaries. Of the two writers, it seems a fairly safe prediction that Mr. Churchill has a rather better chance of maintaining his present level in the years to come. He is still young and his later work shows a real gain in the knowledge of what

fiction as a serious literary form should mean. There is every reason to believe that his best and biggest work is yet to come."

Inasmuch as Dr. Cooper begins his little final pronouncement with the statement that "regarding Mr. Churchill's place in American fiction, it is possible to speak with more confidence than in the case of most of his contemporaries," there is to anyone who calls to mind Mrs. Ward's present age, and the deteriorating quality of most of her later novels, an unconscious humor about Dr. Cooper's placing of Mr. Churchill that comes as a refreshing relief at the close of an article which for priggishness, pretentiousness, narrowness, amateurishness, superficiality, general futility and absence of inspiration and critical discernment has rarely been rivaled in any American periodical — not even in *The Bookman* itself.

In a more extended review of *A Modern Chronicle*, in the same copy of *The Bookman*, by Miss Jeannette L. Gilder — equally an example of how not to criticize — we learn that "Honora Leffingwell is of the Lily Bart type, but I do not find her as appealing as Mrs. Wharton's heroine. I could have wept over the sad fate of Lily, but the tragedies of Honora's fate leave me cold. There was really no excuse for her goings on unless you set it down to temperament. . . . I cannot help feeling that Peter Erwin was a man of great courage. . . . Mr. Churchill has indeed given us a modern chronicle, and there is nothing about the way divorces are obtained that he does not tell us. I think, however, that he is mistaken in the attitude of 'society'

toward the divorces. Even when the post-divorced husband stands waiting at the church, society is seldom shocked if the contracting parties belong to its inner circle.

“Mr. Churchill has written a well worked out story. . . . It is very true to certain phases of life as lived in America to-day, unfortunately too true. And it is a warning to husbands not to neglect their wives for business, particularly when their wives are young and attractive.”

We are inclined to hope that Mr. Churchill will take the reception of his last book as a warning not to neglect his legitimate business and political activities in literature for the cult of the superfluous women.

Such a woman Honora showed herself unmistakably to be in the course of the story, though several men wanted to marry her, and three of them succeeded. Hitherto Mr. Churchill's heroines have been men's women, as a rule sympathetically handled, and admirable and inspiring portraits and characterizations. Honora, like her suitors, is well enough done in a way; she is sufficiently true to life to make us feel, when we have finished the book, that the author and ourselves have wasted an undue amount of time and thought on her.

In her own estimation, and in the minds of many who see and suffer most from her, the importance of that particular phase and type of American womanhood has been decidedly overrated.

We are inclined to feel that Mr. Churchill has fallen for the moment into the popular error. None the less, we may hope that in *The Inside of the*

Cup, whose publication is announced for 1913, Mr. Churchill will return to wider fields of usefulness where former experience is able to make him more convincingly at home.

In the meantime, Dr. Cooper to the contrary, there is no vast technical advance over *Coniston* and *Mr. Crewe's Career* displayed by *A Modern Chronicle*, and the problem of Mr. Churchill's literary future remains as much to be worked out in the minds of his most sympathetic and discerning critics as in the varying factors of his own personality.

One thing at least is certain concerning this present day American novelist and his work. If in Twentieth Century American literature Norris is already immortal as poet and prophet, Phillips almost equally so as a radical and social vivisectioner, while Stewart Edward White bids fair to join the two others as a pioneer and spokesman for outdoor America, it is highly probable that, as long as American fiction is viewed in the mass and detail, the name of the author of *Richard Carvel* and *Coniston*, the creator of Stephen Brice and Austin Vane, will be remembered as the creator of an ideal of the American gentleman (in the best sense of two much abused terms) that this century of all centuries is very ill prepared to do without.

In an era of mob rule in literature and in life, Winston Churchill stands distinguished by qualities that old St. Louis and Annapolis (where he was graduated in 1894) still inculcate; qualities that still make for justice, courage, truth, dignity and the distinction of conscious rectitude; that are as comparatively unknown in their most finished form, to most of us

nowadays, as they seem to be to Dr. Cooper and the majority of his fellow-critics and partisans of an artistic modernity that is in no true sense either modern or artistic.

There is an unmistakable likeness between Mr. Churchill himself as we see him through his books and through his own most successful male portraits — with the exception of Jethro Bass — and the heroes of Thackeray, of which Colonel Newcome is at once the prototype and finest flower.

And it is not too much to expect that in the minds of posterity, throughout the Anglo-Saxon world, the novels and characterizations of these two authors will remain permanently paired.

VIII

CULTURE AND EDITH WHARTON

"The atmosphere of that big house, with its army of servants, the impossibility of doing anything for himself, and the feeling of hopeless insulation from the vivid and necessitous sides of life, galled him greatly . . . these people who seemed to lead an existence as it were smothered under their own social importance . . . they were good specimens of their kind, neither soft nor luxurious as things went in a degenerate and extravagant age; they evidently tried to be simple. . . . Fate had been too much for them. What human spirit could emerge untrammled and unshrunk from that great encompassing host of material advantages?" John Galsworthy, *The Patrician*, 1910.

"As cleverness is the presiding genius that sits at Mrs. Atherton's elbow keeping one constantly responding to the digs and winks, if one may speak vulgarly, of its sparkling personality, so with Mrs. Wharton it is breeding. Breeding is, as it were, a luxury of hers, a cult, and one is subconsciously, and yet consciously, aware of her behind the book, seated in a graceful and composed attitude, while she arranges the incidents and characters according to her intricate design." Hildegard Hawthorne, *The Burning Bush*.

THIS woman's estimate of our most distinguished woman in American literature, taken from the final essay in *Woman and Other Women*, 1908, where Mrs. Wharton's work is contrasted unfavorably with Gorky's *Mother*, comes close enough to the truth to be taken as something more than the expression of mere personal prejudice or literary facility.

From the point of view of modernity and literature for literature's sake alone, one may say offhand that, in *The House of Mirth*, 1905, and *The Fruit of*

the Tree, 1907, Mrs. Wharton has achieved the two biggest, and at the same time the two most artistic, novels that any one woman has ever written.

Purists in technique have some excuse for preferring Jane Austen, George Sand at her best technically — in her simplest and most human tales of French country life — or certain women of the modern Parisian school of fiction, whose view of life is often far from simple, and as frequently inhuman as provincial.

It is comparatively easy to pick flaws in Mrs. Wharton's prose as well as her verse; her occasional blemishes stand out the sharper in contrast with her more uniform excellencies of finish and decorative scheme.

Any direct comparison between George Eliot and Edith Wharton, book by book and page by page, operates adversely against both. Mrs. Wharton at her best is distinctly the greater artist, just as George Eliot is incomparably the broader and finer personality, and a human document of more lasting and sincere significance.

To say to-day that the Englishwoman has the deeper wisdom of the heart is not so much to reflect on varying personal capacities and limitations as to recognize clearly that each is in her way a very creditable type and product of diverse environments: one of middle-class Mid-Victorian England; the other of patrician Boston, the Berkshires, New York — of a twentieth century America, where a government of money by money and for money, and its most immediate gratifications and capitalized graces and refinements, obtains to-day.

As a human being Mrs. Wharton's personal equation remains to be worked out in detail, if not in mass; as an artist she is essentially an academician. And as an academician of far higher and finer powers and broader versatility than the usual run of literary and artistic standpatters, she challenges criticism. And if she has any volition in the matter, being so evidently a product of the temperamental and patrician environment, she will doubtless herself prefer to be so criticised, differentiated, distinguished.

Merely a moderate critical capacity and acquaintance with her work is requisite to discover in Mrs. Wharton an intellectual scope placing her immeasurably above the average bridge-playing woman of her own social class and far in advance of the mob of men and women writers who, for our sins to-day, inflict modern literature and journalism upon us — and to discover at times flashes even of the insight of first-rate genius that in happier circumstances might have made of her a great poet or a great scientist.

Anyone who has read the bulk of her work — *The Greater Inclination*, *The Valley of Decision*, *The House of Mirth*, *The Fruit of the Tree*, *Ethan Frome*, and certain of her later failures to qualify for the high standard set by the last two — is bound to feel at first that she is the one exception in ten thousand that proves the rule; later one more instance of final failure in the mob of American women of exceptional cleverness and misdirected energy who seize or seek to seize the shadow of life in our national race for success while at the same time letting the substance go.

It is perhaps unfair to Mrs. Wharton to lay so much stress on the element of cleverness in her early works as Mr. Henry D. Sedgwick does in his elaborate criticism of her method and material in *The New American Type*. At the same time his opinion is worth quoting. He says of what he considers her early period of apprenticeship: "How clever, how wonderfully clever! . . . It is a game that Mrs. Wharton always plays, pitting herself against a situation to see how much she can score. To many people the point she plays most brilliantly is the episode. . . . In Mrs. Wharton the aptitude is not single but a combination. It includes the sense of proportion . . . so much to bring the dramatis personæ into the ring, so much for the preliminary bouts, so much for the climax, and finally the proper length for the recessional. . . . Some readers deem the dialogue the strong point of Mrs. Wharton's game. . . . Others . . . prefer the author's own observations and comments. Still others like the epigrams or the dramatic interest of the incident itself."

He goes on to say that the fundamental fact of Mrs. Wharton's femininity is conspicuous in many ways. "Her movements are always feminine movements, her case, her poise are always feminine. . . . This fundamental nervous restlessness shows itself in all Mrs. Wharton's stories, in her rapidity of thought, of phrase, of dialogue, in her intensity, her eagerness, her rush of thought. The American dash, this cascade-like brilliancy of motion makes no doubt, for most readers, the interest of the stories."

Calvin Winter, in *The Bookman* for May, 1911, says: "When her first collection of short stories

appeared in 1899, under the title of *The Greater Inclination*, the most salient fact about them and the one which brought swift recognition, was their mature power, their finished art. . . . The first thing that must strike a discriminating critic . . . is that he has to do with an author of rare mental subtlety and unusual breadth of culture; a worldly-wise person with rather wide cosmopolitan sympathies yet with a rigid prejudice of social caste. . . . Next to authors her favorite heroes are artists. . . . Her understanding of human nature, her relentless pursuit of a motive, down to its ultimate analysis, her deliberate stripping off of the very last veils of pretense and showing us the sordidness and cowardice of human souls in all their nudity, are unsurpassed by any other novelist living."

Mr. Winter instances as epigrammatic touches from the short stories, three women: one who dreaded ideas as much as a draft in the back; a second, one of the women who make refinement vulgar; a third, most of whose opinions were heirlooms; and a political boss "who had gulped his knowledge standing, as he had snatched his food from lunch counters; the wonder of it lay in his extraordinary power of assimilation"; and the epigrams "Genius is of small use to a woman who does not know how to do her hair" and "To many women such a man would be as unpardonable as to have one's carriage seen at the door of a cheap dressmaker."

In so far as the influence of Henry James and his most facile followers is predominant in certain of Mrs. Wharton's early and later stories, and in so far as she consciously or unconsciously panders to that

element of intellectual and cultured egotism that assumes distinction as one would assume a gown from the Rue de la Paix and pose in it before a mirror, Mr. Sedgwick is justified in his further contention that "her artistic and literary cultivation is distinctly American in the sense that it immediately displays its acquisitions and ownership. . . . Her culture declares the most appetizing dividends. She showers her references and allusions to art and letters with the ready cleverness and lavish prodigality with which she scatters her epigrams."

This kind of thing does not win her lasting respect or a large reading public among the men, but there are other elements in her make-up that do. She goes deeper than mere superficial brilliancy and cleverness for the sake of cleverness now and then, in her first works as well as in her later ones.

The Greater Inclination includes a prose tale, *A Journey*, whose intensity of realistic horror at its climax goes far to rival Poe. In *The Pelican* we have a short story of something less than novellette length, handled to some extent in Mr. James's own manner, that goes a step beyond anything he has ever attempted or achieved in his briefer fiction. Like many of Mr. James's own earlier studies of American life abroad, it is a human document in contemporary sociology from the point of view of an unattached and scholarly man of the class which Mr. James and Mrs. Wharton naturally and inimitably interpret. For the art of Mrs. Wharton, when it escapes the woman's tendency to pose and strive to dazzle, too often assumes the attitude towards humanity and the rest of the cosmos of an elderly semi-

male Minerva sprung full fledged from the brain of some scholar and man of leisure, whose attitude towards life is not invariably and inevitably what may be described as distinctly jovial in the conventional sense of the term.

On the contrary, there is a certain suggestion of Bessy Amherst's father, Mr. Langhope in *The Fruit of the Tree*. He is said to have possessed indolent acuteness of mind, but he appears to have been a father and a grandfather both, without recognizing or appreciating the fact. We are told that, "if he viewed the spectacle of life at a big country house on Long Island more objectively than the younger and more rudimentary members of the house party, it was not because he had outlived the sense of its importance, but because years of experience had familiarized him with its minutest details; and this familiarity with the world he lived in had bred a profound contempt for any other."

There is no doubt that Mrs. Wharton at times shares this attitude of Mr. James and Mr. Langhope. There is no doubt that she would prefer to live more in the library (if anything worthy of the name is to be found at a typical Long Island country house) than Mr. Langhope seems to have done.

There is no doubt that her literary faculty did spring forth full-grown and full-armed (or nearly so) into the light of day at a comparatively mature age; and that partly as the result of temperament, partly of environment, partly through the mere passage of time, it contained and contains comparatively little of the elasticity of youth and youth's divine capacity of readjustment and realignment.

There is no doubt, however, that, up to the time of the publication of *The Fruit of the Tree*, Mrs. Wharton, in her literary growth and expansion, did wonderfully well with what she had.

If, as Mr. Sedgwick suggests, her talent savors too much of the result of reading and a second-hand acquaintance with life, enforced by the artificial standards and the patrician exclusiveness of the class that she represents; if her romance is either artificial or conspicuously absent, and her realism incomplete and inconclusive; if she never has or had the child's heart and the child's sense of wonder and delight in life as a first-hand medium, which the world's greatest novelists have shared with the world's greatest poets: there is comparatively little to be gained by quarreling with her for all that.

If she has failed to give us what the world rightly expects from the world's most inspired and inspiring interpreters in prose and verse, she has, on the other hand, given us a great deal that we may rightly thank her for. She has done more than a little to further the cause of literary art and literary artisanship in America; and there is very little more than the irreducible minimum of morbidity, decadence and cynicism in the handling of such material as she, in common with Mr. James, has sometimes chosen to handle.

There is noticeable in her at times her sex's tendency to give her sex away. This appears in *The Pelican*, though she speaks through the mouth of a man; and on the whole the exposure of fashionably false standards of culture among American society and club women is well warranted. Concerning the

heroine of this extremely modern tragedy in little, we are told: "I don't think nature meant her to be intellectual. . . . Her mother, the celebrated Astarte Pratt, had written a poem in blank verse on the Fall of Man; one of her aunts was dean of a girls' college, another had translated Euripides. . . . With such a family the poor child's fate was sealed in advance. . . .

". . . She was very pretty when I first knew her, with the sweet straight nose and short upper lip of the cameo brooch divinity, humanized by a dimple that flowered in her cheek when anything was said possessing the outward attributes of humor without its intrinsic quality."

Her marriage results disastrously, leaving her with a very small boy to bring up and put through college. The man who tells the story helps to start her on her lecture platform career of crime. "The next time that I saw her was at New York, when she had become so fashionable that it was a part of the whole duty of woman to be seen at her lectures. . . . The subject of the discourse (I think it was Ruskin) was clearly of minor importance not only to my friend but to the throng of well-dressed and absent-minded ladies who rustled in late and undisguisedly lost themselves in the study of each other's apparel. . . .

"I suspect that everyone of the ladies would have remained away had they been sure that none of the others were coming. As I listened I reproached myself for ever having suspected her of self-deception in saying that she took no pleasure in her work. I was sure now that she did it only for Launcelot,

and, judging from the size of the audience and the price of the tickets, I concluded that Launcelot was having a liberal education."

He was. But literary fashions change; and competition in supplying the demand of the class that his mother catered to is on the increase. When the annalist next sees her some years later, "she nervously gathered her cloak over a gown that asked only to be concealed and shrank into a seat behind a line of prehensile bipeds blocking the aisle of the car."

Her friend joins her other friends in mapping a new course of platform dietetics strictly up to date and warranted obscurely fashionable; and helps to send her out on the road again. Years pass; Launcelot grows up, goes to Harvard, graduates and marries. His mother continues marvelously well preserved, wonderfully well gowned, and almost as fashionable among the newly rich and their other exploiters as in her first flood tide of success.

At the same time her business rivals and those who have known her longest have their private doubts about her boy's age and his inability to support himself. The catastrophe occurs in Florida, where the annalist meets Launcelot as a stranger, meets his mother also, and against his will is dragged into the final *éclaircissement*.

"We thought she was the most popular lecturer in the United States, my wife and I did. We were awfully proud of it, too, I can tell you. . . .' 'How can you, Launcelot, how can you! When you didn't need the money any longer, I spent it all on the children, you know I did' . . . 'Yes, on lace christening dresses and life-size rocking horses with real

manes. The kind of thing children can't do without.' 'Oh, Launcelot, Launcelot, I loved them so! How can you believe such falsehoods about me?'"

The annalist suggests that very little can be gained by prolonging the interview. Launcelot agrees with him abruptly and departs in haste. They hear the lessening sound of his footsteps down the hotel corridor.

"When they ceased, I approached Mrs. Annerly, who had sunk into a chair. I held out my hand and she took it without a trace of resentment on her ravaged face. 'I sent his wife a real sealskin jacket at Christmas,' she said with the tears running down her cheeks."

This story is almost as unique in Mrs. Wharton's own collection as it is *sui generis* in the whole category of modern short stories. It is an eminently successful experiment. It opens up a field which a more disciplined and less diversified talent might have worked considerably longer with substantial profit to itself and others. It is evidently an experiment that Mrs. Wharton has not seen fit to follow up. Her insight into social shams, intellectual snobbery, and the parasites of the lecture platform is suggestive. The new light that she throws on the indirect degradation achieved by fictitious fashions in literature is well enough in its way. We have only to compare this story with Mark Twain's *The Man Who Corrupted Hadleyburg* and the man's honest hatred of a lie or special interest or pretense of any sort, to see clearly where Mrs. Wharton stands here in her first book. On the whole, Mr. Sedgwick's estimate of her

picturesqueness of pose is fully justified. Miss Hawthorne goes further.

“Mrs. Wharton,” she says, “writes with a more deliberate art, with a satisfying finish. She is wholly devoid of humor. But humor as an asset in the world in which her creations move would be absolutely undesirable. These people must take each other and be taken with the utmost seriousness. One whole-hearted laugh would melt their icicle existence entirely away . . . we hear every whisper of the actors who play their carefully thought-out parts with careful discretion. There will be no shrieks, no mess, no broken heads or hearts. Even if there is at times an appearance of these distressing relics of primitiveness we know it is only an appearance. . . . The play being over, we applaud, we rise and we depart precisely as we entered.” Possibly Miss Hawthorne thinks she does. Any counsel of perfection, any art that rings as true, considered as art merely, as that of *The House of Mirth* or *The Fruit of the Tree* — which can hold the average reader as long as either of these books can — is bound to have some lasting effect both on readers of this sort and critics more discerning if less patient professionally.

Whether Mrs. Wharton could draw another type of men and women may be neither here nor there in Miss Hawthorne’s estimation. In reality, regarding Mrs. Wharton herself as a type, the matter is of some importance in any general estimate of our national literary assets present and to come.

Miss Hawthorne tells us that “there are a great many persons who move through just such a world as

she depicts, and manage this big business of living just as she indicates is assuredly true. It all exists, and Mrs. Wharton is interested in its portrayal. She does it excellently, if somewhat self-consciously, and we must needs be grateful, in a hurried age, for evidences of a love of perfection for its own sake."

This love of perfection for its own sake to some extent defeats itself in *The Valley of Decision*. Mrs. Wharton has chosen a big theme: the whole movement of Europe towards freedom at the period approximating the French Revolution. She does not measure up to it. She does not begin to. Her actors are still actors; her patricians with liberal aspirations are no more real flesh and blood creations and inspiring voices of the mind and soul of man than are the conventional, careful studies of the average scholarly historian. Her multitudes in the valley of eighteenth century judgment have more the effect of supers marching and counter-marching on a crowded stage than that of elemental and evolutionary forces demanding a reckoning.

She has failed in her aim in passing (because her aim is not essentially to drive straight to the heart of things), and in her progress towards greater power and a clearer delineation of the modern type that she so successfully represents.

Of her scholarship and method here Mr. Sedgwick has this to say: "Are not the ornaments too clinquant; do not the decorations assert themselves too presumptuously and mar the softer and more harmonic colors of her groundwork. . . . If Mrs. Wharton could gather matter, shear wool, as it were, from *William Meister*, *La Chatreuse de Parme* . . . (and

from sundry memoirs and other earlier novels) . . . and make an interesting novel, one might fairly say that she had done admirably to use whatever material was adapted to her purpose. . . . One could hardly go so far in praise of *The Valley of Decision* as to think of it as creating life out of its literary material. It did not do that. It made a very interesting and agreeable book."

Of this novel Mr. Calvin Winter says in *The Bookman* for May, 1911: "She was saturated to her finger tips with the historical facts of the period, the motley and confusing tangle of petty dukedoms, the warring claims of Austria and Spain. She gave us not merely a broad canvas but a moving panorama of the life of those restless times presenting with a certain dramatic power the discontent of the masses, the petty intrigues of Church and aristocracy, the gilded uselessness of the typical fine lady with her *cavaliere servente*, her pet monkey and her parrot; the brutal ignorance of the peasantry; the disorder and license of the Bohemian world, the strolling players and mountebanks — in short, all the various strata and substrata of the social life of the times. . . . Odo Valesca and Fulvia Vivaldi sacrifice their happiness to the obligations of rank, a prince's duty to his people; and they do this not in the spirit of generous sacrifice, but rather because they recognize the impossibility of doing anything else."

Mr. Sedgwick has comparatively little fault to find with *The House of Mirth*. Concerning this he says: "Her mastery of the episode is as dashing as ever and more delicate. The chapters are a succession of tableaux admirably posed. They remind

one of the succession of prints which constitute *The Rake's Progress*. Like the rake, Lily Bart proceeds downward from point to point, from Trenor circle to Gormer circle, from the Gormers to Norma Hatch, from Norma to millinery . . . each stage is a distinct episode, a scene which Hogarth, with Sir Joshua to paint Lily's picture, might have portrayed. . . . Her luxurious, artistic and literary information is never put obviously forth, nevertheless unjustly perhaps, we cannot shake off a somewhat uncomfortable suspicion that a great deal of the book is the product of culture rather than of life itself. . . . It is her feeling for composition that causes her to disregard both determinism and realism; this she deliberately sacrifices for the sake of obtaining the desired emphasis upon the figure of central interest. . . . This mastery of composition is the great artistic success of the book and justifies its immense success."

There is a certain determinism and a realism of a sort in *The House of Mirth*, none the less. The realism is spread on so thinly or so infrequently that one rarely notices it save as an occasional shadow to accentuate the author's high lights. The determinism is evident in the sense that Lily Bart is fated from the first to sink lower and lower, and in the fact that Mrs. Wharton is determined temperamentally that Lily shall continue a picturesque heroine to the end.

If Lily and her creator had had more red blood, and less blue blood or mere anæmic sawdust in their veins, the heroine might have realized life at last as she sank deeper and deeper towards the bed rock of existence as men and women have made it in America

to-day. The author might have varied her treatment gradually through each successive circle of Lily's Inferno. In the final tragedy she might come to grips with life herself — in a style, and in a setting that somehow should have represented more of the misery, more of the struggle and its transient rewards, its doubtful prophecies and promises, for millions on Manhattan Island, than the narrow stage setting here provided for the final appearance of the ineffectual central figure.

And just so far as Lily Bart is ineffectual, incompetent, unfit to rouse any genuine interest or sympathy from any man or woman not of her own type, just so far we are constrained to feel that Mrs. Wharton is ineffectual and incompetent herself; that she has been trying to gain and retain our attention under false pretenses; that, on the whole, whatever the author's intention, the book tends to over-emphasize false and artificial values; that the author's time and energy to a great extent has been wasted as well as our own.

None the less the book may be profitably studied technically, and there is a great deal in it worth quoting for one reason or another. We find Lily Bart, who has been brought up by her mother to believe that acquiescence in dinginess is evidence of stupidity, sitting in the Grand Central Station between trains one warm summer afternoon in the year of grace 1902 or thereabouts. We are supposed to ask if it was possible that she belonged to the same race as the commuters and other transients. "The dinginess, the crudity of the average section of womanhood made her feel how highly specialized

she was. . . . Everything about her was at once vigorous and exquisite, at once strong and fine."

A man of her own class meets her here by chance. "He had a confused sense that she must have cost a great deal to make, that a great many dull and ugly people must in some mysterious way have been sacrificed to produce her. He was aware that the qualities distinguishing her from the herd were chiefly external." She has tea with him, unchaperoned, at his rooms near by; she is seen by another man who knows them both, on her way out and back to the train that is to take her to the next country house on her round of visits; and in this first false step in the eyes of her world the whole action of the book and her own impulse toward tragedy begins.

It is true that her point of view has already been formed — hopelessly. "What a miserable thing it is to be a woman . . . I even know a girl who lives in a flat. . . . Oh I know. . . . But I said *marriageable*. . . . Your coat is a little shabby . . . but who cares. . . . If I were shabby no one would have me; a woman is asked out as much for her clothes as herself."

It is true that she is the product of fairly typical American conditions. "Ruling the turbulent element called home was the vigorous and determined figure of a mother still young enough to dance her dresses to rags, while the hazy outline of a neutral tinted father filled an intermediate space between the butler and the man who came to wind the clocks. . . . Lily seldom saw her father by daylight. All day he was 'down-town' and in winter it was long

after nightfall when she heard his fagged step on the stairs and his hand on the schoolroom door. . . . In summer when he joined them for a Sunday at Southampton or Newport he was even more effaced and silent than in winter. It seemed to tire him to rest. . . .

“Generally . . . Mrs. Bart and Lily went to Europe for the summer and before the steamer was halfway over Mr. Bart had dipped below the horizon. . . . For the most part he was never mentioned or thought of till his patient stooping figure presented itself on the New York dock as a buffer between the magnitude of his wife’s luggage and the restrictions of the American Customhouse. . . . Lily could not recall the time when there was money enough, and in some vague way her father always seemed to blame for the deficiency.”

We are told that Mrs. Bart was famous for the unlimited effect that she produced on limited means; and that to the lady in question and her acquaintance there was “something heroic in living as though one were much richer than one’s bank book denoted”; and we may assume that this kind of thing is also fairly typical here and there in America nowadays.

We are made to feel that it was inevitable that the child of such parents should be handicapped, after their death (“It was a relief to Lily when her father died.” Mrs. Bart died of a “deep disgust of dinginess and ineffectual retrenchment.”) by a mania for doing as her mother had done and a very small personal income, together with Bridge debts, milliner’s and dressmaker’s bills and other incidentals that showed an increasing tendency to compli-

cate the otherwise well ordered and harmonious currents of her life. We are informed that Lily played Bridge not because she liked it, but because she had to in order to hold her job — and to recoup her debts.

This becomes increasingly difficult after she has become talked about and has failed to entangle a young multi-millionaire brought up in the odor of comparative sanctity, whose mother learns at the last moment the inside history of the woman her son intends to marry.

Not long after this Lily lets her host for the time being and the husband of her dearest friend, also for the time being, take a little flier in stocks for her. It is not till considerably later that she realizes the exact formula of the conventional Wall Street deal, wherein a pretty girl minus capital and a Wall Street magnate minus conventional morals, of a type that is passing, are the *dramatis personæ*. When she does learn what is expected of her, she repudiates her obligations with what we are supposed to believe virtuous indignation. The Trenor circle is closed to her; and she descends to that of the Gormers and other newly rich people, to whom she can be useful in other ways besides serving merely as an unpaid social secretary to her hostess for the day and hour.

In the meantime she has come fairly close to falling in love with Selden, the middle-aged professional man at whose rooms we find her in the first chapter. He is as near a hero as anyone in the book. He is as near in love with her as he can be without making her see that it is his destiny to marry her and to get her out of the mess she has made of her life,

and that he trusts her as well as any woman that he could marry deserves to be trusted.

Of him we are told that he had "the keenly modeled dark features which, in a land of amorphous types, gave him the air of belonging to a more specialized race, of carrying the impress of a concentrated past. Expansive persons found him a little dry, and very young girls thought him sarcastic."

He is not making money as fast as he might. He is not crudely tainted with commercialism. He manages to get a good deal out of life as it is. He wants more.

"My idea of success, he said, is personal freedom . . . Freedom from worries . . . from everything; from money, from poverty, from care and anxiety, from all the material accidents. To keep a kind of republic of the spirit, . . . that's what I call success."

Later he inquires: "Is there any final test of genius but success?" Lily replies: "Success?" She hesitated. "Why, to get as much as one can out of life I suppose. It's a relative quality after all. Isn't that your idea of it?" They fail to settle the question definitely then and there. This is apparently one of Lily Bart's rare moments. Here as well as later, she is as far from realizing, as her creator is, that success consists in finding yourself by helping others to do the same, in interpreting or administering, truly and justly, some place or province of life for the sake of the work and the rest of the world before your own; in subordinating yourself and your interest, whatever your

powers and possessions, to an efficient minor partnership in the work of the world and the search for ultimate truth.

Such is the method of science and true philosophy, ancient and modern. And Mrs. Wharton is about as little of a scientist as she is a humorist or a Stoic.

There is another side to the book in the epigrammatic echoes of life in that section of the "Smart Set" where Lily Bart found herself most at home. "She seemed to exist only as a hostess, not from any exaggerated instinct of hospitality, as because she could not sustain life except in a crowd." "It was simply inhuman of Pragy to go off now. She says her sister is going to have a baby . . . as if that were anything to having a house party." "As if anyone could help having Carry Fisher! It *was* foolish of her to get that second divorce. . . . Carry always overdoes things . . . but she said the only way to get a penny out of Fisher was to divorce him and make him pay alimony, and poor Carry has to consider every penny!" "Have you noticed how *all* the husbands like her? All, I mean, except her own?" "You mean she'd shock him and he'd bore her. Well, that's not such a bad beginning you know . . . and as for getting what she wants in the long run, commend me to the nasty woman."

There are other comments, more searching, on human weakness and human inconsistency. "No insect hangs its nest on so frail a thread as those that will sustain the weight of human vanity, and the sense of being of importance even among the insignificant was enough to restore to Miss Bart the gratifying consciousness of power." "The civilized

instinct finds a subtler pleasure in making use of an antagonist than of confounding him." "He enjoyed spectacular effects and was not insensible to the part that money plays in their protection; all he asked was that the very rich should live up to their calling as stage managers, and not spend their money in a dull way." "She liked their elegance, their lightness, their lack of emphasis, even the self-assurance which at times was so like obtuseness, now seemed the sign of social ascendancy. . . . Already she felt allegiance to their standards, acceptance of their limitations, a disbelief in the things they did not believe in, a contemptuous pity for the people who were not able to live as they lived. . . . That very afternoon they had seemed full of brilliant qualities, now she saw that they were merely dull in a bad way."

So much the intrusion of her own sordid experiences, and the fact that she finds nowhere outside her own family a friend to whom to turn, has begun to teach Lily Bart.

Again we are informed: "Don't you think . . . that the people who find fault with society are apt to regard it as an end — not as a means, just as the people who despise money feel as if its only use was to be kept in bags and gloated over. Isn't it fairer to look at them both as opportunities which may be used stupidly or intelligently according to the capacity of the user? . . . The queer thing about society is that the people who regard it as an end are those who are in it, and not the critics on the fence. It's just the other way with most shows . . . the audience may be under the illusion,

but the actors know that real life is on the other side of the footlights. The people who take society as an escape from work are putting it to its proper use."

Again Mrs. Wharton tells us: "I don't underrate the decorative side of life. It seems to me the sense of splendor has justified itself by what it has produced. The worst of it is that so much human nature is used up in the process . . . a society like ours wastes such good material in producing its little patch of purple. . . . Why do we call our generous ideas illusions and our mean ones truths? Isn't it a sufficient condemnation of society to find one's self accepting such phraseology?"

Mrs. Wharton does not take any particular trouble to show that the illusions of society in and near New York nowadays are commercialized ones. She feels that they are inartistic, she realizes that good material is wasted in their production, she seems concerned more with the inadequacy of the results than with the waste of the material itself. She has a social color sense sufficient to produce her own broad chromatic effects of literary composition. She does not revel in the gold that drips color abroad, as Henry James does; she does not take society in its restricted sense as seriously as he does; her epigrams are sufficiently corrosive to eat through the veneer at times; her cynicism is less self-centered.

At the same time her criticism of society and of life at large is destructive rather than constructive — her talent lies in color rather than in form. To read her is to destroy one's illusions, to learn much of the artificiality, the meannesses and weaknesses of

life. She flays the skin from it, but she fails to anatomize or articulate the nerves and muscles, the skeleton and the vital processes below; or to give us anything to substitute for the world as it seems on the surface, except one of her own elaborately prepared and composed canvases.

And in consequence we have comparatively little patience or sympathy with Lily Bart as she flounders deeper and deeper down towards the submerged tenth. We are inclined to think her a fool — and her cousin Gerty Farrish, who is also in love with Selden, another for making the sacrifices that she does make, and for putting up with Lily as long as she does.

Finally Lily takes herself off, attempts to learn millinery and fails as she has failed at everything else. She finds an over-night refuge from the storm she has invoked, at the home of a working girl she had formerly befriended at her cousin's club for working girls.

Nettie Struthers had started to go wrong. Now she is married happily and the proud possessor of a four months' baby. Her heart overflows with good will for all the world, and she tells Lily: "Wouldn't it be too lovely for anything if she could grow up to be just like you? Of course I know she never *could* — but mothers are always dreaming the craziest things for their children."

Lily has managed to wreck her health together with the rest of her chances by this time. She drifts out into the storm again. Selden has evidently failed her as she has failed him. "As she looked back she saw that there had never been a time when she had any real relation to life. . . . She herself

had grown up without any one spot on earth being dearer to her than another; there was no center of early pieties, a grave, enduring tradition to which her heart could revert and from which it could draw strength for itself and tenderness for others. In whatever form the past lives in the blood . . . whether in the concrete image of the old house stored with visual memories, or in the conception of the house not made with hands but made up of inherited passions and loyalties . . . it has the same power of broadening and deepening the individual existence, of attaching it by mysterious links of human kinship to all the mighty sum of human striving."

We are told with Mrs. Wharton's broad artistic discursiveness and with something that is fairly close to a fatal facility, that "such a vision of the solidarity of human life had never come to Lily . . . all the men and women she ever knew were like atoms whirling away from each other in some wild centrifugal dance."

We may admit in the vernacular of the hour that Mrs. Wharton certainly can write. We may be inclined to imagine, even while she is laying herself out on the final tableaux where Lily lies dead from an overdose of chloral, after she has received a legacy that enables her to pay off her debt to Trenor or to start life afresh outside of New York — while Selden kneels beside her in agonized recognition of the results of his own lack of faith — that while Mrs. Wharton can write impressively in passing about houses not made with hands and inherited passions and loyalties, her own ability to see and to feel what English and American literature has been

working towards for centuries is almost as incomplete and ineffective in its way as was Lily Bart's feeling for home and home ties.

None the less *The House of Mirth* like other works of art — more often met with to-day on canvas than in print — where essential truth is sacrificed to technique and the nice proprieties of artistic composition, is a triumph in its way.

It also contains a very plain and matter of fact moral for those who are not inclined to shy at so serious a thing as a moral for practical use. Mrs. Wharton tries to dramatize Selden's inability to love Lily as we are supposed to imagine Lily ought to have been loved. She says towards the last that a man's faith as well as a woman's was needed to prevent the girl from slipping over the edge of the abyss.

As a matter of fact there was nothing in Lily — nothing true, essential or lasting, for a man's faith to take hold of. She is a product of artificiality and false conventions from first to last; of a false ideal of family and social life to begin with; of an education as artificial as the rest of her; of machine-made Bridge debts; of overcapitalized stock exchange transactions; of artificial social values in circles where "women are asked as much for their clothes as for themselves"; of false emotions and self-pities partly induced by the use of drugs; of false loyalty to the letter of the law of honor, long since disregarded in spirit — down to the very moment when, in a last despairing effort to set herself right with life, she sends back Trenor's money to him and takes the poison.

Always she elects the easiest way. Never once does she turn successfully to face herself squarely; and the whole tendency of the book, however well it displays Mrs. Wharton's talents in other directions, is to foster falsely sentimental pity for Lily Bart as the unfortunate representative of a special interest and a special class. If the true test of immorality is destruction of power, then *The House of Mirth* is one of the most insidiously immoral novels ever written.

II.

In *The Fruit of the Tree* Mrs. Wharton has evidently a bigger and a broader aim. Mr. Sedgwick tells us that she has here endeavored to indicate the relations between the individual and fate. He remarks: "The serious purpose of the novel has carried Mrs. Wharton away from her old epigrammatic habit, from her purple patches of satirical description; it is only occasionally, as in the picture of Mr. Halford Gaines, that one recognizes her former careless flippant brilliancy. . . . It is much less charming than *The Valley of Decision*, much less brilliant than *The House of Mirth* . . . but this book discloses a far more serious purpose of confronting and grappling life as it is."

Mrs. Wharton begins by confronting labor and capital at Hanaford, a Connecticut factory town where Bessy Westmore, the young widow of a millionaire owner of the Westmore cotton mills, is brought face to face with John Amherst, the assistant manager of the mills, through the intervention of chance and the unexpected illness of the manager

during one of Mrs. Westmore's rare visits to her chief source of income.

Amherst's sympathies are all with the workers, though he is a gentleman, conventionally, by birth and breeding. "He felt the menace of industrial conditions when viewed collectively, their poignancy when studied in the individual lives of the toilers among which his lot was cast; and clearly as he saw the need of a philosophic survey of the question, he was sure that only through sympathy with its personal, human side would a solution be reached. The disappearance of the old familiar contact between master and man seemed to him to be one of the great wrongs of the industrial situation."

This phase of the question has not occurred to Bessy Westmore before. She has been an absentee landlord or the wife of one, ever since her marriage. She arrives in Westmore shortly after an accident to an operative caused by the crowding, for commercial purposes, of machines and men in a restricted floor space. Amherst manages to make her see, in spite of objections raised by the lawyer who has charge of her affairs and the authorities at the town hospital, that the operative will probably lose his arm through no fault of his own; and that he and his wife, who has become consumptive as the result of work in an atmosphere choked with lint and dust, have no one but her to look to for compensation or a chance to live.

Bessy's sympathies are enlisted for them and for Amherst's less expensive plans for the amelioration of the workers and the outward beautifying of the factory village.

We learn that "Bessy Westmore had in full measure that gift of unconscious hypocrisy which enables a woman to make the man in whom she is interested believe that she enters into all his thoughts. She had — more than this — the gift of self-deception; supreme happiness of the unreflecting nature, whereby she was able to believe herself solely engrossed in the subjects they discussed, to regard him as the mere spokesman of important ideas. . . . So in obedience to the ancient sorcery of life, two groped for and found each other."

At the beginning of the second book they have been married for more than two years, and Justine Brent who was a volunteer nurse at the Hanaford hospital when Dillon lost his arm, becomes an important factor in the situation. Justine is young and handsome, socially of a better class than her occupation seems to suggest, intellectually Amherst's equal, and temperamentally fitted to sympathize with his partial success in remaking the mills and the lives of the operatives, as well as with the obstacles thrown in his way by his wife's lawyer, her relatives and that side of Bessy's personality which resents the curtailment of her private income and the expensive pleasures of the Long Island country house set, to which she belongs by marriage and by predilection.

After the death of Justine's mother, "she thought that she had chosen her work as a nurse in a spirit of high disinterestedness; but in the first hours of her bereavement it seemed as though only the personal aim had sustained her. For a while after this her sick people became to her mere bundles of disintegrating matter. . . . Gradually her sound nature

passed out of this morbid phase, and she took up her task . . . glad to do her part in the vast impersonal labor of curing the world's misery, but longing for a special load to lift, a single hand to clasp."

She meets Amherst and his wife at a garden party. Presently it appears that Bessy needs rest and freedom from care. She has given up a trip to Europe and countermanded an order for a new motor after a certain amount of struggle with Amherst and herself, in order to facilitate his improvements at the mills. She goes to the Adirondacks and takes Justine with her to brace her up and to help look after Cecily, her daughter by her first marriage.

Justine comes back with her to the big house at Lynbrook and assumes the duties of an official hostess. Bessy, it appears, like other spoiled children of the world, "combined great zeal in the pursuit of sport — a tireless passion for the saddle, the golf-course and the tennis court — with an almost oriental inertia within doors, an indolence of body and brain that made her shrink from the active obligations of hospitality, though she had grown to depend more and more on the distractions of a crowded house."

Justine does not disguise her position in the household. She has no mind to be "taken for one of the nomadic damsels who form the camp-followers of the great army of pleasure." She is "sensitive to the finer graces of luxurious living, to the warm lights on old pictures and bronzes, the soft mingling of tints in faded rugs and panelings of time-worn oak." She does not find many of the finer graces of mind and spirit among "people whose chief business it was to look well and to take life lightly. . . . It seemed

to her that they missed the poetry of their situation, transacting their pleasures with the dreary method and shortness of view of a race tethered to the ledger. Even the verbal flexibility which made her feel that she was in a world of freer ideas, soon revealed itself as a flight from them, in which the race was distinctly to the swift; . . . the deadening influence of the life at Lynbrook roused her to greater intensity, as a suffocated person will suddenly develop abnormal strength in the struggle for air."

None the less she stays on there. Bessy and the child need her. Bessy had been at the same convent in Paris with her, and as Bessy's relations with her husband and the eternal squabbles with the lawyers over money and mill improvements become more acute, she perceives that Amherst needs her too.

Finally Amherst finds his plans checkmated and his position in the house rendered intolerable through friction over neighbors of theirs whose divorce court record he cannot and will not countenance. He is offered a position as manager of a big cotton mill in the South and arranges to go. Justine meets him in New York at the last moment and prevails on him to make one more appeal to his wife. He starts for Lynbrook, telephones that he is coming, arrives, finds that his wife has received his message and has chosen that moment to go off to the house of the divorce court heroine aforesaid. Thereupon he starts for the South forthwith.

Some time after this Justine writes to him, telling him that he ought to come back. Bessy is present when his reply arrives. Justine shows it to her. Bessy approves neither of certain references to her,

nor of Justine's terms of apparent intimacy with her husband. She has her wildest hunter saddled and rides out alone on a winter day when the roads are covered with ice.

She is brought back with a broken spine. Specialists and nurses are summoned. Amherst, who has started for South America to investigate cotton-growing conditions there, and her father who is in Egypt, are sent for. Justine takes her turn at the nursing. Bessy is barely kept alive for nearly a month. The specialist in charge of the case admits that there is practically no hope. A young local practitioner by the name of Wyant thinks otherwise; sees a lifetime's opportunity of making a reputation for himself and almost succeeds. The effect of the anæsthetics begins to wear off. Justine revolts at what seems to her needless prolongation of suffering. And finally, when she is left alone with Bessy to administer hypodermic injections, puts an end to the latter's life.

A will is found, made six months before Mrs. Amherst's death, in which her property is divided between her husband and her daughter. Amherst holds Cecily's share in trust and has enough of the mill stock himself to retain a controlling interest; in the course of time he makes the mills pay and at the same time yield equitable returns to the operatives as well as to the stockholders. Justine goes abroad for six months with a patient who has nervous prostration. On her return she is engaged as nursery governess for Cecily by the child's grandfather, Mr. Langhope.

In less than two years after Bessy's death she is married to Amherst. She keeps the exact cause of his

first wife's death secret. She shares her husband's work and his plans, his tastes and intellectual sympathies. After a time they begin to feel that their happiness is too great to last.

Here fate is made to intervene in the person of Wyant, who has become a morphine fiend and who has never been in doubt as to the precise cause of Bessy's taking off. Justine pays him blackmail for some time, partly for the sake of his wife and child. Finally she rebels when he insists on his appointment to an important position in a New York hospital. Amherst comes in in the course of their dispute and the truth comes out.

He disposes of Wyant finally, and gradually begins to suspect that Justine may have been tempted to murder Bessy through motives of self-interest. Justine comprehends this and insists that the truth shall be told to Mr. Langhope. She gets to him first and arranges to banish herself to Michigan, where she has done nursing before, on condition that the matter shall go no further. Mr. Langhope consents and Justine disappears.

Amherst makes no effort to find her at first. Gradually he begins to feel that he has misjudged her. Cecily becomes ill and wants Justine. Mr. Langhope finally consents that she shall be sent for. Amherst and Justine are reconciled and the book closes, two months after Mr. Langhope's death, with the opening of a people's pleasure palace at Hanaford dedicated to the first Mrs. Amherst.

Mrs. Wharton has injected a characteristic touch of sub-acid cynicism into her description of the final tableau, by reminding the reader of the plans which

Bessy had hurriedly caused to be drawn for a pleasure palace of her own at Lynbrook, with squash court, gymnasium, bowling alley, marble swimming tank, marble fountain and elaborate terraces; and which had as hurriedly caused to be abandoned during Amherst's stay in the South. Amherst finds them when he finds the will and supposes that he is carrying out his wife's last wishes in diverting them to their use at Hanaford. He begins to idealize this side of Bessy's nature, and Justine sees that here is one secret that she can never tell, that she must always keep from him. "It was now at last that she was paying her full price."

We may agree with Miss Hawthorne that the great fault of the book is its lifelessness, that the background of workers at the mills is never a living, breathing reality, though we may not go so far as to say that the impression produced is more farcical than moving. It is neither one nor the other. It is an ineffectual, barely scholarly exposition of certain phases of the labor problem as it appears to minds like Mrs. Wharton's. It is neither sound sociological truth, human aspiration and inspiration, or adequate realistic fiction as Zola's *Germinal* and Arnold Bennett's *Clayhanger* are.

This first section of the book serves as little more than a prologue to the actual working out of Mrs. Wharton's plot, in a setting no more congenial to the author herself than to the majority of the people she writes about and for. Concerning the majority of the persons pictured in the prologue, Miss Hawthorne is quite right when she tells us that they are little more than silhouettes painted on a screen.

She goes on to say: "The actual characters of the story are put before us with a finesse and surety that is delightful in the effect of art. You have no slightest affection for any of them; but you do have a keen interest in observing the thoroughly capable manner in which they are handled. . . . The book seems, indeed, to be written largely to exploit this power. . . . The great sob and struggle of the upward movement of the world, now beginning to beat almost terribly against our consciousness, finds no least echo in the pages of this book that is yet supposedly built upon it."

The very fact that the book is built upon the sob and struggle of the world provides an echo of a sort. When Miss Hawthorne goes so far as to say that while Henry James "concerns himself solely with the spiritual processes, the inner life of his characters, Mrs. Wharton's probe reaches no further than to the idiosyncrasies and little outward manifestations that differentiate man from man," we have only to contrast the characters of Bessy and Justine at their first interview after Amherst has left his wife.

" 'Thanks for your advice. It would be excellent but for one thing — my husband is not coming back!' . . . 'Bessy! What do you mean by not coming back?'

" 'I mean he's had the tact to see that we shall be more comfortable apart — without putting me to the unpleasant necessity of telling him so.'

"Again the piteous echo of Blanche Carbury's phrases! The labored mimicry of her ideas!

"Justine looked anxiously at her friend. . . .

‘Please tell me what has happened,’ she said at length. Bessy, with a smile, released her hand.

“‘John has gone back to the life that he prefers — which I take to be a hint to me to do the same.’

“Justine hesitated again; then the pressure of truth overcame every barrier of expediency. ‘Bessy — I ought to tell you that I saw Mr. Amherst in town the day I went to Philadelphia. He spoke of going away for a time — he seemed unhappy — but he told me that he was coming back to you first —’ She broke off, her clear eyes on her friend’s; and she saw that Bessy was too self-engrossed to feel any surprise at her avowal. ‘Surely he came back?’ she went on.

“‘Oh, yes — he came back,’ Bessy sank into the cushions watching the firelight play on her diamond chain as she repeated a restless gesture of lifting it up and letting it slip through her fingers.

“‘Well — and then?’

“‘Then — nothing! I was not here when he came.’

“‘You were not here? What had happened?’

“‘I had gone over to Blanche Carbury’s for a day or two. I was just leaving when I heard he was coming back, and I couldn’t throw her over at the last moment.’

“Justine tried to catch the glance that flittered evasively over Bessy’s lashes. ‘You knew he was coming and you chose that time to go to Mrs. Carbury’s?’

“‘I didn’t choose, my dear — it just happened! And it really happened for the best. I suppose he was annoyed at my going — you know he has a ridic-

ulous prejudice against Blanche — and so the next morning he rushed off to his cotton mill . . .’

“ At length Justine said, ‘ Did Mr. Amherst know that you knew he was coming back before you left for Mrs. Carbury’s?’ ”

“ Bessy feigned to meditate the question. ‘ Did he know that I knew that he knew?’ she mocked. ‘ Yes, I suppose so — he must have known.’ She stifled a slight yawn as she rose languidly to her feet.

“ ‘ Then he took that as your answer?’ ”

“ ‘ My answer —!’ ”

“ ‘ To his coming back?’ ”

“ ‘ So it appears. I told you that he had shown unusual tact.’ ”

“ Bessie stretched her softly tapering arms above her head and then dropped them along her sides with another yawn. ‘ But it’s almost morning — it’s wicked of me to have kept you so late, when you must be up to look after all these people.’ ”

“ She flung her arms with a light gesture on Justine’s shoulders and laid a dry kiss on her cheek.

“ ‘ Don’t look at me with those big eyes — they’ve eaten up the whole of your face! And you needn’t think I’m sorry for what I’ve done,’ she declared. ‘ I’m not — the — least — little — atom — of a bit.’ ”

Something more than “ mere outward manifestations ” seem to be delineated here.

It is quite possible that Mrs. Wharton knows more about what she is doing than her critic does; that she defines Bessy’s character fairly clearly as a by-product and part of the unearned increment of her own

social class; that it becomes expedient that one woman shall die for the people; that the evil which Bessy and her kind do, chiefly through their inability to do good, lives after them and becomes an obligation, a problem, an obstacle, and a final means of grace for the finer and stronger spirits who survive them.

All this Mrs. Wharton has managed to indicate in her own peculiarly composed and artistic way. She is in no more danger of rubbing in the moral unduly at any time than she is in danger of losing her literary poise through any temporary rush of strong feeling to her pen. The book does continue to take the *ex cathedra* attitude of most of Mrs. Wharton's former work. Many of the characters are comparatively lifelike, very few of them tangibly lovable. Justine Brent may be noted as a partial exception. She is finely conceived and admirably portrayed — up to a certain point. Beyond that she remains elusive like the rest, though she becomes almost human, or seems about to become so, when she starts off on her self-imposed exile.

Here Mrs. Wharton misses another chance, as she did in *The House of Mirth*, of narrowing and intensifying the interest, of focussing it on some sick-bed or some small village center in Michigan, and of making Justine tangibly real to herself and to the reader. This Mrs. Wharton did not do. Such an episode evidently would not suit the epic proportions of the theme announced in her title and crowded into the last hundred pages of a long book: the story of the knowledge of good and evil shared by a man and his wife who win their lost Paradise back again, partly by the interposition of chance and partly

through sheer hard and fast determination to believe that it belonged to them.

Altogether the book, though hardly more human than *The House of Mirth*, is in some respects more divine, and even inspiring intellectually, at the close.

Technically it has many of the faults of its predecessor. Some of them are sufficiently exemplified in the sections already quoted. *The Fruit of the Tree* also has excellencies of its own. We get a little more of the world of nature.

These restricted vistas are apt to be carefully composed colored etchings in a minor key. Like her interior scenes, they have the sense of being posed for — now and again they are very perfect in their way.

“As Amherst looked to where she pointed, the squirrel leapt to another tree, and they stole on after him through the hushed wood, guided by his gray flashes in the dimness. Here and there in a break of the snow they trod on a bed of wet leaves that gave out a breath of hidden life, or a hemlock twig dashed its spicy scent in their faces. As they grew used to the twilight their eyes began to distinguish countless delicate gradations of tint: cold mottlings of gray-black boles against the snow, wet russets of drifted beech leaves, a distant network of mauve twigs melting into the woodland haze. And in the silence just such fine gradations of sound became audible; the soft drop of loosened snow lumps, a stir of startled wings, the creak of a dead branch, somewhere far off in the darkness.”

It is eminently suitable for Mrs. Wharton's purposes that Amherst and Bessy should decide to get married in such a setting. The intellectual or

vaguely æsthetic appeal remains predominant in her outdoor views as well as in her no less carefully composed interiors.

Children, like animals and inanimate nature, Mrs. Wharton has little use for as literary material, save as links in her plots or carefully modulated details in her backgrounds and middle distances.

Like the women of the class that she celebrates most in the majority of her novels, and in more than one of her short stories and novelettes, the most lasting impression that we get from Mrs. Wharton is that she cares comparatively little for anything but the impression she is trying for the moment to produce. This was obvious to Mr. Sedgwick and to the average reader in her earlier work.

In her more recent writings she has done little to reassure us that her development as a personality has equaled or transcended the growth of her facility as a writer. Many of her more recent short stories are pretentiously commonplace. This is especially true of the collection headed by *The Hermit and the Wild Woman*, 1908.

Crucial Instances, 1906, shows a certain advance over *The Great Inclination* and a promise which has not been incontestably fulfilled by any book of short stories published since then. *The Descent of Man*, 1904, in spite of masterpieces in little like its title story, *The Mission of Jane* and *The Other Two*, contains much comparatively inferior work.

In these books and in *The Hermit and the Wild Woman*, 1908, and *Tales of Men and Ghosts*, 1910, there is frequently noticeable a distinct reversion to the less admirable manner, method, point of

view, and stylistic barrenness and infelicity of Mr. James in his last and worst period.

Mrs. Wharton's style never becomes as involved and willfully perverted as that of Mr. James at his worst. It does, however, lapse frequently in her short stories to the inconsequences and unsubstantiated pretentiousness of the following paragraphs: "The Fenno furniture, however, presented to such reasoning the obtuseness of its black walnut chamberings; and something in its attitude suggested that its owners would be as uncompromising. The room showed none of the modern attempts at palliation, no apologetic drapings of facts; and Mrs. Quentin, provisionally perched on a green-reps Gothic sofa with which it was clearly impossible to establish any closer relation, concluded that, had Mrs. Fenno needed another seat of the same size, she would have set out placidly to match the one on which her visitor now languished.

" . . . If she were such an abyss of insincerity as to dissemble distrust under such frankness, she must at least be more subtle than to bring her doubts to her rival for solution. The situation seemed to be one through which one could no longer move in a penumbra, and he let in a burst of light with the direct inquiry: 'Won't you explain what you mean?'"

The average reader, when he cares for Mrs. Wharton at all, has a right to demand, "Won't you explain what you mean, in fewer words and with less rhetorical picturing"—if in these particular passages and others like them you have anything at all to say that is really worth the saying?

Put to the acid test of the most searching verbal and harmonic criticism, they appear as nothing less than flaws in her work that give us good reason to doubt her initial and final sincerity both as literary craftsman and interpreter of life. When, as in the former instance, such passages disfigure a story like *The Quicksand*, which on the whole is very well worth reading, their presence is additionally deplorable.

The second paragraph was quoted equally at random from *The Dilettante*, whose title is sufficiently symptomatic of everything Mrs. Wharton has done or tried to do in prose since *The Fruit of the Tree*.

In the best of her novelettes Mrs. Wharton has applied more conscientiously the principle of the economy of means. In *Madame de Treymes*, 1907, which Mr. Winter thinks the most perfect in form and sympathy with the characters delineated of any of her works, we have an admirable pendant to the *Madame de Mauves* of Mr. James. Had priority of time in this instance been on the side of Mrs. Wharton, the ranking might easily have been reversed.

In *Sanctuary*, 1903, we have an equally admirable and lucid statement of a somewhat academic moral problem, which displays prettily the author's versatile capacity to stretch a short story out into novelette length — and very little more of original or lasting value.

In *Ethan Frome*, 1911, she has invaded the Mid-Victorian New England territory of Mary E. Wilkins Freeman and Sophie Orne Jewett, borrowed both authors' phraseology and imperfectly photographic rendering of New England country life, and, on the

whole, done wonderfully well with what she has found in her new field.

There is this distinction to be noted, however. Mrs. Freeman and Miss Jewett both depict New England life at first hand, in terms redolent of the soil, as a direct outgrowth of environment.

Mrs. Wharton has obviously constructed *a priori* the formula of her attempt to parallel a Greek tragedy in a more somber setting, where the plot mechanism focusses rather farcically around the misadventures of a broken glass pickle dish; and she has arranged suitable local color and stage setting to correspond, in accordance with her inveterate tendency to compose.

After the manner of Mr. James, she has started the story in the mouth of an elderly man of scholarly tastes who appears transiently on the scene; but in spite of these handicaps of temperament and method she has achieved what on the whole, and taken by itself, might easily be ranked as a notable minor achievement of the school of fiction best represented in America to-day by Margaret Deland and Alice Brown. Concerning *The Reef*, 1912, no less a critic than Mr. J. B. Kerfoot has briefly suggested, in a recent number of *Life*, that Mrs. Wharton, after a period of comparative submergence, has emerged, or is about to emerge, on a higher literary level than that reached by *The House of Mirth*. This suggestion indicates a point of view in the critic, with regard to literature and life at large, that seems at times to come perilously close to Mrs. Wharton's own. In the tabloid book review referred to, Mr.

Kerfoot has done even less than the novelist to prove his point.

Taken in connection with the rest of her work, these last two books afford something like final proof of something like a fatal facility, undisciplined and of comparatively little use to its possessor or anyone else, save as a minor commercial asset to the author and to the magazine and publishing house with which she has been from the first identified.

That this versatility rises at times to something like talent of the first rank, we have abundant proof of in a single book of verse, *Artemis to Actæon*, 1909, in which half a dozen or more poems in Browning's manner are readily comparable to Browning at far from his worst.

That it falls frequently intolerably below Mrs. Wharton's earlier and more brilliant excellence needs no explicit and detailed proof here and now.

We may not agree with Mr. Sedgwick when he suggests that there never has been a time when so much fiction has been written at so high a level as to-day; but there is abundant room for his further contention: "In the open competition for fame different novelists have borne off different prizes; one has secured the praise of subtlety, another of solidity, others of poetic feeling, insight or profundity; but who that is writing to-day can dispute with Mrs. Wharton the term brilliancy?"

There are very few novelists in America to-day, doing first-rate work or anything like it, that would care to dispute the term brilliancy with her. Brilliancy is a patrician quality, of the superficial, by the

superficial, for the superficial. It is intrinsically alien to the genius of the Anglo-Saxon world, in particular to that of its male half; and the great mass of the world in general has some reason for looking at it with suspicion.

In sporadic instances, by spurts and by dashes, Mrs. Wharton, like the class of which she is so striking an example, suggests something better than brilliancy, begins to realize it, rises and subsides, achieves, and fails to repeat.

In this failure to make good repeatedly, to get down to some solid working basis, to devote her undoubted talents to some lasting and disciplined service to herself and to the rest of the world, she remains highly typical of the type and the more selfishly enlightened section of Twentieth Century American plutocracy that she so ably interprets and represents.

IX

MRS. ATHERTON AND ANCESTRY

"Distinction is the consequence, never the object of a great mind." Washington Allston.

"Washington is a crude, unwieldy village, New York is one of those nightmares a certain class of writers project and label 'earth in the year 2000.' Chicago is the entrails of the universe. The small interior towns and villages of the Eastern states are open mausoleums for people so old and dried up that their end should be not death but dessication. Some of the cities of the South . . . have backgrounds of a sort, but they are as lifeless as their negroes. The cities of the West are hives, and when you have seen one you have seen all. Its smaller communities are horrors pure and simple."

Mrs. ATHERTON puts these words into the mouth of an Englishman, the hero of *Ancestors*, 1907, who has seen much of Europe and the British Empire, and who has played a leading part in English politics before he visits America for the first time. The sentiments seem to be her own. In one way or another she has given us to understand, at considerable length, that she hasn't much use for America, as she finds it to-day, with the possible exception of San Francisco and the territory tributary thereto.

As an evolutionary product of California and of the feminist school of fiction, she deserves a certain amount of serious consideration that her personality and her writings, taken by themselves, hardly seem to justify. Few can or will dispute with her the title of our leading lady novelist, for Edith Wharton is

in many ways in a class by herself — certainly not in that of Mrs. Atherton's or her leading rivals. Among those it would be perhaps unfair to specify Elinor Glyn as typical, or as crowding her American leader closely in the race for the production of human documents of the distinctively modern and feminist type.

On the whole, one may call Mrs. Atherton ultra-patrician rather than ultra-feminine and come within speaking distance of the truth.

In the book mentioned above, she tells us that England is the apex of the world's civilization to-day. She also tells us that Americans have no temperament; that "the man who is not a gentleman when he is drunk has no right to be alive at all"; that "the man whom champagne transforms into a big, silly boy is the right sort." Whether this is what she means by temperament is doubtful, as the culprit in this case is a San Francisco capitalist of German-American extraction. Less doubtful is her tendency to create an interest of a sort in aristocratic vice, patrician variants of the "eternal triangle," and temperamental affinities on a more expansive and artistic sense — in *Tower of Ivory*, *Ancestors*, *American Wives and English Husbands*, and *The Conqueror* notably.

More doubtful is her own claim, and that of her pet characters and her pet city, to intellectual distinction. She is rather inclined to make light of San Francisco's pretensions to Bohemianism brilliancy in art, literature and the joy of life. At the same time, she appears to be secretly proud of it and of her appreciation of it — as of most things, tempera-

mental, exotic artistically, intellectually fashionable, patrician and expensive, that come within the color scheme of her own impressionistic canvases.

Evidently she prides herself on being an impressionist of the impressionists, a modern of the moderns, a Californian of the Californians. And like most of the less subtle artists in this school, her aim for distinction is obvious; her capacity for striking wrong notes and mixing high lights and shadows that shriek at each other on the same square inch of surface, infinite. Her facility for using the wrong word has been sufficiently commented upon. The result, at her happiest moments, is disconcerting and disenchanting; at her worst, simply ludicrous or unspeakably banal.

All this is not to say that at times she is not worth study, more for what she evidently tries to do than for what she rarely succeeds in doing. Frequently she is essentially readable to minds of a certain type. To others she serves for diversion unconsciously. And we may suppose she is looked up to with something like awe as the feminine prose laureate of the chambermaids, manicures, shopgirls, chorus girls, climbers, actresses, *nouveaux riches*, maids and mistresses both, of empty minds and anæmic morals, who form so large a fraction of her reading public.

She gives this sort of people the thing they want, the thing they are looking for, the thing they would and do sell their souls and bodies to get, in more concrete and tangible form than that of the printed page. Her reward is great in dollars and cents, shillings and pounds sterling, and her fame proportionate. In all this she is typically modern, tem-

peramental, commercialized, twentieth century American up to date, like a great part of the island and the city that she extols.

Dr. F. T. Cooper, in a brief study of her in *Some American Story Tellers*, borrows a phrase from a severe criticism of her work in the *London Saturday Review* some years before, and says: "She has an uncommonly broad outlook upon life, and side by side with this . . . a persistent rebellion against the bondages of the literary schools . . . in short, a riotous freedom of style and construction that is not unfairly stigmatized as intellectual anarchy."

Whether Mrs. Atherton is better or worse equipped for anarchy in the realm of the intellect than the whole mob of writers of all sorts and both sexes whose claim to consideration in literature and out of it may be roughly classed as exotic and extravagant—whether Mr. H. O. Sedgwick for one would rightly consider her as typical of "the mob spirit in literature"—is beside the point.

Dr. Cooper considers her a force in American fiction of the present day. She evidently considers herself such, and acts accordingly.

In his essay on Mr. Howells, already quoted, Professor Phelps tells us: "Every now and then there has arisen a violent revolt against his leadership, the latest outspoken attack coming from a novelist of distinction, Gertrude Atherton. In the year 1907 she relieved her mind by declaring that Mr. Howells has been and is a writer for boarding school misses, that he has never penetrated deeply into life, and not only has his own timidity prevented him from courageously revealing the hearts of men and women, but

that his position of power and influence has cast a blight on American fiction. Thanks to him, she insists, American novels are pale and colorless productions and are known the world over for their tameness and insipidity."

There is a great deal to be said from Mrs. Atherton's point of view about the blight cast on American fiction by men and women of the type that Mr. Howells prominently exemplifies; about the intellectual and moral tameness of most of their books, and about the influence, consciously or unconsciously, exerted by editors, sub-editors, publishers, publishers' readers, critics, librarians, unprofessional readers of literature for boarding school misses or New England spinsters, and people with their ears to the ground for commercialized reasons obvious to all. The fact remains that Mrs. Atherton has, neither in her own work nor through any notable disciples or followers of herself, succeeded so far in providing us with any ultimate antidote for the vagaries of the New England conscience between covers; and that, in the modern world in the making, she may be regarded (like the type of woman that she represents) rather as a by-product than a force.

This product, such as we find it to-day in New York and elsewhere, is still sufficiently crude, unformulated, unevolved, restless, insatiable, extravagant, generally in a state of unstable equilibrium, so far and so often, as to make present analysis uncertain, and prophecies as to its future variants equally unreliable and unprofitable.

One never knows what Mrs. Atherton is going to do next because, apparently, she never knows herself.

Dr. Cooper tells us that her novels are faulty in literary construction because she does not choose to follow the rules as he chooses to interpret them. This reminds one of a man who takes a woman seriously (and this the man in question appears to do in this particular case), and then complains because his logic is not her logic, his reasoning not her reasoning: her method and conclusions are often very far from being his.

Frequently Mrs. Atherton does deserve to be taken seriously by the most serious of critics, though, as a literary artist, she is quite as often illuminating through her misses as through her hits. Any woman who has the courage of her convictions and who manages to publish them through the medium of the modern prose, that seeks and finds the line of least resistance, as successfully as this woman does, is very likely to challenge our attention sooner or later. She may or may not win our sympathies to any vast extent; she may bore us or amuse us, involuntarily, at times; at her best she deserves to be noticed — as far as she herself can be interpreted as characteristic of anything more than a desire shared by her with many other women, ancient and modern, “to draw strength out of the universe” and to use it for ends and in ways that seem sufficient to herself.

Briefly, Mrs. Atherton, in common with many Californians and other Americans more or less favored by nature, worships success with the patrician hall mark of heredity and recognized achievement plainly stamped on it. The theory that every American girl is born a queen in her own right does not appeal to her sans restriction, but she is a living ex-

emplification of some of the best and the worst features of the tradition on which that theory is based.

She is perfectly willing to take advantage of the *soi-disant* aristocrat's assumed privilege of lecturing the lower orders whenever she sees fit. She makes it evident that she admires Alexander Hamilton, a contemporary English politician or two born in the purple, the late Crown Prince of Austria, and the War Lord of Germany intensely. She admires the privileges and powers that they found ready to hand; still more those they took and kept for themselves. She assumes that the spiritual privilege of heredity, the nice regard for honor, truth, loyalty and chivalry (so far as chivalry is convenient if close to a throne), are the special interests of the few, not of the many. She tells us that the only true democrat is an aristocrat at heart. At the same time she asserts that monarchy in Europe is effete and outworn, and permitted to survive only by the will of the people. She manifests a supercilious and patrician disdain for the impurities of American politics, for machine rule, and the bourgeois intrusion of the common people, who have made our politics a mere matter of trade, of buying and selling wholesale in the open market. And on this assumption, she endeavors to persuade herself and others that she is a better American and truer democrat than the rest of us.

Doubtless she has some grounds for belief in the creed that she professes to follow. So has the War Lord for his. He might subscribe as readily as we can to this extract from *The Californians*, 1898: "Men and women were allowed to develop into speak-

ing, reasoning, generally intelligent beings for one purpose only: to make the world better not worse, as the best of men strive more or less constantly toward an ideal (and the second best strive sometimes) which, if realized, would make this world a very different place. . . . If it could be pounded into every woman's head that she was a fool to think twice about every man she could not marry, and that she threatened the whole social structure every time she brought a fatherless child into the world . . . every time she deliberately violated her own instinct for good . . . we'd all begin to develop into what the Almighty intended to be when He started us off on our long march."

It is doubtful if the Kaiser would subscribe to the whole of this: "If you can't get the very best in this world, take nothing. That is the only religion for a woman to cling to, and if she does cling to it she can do without any other." He might to this: "The new country is full of good impulses with little to bind them together. The American press is an exemplification of this absence of *noblesse oblige*, and more particularly in its treatment of women. Even when not moved by personal jealousy or spite, the total lack of respect with which the American press treats women who have not in any way challenged public opinion — society women with whom the public has no concern, women upon whom either the misfortune of circumstances or of a powerful individuality has fallen . . . is the most significant foreboding of the degeneration of a national character while yet half grown.

"Fifty years ago when the United States was still

so old fashioned as to be hardly 'American,' it was more or less bound together by the conventions it had inherited from the great civilizations that begat it. These conventions exist to-day only in the men of the highest breeding, those with six or eight generations behind them of refinement, consequence, and fastidiousness of association. In these men, the representatives of an aristocracy that is in danger of being crippled and perhaps swamped by plutocracy, exists the convention which forces the most deplorable degenerate of old-world aristocracy to manifest himself a gentleman at every crucial test. So thoroughly did Trennahan comprehend these facts, so profound was his contempt for the second-rate men of his country, that he was almost self-conscious about his honor. He would no more have asked Magdalena to release him, nor have adopted the still more contemptible method of forcing her to break her engagement, than he would have been the ruin of an innocent girl."

Around this particular patrician prejudice and scruple Mrs. Atherton has written a book of more than three hundred pages, which, like most of her earlier efforts, is comparatively slight in method and unambitious in bulk.

Magdalena Yorba, half New England, half Spanish by birth, heiress and intimate of the old Spanish aristocracy of San Francisco's Nob hill and the patrician and suburban exclusiveness of Menlo Park, is neither born beautiful, nor does she achieve beauty or has it thrust upon her after the manner of our more modern beauty parlor, man-modiste or society column advertising methods.

Life in Menlo Park is comparatively primitive in the days of which Mrs. Atherton writes. Perhaps that is what makes it attractive to "a Mr. Trennahan of New York," a retired diplomat with a past and a rich man who has come West for diversion of one sort or another.

He finds it in Magdalena who has emancipated herself from all belief in the hereafter *via* a life membership in the Commercial Library, which she values as her most precious earthly possession, and the writings of Darwin and Spencer, and who is determined to make the most of the one life left to her by the product of her pen — preferably by historical fiction of the age of Cromwell to begin with.

Interest in fiction languishes after the arrival of Trennahan, who convinces himself in the course of a morning ride or two that the time has come to settle down, and that Menlo Park is the place in which to settle. Later he falls desperately in love with Helena Belmont, reigning belle of San Francisco and Magdalena's dearest friend and childhood's playmate. Helena reciprocates, as her friend has done.

Magdalena overhears Trennahan's attempt to break things off with Helena and overrules it. Later Helena breaks her own engagement because she finds herself temperamentally incapable of marrying a rake, however reformed, and Trennahan starts to travel.

In the meantime Magdalena discovers Henry James, meets him in the flesh, bows down to him in the spirit, and decides that hereafter literature holds out no possibilities or rewards for her. About the same time her father shows signs of developing into

a miser and a monomaniac. As his symptoms become more acute, Trennahan returns, and they are married in haste just before the old Don succeeds in hanging himself in an American flag that has long hung in his room.

This is one of a series of books that Dr. Cooper finds time to praise: that he considers more or less in detail. He suggests that their symbolism is often obscure or awkwardly handled, and he tells us:

“No one can read her books without being aware of the keen interest she has taken in the spread of the modern democratic movement. . . . Still more keenly is she concerned with the inevitable conflict all the time going on between this younger, stronger democratic movement and the inherent prejudices of an older aristocratic conservatism. . . . She has chosen again and again with many minor variations to study the struggle of a young woman striving to readjust herself to the new order of things, trying to conquer heredity, to put aside the conventions on which she has been nurtured and to live her own life.”

Patience Sparhawk, 1895, is a case in point. Patience, who is temperamentally very far from patient, hails from California, goes East to be educated, marries in haste into a New York family of Plutocrats with patrician pretensions, and very soon wishes she hadn't. It seems that “her ideals of life were accumulated largely from the novels of Mr. Howells and Mr. James”; and the reaction after she has seen all she cares to of New York is something awful.

She decides that the New York women are the most insolent she has ever met. She decides that

Jesus Christ does not satisfy the intellectual needs of the nineteenth century . . . that "civilization needs a new prophet and he must be an anarchist, one who will teach the government of self by self, the government of man's nature by the will, which is in turn subservient to the far-seeing brain."

She tries a little intellectual anarchy herself on a suburban gathering of women religiously inclined. "And yet you, atoms, pygmies, individual manifestations of a great correlative force called human will, you presume to address this stupendous Being, and stand up and kneel down and talk to it, to imagine that it listens to your insignificant wants. . . . It is for you to develop that force-character and rely upon it, not upon a spiritual lover as weak women do upon some unfortunate man. What good does all this religious sentimentality do you? Your brains are rotting. You have nothing to talk about to intelligent men. No wonder the men of small towns get away as soon as they can and seek the intelligent women of lower strata."

Patience is evidently not the long suit of this particular Patience, nor of her creator, whose moral and emotional mouthpiece she is.

She says: "Men are naturally brighter than women, and girls of your sort deliberately make yourselves as limited and colorless as you can. . . . Make yourselves companions of men if you would make the world better. . . . Study the subjects that interest them . . . study politics and the great questions of the day that you may lead them to the higher ethical plane on which nature has placed you." Mrs. Atherton does not show us conclusively

here or elsewhere that women are really on a higher ethical plane than men, or that she really believes them to be.

She does say, however: "One thing is positive, I think. We must adjust our individual lives without reference to the problems of the moment. Womanism, Socialism, the Political Question, the Marriage Questions, and all the others that are everlastingly raging. . . . Moreover, however much she may reason, nothing can eradicate the strongest instinct in woman . . . that she can find happiness only through some man."

She tells us that women make too much fuss. If they don't like their life why don't they alter it quietly. (This is worth bearing in mind in connection with *Julia France*.) Without taking to the lecture platform or polemical novel? They can do anything with the plastic mind. I am sure it can be proved that most corrupt politicians, and bad husbands had weak or careless mothers. If the men of a country are bad, you can be sure that the women are worse.

Naturally, with such outspoken sentiments, Patience is popular neither with her degenerate multimillionaire husband, nor with the rest of his family. She makes other enemies as well. She runs away from home when too much pressure is put on her, and goes to work on a big New York newspaper. She finds the life fascinating, though she has to work hard. She finds some of the men she meets professionally still more so.

She has this to say of them: "This is the young man's epoch . . . think of the men under thirty that

are editors and authors and special writers. They are burnt out at forty, but they begin to play a brilliant part in their early twenties. . . . They are certainly distinguished for conceit. . . . When you get used to newspaper men you'll like them better than any men you've known. . . . It's true that they have no respect for anybody or anything. They believe in no woman's virtue and no man's honesty under stress. . . . No men know so well how to enjoy life, know so thoroughly its resources, or have all their senses so thoroughly developed, particularly their sense of humor which keeps them from making fools of themselves."

From this truly original book and human document, we glean also the following specimens of feminine proverbial philosophy — before we hasten to its final climax and near-tragedy: "Ambition is the looting of hell in chase of biting flames over a desert of ashes. . . I've known girls that looked like marble statues, the kind with the snub nose; that's our swagger New York type. . . . No man can feel so thoroughly for a day, and that after all is the philosophy of life. . . . All phases of feeling are temporary. . . . all emotions, all desires, all fulfillment. Life itself is temporary. . . . There is only one law for a woman to acknowledge and that is her self-respect. Sir Galahad is not my ideal; I could never find anything interesting in an elongated male infant. . . . He doesn't even want to understand her, and a woman resents that as a personal insult. . . . I should have kept your mind interested and talked to you about yourself. Those are the secrets of success in matrimony. . . . Most people are such bores after a little,

. . . Are all people good in the same way? Well it comes to the same thing in the end. . . Remember that no mistake is irrevocable, there are as many to-morrows as yesterdays, that only the incapable has a past. . . In reality happiness means a comfortable state of affairs between a man and a woman with plenty of brains, philosophy and passion, who are wholly congenial in these three matters and have chucked their illusions overboard."

The last is the opinion of a New York editor who comes close to marrying or eloping with her. Patience goes back to take care of the degenerate husband when it appears that he is very sick indeed, and is in great need of the most devoted nursing. He dies through an overdose of morphine. His widow is accused of murder, tried, convicted, brought to the electric chair; and a pardon based on suppressed evidence is produced at the last moment by the lawyer who finally succeeds in proving her innocence, and in marrying her.

There is an obvious striving for intense realism in the final scene that to some extent defeats itself. On the whole the story is well told and more readable from cover to cover than most of Mrs. Atherton's own books, or nine novels out of ten that one meets in current American fiction of the day and hour. Its purpose is evident in extracts like the following, which has reference to the jury by which the heroine is tried:

"The horrible people. . . It is humiliating to think of being at the mercy of men like that. . . She had never seen twelve heads so little. They

were hardly an advance upon their hairy ancestors. At night they haunted her. . . . What was the matter with civilization. . . . ?”

Something of the same intellectual anarchy is seen in *The Doomswoman* (1892): “Granting for the sake of argument that this existence is supplemented by another, you have no knowledge of what elements you will be composed of when you lay aside your mortal part; your power of enjoyment may be worn very thin indeed like the music of a band without brass. . . . But one thing of earth, we do know . . . we have a slight capacity for happiness and a large capacity for enjoyment. There is not much in life God knows, but there is something. . . . Of that we are sure. Of what comes after we are absolutely unsure. . . . I am neither an atheist nor a Catholic. The question of religion has no interest for me whatever.”

This is the point of view of Don Diego Estinega, the hero of a strong story of California before the American occupation. In those days, Mrs. Atherton tells us, the women of California were admirable in many ways, “chaste, strong of character, industrious, devoted as mothers, born with sufficient capacity for small pleasures.”

Some were matriarchs. Mrs. Atherton can admire that kind of thing in the past of her native state, whose early days are vividly delineated in *The Splendid Idle Forties*, 1902. Concerning this Mr. Cooper says: “*The Splendid Idle Forties* with its kaleidoscopic pictures of the life of old California, a life already vanishing into the realm of forgotten things, has a quality that refuses to be disregarded . . . a

quality of exotic beauty. . . . Yet the most that can be said of it is that it contains more of promise than of fulfillment."

In both these books, as elsewhere, wherever she indulges in description of any sort besides that of her own mental states and appreciations more or less thinly disguised, there is a tendency to revel in the crude barbarism of the obvious, in the material surroundings of men and women. Needless to say, her heroines — though for the time being they can be happy in rubber boots and overalls on a California chicken ranch, or clad for the occasion in an Adirondack wilderness, provided some men are somewhere in sight — are of the sort that look best *décolleté* and bejeweled.

She tells us plainly in *Rulers of Kings*, 1904, that this is a sign of race. She has as little use for the woman who can't and won't look her best so panoplied, as in *Ancestors* and its predecessors she has for mere domesticity in California or out of California today. She gives us impressionistic glimpses of luxuriously upholstered interiors, such as she considers suitable frames for her exotic personalities in English country places, German *Schlösser*, old Californian haciendas, modern San Francisco multi-millionaire palaces; but never once has she succeeded in creating or inspiring the illusion of a home.

Children, like other home products, are minus quantities in her scheme of things. You never see or hear of them in her books, except in the case of *The Girl Who Grew Up by Herself* — her stock character and pet puppet — or its masculine variant who develops more spectacularly still with the help of

well-trained tutors, at least one intellectually anarchistic parent alive or dead, and the rest of the whole machinery of patrician fate, into a conqueror or a ruler of kings.

There is no doubt that in *The Conqueror* (1902), she has achieved a big book; though Mr. Cooper gives her no credit for it whatever — not even that of bare mention in his *résumé* of her literary resources and achievements. She has been accused by many of creating a new type of prose literature. Humanity, however, has been spared the infliction. Heroes and Hero Worship was an old story long before Carlyle crystallized its salient attributes. To the more or less remote past that produced it Mrs. Atherton belongs; and she glories in the fact.

For all her dippings into Darwinism, hers is essentially an eighteenth century mind, with the eighteenth century's patrician's limitations and intensities; and like the Hamilton of her creation, she hates Jefferson and eighteenth century democracy in America as intensely as she would have hated Carlyle himself if she had come in his way.

She admits that the most striking part of the book, the description of the West India hurricane, is taken from Hamilton's own written account; and that in all other essential details she has followed his letters and the facts of history very closely. On this substructure she has raised the edifice of a book that will continue to be read more in the light of novelized biography than as a permanent contribution to the fiction of its country or of its century.

Summed up in two words by the ordinary busy reader of Twentieth Century American literature,

the book, like the character of Hamilton as she makes him out, is intensely fascinating.

Still more briefly, from the point of view of the exact historian and scientist, and that of the exacting critic, the word theatrical covers the ground exactly.

She begins by saying in her preface: "After all, what is a character novel but a dramatized biography?" She suggests: "Why not throw the graces of fiction over the sharp hard facts that historians have laboriously gathered?" She claims that she is true in essence to Hamilton's stupendous services to the country, and to his infinite variety. This seems to give her considerable lee-way at the start. Of this she does not fail to take advantage in her presentation of the case, both as a partisan of aristocracy and as a professed artist and novelist of something more than minor rank.

One cannot well quarrel with a woman like Mrs. Atherton for being partisan and patrician. That sort of thing is in the blood and in the temperament and must inevitably color every page she writes. But when she sets herself up, in America to-day, to be at once an historian and a novelist of more than common pretension, we have a right to ask of her, whatever her other qualifications or deficiencies, that as an historian she shall at least seek truth, even more than patriotism as she sees and feels it; and that as a novelist she shall have comparatively little use for the claptrap methods of pseudo-fatalism on the stage of life in general and of early nineteenth century American politics in particular.

The first part of *The Conqueror* is excellent after

its order. Of Hamilton's own account of the hurricane which was the indirect cause of his emigration to New York, we may say as Andrew Lang has said of Scott's tournament in *Ivanhoe*: "No other hurricanes need apply."

In general the rest of this section strikes the same high note of masculine terseness and intensity, descriptive of life in a tropical setting where things happen rapidly and with obvious results. Rachael Levine, Hamilton's mother — married as a child to a brute, later living in unlegalized wedlock with the father of her infant phenomenon — is a woman after Mrs. Atherton's own heart. Much the same may be said of her handsome, aristocratic, brilliant and incapable father. One meets the same character again and again, often as the merest sketch of the heroine's progenitor in her other books.

The minor characters of the life in Nevis, St. Kitts and St. Croix appear to be sketched from life, and are admirably done.

None the less, like Hamilton himself, we are not sorry to leave the islands for a wider field of activity. The whole action of the book up to the point of his departure for New York and King's College, has been to stimulate our interest in the growing unrest of a young genius, cribbed, cabined and confined in a still narrower Corsica; and while we may be fairly well aware of the fact that Mrs. Atherton keeps him on the center of the stage all the time, and while we may not be as deeply impressed with his phenomenal qualities of fascination, brilliancy, industry and supreme intellectual capacity, as she seems to be her-

self, we naturally want to see what she is going to make of him, or let him make of himself.

Hamilton goes to King's College, now Columbia University, and at first — in the intensity of a truly American determination to complete the course in record-breaking time, to do five years' work in two — he displays the typical patrician aloofness to the popular demands of the moment. He goes to Boston on a vacation trip and he sees "men of iron, not of flesh and blood" in Faneuil Hall. Although he meets many of them, "they made no individual impression on him, he sees them only as a mighty brain, capable of solving a mighty question and of a stern and bitter courage."

He goes back to New York. He reads up the question according to the best authorities. He also reads up military tactics. He has been inclined to favor the principles of the British Constitution. He perceives that the jumping off place has arrived; and he jumps. He becomes the leader of the patriots among the students in a day. He makes a highly inflammatory and patriotic speech to a mixed multitude of students and towns people; he gets into trouble with the college authorities; he saves the royalist college president from being mobbed; he becomes the first pamphleteer among the patriots; he starts to recruit an artillery company.

At this time we learn of him: "His mind by now was so mature that he reminded himself with some difficulty that he was but seventeen. He was as lively and as happy as ever, but that was temperamental and was to endure through all things; mentally he

had no youth in him, and had had little since the day he began to ask questions."

We are told that after his first speech he pledges himself to the cause in a tavern in the following words: "I pledge myself to the most sacred cause of the American colonies, I vow to it all my best energies for the rest of my life, I swear to fight for it with my sword; then when the enemy is driven out, and all the brain in the country needed to reconstruct these tattered colonies and unify them into one great state, or a group of allied states which shall take a respectable place among nations; to give her all that I have learned, all that my brain is capable of learning or conceiving. I believe that I have certain abilities, and I solemnly swear to devote them wholly to *my country*. And I further swear that never, not in a single instance, will I permit my personal ambitions to conflict with what must be the lifelong demands of this country."

Mrs. Atherton does not try to persuade us that Hamilton fought and won the Revolutionary War, and wrote and caused the Constitution to be ratified single handed; but she does suggest that, as Washington's chief secretary, he was prevented from exercising military talents quite as remarkable as his other ones, and that he made the sacrifice not always willingly. Of his part in the writing and publication of the *Federalist*, and of his services as the first secretary of the treasury, there can be no doubt; and she does not fail to make the most of this. Whether Hamilton's fame is at all appreciably enhanced by her persistent attempt to play the lime-light on him, to represent him as a theatrical posturer and self-

conscious "leader of the leaders," or by her bitter and unsparing partisanship of him and his ideals against Clinton, Madison, Monroe, Jefferson and Adams, is more questionable.

We may find satisfaction of a sort in applying the deadly parallel of present conditions to certain utterances of himself and his friends. " 'Go to Congress !' he exclaimed, 'Who goes to that ramshackle body that is able to keep out of it. Could they not find someone else to send to distinguish himself by failure? . . . There certainly is nothing in that body of old women and lunatics perpetually bickering . . . to tempt the ambition of any man. . . . Congress appears to me to be rooted contentedly to its chair, and determined to do nothing, happy in the belief that Providence has the matter in hand and but bides the right time . . . to make the world over. . . . All this State patriotism makes me sick. One-half were not born in the State they vociferate about, are not certain of ending their days there, nor of which their children may adopt as intemperately.' "

But we are not convinced that such touches add any great literary grace and distinction to the book, or lasting luster to the character of Hamilton, the superman (as the author conceives him) who has taken a superhuman oath, and who is forced at last only by the direct interposition of fate, by the violence of his own patrician passions, by the malice and hatred of his plebeian enemies, and by the jealousy of one superhuman woman, reputed daughter of a king and under a happier star fit mate for him, to decline and fall as Mrs. Atherton makes him decline and fall.

When the author diagnoses the opposition to her hero as "state selfishness, stinginess and indifference . . . caused by the natural reversion of human nature to first principles, after the collapse of that enthusiasm which inflates mankind into a bombastic pride of itself," we are entitled to our reasonable doubts. We may even go so far as to ask her if there isn't something of the same collapse suggested in the character of her demigod as she has chosen to represent him.

Whatever it may or may not have been in the past, history to-day is not made up of the strivings of demigods and demigoddesses, with the rest of the world as lists for their combats at arms, or as ante-rooms to the chambers of a patrician and passionate joy of life.

History as we know it to-day is an evolution, a resultant of forces, wherein men like Hamilton at the best are barely more than the mouthpiece of all humanity, or the hand on the lever for a day or an hour.

Hamilton himself, if all the credit given to his brain is true, though he never seems to have foreseen, or foreshadowed evolution, would be the first to wish to be so judged and so recorded. People believe what they want to believe; and so long as there is a decreasing minority of men and women who believe that they are specially appointed to administer — when they are able — the affairs of earth and the rest of the universe, by some special hereditary grace or divine prerogative, just so long books like *The Conqueror* will be written, read and enthused over; their literary flaws, their superstitions and ethical pervers-

sions will be condoned; and their writers will continue to be in the fashion where the fashion, hallowed by tradition, is the supreme arbiter.

Mrs. Atherton tells us that Hamilton's profile was classical. In the statue of him at Columbia University the nose is if anything a trifle *retroussé*; its Scotch bumptiousness is evident. This fact or perversion of fact, otherwise inconsiderable, is typical of her presentation of the man, of the whole book, of the writer's whole attitude toward life.

She harks back to the long-winded speeches put in the mouth of Greek and Roman oligarchs and dictators, before or after a battle, by their national historians. There is an attempt to wear the tragic buskin of Æschylus or Sophocles in Hamilton's final communings with his soul. In those days, as now, actors wore high heels to add simulated majesty to their gait and stature. But always when Mrs. Atherton's striving for theatrical effect soars highest, when her dramatic monologues seem least stulted and most adapted to her method, some verbal slip, some unwarrantable intrusion of her own personality, brings the reader back to earth again.

The Conqueror is a long book of more than five hundred pages. We become thoroughly aware of the fact before we reach the end. We are aware that Mrs. Atherton hates Jefferson, Clinton, Adams and the other contemporary leaders of democracy in America, if anything, harder than Hamilton himself did. In the uncompromising bitterness with which she assails these three men, as well as Madison and Monroe — their private character; their political methods (which Hamilton himself shared on her own

showing) and the whole democratic ideal back of them — we feel that she overshoots the mark.

When she tries to create the impression that Hamilton was fated to be born abroad; that America could by no means and in no case have produced him; and that no native American brain could have done the work that Hamilton's did, then we cease to regard her most extreme pretensions and most hide-bound prejudices seriously.

It may be perfectly true that Talleyrand meant what he said when he declared: "I consider Napoleon, Fox and Hamilton as the three greatest men of our epoch, and if I should decide among the three I should give without hesitation the first place to Hamilton." It may be equally true that Talleyrand was mistaken. Talleyrand's own evidence was not always unimpeachable. His acquaintance with Hamilton during a brief period of exile from the Europe that had cast him and his master out, was not conducive to forming the most impartial opinion or to laying down the law finally for ourselves and for posterity.

Hamilton's services to this country and the rest of the world are unquestionable. His fame as one of the master minds of modern history stands assured, and is neither to be magnified nor lessened appreciably by the opinion, written or spoken, printed or dramatized, of any one man or woman. He is not the first to have suffered before or after death by the intemperate zeal of injudicious friends or unscrupulous partisans.

Concerning the exact merits of his political warfare with Jefferson, Clinton & Co., and later with Adams, as well as of Mrs. Atherton's setting forth of

them, it is sufficient to say that this section of the book, as literature and as adapted history, is quite good enough for its purpose.

On Hamilton's relations with his wife, who was the mother of eight children, or his admitted infidelities with other women, and his liaison with Madame Jumel, there is no necessity for dwelling. Mrs. Atherton's own account of his courtship, marriage and subsequent matrimonial relations is incidental, though not without charm of a sort, in the intervals of more pressing affairs. Up to his final infatuation and quarrel with Burr, she takes the ground consistently that this side of his life, good and bad, was a minor issue beside his political passions, loyalties and hatreds, achievements and ideals.

That those ideals lost their first luster toward the last she makes us see clearly and with considerable art. In spite of her tendency to distort and exaggerate, to make up spectacularly for the part, to lay the paint on thick and to play the limelight unremittingly, Hamilton as man and as patriot, as she shows him, retains our sympathy and respect to the hour that he goes to the dueling ground in Weehawken. Here at least she does not make a prig of him; and Burr's character and the whole final episode are treated with a restraint that is equally unexpected and commendable.

The same cannot be said of the whole of Hamilton's final interview with Madame Jumel and his last soliloquy on the night before the duel. " 'Yes,' he said grimly, 'I forgive you. You and Bonaparte are the two magnificent pendants of the French Revolution. I am sorry you are not more of a philoso-

pher, but so far as I am concerned I regret nothing.'

" 'Oh,' she exclaimed with scorn. 'They are always philosophers when they are in love with a woman. But you will give me your last conscious moment.'

" 'No,' he said deliberately, 'I shall not.' She sprang to her feet. 'You will! Thank you for saying that. I was about to grovel at your feet. Take me to my coach. What a fool I was to come here.'"

There are symptoms of intellectual anarchy here as well as in the words that follow: "Every cow-herd hopes to be president. What is the meaning of civilization, pray, if the educated, enlightened, broad-minded, are not to rule? Is man permitted to advance, progress, embellish his understanding, for his own selfish benefit or for the benefit of mankind? And how can his superiority avail his fellow men unless he be permitted to occupy the high offices of responsibility! God knows he is not happy in his power; he is indeed a sacrifice to the mass. But so it was intended. . . .

"Doubtless it seems to the destiny that controls my affairs as the swiftest way to dispose of Burr and to awaken the country to the other dangers that menace it. To the last I am but a tool. No man was ever so little his own master, so thrust upon a planet for the accomplishment of public and impersonal ends alone. I have been permitted but a certain amount of domestic felicity, as my strength was but conserved thereby, my mind free to concentrate upon public duties. I was endowed with the gift of fascination that men should follow me without ques-

tion and this country be served with immediate effectiveness.

“I have received deep and profound satisfaction from both these concessions, but it would not matter in the least if I had not. They were inevitable with its equipment for the part I had to play. I have had an astonishing and conquering career against the mightiest obstacles, and I may as a further concession be permitted an enduring place in history, but that is by the way.

“I conquered not to gratify my love for power and win immortal fame, but that I might accomplish the part for which I was whirled from an almost inaccessible island fifteen hundred miles away. . . . The proof that no native born American could have played it, is the fact that he did not.”

Here we have the wrong word cropping out again and again, the ego in the dramatized Hamilton's cosmos undisguised; and, to crown all, a piece of woman's logic and patrician pretentiousness that alone makes the passage worth preserving as a literary curiosity.

In *The Conqueror* Mrs. Atherton has tried to write a great book and has failed ambitiously. So far she has distinguished herself from one section of the mob of modern American writers. She has made a book that is big and gripping in more ways than one. She has at least shown that she is very much alive and as hard a fighter as Hamilton himself. She has shown still more plainly her utter incapacity for understanding the beginnings of modern thought in Hamilton's time, and the new light that to-day's scientific study of history as an evolutionary growth

has thrown on his period and our own. In a drama ostensibly of heroic size, she has failed to grasp, or has chosen to disregard, the whole world movement of which our revolution formed a part, and of which America is still to-day the most significant factor; and she has relegated it to the background of the stage which she has erected for the display of her superman and patrician protagonist.

She closes *The Conqueror*, in an effort for supreme dignity, with a brief enumeration of the details of Hamilton's funeral cortège that somehow, like the rest of her most ambitious efforts, falls short of its purpose. We are told that the city and the people wore mourning for one month, the bar of New York for six weeks.

So the story closes in the conventional trappings of distinguished grief, and the only hint we have as to how Hamilton lived on in the hearts of his family and his friends is a letter from his wife written in her old age, incidentally introduced earlier in the book.

There is very little in the whole volume that is vital, except its insufficient shadowing forth of a brilliant personality and unique career. There is still less that is vital in *Rulers of Kings*, which was published two years later, in 1904. Dr. Cooper calls it fantastic melodrama about comic opera kings. Mrs. Atherton has succeeded in suggesting something more here, though her tale savors equally of the theatrical and the miraculous. She indicates the advent of the United States as a full-fledged world power under the auspices of Fessenden Abbott and his father, who control more than \$400,000,000 between them. The

boy has been brought up in the Adirondack wilderness and educated at a Western State University in ignorance of his parentage. After his graduation he experiences "the most profound discouragement" at the announcement of his heirship. Later he makes himself dictator of South America; tours Europe incognito on foot and in a canoe; forms a lasting alliance with William of Germany, whom Mrs. Atherton considers the master mind of Europe to-day; develops an electrical contrivance which renders war impossible by the threat of instant and complete annihilation of all who oppose him; falls in love with a fictitious daughter of Franz Joseph of Austria; marries her after sufficient pressure has been brought to bear upon her father, and after she has renounced all pretension to her imperial rank; and goes back to America to purify the politics of his native country by force and a temporary dictatorship if necessary.

Like the majority of Mrs. Atherton's heroes and heroines, young Mr. Abbott has decided views. So has his father. From Abbott *père* we learn: "Don't believe all this twaddle about the rich, my son . . . most of them have risen from the ranks . . . for this country offers equal chances to all. It is the brains of the men that are not equal; and every millionaire has only himself — in rare instances his immediate forebears — to thank that he is not still groveling with the herd, close to the wall. . . . There was never a real democrat who was not born an aristocrat. The risen plebeian is a tyrant, is insatiable in his greed, glories in the thought of grinding the life out of thousands of his own class, delights in

the hatred and envy which are but another signal of his success; in short he is a damned fool, and deserves to wake up and find his throat cut."

From another source we also learn "American morals are *bourgeoise*. So is its hypocrisy! But we like things that way. . . . The most malignant force in the world to-day is Russia. . . . Russia is the one menace which prevents Europe and England from enjoying a moment's security."

One could hardly expect Mrs. Atherton to tell us that the real Yellow Peril lies in the modernization of China as a manufacturing and exporting center, and in her temporary or permanent alliance with Japan in war and peace. Some suggestion of the Far East as a factor in world politics might have been expected of her however; and her failure to recognize what every farmer of importance in the Middle West, and each exporter of our Pacific slope knows and reckons with, shows conclusively just how fragmentary and superficial the wide knowledge of life for which Mr. Cooper gives her credit really is.

Neither as literature nor as a piece of special pleading is *Rulers of Kings* to be taken seriously. Dr. Cooper tells us that *Ancestors* is. Here, he says, she is writing "plain truth about real people that she may have known personally . . . picturing how the magic glamour of California may react upon a Conservative Englishman . . . until he ends by proving himself a better American than the Californians themselves. It is a big book, undeniably a book of almost epic sweep. The protagonist is not Jack Gwinne the Americanized Englishman, nor Isabel Otis . . . but the city of San Francisco which dominates

the book, like a regal and capricious heroine whose hour of agony by earthquake and by fire closes the volume with the shadow of a cosmic tragedy."

Charity to Dr. Cooper suggests that he either wrote this in a hurry, or in the fine frenzy of a somewhat surcharged literary imagination, and then failed to revise it.

Ancestors, 1907, is a big book in its scope and in its suggestions, as often as not in its handling. It measures somewhere up to the theme indicated. There is hardly a dull page in it from cover to cover. At first reading it is apt to promise more than it fulfills. A second critical perusal, however, leaves one with the impression that Mrs. Atherton (as she generally does, except in mere episodes of life abroad like *The Travelling Thirds*, 1905) falls considerably below the goal she has marked out for herself, both in detail and in the mass.

Here as elsewhere she must be given credit for originality. She has invented or discovered a new brand of international marriage, frequently paralleled to some extent in her own native state, but comparatively unknown in American fiction.

As a matter of fact John Elton Gynne (obviously drawn to life from the English Winston Churchill) is an American by birth, by accident; though at the same time heir to one of the greatest ducal houses of Great Britain. In the first part of the book his career as coming leader of the House of Commons comes to a tragic close through the sudden death of his two nearest male relatives.

Isabel Otis, his third cousin, a Californian, unmarried and very much her own mistress — and mistress

also of a chicken ranch and some thousands of acres of marshland across the bay from San Francisco — persuades him to emigrate to the United States and to become the coming man in American politics.

He travels from Maine to Florida and from New York to San Francisco for something like a year; he becomes desperately lonely and disillusioned; he even begins to doubt his own Napoleonic star. He comes back to the larger ranch that he owns besides his cousin's, starts to study law in the neighboring country seat of Rosewater and lays the foundations of his future popularity there.

Here he becomes acquainted with Tom Colton, a relative of Isabel's by marriage, whom Mrs. Atherton evidently considers a typical machine politician of suburban California, and who rarely appears in the light of day without a large bag of peanuts and a big red apple which he munches indiscriminately. By him we are told: "I can't say that I like the seamy side of politics. . . . My wife always says that I'm the most honest man alive, and I shouldn't wonder if that was the way I really was made. Anyhow I know that I'd a heap sight rather do a man a good turn than an ill one; but when he gets in your way, what are you going to do in a country where politics are machine-made and every cog has to be oiled with graft?" To this query neither young Mr. Gynne nor the book itself provides any sufficient or significant answer.

Mrs. Atherton, in common with others here or abroad, has, or professes to have, a vast scorn for pseudo-reformers or real reformers who join the great majority; whose "zeal for reform had played

between the horizon and the zenith like a flaming sword," which "served its purpose — if to be sure it was needed at all" — till its owners were past masters of success.

Of quite a different type are the little group of civic life savers in San Francisco, headed by a few rich men that the world has heard of. Gynne becomes acquainted with these, and decides to go to Washington to have the question of his nationality settled for good and all. On his return, rejoicing in his birthright as an American citizen, he finds that feminine gossip in Rosewater has busied itself with his cousin's name and his own.

Isabel like himself has decided views, and having arrived at the mature age of something like thirty years, she does not hesitate to act on them. She insists on living alone on her chicken ranch with a Japanese man servant and one or two other male laborers, and on seeing her cousin wherever and whenever she pleases.

Gynne makes up his mind at last that she will make an ideal wife for a rising young politician; and just as they have decided to get married, after she has protested for more than a year that single blessedness is quite good enough for her, and that mere domesticity belongs to the dark ages, the San Francisco earthquake arrives, and the story ends in a final blaze of glory with the burning city for the background and middle distance.

Here Mrs. Atherton seems at last to have learned the value of restraint, or to have estimated accurately the comparative inadequacy of her powers. The description, such as it is, is graphic and stirring;

like most of her descriptions it is directly personal. A few of the most obvious general features are noted. The immediate effect on the characters with whom she is most concerned is succinctly set forth. The whole effect none the less is one of superficiality, and the impression persists that she has missed more chances than she has scored hits.

Earlier or later in the book we have unhealthy interior glimpses of English country houses, London clubs and San Francisco Bohemian dives, to some extent counteracted by a sincere feeling for the beauty and undeveloped resources of California out doors. Her major and many of her minor characters are interesting and well drawn. Several of them are, even Mr. Howells might admit, fairly human, simple, sincere, natural and likeable. Traces of deep and sincere feeling are singularly lacking or barely sketched in. The patrician tradition is rather suggested than insisted upon. The author has to some extent gained in objectivity, and literary discernment, at the same time her individuality seems to have lost force and vital interest and is still a long way from the patient apprenticeship to the story teller's art that alone might make the most of her truly original powers.

In *Tower of Ivory*, 1910, she has gone back a step or two from the standard set by *Ancestors*. The story is that of an American opera singer residing in Munich as a fixture of the Bavarian Court, and a young English cad of title in the British diplomatic service. Halfway through the book he marries an American heiress who angles for him desperately with the help of her mother and other women who

might be better employed. The bride objects to living out of England and has no use for diplomacy as a profession for the husband of a multi-millionairess. About the time that an heir is expected, her husband goes back to relations rather less than platonic with the opera singer, his wife dies in childbirth, and we are left to infer that the doctrine of temperamental affinities and of intellectual anarchy has hereby taken a long step towards its final goal.

The characters of the heiress, her mother and her husband are close and accurate studies; one is made to realize that there are such people in the world, however little one may care to know it or them. That of the opera singer — on which, with that of her hero, the writer seems to have expended the greater part of her time and sympathy in her attempt to score heavily — produces an effect of pretentiousness, literary snobbery, wasted labor and a general bad taste in the mouth, such as only Mrs. Atherton can achieve when she lays herself out on the work.

To say that she has a rival of a sort in Henry James, whom she affects to admire, and that like him at her worst she is reactionary and decadent, rarely inspiring, frequently inhuman and unnatural, almost never humorous of her own free will, disposes of her neither finally nor altogether.

In *Tower of Ivory* and in *Julia France, 1912*, she has gone far towards relegating herself definitely to the ranks of the more neurotic lady novelists, and as such she is comparatively insignificant. As a type and the mouthpiece of a certain phase of feminism up to date in America and abroad she deserves serious study.

Julia Kaye, one of her characters in *Ancestors* concerning whom she says that "she was a very clever woman, for snobbery had planted and demoralized only one small chamber in her brain," bears a certain likeness to this type. There is a suggestion of Satan's rebuking sin in these words and their source.

Snobbery of the intellect, resting on its oars and its denunciation of what it considers commonplace, crude, merely domestic, democratic, plebeian, tiresome, undistinguished, unprogressive, is merely one phase of the mental and moral neurosis that has attacked an irreducible minimum of the unfair sex in both hemispheres during the last fifty or sixty years. In *Julia France and Her Times* such snobbery becomes acute, but it does not see fit to rest on its oars.

In this book Mrs. Atherton harks back to the women of Imperial Rome and their Parisian variants in her title and general tendency. In the *locale* of her plot she harks back to Nevis and St. Kitts in the first book. Here the action is dominated by a matriarch of the old school, still dear to the author (formerly illustrated by her portrait of Hamilton's mother in *The Conqueror*), who takes life as she finds it in her corner of the world; who accepts man like the rest of her environment after the traditional manner of women through the centuries; who manages to profit directly or indirectly from man's vices and complacencies; and who succeeds eventually in transmitting to her daughters and granddaughters the same uninspiring knowledge of the evil that men and women do, and of the seamy side of life.

Mrs. Edis of "Great House," Julia's mother, has

failed in a career for herself. She remains a scheming mother of considerable force of character.

In the first section of the book we meet also the captain of a visiting British warship, who ineffectually suggests to Mrs. Edis that women nowadays are working out destinies for themselves as authors, painters, singers, even on the stage; Lieutenant Harold France, who has gone the pace to the limit, who thinks he is ready to marry and settle down as soon as he sees Julia, who also happens to be the nephew of a duke; and Julia herself, a "happy young animal" and child of eighteen, decidedly less mature physically than most girls born in the tropics, and absolutely unsophisticated, if her creator and idolater is to be trusted, as regards life at large.

Mrs. Edis is said to believe in the stars; Julia appears to believe in her mother in the same way, and after thirty-eight pages of rather prosaic preamble we are told "so the fate of Julia France was sealed," and the action shifts to London. Here we find Julia, twenty-four days married, waiting for her husband, who is expected back from his last cruise in the Royal Navy in the course of a month or two. We learn that France went on board his ship some two hours after the wedding ceremony, and we are presented with several indifferently well done portraits of London society types of the sort that bore others and themselves habitually — types that Mrs. Atherton has shown some capacity to choose and to dwell upon before.

Among others we meet a young man recently out of Oxford, by the name of Herbert, whose father is a radical peer, and who comes close to falling in love

with Julia at first sight. We are informed that "English people, no matter how frivolous, are never as empty-headed as Americans of the same class"; we are told that "Herbert felt a wild sense of exultation and an equally wild impulse to save her" after Julia's predicament is placed before him.

From this point the action of the five hundred and thirty-three page book proceeds with a certain intensity of interest where the author does not pause to take up women suffrage, East Indian occultism, Socialism and the Bahai religion as component parts of a new peace propaganda; or to dwell upon various other personal applications of Mrs. Atherton's formula "for drawing strength out of the universe" and for feeding a ravenous egotism which Julia in the course of time comes to share noticeably with her creator.

In all this, in spite of herself, Mrs. Atherton provides on the whole a stimulating diet. Whether she fully justifies the claims of her English publishers and other English critics, to be the most highly powered brain among women novelists in America, may be safely left for posterity to decide.

Julia's development proceeds rapidly after France's return and the consummation of their marriage. Before this she has made the acquaintance of two young London women of society, Bridget Herbert and Ishbel Jones — one the daughter of a decayed duke, the other the wife of a millionaire stock broker — who eventually lead her into the ranks of the militant Suffragettes; and of the young Oxford man who makes an ineffective effort to save her from the arms of the Minotour to whom she is promised.

France comes home to claim his bride, and Mrs. Atherton proceeds to paint a picture of a bogey man and Frankenstein monster that is frequently ludicrous where she wants it to be most impressive. To say that Mrs. Atherton's characterization of Harold France — from his first appearance in the prologue to his final incarceration in an expensive sanatorium after an unsuccessful attempt to murder the duke, his uncle, at the end of the two hundred and seventh page and of Book III — occasionally fails to convince, is to understate the truth.

As a piece of modern pathologic infection and realism for realism's sake, dealing with various symptoms of progressive paranoia, this part of this book does not shine by comparison with various neurotic heroes of fiction and the drama, from Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* to Strindberg's *Thekla* and *Fröken Julie*; from Maupassant's male and female degenerates to those in Ibsen's *Ghosts* and *Hedda Gabler*.

It has been said of Strindberg that he set out to find God and discovered the devil. Few if any have accused Mrs. Atherton of starting with Strindberg's original intention, and few if any will be quite ready to believe that the devil, in the person of Harold France, is quite as black as she has seen fit to try to paint him.

We may imagine that Mrs. Atherton has at one time or another been too close to her subject, in her own life or that of her friends, to write about it with perfect charity and breadth of view. We may fancy that a certain sneaking fondness for rakes and *roués* of title, which has cropped out more than once in her earlier work, has led the author to make certain epi-

sodes in the decline and fall of France, certain periodic trips to Paris, connived at by his wife so long as the allowance made to them by the duke remains intact, almost the most natural and human if not the most edifying part of the book.

Or else we may be forced to conclude that Mrs. Atherton of set purpose and deliberate design has raised up this scapegoat, this scare-crow, this bogey man, this Frankenstein monster, as a provocative in print, and a lethal weapon in the war of the sexes that she and her friends are waging.

Doubtless there are men in London, more or less tolerated in Society, who abuse their wives drunk or sober. Doubtless some of them make a practice of it. Doubtless some of these offenders of titles or heirs to titles are not locked up in prisons or insane asylums as soon as they might be otherwise, as a result of the snobbery and caste worship which England, still "the apex of the world's civilization" in Mrs. Atherton's estimation, jealously guards and hugs to her breast.

Doubtless at the same time there are female malefactors of great rank and notorious social prestige, whom the same caste worship still favors at the expense of the rest of the world.

Mrs. Atherton naturally has nothing to say about this. It is no part of her Feminist propaganda to muck-rake caste and social rottenness in England in its most offensive female manifestations and from the man's and the child's point of view.

Doubtless there are men in the world, insane or nearly so, who take a peculiar pleasure in humiliating their wives socially at home and abroad; who might

even have the wit to send street-walkers into a shop, in which their martyriized better half was interested, shortly before the expected event of royalty itself.

Mrs. Atherton proceeds to make all the capital she can out of this hypothetical incident; at the same time she claims to be a good American and democrat, not to say socialist, so far as she or anyone else can reconcile these claims.

All this is fictional license of a sort legitimate enough when used by the hand of a master, masterfully. But when Mrs. Atherton makes her heroine sleep with one loaded pistol under her pillow, another within arm's reach, and three or more scattered about the house; when Julia goes home voluntarily from her hat shop to this sort of thing and thrives on it for months, consoled by the thought that therefore her friend, Ishbel Jones, will be left in peace to support her ex-millionaire stock-broker husband, now ruined and helpless as a result of speculation in stocks at the outbreak of the war in South Africa caused by the greed and capacious extravagance of men alone: then we begin to suspect that Mrs. Atherton is laying it on a bit thick, either with her tongue in her cheek, or with the same scatter-brain and militant attention to details and failure to focus higher and finer, wider and deeper issues, that has characterized equally much of her former work in fiction and a great deal of the more militant activity of her shrieking sisters in the Votes for Women sex war.

It is true that in spots the dialogue of Book III, *Harold France*, is rather divertingly melodramatic not to say farcical. It is also true that Julia is animated by one more heroic motive in her self-immola-

tion in the house of France up to the time of Mr. Jones's death; i. e., loyalty to the cause of the militant Suffragettes, whose ranks both Ishbel and Bridget have long since joined — early in the book, more than a third of which is devoted at recurrent intervals to the unfairness of man and the excellencies of woman as Mrs. Atherton sees or seems to see them.

Judged as literature, very little of this is worth the time and space spent on it; considered as a criticism of life, the final verdict is the same; though here and there Mrs. Atherton proves sufficiently stimulating in her wrong-headed way, like the movement she represents, to those who for various reasons have hitherto failed to find anything else in the world worth fighting and working hard for.

Mrs. Atherton does not go so far as to claim that all girls and women shall immediately be made a little lower or higher than the angels by votes for women.

She does claim and hope, or seems to claim and hope, however, that a new race of super-women is evolving; women whose brains shall dominate, who shall be complete in themselves, far more than men have ever been complete; women in whom sex is a by-product, maternity a dead issue, and love a minor religion, an incidental vice, or a mere episode in their gradual mastery of the rest of the world.

She claims that the militant Suffragettes in England already represent the nucleus of this new sex. "I feel sure the time will come when every self-respecting woman will want to be the author of her own income — when no girl will marry till she is." She says on the next page: "We women want many

things beside love, we Englishwomen at least, for we belong to the most highly developed nation on the globe, and we are the daughters of men as well as of women, remember. And we have heard affairs of the world discussed at table since we have left the nursery."

She says on the next page: "Merely put your name over the door to draw the customers and pocket the proceeds. By no means. What possible satisfaction could I get out of making other people do what I want to do myself? The joy of succeeding must lie in the effort in knowing that you are doing something that no one else can do in quite the same way. I can be an artist even in hats and I propose to be one."

Here as elsewhere the author glances over the surface of one or two truths old as the hills, more or less accurately apprehended and applied several centuries before the Votes for Women movement set up its standard of the super-sex.

If art is life viewed through a temperament, we can't envy Mrs. Atherton her selection of smart hats and gowns from Paris and Regent Street, interior decorations made at Maple's, and feudal castles modernized only in the author's prime essential of open plumbing, as the high lights and chief scenic decorations of her novelized color schemes to the exclusion of children, dogs, horses, gardens and all outdoors and the rest of life.

We don't even think that this sort of thing represents English feudalism, ancient and modern, in town and in country, accurately and adequately from merely the pictorial and fictional point of view.

Furthermore, if the distinction between morality and immorality be that between construction and destruction of power, we are inclined to question the large or small moral gains derived from the efforts of her heroines to make their new hat shop the smartest and most extravagant in all London; to question further the supreme excellence of any ideal or practical work that depends on the patronage of royalty for its chief advertising asset; and to hail with a more or less unregenerate joy the temporary success of Harold France, the Man Monster, in putting the brakes on Julia and Ishbel's production of commercialized art-millinery, and on the more militant activities depending directly on the financial success of the Bond Street hat shop.

Mrs. Atherton is at heart like many of her Suffragette sisters, an ultra-patrician, though like many of them she pretends to be a kid-glove and silk-stocking Socialist and an advocate of the purest democracy the world has yet seen. Applied democracy in America and England shocks and revolts her, as it does the majority of minds too small to focus its immediate details in something like cosmic perspective with its ultimate destiny.

Applied feudalism in England has always appealed to her personally and temperamentally; none the less, like many others of her particular sub-species of the *genus homo*, she has observed of late that something like a period is being put to its most peculiar and extortionate prerogatives in the British Isles. In her native land she has long observed the same sort of thing with sorrow and dismay. Her earlier books testify to this freely.

In this book she makes one of her own characters say that birth is less and less of a social and political asset in England nowadays. Having declared some time since that Christianity cannot satisfy the intellectual needs of the Twentieth Century, and having found no reason to alter that view in the meantime, she finds herself forced to fall back upon the super-sex theory for a new special interest and patrician prerogative to grasp for herself, and to help her fellow-patricians at heart and Socialist and Suffragettes superficially to have and to hold.

She claims that every truly modern woman wants to make money as well as a career for herself, before marriage as well as after.

What she really tells us, however, is that the new super-woman, as she sets her forth, is quite as ready to steal money (*a la* Bond Street hat shops at record prices), and to pirate power after the methods of the tribe of Pankhurst, in the "grand manner" that Mrs. Atherton here gives abundant signs of approving (and which she shares or would like to share equally with a Tammany boss and an English or Russian reactionary duke or grand duke), as any of the merely male conquerors and patrician pirates of the past that she has already deified in the person of Alexander Hamilton and his immediate forebears and followers.

So far conclusive evidence is lacking that she and the people she most approves, in her last book and in the world at large, have evolved noticeably beyond the "good old plan that those that have should hold the power and those should take who can," in their criticism and conduct of life.

The same old male pirate formula, the same old militant tactics of grab all you can comfortably or safely hold, waste and destroy indiscriminately wherever your own cause is helped and your enemy's hurt; bluff, brag, bluster and bully to the limit in the sacred name of freedom or whatever else is your watchword for the hour — these have already been sufficiently exemplified and exploited in the course of the window-smashing campaign in London to need any further recapitulation here. What is needed here is emphasis of the fact that there is a new Twentieth Century "special interest": as egotistic, as grasping, as ruthless of results as any class or caste movement that history has known.

And the leaders of this movement are the superwomen of whom Mrs. Atherton says: "They are like no other women under the sun — nor any sun that has ever shone. They've a new group of brain cells — they've got the same look those old leader-martyrs had when chained up to the stake — the same grim, patient mouths, the same clairvoyant eyes — their enthusiasm is cold and eternal. They are as deliberate as death. There are no better brains in the world. Precious few as good. They never take a step that isn't calculated beforehand, and they never take a step backward. Discouragement and fear are sensations they have never experienced. When they are hurt they don't know it. They fear injury or death no more than they fear the brutes that maul them. In short, they're a new force let loose into the world and the geese outside put them down as hysterical females."

Admitting that much of this may be true of the

best of the fanatic leaders of Votes for Women in England, much of this passage and the rest of the book sounds suspiciously like Mr. Sedgwick's "mob spirit in literature."

Mrs. Atherton compares these women to the martyrs of old inconclusively. So far they have at least stopped short on the safe side of martyrdom. And Mrs. Atherton shows us in detail that Julia France did.

Like most Suffragettes, she is rather more sparing of detail when it comes to showing us what a woman will do with the vote when she gets it. She says something about a Woman's Parliament to deal exclusively with the poor laws, and about various local and general boards, composed solely of women, to deal with all matters concerning the rights and necessities of women and children.

These are Mrs. Atherton's sole constructive suggestions (besides the segregation of a men's parliament to deal apparently with foreign and fiscal affairs) as to the possible results of the present window-smashing crusade.

Probably the best brains of the Suffragettes — "than whom there are no better in the world" — are not directly responsible for this truly brilliant effort of Mrs. Atherton (whom many English men and women believe to have the best brain of any woman novelist in America) to picture two parliaments of the sexes in England, independent, co-existent, and equally powerful in their respective and interesting spheres.

Mrs. Atherton, like many of her English patrician friends, thinks she knows something of world politics

from the outside. She has shown no further evidence, here or elsewhere, of even thinking she knows anything about applied sociology and the modern science of industrial and evolutionary history from the bottom up.

Some elementary acquaintance with the basic phenomena of both sciences, and the most obvious results of her project, might have led her to question just how, with two sex parliaments, each supreme in its own sphere, in existence at the same time, the small matters of child welfare, factory and school laws, income tax and general budget legislation, and the equally pressing needs of Dreadnaught and super-Dreadnaught building, and general military and naval efficiency, are to be reconciled and thrashed out to a practical solution.

A few women, Suffragettes and Antis both, and not a few men, are already able to see that each of the major problems outlined here is more or less involved with all the others in constantly growing and spreading ramifications as the intensity of modern life is multiplied and re-multiplied by increased economic and racial competition in the arts and sciences of war and peace.

Not so Mrs. Atherton, however; intuitively she gets around her biggest difficulty, or thinks she does, by assuming that Votes for Women and Socialism and the Bahai religion are going to abolish war in a hurry. And the way she goes about bringing peace on earth is by stirring up strife, and by insisting that an increasing proportion of the women of England, civilization's apex, are forced to smash shop

windows and maul prime ministers every day or two, by the wrongs that they and their sex have received, or think they have received, at the hands of men.

Mrs. Atherton furnishes sufficient evidence in *Julia France* to prove to the average impartial mind that many of these real or fancied wrongs are wrongs that they insist on bringing on themselves.

Julia France, in the floodtide of her conversion, after initiation in the company of an older woman into the way to make a cabinet minister's life miserable, goes down into the slums of a big Midland colliery town with a chip on her shoulder, looking for trouble.

She finds "a convenient box on a corner" and "began to address eight or ten young men and women. In a few minutes the group has become a crowd that blocked the street."

This pleases Julia at first. So does their initial sarcasms which help to focus the limelight more vividly on her. But presently it appears that they are not going to let her have the limelight all to herself. They begin to make loud and unpleasant remarks. They continue to make them. "Finally one hurled a vile epithet at her. . . . But she was not conscious of any fear. . . . What she really felt was the profound disdain of the aristocrat for the brainless mob — here was one section of the poor that might go to the devil for all the help and sympathy it would ever get from her. But of these and other uncomplimentary sensations she betrayed no more than she did of fear."

Mrs. Atherton may not be conscious of any humor,

obvious or otherwise, in the lines quoted above, nor yet in the paragraphs that follow. At any rate, just at the near-tragic moment of crisis, Julia "drew a long breath of relief. She had grown to look upon the British policeman as her natural enemy; but now she hailed him as her only friend on earth. To her amazement the policemen pushed their way through the mob and jerked her off the box.

"'Nice doings, this,' cried one indignantly. 'Obstructing traffic and collecting crowds. *Ain't you Suffragettes ever going to have sense?*'"

We may pause to dwell upon this last sentence for a moment before we observe that Julia, "with still deeper indignation," objects vociferously: "Couldn't you hear them using language that alone ought to send them to jail? And couldn't you see that they would have torn me to pieces in another moment? Why don't you arrest them?"

"'It's you that we're going to arrest. It's you that's obstructing traffic—not them. They're out for their half-holiday.'

"'But I tell you they threatened me with violence'—and Julia, filled with a wrath of which she had never dreamed herself capable, was dragged off—and the Liberal candidate stood on the side of the street laughing softly.

"Once her fury so far overcame her that she struggled and attempted to break away. . . . So Julia spent twenty-four hours in prison. . . . She was too infuriated to sleep and forget for a moment the gross injustice to which she had been subjected by the laws of a country supposed to be the most enlightened on the globe. She had mounted the box

to make a peaceable — not an incendiary speech — the vile creatures that had insulted and threatened her were not even reprimanded.

“In a mind naturally fair and just nothing will cause rebellion so profound as an act of gross injustice — it takes the personal indignity to sink deep and bear results. Julia — cold, half fed, alone, in a vermin-ridden cell, forgot her ambitions, her artistic pleasure in playing a part well. . . . She would war against those stupid brutes in power as long as they left breath in her. . . . No wonder these chosen women were superior to femininity and gowns. . . . What mortal happiness they missed mattered nothing. . . . And so Julia received her baptism of fire.”

To a mind naturally fair and just, the evidences of special-interest auto-hypnotism in this passage are conclusive and elemental.

There are certain aspects of this account that are frankly farcical so far as literature is concerned. There are certain aspects that bear the possible earmarks of a deeply resented personal experience on the author's part, or the part of her friends.

Be that as it may, while Mrs. Atherton is here unconsciously humorous, she is also unconsciously and naïvely human in her presentation of Julia's side of the case.

Doubtless it is intensely exasperating to a certain militant type of mind, having worked itself up to a state of expecting possible near-martyrdom (police-protected), to find said police protection on its arrival considerably more concerned with the interests of the community at large and the preservation of the King's peace than with equal and exact justice

to the personal rights of each and every militant Suffragette as she sees fit to insist on them.

So a militant atheist might possibly protest at being roughly handled after loudly advertising his views in a congregation of primitive Methodists or hard-shell Baptists; or a radical socialist might conceivably object to the immediate results of his violently waving the red flag in the eyes of a particularly patriotic and slightly intoxicated chowder party.

In either case the rough justice of the street and the police court marches the male offenders off to temporary retirement as the easiest and most effective solution of the problem of keeping them and the rest of the world out of trouble.

The usual male verdict is that the agitator has no kick coming, that he was looking for trouble and got it.

Unless we conclude that Mrs. Atherton has been writing with her tongue in her cheek all the time, that she is wantonly stirring up strife, amusing herself at the expense of humanity and cynically pocketing the proceeds of literary sensationalism, the intimate psychology and unconscious self-revelation of the incident related at length, and all that leads up to it, make this perhaps the most significant and memorable passage of the book.

At any rate, for the average reader the interest is apt to pall after militancy begins to be relegated to the background, and Eastern occultism, supersexualization and various other features of Mrs. Atherton's last attempt to draw strength out of the universe — and to convert it into dollars and cents, pounds, shillings and pence and a career, in a way

that no other mortal man or woman certainly has yet attained to — begin to hold the boards.

The average reader, if he or she has curiosity enough and little enough love for literature, may follow Julia and her fortunes and affinities even to the bitter end and page 533, as well as back to St. Kitts again and to her marriage, startlingly sudden though conventional in form, to a young San Francisco multimillionaire, who is destined, like earlier heroes of the author, to clean up the politics of his native city, state, and land, in ways best left to the imagination of her reader or known to the author herself alone.

American readers and Suffragettes will find themselves woefully disappointed if they take up *Julia France* in the hope that Mrs. Atherton's account of her career will throw any new or detailed light on conditions directly affecting the militant campaign in this country.

It may be that Mrs. Atherton has kept her hands off here for strictly commercialized reasons, and that we are shortly to have the American misadventures of Julia and her friends specifically set forth in an impressionistic setting that only New York itself — and Mrs. Atherton could ever expect to achieve.

It may be, however, that this particular phase of Feminism in America and of Mrs. Atherton's own literary career has reached its Swan Song in *Julia France*. For the best interests of all concerned we may devoutly hope and pray that it has.

The problem of the feminine unemployed "higher up" — what to do with the cleverly superfluous women, to some extent cultured and capable, for whose energies motoring and Bridge, international

marriages and domestic literature, politics à la Colorado and Utah, and divorce court proceedings à la Newport and Reno, furnish insufficient outlets — is not the least important or imperative of all the problems that modern civilization, such as it is, forces upon us. It is not confined to the Votes for Women agitation alone.

It is a problem that still, to some extent, has been insufficiently advertised; and we can at least thank Mrs. Atherton for what she has done to render one phase of it acute. Certainly she might be worse as well as better employed than in writing the books that least worthily represent her.

In so far as these books form a safety valve for herself and her readers, whatever their subversive tendencies and decadent infection, they at least serve one useful purpose.

In this sense at least we may agree with Dr. Cooper that on the whole "it is no bad thing for a nation's literature to have such a potent and unique force as the sort of intellectual anarchy that is represented by Mrs. Atherton at her best."

X

ROBERT W. CHAMBERS AND COMMERCIALISM

"Money rules because men are for sale." Ferguson, *The Religion of Democracy*.

"If the nation is not to suffer by cheap complacency and the triumph of ostentatious mediocrity, the whole educational life must be filled with a new spirit of devotion to serious tasks." Hugo Münsterberg, *American Problems*, 1910.

HUGO MÜNSTERBERG is recognized here and abroad as a specialist of the first rank in his chosen field; Robert W. Chambers is not. There are those who openly call him a literary charlatan or quack; there are those who veil their lack of faith in him in more diplomatic or evasive language.

Very few of his best friends will pretend that his later work shows a serious spirit of devotion to anything but record-breaking sales and the most obvious results of the same, and to the almighty dollar that inspires and creates them.

Professor Münsterberg has proved to us, in one way or another, that, in Germany to-day, literature seriously considered, in verse and in prose, in fiction as well as the drama, is, on the whole, a national asset and an educational force recognized and to be reckoned with.

Here in America to-day, there is a growing tendency to question the educational value of fiction of the order of ostentatious mediocrity turned out whole-

sale by Mr. Chambers and his closest trade rivals, manufactured and sold in bargain-counter consignments over the counters of the largest dry goods stores of our largest cities at the uniform rate of \$0.98 or \$1.08 per volume, in editions that run regularly into the hundreds of thousands, at least once or twice a year.

If demand inevitably breeds supply, Mr. Chambers is less to be blamed perhaps for this state of things than his consumers, ultimate and parasitic.

If the Waldorf-Astoria was the first huge American hotel to provide exclusiveness for the masses; if it remains still without a rival as a palace of delight in rural communities, where the St. Regis and the Plaza are yet unknown, then Mr. Chambers enjoys the equally questionable distinction of having provided a sense of literary exclusiveness for the people who live in these hotels, and the people whose ambition centers there, both on Manhattan Island and in the outer darkness where the fame of Richard Harding Davis is already eclipsed.

If Mr. Chambers thoroughly deserves to be called the prince of wholesale and cheap illusion, of commercialized darkness and flippant immorality in American fiction; if he gets the highest current prices for literary lies and extravagant frivolity based on false social distinction and exclusively patrician ideals; if continually he assumes more than he proves, and alternately professes the most inconsequent triviality in his treatment of contemporary life and a pose of the social reformer of Society from the inside, who satirizes what he exploits; then it is small wonder that a comparatively large and unsophisticated

section of the reading public, who still buy and read his books, are at a loss just where and how to place him.

It is a greater wonder that, in this era of Broadway musical comedies and of the wholesale commercialization of every art and artificiality of American life, a fairly large proportion of his fellow-countrymen and countrywomen have at last waked up to the essential inconsequence of Mr. Chambers' later books; and to the extreme thinness of the fabric of pretense and pretentiousness out of which he spins his productions in print, retailed to-day everywhere by the square yard and the square inch.

It may or may not do Mr. Chambers equal and exact justice to call him the barker of the New York society side-show, and to suggest that his novels dealing with it have about the same relation to real life that the average moving picture film of things Parisian has to existence as it actually occurs in Paris or anywhere else. But the fact remains that he has the same happy faculty of giving the public what it wants (or of making it think so) that characterizes the purveyor of the two popular forms of amusement suggested above.

It is no new discovery in the literary world or out of it, that the Great American Public dearly loves a literary gold brick, provided it is wrapped up and handed out in sufficiently startling or diverting language. Mr. Chambers' reading public does not consist solely of the very young and unsophisticated of both sexes, of the lackeys, butlers, footmen, grooms, valets, chauffeurs, French maids, housemaids, chambermaids of the idle rich, together with their masters

and mistresses, and the rest that take him seriously, or try to. It also consists of the people who take a perverted but very natural pleasure in watching his effect on those who are unable to see through him, and of the literary cappers who stand in with the system that has produced him.

So the crowd around the shell game stands and watches the circulation of the nimble pea under the hand of the artist that produces it; the misadventures of the "come-ons" who think they can beat the game; and the less pronounced activity of the confederates and cappers in the crowd who do their share in producing this phase of the human comedy.

Mr. Chambers stands for more than the yellow peril of extreme commercialism in American literature; he is something less than the Great American Joke in the same field. It would be hardly fair to a greater man and truer American to call him the Phineas T. Barnum of American fiction; none the less, equally with Mr. Barnum, he is a man of his time and of the day and hour; and his rise to fame and Philistine prominence is quite as symptomatic of certain fundamental racial and human qualities that he shares, to our frequent sorrow and occasional diversion, with the rest of us.

Dr. Frederic Taber Cooper, in *Representative American Story Tellers*, is inclined to take Mr. Chambers seriously. Not as an exponent rather than a personality, not from any sociological and economic point of view (in Dr. Cooper's estimation such matters are altogether out of the field and function of literary criticism as he contrives to write and publish it), but as author alone.

Although this particular critic admits many of Mr. Chambers' sins in the past, none the less he has hopes of the novelist's future, and he sees no reason why Mr. Chambers should not be remembered as the producer of a comprehensive Human Comedy of New York.

He does not give us any conclusive reason or reasons for this opinion of his. He begins by suggesting that Mr. Chambers is naturally a born storyteller rather than a novelist. He says that a storyteller is born and not made, while a fairly good novel may be written by the simple but patient process of taking infinite pains.

He does not suggest that Mr. Chambers has ever taken infinite pains with any novel that he has produced. He says: "The elementary principle of Economy of Means is a rule for which Mr. Chambers seems to have no use. He has found by experience that the public likes to listen to him, and so long as they listen he sees no reason for curtailing to fifty words a sentence which, left to itself, flows along to upward of one hundred. In his latest books he sees no more objection in interrupting the progress of a plot by a few pages of unnecessary dialogue than in his earlier period he saw the harm of delaying progress with superfluous paragraphs of quite wonderful and vivid description.

"In other words, the impression left by Mr. Chambers' work as a whole is that he has not chosen to study carefully and to practice the best technique of the recognized masters of modern fiction. He professes to begin and to end a story when he pleases, regardless of the question whether this beginning and

end coincide with those dictated by the best art.”

Mr. Cooper thinks that this is curious, in view of the fact that Mr. Chambers studied art for more than seven years in New York and Paris, and had exposed paintings in the Salon before he returned to New York in 1893, at the age of twenty-eight, to attain an initial local prominence as an illustrator for *Life*, *Truth* and *Vogue*.

As a matter of fact, the career of Mr. Chambers, in art as well as in fiction, is an admirable instance of the application of the principle of the easiest way to the chase of the almighty dollar and social distinction.

It is an equally admirable example of the pressure of environment upon character or its absence.

The facts speak for themselves. Mr. Chambers comes back to New York, after seven years spent in Paris, at the culmination of his formative period. There is no evidence extant to show that he took himself seriously, with any lasting success, as a painter or illustrator. Naturally he wanted a wider recognition than that involved in contributions to the three most frivolous and ephemeral publications of any commercial standing that New York has ever known.

Naturally he went to work to transcribe the life that he had lived and seen in Paris, as a painter might work up sketches of any environment known to him, for publication. Mr. Cooper considers *In the Quarter*, 1893, one of his novels that cannot be disregarded, “unmistakably a series of pen drawings, of things actually lived and seen, a pell-mell gathering of the humor and pathos, the gladness and the pain of the modern art student’s life . . . curiously old-fashioned in structure. . . . There is not an episode

that you wish to prune away — they are so frankly enjoyable for their own sake.”

On the whole, in contrast with much of his later work, *In the Quarter* is very well worth reading. So is much of *The King in Yellow*, his third book, published in 1895, and consisting in part of a series of short stories characterized by the same commercialized mingling of motives of curiosity and horror later treated with more success in *The Maker of Moons*. The latter half of the book — including *The Demoiselle d'Ys*, an exquisite bit of modern mediæval drama romance, and *The Street of the Four Winds*, *The Street of the First Shell*, *The Street of Our Lady of the Fields* and *Rue Barée*, wherein he reverts to the Latin Quarter at the time of the siege of Paris by the Prussians — contains much of the work that makes Mr. Cooper consider his early short stories better than his later ones, and claim that he is the author of at least half a dozen tales that deserve to rank among the very best that American writers have produced. *The Mystery of Choice* is classed by him in this series.

He disregards *A King and a Few Dukes*, which is an inimitable opera-bouffe romance of *The Prisoner of Zenda* order, to which the author's love of outdoor life and apparent interest in trout-hatching and butterfly-catching gives a slight substratum of reality; and *The Conspirators*, an inferior effort of the same nature; to consider *Lorraine*, *Ashes of Empire*, *The Red Republic* and *The Maids of Paradise*, ranging in date of publication from 1894 to 1903, which he thinks “belong together for the twofold reason that they all four have the Franco-Prussian War as a

setting and dashing young Americans for their heroes."

Of these four, the *Red Republic*, 1894, which presents vividly certain phases of Parisian life under the Commune, deserves to be seriously considered.

Concerning the other three, Mr. Cooper is near enough to the truth when he says: "He happens to know unusually well both the history and the topography of France during the period which he chooses to treat; he attempts no ambitious character study; he takes no daring liberties with recorded facts; he is content to tell a series of rattling good stories that not only keep you moving with them. . . . One may venture to risk the conjecture that he would never have written these books at all had it not been for the sudden popularity, a decade ago, of the adventure novel, coupled with his own fatal facility for turning out pretty nearly any sort of story that he chooses to undertake. Had he cared more for his work, we should have had in these books characters less wooden and more like real people and episodes more uniformly serious and less apt to approach the border line of farce."

This last sentence, while true enough with regard to Mr. Chambers' work as a whole, has a more limited application to the volumes of this particular series than Mr. Cooper claims. It is true that *The Maids of Paradise*, which is technically the best of the books, has to do with the misadventures of a Yankee circus which is marooned in Brittany at the time of the fall of Napoleon III, as well as with an attempt to capture a treasure train of gold from the Bank of France; it is true that Mr. Chambers takes the easiest

way of adding interest to the two heroines of *Ashes of Empire* by giving them a tame lioness for a pet as well as a whole bird-shop full of smaller animals and winged creatures. But there is nothing farcical about the grim chronicles of murder in *The Red Republic*, and *Lorraine* is written in a spirit of fervid romanticism that makes one feel almost as if the American who wrote the book was a Frenchman and a patriot of 1870 himself.

There is something of the same sense of contemporary illusion in *Cardigan*, 1901, which, like the rest of its series, Mr. Cooper disregards, and which was the first of three historical novels dealing with our own Revolutionary and pre-Revolutionary period. There is a great deal of careful work in *Cardigan* and in *The Reckoning*, and not a little in *The Maid at Arms*, which is distinctly inferior to the other two, to justify Mr. Cooper's general conclusion that Mr. Chambers enjoys a graphic power of visualization, an ability to handle crowds and to give one a sense of the tumult and uproar of angry throngs and the din and havoc of battle, and that he possesses to an exceptional degree the trick of conveying a sense of motion.

At first reading *Cardigan* appears to be a brilliant bit of work. More careful analysis, however, reveals comparatively little except the conventional plot machinery of the commonplace historical novelist and the painter's trickery of massing effects picturously to confirm the reader's first impression.

Cardigan consists of a series of sufficiently vivid historical tableaux, a schoolroom scene at the home of Sir William Johnson, Commissioner for the Crown

of Indian Affairs in North America in 1791[?], a fishing party in the woods near by, a dancing of the minuet, an incident on the trail to Fort Pitt, a parley in the Long House of the Iroquois, a riot at Fort Pitt, a view of the interior of the debtors' prison in Boston, and finally another interior view of Buckman's Tavern at Lexington during the British attack on the town.

These pictures are most of them brilliantly executed. They dovetail into each other well enough, with a sufficiently accurate sense of historical perspective from the most obvious point of view. Through them the schoolboy who tells the story and the school-girl that is destined on the first page to be his wife on the last, in the conventional manner of historical novels and novelists for the last two hundred years, pass plausibly and develop sufficiently to hold the reader's attention for the time being and no longer. There is no effort, successful or unsuccessful, to represent the general temper or tendency of the times.

The whole Revolutionary agitation and uprising, in spite of the careful portraits of Jack Mount and one or two more incidental "Friends of Liberty," serves simply as a frame for the picture of the moment and an obscure background for the whole series of carefully posed and proportioned tableaux. None the less, *Cardigan*, conventional though it is in some respects, remains a fine and stirring historical romance, fit for comparison with all but the best of its type in English and American literature, and having a very perceptible intensity and charm of its own.

This intensity and charm is heightened and deepened in *The Reckoning*. Much the same method is

followed as in *Cardigan*, but save in the first few chapters, where we have a picturesque account of affairs in New York City under British rule during the last year of the war, the artificiality of the treatment is less obvious.

Carus Renault, who tells the story in his own words — a favorite method for Mr. Chambers, who consistently takes the easiest way to secure interest in his heroes and heroines; who is twenty-three years old at the beginning of the book, and who has served for four years as an American spy and private secretary to one of the most prominent of New York's loyalist citizens, refuses for some time to be beguiled into falling in love with the Honorable Elsin Gray, ward of the Governor of Canada, recently released from a convent at an age estimated by Mr. Renault as no more than seventeen or eighteen.

Later it develops that Elsin has found time to be married secretly to Walter Butler, whose historic reputation as arch-devil of the Canadian-Indian atrocities along the New York frontier needs no heightening by Mr. Chambers.

The author has resisted the temptation to employ startlingly impressionist methods in his portraiture of Butler, who also appears in *Cardigan*, with the result that a very vivid historical character remains in his hands somewhat colorless and unconvincing.

Butler comes to New York by sea, suspects Carus, and is on the point of exposing him, when Elsin rises to the emergency, declares that a compromising document, found by Butler in Renault's room, was placed there by herself as a practical joke; secures from Sir Henry Clinton a pass through the British lines for

Carus and herself, on the plea that they are about to start for the local Gretna Green; and manages to escape by night with him to Washington's headquarters at North Castle.

Mr. Chambers here shows himself sufficiently a master of rapid action and the forced development of a child into a woman, to keep this part of the book within the bounds of plausibility. Temporarily in safety, Elsin reverts once more from woman to child; there is an idyllic charm about her brief stay in safety with Carus, and a Sunday preaching to the Continental troops that are admirably done.

Washington is kept studiously in the background, and never appears; Renault's services being such as cannot with safety be publicly acknowledged at the time.

Renault as a boy has been adopted into the Iroquois confederation. He is sent north to the national council fire as sachem and ambassador of the Oneidas, the only one of the Six Nations that remained friendly to the Colonies during the war, and as spy on the British and on Butler.

He leaves Elsin in comparative security in the fort at Johnstown, after a somewhat melodramatic love scene wherein she confesses that she is Butler's wife in name only, and Renault's to dispose of as he chooses. He goes to the Council fire and induces the hostile tribes to remain neutral; he sees them depart before Butler's arrival; he fails to make Butler a prisoner; eventually he arrives in the middle of the fighting at Johnstown and learns that Elsin has given herself up to Butler in hopes that her influence with him will be sufficient to save the women and chil-

dren of the Mohawk Valley from massacre during this last invasion by the British, Indians, Tories, and renegades.

Her influence does not prove sufficient. We have a few terse pictures of fire, murder and torture, handled with commendable discretion; an admirably brief portrait of Colonel Marinus Willett, the one man capable of holding the New York frontier and the granary of the Revolutionary armies safe for Washington; sketches in outline accurately proportioned, of Jack Mount, Morgan's rangers, Dutch farmers, Continental officers, Oneida scouts. Butler and Ross are repulsed and routed at Johnstown; and the action of the story leaps forward to the pursuit and destruction of Butler's column and its leader's death in Canada, with a breadth and intensity of interest that makes Carus and Elsin for the time being mere details in the red reckoning of the New Yorkers of the Revolutionary frontier with those who had spared neither age nor sex, sickness nor infancy, in seven long years of fire and murder, torture and captivity.

Inevitably according to Mr. Chamber's favorite formula, Carus finds Elsin alive, though bearing marks of brutal treatment at Butler's hands; and the book ends with the close of the war, the surrender of Cornwallis, and the setting of the day of their marriage.

Here we have as an epilogue one of the author's infrequent lyric passages, worth quoting at least as a rarity, and a contrast with his more commercialized work:

"That brief and lovely season which in our Northland checks the white onset of the snow, and which

we call the Indian summer, bloomed in November when the last red leaf had fluttered to the earth. A fairy summer, for the vast arches of the sky burned sapphire and amethyst, and hill and woodland, innocent of verdure, were clothed in tints of fairest rose and cloudy violet; and all the world put on a magic livery, nor was there leaf nor stem nor swale nor tuft of moss too poor to wear some royal hint of gold, deep veined or crusted lavishly where the crested swales spread, burnished by the sun.

“Snowbird and goldfinch were with us — the latter veiling his splendid tints in modest russet; and now, from the north came to us silent flocks of birds all gray and rose, outriders of winter’s crystal cortège, still halting somewhere far in the silvery north, where the white owls sit in the firs, and all the world lies robed in ermine.

“All through that mellow Indian summer my betrothed grew strong, and her hurts had nearly healed.”

There is more than picturesque and poetic word-painting and graphic rapidity of interest in this book. Elsin, though not always consistently handled, remains one of the author’s most successful characters in his vast gallery of girls, French and American. Unlike many of them, she is deeper than she appears to be at first sight. Superficial charm she possesses in common with the rest of the young women that have made Mr. Chambers the Harrison Fisher of American literature, but there is a real humanity about her underneath, that like the rest of the book is likely to stand the test of time.

Carus is not less admirable. The boyishness of

his youth under stress, his love of fine clothes, his reverence for Washington whom he has never seen, his natural desire to win distinction on the field, his hesitation and final resolve to serve as a spy again, paralleled by Colonel Willett's questionable promotion from the command of a brigade of the Continental Line to the obscure guardianship of the frontier, are all rendered with an admirable and sympathetic brevity that combine to make him one of Mr. Chambers' most natural, democratic and human of heroes.

In spite of certain superficialities of impression, specially noticeable in the account of garrison life in New York and other minor details, there is a lightness and sureness of touch about *The Reckoning* that shows the true artist at his best, within his limitations, and ensures a pleasurable second or third reading however prejudiced we may be by the worst of Mr. Chambers' later works.

To say that in *Cardigan* and *The Reckoning* he found himself on the frontier, for the time being; that here his natural facility and love for outdoor life, for adventure and picturesque description, might legitimately have satisfied itself; that he might have made the American frontier his own, working West and South for a hundred years or more, as neither Cooper nor any other American novelist had done, if he had seen fit to concentrate himself and serve a longer and more painful apprenticeship to the art that comes to him at second hand, is to deal with quantities unknown and comparatively unimportant at this moment.

The fact remains that Mr. Chambers, tempted by the facile versatility which has wrecked so many other

and abler artists, or by the obvious increase in financial returns, has turned to other, less creditable fields; that the *Cardigan* series is still unfinished, and that the missing third volume is not the only loss to him and to us.

II.

Taken as a whole, the method and purpose of the vast majority of Mr. Chambers' novels and stories of every type and period, is that of a man who is, by temperament and training alike, a painter of surfaces and very little more.

Mr. Cooper makes the most of the fact that there is one exception to prove this rule, in the course of seventeen years' work and an output of more than thirty volumes. He admits that many of Mr. Chambers' friends have declared *Outsiders*, 1899, to be his one great failure. At the same time he calls it a better and more sincere piece of work than many of his more successful novels. He says it is not surprising that the book failed to achieve popularity; that in it the author has ridiculed American culture and American social standing; and has expressed freely and forcibly his attitude toward publishers, critics and life in general in New York. He admits that it is done largely in caricature; he says that it is caricature that is easily recognized; he fails to add that much of it is the caricature largely unconscious of a man whose chief use for sincerity seems to be to get back at the people and things that have rasped his own personal susceptibilities. He quotes as memorable the following passage:

"Suddenly he realized the difference between a city in the Old-World acceptance of the term, and

the city before his eyes — this stupendous excrescence of naked iron, gaunt under its skin of paint, flimsily colossal, ludicrously sad — and this half-begun, irrational, gaudy, dingy monstrosity — this temporary fair-ground, choked with tinsel, ill-paved, ill-lighted, stark, treeless, swarming, crawling with humanity.”

In one way this passage is memorable. It is a notable example of how English should not be written. It is obviously more superficial than discerning; it does not quite represent Mr. Chambers at his worst, but it is a fair sample of his modern descriptive style when he really tries to let himself out.

Needless to say, there is very little of it in his later series of lighter books calculated to please the public — including volumes of short stories and brief prose extravaganzas like *The Tree of Heaven*, *A Young Man in a Hurry*, *In Search of The Unknown*, *Some Ladies in Haste*, *A Tracer of Lost Persons*, *The Green Mouse*, *The Adventures of a Modest Man*; artistic and social satires like *Iole*; charming outdoor stories like *A Cambric Mask*; and Civil War novels and novelettes like *The Special Messenger* and *Ailsa Paige*.

Here and there in the series of four long novels of contemporary New York Society life beginning with *The Fighting Chance* and ending with *The Danger Mark*, in which Mr. Cooper thinks he has found himself at last, we do find a yielding to the natural tendency to hit out and hit back at the things that he doesn't like; and which, both by his long residence abroad and his social and professional associations ever since, he is incapable of appreciating at their

exact and evolutionary value, either as novelist or wider critic of life.

Mr. Cooper thinks that *The Firing Line* and *The Younger Set* which have to do with divorce unconclusively and indifferently, are so much worse than *The Fighting Chance* and *The Danger Mark* that they may be left out of the discussion. In the last two books he admits that he becomes every now and then mildly exasperated with Mr. Chambers: "Not because his work is bad but because it falls just short of being something a great deal better."

Passages like the following suggest cause for exasperation more than mild: "By January the complex social mechanism of the metropolis was whirling smoothly again. . . . The glittering machine, every part assembled, refurbished, repolished and connected, having been given preliminary speed tests at the Horse Show and a tuning up at the opera was now running under full velocity; and its steady subdued whir quickened the chattering pulse of the city, keying it to a sublimely syncopated ragtime. . . . Like a set piece of fire works spectacle after spectacle glittered, fizzed and was extinguished, only to give place to new and more splendid spectacles; separate circles, sets and groups belonging to the social solar system whizzed, revolved, rotated, with edifying effects on every one concerned, unconcerned and not at all concerned. . . . And the social arbiter of Bird Center was more of a facsimile of his New York confrère than that confrère could ever dream of in the most realistic of nightmares."

Such passages do not occur frequently enough to warrant Mr. Cooper's suggestion that the uneven-

ness of style characteristic of *The Fighting Chance* is due to mere haste and oversight on the author's part. They appear to be inserted perversely, provocatively, to show how well Mr. Chambers sees through the Society that he is content to exploit, which he takes just about as seriously as he does any other financially available literary material; and to heighten the general spectacular effect of the book.

Mr. Cooper says justly that Mr. Chambers' portraits of men are better and stronger than his feminine studies in fantasy and distorted fact. There is a certain naïve and childlike quality about his criticism of the plot of *The Fighting Chance* that deserves quotation almost complete:

"In substance it amounts to this: A young woman already pledged to a man enjoying all the advantages of wealth and position one day meets another man, under the shadow of a heavy disgrace due to his intemperate habits. They are guests at the same house party, they are thrown much together, and within forty-eight hours she falls unresistingly, into his arms, and yields her lips as readily as any servant girl. Heredity, says the author; the girl cannot help it; the women in her family have for generations been all they ought not to be. Nevertheless the reader retorts, the girl does not become 'all that she ought not to be.' During the weeks that follow there is many a venturesome scene, many a dialogue between the two that skirts the edge of impropriety; but in spite of heredity, the lady never quite loses her head; and after they have all separated for the season and she knows quite well that the man she loves is drinking himself to death, when

a word from her would stop him, she continues to wear the other man's large diamond and to play her part in the social whirl; and only after the lapse of many months does it occur to her that she can effect the salvation of a human soul without in the least endangering her own reputation, by merely calling him up on the telephone and having a five minutes' chat. Now this is not said to belittle Mr. Chambers' work. . . . Only it does not seem that a real woman would have acted that way. She either would have flung discretion to the winds and done all sorts of mad things earlier in the game, and thrown the blame upon heredity; or else she would have had sufficient self-control to have kept her lips her own for somewhat longer than forty-eight hours."

Mr. Chambers is entitled to say that Mr. Cooper is in no position to pronounce authoritatively upon the psychology of degenerates such as he chooses to represent.

Whatever doubt there may or may not be about this point, there is no doubt whatever about his cleverness in building his book so as to capture at the start that section of the reading public whose taste in fiction is as degenerate as his own, and to hold their attention securely through the resulting pages at record prices per word.

He makes his two young degenerates, Stephen Siward and Sylvia Landis, meet at a railroad station chaperoned only by a dog which, together with other dogs and several square miles of shooting country, help to give a sporting turn to the story. Before they reach the house in the course of an hour's drive, he has them on terms of "the gayest understanding."

Subsequently they meet and embrace in the corridor outside of their respective rooms, and on one occasion inside of hers, in order that the subsequent plot machinery of blackmail and the literary vivisection of three or four more degenerates in Society and out of it, may be started early in the game and the reader given the promise of a lot of this sort of thing to look forward to.

It is only fair to Mr. Chambers to say that, when he cares to do this sort of thing, he does it indifferently well. The cumulative degeneration of Leroy Mortimer, his relations with his wife, Beverley Plank, Harold Quarrier and Lydia Vyse, and the joint blackmailing of Quarrier by Mortimer and Lydia in the house where he has himself installed the girl, are portrayed with a realism that is as readable as it is rare in this part of the world.

This phase of the story, in which Mr. Chambers shows that he has a great deal to learn yet from the men who failed to teach him the art of novelizing the demi-monde during the seven years that he lived in Paris, is on the whole far from being the least conclusive, or artistically the least tolerable part of the book.

There is no indication that he has achieved a rigorously Parisian literary conscience, here or elsewhere. He handles vice that commercially justifies its existence, as he handles questionable virtue that spectacularly advertises his own cleverness, not with any clarifying or inspiring effect of getting at the vital problems of existence, but as literary material superficially ready to his hand.

With the single exception of Mortimer, his sin-

ners, like his heroes and heroines, lack the breath of life. Harold Quarrier and the woman that he finally marries are sufficiently improbable to be quite at home in the pages of Lady Novelists of the caliber of Elinor Glyn and Marie Corelli.

The other characters compose well enough into the pictures that Mr. Chambers chooses to paint. Taken by themselves — with the exception of Beverley Plank who is rather a superior, good-natured, simple-minded, well-meaning snob among inferior snobs, and whose friendship for Siward is the one decent human interest of the book — they bear a curious resemblance to the rudimentary figures of a tragi-comedy of marionettes.

Stephen Siward, who inherits the curse of drink in order to make him interesting to Sylvia Landis and a sufficient quantity of Mr. Chambers' readers, is pictured like the majority of the author's heroes and heroines as young, handsome, clever, charming, socially eligible and sexually rather irresistible. We are assured in this case by a clubman and contemporary, that in one way, with women, he has always been singularly decent.

When he discovers that the girl who reciprocates his somewhat volcanic passion up to a certain point, insists on marrying her multi-millionaire, he shuts himself up in his old house near Washington Square and deliberately begins to drink himself to death. He gets tired of this and goes to Muldoon's. He is cured temporarily by the ex-wrestler and physical culture specialist. He relapses and goes back to the care of an old family doctor and an old family servant who like Beverley Plank helps to exemplify

the religion of snobbery on grounds that seem, to say the least, unwarranted as pictured here.

During one of his periods of convalescence, Plank is taken to see him by Billy Fleetwood.

“Politics were touched upon . . . the sport of boss baiting providing a new amusement for the idle rich . . . city, state and national issues were run through lightly, business conditions noted . . . presently conversation died out. . . . ‘You haven’t discoursed upon art, literature and science yet and you can’t go till you’ve adjusted the affairs of the nation for the next twenty-four hours.’

“‘Art,’ yawned Fleetwood. ‘Oh, pictures. Don’t like ’em. Nobody ever looks at them except débutantes who do it out of deviltry to floor a man at a dinner or a dance. . . . Science, Spider Flynn is matched to meet Kid Halloway; is that what you mean, Stephen? Somebody tumbled out of an air-ship the other day; is that what you mean?’”

Opinions may differ as to the exact identification of this point of view with Mr. Chambers’s own. The fact remains that he has chosen as the hero of his most ambitious book before *The Common Law*, a drunken degenerate who is not visited either in sickness or in health by people of more importance and significance in the world than Plank and Fleetwood, because, with every initial advantage of wealth and social position in New York, he has never taken any trouble to become acquainted with the real people of the real world.

He is a puppet; we are supposed at Mr. Chambers’ suggestion, to consider him a clever, charming, chivalrous and truly interesting one, pulled by the

strings of his hereditary vice and the impulse of the moment, and imperfectly restrained from making a bestial spectacle of himself on the streets by his inbred sense of what is due to good form and good breeding.

Either through incompetence or indifference, he lets his business affairs get into a state where he is about to be ruined, when Plank steps in and rescues him.

The brief account of Plank's financial battles with Quarrier and his chief confederate, wherein we are told at the climax of the campaign, that a certain judge had been bought, and value given in return, is about as inconclusive, and requires about as much to be taken on trust and insufficient pretense, as nine-tenths of the rest of the book.

Sylvia Landis is rather more of a marionette than Siward himself. Stripped of her superficial charm and her inherited sexual allure, she is simply a blind hunger for money and social position. She admits this to herself and to Siward. She binds Quarrier by the terms of a long engagement, and lets him do as he likes in the meantime, provided she is given the same liberty.

As the day of her wedding approaches, she hasn't even the courage of her commercialized convictions; she finds it impossible to let Quarrier kiss or embrace her; she calls Siward up on the telephone and proceeds to fall into his arms after Plank has assured Siward that he, Siward, is stronger than she, and that the happiness of both is involved in his taking control of their two lives. This Siward proceeds to do.

"He looked into her eyes . . . she looked back

with the divine untroubled gaze of a child . . . and deep in his body as he stood there he heard the low challenge of his soul on guard; and he knew that the enemy listened."

And so the book ends.

Mr. Chambers has an apparently careless habit of tossing words like darling, divine, charming, pleasant, clever, delightful, around loosely, and expecting us to be suitably impressed with the ease and supposed unconscious grace with which he does it. This detail, like other superficial faults in a tissue of superficialities, is of comparatively minor importance.

What is more to the point, if *The Fighting Chance* has any moral values at all aside from the waste of time and perversion of power involved in the case of the author and some hundreds of thousands of his readers, is our being led to suppose that, as a result of Stephen's stern self-assertion and Sylvia's supreme self-denial in the matter of Quarrier's millions, these two spoiled children of all creation are left to marry and live happy ever after on an income fairly comfortable even on Manhattan Island, without the necessity on the part of either or both of them to do anything more to secure and safeguard their happiness than what the most obvious rules of health and sobriety demand.

People of their type may be common enough in New York society; here at least the book may be true enough to life; but neither there or anywhere else has the author any rational ground for assuming that lasting happiness for themselves or anyone else is at all likely to result from any such marriage as he has made the triumphant climax of his story.

Books like *The Fighting Chance* not only help the idle rich to take a curiously perverted and imperfect view of their own insignificance: they tempt the idle poor to do the same. They induce thousands of empty-brained women of all classes, who waste their time over them, to sentimentalize falsely over the sham passion of Mr. Chambers' marionettes and to tell themselves truly in their commercialized heart of hearts that Sylvia Landis was a bigger fool than they ever would have been if they had had her chance to sell herself to her multi-millionaire.

Books like this advertise in wholesale the commercial possibilities of matrimony on a large financial scale; they concentrate feminine attention and appetite upon extravagance and irresponsibility; they crowd out other books and other ideals, and they have more to do with the tragedies of the divorce-court and the stock exchange than either Mr. Chambers or critics like Mr. Cooper are likely to imagine.

In this respect, in view of its large circulation and its trifling with truth from various points of view, *The Fighting Chance* may properly be considered one of the most immoral books ever published in America.

As a work of art its inferiority to *The House of Mirth*, which appeared at the same time, was widely recognized. As a human document, treating of life in Society and downtown in New York, it needs only to be compared to a book like *The Great God Success* by David Graham Phillips.

There is a clarity, a sincerity, a directness, an inevitableness about the latter, an absence of artificiality and pretense and an immanence of the es-

sential truth of human nature and the environment that molds and is molded by it in New York today, in this first novel of Mr. Phillips, that is to be found neither in *The Fighting Chance* nor in anything that Mr. Chambers has ever written.

The former is less than half the length of the other; there is in it an economy of means, a signal illustration of this first principle of the art of fiction, and of all other arts that Mr. Chambers continually violates for pecuniary value received.

If *The Great God Success*, which is a thousand times more powerful than *The Fighting Chance* and infinitely more memorable, is placed side by side with it, any fairly intelligent reader of any typical American newspaper or magazine has no difficulty in differentiating between them.

One is the real thing; one a commercialized effusion of hot air. One is concrete and self-evident fact; one a pretentious and unedifying falsehood and failure.

In *The Danger Mark* (1909), Mr. Chambers' usual superficial fertility in the evolution of his plots seems to have failed him. He has seen fit merely to reverse the mechanism of *The Fighting Chance*. We have the same country house, with its sporting side issues, bulking largely in the action of the book, full of the same irrelevant, unimportant and uninspiring minor characters. In this book the heroine is afflicted with the hereditary curse of drink aggravated in the course of her childhood by a habit of nibbling lumps of sugar drenched in cologne.

She has moreover a temperamental trait, also developed in her extreme youth, of hitting out blindly

and passionately with her fists whenever sufficiently provoked. We are told toward the close of the book that she broke the bridge of the hero's nose at an early age during an encounter with boxing gloves, and the knowledge of this seems to be a bond of union between them.

The hero, like other heroes of Mr. Chambers before and since, is a painter gifted with marvelous and quite unsubstantiated facility, as well as with money and social standing of his own, sufficient to render him eligible in the homes of the Best People on Manhattan Island in spite of a somewhat sultry past in Paris and other Continental centers. During the panic of 1907 he loses most of his money. By this time inspired by his sweetheart's heroic struggle against her besetting weakness — a large part of said struggle consisting of the shooting of wild boars on skis, at her country estate and private preserve somewhere in Eastern Canada or near there — he has himself struggled sufficiently to have attained wealth and fame as a fashionable portrait painter in the city where he is most at home; and where we are given to understand, without any vast weight of testimony in favor of the author's assumption, that happiness awaits him.

To say that this book is about as true to life as *The Fighting Chance* is to slander the latter — slightly. At the time of its publication it met with a more immediate and outspoken effusion of parody and ridicule in New York and elsewhere than any book that has been prominently before the American public for many years.

Obviously, with the kind of reading public which

takes Mr. Chambers seriously, a reception of this sort might have been considered an honor for some books and some authors. The only trouble about any theory of this sort is that the only reading public to which Mr. Chambers's books continue to appeal is the public which, through ignorance or perversity, puts a premium on shallowness, insincerity, pretentiousness, extravagance, and a lively sense of the spectacular that verges on vice where it does not cross the line in life and literature alike.

To such the book may be safely commended with the questionable advertisement that, all things considered, it might have been worse.

Nevertheless there are passages in the book that are worth quoting for one reason or another. Some of them betray Mr. Chambers' growing tendency to try to run with the hares and hunt with the hounds; to pose as a critic and satirist of New York Society, while at the same time continuing to augment his sales by exploiting its caste pretenses and assumptions.

"The cotillion led by Dysart dancing alone was one of those carefully thought out and intellectual affairs which shakes New York society to its intellectual foundations.

"In one figure Geraldine came whizzing into the room in a Palm Beach bicycle-chair trimmed with orchids and propelled by Peter Tappen; and from her seat among the flowers she distributed favors — live white cockatoos — fans spangled with tiny electric jewels; parasols of pink silk set with tiny incandescent lights; crystal cages containing great pale-green Luna moths alive and fluttering; circus

hoops of gilt, filled with white tissue paper, through which the men jumped."

" . . . She lay back on the cushions with a tired little laugh. 'We are like the others of our rotten lot, only less aged, less experienced. But we have each of us our own heritage, our own secret depravity. . . . It's all rotten, I tell you . . . the whole personnel and routine . . . those people and their petty vices and their idleness and their money! I — I do want to keep myself above it — clear of it — but what can I do? One can't live without friends. If I don't gamble, if I don't flirt, I'm isolated. If one stands aloof from anything one's friends go elsewhere. . . .

"I say it's rotten. . . . All this — the whole thing — the stupidity of it — the society that's driven to these kinds of capers, dreading the only thing it ever dreads — *ennui*. Look at it all. For God's sake survey us damn fools, herded here in our pinch-beck mummery — forcing the sanctuary of these green woods, polluting them with smoke and noise and dirty little intrigues. I'm sick of it."

"There's a stench of money everywhere; there's a stale aroma in the air too — the dubious perfume of decadence, of moral atrophy, of stupid recklessness, of the *ennui* that breeds intrigue, . . . of their women folk, whose sole intellectual relaxation is in pirouetting along the danger mark without overstepping and in concealing it when they do; of the overgroomed men who can do nothing, know nothing, sweat nothing but money and what it can buy — like horses and yachts and prima donnas."

This is all very well as far as it goes and taken by

itself. Shortly after we are told that "Geraldine was one of a type characteristic of that city and of the sunny avenue, where there pass more beautiful women on a December morning than one can see abroad in a dozen years' residence."

There is enough more of this sort of internal evidence to lead one to conclude that Mr. Chambers is about as sincere and commercialized in the former passages as in the last.

There is a passage in *Ailsa Paige* (1910), that panders equally to the local pride of snobbery for snobbery's sake and to the *noblisse oblige* of commercialized pretense in the regions where his heroes and heroines find themselves most at home:

"To Ailsa Paige the Seventh was always The Guard, and now in the lurid obscurity of national disaster . . . out of the dust of catastrophe emerged its disciplined gray columns. Doubters no longer doubted, uncertainty became conviction; in a situation without a precedent, the precedent was established; the *corps d'elite* of all state soldiery was answering the national summons; and once more the associated states of North America understood that they were first of all a nation one and indivisible. — Above the terrible alarms of political confusion rolled the drums of the Seventh steadily beating the assembly."

It is possible that Mr. Chambers, who was born in Brooklyn, may be equally sincere in his patriotism and his local pride set forth spectacularly in the pages of *Ailsa Paige*. It is true that the Seventh Regiment of New York has a long and worthy record as a militia organization in the field, and as a training

school for officers, sufficient to stand by itself without the sort of extravagant exploitation with which Mr. Chambers has seen fit to advertise it.

It is true that *Ailsa Paige* contains bits of spirited character drawing, pages of graphic and essentially readable descriptions and suggestions of commonplace manhood's and womanhood's capacity to rise to heights of heroism and devotion under the stress of war.

None the less the whole tendency of the book, as in the instance quoted above, is to remind us irresistibly of packages of popcorn, candy, cheap toilet soap and other non-essentials on which the American flag is displayed for commercial purposes in states where the practice is not forbidden by law.

As for *The Common Law*, whose "nude heroine" was not held in modest retirement by the absence of obvious press agent methods previous to and during its publication as a serial in the yellowest of our yellow magazines, too much has been said and written already about it and her, for the peace of mind of a long suffering public.

It is perhaps due to Mr. Chambers to say that, having decided to utilize the nude heroine aforesaid (who later develops into rather a model young lady in the conventional sense of the word) in the "altogether" in a fashionable New York studio in the first chapter or two, the initial scenes in the nude are staged with a discreet dexterity of exploitation which is either maddening or pitiable according to the temperament of the critic; and that any reader of a salacious turn of mind looking for more lurid pages later will be grievously disappointed.

The bareness of the artifice, the suggestiveness of the title, the way in which the reader of this order is cleverly strung along till he reaches the last pages and finds that which began as a rather highly-colored, near-Parisian romance subsiding into a New England Sunday School story, is doubtless highly diverting in its way. It also doubtless proved highly profitable to the original perpetrator, who has at least proved himself unmistakably the most adroit literary faker that America has ever produced.

Mr. C. D. Gibson — whose failure to “come back” as a portrait painter after his loss of vogue as an illustrator is exploited in the plot of the novel — is also to be commiserated in view of the fact that the book is dedicated to him.

However, as Mr. Gibson saw fit to illustrate the book, and has doubtless shared in its unearned financial increments, we are at liberty to suppose that he feels about as well satisfied with the final result as Mr. Chambers does.

More briefly and mildly, in the words of a tabloid book review by Mr. J. D. Kerfoot in a recent copy of *Life*, we may characterize *The Common Law* as “a pseudo problem novel of New York studio life which gives a clever imitation of being serious while making much ado about nothing.”

Mr. Chambers' suffragette stories, published in *Hampton's Magazine* shortly before its untimely end, do not even pretend to do as much or as little. In general, however, Mr. Kerfoot's characterization of his recent activity can hardly be bettered.

Further comment on this particular author's present and future seems superfluous. Careful perusal

of *Japonette* (1912), and *The Streets of Ascalon* (1912), some months after this essay was written, have not materially altered this conviction. There is a certain class of readers in America to-day to which Mr. Chambers's books seem to appeal. There always will be as long as publishers of books and magazines are allowed to exploit unchecked the least sincere and inspiring phases and portrayals of American life. This class unfortunately is not confined to that section of Society which Mr. Chambers chooses, for reasons of his own, to satirize, to advertise, and to exploit.

Consequently, once a year or so nowadays, he appears together with his readers, admirers, imitators and closest trade rivals, as a product of environment for which the American people is responsible; or as a by-product not altogether uncharacteristic of the trend of to-day.

Viewed in this light, he may be worth considerable study and detailed thought.

Otherwise, as a literary producer and poseur whose insincerity is notorious and inveterate, he reminds us irresistibly of Kipling's Tomlinson, for whose soul after death not even Satan himself could find either room or use.

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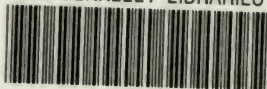
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- Renewals and recharges may be made 4 days prior to due date

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