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Best Sellers in American Fiction During the First Decade of the Twentieth Century

Sister Marie Joan Sullivan

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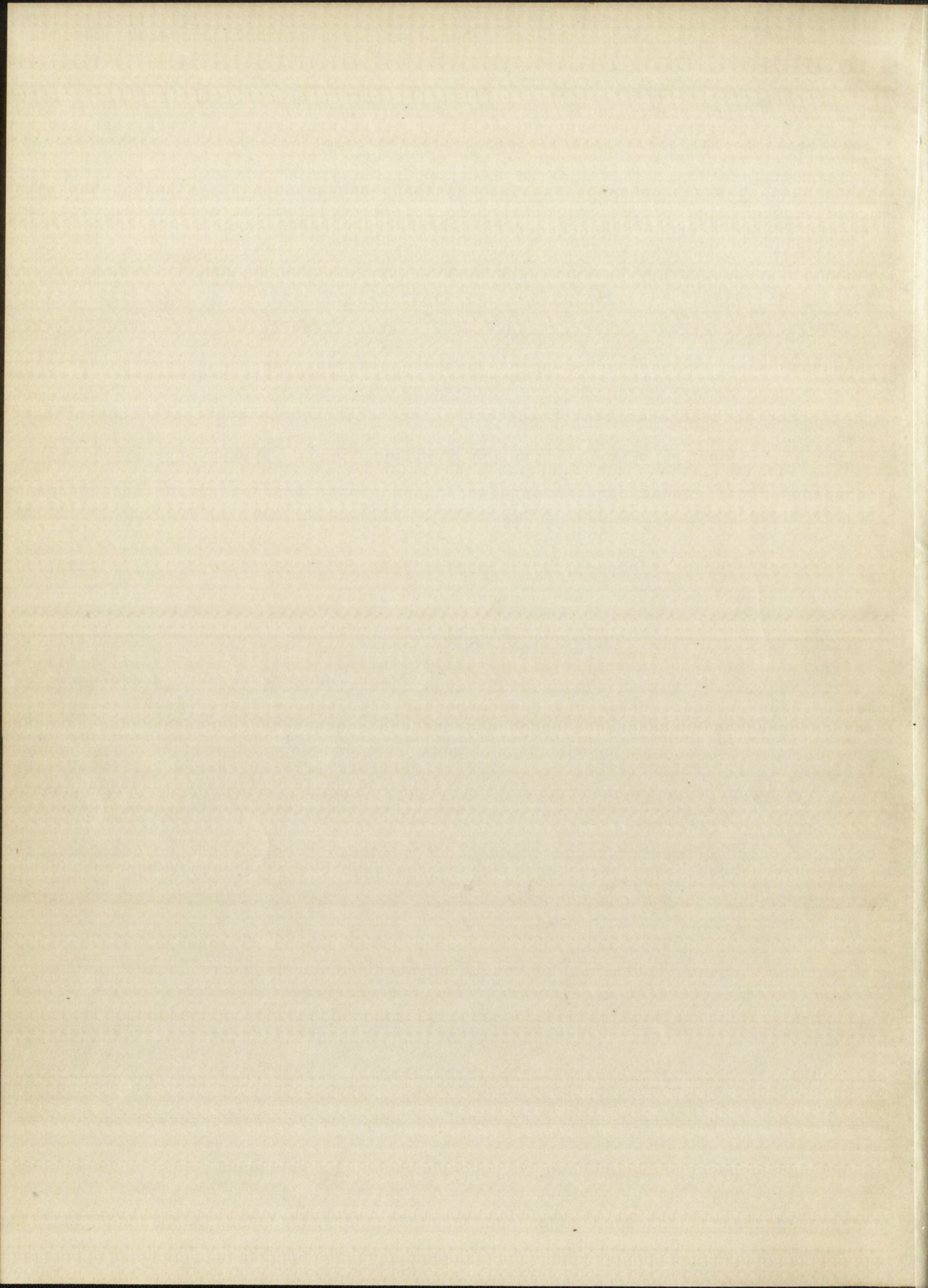
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DATE

NAME AND ADDRESS

BEST SELLERS IN AMERICAN FICTION
DURING THE FIRST DECADE OF
THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

By

Sister Marie Joan Sullivan

A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in English

University of New Mexico

1943

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This thesis, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the Graduate Committee of the University of New Mexico in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

J. R. Hammond
DEAN

april 30, 1943
DATE

Thesis committee

Dane F. Smith
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Dudley Wynn

T. B. Pearce

This thesis is a study of the life and work of
the author, who has been a member of the
Committee of the Board of Directors of the
University of the State of New York since 1910.

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James H. Smith

Chairman

1910

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CHAPTER

VII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

Conclusions

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The first problem that confronts the reader of lists of best sellers is a concern for the character of those who make these novels their intellectual food. It has been said that the character of a man may be determined from the type of literature he peruses. The best sellers of a period will, consequently, stand as silent witnesses to the character of the people in question. American readers, during the period of economic expansion from 1900 to 1904, were interested in the nation's history and in romantic literature offering an escape from preoccupation with business. From 1905 to 1908 they demanded greater realism in fiction, carrying with it criticism of the American scene. At the end of the decade readers were returning to sentiment and romance but seeking it in the contemporary settings of regional color.

It sometimes happens that a novel unreal in situation and poor in style becomes widely read. Yet in every case, a novel of this kind, if carefully examined will reveal some quality of "at least the semblance of excellence."

Some men and women who know nothing of the art of construction or of style know how to tell a story. . . . There are stories which are worth reading as recreation simply because they are interesting. The really good novel must be interesting, but it must also be sound, sane, well constructed and well written.¹

¹William Wright Mabie, "Mr. Mabie's Literary Talks," The Ladies' Home Journal, XX (October, 1903), 15.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It is the purpose of this study to throw some light upon the characters and habits of thought of the American reader at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Limitation of the study. This thesis will be confined to those novels classified as best sellers by The Bookman in the years 1900-1910.

Definition of terms. To classify a novel as a best seller does not mean that it is a great or even a mediocre work judged from an artistic standpoint. By the term best sellers is here meant:

Books in more active current demand. The term came into popular use through the American Bookman, which began in 1895 to print each month a list of the six books in most active demand in bookstores. The list was widely quoted as "The six best sellers."²

Importance of the study. Besides stimulating thought as to the influence of books upon men, this study should serve as an evaluation of those books of the first decade of the twentieth century that have been best sellers. It may also serve as a source for material upon lists of best sellers.

²John A. Holden, The Bookman's Glossary (New York: R. R. Bowker Company, 1925), p. 17.

Statement of the Problem. It is the purpose of this study to know some of the important habits of thought of the American novel of the twentieth century.

Limitation of the Study. This study is limited to those novels published in the United States between 1900 and 1920.

Definition of Terms. A novel is a story which is not true, but which is told in a way which makes it seem true. It is a story which is told in a way which makes it seem true. It is a story which is told in a way which makes it seem true.

Books in more active contact with the popular imagination have been published in the United States since 1900. The number of books published in the United States since 1900 has increased rapidly.

Statement of the Study. The purpose of this study is to know some of the important habits of thought of the American novel of the twentieth century. It is the purpose of this study to know some of the important habits of thought of the American novel of the twentieth century.

II. SOURCES OF MATERIAL

The chief source in determining the best seller of each year was The Bookman. By assigning to each book a relative number of points according to the sales during the year the following novels were discovered to be the best sellers for the first decade of the twentieth century:

1900	<u>To Have and To Hold</u>	Mary Johnston
1901	<u>Alice of Old Vincennes</u>	Maurice Thompson
1902	<u>The Virginian</u>	Owen Wister
1903	<u>Lady Rose's Daughter</u>	Mrs. Humphrey Ward
1904	<u>The Crossing</u>	Winston Churchill
1905	<u>Sandy</u>	Alice Hegan Rice
1906	<u>Coniston</u>	Winston Churchill
1907	<u>The Port of Missing Men</u>	Meredith Nicholson
1908	<u>Mr. Crewe's Career</u>	Winston Churchill
1909	<u>The Trail of the Lonesome Pine</u>	John Fox

Since Lady Rose's Daughter is an English publication, this thesis will also contain an evaluation of the book of American authorship which sold best in 1903, Gordon Keith, by Thomas Nelson Page.

Criticisms appearing in periodicals published during the decade afforded information for evaluating the best sellers. The question of whether or not any given book merits enduring literary fame has been decided by a study

II. SELECTION OF MATERIAL

The chief source in determining the relative number of books according to the year the following novels were published is the list of the first decade of the twentieth century.

1900	To Have and Have Not	Ernest Hemingway
1901	Alone of the Wilderness	Robert Bly
1902	The American	John Galsworthy
1903	My Son's Son	John Galsworthy
1904	The Grapes	John Galsworthy
1905	Stony	John Galsworthy
1906	Confession	John Galsworthy
1907	The Road of the World	John Galsworthy
1908	Mr. Pitt's Court	John Galsworthy
1909	The Trail of the Fox	John Galsworthy

Since Mr. Pitt's Court is an English publication, the thesis will also contain an examination of the American authorship which was published in 1909, by Thomas Nelson Page.

Cricket was appearing in the second decade of the century. The question of whether or not the author was a native American is also being considered.

of the attitude adopted toward these novels by reputable critics of the present day.

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action of the present day.

CHAPTER II

BEST SELLERS, 1900-1901

I. To Have and To Hold

The great demand for fiction which characterizes early twentieth century literature owes its inception to Reverend Edward Payson Roe who, in 1872, published his most important novel, Barriers Burned Away, which definitely put an end to moralizing fiction. This book

. . . with its background of the great Chicago fire, and its tense moral atmosphere which skilfully concealed its sensationalism and its plentiful sentiment, became enormously popular.

.
With Holland and his school he helped greatly in the building up of that mass of novel readers, mostly women it must be said, which by the middle of the eighties had reached such enormous proportions. He led readers on to Lew Wallace's The Fair God and Ben Hur, and to the novels of Frances Hodgson Burnett, who added to the conventional devices of Holland and Roe--sentiment, sensation, love-centered interest culminating inevitably in marriage at the close of the story--literary art and a certain dramatic power. . . . From her the current of popularity flowed on to F. Marion Crawford's cosmopolitan work, to Margaret Deland's strong problem novel John Ward, Preacher; then it swelled into a flood with David Harum and the historical novel that made notable the nineties. At the close of the century fiction was read by all and in quantities that seem incredible.³

It was, then, when conditions were most favorable for literary success that Mary T. Johnston launched her his-

³Fred Lewis Pattee, A History of American Literature Since 1870 (New York: The Century Company, 1915), pp. 387-389.

torical romance, To Have and To Hold, the best seller for 1900.

The publication and subsequent popularity of To Have and To Hold made its author famous throughout America.

Through all its accompaniment of battle, murder, and sudden death, the story is told with a sweetness of spirit, a tenderness of fancy, a poetical insight that are rare indeed in the "novel of adventure" and much to be prized.⁴

The scene of the novel is Jamestown in the year 1630, and the reader obtains an authentic picture of that locality and that time from Miss Johnston's work. The characters, background, and historical incidents depicted make the novel of permanent value.

The action begins with the arrival in Jamestown of a ship bearing ninety maidens, who are to become the wives of the colonists of Virginia. The hero of the story, Ralph Percy, purchases for 120 pounds of tobacco one Jocelyn Leigh, who, under the assumed name of Patience Worth, has fled England to escape the attentions of Lord Carnal, the King's favorite. Jocelyn treats her husband with icy contempt and acquaints him with the fact that she desires the protection of his name and not his affections. Ralph gallantly acquiesces to her demands.

⁴"The New Books," The American Monthly Review of Reviews, XXI (May, 1900), 634.

1900.

The publication and a number of other works
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About two weeks after the marriage, a second ship arrives from England bearing Lord Carnal, who has come in search of Jocelyn. The remainder of the plot relates the efforts made by the minion to secure his prize.

Carnal first engages Ralph in a duel, but, before serious damage can be inflicted by either party, the governor of the colony interferes. Carnal next attempts to abduct the maid, but is again foiled by Percy.

In an effort to escape a forced return to England Ralph and Jocelyn flee from Jamestown. Together with Sparrow, the preacher, Diccon, Percy's servant, and Carnal, whom they have captured, the pair are wrecked. The group is stranded upon an island and finally succeed in boarding a pirate ship, over which the hero obtains command. After many exciting adventures the party is taken aboard an English vessel and brought back to Jamestown.

Here Percy is tried for treason and saved through the loyalty of his wife, who condescends to permit Carnal to kiss her if he will tell the truth about their adventure. Jocelyn and her husband are then free to live in peace and Carnal ends his life by taking poison.

A synopsis of To Have and To Hold exhibits the principal weaknesses of construction: lack of probability and of unity.

The improbabilities are daring and Ralph Percy is one of those irritating romantic heroes who turns pir-

About two weeks after the arrival of the ship, the
arrives from England bearing the name of the
search of Jocelyn. The result of the search is
efforts made by the minister to secure the
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serious damage can be inflicted by the
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In an effort to secure a better result, the
Ralph and Jocelyn live their lives in
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ate at a moment's notice and apparently learns seamanship over night!⁵

The leniency with which Percy favors Carnal, the timely appearance of Jeremy and Diccon whenever the hero is in danger, the need of a captain for the pirate ship and Ralph's method of securing the position, the convenient disposal of all the villains, and episodes of like improbability destroy the quality of realism in To Have and To Hold.

The fact that the book of the year was published serially in The Bookman may account in part, at least, for the lack of unity in plot. Several times the villain is in Percy's power, but the story must continue and each time some means of escape is invented to prevent the consummation of the story. An illustration of such an addition may be found in the chapter in which Ralph and Jocelyn flee. Carnal could have been conveniently disposed of at that juncture. The disappearance of Jocelyn after Percy's capture by the Indians is another episode that seems to be "tacked on" for the purpose of drawing out the story.

The characters of Ralph Percy and of Jocelyn Leigh are certainly not static. The hero, under stress of adverse circumstances develops from the dispassionate man

⁵Arthur Hobson Quinn, American Fiction (New York: Appleton Century Co., 1936), p. 502.

whose decision to take a wife rests upon the throw of dice to a lover ready to sacrifice life itself for the object of his affections. Jocelyn's plight engendered pity in his heart; pity sought expression in defense of his wife and finally developed into love. Jocelyn changes from a cold, aloof maiden to a loving and devoted wife. The change in the girl was brought about by the admiration and the respect she felt for Percy's defense of her.

The minor characters include Lord Carnal, who is all that his name implies; Jeremy Sparrow, the humorous preacher, self-sacrificing and loyal to the extreme; and Diccon, a strange admixture of loyalty and disloyalty, of strength and weakness.

The philosophy expressed by Miss Johnston in this book is sound. Percy's chivalric attitude toward Jocelyn, his manly dealings with Carnal, the charity he extends to Diccon in spite of the servant's infidelity are qualities that may well be proposed for imitation. There is nothing sensual in the author's portrayal of love; Percy's affection for Jocelyn is clean, manly, and pure, nor will he brook any intimation to the contrary. There is no murder for unjustified reasons; evil is made to appear evil; and good is triumphant in the end.

Miss Johnston seems to write her book with historic accuracy. She draws a picture, not only of Colonial America

but of contemporary England as well. The language of the characters, interspersed with the oaths popular in the England of those days, references to English customs, sports, and amusements, and the appearance, now and then, of historical characters, lend an air of authenticity to the novel. Carnal with all his baseness and selfishness typifies the ephemeral and sensual element of English society, while Jocelyn epitomizes the honor and nobility found in the same environment. Percy, on the other hand, portrays the conception of that truly American chivalry, which, though it does not place its cloak in the mire before a queen, is quick to make any sacrifice for the sake of honor.

The author employs little humor in her novel, but the scarcity of it heightens the value of what does appear. Jocelyn's assumption of the name of Patience is divulged immediately after she has slapped a youth who made advances to her and after she has given other evidences of a fiery temper. Percy's reaction to the silence of his bride is humorously expressed, "I shrugged the shoulders of my spirit and said nothing."

Criticism of Miss Johnston's book, has, for the most part, been favorable. The Critic particularly praises the book for its style.

It is not only that it is direct and exciting, strong, vivid and well-written It has the sparkle of the west wind in it, and the witchery

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of the spring, and the strange magic of life in a new land, with the very wine of love as the solvent in which all these other elements are mixed and melted.⁶

Appreciation of her style is also The Bookman's chief comment upon the author.

She knows . . . and has reproduced for us, the atmosphere of the times of which she writes--rough, wild and daring, but pervaded by the subtle, elusive spirit which we call . . . Virginian chivalry. . . . She is in no respect a realist, but gains her effects by a few bold strokes, which set the character at once before us.⁷

Carl Van Doren believes that Miss Johnston enlarges and changes ancient themes with something spacious in her language and liberal in her sentiments, but transmits her material agreeably rather than creatively.⁸ The Lamp claims that Miss Johnston's book is a best seller because it is of the type then popular, "historic, dramatic, simple, and superficial, rather than deep and elemental."⁹

The people of the 1900's were evidently idealists. They enjoyed a book that, by portraying an impossible series of events in an engaging manner, made them forget for a while the circumstances of the world about them. They read,

⁶"Miss Johnston's Velvet Gown," The Critic, XXXVI (April, 1900), 351.

⁷"Novel Notes," The Bookman, XI (March, 1900), 91.

⁸Carl Van Doren, Contemporary American Novelists, 1900-1920 (New York: Macmillan Co., 1922), p. 24.

⁹The Lamp, XXVII (August, 1903), 62.

primarily, to be entertained. Perhaps, too, they put the book down with a determination to make their lives a little better as a consequence of a brief companionship with the inspiring characters of To Have and To Hold. If such was the case the readers themselves were of noble mold.

Despite the flood of realistic fiction that is on the market today, the most popular novel for 1900 is still widely read. To Have and To Hold is of value as an entertaining source of historical background for the average student. Representative lists, suggesting material for the high school student, place this novel in the sections on historical fiction. The theme of the operetta Naughty Marietta was drawn from the book and has thus helped to sustain interest in the novel.

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II. Alice of Old Vincennes

Alice of Old Vincennes, written by Maurice Thompson, is the best seller for 1901. The novel is

. . . a semi-historical story of the Middle West during the Revolutionary period, the chief figures being a young Virginian officer, the French inhabitants of Vincennes, the English troops who occupy the fort, the Indians who are their allies, and the vivacious and spontaneous girl who is the heroine of the romance.¹⁰

The plot is loosely constructed, but Mr. Thompson redeems this fault by thrilling incidents which he portrays. Duels, scalping parties, battles, and the exuberant Creoles furnish excitement from the beginning to the end of the book.

After introducing Alice Roussillon, who is the heroine of the novel, the author begins his narrative with the arrival of a ship which brings a supply of liquor to the inhabitants of the fort. Long-Hair, an Indian brave, steals a flask of brandy and is wounded in the chase that ensues for the recovery of the demi-john. Alice unwittingly stumbles upon the Redman's hiding place and, with the aid of Father Beret, the village priest, cares for the stricken man. Before leaving the vicinity the savage returns to Alice a locket which she had unknowingly lost and which he

¹⁰ "The Season's Books Reviewed," The Outlook, LXVI (December, 1900), 808.

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had found and kept for her.

The next event of importance to the development of the plot is the arrival of Father Gibrault with news of the Revolutionary War. The inhabitants of Vincennes pledge their loyalty to the colonists and Alice hoists the flag over the fort. Captain Helm is placed in command and Lieutenant Fitzhugh Beverly is made responsible for the good behaviour of the Creoles. The latter soon discovers the attractiveness of Alice and eventually falls in love with the girl.

While the inhabitants of Vincennes are enjoying a party given by Gaspard Roussillon, the guardian of Alice, news comes of the approach of Hamilton-the-Hair-Buyer with a party of Indians. Chiefly because Helm has been dilatory in the performance of his duty, the fort surrenders to the English.

Under the regime of the English, Beverly has cause to rebel against Hamilton for his ungentlemanly conduct toward Alice and the lieutenant leaves the fort in search of George Rogers Clark, who, he hopes, will bring relief from English domination. Hamilton sends Long-Hair with a party of Indians to bring Beverly back to the fort. The savages succeed in their attempt to capture him. During the torture to which they subject their victim, Long-Hair discovers Alice's locket in Beverly's possession. The

had found and sent for me. The next evening I went to the club in the morning of the 1st of June. The club is the center of the revolutionary movement. Their loyalty to the revolution over the form. Captain John. Lieutenant. Good behavior of the club. and attractiveness of the club with the club.

While the investigation party given by the news comes of the party of Indian. in the performance of English.

to rebel against the power of George Rogers Clark, who is the true English domination party of Indian to the success in their the future to the Discoverer Alice's

Indian's sense of gratitude impels him to free his captive and the lieutenant succeeds in reaching Clark. The subsequent capture of the fort by the American pioneers is a matter of history.

Beverly and Alice are united in marriage and make their home in Virginia. It is there that the heroine is discovered to be the daughter of an aristocratic family of that region.

The plot has that irksome appendage to the logical conclusion which lack of constructive skill makes necessary for the satisfactory disposal of the characters. The narrative seems to conclude naturally with the capture of the fort by the colonists, but Thompson adds three more chapters to the book.

The novel is one of incident rather than of character. The personages depicted are picturesque, not dynamic. The heroine's predominant characteristic is impetuosity, a trait which brands her as unwomanly, but, at the same time, makes her interesting. Her demonstration of affection for Beverly in the presence of the entire village, her plea for Long-Hair's release from the death sentence, and other incidents of like nature betray a lack of the self control and poise which mark a more mature character.

Beverly is, at all times, a gentleman. He never forgets the respect due to a superior nor the courtesy due to

Indian's sense of justice is a quality
and the lieutenant's attitude is a quality
evidence of the fact that the
nation in history.

Severely and since his return to
their home in Virginia. It is a
discovered to be a quality of
that nation.

The plot was not a quality of
condition and it is a quality of
for the nation's quality of
native seems to be a quality of
lost by the colonists. The quality of
so the plot.

The quality of the nation's quality of
The nation's quality of the nation's
facts which are a quality of the nation's
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Severely in the nation's quality of the nation's
Long-Hall's quality of the nation's quality of the nation's
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and noise which are a quality of the nation's
Severely in the nation's quality of the nation's
State the nation's quality of the nation's quality of the nation's

a lady. The lieutenant's control of temper in the face of Hamilton's jeers and his efforts to protect his fiancée mark him as a sterling character.

Thompson does not sacrifice the human element in Father Beret to the depiction of the priest's spiritual qualities. The Jesuit's sacrifice shown in his renunciation of home and friends, his steadying influence upon the populace, and his zeal for souls are true to the character of the missionary. The priest's conflict with his own passions makes him seem real.

The best piece of characterization is, I believe, that of Long-Hair. There is something compelling about the savage, physically as well as morally.

Long-Hair was a man of superior physique, tall, straight, with the muscles of a Vulcan, and while he lay stretched upon the ground half clad and motionless, he would have been a grand model for an heroic figure in bronze. Yet from every lineament there came a strange repelling influence, like that from a snake.¹¹

Near the end of the story we find him again. He hands the locket to Beverly with the words, "Little girl saved Long-Hair's life. Long-Hair save white warrior for little girl." The savage is depicted as

. . . a type of inhumanity raised to the last power; but under his hideous atrocity of nature lay the in-

¹¹Maurice Thompson, Alice of Old Vincennes (Indianapolis: Bowen-Merill Co., 1900), pp. 44-45.

destructible sense of gratitude so fixed and perfect that it did its work almost automatically.¹²

Among the minor characters Uncle Jazon is, probably, the most unique. He is unkempt, uncouth, ignorant, but exceedingly loyal. The mayor of the village, Gaspard Roussillon, is overdrawn. Clark is not particularly well depicted and the remainder of the characters are unimportant.

The author fails to allow for the intelligence of his readers, particularly in characterization. The mayor shows himself on every occasion to be of a very bombastic nature, but Mr. Thompson gives a lengthy description of the Frenchman's fault. This redundancy on the part of the author detracts from rather than enhances his delineation of the character. The portrayal of Hamilton is rendered less effective by the same means.

The theme of patriotism which dominates Alice of Old Vincennes is well chosen. The heroism and sacrifice of the little band of pioneers inspires the reader with sentiments of admiration for the ideals which these people held so dear and of gratitude to the patriots of the Revolutionary War.

The most outstanding achievements of Thompson's style are authenticity and vividness. References to a letter written by Gaspard Roussillon to which the writer is supposed to have access, and the accurate portrayal of historic

¹²ibid., p. 276.

...the most famous...
...exceedingly loyal...
...million, in...
...the...
...The...
...himself on every occasion...
...but...
...man's...
...character...
...festive...
...The...
...Vladimir...
...little...
...of...
...and...
...The...
...are...
...written...
...posed...

events lend an air of reality to the book. Mr. Thompson's descriptions are charming. The picturesque town of Vincennes as it appeared to Captain Helm is described with its quaint inhabitants:

When a door was opened he could see a fire of logs on the ample hearth, shooting its yellow tongues up the chimney throat. Soft Creole voices murmured and sang, or jangled their petty domestic discords. Women in scant petticoats, leggins, and moccasins swept snow from the squat verandas, or fed pigs in the little sties behind the cabins. Everyone cried cheerfully "Bon jour, monsieur, comment allez-vous?" as he went by accompanying the salute with a graceful wave of the hand.¹³

The style of Mr. Thompson suffers from his habit of generalizing his characters. He makes sweeping statements that cannot be proved. For instance, he remarks that all men are superstitious. He also makes lavish use of oratory presumably for the purpose of striking a patriotic note in the heart of the reader, but, because it is overworked, this device fails to accomplish any purpose.

Critics are agreed that the best seller for 1901 is not a great book, but they praise it highly for authenticity and for action. Arthur Hobson Quinn says of it:

Thompson drew an accurate picture of the uncertainties of 1778 and the perils of an outpost.¹⁴

¹³ Ibid., p. 123.

¹⁴ Quinn, op. cit. p. 494.

The Independent states that

Mr. Thompson himself lives on the banks of the Wabash, and he has set the story in a country every stick and stone of which he knows and loves.

The whole story is told with plenty of action, and the characters stand out in just proportion. The plot is essentially dramatic.

It is a clean, good, and interesting story, and a credit to American literature, but measured by classical standards it is not great.¹⁵

In The Outlook we find that the book

. . . is in no sense a great novel, and there are touches of crudity in its construction and occasionally in its expression, but it is singularly fresh in feeling, full of vivacity and atmosphere, catching and reflecting the picturesqueness of the early days of the Middle West.¹⁶

The Critic says of Mr. Thompson,

You do not feel that he has written the story to meet the public demand, but because it was in him to write.¹⁷

Such was the best seller for 1901. The people read books, not because they constituted an artistic whole, or because of the realistic delineation of events or characters, but for the theme upon which the novels rested, for the stirring incidents related, vivid portrayal of scene and incident, and for the historical events they contained. The readers of 1901, like those of the preceding year, read

¹⁵"Literature," The Independent, LII (November, 1900), 2635.

¹⁶"The Season's Books Reviewed," The Outlook, LX (December, 1900), 808.

¹⁷"A Western Historical Novel," The Critic, XXXVII (November, 1900), 407.

The last sentence of the text

Mr. Thompson is a very interesting man and he has been very helpful in the study of which I am now writing. The results of his study are very interesting and I am sure that they will be of great value to the community. It is a pity that he is not here now. He is a very good man and he is very helpful. He is a very good man and he is very helpful. He is a very good man and he is very helpful.

In the opinion of the author

... is in no way a very good man. He is a very good man and he is very helpful. He is a very good man and he is very helpful. He is a very good man and he is very helpful. He is a very good man and he is very helpful. He is a very good man and he is very helpful.

The author says that

you do not need to be a very good man. You do not need to be a very good man. You do not need to be a very good man. You do not need to be a very good man. You do not need to be a very good man.

There was the first time that

books, not because they were good

because of the excellent illustrations

but for the time spent in the study

of the incidents of the life of the

incidents, and for the time spent

reading of the life of the

18. The author says that

19. The author says that

20. The author says that

chiefly for entertainment and without giving particular thought to artistry.

Alice of Old Vincennes has, like its predecessor on the best selling list, been found of historical value. It, too, is placed upon high school reading lists and has proved to be an entertaining and easy method for learning facts and keeping them impressed upon the memory.

Various reasons have been assigned for the predominance of the historical romance in 1900-1901. Harold Frederic suggests that the popularity of Richard D. Blackmore's Lorna Doone (1869) was responsible for the flood of historical fiction which followed it. Paul Leicester Ford believes that the "burst of patriotism and martial feeling" engendered by the Spanish-American War was the mainspring of the flood of this type of novel.¹⁸ Arthur Hobson Quinn, although he recognizes the impetus given by the War, assigns other causes as well.

A fashion in fiction needs first, a great popular success to start the way and second, a receptive state of mind in the reading public. Hugh Wynne (by Weir Mitchell, 1896) came just at the right moment. The nation had been slowly recovering from the panic of 1893 and was feeling its oats. The Exposition at Chicago had brought about a better mutual understanding of the different sections. The Mason and Dixon line was growing fainter; Grover Cleveland's two terms had buried the "bloody shirt"; and even the new sectionalism of the West versus the East did not prevent a popular support

¹⁸Pattee, op. cit. p. 401.

chiefly for entertainment and with little or no purpose.

thought to satisfy.

Allen of Old Virginia

the best selling list, and that it was the only one of its kind, is placed upon the list of best sellers to be an entertaining and instructive work.

keeping them interested from the beginning.

Various reasons have been given for the success of the historical fiction.

One of the historical fiction writers, Allen, says:

Frederick suggests that the reason why historical fiction is so popular is that it is more

more's James Joyce (1882) was more popular than any other historical fiction writer.

historical fiction writer since the time of the Renaissance.

believes that the "boom" of historical fiction was caused by the

engendered by the Spanish-American War, and the feeling of patriotism.

the flood of this type of novel. It was a natural result of the

though he was not a writer of historical fiction, he was a writer of other

other classes as well.

A fashion in fiction was born, and it was a fashion that was

suggested to him by the very name of the book. It was a fashion

of mind in the reading public. It was a fashion that was

born in the reading public. It was a fashion that was

born in the reading public. It was a fashion that was

born in the reading public. It was a fashion that was

born in the reading public. It was a fashion that was

born in the reading public. It was a fashion that was

born in the reading public. It was a fashion that was

born in the reading public. It was a fashion that was

born in the reading public. It was a fashion that was

to an imperialistic program. The Spanish-American War, which came in 1898, was a result rather than a cause of the national feeling, although in its turn it spurred the novelists on. A natural outlet was the survey of our past, especially of its most vigorous periods.¹⁹

The best sellers for each of these two years were not the only historical romances of the period that sold well. Exceedingly popular were the stories of the Revolutionary War, Paul Leicester Ford's Janice Meredith and Winston Churchill's Richard Carvel in 1900 and The Crisis with its Civil War background published by Churchill in 1901.

Though the scenes for To Have and To Hold, Alice of Old Vincennes, Janice Meredith and Richard Carvel are laid in the distant past, the setting for The Crisis is more immediate and presages the almost contemporaneous historical background of the best seller for 1902.

¹⁹Quinn, op. cit. p. 492-493.

CHAPTER III

BEST SELLERS, 1902-1903

I. The Virginian

With the advent of Theodore Roosevelt to the White-House in 1901 there arose a type of literature for which the life and character of this man were highly responsible. The popularity of the President had its influence upon the fiction of his day. The man who had organized the Rough Riders in the Spanish-American War was not the type of hero one generally associates with the historical romance.

Owen Wister was aware of this fact, but he was also conscious of the importance of the demand for the type of literature that was then in current favor. His successful blending of "the strenuous life" with history and romance accounts for the popularity of The Virginian.

The author's residence on Wyoming ranches enabled him to write convincingly of the American cowboy in the best seller for 1902. The story of The Virginian centers in the cattle country of Cheyenne, Wyoming, between the years 1874-1891. The hero is a Southern wanderer, and the novel depicts his development physically, socially, intellectually, and romantically.

At the beginning of the story, the villain, Trampas, and the Virginian quarrel over a game of cards. From this

point the reader is aware that the dominant interest is to be centered in the contest between these two men.

Upon returning to his ranch at Sunk Creek in company with the narrator of the plot, the hero learns that the district is to have a school and that Miss Molly Wood from Bennington, Vermont, will be the teacher. The girl meets the cowboy under circumstances favorable to romance. While the incompetent driver of the vehicle in which Molly is travelling is fording a stream, the carriage lodges in the mud. The hero rescues the girl and takes her home.

Several days after this episode the cowboy again encounters Trampas and defends Molly's honor, which the villain had questioned. The hero, as assistant foreman to Judge Henry, is soon commissioned to deliver his employer's cattle to an Eastern market. Trampas is among the men assigned to aid him in the task. On the long journey, another combat arises and Trampas is again the loser. The successful accomplishment of his errand wins for the Virginian the position as foreman.

When the cowboy is returning from a mission to Balaam, where he went to secure the return of some borrowed horses, he is attacked by Indians and injured. Molly comes to his rescue, escorts him home, and nurses him through his illness. She finally consents to marry the Virginian.

Before the wedding, duty forces the hero to adminis-

point the reader is aware that the manuscript is in the
be centered in the center of the page. The text is
Upon returning to the manuscript, the text is
with the narrator of the story, the text is
Elster is to have a second story. The text is
Bennington, Vermont, which is the scene of the
the cowboy under circumstances. The text is
the independent subject of the text is
traveling is forming a story. The text is
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Several days after this event the text is
encounters. The text is forming a story. The text is
villain had questioned. The text is forming a story. The text is
Judge Henry, is soon questioned. The text is forming a story. The text is
cattle is an incident. The text is forming a story. The text is
assigned to him. The text is forming a story. The text is
another combat. The text is forming a story. The text is
successful. The text is forming a story. The text is
Virginia the position. The text is forming a story. The text is
Then the cowboy. The text is forming a story. The text is
Belmont, where he went. The text is forming a story. The text is
Horse, he is affected. The text is forming a story. The text is
to his rescue. The text is forming a story. The text is
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Before the wedding. The text is forming a story. The text is

ter the grim justice of the cow country to a band of rustlers. Among the outlaws is Steve, a one-time friend of the Virginian. The fact that crimes of this sort are punishable by death is the cause of greater grief to Molly, and it is only through the influence of Judge Henry that the girl's prejudice against her fiancée's administration of justice is broken down.

On the day set for the marriage Trampas makes a final attempt to defeat his enemy. He orders the Virginian to leave the town or be shot. The gun fight which ensues ends with the death of the villain, and Molly and her cowboy finally become bride and groom.

The gentleman who relates the story appears several times in the book: at the beginning, just before the school teacher arrives, again at the return of the cowboys from the East, and, finally, at the lynching of the cattle thieves. His knowledge of the other incidents of the narrative is but inadequately accounted for or not explained at all, a fact which is slightly detrimental to the smooth movement of the story.

The Virginian possesses a morally sound character and is remarkably free from the vices which were prevalent in the early West.

Mr. Wister has approached the cowboy as a type of elemental man, fashioned on a large scale by conditions which kept conventional qualities in the background and

for the firm justice of the law...
...the...
...of the...
...penal...
...and it is only...
...the...
...of justice is broken...

On the day...
...final attempt to defeat...
...to leave the...
...ends with the...
...every...
...The...
...there is the...
...positive...
...the...
...themselves...
...justice is...
...at all...
...movement of the...

...the...
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...themselves...
...justice is...
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...movement of the...

evoked the primal instincts and passions. . . . He is a real man of large mold with a touch of the heroic.¹

The Virginian is a figure of splendor, and of splendor all the more irresistible because of recognition of it does not depend upon what the author says about him. . . . Strong and shrewd and gentle in all senses except the sense of formal breeding, The Virginian wins his successes fairly by force of character.²

Miss Wood, the heroine of this best seller for 1902, is not quite so perfect a character as the hero. The teacher is permitted to exhibit several feminine vagaries which make her interesting and lifelike. Her refusal to recognize the Virginian until he had been formally introduced and her prejudice and pride show Miss Wood to be very human.

The bishop of the territory, though not frequently mentioned and only once seen in the story, is an unforgettable character and is made even more striking by contrast with the minister. Steve, the Virginian's friend, is a pathetic character because of his weakness and his ultimate downfall. Trampas possesses all the vices typical of the villain of his time and place. The characters are, on the whole, well drawn and give an accurate cross section of the persons who made up the life of the Western plains.

¹"Some Recent Stories," The Outlook, LXXI (July, 1902), 742.

²"Boynton, H. W.," New Books and Old, XC (August, 1902), 277.

...the original intention of the ...
...a real man of letters and a ...

The Virginia is a ...
...all the ...
...of ...
...about ...
...in all ...
The Virginia ...
character.

Miss Wood, the ...

is not quite so ...

teacher is permitted to ...

which make her ...

recognize the Virginia ...

dress and her ...

human.

The ...

membered and only ...

and character ...

with the ...

perhaps ...

downfall. ...

villain of the ...

whole, well ...

person who ...

1902, ...

1902, ...

The Virginian's ideas of religion, though unusual, are what one would expect of such a man.

As for salvation, I have got this far: somebody, (he swept an arm at the sunset and the mountains) must have made all that I know. But I know one more thing I would tell Him to His face; if I can't do nothing long enough and bad enough to earn eternal happiness, I can't do nothing long enough and bad enough to be damned. I reckon He plays a square game with us if He plays at all, and I ain't bothering my haid about other worlds.³

He judges his Maker by the only standards he knows and pays Him the perfect tribute of sincere acknowledgement of His justice. After an unusual outburst of temper the Virginian philosophically remarks, "Any full sized man ought to own a big lot of temper. And like all his valuable possessions, he'd ought to keep it and not lose any."⁴

There has been much discussion as to the ethics of this best seller, particularly regarding the morality of the lynching of the cattle thieves and the shooting of Trampas. The reader must, however, realize that, "In every community men must make such laws for themselves as the conditions under which they live demand,"⁵ and that the delicate question of whether the hero was right or

³Owen Wister, The Virginian (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1902), pp. 218-220.

⁴Ibid., p. 219

⁵Frederic T. Cooper, Some American Story Tellers (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1911), p. 277.

The Virginia's 1860s...

are what one would expect of...

As for education... (he) would have been... thing I would like... notable long... has been... enough to be... with us if... my mind about...

He judges his...

and says that the...

ment of his Justice...

the Virginia...

ought to be a...

possessions, he...

There has been...

of this best...

of the teaching...

frapper. The...

every community...

the conditions...

the delicate...

John Henry... (1903)...

1912...

George... (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1912)...

wrong is capably handled by Mr. Wister himself through the words of Judge Henry to Molly.

The Virginian is beautifully written in that it is naturally written. The author describes the West in simple language that renders his pictures vivid. The reader has a clear picture of the Western towns:

Houses, empty bottles, and garbage, they were forever the same shapeless pattern. More forlorn they were than stale bones. They seem to have been strewn there by the winds and to be waiting till the wind should come again and blow them away. Yet serene above their foulness swam a pure and quiet light, such as the East never sees; they might be bathing in the air of Creation's first morning.⁶

The Virginian is the first best seller of the century to portray real humor in an interesting way. The hero's method of securing a bed for himself, the chapter on Em'ly, the hen who mothers everything from rocks to puppies, the cowboy's night session with the minister, and his droll comments throughout the story, afford a wealth of humor that is irresistible.

This book of the year for 1902 gives its readers a mere poignant example of pathos than can be found in any of the previous novels. The scene occurs after the hero is obliged to see his best friend hanged. The Virginian had grieved all day because Steve had given him no sign of recognition at the end. At length he discovers, on the

⁶Wister, op. cit., pp. 12-13.

newspaper the condemned man had been reading, the scribbled message, "Good-by Jeff. I could not have spoke to you without playing the baby."

The only fault in the author's style is his choice of telling the story in the first person. The narrator plays no significant part in the story and is clumsily introduced, now and then, in order to relate incidents that occur.

Criticism of The Virginian is favorable. Talcott Williams says that it is the best thing that America has produced,⁷ while Percy Lubbock claims that it is the first of the twentieth century best sellers that conveys a single image rather than a series of facts.⁸ Lucy Monree says of The Virginian:

There is something broad and generous and free about it. It holds the wide horizons and makes evident the sweeps of things across the new world. Something of the freshness of the open air is in these pages--hints of strange, far-away places where art is still undiscovered and life alone is capitalized.

.....
Quite the deepest and strongest thing in the book is the story of the lynching of the cattle thieves.
..... For the first time one realizes what the thing means--what it did mean in those days of infrequent

⁷Talcott Williams, "The World's Fiction for a Year," The American Monthly Review of Reviews, XXVI (October, 1920), 444.

⁸Percy Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), p. 62.

newspaper the concerned men had been reading. The following
message, "Good-by, Jeff. I could not have done so with-
out saying the word."

The only fault in the statement is the absence
of telling the story in a clear and concise
manner. The story is in the story and is almost
intended, but not clear. It is not to be taken
that seriously.

Exposition of the situation in the story.
William says that it is the only one that has
produced. William says that it is the only one that
of the situation. William says that it is the only one that
image rather than a picture of the situation. William says
the situation.

There is something broad and generous in the story.
It is a story of the wide world and the wide world.
The story is a story of the wide world and the wide world.
The story is a story of the wide world and the wide world.
The story is a story of the wide world and the wide world.
The story is a story of the wide world and the wide world.
The story is a story of the wide world and the wide world.
The story is a story of the wide world and the wide world.

The American people's reaction to the story.
The American people's reaction to the story is a reaction to the story.

George Washington, the first of the story.
George Washington, the first of the story, is the first of the story.

justice.⁹

Mr. Frederic Cooper believes that the charm of the book lies in Mr. Wister's description.

The clarity, vigor, and tone of sympathy with which Wister limns his characters and setting gives the book that atmosphere of authenticity which is, perhaps, its greatest charm. It has a certain primal bigness about it that makes it seem to loom up, treelike, in rugged dignity, a growth of nature rather than of art.¹⁰

The fact that the book is dedicated to President Roosevelt added, perhaps, to its popularity. The author writes to him in the dedication

Some of these pages you have seen, some you have praised, one stands new-written because you blamed it.¹¹

The newly written page was the one depicting Balaam's treatment of horses. The author's work is rendered more artistic by the wise reticence he used in the second draft.¹²

A growing interest in the West and in the President may have influenced the sale of The Virginian. It is likely, too, that the character of the hero himself and the humor found in the book may have been added reasons for its appeal. A keen interest in national affairs, an innate love of "rugged individualism," and a deep appreciation of

⁹Lucy Monroe, "The Virginian Wins East and West," The Critic, XLI (April, 1903), 358-359.

¹⁰Cooper, op. cit., P. 266.

¹¹Wister, op. cit., dedication.

¹²"Some Recent Stories," The Outlook, LXXI (July, 1902), 742.

Mr. Frederic Cooper, D.D., Secretary of the
Book of the Month Club, writes:

The clarity, vigor, and force of the
writing in this book are such as to make
it a masterpiece of modern literature.
It is a book that will be read and
re-read with interest and pleasure.

The fact that the book is written in
English is a great advantage, for it
enables the reader to understand the
author's meaning without the aid of a
translator.

Some of the most important points
discussed in the book are the
treatment of the negro, the
treatment of the woman, and the
treatment of the child.

A growing interest in the subject
may have influenced the author's
writing, but the book is a masterpiece
of its kind. It is a book that
should be read by every one who
is interested in the subject.

12" Home Reading Book, 1903, 742.
11" Home Reading Book, 1903, 742.
10" Home Reading Book, 1903, 742.
9" Home Reading Book, 1903, 742.
8" Home Reading Book, 1903, 742.

manly qualities must have characterized the readers of 1903.

The fact that, after nearly a half century, The Virginian is still read and enjoyed speaks well for its value. The fact that the novel has been filmed helps to sustain interest in the book. This best seller, like its predecessors of the century, is still found on reading lists as a representative American novel.

many qualities must have in relation to the subject.

The fact that, after a long and arduous search, the

Virginia is still poor and backward, and that the

value. The fact that the country is still poor and backward

and that the interest in the subject is still low, and that the

progress of the country is still low, and that the

list is a representative of the country.

THE
FEDERAL
BUREAU OF
INVESTIGATION
WASHINGTON
D. C.
JAN 10 1900

II. Gordon Keith

In Gordon Keith, the American best seller for 1903, Thomas Nelson Page has given his readers a stirring picture of a Southern gentleman. In his novel Mr. Page contrasts the honor, truth, and nobility of true gentlemanliness with the affected polish of men whose chief aim in life seems to be the acquisition of social prestige.

Gordon Keith is a book with a dual setting, probably so arranged for the sake of contrast. The South, after the Civil War, forms the principal setting. The Keith plantation and the small towns nearby afford a background for the study of Southern chivalry, while New York with its stock market and palatial homes forms a fit setting for the glitter of wealth.

The multitude of characters makes the plot of Gordon Keith difficult to relate. From the moment that the lives of Gordon Keith and Ferdinand Wickersham meet there is conflict between the two characters. The former represents all that is manly and honorable in Southern tradition; the latter is "high society" at its worst. The two first meet as boys on a voyage to England. They quarrel on board ship and again while in London. On one of these occasions Norman Wentworth champions the cause of Gordon and the two become fast friends.

An incident which widens the breach between Gordon

In Gordon Keith, the American... Thomas Nelson Taggart... at a Southern gentleman... the party, first, and... with the alleged... seems to be the... of the...

Gordon Keith is a... so... Civil War... and the small... the... stock market and... the... of Keith.

The... Keith... of Gordon Keith and... conflict between the two... all that is... latter is "high society"... as boys on a voyage to... and... Norman... become fast friends.

An incident which...

and Ferdinand occurs after they return to the States. Ferdy's father purchases the old Keith plantation and sends his son to assist in surveying the property and to negotiate for the purchase of lands that are in the possession of Squire Rawson, a friend to Keith. Ferdy seeks to ingratiate himself with the farmer by lavishing his attentions upon Euphronia, the old man's granddaughter.

While Gordon is teaching school in a small town, he makes the acquaintance of Alice Yorke. Gordon falls in love with her, but the girl's mother refuses him permission to court her daughter. Gordon thereupon determines to make himself worthy, socially, to seek the hand of Alice.

The first step in the hero's ladder to success is attained when he gains the trust of Squire Rawson, who authorizes him to sell the valuable lands that he had amassed. Norman Wentworth aids Gordon in his commission and the hero feels that he now can ask the hand of Alice. The man's triumph is short lived as the object of his devotion has, in the meantime, become the wife of Mr. Lancaster.

While he is attending a ball in New York, Gordon meets Lois Huntington and renews the acquaintance they had begun in London many years before. He almost loses the friendship of the girl through the villainy of Ferdinand, who associates Gordon with Terpsichore, a woman of doubtful reputation.

and friendship occurs after they learn of the
 Jerry's father purchases the old mill and
 his son is asked to survey the property and
 for the purchase of land that the
 Spence Hanson, a friend of Jerry's, is
 himself with the farmer by the name of
 Anderson, the old man's name.
 While Jerry is working on the
 makes the acquaintance of Alice, a girl who
 with her, but the girl's mother is
 court her father. Jerry's father is
 himself worse, actually, he is
 The first step in the story is
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 advises him to sell the property
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 her, in the end, because she is
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 who associated with Jerry's father
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Ferdinand is also responsible for the estrangement between Norman and his wife, Louise. He succeeds, too, in causing a grave misunderstanding between Norman and Keith. Mr. Wickersham draws upon himself the hatred of Squire Rawson by participating in a fake marriage with Euphronia, the Squire's granddaughter. After Ferdy has committed a long series of misdemeanors, his hand is forced and he is sent to South America. The man, however, returns and Squire Rawson kills him.

The story ends with the discord sown by Wickersham brought to light and finally resolved. Norman and his wife are reconciled; Gordon and Wentworth settle their misunderstanding, and Gordon and Lois are married.

The characters are as contrasting as the setting. Gordon Keith is a typically Southern man, gentlemanly, interesting, marred by society as evidenced in his failure to aid Norman until his father induces him to do so. The hero is kind, particularly to women: Terpsichore, the unfortunate dancer, and the innocent Euphronia. The generous sacrifice which he makes for Norman after their estrangement, his healthy ambition to make something of his life, his honesty in refraining from capitalizing upon Squire Rawson's trust, as well as many other admirable qualities and good deeds make Keith a noble character. The author adds an air of reality to his characterization by permitting Keith's

ideals to become temporarily tarnished by life in New York.

Ferdinand Wickersham is the exact opposite of Gordon in character. He is selfish and unfaithful, a flatterer and a deceiver. He embodies within his nature the evil which Gordon escapes. Alice Yorke is of importance principally for her influence upon Keith. She is dominated by the wishes of a scheming mother and by the environment in which she lives. She does, however, possess a deep loyalty and a high sense of honor, as she shows in her friendship with Lois and in her interest in Keith's happiness.

Lois appears for so short a time in the novel that a depiction of her character is difficult. She jumps at conclusions, as is manifested in her disapproval of Gordon's kindness to Terpsichore and in her readiness to believe the untruths which Ferdy tells her of Keith. Euphronia is a misguided country girl. Squire Rawson is the epitome of the shrewd, calculating farmer. Terpsichore is, probably, the best drawn of all Mr. Page's characters. She is painted with a restraint that makes for realism. There are many more characters who appear in the story, but they are too numerous and not of sufficient importance to be herein described.

Though evidently not didactic in purpose, the novel exposes the sham of the moneyed class of the nineteenth century. This it does chiefly by comparison. Mr. Page

idea to become permanently settled in the country.

For this reason, the country is not a permanent home.

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plays upon the eternal triangle, but the solution which he offers is not adapted to the situations of real life, for, in the actual world, the third party is not so easily disposed of as was Ferdinand. The novel demonstrates the danger of over-familiarity of married couples with persons of the opposite sex, exposes the sham beneath the veneer of wealth, and warns against the tongues of flatterers.

Page uses the pictorial method of writing almost completely. There are scenes in the book which call for dramatic treatment: the marriage of Euphronia, the bank failure, and other incidents, but the author fails to utilize these opportunities. On the whole, Gordon Keith is an entertaining book, but it is neither forceful nor real. The only facts that impress the reader sufficiently to be remembered long after the novel has been read are the friendships portrayed therein. Norman and Keith, Lois and Alice are pairs of friends characterized by complete unselfishness.

Two critics of his time criticize Mr. Page for the multiplicity of characters in his work.

He is too apt to give undue significance to minor people and incidents that have but little bearing on his tale. And the result is often a diverted interest and an overcrowded stage.¹³

¹³Herman Knickerbocker Viele, "Eight Books of the Day," The Bookman, XVII (July, 1903), 513.

We have a right to expect from Mr. Page a better constructed novel than this. It runs on to a wearisome length. There are too many figures on the canvas; and some of them in consequence are mere figures. There are too frequent and violent impossibilities in the miraculous appearance of persons long since forgotten.¹⁴

Mr. Page's style is the subject of commendation by several reviewers:

That the author personally felt this story is deeply evident. No detail is spared, and if he sometimes clogs the action of the book, it is all done with the charm and truth to life which made Red Rock a literary achievement. The people of the Virginia country are more human and attractive than the city folk in the story, exactly as they are in real life.¹⁵

Mr. Page's episodes are always entertaining, sometimes exciting, and thrilling more than once. His style is ever finished and agreeable.

.....
The book, though not a great one, is by no means little.¹⁶

Gordon Keith appealed to the readers of 1903 because of its depiction of contemporary life. The average man probably read the book for its implicit condemnation of the wealthy and for its approval of the gentlemanly qualities of the hero. Like the readers of the previous year, the people of 1903 enjoyed reading about a character that might be considered representative. Just as the Virginian was typical

¹⁴"Mr. Page's Gordon Keith," The World's Work, VI (July, 1903), 3702.

¹⁵"The New Books," The American Monthly Review of Reviews, XXVIII (November, 1903), 634.

¹⁶Viele, op. cit.

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-fostered novel than this. It is a
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(July, 1905), 1905.

13. The book is
Review. XVII, November, 1905.

14. The book is

of the ideal Westerner of his day, so was Gordon Keith the epitome of Southern chivalry.

This best seller of American authorship for the year 1903 has not survived the test of the years. Like the period it depicts, it has lost its appeal with the advent of newer interests.

of the Ideal Westerner of the last century. This is the
edition of Southern Literature.
This part of the book is not
has not survived the test of time. It is
parted it is a pity. It is a pity that it is
never interest.

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EX-102
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III. Lady Rose's Daughter

Mrs. Humphrey Ward, a popular English writer, wrote the best seller for 1903, Lady Rose's Daughter. In order to show the taste of the reading public for that year, an account of this book should be given.

The novel is partly historical in that the true story of the eighteenth century character, the Comtesse de Lespinasse, forms the basis of the story. The book is a society novel and may also be called psychological because it poignantly reveals the emotions of Julie Breton under varying lights and shades. In it, "the old and ever present problem of the reaction of the individual against the over pressure of organized social traditions, standards and laws is stated afresh."¹⁷

Julie Breton is the illegitimate daughter of Lady Rose Chantrey and Mariott Dalrymple. Upon the death of her parents, the girl becomes the companion of Lady Henry, an English dowager. The elderly lady believes that Julie is supplanting her, socially, and discloses her thoughts to Sir Wilfred Bury. The girl also has a grievance which she discusses with Sir Wilfred. Julie feels that Lady Henry treats her cruelly, is suspicious of her every act, and demands so

¹⁷The Works of Mrs. Humphrey Ward, " North American Review, CLXXVI (April, 1903), 485.

much of her time that the girl is very unhappy. Julie practices many petty deceits and justifies her actions by stating that she must have some pleasure to atone for the misery of her life with Lady Henry.

Jacob Delafield, a friend of the Dowager, becomes interested in the girl, but his affections are unrequited because Julie has given her heart to Harry Warkworth. Julie uses her influence to secure for Warkworth a prominent military position in Africa. Marriage cannot result from the passion of this couple for each other because Warkworth is engaged to Aileen Moffatt, Julie's cousin.

Before her lover's departure for his post, Julie quarrels with Lady Henry and seeks a lodging of her own. She finally decides to meet Warkworth in Paris so that they may spend together the last two days before his departure. When Julie alights from the train in Paris, she meets Jacob Delafield who informs her of the mortal illness of her grandfather, Lord Lackington. The girl is obliged to return to London that she may attend the man in his last moments and so fails to meet Warkworth.

After the death of Lord Lackington, the Duchess, a friend of Julie's, takes her to Italy for an extended visit. While there, they learn of the death of Warkworth. Julie, at length, consents to become the wife of Jacob, but she makes it very plain that she does not love him. The true

worth of her husband finally overcomes his wife's prejudice and the fierce nature that is her inheritance, and she eventually returns her husband's affection.

Undoubtedly it is Julie Breton who makes the book popular. Mademoiselle is unique, is real. She possesses the same passions that her readers have either openly or in nascent form. She is to each reader a mirror in which he sees that which he is or "might become." One wonders whether she is "a mere intriguer, a fine example of adventuress or a victim of tyranny and prejudice, whose small deceits are justifiable, because through them she gains enough happiness to make the rest of life endurable."¹⁸ The minor characters are on an equal plane intellectually and socially, are constant in character, and, therefore, require no great amount of skill in their delineation.

The sham of London social life is vividly pictured, as is the influence of that environment upon the people involved. The duchess shrewdly sums up the characters of her associates when, in speaking of the promulgation of the knowledge of Julie's parentage, she states that the people will not be angry because of the violation of morality, but because they were kept in ignorance so long.

¹⁸Cornellia Atwood Pratt, "A Great Novel," The Critic, XLII (April, 1903), 354.

...of her husband...
...the force...
...eventually...
...indoubtedly...
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Mrs. Ward shows skill in the use of reticence. She has written her novel dramatically rather than pictorially; she creates the scene, introduces the characters, and lets the reader draw his own conclusions.

Lady Rose's Daughter is in no sense a problem novel. The old and ever-present problem of the reaction of the individual against the over-pressure of organized social traditions, standards and laws is stated afresh; but that problem, in some form, is the substance of all drama and fiction that have any claim to be accepted as art.¹⁹

Critics acclaim the book for the characterization of Julie Breton. Cornelia Atwood Pratt says of Lady Rose's daughter:

She is always more than alive, surcharged with feeling; the air about her is electric.

.
Not only is the heroine of the novel convincingly one of those women toward whom events are attracted, and one of the people to whom the dramatic inevitably happens, but all the circumstances of her setting heighten her effectiveness. . . .

.
Personality and feeling are absolute solvents of circumstance, environment, events.²⁰

Mary Moss, in writing a criticism of Lady Rose's Daughter is more reticent in her praise. She believes that

Julie Breton, with her intense demand upon the sympathies of those about her, with a marvelous elegance and distinction added to captivating wit and mastery of the Mot juste (these insisted upon at all turns, but never directly revealed to the reader), this Julie, at the

¹⁹ Hamilton W. Mabie, "The Work of Mrs. Humphry Ward," North American Review, CLXXVI (April, 1903), 485.

²⁰ Cornelia Atwood Pratt, "A Great Novel," The Critic, XLII (April, 1903), 354.

end of nearly five hundred pages, has become rather wearisome.²¹

The same critic blames Mrs. Ward for her scanty use of dialogue:

A few words from the little duchess gratefully enliven lengthy passages of sheer narrative, like a natural person whisking through a company of automaton. And not only are there pages of unbroken narrative, but with occasional exceptions, everybody talks narrative. Mrs. Ward dwells upon Julie's conversational gifts, but never a sample of them does she vouchsafe. . . . Statesmen, soldiers, men of letters, well differentiated in careful descriptions, certainly could never be told apart by their dialogue.²²

Lady Rose's daughter is unique. She is, perhaps, as distinctive a character as Becky Sharp and is, for that reason, interesting. The factual basis for the story also exerted an appeal which intrigued those who may have otherwise disregarded the best seller of 1903. It is of interest to note that Mrs. Ward's book has for its background the same picture used in Gordon Keith, society life. It would seem that the American public was becoming more conscious of contemporary life than in the previous three years.

The book for 1903 does not seem to have had so long or universal an existence as the previous best sellers of the century. To sustain interest in a novel of this type is difficult and requires the pen of a great artist.

²¹ Mary Moss, "Lady Rose's Daughter," The Bookman, XVII (May, 1903), 255.

²² Ibid.

end of nearly five hundred pages, and become familiar with the author's style.

The book critic places Mrs. W. in the first rank of the age.

A few weeks from the time of publication, the book was everywhere being read, and the author's name was everywhere known. The book was everywhere being read, and the author's name was everywhere known. The book was everywhere being read, and the author's name was everywhere known.

Lady Rose's daughter, the author, was everywhere being read, and the author's name was everywhere known. The book was everywhere being read, and the author's name was everywhere known. The book was everywhere being read, and the author's name was everywhere known.

The book for 1900 does not need to have had as long or universal an existence as the previous best sellers of the century. It is a novel of the type to which the public is now turning.

XLVII (May, 1901), p. 100.
The book for 1900 does not need to have had as long or universal an existence as the previous best sellers of the century. It is a novel of the type to which the public is now turning.

"The red-blood school of writers," led by Owen Wister, persisted throughout the decade. In Jack London's The Call of the Wild (1903) we find "the soul of Western individualism, the spirit of the young, free West of our America."²³ Stewart Edward White, in The Blazed Trail (1902), presented a story "whose major character was strenuous enough even for a Roosevelt--a superman, "hard-boiled," triumphant over seeming impossibilities, the embodiment of the new American gospel of "Get there!"²⁴ Rex Beach, in The Spoilers (1905), presents a man of powerful nature in his hero, Roy Glenister. These books, together with many of less importance, are indicative of the spirit of the times.

Thomas Nelson Page, author of the American best seller for 1903, though he, also, wrote of an epoch that had vanished, could, with Owen Wister, "study this antiquity from his own diaries."²⁵ It is, however, only in its historical setting that Gordon Keith resembles The Virginian. The hero of Mr. Page's book is of the type then attaining

²³•Fred Lewis Pattee, The New American Literature (New York: The Century Company, 1930), p. 139.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 114-115.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 112.

The red-blooded aspect of the
... presented throughout the ...
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(New York: The ...)
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prominence, the "self-made" man. The author places his story in the South just long enough to give a picture of "Cavalier chivalry completely destroyed by the war, blooded aristocracy like Old World nobility forever gone."²⁶ He then moves his setting to the North and introduces the theme, the exposition of social evil, a theme which was to continue in prominence in the greater number of best sellers for the remainder of the decade.

Mrs. Humphrey Ward follows the trend of the historical romance only in her choice of a historical character for the model of her heroine. Like the American best seller for 1903, Lady Rose's Daughter is a novel of manners. The novels of Mr. Page and Mrs. Ward do not belong to the "Muckrake" school which will be discussed later. They laid bare the evil, diagnosed the case, but they did not suggest a remedy.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 55.

CHAPTER IV

I. The Crossing

The first of Winston Churchill's novels to achieve the distinction of becoming a best seller was The Crossing. The book is a historical novel and received its title from the author's purpose of expressing the beginnings of the Westward movement that finally culminated in the settlement of the continent as far as the Pacific itself.¹

The shifting panorama that Mr. Churchill sought to picture is almost impossible to convey in one book; nevertheless, the author gives his readers a glimpse of

. . . the lonely mountain cabin; the seigniorial life of the tidewater . . . the foothills and mountains . . . the Wilderness Trail; the cruel fighting in the border forts there against the most relentless of foes; George Rogers Clark and his momentous campaign which gave to the Republic Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois; the transition period--the coming of the settler after the pioneer; Louisiana, St. Louis, and New Orleans.²

The Crossing is divided into three books, entitled The Borderland, Flotsam and Jetsam, and Louisiana. The momentous plot is tied together in the person of David Ritchie, the hero of the story, who is also the narrator.

The adventures of Davy really begin with the death

¹Winston Churchill, The Crossing (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1904), p. 596.

²Ibid., p. 597.

CHAPTER IV

I. The Western

The first of Winston Churchill's novels to achieve the distinction of becoming a best-seller was *The Western*. The book is a historical novel and contains a number of the author's purposes of expounding the meaning of the Western movement and the history of the continent as far as the British Empire is concerned. The author's purpose is to show the Western movement as a movement of the spirit, and not merely of the body. The author gives his readers a picture of the Western movement as it was in the days of the pioneers.

The Western movement is a movement of the spirit, and not merely of the body. The author gives his readers a picture of the Western movement as it was in the days of the pioneers. The Western movement is a movement of the spirit, and not merely of the body. The author gives his readers a picture of the Western movement as it was in the days of the pioneers.

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Winston Churchill, *The Western*, New York: Macmillan Company, 1904, p. 250.

of his father and the lad's flight from the home of his aunt, Mrs. Temple. The wanderer finally makes his way to Kentucky in the company of Tom McChesney and his wife, Polly Ann. The group settle at Harrodstown, a village under the command of George Rogers Clark.

Clark decides to seek and conquer Hamilton, the Hair-Buyer who is located at Vincennes. The subsequent attack upon the village, with the hardships attendant upon the long march North, forms the remainder of the incidents related in Book I. Mr. Churchill's story of this episode is much more dramatically related than is the same incident in Alice of Old Vincennes. The difficulties of the march, the tenacity of Clark to his purpose, the courage and sacrifice of the little army who marched through the icy water of the Wabash to capture the fort is one of the most interesting scenes in The Crossing. Maurice Thompson dismisses the episode with unwonted brevity.

The second period of the story narrates the adventures of David in his adolescent years. His education in law is begun at Richmond through the sacrifice of Tom and Molly. Mr. Ritchie is no sooner settled in Louisville to begin his practice than he is sent on a mission of a delicate nature that involves a journey to New Orleans. It is there that Nick Temple, his cousin, meets and falls in love with Antoinette St. Gré. The girl seems to favor her admirer

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Kentucky in the company of ...
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Book I. Mr. Churchill's story of ...
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until she discovers Nick's bitterness toward his mother who has been residing at the girl's home. After a dramatic scene in which Nick refuses to forgive his mother for her associations with an adventurer, Antoinette breaks off all relations with Nick, and he and his cousin depart. Mrs. Temple then leaves the St. Gré home and moves to New Orleans.

An interval of five years comes between the events narrated above and those which constitute Book III. The activities of the Jacobins form the political background for the last third of the novel. George Rogers Clark, because of the ingratitude of Congress, has become embittered toward the government. Weakened by drink and influenced by the French agents acting here, he plans to raise a company, march upon Louisiana, and conquer it for the French Republic.

David, while in Kentucky, learns of the plot and departs for New Orleans. While in that city he finds Mrs. Temple in the care of Helene de Saint Gré, with whom he falls in love. David and Helene, to whom he becomes engaged, succeed in reconciling Nick and his mother. Antoinette then accepts Nick; David and Helene are married; Clark's plot fails, and the story ends with the purchase of Louisiana.

The characters in The Crossing which are best portrayed are those of Nick Temple and of George Rogers Clark. Nick is an irresponsible type of man, unsettled, uncontrolled, but real. Clark is well portrayed. His marvelous command

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There is an irreconcilable

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over men, his military ability, his taciturnity, and his physical and moral decline are vividly and realistically pictured.

The hero of the novel, David Ritchie,

. . . is a sort of general utility man, ready to play any part assigned him. . . . As a child he is the mascot in Clark's army. Later, he is the master of ceremonies, who introduces every important man in the country, and gives him a seat somewhere in the story. Even if a statesman is needed, he is hurried away, educated, and returned before the end of the chapter, able to solve the most difficult problems of the young commonwealth with delicacy and dispatch.³

Helene, Antoinette, Aunt Polly and the minor characters of the story are typical, and they unfold rather than grow.

Churchill's philosophy as portrayed in The Crossing is sound. He leads the reader to admire virtue and to pity the erring, but, at the same time, to refrain from condoning the wrong. There is an element of hope in the book which grows into certainty as time progresses, the hope for the territorial, political, and intellectual development of America.

In The Crossing, as in his other novels, Mr. Churchill

. . . uses, with conscious purpose, a double theme: first, the big basic idea underlying some national crisis; and secondly a specific human story, standing out vividly in the central focus with the larger, wider

³"Literature," The Independent, LVII (July, 1904),

serving as background.⁴

This device of contrasting the large and the small is effective for two reasons: it emphasizes the importance of the individual by portraying his effect upon the multitude and, paradoxically, lessens that same importance by proving that the great movements of history are accomplished in spite of the efforts of the minority to obstruct and tear down. When Clark sought to build, to help his country expand and grow, he succeeded; when he turned to the Jacobins and sought to destroy what he had helped to accomplish, he failed.

If sincerity makes for excellence of style then Mr. Churchill certainly is an artist. There is a tone of earnestness about The Crossing which reveals a mind that knows its subject thoroughly and is capable of depicting what it knows.

It is in describing historical backgrounds and events that Mr. Churchill does his best work in the novel for 1904. The picture of the approach to the cabin of a Dutch pioneer is typical:

Towards the end of the day the trace led into a beautiful green valley, and in the middle of it was a stream shining in the afternoon sun . . . and presently as the shadows grew purple, we came to a

⁴Frederic T. Cooper, Some American Story Tellers (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1911), p. 55.

serving as background.

This device of contrasting the two is effective for two reasons. It is effective of the individual by contrasting his attitude and, particularly, his attitude by proving that the great achievement is finished in spite of the efforts of the and tear down. When Clara comes to the country expand and grow, he succeeds in the Jacobine and seeks to destroy it, accomplished, he failed.

If directly makes for the Churchill certainly is an artist. He knows the subject thoroughly and knows it knows.

It is in describing the picture of the approach to the typical that Mr. Churchill does his best work in the novel. The picture of the approach to the typical is typical:

Down the end of the road, the beautiful green valley, and a stream shining in the distance, the picture is the picture of the typical.

London: Henry Holt and Company, 1911.
Revised by J. G. Cooper, 1911.

cabin set under some spreading trees on a knoll where a woman sat spinning at the door, three children playing at her feet.⁵

The description of the pioneer wedding, the march to Vincennes, and the Indian raids are remarkably well drawn. Mr. Churchill also exhibits accuracy and variety in recording the various dialects of the country: Dutch, French, Spanish, Scotch, and Negro.

The story contains several passages that are eloquent with pathos. The departure of Davy from the home of Mrs. Temple, the ruthlessness of the land swindlers, and the depiction of General Clark's degradation are, perhaps, the most powerful.

The author's best example of humor is found in the person of Swein Poulsson whose naive speeches, besides provoking a chuckle, at times relieve the tension created by highly dramatic incidents.

The most appreciative estimate of the best seller for 1904 is found in the Review of Reviews which states that:

Mr. Winston Churchill's new novel, The Crossing, will be measured by various standards, according to the varied points of view of its readers and critics; but we wonder whether it has occurred to anybody to estimate its educational possibilities. Here is the medium through which thousands of Americans will learn about all that they will ever know concerning the be-

⁵Churchill, op. cit., p. 65.

... cabin and under some ...
... a woman ...
... at her feet.

The description of the ...
... and the Indian ...

Mr. Churchill also exhibits ...
... the various ...

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The author's ...
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Mr. Winston Churchill's ...
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ginnings of the great movement of population across the Alleghanies during and after the Revolution which later made the whole continent its field and fixed forever the destiny of the Mississippi Valley.

In Davie's career . . . is typified the resistless advance of the English and the Scotch-Irish stock across the mountains and down the fertile valleys, leading to the Father of Waters. The story is well told. There is a dignity in its movement that befits so weighty a theme, and a skill of expression that transmutes the thoughts of a bygone age into an effective English of today.⁶

The Bookman claims that the first book of The Crossing is the best piece of work that Churchill had done up to that time and that it is his portrayal of the little drummer boy that makes it so. As an estimate of the book as a whole the review states:

The Crossing is a well-planned, well-constructed, well-written novel of six hundred pages--excellent and tire-some.⁷

The Independent carried the following criticism:

The fact that Mr. Churchill's novel is the best selling book of the year does not mean that it is especially good from the literary point of view. He has made an awkward effort to dramatize one of those great pioneer movements which stretched the boundaries of this country. It appeals to American pride and patriotism--qualities more highly developed in us than a sense of art.⁸

⁶"New Books for Summer Reading," The American Monthly Review of Reviews, XXX (July, 1904), 123.

⁷Arthur Bartlett Maurice, "Winston Churchill's The Crossing," The Bookman, XIX, 607-608.

⁸"Literature," The Independent, LVII (November, 1904), 1137.

stunning of the great movement of the
the American continent and after the
later made the whole continent of
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Review of the continent of today
The continent of today
The continent of today
The continent of today

Mr. Churchill timed his book well; it was published at the time of the St. Louis fair which commemorated the Purchase of Louisiana from the French, the incident which brings The Crossing to a close.

The patriotic sentiments contained in The Crossing, its timeliness, and its entertaining portrayal of history are, probably, the chief reasons for the popularity of Mr. Churchill's work. National pride must have been a dominant trait of the readers of 1904.

The Crossing is read today chiefly by the younger generation. The boy who drums an army to victory, the admirable character of Clark in the Vincennes campaign, and the element of danger which pervades the book magnetize the mind of youth and make the history of America interesting and easily learned.

Mr. Churchill found his book well; it was not only

at the time of the St. Louis Fair when it was

Purchase of Louisiana from the French and the

bring the question to a close.

The battle was fought in 1803 and 1804.

its timeliness, and its authorship was of a

are, possibly, too often, reasons for its

Churchill's work. National will that was a

fact of the history of 1792.

The question is not only a

generation. The day the first

admirable character of Clark in the

and the element of danger which

the mind of youth and the history of

setting and easily learned.

II. Sandy

Sandy, by Alice Hegan Rice, seems to possess few, if any, qualities which one would expect of a best seller. The book may be classed as a social novel because its chief purpose seems to be to instill into the public a sympathy for the weak and the downtrodden. It may be styled romantic in that it contains a high degree of sentimentality. The book does not seem to be of sufficient force to be definitely placed in any particular category.

The dominant setting for Sandy is Kentucky, although the story begins on shipboard. Scenes involving horse-racing and negro folklore rather than ideals and customs are the means that Mrs. Rice uses to localize her plot.

The plot of the best seller for 1905 is thinly woven, and could easily have been designed by a child. Some chapters, the Baptist meeting concerning dancing, and the fortune telling episode, seem to have no bearing whatever upon the plot.

Sandy Kilday is an Irish stowaway upon a ship bound for America when the reader makes his acquaintance. His winning smile and happy disposition make him popular on board after his presence has been discovered. One evening Sandy catches a glimpse of Ruth Nelson, a young girl returning to America. He immediately loses his heart to her. Sandy also discovers and becomes familiar with a lad named

Ricks Wilson who offers to let Sandy accompany him in his vagabond travels in the States. Sandy refuses to go with Ricks until he learns that his friend is bound for Kentucky, the destination of Ruth Nelson.

Sandy is soon initiated into disreputable aspects of American life. The boy's natural sense of honesty soon leads him to see the evil of the life his companion is leading and Sandy parts company with him. His estrangement, however, is short-lived, and the two soon become pedlars in Kentucky. Here the hero again comes face to face with Miss Nelson.

One day Sandy becomes ill and is no longer able to keep up with Ricks. The latter deserts him and Sandy falls unconscious by the roadside. Aunt Melvy, Judge Hollis' cook, finds the lad and takes him to the Hollis home where he receives the proper care and is soon brought back to health. The Judge finances the boy's education, and he becomes a successful lawyer.

Sandy, while in Kentucky, has an opportunity to press his suit with Ruth. The girl rejects his advances, and he determines to end his life. While Sandy is generating enough courage to place himself in the path of an oncoming train, he discovers that Annette Fenton, daughter of the doctor who cared for him in his illness, is eloping with Carter Nelson, Ruth's brother who is a gambler and a drunkard. Sandy

succeeds in preventing the marriage and induces the girl to return home while Carter is left to his own devices. Later Mr. Nelson, under the influence of liquor, shoots Judge Hollis.

Sandy discovers Carter's guilt but shields him through pity for his wretched condition. The guilt for the attempted murder is then placed upon Sandy. Carter soon dies but confesses his crime to his sister before death comes. Ruth then discovers Sandy's real worth and consents to become his wife.

The characters in Sandy are meager and not well depicted. There is lack of force and vigor in their delineation and a note of sentimentality and weakness even in the chief personages in the story. Ruth is womanly only in her devotion to her brother, and Sandy never matures. His adolescent infatuation for Ruth and his despair at her rejection of him do not make him a character to be admired or imitated. He is also impulsive and high strung; one day he is overflowing with exuberance, and the next, ready to take his own life for some disappointment. Kilday is, however, frank and honest. He exhibits his honesty when he refuses to allow Ricks to be taken for the shooting of the Judge.

Wilson and Carter possess more individuality than any other of the characters, but even they are not well portrayed.

Philosophically the best seller for 1905 does little

succeeded in preventing the marriage and the bride
return home while Carter is still in the hospital.
Mr. Nelson, under the influence of the alcohol,
Halla.

Early discovery of the fact that the bride
through pity for his wretched condition. The bride
attempted murder in the second act. Carter
also but could not see his crime in the light of
came. But then discovery of the fact that the bride
to become his wife.

The character in the play is a man who is
picted. There is lack of love and respect in the
tion and a note of sentimentality. The bride
child personality in the play. The bride is a
devotion to her brother, and her brother is a
passion for him and his brother. The bride is
of him to make him a character in the play.
He is also inactive and high. The bride is a
flowing with experience. The bride is a
own life for some discovery. The bride is a
and honest. He exhibits his character in the
allow him to be seen for the first time.
Nelson and Carter's character in the play.
other of the characters. The bride is a
philosophically to the fact that the bride is

or nothing. It is neither a force for evil nor for good; unless, perhaps, it should lead the reader to a keener understanding of the weaknesses to be found in his fellow man. The novel also extenuates the faults of those who err through weakness.

Mrs. Rice's outstanding quality of style is delicacy. She writes more like a poet than a novelist. Her portrayal of Ruth's devotion to her erring brother is, perhaps, the finest thing of its kind that the century had so far produced.

The escape of Ricks Wilson from jail lends an air of reality to the otherwise too improbable story as does Sandy's preference of a baseball game to an important examination. Kilday's decision to take his own life is too much forced to impress a reader as a real incident; it is obviously an artificial situation created by Mrs. Rice to enable Kilday to rescue Antoinette. The timely discovery of Carter's pistol at the scene of the shooting and other incidents of like improbability are too plainly "arranged" to be natural.

Criticism of the best seller for 1905 is slight.

One periodical says:

Sandy is a lighthearted stowaway who wanders to Kentucky and captivates everybody including the reader.⁹

⁹ A. L. A. Booklist, I (May, 1905), 53.

and another is satisfied with this brief comment:

Sandy is about as near as a lady can come to interpreting the cross which he represents between a useful citizen and a baseball here.¹⁰

Perhaps the success of the author's previous work, Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch, popular in 1902, accounts for the favor shown to Sandy, perhaps the public sought something in a lighter vein after The Crossing, or it may have been the sentimental appeal exerted by the hero with his Irish brogue and his Irish humor that captivated the readers. It is hard to decide just why Sandy became a best seller. The people who read it must have done so only for entertainment or through curiosity as to what type of novel the author had now written.

The story of the Irish stowaway does not seem to be in demand any longer and has not retained its popularity even as well as Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch. The book is too thinly woven even to hold the interest of high school students of the present generation.

Although novels portraying "the strenuous life" and the novel of manners were more popular in 1904 than the historical romance, Winston Churchill's book, The Crossing, was the best seller for that year. His close connection between the political and the historical, in all proba-

¹⁰"Men and Women in Recent Fiction," The Independent, LIX (July, 1905), 209.

and another is entitled with the title...

...in about as much as a book...

...the story of the...

...for the favor shown to...

...something in a lighter vein...

...have been the sentimental...

...his Irish brogue and his...

...readers. It is hard to...

...best seller. The people...

...only for entertainment...

...type of novel the author...

...The story of the Irish...

...in regard any longer...

...even as well as...

...is too thinly woven...

...students of the present...

...Although novels...

...the novel of romance...

...historical romance...

...was the best seller...

...between the political...

bility, gave the book a claim to prominence.

That Churchill conceived The Crossing as a political document is shown clearly in his "Afterword." To him the novel is the celebration of the manifest destiny which took the borders of the United States Westward.¹¹

The book is in line with the historical trends of the period, the era of imperialism and expansion. The trans-Atlantic wireless had been established in 1902; the year 1903 witnessed the treaty authorizing the construction of the Panama Canal and the determination of the Alaskan boundary.

Sandy does not follow the literary tendencies of the decade. It is not of the "red-blood" type; it is not a historical romance; it does not expose a social or political evil. The book does, however, contain a strain of sentimentalism, and, for this reason, appealed to the type of reader who revelled in the work of such authors as Chambers, McCutcheon, and Henry Harland. Edith Wharton's The House of Mirth, which is "a dissection of the so-called idle-rich class of New York,"¹² is more representative of the taste of the readers of 1905. Booth Tarkington's The Conquest of Canaan, which reveals the intolerance and narrow-mindedness of the typical small town, is also timely. These two novels, together with

¹¹ Fred Lewis Pattee, The New American Literature (New York: The Century Company, 1930), p. 498.

¹² Ibid., p. 250.

ality, gave the book a class as a whole.

That Churchill's character is shown in the book is shown clearly in the chapter on the novel in the collection of the letters which form the basis of the book.

The book is in the line of the

the series, the one of the series.

Atlantic wireless had been out of order.

1903 witnessed the first wireless

the Atlantic Cable and the Atlantic

boundary.

Sandy had not followed the

desert. It is not of the red-

territory returned, it does not return

The book does, however, contain

and, for this reason, entitled in the

called in the work of the author

and Henry Martineau. With whom's

is "a discussion of the re-

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of 1900. Henry Martineau's

reveals the importance and

will come, is also clearly

It is a book of the

(New York: The Century Company,

12 pp., 1900.

The Crossing and others of similar theme denoted the increasing popularity of the type of novel which was to dominate fiction during the remainder of the decade.

CHAPTER V

BEST SELLERS, 1906-1907

I. Coniston

In domestic as well as in international affairs Roosevelt's accession coincided with the dawn of a new age in American political life. . . . Since the days of the Economic Revolution the farmers had been fighting a losing battle against the cities and the rising industrial magnates. Now the spirit of unrest and revolt reached the cities, and aroused not only the wage earners, who had long known how to wage war against their employers, but also members of the middle class, notably the white collar workers and small business men.

.
It seemed as though America, in ironical perversion of Lincoln's words at Gettysburg, had come to be a government of the corporations, by the corporations and for the corporations. Organized wealth was active in municipal, state and national government, the laws to restrain railways and trusts were openly flouted, and a spirit of unbridled materialism infected every branch of business and society.¹

In an effort to expose and correct these abuses, S. S. McClure, in 1902, began the publication of a series of articles exposing the fraudulent practices of the Standard Oil Company. "The exposure articles in McClure's, sandwiched artificial fiction, gradually awakened novelists to the connection between special interests and politics."² A veri-

¹Arthur Meier Schlesinger, Political and Social Growth of the United States (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935), p. 315-316.

²Jeannette P. Nichols and Roy F. Nichols, The Growth of American Democracy (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, Incorporated, 1939), p. 513.

table deluge of "literature of exposure" was the result. It was not, however, until 1906 with the publication of Churchill's Coniston, that this type of fiction headed the list of best sellers.

Coniston was based upon a real character and upon a wide-spread political evil which existed in America in the early twentieth century. Of Jethro Bass' prototype, Mr. Churchill says:

When I went down to Concord three years ago I found in a room in one of the hotels there an old man to whom every single bill that came up was submitted before being offered on the floor of the House or Senate, and if he approved it was offered; if he did not the bill went into the wastebasket. . . . I went to him myself one day with a bill to improve the roads all over the state at state expense. It is needless to say what happened to my bill. The old gentleman . . . was division superintendent of the Boston and Maine Railroad, and he certainly kept the machinery of the State government well oiled and running smoothly.³

The scene of the book is laid in the shadow of Coniston Mountain in Massachusetts and the action of the plot is contemporaneous with the presidency of Ulysses S. Grant. There is much local color in the novel and the descriptions of the mountains, and of Clonelly township have been likened by critics to those of Walter Scott.⁴

In the story Jethro Bass, the son of the tanner of

³ Winston Churchill and Everett Calby, "The Outlook," XC:93.

⁴ "Literature," The Independent, LXI (July, 1906), 97.

...of the ...
...was not, however, ...
...Continued, that this ...
...relates.

...Continued was ...
...wide-spread ...
...early ...
...Churchill says:

When I ...
...in a room ...
...every ...
...being ...
...if he ...
...went ...
...one ...
...state ...
...admitted ...
...division ...
...road, ...
...government ...

...The ...
...Continued ...
...first ...
...Grand ...
...associations ...
...have ...
...In the ...

...Continued ...
...XC:92.
...Continued ...

Coniston, becomes interested in Cynthia Ware. The acquaintance between the two characters soon ripens into love. As a token of regard for the girl, Jethro proposes to buy a locket for her in Boston. The tanner makes the purchase from a clerk named William Wetherell. Before her admirer has an opportunity to present her with the gift, Cynthia learns of Jethro's unscrupulous political methods. Her friend refuses to sacrifice his interests for the girl he loves, and they separate. Later Cynthia marries Wetherell who has, in the meantime, moved to Coniston for business purposes.

Cynthia's daughter, born in Boston where her parents eventually settled, is quite young when her mother dies. Because of ill health her father is obliged to live in the country, and Wetherell and his daughter, also named Cynthia, move to Coniston. Here the child makes the acquaintance of Jethro, who lavishes the affection he felt for the elder Cynthia upon her daughter. Upon the death of her father Cynthia becomes the ward of Jethro Bass.

As time progresses the heroine learns to know and love Bob Worthington, whose father, a Coniston banker, is a bitter enemy of her guardian. When the girl learns of the animosity which exists between the two men, she endeavors to discourage Bob, but with no success.

After a visit to Washington Jethro decides that his

Coniston, becomes interested in Cynthia and the situation.

and between the two friends as soon as the love

a token of regard for the girl. Cynthia proposes to him

locked for her in Boston. The family is in a

from a clerk named William Westcott, before

has an opportunity to present her to the girl.

last of Cynthia's character, and her

typical virtues to assist in her

lover, and they are separated. Later Cynthia

who has, in the meantime, moved to Boston for

purpose.

Cynthia's daughter, born in Boston, is

eventually settled, is due to young

Because of his health her father is obliged to live in the

country, and Westcott and his daughter, who named Cynthia,

move to Coniston. Here the child makes the acquaintance of

John, who invites the attention of his father

Cynthia upon her daughter. Upon the death of her father

Cynthia becomes the ward of John's

As time progresses the heroine learns to know and

love Bob Worthington, whose father, a Coniston owner, is

a bitter enemy of her grandfather. When the girl learns of

the animosity which exists between the two men, she

desires to marry Bob, but with no success.

After a visit to Worthington's home decides that

ward should receive an education and arranges for her stay in Boston for that purpose. While there Cynthia learns of the true character of Jethro in the political world and returns to Coniston to learn the truth from him. The old man acknowledges the truth of the accusations brought against him. Cynthia declares her love for him to be as true as before, but her high sense of honor will not permit her to use any more of the money gained by unscrupulous means. The girl secures a position as a school teacher in Bampton, a nearby town. The elder Mr. Worthington endeavors to revenge himself upon his enemy by forcing the dismissal of Cynthia, but is not successful.

Worthington and Jethro meet in one last battle near the close of the story. The "Boss" has the upper hand and uses his power to force Worthington's consent to the marriage of Cynthia and Bob. The old man relinquishes his political power. The story ends with the marriage of Bob and Cynthia, and pictures the delight of Jethro in their joy.

Jethro Bass is the most individualized character of the decade and should be classed with Becky Sharp as a creation. Jethro is a politician because he loves power and loves it more than he does Cynthia Ware, but his affection for her daughter gradually displaces his ambition and engenders in his calloused soul a strong, tender, unselfish devotion. His love for his ward is great enough to

ward should be negative an exception and the...
in London for the purpose...
the true character of...
to London to learn the...
acknowledges the truth of the...
the Cynthia declares her love for...
before, but her high sense of honor...
has any more of the money...
first assumes a position as a...
nearly torn. The elder...
himself from his enemy by...
but is not successful...
Washington and...
the close of the story. The...
uses his power to force...
of Cynthia and... The old man...
power. The...
and... the...
Jano... is the most...
the... and should be...
organization. Jano is a...
and loves it more than he does...
reaction for her...
and... in his...
selfish devotion. He loves...

urge him to the supreme sacrifice which he makes in the end. The utter loneliness of the man and the failure of all his success from the standpoint of satisfaction stands out sharp and clear with a poignancy that is artistic. Sympathy with Jethro in his blindness to real happiness, admiration for his compelling power over men, amusement at his naive manner of speech and his quiet humor are the chief impression the character of Jethro Bass makes upon his readers. Ignorance seems to be the seat of his wrong-doing--an unconquerable, boorish ignorance of what is fine and noble and true in man. The complete knowledge of only one aspect of life without the balancing power of acquaintance with other viewpoints tends to develop the dangerous type of individual. The stress placed by Churchill upon the value of education runs like a fine thread all through the story, and the author may have intended to show, by inference, the value of a well-rounded education. Though Jethro himself was corrupt, he appreciated true manhood where he found it. His admiration for the painter of Cynthia's portrait opens the reader's eyes to this trait. Deep in his heart, the "Boss" had no respect for the men who were so weak as to let him dominate their minds.

The characters of Cynthia and of Colonel Prescott are admirably drawn. There is a quaint frankness about the heroine which makes her a delightful person to know. Colonel

Prescott is a true veteran of the Civil War and typical of his kind. His conversation with President Grant and his unsuspecting acquiescence in Jethro's plans for his advancement at the expense of the politician's enemies is humorous, but, at the same time, we see that Uncle Eph is not so guileless as he appears. He loves Cynthia and her guardian and is willing to sacrifice his hard-won position to defend them.

The philosophy portrayed in Coniston is certainly sound. There is deep condemnation of Jethro's methods coupled with tenderness and understanding for the guilty man. The "Boss" is made to pay the bitter penalty for his errors in the remorse that is his because of Cynthia's disappointment in him. The girl, in turn, does not condone the wrong, but loves him and pities him although she metes out a justly deserved punishment to Jethro.

Churchill's style is convincing, forceful, and charming. He knows the material he uses for his setting and characterization and has the power to delineate it satisfactorily.

There are several scenes in Coniston that are highly dramatic. Cynthia Ware's appeal to Jethro to cast aside his unlawful political methods and her daughter's duplication of the same situation in the tannery shed are the most forceful scenes in the novel. Jethro's simple, stark confession of a

Frederick is a fine veteran of the Civil War, and his
the kind. His conversation is full of wisdom and
unimpaired intelligence in dealing with the
various at the expense of the good, but at the same time, he is not
humorous, but, at the same time, he is not so
not so gentle as he appears. He is a man of
gentle and is willing to sacrifice his own
to defend the
The philosophy of the world is a
sound. There is a deep sense of the
connected with the human condition, and the
man. The "Book of the Dead" is a
exists in the world that is a
disappointment to the world. The world is
the wrong, but love is the right. The world is
over a justly deserved punishment as a
Shakespeare's style is a masterpiece of
character. He knows the material of the world
and characterized and the power of the world
satisfactorily.
There are several names in the world
dramatic. The world is a
unlabeled political method of the world
the same action in the world is the same
scene in the novel. The world is a

lifetime of fraud and corruption is a magnificent scene. As the girl fearfully asks the momentous question, Jethro says, "I ain't been happy, Cynthy, I guess the things which you speak about are true--the way I got where I am, and the way I got my livin'."⁵

The most dramatic of all scenes, "the spectacle of one human being under the absolute power of another,"⁶ is present in Coniston. The situation occurs when Bass forces Worthington to consent to the marriage of Bob and Cynthia.

There are several highly humorous situations in this best seller, not the least of which is Jethro's attempt to purchase from an old maid clerk, a dress for his ward. The "boss" is, for once, completely nonplussed. The droll remarks of Jethro also lend an element of humor to the book.

Hamilton Mabie highly commends Mr. Churchill for his creation of Jethro Bass: "So much human nature has rarely been put into one person as Mr. Churchill has put into this old-fashioned country 'boss'."⁷

The Independent asserts that

Jethro was a hero over and above his infamies, a man

⁵Winston Churchill, Coniston (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1906), pp. 392-393.

⁶Arthur Hobson Quinn, American Fiction (New York: Appleton Century Company, 1936), p. 160.

⁷Hamilton Mabie, The North American Review, CXXCIII (September, 1906), 417.

lifetime of friend and companion is a well-known story.
The first I actually saw the man about questioned, I think saw,
"I ain't been here," I think the man said.
You speak about the first time I got where I am, and see
way I got my living."

The most dramatic of all scenes, "the spectacle of
one human being under the absolute power of another," is
present in *Confessions*. The situation occurs when the
Washington is confined to the narrowness of the old
There are several things which are striking in this
best seller, not the least of which is the story's
purchase from an old girl story, a story for the
"boss" is, for once, completely non-existent. The final
revelation of the story is a kind of a surprise to the
Hamilton might be a very common one. Churchill for
creation of the story is "so much more" and has rarely
been put into one corner as Mr. Churchill has put into
old-fashioned country "boss."

The independent asserts that
John was a hero over and above the influence, a man

William Churchill, *Confessions* (New York: Grosset and
Dunlap, 1906), pp. 125-126.
Arthur Conan Doyle, *Confessions* (New York:
Appleton Company, 1906), p. 126.
Hamilton, *Confessions*, The Appleton Company, 1906, p. 126.
(September, 1906), p. 126.

silently capable of the supreme surrender at the moment of greatest sacrifice to himself and of greatest gain to the one he loves. He had a river of life in him which love had kept pure and undefiled.⁸

With reference to the factual basis for Coniston the Review of Reviews says:

It has served the purpose of Mr. Churchill to give this native-American boss, whom we all recognize as an old acquaintance, the name of Jethro Bass, and in the novel Coniston he represents him to that section of the American reading public which is supposed to be more faithful and regular in reading the "best sellers" than in going to the primaries.⁹

That Mr. Churchill succeeded in his purpose is manifest from the popularity of Coniston.

The readers of 1906 possessed that same spirit of democracy that their predecessors evinced; they were as vitally interested in fiction which depicted an aspect of political life as they had been in stories of warfare and pioneering. Whether or not these men appreciated the artistic achievement in the creation and depiction of Jethro Bass is a matter of conjecture.

Coniston does not seem to have enjoyed the popularity among present day readers that its craftsmanship warrants. This best seller for 1906 is not so widely read as the author's previous novels, The Crisis and The Crossing.

⁸"Literature," The Independent, LXI (July, 1906), 97.

⁹The American Monthly Review of Reviews, XXXIV (August, 1906), 256.

...the ... of ...
... of ...
... to ...
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With reference to the ...

The Review of Reviews

It has been the purpose of ...
this native-American novel, ...
an old acquaintance, ...
the novel ...
of the ...
no more ...

That Mr. Churchill succeeded in ...

The popularity of the ...

The readers of 1900 ...

... that this ...

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... as they ...

... whether or not ...

... in the ...

... is a matter of ...

Conclusion does not ...

among present ...

This best seller for 1900 is ...

author's previous novels. The ...

...

On ...

The ...

(August, 1900, 2nd ...)

II. The Port of Missing Men

The Port of Missing Men, by Meredith Nicholson, claimed the greatest number of readers in 1907. The novel is a story of court intrigue, and is of the mystery type. The scene shifts from Geneva to Washington, thence to the Virginian hills, but the background and atmosphere are distinctly foreign.

The story begins in Geneva in the year 1903 when Count von Stroebel, the power behind the Austrian throne, pleads with his visitor from America, John Armitage, to "do something for Austria." The Count is murdered shortly after the interview. Armitage believes Jules Chauvenet to be the guilty party and later discovers that his surmise was correct.

While in Europe John meets Shirley and Dick Clairborne, who are preparing to return to their home in Virginia after a trip abroad. The trio secure passage on the same ship, and Shirley and John become well acquainted, much to the displeasure of the former's brother.

Zmai, a hireling of Chauvenet, makes the first of a series of attempts upon the life of John while they are on the ship. John does not disclose the reason for this attack to Shirley because of the political situation involved.

Armitage and Chauvenet meet several times in America and John openly accuses the man of the murder of von

II. The Fort of Washington

The Fort of Washington, by William L. G. Allen

claimed the greatest number of soldiers
is a story of courage and valor,
The scene shifts from the fort to the
Virginia hills, but the background
distinctly foreign.

The story begins in January, 1777.

Count von Scharnhorst, the former
presents with him a vision from
"do something for America."
after the fort was taken, the
as the only copy and later
the correct.

While in Europe, John had
home, who are preparing to return
after a trip abroad. The trip
ship, and Shirley and John
the character of the former's
real, a story of the
series of attempts upon the
the ship. John does not
be better because of the
Amiga and Henry I
and John openly

Stroebel. The hero hides himself in a secluded spot in the hills of Virginia near the Port of Missing Men. Oscar, his servant, prepares the house for his master and becomes his confidant and his messenger.

Dick Clairborne receives a commission to capture John, but Shirley, who is aware of the plan, warns Armitage because she knows that he has serious reasons for maintaining secrecy as to his plans. While Clairborne is searching for Armitage, John's enemies, mistaking Dick for the hero, kidnap him. The abduction makes Dick a champion of Armitage's cause and he joins in an attack upon Chauvenet, Zmai, and Durand, who is an accomplice. Chauvenet and Durand are captured and Zmai loses his life in the struggle.

The denouement reveals the identity of John as Count von Stroebel's son. The villains pursued him because they mistook him for the rightful successor to the Austrian throne. The villains are deported, and Shirley and John are married.

The plot is stock type, but the author, by means of suspense and cleverly sustained interest, makes the reader forget that such is the case. The story moves rapidly and, for the most part, smoothly.

The hero of Mr. Nicholson's best seller is a noble character who is well portrayed. His fidelity to his father's wish that he do something for his country, his

Stinson. The hero himself is a man of
in the of Virginia when the part of the
servant, prepared the room for his master
confident and his messenger.

John Stinson receives a letter from
John, but Stinson, who is a man of
because she knows that no man would
ing answer as to his plans. With
for a while, John's enemies, who
killing him. The abolitionists
cause and he joins in an effort
Leland, who is an abolitionist.
captured and will later be

The denouement reveals the
for Stinson's son. The abolitionists
Stinson for the abolition cause
thru. The abolitionists
are married.

The plot is a good one, and
suspense and cleverly written
forgot that such is the case
for the most part, smoothly.

The hero of the story is a man of
character who is well
father's side that he is

concern for Shirley and her family, and, above all, his unusual frankness make him outstanding.

Shirley is well drawn, but is not particularly interesting. Zmai, the tool of Chauvenet, is an odd character and the foil for Oscar, who serves Armitage with true devotion.

The theme of patriotism runs through the plot of The Port of Missing Men and leads one to a deeper appreciation of his own country by contrasting it with Austria. We glean something of the American's distaste for the type of government Austria possessed from Armitage's outburst at the close of the book when, speaking of his friend, the deceased Austrian Archduke, he says,

He taught me to hate the sham of the life he had fled from. My father was the last great defender of the divine right of kings; but I believe in the divine right of men. And the dome of the Capitol in Washington does not mean to me force or hatred or power, but faith and hope and man's right to live and do and be whatever he can make himself.¹⁰

The style is fluent. There is a generous amount of dialogue in the novel and some humor. Clairborne's reactions to his abduction, coupled with his ludicrous appearance after being carried away in a potato sack, are laughable, as are the bland retorts of Oscar to Clairborne in the chapter entitled The Sheepfold.

¹⁰Meredith Nicholson, The Port of Missing Men (New York: Grosset and Dunlap), p. 398.

common for Miller and his friends to be seen

in the streets of New York.

Miller is well known to the public

and his name is often mentioned in the

papers and the public is interested in

his life.

The theme of the book is the life of

the poet of the East.

Miller's life is a story of

adventure and discovery.

Miller's life is a story of

adventure and discovery.

Miller's life is a story of

adventure and discovery.

Miller's life is a story of

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Miller's life is a story of

adventure and discovery.

Miller's life is a story of

adventure and discovery.

Criticism of this best seller is, for the most part, favorable. Isabel Colbron says of it:

The Port of Missing Men . . . is frankly only a story of adventure builded on a shop-worn model, but very well done of its kind. It is the sort of book very many people will read through with pleasure in one or two sittings, but few will remember it later. The story moves quickly, event following event sharply with few pauses in between, the mystery is well sustained.¹¹

The Dial commends the author for skill in plot and characterization,¹² but the A. L. A. Booklist is more conservative and declares that although the story moves rapidly, the plot is not as good as that of The Prisoner of Zenda.¹³

The Port of Missing Men probably made its appeal partly through the mystery, hair-breadth escapes, and thrills that it contains and partly through the contrast in government. American democracy is again served to the populace in fiction and enthusiastically accepted.

The best seller for 1907 does not seem to be of permanent value. It is of the mystery type; it presents no new thought, it involves no unusual characters. The Port of Missing Men saw its day and was forgotten.

The "literature of exposure," characteristic of the

¹¹Grace Isabel Colbron, "Seven Books of the Month," The Bookman, XXV (March, 1907), 85.

¹²William Morton Payne, "Recent Fiction," The Dial, XLII (April, 1907), 227.

¹³A. L. A. Booklist, IV (1908), 110.

Characteristics of this best seller...

Favorable. Label follows page of 12

The Port of Marseilles... of adventure... well done... many people will read... two sittings... novel... scenes in... the mystery...

The last sentence... the author...

characterization... but the...

nerveless and... the plot...

The plot is not as good as that of...

The Port of Marseilles...

partly... half-drawn... and...

that it contains... the...

ment. American... is again...

in fiction as enthusiastically...

The best seller for 1907 does not...

permanent value. It is of the...

new thought, it involves no...

Meaning Man saw the day and...

The "literature of experience"...

Literary Label follows...

The Bookman, XVII (April, 1907), 35.

Is... Fiction...

XIII (April, 1907), 327.

L.A. L. A. Bookman, IV (1903), 210.

years 1902-1908, is better known by the appellation "Muckrake." President Roosevelt, in an effort to condemn the writing of this type of literature for commercial aggrandizement, likened its authors to a character in Pilgrim's Progress who was so busily engaged in raking for straws in the muck that he was blind to the beauty that lay around him.

Previous to the publication of Coniston, other problem novels had been prominent. In 1901, The Octopus, by Frank Norris, The Autocrats, by Charles E. Lush, The Warners, by Gertrude Potter, and By Bread Alone by Isaac K. Friedman had been aimed at the trusts. Brand Whitlock's The Thirteenth District (1902), David Graham Phillips' The Golden Fleece (1903), The Plum Tree (1905), and others turned the spotlight upon political corruption. Frank Norris, in The Pit (1903), was concerned with grain speculation.

This movement was

. . . a reaction from the crudities and shoddiness of industrialism, from the gross inequalities of modern economy. Some of it was broadly philosophical, some was sheer propaganda: only a small part of it had permanent literary value.¹⁴

The popularity of the novel which followed Coniston as a best seller is indicative of the reaction which was inevitably to follow the "Muckrake" literature. In The Port

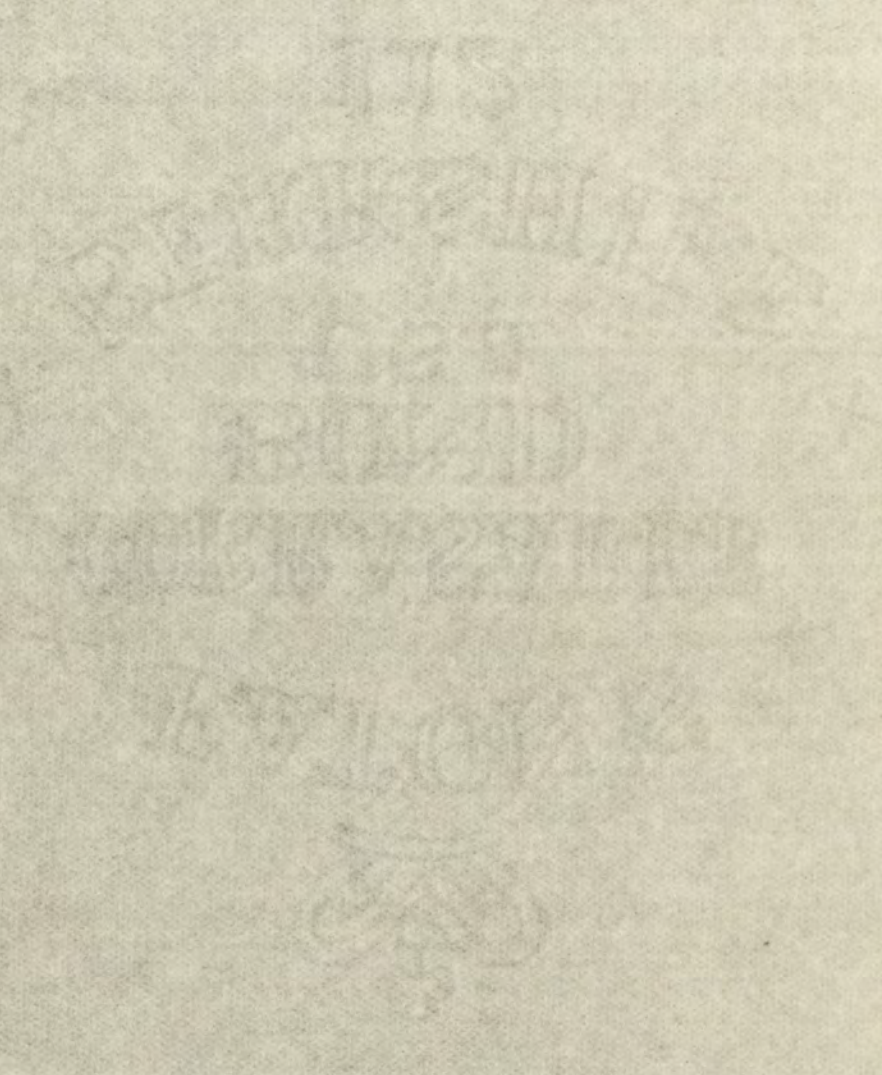
¹⁴Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager, The Growth of the American Republic (New York: Oxford University Press, 1930), p. 742.

years 1902-1908, is better known by the name of
President Roosevelt, in an effort to be
this type of literature, for example, the
lithograph the author is a character in
was an early attempt to bring the
he was able to the literary scene, and
previous to the first edition of
exhibits signs of a new movement.
Frank Norris, The Pit, The Octopus,
by George Eastman, and The Sign of the Cross,
had been aimed at the market, and
The Master (1902), The Sign of the Cross
Lucas (1903), The Sign of the Cross (1903),
spotlight upon political corruption.
The Sign of the Cross (1903), was concerned with
This movement was

a reaction from the earlier and
questioned. From the group of writers
economy. Some of it was a reaction
they regarded only a small part
manent literary value.
The popularity of the novel
as a best seller is indicative of the
eventually to follow the "literary"

1. The Sign of the Cross by
The Sign of the Cross by
University Press, 1903, p. 1.

of Missing Men, Meredith Nicholson writes a "literature of escape," indicating perhaps that, by 1906, the American public was becoming tired of the "literature of exposure." Indeed, muckraking and agitation for reform had passed their zenith by 1906.



CHAPTER VI

BEST SELLERS, 1908-1910

I. Mr. Crewe's Career

Although the year 1906 marked the climax of the literature of exposure, the type continued in popularity through 1908. During these years, prison abuses, in The Turn of the Balance (1907), financial speculation, in The Money Changers (1908), society life, in Old Wives for New (1908), were the objects of remorseless exposure by the "Muckrakers." The most popular novel for 1908 is an attack upon the railroads.

Mr. Crewe's Career, the third of Winston Churchill's books to win first place in the favor of the reading public of the decade, is a political novel. It represents three types of politicians: the railroad tool, in the person of Hilary Vane; the reformer, exemplified in Austen; and the fool politician, Mr. Crewe. The author describes with humor, tinged at times with a streak of irony, the control of politics by corporations. The fact that the author himself was a representative in the State Legislature of New Hampshire and candidate for nomination for governor, makes the narrative authentic and convincing.

The action takes place in the little town of Ripton in the early twentieth century, the era of railroad domin-

HART, 1898-1910

II. Mr. Grew's Career

Although the year 1900 marked the close of the literature of expansion, the type continued in popularity through 1908. During these years, when the Turn of the Balance (1907), financial speculation, in the Money Changers (1908), society life, in Old Times (1908), were the objects of romances composed by the "blackboarders." The most popular novel for 1908 in the United States was Mr. Grew's Career, upon the railroad.

Mr. Grew's Career, the third of Mr. Grew's novels, was

books to win first place in the list of the reading and in the decade, in a political novel. It represented a new type of politician: the railroad boss, in the person of Henry Vane; the reformer, exemplified in Robert and the other politician, Mr. Grew. The author described with humor, stung at times with a streak of irony, the conduct of politics by corporations. The fact that the author himself was a representative in the State Legislature of New Hampshire and candidate for nomination for Governor, gave the narrative authenticity and conviction.

The action takes place in the little town of New in the early twentieth century, the era of railroad domination.

ation of politics.

In the hero of Mr. Grewe's Career, Mr. Churchill has, for the first time, created the character of what may be called "the political bounder"--the young American millionaire who enters politics to get a national pedestal for himself, just as he would enter an expensive yacht race to get the "cup." He is essentially a fool, as all bounders are, of the kind made obtuse by the conscious power of wealth, who never will "play the game" because he lacks the integrity of the true sports-man's instinct, and because he knows that he can buy his way. Just the rich man squeezed down to nothing but wealth, insolence, selfishness, and the determination to have what he wants if he sacrifices every conviction of honest manhood and pays a double price for it besides.¹

The story moves more slowly than Mr. Churchill's previous novels because of his effort to uncover the politics involved. One finds it difficult to focus attention on either the romance of Austen Vane or the political history; one element detracts from the other.

Hilary Vane, a sixty-five-year-old lawyer is the chief council in the state for the Northeastern Consolidated Railroad. His son, Austen, does not approve of the policies of the company and is at odds with his father because of this fact. The younger man is also a lawyer and he accepts cases against the railroad.

Austen becomes interested in Victoria Flint, daughter of the president of the Imperial Railroad. Vane attempts to

¹Mrs. L. H. Harris, "The Advance of Civilization in Fiction," The Independent, LXV (November, 1908), 1169.

avoid the company of the girl because of the animosity Mr. Flint bears toward his political ideals. Fate, however, throws them together, and they become strongly attached to each other.

When Hilary Vane begins to see things in the same light as does his son, the friendship between Flint and his associate is on the verge of disruption. The judge, after a quarrel, tenders his resignation to the president but promises to work for his interest until after election. This the old man does although he is critically ill. His duty is accomplished when he succeeds in securing the nomination of the Railroad's candidate for governor. Hilary then retires from politics, and Victoria and Austen marry.

The plot involving the fortunes of Mr. Crewe has little bearing upon the one related above. The efforts of the man to secure the nomination for governor are only a source of repugnance and pity to the reader. Humphrey sacrifices all that is noble within him to secure his end and then fails.

Austen is a thoroughly noble character, but seems just a trifle too self-righteous to be real. Hilary, Austen's father, is well drawn. The old man's secret admiration for his son, which led him to overcome the corrupt habits of a lifetime, is realistically portrayed. Victoria, the heroine, her father, and the minor characters are types rather than

individuals.

The best seller for 1908 is philosophically sound. The author does not condone the fraud of the railroads, but the case of the magnates is fairly presented. This procedure lends an air of fairness and truth to the novel.

There are several dramatic incidents in the story. The portrayal of the final break between Austen and his father is compelling and so is the judge's loyalty to duty.

The book was obviously written for the purpose of reform. The workings of the railroad feudal system

. . . are more than proclaimed, they are dramatized with a cynical veracity that makes the story of great value for enlightening the great mass of people who are not sufficiently interested in their citizenship to insure honest government, but who are sufficiently interested in the romance to take lessons in political economy from the pen of a novelist.²

It is principally for its verisimilitude that the best seller of 1908 is commended.

The book has an accent of reality rather than fiction. He (Mr. Churchill) shows a generous power in drawing strong, diverse types, a breadth of understanding that will give his representation weight with serious people. And he has done what most political novelists neglect when he interprets the political mania of the rural mind.³

Another review states:

The story is too long and the style often slovenly.

²"Literature," The Independent, LXIV (June, 1908), 1400.

³Ibid.,

But the people are real people, there is an admirable humor, and the tale possesses vitality and interest.⁴

Mr. Crewe's Career probably became a best seller because of the theme of the narrative. The reading public was suffering from the very evils condemned in the book and found in the novel a suggestion for combating the corrupt policies employed by vote controllers.

This best seller seems to have lost its appeal. The book is far inferior to Coniston in characterization and dramatic technique; therefore, when the theme became outdated, the book did also.

⁴A. L. A. Booklist, IV (June, 1908), 218.

II. The Trail of the Lonesome Pine

"The Trail of the Lonesome Pine is an interesting picture of the struggle between mountain standards and the new industrial forces represented concretely by a young Kentucky engineer."⁵ It is a vivid portrayal of the determination, perseverance, and, in many cases, the heroism required to make our country the "land of the free and the home of the brave." The forces to be overcome are many and varied--the prejudice and jealousy of the ignorant, the indifference of the short-sighted, the studied hatred of the vicious, the pride of the self-respecting, the misunderstanding of the educated. John Fox, in the best seller for 1909, shows his readers this struggle vividly, convincingly, forcefully, and entertainingly.

The country just over the Kentucky line forms the setting for The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, and the author definitely follows the cult of the local color group of the latter nineteenth century. Fox has successfully captured the spirit of the mountains, and his best seller is permeated with it. His book is tuned to the country of which he writes. It is bright with the flash of mountain lightning and somber with the gloom of mountain shades; it

⁵Arthur Hobson Quinn, American Fiction (New York: Appleton Century Company, 1936), p. 372.

II. The Trial of the Defendant

"The Trial of the Defendant"

picture of the struggle between industrial forces represented by the Kentucky engineers, on the one hand, and the miners, on the other, in their determination to make our country the "land of the brave." The forces to be overcome are varied--the prejudice and jealousy of the miners, the indifference of the above-mentioned, the vicious, the pride of the... understanding of the... for 1909, among the...

directly, forcibly, and... The country just over the... setting for the trial of the... definitely follows the... latter research... the... the... matted with it. His... he writes... lightning and... with the...

is vibrant with the tenseness of mountain grandeur and tender with the simple beauty of mountain wildflowers.

While John Hale, the hero of the book, is on his way to Lonesome Cove, he sees June Tolliver, the heroine of the story, daughter of Devil Judd. Later in the day John's acquaintance with the girl's father begins when the mountaineer points a Winchester at him believing the man to be a revenue officer trying to locate a still. When the old man learns that Hale is an engineer, interested in developing the region through coal mining, he takes him to his home. Here John meets Dave Tolliver, June's cousin, who is enamoured of her. The acquaintance which develops between June and John fills the jealous Dave with hatred and he becomes the mortal enemy of the engineer.

John, the hero, returns to the Gap after having made friends with Judd, and a boom town soon springs up there. John determines that the lawlessness rampant at the Gap must be stopped and organizes a force to secure and maintain order in the town.

In the course of time the hero makes several trips to Lonesome Cove to negotiate for Tolliver's land, and the acquaintance between June and John soon ripens into love. The engineer sponsors the girl's education, first at the Gap and later in New York. While the girl is there John's venture fails and he meets with grave financial difficulties.

is vibrant with the same
with the same energy as
While John said, "I
to the same place, I
at it, and the same
renewed sense of the
see, and a whole new
renewed sense of the
last, and this is
the whole thing, and
have John said, "I
experience of the
and John said, "I
comes the whole thing
about the same, and
friends of the
can determine that the
be stopped and or
in the town.
In the course of
John said, "I
against the whole
The whole thing
and later in the
renewed sense of the

June returns to Lonesome Cove and, during her stay at home, Bad Rufe, her uncle, arrives. In a wild disregard for the order of the Gap, the man kills an officer and is eventually captured and hanged. The punishment meted out to Rufe at Hale's command makes Judd a bitter enemy of John.

While the Tollivers are returning to Lonesome Cove with the body of Rufe, June's father is shot by a member of the Falin family, with whom the Tollivers have long had a feud. June promises her father that she will not marry Hale and, after Judd's recovery, the family moves West.

At her father's death June learns that John has cared for her finances all along, and that he purchased Lonesome Cove so that she would always have it. These facts cause her to repent of her harsh treatment of Hale, and she goes back to the Gap to tell him of her regret. The pair meet beneath the Lonesome Pine, and the book ends with the celebration of their marriage.

The characters are highly interesting, vibrant with the fearlessness and the strength of the mountains in which they live, reflecting the contrasts of the mountains in their own lives. June is brave and shy; Red Fox is a villain and preacher, Judd Tolliver is tender and merciless, and Dave is vindictive and fair. Untarnished by the tinsel, sham, and duplicity of corrupt civilization, they are equally innocent of its refining powers. June, alone, by reason of

some returns to London. Cove and his family

had been, but single, arrived. In a letter to the

order of the day, the man will be left in the

ally captured and killed. The arrangement was made

at Hale's command and was a bitter enemy of the

While the Tolliver are returning to London

with the copy of the letter, Jane's father is

of the family, with whom the Tolliver have been

a friend. Jane promised her father that she would

Hale and, after that's recovery, the family

At her father's death she had been

for her financial all along, and that she would

Cove so that she would always have a

her to report of her health (instead of

back to the day to tell him of her

beneath the Londoner's face, and the

celebration of their marriage.

The characters are highly interesting.

the fearlessness and the strength of the

they live, reflecting the character of the

their own lives. Jane is brave and

villain and preacher, but Tolliver is

and Cove is vindictive and fair.

them, and quality of conduct of the

innocent of the religious power.

hard study, stands forth a perfect example of the native mountain virtues polished and refined by the fine things of civilization.

Hale, the hero, is steadfast as the pines, courageous, a man of principle, who lives up to his ideals and performs his duty regardless of the cost involved. He possesses a frankness of spirit which wins the admiration of the mountaineers among whom he cast his lot. He has a powerful personality--a power born of straight thinking and straight doing, the power of goodness over evil, the supremacy of moral over physical force.

"Uncle Billy and Old Hon are delightful, whether perched together on the old grey mare or sitting outside their little mill listening to the sound of the wheel."⁶ This old couple, while they do not figure prominently in the story, add a charm to the picture of mountaineer life.

The Trail of the Lonesome Pine contains many highly dramatic scenes; the first meeting of June and the engineer, the confession by June of her love for John; the trial and hanging of Bad Rufe and others. The courtroom scene is, probably, the most striking. When June's turn to testify comes she is asked:

⁶Ward Clark, "Mr. Fox's The Trail of the Lonesome Pine," The Bookman, XXVIII (December, 1908), 365.

hard study, stands forth a portrait of the native
mountain virtues polished and refined by the time element of
civilization.

Here, the hero, is represented as the finest, noblest, and
a man of principle, who lives up to his ideals and maintains
his duty regardless of the cost involved. His possession of
firmness of spirit which wins the admiration of those
mountaineers among whom he acts as a leader. He has a powerful
personality--a power born of spiritual training and elevated
being. The power of goodness over evil, the supremacy of
moral over physical force.

"Uncle Billy and his son were delighted, watching
gathered together on the old grey mare or sitting outside
their little hill mansion, to the sound of the wheel."
This old couple, while they do not figure prominently in the
story, add a charm to the picture of mountain life.
The trail of the lone ranger and his companions is
dramatic scenes; the first meeting of him and his companion,
the conclusion by him of her love for him; the first and
meeting of her life and others. The conclusion being the
probably the most striking. When his turn to really
come she is seen:

Good-bye, my love, for the trail is long and
long, the lone ranger (New York, 1908), 101.

"Have you ever heard the prisoner express any enmity against the volunteer Police Guard?" . . . June hesitated and Rufe leaned one elbow on the table, and the light in his eyes beat with fierce intensity into the girl's eyes. . . .

"What was the last thing you heard the prisoner say that afternoon when he left your father's house?"

"I'm goin' over to the Gap--" her face turned deadly white, she shivered, her dark eyes swerved suddenly full on Hale and she said slowly and distinctly, yet hardly above a whisper, "to kill me a policeman."⁷

The courage that was required of June to make this statement, the hesitation, the suspense, the forces working to compel her to deny her knowledge of the threat make this scene gripping.

The Review of Reviews comments upon the nationalistic spirit in the best seller for 1909:

It is an intensely national note which is struck in this novel in scene, characters, and treatment. The hero is the type of American life of which we are most proud, the vigorous, brave, energetic man of flesh and blood, who "does things."

.
The mountain folk of Kentucky, whose life and homes Mr. Fox knows so well, have dormant in them, he believes, the intellectual vigor and capacity of the best of our pioneers.⁸

The Independent says of The Trail of the Lonesome Pine:

The story progresses with that fascinating interest we always take in the truthful lives of primitive folk

⁷John Fox, The Trail of the Lonesome Pine (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), pp. 318-319.

⁸"New Books for Summer Reading," The American Monthly Review, XXX (July, 1904), 123.

"I have you ever heard the story of the blind men and an elephant?"
"No, I haven't," said the girl.
"Well, let's learn one thing on the spot, and that is, the blind men are all touching the elephant in different places, and each is making a different statement about it. One says it's like a wall, another says it's like a tree, another says it's like a snake, and so on. Now, what was the first thing you heard about the blind men?"
"That afternoon when the blind men were talking about the elephant," said the girl.
"I'm glad you said that," said the girl. "Now, let's learn one thing more, and that is, the blind men are all touching the elephant in different places, and each is making a different statement about it. One says it's like a wall, another says it's like a tree, another says it's like a snake, and so on. Now, what was the first thing you heard about the blind men?"

The courage that was required of him to make such a statement, the realization, the suspense, the terror, nothing is more real to any boy than knowledge of the world and of his own mind.

The Review of Reviews comments on this in its issue of April 15, 1904, and says:

It is an intensely national novel, with a story in which the type of American life is shown at its best and worst, the vigorous, brave, energetic men of letters and blood who "go on things." The woman's life of America, those life and death, Mr. Fox knows so well, have been put in them, as well as the intellectual vigor and capacity of the best of our character.

The Independent says of The Trail of the Lonesome Pine:
The story progresses with that fascinating interest which is the result of the author's skillful handling of the plot.

John Fox, The Trail of the Lonesome Pine (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903), p. 115-116.
New Books for Young Readers, The Lonesome Pine.
Review, N.Y. (July, 1904), 12.

when adequately portrayed. And presently we realize that while the Cumberland mountaineers may not be civilized to any very high degree, they have sensibilities, and their own deeper delicacies of mind more highly developed along the lines of gravity and personal pride than we shall find in certain cultured circles of society.⁹

A reviewer in The Bookman believes that

It is amply evident that Mr. Fox knows the kind of people of whom he writes. The Local Colour is not only plentiful; it is correct.

.....
It is as a novelist of manners of an arrested civilization that he scores his success.¹⁰

The public liked The Trail of the Lonesome Pine for the patriotism involved, for its local color, its swift movement, its style, and for the novelty of the theory that Mr. Fox expounded through the novel: his belief that these men are still in the same stage of civilization as our forefathers were.¹¹ This best seller contains just enough of the historical to appeal to the people who liked Churchill's novels, just enough of the romantic to interest those who preferred Sandy, enough of the patriotic to please the great majority, and enough realism to captivate the readers who were to determine the best sellers of the following decade.

The Trail of the Lonesome Pine is still widely read. It appeals to a variety of people and is based upon a theme

⁹"Literature," The Independent, LXV (November, 1908), 1121.

¹⁰Ward Clark, op. cit., pp. 364-365.

¹¹The Independent, op. cit.

that does not become uninteresting with the passage of time.

Though the greater part of the literature of the Muck-Rake school perished, it performed an office unique in the history of American literature.

More social legislation was passed in the first fifteen years of the century than in all previous American history.¹²

.
The most beneficial effect of this "literature of exposure," however, was the moral awakening of the masses. In growing numbers they gave their support to a new group of political leaders who fought to restore government to the people.¹³

After the popularity accorded to Mr. Crewe's Career, interest in the "Muckrake" novel declined. The best seller for 1909 may be classified as a novel of "the strenuous life;" its hero, John Hale, is a "red-blooded" American of the type popular throughout the Roosevelt Era.

¹²Arthur Meier Schlesinger, Political and Social Growth of the United States (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935), p. 321.

that does not depend on the existence of a certain number of

through the government of the United States

which have been established in the United States

the history of the United States

More recent history of the United States
year of the history of the United States
history

The year of the history of the United States
exposure of the history of the United States
history of the United States
a new series of history of the United States
government of the United States

After the year of the history of the United States

interest in the history of the United States

for 1909 may be considered as a year of the history of the United States

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CHAPTER VII

I. SUMMARY

In the study of American best sellers during the first decade of the twentieth century the writer discovered the truth of Carl Van Doren's assertion:

Patriotism and jingoism, altruism and imperialism, passion and sentimentalism shook the temper which had been slowly stiffening since the Civil War with a rush of unaccustomed emotions, the national imagination sought out its own past, luxuriating in it.¹

It is of interest to note that nine of the ten American best sellers depict some phase of American life either historical, or political, or social. Sandy, the story of an Irish immigrant, is the only one of the ten that fails to exhibit the common theme. In To Have and to Hold we have a picture of colonial Virginia; Alice of Old Vincennes depicts the Revolutionary period; The Virginian offers a picture of life in the early West; Gordon Keith shows the reader the characteristics of Southern chivalry; The Crossing portrays a panorama of America from the pioneer days to the purchase of Louisiana; The Port of Missing Men contrasts the democracy of America with the monarchy of Austria; Coniston and Mr. Crewe's Career disclose the fraud of political institutions and corporations; and The Trail of the Lonesome Pine

¹Carl Van Doren, Contemporary American Novelists (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922), p. 48.

delineates the life and customs of the Kentucky mountaineers.

Winston Churchill is the author of three of the best sellers: The Crossing, 1904; Coniston, 1906; and Mr. Crewe's Career, 1908. This author owes much of his success to the fact that he

habitually moved along the main lines of national feeling--believing in America and democracy with a fealty unshaken by any adverse evidence and delighting in the American pageant.

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The sounds which have reached him from among the people have come from those who eagerly aspire to better things arrived at by orderly progress, from those who desire in some lawful way to outgrow the injustices and inequalities of civil existence and by fit methods to free the human spirit from all that clogs and stifles it.²

A distinctive characteristic of many of the best selling novels of the decade is the fact that, in the majority of the books, some great movement rather than any individual dominates the plot. This is true of Alice of Old Vincennes, The Virginian, The Crossing, Coniston, The Port of Missing Men, Mr. Crewe's Career, and The Trail of the Lonesome Pine. In only one of these best sellers is there found a character who is distinctive and who may be called a creation. The exception is Jethro Bass, in Mr. Churchill's Coniston. Julie Breton, the heroine of Lady Rose's Daughter, is an interesting character, but the book is of English

²Ibid., p. 52.

Belonging to the life and history of the people.

Winston Churchill is the author of the book.

Believe: The President of the United States.

Carver, 1908. With a preface by the author.

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authorship.

Three distinct types of literature were popular in the first decade of the twentieth century: the historical romance, the novel of "the strenuous life," and the literature of exposure. No definite date can be said to mark the end of any of these types as they persisted throughout the decade in some form or other.

All of these best sellers appealed to something elemental in the nature of man. In To Have and to Hold it was to man's chivalry toward woman, shown in Ralph Percy's protection of Jocelyn Leigh. In Alice of Old Vincennes it was courtesy, evinced in Beverley's attitude toward his superior officer. In The Virginian it was truth and honor, shown in the character of the hero. In Gordon Keith it was gallantry, that of Gordon toward friend and foe alike. In The Crossing it was patriotism, the dominant theme of the book. In The Port of Missing Men it was devotion to a cause, shown in John Armitage's deeds for the good of Austria. In Mr. Crewe's Career it was the devotion and loyalty of child toward parent, depicted by Austen Vane. In The Trail of the Lonesome Pine it was fidelity to duty, shown in John Hale's efforts to obtain order at the Gap.

None of the authors of the best sellers of the decade is eminent for style or for construction of plot.

There are, however, evidences of pathos and other dramatic qualities to be found in several of these books. The farewell message from Steve in The Virginian and Jethro Bass's confession to Cynthia Wetherell in Coniston are indelibly imprinted upon the reader's memory for sheer poignancy of expression.

Although none of these best sellers can be called great, they are sincere in purpose and competent in execution; many of them have survived through almost forty years. To Have and to Hold, Alice of Old Vincennes, The Virginian, The Crossing, and The Trail of the Lonesome Pine are familiar to the majority of readers today.

II. CONCLUSIONS

As reflection of the character of the reading public the best sellers of the first decade of the twentieth century would seem to point to the following conclusions:

1. The people of the period were predominately patriotic. They were interested in and proud of the achievements of America.
2. They demanded, in literature, a wholesome morality, with villains clearly distinguished from heroes, although they were willing to accept the idea that great villains have redeemable features in them.
3. They were more concerned with life than with art, more interested in the thought of the book than in its style.
4. They were extremely moralistic-minded readers, seeking uplift and inspiration rather than mere entertainment.
5. They were indiscriminating as to literary perfection. Not one of the books of the decade rises above the standard of mediocrity in style or in construction of plot.

II. CONCLUSION

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1. The people of the

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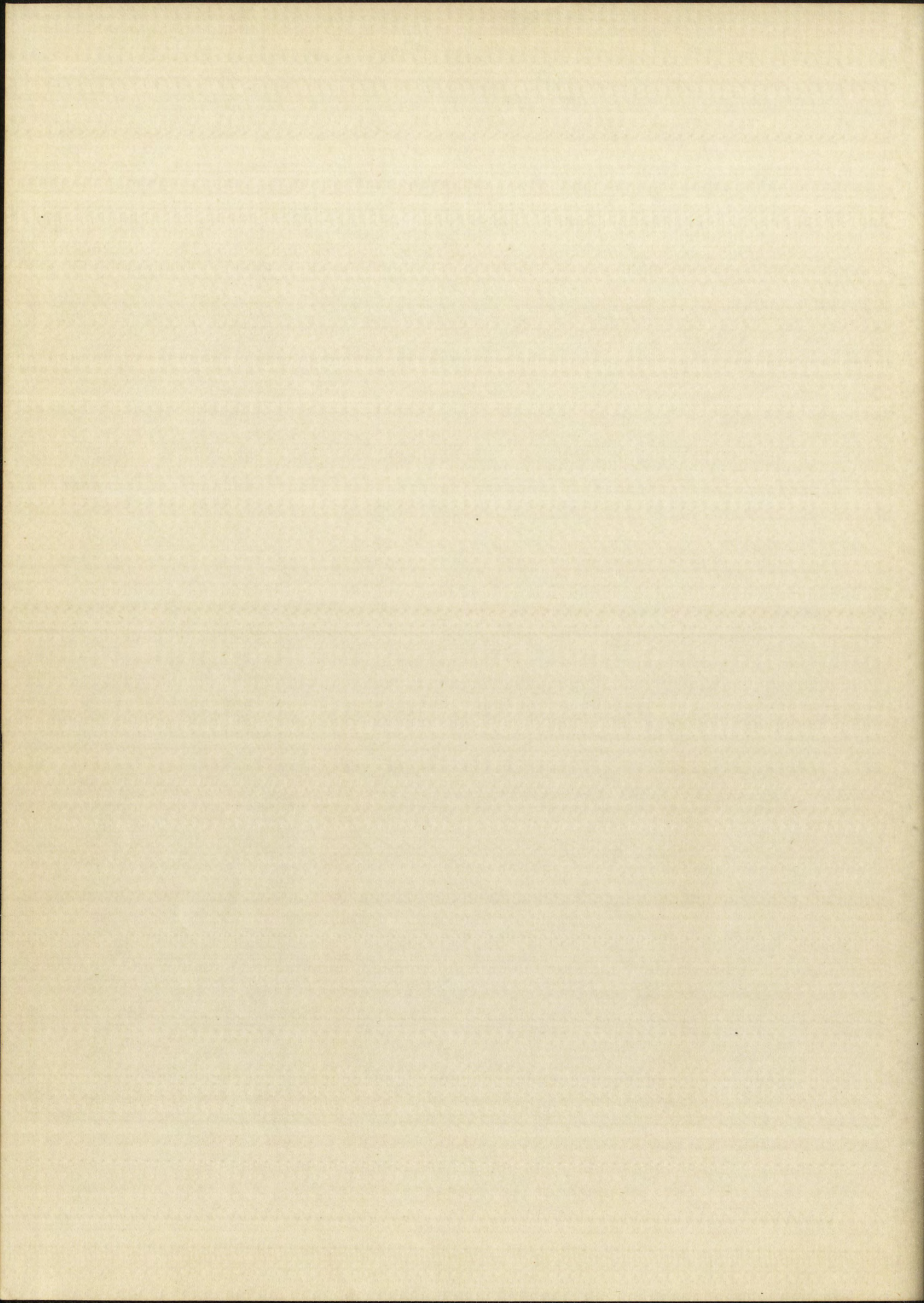
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