

## A BALLADE OF AMBITION .

Some aim to write scholastic lore  
In words aglow with learning's light ;  
While others would in verse outpour  
Their happy souls so clear and white.  
Some would achieve Fame's glorious height  
By breezy screeds of babbling brooks ;  
But as for me, I'd fain indite  
One of the Six Best-selling Books.

With stirring tales of sea or shore  
Some would the Torch of Fame ignite ;  
Others Parnassus-ward would soar  
On Hymns and Odes of interest slight.  
Some, commendation would invite  
By "Aids to Health" or "Hints to Cooks ;"  
But I would publish if I might  
One of the Six Best-selling Books.

'Tis easy. All one needs is Gore,  
A Shipwreck or a Frantic Fight ;  
Hints of fierce oaths the villain swore,  
Some saws and aphorisms trite.  
Although these elements seem quite  
Enough for certain scribbling crooks,  
I reach but in my fancy's flight  
One of the Six Best-selling Books.

### ENVOI :

Oh, Fame, I ask not gilding bright,  
Nor brave *éditions de luxe* ;  
But grant that some day I may write  
One of the Six Best-selling Books.

Carolyn Wells.

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## AN INTERVIEW WITH NOBODY

A new star has arisen in the literary firmament in the person of Mr. Zero O. Nobody, whose recent book, *No Matter What* (being the Memoirs of Cypher Little, late major of His Majesty's Naughty-Ninth Nincompoops), has sold five hundred thousand copies before publication.

Mr. Nobody was born and erased in Nowhere, New Jersey, and is descended from a long and insignificant line of ancestors. On his mother's side he comes of the famous Anybodys of Eniol Place. He is now living at his villa home, "No-where-much," a charming house of only

one short story, painted mediocchre, with a windmill in the rear.

Mr. Nobody disclaims all the usual tricks by which authors attain success. "I have no methods, no style, no knowledge," he says. "I depend entirely upon Nothing for inspiration, and leave the rest to my publishers."

Mr. Nobody's study is characteristic of this rising young nonentity, filled with nameless knickknacks and adorned with old negatives. The walls are covered with books; but, in accordance with the prevailing literary fashion, they are not a mere conglomerate of different authors,

but all copies of one book—his own. He does not collect first, but only thousandth editions. The ceiling is stencilled, and of a dull colour, the floor is flat, while the windows are obvious. In one corner of the room is an old cannon, seated astride which Mr. Nothing dictates hysterical romances. "The public likes a smooth-bore," he explained with a meaningless smile.

"I have no needs, no necessities. Every day I rise at ten, walk into the front yard to be photographed, look at the ticker

tape that quotes sales by direct wire from my publishers. Then I take a nap and dictate masterpieces. I have not been well for some time, having caught a rather serious idea some months ago. Oh, yes, it was before I wrote *No Matter What*. By using many stenographers at once I am able to complete the whole novel before publication, though that, of course, is seldom necessary. The advertisements, reviews and posters are, of course, done long before I commence work."



In answer to a request for his opinions of modern literature Mr. Nobody said: "The fact is, Modern Literature is decaying; it might even be called rotten, and the modern writer is a modern maggot bred by the carcase of Literature. Maggotry is, as you know, enormously upon the increase, though I should distinguish between mercenary maggotry and magazine maggotry. Magazine maggotry supplies the literary monthlies with pictures and poses. Maggots dictating romances, maggots at home, maggots brushing their teeth and maggots reading the Sonnets of Somebody are of this class.

"Mercenary maggots, on the other hand, have made the fortunes not only of themselves but of the booksellers, who now have to purchase the works of only the Six Best Selling Maggots instead of

having to stock themselves with as many as forty-nine different authors, as they used to before we nonentities appeared. The true martyrs to maggotry are the women, who desire changes in the fashions, but are forced to read Hystery and Cologneal Romance. This has forced many women into writing Love-Letters of Ladies.

"Yes," continued Mr. Nobody, "I suppose I am the Head Maggot—of both sorts!"

But I hardly thought "head" was the proper term for him.

As I left he informed me that *No Matter What* was now in its five hundred and fifty-seventh thousand. "We are delaying its issue," Mr. Nobody informed me. "You see we sell so many more copies before than after publication."

Gelett Burgess.

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## THE AUTHOR OF "SIR RICHARD CALMADY"

It is my devout belief that *Sir Richard Calmady* is destined to give to its author something of the fame that she has long enjoyed in other English-speaking lands as one of the very flower of the exclusive aristocracy of English letters. That she was not long ago made known to the entire reading public of this country is due to various causes, not the least important of which is the circumstance that she has chosen to write under the name of "Lucas Malet," a pseudonym which reveals nothing as to her identity or sex, and which it is very easy to spell wrong.

For this reason the shallow-pated ones who do so much of the reading in this country do not, as a general thing, talk about her, even if they happen to have read some of her books, because they cannot remember whether they should say "him" or "her." In short, Mrs. Mary St. Leger Harrison's unfortunate choice of a *nom de plume* has cost her a vast amount of that sort of conversational advertising which droppeth as free as the gentle dew of heaven and is the very life of the literary trade in this country. But now I believe that *Sir Richard Calmady* is going to change all that by making her so much the fashion, that not even those persons

of literary taste who have been recently illumined concerning George Sand and George Eliot will dare to leave her out of the conversation.

But Mrs. Harrison can at least feel that her success in letters has been honestly achieved on the strength of her work and not by virtue of the fact that she is a daughter of Charles Kingsley, who died a quarter of a century ago, but whose memory is still tenderly cherished throughout the English-speaking world as a clergyman of the church militant, a poet and story-teller, a fearless champion of what he believed to be right, and, more than all, as one who loved his fellow men. Such a name as his is apt to prove a dangerous heritage, and in disdaining to make use of it as a crutch, his daughter has displayed rare good judgment, as well as a commendable spirit of independence, although she may not have looked with a shrewd and calculating eye upon the American literary market.

During the past five years Mrs. Harrison has lived in London, occupying a charming apartment in Kensington, and devoting most of her working time to "Sir Richard," which was begun fully a dozen years ago in the quaint and pictu-