

thing which obscures the portrait of a typical parvenu. This part of the book is perpetually true and therefore perpetually interesting. All the rest of it is rubbish. As a matter of fact, there are not a few well-known but obsolescent authors who could be made popular once more if a practiced hand and unerring taste could be brought to the task of pruning away that part of them which belongs exclusively to their own time. For example, if some one would only take the works of Fenimore Cooper in hand and translate a lot of their stilted dialogue into the sort of language that human beings really speak, it would be a service to literature. Whenever Cooper is telling the story of a sea-fight or an Indian ambush, and when some of his genuine creations, such as Long Tom Coffin and Leatherstocking appear upon the scene, everything moves with the fire and briskness of actual life. But when his young men and his young women get to talking, or when some of his ordinary civilians of mature age become eloquent, then we have pages upon pages of intolerable pomposity which one is tempted to skip even though in skipping, the thread of the narrative is lost. Take, for instance, the beginning of *The Pilot*. Katherine Plowden, an impulsive girl, is speaking to Barnstable, a young naval officer. Here is a bit of their conversation as given by Cooper:

"Come, Katherine," he said, "the time urges to be prompt."

"What pressing necessity is there for immediate departure?" she inquired, checking his movements by withdrawing herself from his side.

"You heard the ominous prognostic of my cockswain on the weather, and I am forced to add my own testimony to his opinion. 'Tis a crazy night that threatens us, though I cannot repent of coming into the bay, since it has led to this interview."

"Ominous prognostic," is good. We should translate this passage as follows:

"Come along, Katherine," he said. "We haven't a minute to lose."

"Why are you in such a hurry?" she asked, checking his advance by turning from him.

"You heard what my cockswain said about the storm, and I believe he's right.

We're going to have an awful night. All the same, I'm not sorry I came up the bay, for otherwise I shouldn't have met you."

Now that the time has come again to turn over the numbers of the magazine during the past twelve months for the purpose of reading the story of a year's successful books, we are obliged to preface our paragraphs with the customary observation that the subject has very little to do with permanent literature, but is of importance primarily because it furnishes so many curious contrasts and comparisons, and because it is a record of undoubted value to those who have an interest in what the "great selling" novel is, and what makes it a "great selling" novel. Taken as a whole, 1903 has differed very little from the four or five years preceding, except that the record of sales shows that it is no longer easy to take a mediocre novel and by the mere force of lavish exploitation and ingenuity of advertising methods induce the reading public to accept and buy it as an exceptional work of fiction. People are beginning to demand something more than gaudy wrappers, posters by the "best illustrators," and reading notices studded with superlatives. Which is a little something over which we may feel pleased. Then another feature of much more importance is the consistent good work that is being done by the men who go out of the beaten and conventional path to find their material—the men who write of trails, and of the Northland, and of remote seas—the men whose industry and energy have made the quest of new local colour so baffling, as Mr. Wallace Irwin complained in his poem in our December issue. The work of such writers as Richard Harding Davis, Stewart Edward White, Jack London, John Fox, Jr., Joseph Conrad, Owen Wister, A. J. Dawson, Lloyd Osbourne, and Bruno Lessing is of undoubted importance. They are succeeding admirably in bringing the strange and the far-off corners of the earth very close to us. It is the writer who is trying to paint the life we all of us know at first hand, the tragedy that is going on in the house at the corner, or in the flat overhead, who is failing to "make good."

Those writers from whom we have come to expect a book or two every year have, in the main, not disappointed us. Mr. Kipling published nothing of any length during 1903, which may mean that we are to have something to look forward to in 1904. From Mr. George Meredith and Mr. Thomas Hardy, nothing; but this was not in the nature of a surprise. Mr. Henry James was as usual industrious, and Mrs. Humphry Ward had the success to which she has become accustomed with *Lady Rose's Daughter*. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle revived his Napoleonic hero, the *Brigadier Gerard*, and is now in the full swing of a new series of tales about Sherlock Holmes. As to American writers, Mr. F. Marion Crawford brought out his expected novel of Italian life, Mr. James Lane Allen broke the silence of three years with *The Mettle of the Pasture*, Mr. John Fox, Jr., produced in *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come*, a novel very much out of the ordinary, Mr. Howell's *Letters Home* elicited much high appreciation, and in *The Forest*, Mr. Stewart Edward White wrote a book which is far from being merely one of the books of a year. Mr. Davis's *The Bar Sinister* and Mr. Tarkington's *Cherry* we read and enjoyed long before they ever appeared in bindings of their own. We agreed with all of our readers that Jack London's *The Call of the Wild* was a rattling good dog story, and that it was a downright pleasure to be enabled to meet again Mr. F. Hopkinson Smith's Colonel Carter, and to share the hospitality which he extended to that reprobate Klutchen, even though *Colonel Carter's Christmas* seemed to lack something of the spontaneity and genuineness of *Colonel Carter of Cartersville*.

In the list of the best-selling books at the end of THE BOOKMAN for January of last year first place was held by *The Virginian*—a position which Mr. Wister's popular novel had occupied in every number since August. Mr. Tarkington's *The Two Vanrevells* was second, twenty-four points behind, and then followed Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch, *The Blue Flower*, *The Letters of a Self Made Merchant*, and *Cecilia* in the order named. In the February number *The Virginian* had dropped to third place,

although having twenty-six more points to its credit than the month before, with Mrs. Wiggs first and *The Blue Flower* second. In the months of March and April Mr. Frank Norris's *The Pit* held the lead, being closely followed by Mrs. Wiggs and *The Virginian* in the first month and by *The Virginian* and *The Letters of a Self Made Merchant* in the second. May showed a close competition between *Lovey Mary* and *Lady Rose's Daughter*, there being a difference of only seven points in favour of Miss Hegan's book. This order was reversed in both the June and July issues, when *Lady Rose's Daughter* had 244 and 193 points respectively, as against 215 and 125 points for *Lovey Mary*. In August Gordon Keith forged far to the front, *Lady Rose's Daughter* being a poor second, and *Lovey Mary* being forced down to sixth place. Gordon Keith remained in first place in the September issue, but in October was passed by Mr. Allen's *The Mettle of the Pasture* which was also the leading book in the November lists. The other best selling books were, in the order named, Gordon Keith, *The One Woman*, *The Call of the Wild*, *The Grey Cloak*, and *The Lightning Conductor*, for October; and *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come*, *The One Woman*, Gordon Keith, *The Call of the Wild*, and *The Main Chance*. The order for December was: 1. *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come*. 2. *The Call of the Wild*. 3. *Rebecca*. 4. *The One Woman*. 5. *The Adventures of Gerard*. 6. *The Sherrods*.

## JANUARY.

1. The Virginian.....	160
2. The Two Vanrevells.....	134
3. Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch...	106
4. The Blue Flower.....	98
5. The Letters of a Self Made Merchant	74
6. Cecilia .....	55

## FEBRUARY.

1. Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch...	210
2. The Blue Flower.....	192
3. The Virginian.....	186
4. Wanted: A Chaperon.....	87
5. An Old Sweetheart of Mine.....	65
6. Glengarry School Days.....	61

## MARCH.

1. The Pit.....	188
2. Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch...	168
3. The Virginian.....	135
4. The Letters of a Self Made Merchant	110

5. Glengarry School Days.....	56
6. The Blue Flower.....	50

APRIL.

1. The Pit.....	259
2. The Virginian.....	120
3. The Letters of a Self Made Merchant	115
4. Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch...	107
5. The Leopard's Spots.....	37
6. The Spenders.....	34

MAY.

1. Lovey Mary.....	272
2. Lady Rose's Daughter.....	265
3. The Pit.....	175
4. The Letters of a Self Made Merchant	90
5. Under the Rose.....	57
6. The Circle.....	54

JUNE.

1. Lady Rose's Daughter.....	244
2. Lovey Mary.....	215
3. Under the Rose.....	129
4. The Pit.....	104
5. Conjuror's House.....	58
6. The Filigree Ball.....	43

JULY.

1. Lady Rose's Daughter.....	195
2. Lovey Mary.....	123
3. Under the Rose.....	97
4. Darrel of the Blessed Isles.....	73
5. { The Filigree Ball... ..	56
6. { Wee Macgregor... ..	56

AUGUST.

1. Gordon Keith.....	229
2. Lady Rose's Daughter.....	117
3. The Grey Cloak.....	102
4. The Filigree Ball.....	64
5. The Under Dog.....	61
6. Lovey Mary.....	59

SEPTEMBER.

1. Gordon Keith.....	237
2. The Mettle of the Pasture.....	150
3. The Grey Cloak.....	88
4. The Filigree Ball.....	80
5. Lady Rose's Daughter.....	74
6. The Main Chance.....	50

OCTOBER.

1. The Mettle of the Pasture.....	221
2. Gordon Keith.....	207
3. The One Woman.....	164
4. The Call of the Wild.....	77
5. The Grey Cloak.....	69
6. The Lightning Conductor.....	66

NOVEMBER.

1. The Mettle of the Pasture.....	161
2. The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come .....	144
3. The One Woman.....	120
4. Gordon Keith.....	115
5. The Call of the Wild.....	104
6. The Main Chance.....	95

DECEMBER.

1. The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come .....	205
2. The Call of the Wild.....	91
3. Rebecca .....	69
4. The One Woman.....	65
5. The Adventures of Gerard.....	61
6. The Sherrods.....	60

A compilation from the above tables yields the following results:

*Five Times Mentioned.*

Lady Rose's Daughter.

*Four Times Mentioned.*

The Virginian, Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch, The Letters of a Self Made Merchant to His Son, The Pit, Lovey Mary, The Filigree Ball, Gordon Keith.

*Three Times Mentioned.*

The Blue Flower, Under the Rose, The Grey Cloak, The Mettle of the Pasture, The One Woman, The Call of the Wild.

*Twice Mentioned.*

Glengarry School Days, The Main Chance, The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come.

*Once Mentioned.*

The Two Vanrevels, Cecilia, Wanted: A Chaperon, An Old Sweetheart of Mine, The Leopard's Spots, The Spenders, The Circle, Conjuror's House, Darrel of the Blessed Isles, Wee Macgregor, The Under Dog, The Lightning Conductor, Rebecca, The Adventures of Gerard, The Sherrods.

During 1903 there was no single book which had the uninterrupted run month after month in the "six best-selling books" such as *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch* had in 1902, and *When Knighthood Was in Flower* had in 1899 and 1900. *Knighthood* appeared in fourteen consecutive lists and *Mrs. Wiggs* in twelve. *Lady Rose's Daughter* the most consistent book of 1903, appeared in but five. Thirty-two different books are to be found in the above tables, as against twenty-eight last year, and twenty-nine in 1901. Of these, twenty-seven were written by American authors, and if you will look back to the records of six or seven years ago, when the authors whose books our reading public was buying were

Sienkiewicz and Barrie and Ian Mac-laren and Marie Corelli and Hall Caine, and when the American tale spinner was very much in the background, you will realise that this statement has some significance. The only strikingly successful book by an English author was *Lady Rose's Daughter*, and of the other three writers in England, we can claim one, *The Lightning Conductor*, as half Ameri-

can in authorship. Last year twenty-three were by Americans and five by Europeans, and in 1901 the figures were nineteen to ten. When we come to the matter of sex we find that twenty-five were written by men and six by women, *The Lightning Conductor*, of course, being the joint effort of a husband and a wife. On this point, 1903 did not greatly differ from 1900 and 1901.



## A RECIPE FOR CERTAIN SOCIETY FICTION.

Take three parts so-called Society  
 (Choose it just a trifle shady)  
 Then a pinch of impropriety  
 (If in doubt, divorce the lady!)

Have a *roué*, who engages  
 To undo some maid's salvation:  
 (Make 'em wait for sixty pages  
 Larded well with French translation!)

Put her in a *devilish* pickle;  
 Carry on, say, like a Cenci;  
 (Epigram through this must trickle,  
 Pungent, and—er—rather Frenchy!)

Talk in millions, debonairly,  
 (Morgan?—pooh, a Lilliputian!)  
 Though your attic ink-pot barely  
 Turns the page without dilution!

Then a yacht—one scene aquatic—  
 Drag in Newport, Lenox, Aiken;  
 (If uncertain, turn erotic;  
 Love-scene *always* saves your bacon!)

Callow youths, and maids romantic,  
 Who know less of life than art yet,  
 One and all then will grow frantic  
 At "true scenes of Gotham's Smart  
 Set!"

Arthur Stringer.