

Sorrow we saw.
 It shall go pleading forever down the years,
 Telling the pitiless price of the frantic lesson.
 And still we saw
 The dream of a higher law for a higher people,
 The dream no charnel river shall wash away.

Down again, and down again,
 And up with a slimy truth again!
 For we are divers,
 The Eastland divers.

SOME NOVELS OF THE MONTH*

BY FREDERIC TABER COOPER

"THE RESEARCH MAGNIFICENT"

MR. H. G. WELLS is a writer of many manners and frequent surprises; yet there is no rashness in the statement that his latest volume, *The Research Magnificent*, is one of the most curious and thought-compelling of his works. He attempts in it, to say so many things and suggests so many more,—things dealing with the largest and most vital interests of life,—that one feels somewhat at a loss to know just how to sum the book up briefly and at the same time maintain a due sense of proportion regarding its salient points. In one sense, it is the life history of an exceptional man, a man who conceives of life as a boundless opportunity and believes that his first and greatest duty to himself is to surmount

or break down those hampering limitations through which all human beings are balked in their pursuit of their higher aims. His own briefest term for his ideal is the Aristocratic Life,—and "aristocratic" as he uses the word has nothing in common with rank and title, but means simply doing consistently and under all conditions what he regards as the noblest and finest thing to do, regardless of the difficulty or the danger. As a psychological study of an exceptional man, self-willed, erratic, even slightly unbalanced, this volume is admirable for its ruthless vivisection and penetrating insight. But, on the other hand, while studying the exceptional individual it is equally luminous in its implied criticism of humanity in general, and of the reasons for the great dead level of mediocre and uninspired lives. To be more specific, the story of William Porphyry Benham falls conveniently into three subdivisions, each of which deals in succession with one of the three great human limitations which he meets and overcomes. The first is the Limitation of Fear. Looking back at his childhood, Benham cannot remember a time when he was not terribly afraid, afraid of the dark, afraid of dogs, of cows, of a hundred and one dangers real or imaginary; and his first vague glimmer of the ideal of the Aristocratic Life is when he determines that he will not yield to fear, that the more afraid he is

**The Research Magnificent*. By H. G. Wells. New York: The Macmillan Company.

The Story behind the Verdict. By Frank Danby. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company.

Making Money. By Owen Johnson. New York: The Frederick A. Stokes Company.

The Story of Julia Page. By Kathleen Norris. Garden City and New York: Doubleday, Page and Company.

The "Genius". By Theodore Dreiser. New York: The John Lane Company.

The Song of the Lark. By Willa Sibert Cather. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Jerusalem. By Selma Lagerlöf. Garden City and New York: Doubleday, Page and Company.

the more determinedly will he force himself to walk into the jaws of danger. To his great joy he makes the discovery that fear precedes the dangerous act, that during the actual crisis the horrible agony of suspense gives way to a strange exaltation, a sense of infinite triumph. Yet all his life fear remains, and the battle has to be fought over again hourly. The second great limitation is the Limitation of Sex, which he discovers in early adolescence. To attain the Aristocratic Life, a man must be free; and Benham discovers that the love of women is a bondage, something that hampers him and disturbs his ideals. Fleeting attachments, loves of a day or an hour, he easily puts behind him; but just as he thinks that he has escaped from the snare of sex, he meets Amanda, a girl "as clean as the wind," who made him feel at first sight as though "there was a sword in her spirit." He had meant to spend years roaming the world; and the sudden thought comes, why should they not marry and roam together? There is a memorable three weeks' honeymoon and then, suddenly, Benham discovers that his glorious Amanda is sadly conventional after all, that her idea of married life is not roaming the world untrammelled, but settling down in London, knowing just the right people and going to endless teas and receptions. And because, in his eyes, she is still desirable, she bends him for a while to her will. But the day comes when he rises triumphantly above this new and strongest bondage, is deaf to her entreaties, and leaves her, lonely and unprotected, while he seeks wonderful and perilous adventures in distant lands. Then, one day, letters reach him which bring him face to face with the third limitation, the Limitation of Jealousy. This, also, he sets himself to conquer, and he knows he can do it in but one way. Jealousy is a suspicion: knowledge will be the cure. He speeds back to England with his mind in a chaos. He finds his wife in another man's arms, and straightway he knows that he has ceased to love her and that jealousy is

dead. This brief epitome does not begin to convey an adequate impression of what the book really means. At best, it can serve only to stimulate curiosity. And that is precisely what the reviewer's first duty should be, in the case of a book so unusual, so stimulating and so deeply in earnest.

"THE STORY BEHIND THE VERDICT"

The series of mysterious crimes hidden behind bungling verdicts by coroner's juries makes up the contents of Frank Danby's new volume which, while interesting as a clever example of the Sherlock Holmes type of story, is a curious and radical departure from the customary methods of the author of *Pigs in Clover*. The character which gives the volume its chief interest is Keightley Wilbur, a young novelist and playwright, master of the epigram and paradox and possessed of an unwholesome love for ferreting out ugly deeds. Keightley Wilbur is first brought to our notice as star witness in the case of Pierre Lamotte, a distinguished writer, who met his death by drowning while a guest on board Mr. Wilbur's houseboat. The two men, together with two ladies, also guests, had, according to the evidence given at the inquest, spent a very pleasant and quiet evening; the Japanese butler had withdrawn after serving dinner. The other witnesses denied any altercation during the evening or any suspicious noise after they had retired. Yet the Frenchman's body was found the next day floating in the river. The coroner's blunder lay in neglecting to call one other witness, a physician who visited the houseboat for a brief half-hour on the evening in question and who could have testified to the fact that he had gone there for the purpose of showing his four friends how to smoke opium. Cross examination might then have led the way to the real story: how the Frenchman, under the influence of the unaccustomed drug, suddenly developed a violent attachment for the younger woman and how Keightley, under the same influence, avenged the insult by

pushing his friend into the water, never thinking, in his dazed condition, that the other perhaps did not know how to swim. The circumstances under which Keightley subsequently tells real facts to a friend, forms another sub-current of narrative which recurs intermittently through the succeeding stories and is quite outside of the stories themselves. Of course Keightley's morbid interest in coroner's inquests springs from the burden of his own secret crime and from a haunting belief that it will sooner or later be expiated. And, in point of fact, fate does finally exact a heavy toll, although in a somewhat different way from that which Keightley had expected.

"THE STORY OF JULIA PAGE"

The Story of Julia Page, by Kathleen Norris, seems naturally to call for mention while Frank Danby is still in mind, because it succeeds in doing convincingly and with clear-cut, unwavering artistry what the English writer almost achieved in *The Heart of a Child*,—namely, to answer the question whether a female child born in the slums and bred in the gutter, growing up in ignorance and left to shift for herself, can through her own unaided efforts guard herself from temptation and danger and eventually achieve culture and refinement and an enviable social position. Sally Snape, Frank Danby's quite incredible heroine, managed to keep herself technically unspotted through the miraculous intervention of fate, just in the nick of time whenever designing profligates threatened her virtue; and eventually she won her reward by marrying a fortune and a title while the dialect of the street and the music hall were still upon her lips. All of which savoured of a Grimm's fairy tale translated into twentieth century terms. Julia Page, on the contrary, rings true as steel from start to finish. She is a real personality and one that refuses to be forgotten. Like her mother before her she is the child of the working class, fairly successful wage-earners, but shiftless, improvident, hopelessly slovenly. The condition of the home of her child-

hood, with its grimy floors and walls, its tattered Nottingham lace curtains that fail to hide the fly-specked windows, its litter of soiled and ragged garments, its haunting odour of stale food, leaves upon the reader's mind an insistent nightmare impression of human sordidness. Just how Julia Page received her first incentive to try to raise herself; how the sting of some scornful comment overheard by chance made her realise her own crass ignorance and bad manners; how, in her slow, upward climb, fate just once failed to intervene in an hour of danger; and how, in spite of the fact that she was not technically unsullied, she nevertheless, thanks to her clean soul and brave honesty, won the love and respect of a sterling man,—all this is told infinitely better by the author herself. But what the reviewer wishes to emphasise is the fine artistic balance, the unobtrusive and yet pervading contrast between the beginning and the end; the merciless insistence upon the disorder, the uncleanness, the lack of thrift in the opening scenes and the exquisite harmony and refinement and perfect order of the English home in which we leave the heroine. Kathleen Norris is to be congratulated upon an achievement of considerable magnitude.

"MAKING MONEY"

In his latest volume, *Making Money*, Mr. Owen Johnson does not seem to have felt the necessity of troubling himself overmuch to achieve a remarkably new and strong and original plot. A reviewer, overlooking the real intentions of the book, and looking only for a sheer thread of narrative, would probably epitomise it somewhat as follows: a young man, full of ambition and the joy of living, is lucky enough to fall in love with one of the daughters of a Wall Street magnate who, approving the girl's choice, determines to give the young fellow his chance to make his fortune. Unfortunately, a sensitive conscience is a bad handicap in Wall Street. The young man develops a precocious genius for the big game, but on one or two vital oc-

casions he guesses wrong; and while his future father-in-law so manipulates things that the youth himself wins instead of losing, his mistaken advice to his friends has left a sad trail of ruin, disgrace and suicide. Consequently, he refuses to accept the profits of dishonest transaction, leaves Wall Street and starts in at the bottom to learn mechanical engineering, which, if physically dirty, is morally clean. Incidentally, his betrothed, who loves wealth and glitter and adulation, breaks her engagement. But since she happens to have a younger sister who is sane and sensible and not afraid of poverty with the man she loves, everything works out quite as it should. Told in this strain, the story sounds, it must be confessed, rather uninspired. But what Mr. Johnson seems to have wanted to do is not so much to tell a story as to portray a certain mood of youth, a certain phase of human development. He shows us, first, the wonderful pageant of New York, the ceaseless flow down Fifth Avenue of beauty and wealth and ambition,—and all this is seen and magnified through the eyes of a young man, a recent graduate from college, who has returned after a long absence, fired with the golden hopes of youth, ready to take the world by storm and looking upon New York as a great and glorious opportunity. He is rather pathetic, he is so brave, so sanguine, so extremely young; he has such an infinite number of things to learn, such an endless amount of mental and moral readjusting to undergo. Seen from this point of view, the volume is really a history of that readjusting, the story of how a boy grows up into a man. The book does not have the evenness that we expect from Mr. Johnson, and there is a falling off in the sheer writing of it, toward the end, that makes one wonder whether the keen enthusiasm with which he started had not begun to wane. Yet the fact remains that he has handled certain vital issues of life with firm purpose. And one must be a rather hard-hearted and cynical critic not to find a soft place in one's heart for his uncon-

ventional and altogether refreshing little heroine, Patsie.

"THE 'GENIUS'"

Mr. Theodore Dreiser is a figure which refuses to be ignored in contemporary fiction. He has an undeniable strength of a certain sort, and he carries on some of the distinctive features of the French naturalistic school in a decade when they are in danger of becoming a lost art. And yet his volumes, especially the later ones, leave behind them a sense of disappointment, a feeling that somehow or other they have just fallen short of being really big. There are, to be sure, big pages, even big chapters here and there. He has the gift of taking the human animal and turning him inside out pitilessly, and then seeming to say sardonically, "There, whether you like it or not, that is what men and women are really like!" He can do this sort of thing with such unblushing thoroughness that there are times when the reader has a sense of physical discomfort in the presence of humanity stripped so bare. The tendency to depict this side of life seems to have grown upon him, reaching, let us hope, its culmination in *The "Genius."* The central character, Eugene Witla, is defined by the author as "an artist who, pagan to the core, enjoyed reading the Bible for its artistry of expression, and Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Spinoza and James for the mystery of things which they suggested." But a pagan may still sense the joys of living; he may have deep-rooted passions for the beautiful and the true; he may worship faithfully at some single shrine,—but not so Eugene Witla. He thinks that he loves, not one but many women, successively, simultaneously, as it may happen: but of fidelity he does not know even the definition. He has the promiscuity of a Turk, and the callousness of a slave-driver. Women are pretty toys, to be taken up, played with and tossed aside, when his mood has cooled. To one girl only, Angela Blue, he gives the semblance of loyalty; yet after keeping her waiting year after year for him to fulfil

his promise of marriage, he does not scruple to seduce her under her own father's roof. And the only reason why he later redeems his promise and makes her his wife is not from any sense of pity or remorse, but from cowardice,—she has threatened to drown herself, and his artistic soul shrinks from the thought of how her dead body would look in the water. It is quite possible that Mr. Dreiser meant to depict a somewhat different character from what he has actually done. It is equally possible that the reviewer has failed to interpret him correctly. The trouble may be partly that he has shown us his hero a little too intimately, and thus has bred the proverbial contempt. It is not unlikely that he has meant him for a sort of American substitute for Maupassant's *Bel-Ami*,—but there is a gulf between them. The Frenchman understood the great value of reticence and implication. We do not know how many other women than those mentioned in his pages figured in the butterfly life of his amorous hero; but we sense the abiding memory of their vanished faces, the echo of their bygone tears and laughter. Mr. Dreiser gives us no chance for flights of fancy. All the women, and there are throngs of them, who figured in Eugene Witla's life are recorded with the fidelity of a dictograph; one affair endures for seventeen days, another for a specified number of weeks,—passion reduced to the prose of daily entry bookkeeping. As has already been admitted, there are some quite wonderful pages on certain subjects, as for instance the mixed emotions of a young art student the first time that he draws from a female model in the life class, and again, later in the volume, a child-birth scene unequalled in frankness since Zola wrote *La Joie de Vivre*. But episodes of this sort do not in themselves constitute great fiction; they are merely pardonable if the fiction is of big enough magnitude to be its own justification.

"THE SONG OF THE LARK"

The Song of the Lark, by Willa Sibert Cather, is one of those volumes

about which opinions may quite honestly differ. To the reader who appreciates a pleasant style, a keen observance of the little things of life, and an indulgent understanding of plain, simple souls, her portraiture of the daily, plodding routine of a Methodist minister's family in a remote Colorado town will bring a few hours of quiet but very genuine enjoyment. On the other hand, any one who demands action, a strong, well-knit plot carefully worked out with an ever-watchful eye for the greatest economy of means, will feel a growing irritation at the placid, casual manner in which things happen, the patient acceptance of life that characterises her people, the phlegmatic temperament of the Swedes, who play a dominant part in the story. Reduced to its simplest elements, this is the history of Thea Kronborg, from her early childhood in the town of Moonstone, until in ripe young womanhood she returns from her musical studies abroad, achieves fame in Wagnerian rôles, and marries a Chicago millionaire, who has the wisdom not to interfere with her professional career. Stated in this form, this story has a rather familiar ring: the poor but worthy young woman with a latent artistic talent, which some man, more or less disinterested, helps to develop, recurs at fairly regular intervals. In the present case a slight novelty is introduced by making the benefactor a wealthy benefactor, a wealthy engineer, who secretly loved her, abiding his time until she should be old enough for marriage, and died leaving a life insurance policy in her name. But, as already intimated, the interest of Miss Cather's story is only secondarily in the plot. She has created a group of real persons; she takes us into their home and makes us share in their joys and sorrows, with a quickening sympathy such as we give to our friends in the real world. And that is a gift that is perhaps quite as rare as a genius for plot-building.

"JERUSALEM"

The central episode which gives the title to Selma Lagerlöf's *Jerusalem*, just

issued in the English version by Velma Swanston Howard, is based upon the historic event of a religious pilgrimage which set forth in the last century from the author's own district, Dalecarlia. As is pointed out by Henry Goddard Leach, who provides an appreciative and discriminating introduction, the volume is not merely an exposition of the effect upon a prosaic community of a religious revival sweeping them out of their routine, arousing them to forsake home, and land and country, and fare forth into unguessed privations and dangers. It is more than that; it is the tragedy, the futility that the author has suggested between the lines,—the heart-ache of those who went and of those who were left behind. The full intensity of the drama which forms the central thread of the personal narrative is perhaps apt to be missed by American readers, to whom the old homestead is far from being the

sacred possession that it is to the peasantry of Selma Lagerlöf's land. Among them "attachment to the land is life itself. Hearts are broken in the struggle which permits Karen to sacrifice the Ingmar Farm to obey the inward voice that summons her on her religious pilgrimage, and which leads her brother, on the other hand, to abandon the girl of his heart and his life's personal happiness in order to win back the farm." To those readers who appreciate the rare blending of qualities that make Selma Lagerlöf the true artist that she is, the concluding chapter is to be especially commended. It is seldom that such pathos, such tragedy, such exaltation has been achieved with such simplicity of diction, such almost stoic self-restraint. It sets the nerves to tingling and wrings the heart, after the fashion of just a few of the world's great funeral marches.

LIGHT-HEARTED NOVELS*

BY FLORENCE FINCH KELLY

THE most outstanding quality of this fall's fiction, take it by and large, is its light-heartedness. There are, of course,

*The Old Order Changeth. By Archibald Marshall. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company.

The Co-Citizens. By Corra Harris. Illustrated by Hanson Booth. New York: Doubleday, Page and Company.

Peter Paragon: A Tale of Youth. By John Palmer. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company.

Mr. Bingle. By George Barr McCutcheon. Illustrated by James Montgomery Flagg. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company.

The Prairie Wife. By Arthur Stringer. Illustrated in colour by H. T. Dunn. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company.

Shadows of Flames. By Amélie Rives (Princess Troubetzkoy). Frontispiece in colour by Alfred James Dewey. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company.

The Wooing of Rosamond Fayre. By Berta Ruck (Mrs. Oliver Onions). New York: Dodd, Mead and Company.

The Inner Law. By Will N. Harben. New York: Harper and Brothers.

many serious novels among its hundreds of books. But they serve only, like an occasional clump of evergreen shrubs in a field of flowers, to make more marked by contrast the general brightness and gayety. I do not remember a publishing season, not even a spring season, in which the purpose of fiction to entertain rather than to stir thought or feeling is always more marked than it is in the autumn, when so large a proportion of the novels looked out upon life with a smiling face. Even from England, England with her decimated homes, her training camps, her millions waiting tensely for the dread casualty lists, comes a goodly number of these gay and laughing stories. With the whole world filled as never before with horror and heartache and its attention absorbed by appalling things, the novelists, like birds breaking into song in the shattered tree-tops of a battlefield, are telling us blithely of love and