

THE BOOKMAN

A MAGAZINE OF LITERATURE AND LIFE

JANUARY, 1916

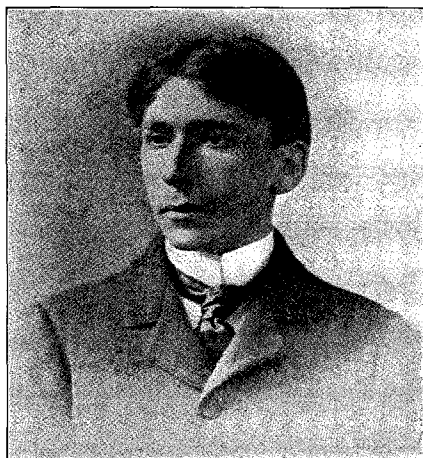
CHRONICLE AND COMMENT

THE following is the postscript of a letter from the author of *Ruggles of Red Gap* and *Bunker The Yellow Bean*: "The Chinese Peril cook of a friend in the near-by literary colony of Carmel has taken up the local indoor sport and written a poetic drama. It's full of fractricide, bridges, ghosts and a very naughty lady-moon. I can't read it, but I have read the title, which is—*Loveless Must Crime*. Is not that all strength and wouldn't you buy on the title alone if you were editing the — Magazine?"

...

Almost a quarter of a century ago there went to Princeton College—it was Princeton College then —a young man who was slightly older than most of his class mates, who was something of a Man of the World, who had seen Life, and whose dash manifested itself in his feet, on which he wore shoes with fancy cloth uppers. Of the Booth Tarkington of those days, and incidentally of the Tarkington of subsequent years, Mr. Jesse Lynch Williams has told in a "Personal Impression" which appears in the *Princeton Alumni Weekly* for December 8, 1915. The sketch was designed for what may be called family reading, and is the more delightful by reason of its very informality. It is not Newton

Booth Tarkington, the novelist, whom Mr. Williams presents, but "Tark" the Fresh—Junior of 1891-92, "Tark" the genial, kindly, human, sometimes irresponsible friend of subsequent years. In the days of long ago the writer of this "Impression" was something of a personage in that little world. There were grave responsibilities upon his shoulders and manifold calls upon his valuable time. So it was with just a little sense of weariness that he regarded his brother's letter asking him to look out for the young man who was coming out of the West. Like most of the fellows one was enjoined to "look up," this one was



BOOTH TARKINGTON AS AN UNDERGRADUATE
AT PRINCETON

likely to prove a bore. So his reply, though dutiful, was without enthusiasm. It elicited the telegram: "Not Parking-ton, but Tarkington."

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The first time that the grave, young, important Senior saw the Responsibility that was thrust upon him, the Responsi-



Courtesy of the Princeton Alumni Weekly
BOOTH TARKINGTON, '93, AS CASSIUS AND SHIRRELL NORTON MCWILLIAMS, '94, AS CAESAR IN "THE HONOURABLE JULIUS CAESAR," WRITTEN BY MR. TARKINGTON AND POST WHEELER, '91, AND PRESENTED BY THE PRINCETON DRAMATIC ASSOCIATION IN THE "GOLDEN NINETIES." MR. MCWILLIAMS IS NOW A SOMEWHAT AUSTERE GENTLEMAN RESIDING IN BUFFALO, NEW YORK, WHO WILL PROBABLY ANSWER AMIABLY IF ADDRESSED AS "SKINNY"

bility was smoking cigarettes. To-day the memory suggests to Mr. Williams the figure of the pathetic and sickly looking "Bibbs" of the early chapters of *The Turmoil*. "I gave him six months to live."

He was woefully gaunt, almost cadaverous, and had a concave chest. It always made me feel as if it had been sprung by one of his spasmodic exhalations of cigarette smoke so that the breastbone hit the

backbone and stuck there, like a pair of collapsed bellows. That was over a quarter of a century ago, but I may add that until comparatively modern times, six months has been the usual limit allowed him, not only by *anxious friends*, who of course don't understand such things, but by famous physicians in Paris, Rome and New York, who, of course, have scientific knowledge. And Tarkington, being the kindest, most imaginatively considerate person in the world, feels a real sense of shame and sorrow whenever he meets any of these famous scientists face to face. For he has a convex figure now, and can stand longer hours of work than any member of the author's trade union.

...

A year or so ago Mr. S. S. McClure, in his *Autobiography*, pointed to himself as the discoverer of Booth Tarkington because he had brought out *The Gentleman from Indiana*. That is a claim that Mr. Williams feels inclined to dispute. He is the original claimant and he can offer documentary evidence. "It was I," he says, "who made him write his first short story. If he had not written his first short story, how could he have written his first novel? Indeed, in *The Gentleman from Indiana* one of the scenes and some of the minor characters, if I am not mistaken, were spun from that yarn. It was called 'The Better Man' or something of that sort, and it was written in the top floor of the south wing of University Hall in competition for a prize offered by the editors of the *Nassau Literary Magazine*.

I had told Tarkington that I thought maybe he could write, and that, yes, I really meant it. He did not seem to think so, but I told him, most kindly, that you never can tell till you try. In short, I was probably as patronising as became my superior rank as a Senior and an editor. He was a Fresh-Junior and nobody in particular—as yet. But that doesn't matter. He wrote a story, and it was a good one. It won the competition and the prize was fifteen dollars. Thus encouraged, he has been writing ever since. In short, I began his career for him.