



THE DOBBS FERRY HOME OF CHARLES L. BRACE, WHICH WAS DESCRIBED AS THE HOME OF ROYAL MACKLIN IN RICHARD HARDING DAVIS'S "CAPTAIN MACKLIN"

American National Army and that he was simply writing a popular history of an existing institution. He described his conception of the American National Army of the future as he might have described the army of Switzerland or any other actual existing force.

"On no other book have I ever worked so hard," Richard Harding

The Home of Macklin

Davis once said of *Captain Macklin*. The fact that only a few of the readers of the story seemed to understand what he was trying to do was a bitter disappointment. For two or three years after *Captain Macklin* Mr. Davis abstained from writing fiction, turning most of his attention to the construction of farces. For *Captain Macklin* was not merely a tale of swashbuckling adventure, but a very subtle and well wrought character study. A romance of revolution in Honduras, the discriminating reader took away with him the vivid memory of a house in Dobbs Ferry, overlooking the Hudson. It was there that most of Royal Macklin's boyhood was passed; it was there that he came to know his cousin, Beatrice; and it was there that he received the message from General Laguerre calling him to new military ser-

vice under the Tricolour in the Far East. The house had a definite original in Dobbs Ferry. It was the home of Mr. Charles L. Brace, of New York, the founder of the Children's Aid Society. Mr. Davis visited there in his boyhood.

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Two or three months ago we commented on Mr. Edward J. O'Brien's summing up in the *Boston Transcript* of the Short Stories of 1915. In the course of the year Mr. O'Brien read approximately twenty-two hundred short stories appearing in forty-six periodicals. From the twenty-two hundred he picked an honour list of ninety-one stories. To this list Katherine Fullerton Gerould contributed six stories, Wilbur Daniel Steele four stories, Lord Dunsany, Ben Hecht, and Fannie Hurst three stories each, and Lincoln Colcord, Rupert Hughes, Walter J. Mullenberg, Shumas O'Brien, and Robert W. Snedden two each. But the very best short story of 1915, according to Mr. O'Brien, was "Zelig" by Benjamin Rosenblatt, which appeared, after many rejections, in the *Bellman* of Minneapolis. Straightway a number of enterprising publishers and publishers representatives had visions of



EMMA WOLF, AUTHOR OF "FULFILLMENT"

future masterpieces, that, incidentally, would be "best sellers," and wrote suave letters to Mr. Rosenblatt expressing their interest in his present work and in his literary plans for the future. We wonder how many of them thought it worth while to sit down and read "Zelig" for themselves.

Now for Mr. O'Brien's patience and industry we have a profound admiration. For his judgment we cannot muster up honestly even a half-hearted respect. "Zelig" is not the best short story of 1915, nor the second best, nor the twentieth best. A good story, yes, but a tale remote, depending psychologically on the understanding of an utterly alien mind. It was, we think, because Mr. O'Brien did not understand that psychology, had no means of judging it false or true, that he was so impressed. Psychology, what humbugs are practised in thy name! You are a novelist. The heroine of your story is a young woman subjected to the shock of a sudden grief. What follows? The daze of a moment, and

then an outburst of passionate grief. That is logical, that is normal, but it is not an effect. But suppose, with your tongue in your cheek, you describe her in the stress of emotion, and substitute for the natural outlet some perfectly preposterous obsession. "A very curious thing happened. Belinda received the blow blindly. About her lips was a quiver of half laughter. Strangely automatic are the workings of the human mind. That day at Bar Harbour. It all came back so vividly. She was conscious of nothing but a ravenous appetite for gooseberry tarts. The treachery of Sheldon's desertion, the terrible consequences it threatened, for the moment meant nothing. She thought only of gooseberry tarts." The obsession may be Catherine wheels, or a colour, or the sound of church bells, or the echo of some long forgotten song. Just the substitution of something unexpected and *outré*. In the minds of a great many readers the "gooseberry tart" will stamp you as a master psychologist.



J. HARTLEY MANNERS, AUTHOR OF "WRECKAGE"