

# Fiction From America's Plains and London's Drawing Rooms

## The Latest From Zane Grey's Pen

THE MYSTERIOUS RIDER. By Zane Grey. Harper & Brothers.

"Is there any sense in the talk that wherever you land there's hell to pay?" "Bellounds, there's no sense in it but a lot of truth," confessed Wade gloomily.

This question was a natural one for old Bill Bellounds to ask before he hired Hell-Bent Wade, as the latter had a reputation all through Colorado for bringing bad luck with him. However, old Bill hired Wade to hunt for him and rid the range of wolves and bears, for he was short of hands, because although he was regarded as the whitest man in the district his oldest and best help had resigned rather than work for Buster Jack, the cowardly and brutal but idolized son of old Bill.

Wade had a presentiment that this experience would be the climax of his stormy career since the days when he first began seeking his daughter whose tracks he had lost when he drove his wife away from him in a fit of unjust suspicion. He discovered that Bellounds's adopted daughter Columbine was his own child, but he did not dare tell her lest he lose her affection by confessing his treatment of her mother. Old Bill was sure that his son's marriage to Columbine would straighten Jack out and make a man of him. Columbine consented out of gratitude, but realized that she was in love with Wilson Moore, a cowboy who had protected her in childhood.

Buster Jack made a cowardly attack on Moore when he was crippled. In spite of this Columbine held to her word. Jack displeased his father by getting drunk on the first day set for the wedding. Hell-Bent Wade watched over her carefully and kept her in touch with Moore. Jack had apparently reformed and Bellounds again demanded their marriage.

Meanwhile old Wade had kept his eyes open. He discovered that Buster



Zane Grey.

Jack was selling his father's stock to rustlers and planning with diabolic cunning to fix the blame on Wilson Moore. Wade broke in upon a meeting of Buster Jack with the rustlers and after killing three men in a terrific gun fight he made Jack promise to give up all plans for marrying Columbine. It would be unfair to the reader to tell what happened when Jack did not keep his promise, for Zane Grey has constructed a story which holds the interest from the first page to the last.

It is a Wild West romance with enough gun play in it to furnish many thrills, but it is much more, and this explains why Zane Grey has and deserves such a large following. He knows the West, and both his pictures of ranch life and of herds of elk browsing in the forest have the stamp of the authentic upon them. As a character Hell-Bent Wade ranks but little below Cooper's Leather Stocking.

## Story Out of the Northland

THE VALLEY OF SILENT MEN. By James Oliver Curwood. Cosmopolitan Book Corporation.

Sergeant Jim Kent of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police was about to die! That was the diagnosis of Dr. Cardigan, who found that the aorta was so weakened from the bullet that it pierced the chest of Kent, that its outer wall bulged out in the form of a sack, just as the inner tube of an automobile tire bulges through the outer casing when there is a blow-out.

"And when that sack gives way in-

side you," Cardigan had explained, "you'll go like that!" He snapped a forefinger and thumb to drive the fact home.

Knowing exactly his condition, Kent gives the reader another thrill by confessing that he, and not the man he has taken in as prisoner, who was confined in the strong cells that Kent himself had carefully planned, was the murderer of one John Barkley. The reader learns that Kent's "confession" is nothing but a lie—a lie to set free McTrigger, whom Kent thought guilty, but who had, at one time, saved his life. Now that he was to die he felt that he could, through his lie, repay a debt. But the doctor's diagnosis proved to be wrong. Kent will recover, only to find himself between the devil and the deep sea. If he can prove his innocence it means imprisonment for perjury; if not, he must hang.

And then Marette comes into the story. She visits Kent while the doctor's sentence of death still affects his mind. She laughs at him. She calls him a splendid liar and then tells him that she knows that neither he nor McTrigger killed John Barkley. Then: "I think if you lived very long I should love you."

This beats the doctor. Kent decides not to die but to live to be loved by the beautiful, fiery Marette, which he does. But not for several pages! For she came from the valley of silent men and he had to evade the law and travel to the northland, through the living hell of the sulphur country right into Marette's own land and to her people.

In "The Valley of Silent Men" James Oliver Curwood holds the helpless reader suspended in midair and then suddenly drops him, only to yank him up again. You will find that you can fall in love much quicker with a girl of the north but that it takes more time to make her fall in love with you. You've got to fight for her, protect her, share her every hatred and be her ideal cave man from the start.

That's enough of the story. If Curwood doesn't look out he will be responsible for as many million cases of palpitation of the heart as Harold Bell Wright.

### On the County Fair.

September 24, 188—brite and fair and country fair too, that is a goke and a good one too but nobuddy will ever see it but me. gosh I am tired tonite I never had so much fun in my life. we had the best percession I ever see. first come the marchals George Perkins and John Gardner and Bonny father and old Francis and John Gibson all on white horses except George Perkins and John Gardner and old Francis whitch was on red horses and John Gibson whitch was on a spotted horse and they all looked fine, then come the Ezeter band and then a lot of oz teams full of women in white with their rides all brushed up with curvy combs and their horns all covered with ribbons and evergreens in their slats. I tell you when old Giddings and old Wilam Conner and old Nat Guman jabbed them with the oz godes they walked along pretty lively. then come the Newmarket band and then the fire engine and a lot of men with cans and stove pipe hats and then a steam wagon and then a steam wagon and then Charles Tredwell driving his bull and old waakep Robinson with his troter and a rope pedler with a humpback horse. It was the best percession I ever see. the Ezeter band played 4 times as loud as the Newmarket band. I wish you could have heard Peelliky Tiltons uncles play you wood have thought they wood bust their cheeks but they didnt. Fatty Walker brook 2 heads on his base drum the first day and Len Heirvey broke one in the axie drum.—From Henry A. Shute's "Brite and Fair." (Cosmopolitan Book Corp.)

## It's Fun to Write About Children

By E. A.

After I had finished "Laughing House" (Putnam) I fancied the author, Meade Minnergerode, a man who accepts the antics of boys and girls like a mellow old sage, to be an elderly gentleman whose frolicsome grandchildren had inspired the merry child episodes that one finds in his novel. "Mary Elizabeth of the heavenly lisp; Newell, the nine-year-old lion tamer; Billy the effervescent and the other youngsters he writes about are the children of his children," I thought, "and nightly they sit on his knee fondling his whiskers as he tells them jolly bedtime stories." Imagine my surprise, then, to find Minnergerode a young man who only a few years back was a student at Yale cheering his head off for the football team—I'm sure he cheered at the games, for he talked affectionately of the Bowl—and passing or flunking examinations, whichever it happened to be. (An aside, in the manner of the old fashioned drama, I'm sure he passed.)

"It's more fun than a circus to write about kids," said Minnergerode. "That is why I presented my characters at the beginning of the story as children and let them grow up before my readers' eyes. Wherever it is feasible I believe in this method of telling a story, first (and this is a selfish reason), because the author, calling upon his childhood memories, has the time of his life making the tots of his yarn perform all sorts of

shenanigans, and secondly because when it is well done, as Ernest Poole did it in "The Harbor," real character work is the result. But the first reason is sufficient. We writers must have our fun!"

There has been much speculation on the part of reviewers as to the identity of Shirley House, Shirley, Conn., the "Laughing House" in which Minnergerode's story is laid. William Lyon Phelps, who, incidentally, called the book charming, said in his review: "The protagonist is a Connecticut family whose identity may be guessed." The writer, who has gone the length and breadth of Connecticut as a newspaper correspondent, hasn't any theories at all. Connecticut looks small on the map, but there are many "Laughing Houses" in it. Minnergerode gives one some clues, but only a good detective can do anything with them. Near Shirley House, says the author, is a little hotel, where holds forth a parrot which is in the habit of greeting visitors with a raucous "Get to h—out of here!" There is also, hard by, the statue of a Revolutionary soldier surrounded by ominous looking cannon balls. As for the house itself, for two hundred years it has been inhabited by the family that built it, and the door latches are fingered to-day by people bearing the same name as those who installed them. There is an enormous open fireplace; on the walls of the dining room there are pictures of the family ancestry, including a member who disgraced the house by siding with the King during the Revolution; there are old fashioned knockers on the doors, two peacocks strut about in the back yard, and there is a cat named Hecuba which is reputed to have had one hundred kittens. Now, you amateur detectives, tell us the name of the family that inhabits Minnergerode's "Laughing House!" You can't? For shame! All those detective stories you have read haven't done you a bit of good!

I asked Minnergerode, as an ex-

Connecticut newspaper man whom he had succeeded in puzzling, to tell me his secret and let me die happy. "There isn't any secret," he said with a laugh, "but whatever it is, Mr. Interviewer," he added in a way that left me more puzzled than ever, "you'll have to guess it. Won't you please tell me why so many people are curious about this phase of my book? New Englanders have asked me dozens of times to tell them the name of the family I had in mind. They seem to feel that 'Laughing House' has a peculiar New England significance. As a matter of fact, I might have chosen New York State as my locale without affecting my story one way or the other. I simply chose New England because I have lived there for many years and have an intimate knowledge of the people and the country."

"Nevertheless, any one reading your book," I said, "is at once aware that you are writing about an existing group of people—people who are evidently well known—and it is natural that your readers should be curious." Which Minnergerode answered by smiling.

"Speaking of New England," he resumed, "I received a letter the other day which represents either a very pathetic circumstance or the latest kind of con game, I'm not sure which. The letter came from Florida and the writer, who described himself as an elderly man who had lived in New England most of his life, said that he was incurably ill of diabetes, that his story, which he had recently read, had made him so homesick for his native Connecticut that he wanted to return at once, and wound up by asking me to furnish the cost of transportation!"

In dedicating his book to his heroine, "Isabelle," Minnergerode has done an unusual thing. I ask him about it. "Why shouldn't an author dedicate his book to his heroine? Nobody ever does it and yet it seems a natural thing to do. There have been dedications to

## The Passion Play Theme of a Drama

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. A Drama in Three Acts. By Guy Bolton and George Middleton. Henry Holt & Co.

Modern playwright falls into three classes—plays that may be successfully acted because of a moving plot but which could hardly be read without boredom, the merely closet drama which is impossible on the stage, and a small third class that meets the requirements both of the printed page and the footlights. "The Light of the World" belongs clearly in this third category. It has been tested successfully in its production at the Lyric and Manhattan theatres and outside of New York, holding its audiences and meeting the approval of distinguished dramatic critics. Perhaps the closest test is the more severe, especially for a play the aim of which is so high as this. One may say, unhesitatingly, that it holds the reader's attention, its dramatic crises are well built up, inherent in the theme and thus genuine. Its diction is natural, forceful, sufficiently restrained, and yet colorful.

Its theme is the application in actual, everyday life of the teachings of Christ, and if one must find fault it would be that the triumphant, "happy ending" of the experiment is perhaps a little forced, something of a concession, though it is pleasingly engineered. Still, it is something of a descent from the high level of the preceding tragedy.

The scene is laid in a small German town which is famous because of its Passion Play. The characters are all actors in that play, the hero, Anton, being cast for the part of Christ. He is imbued with the spirit of the part, and, moreover, the village expects him to live up to it. But the taint of scandal falls on him. He has given refuge to a village woman with a child, whose father is Anton's friend Simon. Simon marries another girl without confessing his



George Middleton.

part in the affair. The scandal results in depriving Anton of the sacred role, as he is believed to be the father of the child. The enmity of the village is aroused against him and martyrdom is threatened for him and the woman also. Anton maintains silence and cares for the woman, being willing to take the sins of others upon himself. But Simon's wife, Ruth, learns the truth and tells the story, and all ends happily. Anton is reinstated in his role and the village rejoices.

Robert Hillier, author of "The Five Books of Youth" and "Alchemy" (Brentano's), has temporarily abandoned his position as instructor at Harvard to study for two years in Denmark, as the result of receiving one of the first scholarships awarded an American by the Scandinavian Foundation.

## Book Exchange

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## The Chinaman in America

THE NIGHT TIDE: A STORY OF OLD CHINATOWN. By Grant Carpenter. New York: The H. K. Fly Company.

Reviewed by R. L. PANGBORN.

There has been no lack of lurid fiction dealing with the Chinese in America, ranging from mere melodrama, "movie" thrillers, to seriously intended psychological analyses, but one must go back some twenty years to Chester Bailey Fernald's "The Cat and the Cherub" to find anything comparable in intelligence, and skill in presentation to these episodic sketches by Mr. Carpenter. He is a lesser artist in subtlety than Mr. Fernald, but he cuts deeper and sees more broadly. We are told that Mr. Carpenter "has spent years among the Chinese (of California) as their solicitor, friend and agent of the Government." One feels that he knows his Chinaman, and that his portraits are authentic. Taken merely as a story it is excellently done; each episode is dramatic in itself, and integrally a part of the whole. It is hung upon a thread of adventures involving an elderly Chinese rascal, a scholar and all around fraud who preys upon his own people, a younger "highbinder" and a dozen or so of Chinese wives and slave women. In time it covers many years; from the earlier era of the formation of the tongs down to the present, the scene being San Francisco. The plots deal with tong wars, intrigues, the scheming of old Quan Quock Ming, murders, gambling, fortune telling and the slave trade—all of it very much alive, and most of it genuinely tragic. It is not at all a "nice" story. It reaches back to China for its sources, opening with a scene on a ship bound for America. The future "highbinder" sees a slave girl beaten, and asks her whence she comes. She answers:

"From up the river."  
"Where every one hungers?"  
"Where people die for the want of a handful of rice, as my father did; where others die for stealing a handful of rice as my elder brother did, and where a family can live for a month on half a mat of rice, as my mother and younger brothers and sisters will."  
"But what will they do when the rice is gone?"  
"Sell another girl."  
"And when all the girls are gone?"  
"Sell a boy to one who has no son to preserve the family name."  
"And what will your mother do, hungry one, when there are no more children to sell?"  
"Die—and lie unburied until the flood comes to bear away the bodies."  
And that is the background which figures in the psychology of many of the Chinese after they have reached the Californian land of plenty. Mr. Carpenter shows them fundamentally unchanged, forever unassimilable, however much they may learn of the outer things of American life. All of

his characters but one remain wholly Chinese to the end—usually a violent end in the cases he selects, though of course the majority doubtless lead fairly humdrum lives. But the thing that sticks out is their unchanging differentness to all that is American.

The Chinaman is logical, entirely consistent according to his light, and naturally contemptuous of the foolish foreign devil. Thus the old philosopher Quan asks of his disciple:

"How is it possible for officials to live without squeeze?"  
"They are paid wages, sir scholar."  
"What a foolish way to govern! Paying wages to officials who could pay themselves out of the squeeze!"  
As a story this book will hold the reader's interest from start to finish, but there is a good deal more in it than mere entertainment.



Meade Minnergerode.

my pipe, the friend that has lit up many a dark hour, 'to my wife, without whose encouragement and support I should never have finished this book,' 'to my father, whose guidance has been responsible for whatever success I have achieved,' 'to my mother, whose understanding mind has helped me to triumph in many a bitter struggle,' 'to my dog, friend of friends, companion on many a joyous pilgrimage into the country, whose sympathy—a trait which he possesses in a greater degree than most human beings—means everything in the world to me,' &c.—all of them in good taste, perhaps, but, oh, so conventional. Books have been dedicated to every one except policemen, politicians, longshoremen and trained fleas. Why not a dedication to a heroine? If an author thinks enough to make her the leading lady of his cast, why not hand her still another bouquet?"

"Especially," I asked, "if she is drawn from the life and really exists?" "That may have something to do with it," said Minnergerode with a laugh.

"If it ever becomes popular to dedicate a book to one's heroine," he continued, "we may see some interesting variations. We may see a dedication 'To Luella, whom I created in a felicitous moment and whose prototype in real life (since I am a young man and unmarried) I am not averse to meeting; or a dedication 'To Genevieve, whose defiance of the villainous McGregor in Chapter 17 was as daring a deed as I have ever imagined.' But I'd better cut this out," Minnergerode added, "lest in your article you accuse the author of 'Laughing House' of an overfondness of the frivolous." Not an overfondness, just a fondness, we'd say. And what's the harm in that?

Another book by Meade Minnergerode, "The Big Year," is soon to be published.

## McKenna Heroine a Friend of Sonia

LADY LILITH. By Stephen McKenna. George H. Doran Company.

McKenna has created another fascinating young figure, who while resembling Sonia has an individuality of her own, and who enchains by her vagaries and whimsies, however we may disapprove. McKenna endows her with far too much cleverness and wit to make her convincing. Imagine, for instance, a girl of sixteen talking in this fashion:

"You talk just like Fatty Webster's imitations of you! That's so clever of you! But why do you do it? You've arrived. There's no need to be eccentric now. But perhaps you've grown into your own pose? In that case you're right to express yourself in your own medium. Life is simply self-expression, isn't it? The discovery of the Ego, the refinement of the Ego, the presentation of the Ego. It would never do to be submerged by that kind of thing. I'm always so sorry for royalty."

Lady Lilith is Lady Barbara Neave, daughter of a much tried and long suffering British Ambassador who can deal with affairs far easier than with his own wilful daughter. She gets into one scrape after another and finally gives a ball in her own name, receiving by herself, unchaperoned, a thing unheard of in London society, where a debutante is always spoken of as Mrs. So-and-So's "girl."

Lady Barbara is a contemporary of Sonia and O'Rane, who appear occasionally, and O'Rane makes a prediction to his group of friends when their university days close:

"Within ten years five of us will be married and five will be dead, one will have to cut the country, one will have lost his money, one will achieve fame, and one, and not more, will make great money." But it took the unexpected war to bring all these things true.

There exists no young lady in London society who could have done and said all the things Lady Barbara does in this narrative, but the story might be called a composite of the extravagant. McKenna sketches, but does not picture, present day English society. He is one of the social elite, but he uses too small a brush and fails to convey a picture of life and manners at all comparable with the novels of Bulwer Lytton or Disraeli.

Interest deepens when Lady Barbara develops a conscience, and there commences a contest of wills—her own to do justice to the man she has led on and flouted, and her lover's determination to have done with her forever. What she did a girl might do for love, but for conscience sake—we are not convinced. The book ends with nothing solved, and a new love dawning in Barbara, and it is plain that a new trilogy is impending in the Sonia manner. But for one thing we can rejoice to learn that Sonia and her blind hero-husband are very happy, so doubtless Lady Barbara will be brought safely into port some day.

## Leaves From a Workman's Journal



Margaret Sherwood.

A WORLD TO MEND: THE JOURNAL OF A WORKING MAN. By Margaret Sherwood. Little, Brown & Co.

In "A World to Mend: the Journal of a Workingman," by Margaret Sherwood, the great war serves as the motive force in the "adventure into democracy" of a middle aged, cultured gentleman turned cobble. The journal kept by him from day to day chronicles his own growth in character through the helpful interest that he takes in his neighbors in the New England seaport town to which he comes as a stranger.

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