

poor and corrupt of New York City during one of its most corrupt periods; the scene of Mr. Barr's novel is the middle West, and his political pictures are realistic and among the best things in the book. Here, too, is an endeavour to give us a fair idea of the politician as a man; to introduce the reader to the shrewd observer of men and conditions, and to other things than the mere trickery by which the politician is popularly known. Mr. Barr's intention was to show that political ambitions, even in the most successful leaders, do not always dominate to the exclusion of unselfish purposes.

Less satisfactory than *Shacklett* in some respects, yet showing careful study of certain phases of the subject, is *The Autocrats*, by Lusk. Here is municipal corruption and the power of money in politics at large, and an interesting story as well.

*J. Devlin, Boss*, the story of a city politician's rise, aims to show that his success is due to no occult power, but to personal truthfulness, staunch friendship and the exercise of a firm will.

Mr. Robert Barr in *The Victors* tells a story with his usual facility and appreciation of the picturesque. The politician is transplanted to New York City from the country, and there takes root and flourishes vigorously under influences unmistakably suggested by the phrase from which the book takes title, "To the victors belong the spoils." Mr. Barr's story is interesting, and some of the scenes revelatory of municipal political methods, are instructive; though not so much can be said for the character study.

The most recent addition to the ranks of political novels comes from a Western man, Mr. Brand Whitlock. It is entitled

*The 13th District*, and as a study of political methods in an Illinois congressional district and of certain local types it is a performance of merit. It evinces an intimacy with things political which gives it authoritative value. The author has concentrated attention upon two campaigns for congressional nomination and election. The course of these he follows with a care for detail that is impressive to the reader sufficiently interested in such things not to complain at a lack of sunshine and a paucity of humour. There is a grim earnestness about this story of the rise and fall of a man of ability, but of little moral stamina which commands respect. Garwood, from the moment we come upon him in the train returning in triumph to his home town, is a man of flesh and blood. If he seems to be posing, he never deceives the reader. To draw no invidious comparison, it may be added that Garwood in mental attitude, in professional equipment and in experiences appears to be typical of the politician of his class. And Mr. Whitlock has given us not only an exceedingly strong and well-written story, but also a study of temperaments which gains potency from its freedom from moralising. It is only a pity that he should not have been able to endow Garwood with some of that cheery, stalwart quality which makes sympathetic the figure of big Jim Rankin, Garwood's right-hand man and later his bitter enemy. As it is, his story causes us to wonder that one so piteously weak and in some respects shallow ever should have found a strong man to be his friend and sponsor, and so have reached an elevation on which he had no claim.

Francis Churchill Williams.

## AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING

I gave my lover tears and sacrifice,  
My soul's white prayer, my dreams of paradise,  
The vision of my guardian angel's face,—  
He laughed and turned away his weary eyes.

I gave my lover kisses bitter-sweet,  
Strange, deadly blossoms for his soul's defeat,  
The purple paths of Hell I lured him on,—  
His lips burn fiercely on my tear-stained feet.

Elsa Barker.

## BRET HARTE

Affection tinged with apology was the almost universal epitaph on Bret Harte. The charming sentimentalist of the Sierras crossed the bar on a flood-tide of charming sentiment. The dead disciple of Dickens drew from Englishmen an attenuated echo of the wistful sigh which made the death of Dickens an Anglo-Saxon sorrow. He loved Dickens, Dickens loved him, and therefore we loved him. As one born too late to bask in this dual enchantment, I vainly sought in the obituaries for an explanation of it. Praise there was in abundance, but it was vague, languid, blurred. Men seemed to be renewing an old emotion, a forgotten delight, a faded loyalty. There was a rustle in the newspapers as of old love-letters and ancient flowers. As I watched the faint stirrings of former enthusiasms in the dry, cold light of death I began to feel the pathos of it all, and to realise the gallant kindliness of human nature. Somehow the memory of love is infinitely tenderer than love itself, for love is selfish, whereas the requickening of love is the pure gold of gratitude.

It is not my fault that fiction had left Bret Harte far behind before I came on the scene, and so made his work for me a landmark rather than a revelation. For there is no doubt that we have outgrown the art which relies on picturesque lay figures grouped against a romantic backcloth. Our emotions no longer respond to the gestures of the well-made marionette. We are not tired of romance, but we are tired of pseudo-romance. We demand romance mingled with realism, and realism mingled with romance. In Bret Harte's best stories the presence of the scene painter, the stage carpenter and the stage manager jars on our consciousness. The sharp, sudden invasion of life seldom surprises us. How, then, can we explain his vogue? Why did he thrill two continents? In the first place, I think he was a purveyor of new news. His background was novel, and his miners were not yet become a literary convention. They gratified that love of the strange and remote which is one of the curious eccentricities of human nature. In the second place, he supplied part of the demand for sentiment which Dickens stimulated in the Anglo-Saxon heart. He

used primary colours, and he laid them on thick. The rough, blasphemous miner was an irresistible conduit for pathetic emotions. Strength and wickedness turning into tenderness and virtue raised a lump in the throat of the most innocent audience that ever rejoiced over electro-plated art. To-day we smile where we used to snivel. Bret Harte did not change; we changed. Perhaps we have become more cynical. At any rate, our tear passages are blocked, and few can unseal them.

If you wish to discover how far we have travelled since the sixties and seventies, read *The Luck of Roaring Camp* and then read Maxim Gorky's *Twenty-six Men and a Girl*. Both writers try to show the effect of idealism on brutalised natures. Bret Harte takes "Cherokee Sal," an Indian prostitute, puts her in a degraded mining settlement and sanctifies her by motherhood. That is good art. He lets her die, while her child survives. That is not so good. It is the pathos of accident. He sends the miners in to see the child. That is good art. He makes the presence of the child work a revolution in the camp. Strong men wash their faces and wear clean shirts in order to be worthy of the child. That is not good art. Finally, he drowns the child and his readers in a deluge of melodramatic sentiment. That is bad art. Gorky, on the other hand, keeps rigidly within the bounds of plausibility. He makes a young girl the one gleam of idealism in the life of obscene bakers slaving in a cellar, but he does not pretend that Tanya made them wash their faces and wear clean shirts. He simply shows that into the foul misery of these wretches came a glimmer of romance. Then he lets you see the selfishness of romance. These twenty-six bakers set up a lien on Tanya's innocence, and when Tanya failed their selfish idealism, they insulted her, while she scornfully hurled them back into their joyless cellar. That is good art, for it never goes an inch beyond the limit of sincere belief. It does not ask you to weep over accidental pathos. It is the pathos of human will, human temperament, human desire. In short, while Bret Harte assaults your emotions by deliberate artifice, Gorky al-