

I have more than once expressed the opinion that Mr. Tarkington is a better humourist than novelist. *The Turmoil* seemed to me, and still seems to me, a rather pretentious and absurd yarn, with little integrity of action or characterisation. In the Penrod stories, on the other hand, he produced something genuine. Not since the *Real Diary of a Real Boy* (which has been too soon forgotten) has the very substance of American boyhood been so captured and held alive between covers. Penrod was not a real boy, he was something better than that—an embodiment of boyhood. We all recognised ourselves in him—that was the uproarious part of it. In *Seventeen*, the interpreter has attempted a more difficult feat, for which there have been even fewer precedents. A boy-child is a solid and comprehensible thing compared with a boy-man. It is the season between the codling and the apple which is the most difficult for everybody concerned. For a day which, with its shoddy "boy's book," seems bent upon giving youth a false glamour of dignity and heroism in its own eyes, such an interpretation as this should be good medicine. The tale of William Baxter's

love is confessed comedy. It has, like the Penrod stories, a good many passages of pure farce; but as a whole it easily merits the higher classification, as genuinely comic, and not merely "a comic."

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