

Harry Leon Wilson is an admirable example of a novelist who can build up a novel around a very definite purpose without obtruding his own personal bias or doing violence to one's sense of

"The Boss of Little Arcady."

reality. Yet in his latest story, *The Boss of Little Arcady*, one feels that for once he has written primarily for the story's sake, and that whatever purpose the reader gleans from between the lines is of that half unconscious sort that comes from the faithful interpretation of simple, average lives. Indeed, the nearest approach one can make to a concrete statement of a definite motive is, that Mr. Wilson has tried to make us feel how narrow a dividing line there is between the poetry and the prose of life, and how full of romance is the narrow sphere of the usual man and woman, if we could only see it. But to see it, he adds, we must retain our early faith in the sufficiency of our own little town or village; we must go back "to the days of a boy's Little Arcady, when all the world beyond was but a place from which to order merchandise." It is a whimsical book that Mr. Wilson has given us this time, a book that is scarcely a novel at all, in the accepted sense, a book that drags somewhat at the start, at the same time that it is surreptitiously fastening its hold upon you,—and then suddenly you find that certain of its characters have twined themselves into your affections, and that you cannot lay the book down until you have assured yourself that at last all has gone quite well with them. A veteran of our Civil War, who has come back from his four years' service with an empty sleeve, and the rank of major; a fine old Southern lady, whom fate had stripped of all her possessions save her daughter, her household furniture, and the loyalty of one old darkey; Uncle Maje, Miss Caroline, Little Miss and Clem, these are the four that one feels it something of a privilege to have known. All the rest, down to the Boss of Little Arcady himself, are but the background, the stage setting, the scene-shifter's devices for imparting reality to that Little Country which "exists no more save as a wraith in remembering minds."