

# CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN FICTION

Committee: Mary Austin, chairman; Willa Cather, Zona Gale, Sherwood Anderson, Mary Roberts Rinehart, William Allen White.

## First Quarter: Novels of Story Interest

In the early part of the nineteenth century the American novel emerged as the romantic story. There has, however, been a change both in material and in method of treatment since the days of Cooper and Melville. This change is most definitely marked in the present century by the name of O. Henry. Since his time the story written chiefly for story interest has found its material largely in the common life.

The following are outstanding figures in this field. The names of three works of each are given as meriting special study.

### JOSEPH HERGESHEIMER

*The Three Black Pennys.* 1917. KNOPF.  
*Linda Condon.* 1919. KNOPF.  
*Java Head.* 1919. KNOPF.

Characterized by exotic settings, brilliant word pictures, a style that, while reminiscent of Conrad and of others, yet has a peculiar charm of its own.

Hergesheimer was born in Philadelphia in 1880, was educated in schools there and at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. He is said to have given himself a long apprenticeship as a writer, and actually to have burned scores of manuscript novels before the publication of his first, "The Lay Anthony", in 1914. His work in the short story is also notable, and "Wild Oranges" (Knopf) is, perhaps, his best. He is married, lives in West Chester, Pennsylvania, and is only occasionally seen in New York City. He is large, genial, suave, and usually rather elaborately dressed; talks much and in a low voice. His latest novel is "Cytherea" (Knopf), to be followed by "The Bright Shawl" (Knopf) this autumn.

"With the fullest intellectual sophistication, Mr. Hergesheimer has artistically the courage of naïveté. He subtracts nothing from the common realities of human character when he displays it in some past age, but preserves it intact. The charming erudition of his surfaces is added to reality, not substituted for it."—*C.F.D.*

"The Three Black Pennys" placed Joseph Hergesheimer in the first rank of American novelists. It is a masterly study of character, atmosphere, and circumstances. The first part of his 'Java Head' is equally important; but his later affections—his

devotion to the little details of luxurious life which people accustomed to them take as a matter of course—vulgarize much of his recent work. It has a touch of the meretricious splendor of Lord Beaconsfield."—*M.F.E.*

### REFERENCES:

*In Respect to Joseph Hergesheimer.* James Branch Cabell. *THE BOOKMAN*, vol. I, p. 267.

*Joseph Hergesheimer, the Man and His Books.* A pamphlet by Llewellyn Jones, obtainable from local booksellers or for \$.10 postage from his publishers, containing both critical and biographical material.

*The Literary Spotlight.* Anonymous. *THE BOOKMAN*, May, 1922.