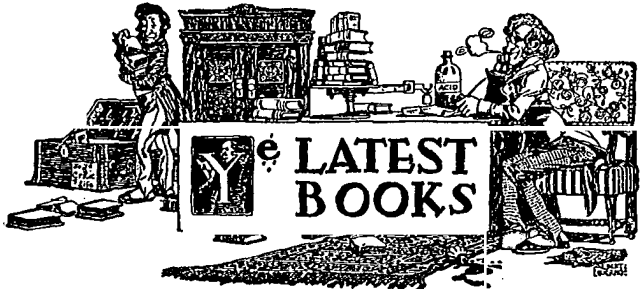

ON one of the fly leaves of a recent edition of *The Rosary* (Putnam, $1.35) there appears the following statement:

Copyright, 1909,
by
Florence L. Barclay.
Published November, 1909;
Reprinted December, 1909; January, 1910;
February, 1910 (three times);
March, 1910; May, 1910 (three times);
June, 1910 (twice); July, 1910 (twice); August, 1910 (twice);
September, 1910 (three times); October, 1910 (three times);
November (four times);
December.

This inscription is eloquent. It is like a massive gold watch chain on a respectably rotund waistcoat. It soberly but firmly proclaims success, and modestly, yet smugly, assumes explanations to be superfluous. And yet, sometimes, explanations are the only things that are really pertinent, as well as the most difficult things to come at.

There are, for instance, two pseudo-critical dogmas relating to the popularity of novels. One is that a widely read novel is a good novel, because the people like it and the people are always right. The other is that a widely read novel is a poor novel because the people like it and the people are always wrong. There is another view of the matter, but it is seldom mentioned. It is that one can learn more about the people from a widely read novel than one can learn about the novel from the fact of its being widely read. Let us try the experiment on *The Rosary*, which, by one of those lucky accidents that occasionally happen even in the worst regulated families, has never been noticed in LIFE.

The Rosary is a love story in which, with all the native eloquence and uncritical fervor of emotional conviction, the illusions of adolescence are insisted upon as the ultimate validities of maturity. It is the story of an artist of achieved position, a social favorite and a matrimonial prize, and of a prominent woman of sterling character and similar physique, universally liked but never loved, who suddenly discover their real selves through discovering each other. There being no convenient hindrances to their immediate union, they naturally proceed to manufacture some; and an understanding fate (in the person of Mrs. Barclay) obligingly adds irrevocable misfortune to the barricade. When each of the participants in the romance has proved, to his or her complete satisfaction, the heroic possibilities of their respective natures, we leave them hand in hand on the threshold of untroubled bliss. In other words, *The Rosary*, from the standpoint of seventeen, is a triumphant vindication of the only conceivable prognosis of life. For, at seventeen, life appears as a practically endless condition confronting a marvelous, because a previously undreamed of, individuality that is just beginning to discover itself. That individuality's greatest desire is self-expression. Self-expression's two great needs are opportunity and an audience. And as youth is ambitious and impatient, romantic and ingenuous, it dreams of heroic difficulties (manufactured if necessary) heroically overcome, once for all, before a perfectly sympathetic audience of one and deservedly rewarded by an enduring, though vaguely visualized, state of stable beatitude.

It is difficult to imagine a normal seventeen-year-older of either sex who would not glory in *The Rosary*. It is equally difficult to imagine a reader to whom experience had revealed the deeper beauties and more pregnant griefs of life who could give it more than a reminiscent smile. And the only conclusion one can reach from its popularity is that some hundreds of thousands of one's grown-up contemporaries are either suffering from arrested development or enjoying eternal youth.