There is always the chance of being misunderstood when, after supporting a critical opinion by reference to Scott, Hawthorne and Dumas, a reviewer passes on to the discussion of some present-day volume, by a new or little-known author. There are always a certain number of careless or hasty readers who bring away with them a vague impression that, because the new writer and the old have been mentioned in adjacent paragraphs, it must have been the reviewer's intention to place them in the same category. Yet, even at the risk of such misunderstanding, this seems to be the proper time to speak of *Weeping Cross,* by Henry Longan Stuart, and to speak rather emphatically: because, whatever place may eventually be assigned to it by critical opinion, the fact will not be altered that the characters in it are alive, vitally, painfully alive—as much alive, for instance, as the characters in a modern story by Robert Herrick, or Joseph Conrad; alive to a degree achieved by no living writer of historical fiction, with the single exception of Maurice Hewlett. The book is eminently worth reading. Accordingly, do not be deterred by the first impression that you receive, of its being a seventeenth century chronicle of Puritan New England, a chronicle of the type that has been given us much too bountifully, since the popularity of *Richard Carvel, Janice Meredith* and *To Have and to Hold* encouraged a host of imitators. As a matter of fact, *Weeping Cross* has nothing in common with these books. It happens, to be sure, to be laid in the days when Massachusetts was a scarcely settled colony, and when the physical hardships of life in Boston were in keeping with the gloomy austerity of the moral atmosphere. All this is sketched in, with an assured touch, as a necessary and vital part of the historic background. But the real story is bigger and broader than the limitations of a particular race or epoch. It is one of those intimate human dramas that may belong to any age or country, provided the outward conditions of life are ripe for it. Many a man has thought it a sin to love a certain woman—and none the less has gone on loving her, though it be to the everlasting damnation of his soul and hers. In this particular case, the man happens to be one Richard Fitzsimons, a young Irish cavalier, whom fate first destined for the priesthood, but before his final vows were taken, snatched him from it and made a soldier of him—a soldier who is two-thirds theologian and can reconcile his conscience to the bloody deeds of war only by vowing to accept with meekness every sort of indignity in times of peace. Such is the man who, in the course of the Wars of the League is captured by Cromwell's soldiers, shipped to the colonies and bound over, for ten years, to a servitude that is essentially slavery, as the leather collar, rivetted around his neck, abundantly testifies. By good luck, his master lives on the boundary line of the new colony, on the very threshold of the primeval forest; he is spared the humiliation of a slave's life in the midst of men and women who, for the most part, were once socially beneath him. But his master has a daughter, a young widow, in the rich glow of full womanhood—a woman embittered by the disillusion of an unhappy marriage, who is hungry for love and tenderness, who feels instinctively the big-hearted nature of her father's new servitor, and loves him boldly, recklessly, refusing to be denied. To Richard Fitzsimons, royalist and Jesuit, the love of any woman, even though sanctified by marriage, stands for sin—while the love of Agnes Bartlett, his master's daughter, doubly removed by the laws of Church and State alike, is the unpardonable transgression. Accordingly, the story of *Weeping Cross* is the chronicle of a soul's struggle against overmastering temptation; the chronicle of a love, the very magnitude of which endows it with a certain dignity and justification; and which sweeps onward inevitably to its logical and foredoomed expiation. If all so-called historical novels succeeded so well in making us forget the gap that lies between their epoch and our own, between their standards of ethics and morality, and our standards of today, then the chief stigma which, in the eyes of the modern realist, rests upon the

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novel of bygone days would be at once removed.