

CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN FICTION

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

Fourth Quarter: The Younger Group

Within the past ten years there has come prominently into notice in America a group of fiction writers whose work is of high quality and the utmost seriousness. It does not, however, conform to any of the earlier groups, and as most of its exponents have not yet reached their full development, it would be unfair to attempt any descriptive term defining their work.

The following are outstanding figures in this field. The names of two or three works of each are given as meriting special study. The opening comments under each author's name are by the editor. Quotations marked C. V. D. are by Carl Van Doren and are taken from his book, "Contemporary American Novelists". Those marked M. F. E. are by Maurice Francis Egan. The viewpoints of these two members of the executive committee form a nice contrast.

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

This Side of Paradise. 1920. SCRIBNER.
The Beautiful and Damned. 1922. SCRIBNER.

Brilliant, bitter, sometimes chaotic but always young with a peculiarly impudent youth, he is quite the most promising of our very young writers.

Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1896. He attended Princeton University; but left there to join the army in 1917. Partly at training camp and partly after he left the army, he wrote his first novel which was an immediate popular success. At the present time he is living near New York, and writing short stories and plays. He is married and has one child. Fitzgerald has not been spoiled by popularity. His determination to write to the best of his ability without regard for public consumption persists, and it bids fair to bring him into the front ranks of our novelists.

M. F. E. says of "This Side of Paradise": "Interesting and amusing; but hardly literature in the best sense."

"This Side of Paradise" comes to no conclusion; it ends in weariness and smoke, though at last Amory believes he has found himself in the midst of a wilderness of uncertainties. Yet how vivid a document the book is upon a whirling time, and how beguiling an entertainment! The narrative flares up now into delightful verse and now into glittering comic dialogue. It shifts from passion to farce, from satire to lus-

trous beauty, from impudent knowingness to pathetic youthful humility. It is both alive and lively. Few things more significantly illustrate the moving tide of which the revolt from the village is a symptom than the presence of such unrest as this among these bright barbarians. The traditions which once might have governed them no longer hold. They break the patterns one by one and follow their wild desires. And as they play among the ruins of the old, they reason randomly about the new, laughing." — C. V. D.

REFERENCES:

Contemporary American Novelists, p. 172.
F. Scott Fitzgerald. Anonymous. THE BOOKMAN, vol. LV, p. 20.