

Stories of Adventure

IN *Gold and Iron* are collected three stories of adventure by Joseph Hergesheimer: "Wild Oranges," "Tubal Cain" and "The Dark Fleece"—stories far removed from the usual types of fiction, removed even from life as most of us see it, and yet dominantly real in the characters they present. The early blast furnaces of middle Pennsylvania and the sedate white houses of the salty New England coast; the pungent sweetness of orange groves run wild and the slow progress of the canal packets, with their gay loads of women in crinoline and peacock cashmere shawls, and men with prodigious whiskers and varnished Wellington boots, make up the varicolored backgrounds of these tales. Against them in bold relief are sketched the men and women who mastered fate and molded it to their will. In character analysis Mr. Hergesheimer has somewhat the viewpoint and technic of John Galsworthy; in his nature descriptions the author of *Gold and Iron* suggests the quality of somber beauty dominant in Joseph Conrad's tales. Take, for example, this paragraph from "Wild Oranges":

Supper at an end, Woolfolk rolled a cigaret from shag that resembled coarse black tea, and returned to the deck. Night had fallen on the shore, but the water still held a pale light; in the east the sky was filled with an increasing, cold radiance. It was the moon, rising swiftly above the flat land. The moonlight grew in intensity, casting inky shadows of the spars and cordage across the deck, making the light in the cabin a reddish blur by contrast. The icy flood swept over the land, bringing out with a new emphasis the close, glossy foliage and broken facade—it appeared unreal, portentous. The odors of the flowers, of the orange blossoms, uncoiled in heavy, palpable waves across the water, accompanied by the owl's fluctuating cry. The sense of imminence increased, of a *genius loci* unguessed and troublous, vaguely threatening in the perfumed dark.

Gold and Iron, by Joseph Hergesheimer. Alfred A. Knopf. \$1.50.