

# Frank Norris Studies

An Annual Publication of the Frank Norris Society

© 2002, The Frank Norris Society

## Frank Norris's Training in Composition

Ormond Loomis

*Florida State University*

There is one word of counsel I would give to young authors, which is that they should be humbly obedient to the truth proclaimed by their own souls, and haughtily indifferent to the remonstrances of critics founded solely on the departure from the truths expressed by others.

George Henry Lewes,  
*The Principles of Success in Literature*

Anyone interested in the formative influences on Frank Norris as a prose stylist sooner or later learns that he attended the University of California from 1890 to 1894 and, two years later, commented quite negatively on the way writing was taught there in an essay that appeared as an editorial in the San Francisco weekly, *The Wave*. Neither "The 'English Courses' at the University of California" nor the scholarship on Norris's life and works, however, provides much detail about the exact nature of his instruction in composition at Berkeley.<sup>1</sup> Little specific information about the nature of the courses Norris took is available,<sup>2</sup> and none of the essays he wrote for introductory writing courses survives.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, some features of the program Norris encountered can be reconstructed from his comments on the way writing was taught, a report on Berkeley's English curriculum in 1894, comments made by one of Norris's professors, and the prevailing orientation toward instruction in composition at American universities during the 1890s.

In "The 'English Courses'" Norris objects to the Berkeley curriculum on four counts: the 'number and scope of the hours devoted by the students to recitations and lectures'; its reliance on "text books and 'manuals'"; the method of having students write "'themes' . . . [on] subject[s] chosen by the instructor and [on] the matter found in text books and encyclopedias"; and its emphasis on

analysis and "'Classification,'" "counting the 'metaphors' in a given passage, . . . tabulating them, separating them from . . . 'similes,' comparing the results," and studying "sentence structure."<sup>4</sup> He appears to have encountered such emphases in the writing program throughout his undergraduate years. As Robert A. Morace observes, "although the article presents the hypothetical case of 'a young sophomore,' Norris's remarks clearly indicate that he found the four-year English program cast in the same mold [as] the Freshman course."<sup>5</sup> Support for Morace's inference was provided by Charles Mills Gayley. He headed the English Department, and shortly after Norris left the school he gave an account of the department and its curriculum.<sup>6</sup> His article identified the courses offered, differentiated lower level studies from upper, and indicated the actual work students did.

Gayley described the "prescribed preliminary courses" for freshmen and sophomores at length. Two of the courses were "prerequisites to all advanced work." The first, "English Prose Styles," was "required at the rate of four hours a week throughout the year, of all freshmen"; the second, "Supplementary Readings," involved "one hour any two consecutive terms."<sup>7</sup> Those taking the courses read the writings of recognized authors, wrote paragraphs weekly in class, and wrote three themes a term. Consistent with Norris's criticism of "the 'English Courses,'" Gayley's summaries of the two courses suggest that they may have been conducted with a stiff tone and from an analytic point of view:

English Prose Styles aims to acquaint the student, at first hand, with the features and elements of effective workmanship in prose-writing, and to train him to discern the salient qualities of any well-marked prose style presented for his consideration. The course is based upon direct study of selected groups of authors. The course entitled Supplementary Reading extends, as far

as time will permit, the acquaintance of the student with the Hellenic, Teutonic, or Romance Epics, or others classics in translation. It serves as an introduction to common and traditional store of literary reference, allusion, and imagery, and as a basis for paragraph-writing. . . . These courses . . . in general serve to stimulate constructive effort and practical skill in writing *pari passu* [at an equal pace] with analytical effort and the acquisition of information. They accordingly include first the weekly exercise in paragraph-writing, written in the class-room upon some topic not previously announced but involving acquaintance with the Supplementary Reading assigned for the week; and, secondly, a carefully supervised series of composition. Three themes have been required each term. The supervision, which is personal, extends to methods of using the Library, of securing material and taking notes in scholarly fashion, to limitation and definition of subject; to construction of a scheme of presentation in advance of the writing, as well as to careful criticism of the finished work.<sup>8</sup>

Although Norris's Berkeley essays have not survived, evaluations of his themes have—in the grade sheets of his instructor for his "Preliminary" classes, William Dallam Armes. An article on Norris's "Freshman Themes" by James D. Hart reports that, from October of 1890 through June of 1892, Norris wrote eleven essays and "A Story." As Hart explains, the essays addressed these subjects: Quentin Durward; Harold; Thomas à Becket; European Civilization at the Outbreak of the Hundred Years' War; Joan of Arc; Heroes of the Iliad; Jongleurs and Trouvères of Mediaeval France; Alfred the Great; A Young Englishman at an English University in the Early Part of the Sixteenth Century; The French Dwelling House of the Middle Ages; and the Constitution of 1791. Armes's comments show that he regularly found fault with Norris's prose. Grades for the early papers were low, and his instructor's notes included remarks such as these for the October 1890 submission: "Quentin Durward. Showing some real ability, but marred by an entire lack of precision. Sentence structure and punctuation very faulty."

As Norris progressed, his marks rose, but Armes's

comments continued to be generally negative, as in those on one of Norris's best papers, his April 1891 piece on Jongleurs and Trouvères of Mediaeval France: "Sober and restrained in style and well introducing occasional picturesque concrete touches; but not well arranged, pedantic and careless in spelling."<sup>9</sup>

Details of Norris's studies in English as an upperclassman are less well known than those of his freshman and sophomore work since Gayley wrote more about "the prescribed preliminary courses" than the "Higher" ones. As has been noted by Allys Palladino-Craig, the advanced courses that Norris took consisted of "English Literature to the Restoration, as well as English Literature from the Restoration, Poets of the 14th and 15th Centuries, Themes, Drama, Essays and Debates, Linguistics, Milton, Literary Criticism, and . . . coursework designated both English and English Literature in his senior year."<sup>10</sup> While these courses may have been *relatively* more enjoyable than the study of composition, they may also have been the cause of Norris's less-than-admiring, or derisive, comments about "the 'co-eds' [who] take to the 'classification' method" and "after graduation . . . 'read papers' to literary 'circles.'"<sup>11</sup> Describing the approach in the "Higher" classes in his article, Gayley comments that "the method has been described by a former student."<sup>12</sup> According to Isabella M. Andrews, the "class met twice a week, once for an hour's lecture on the philosophical basis of literary criticism, and again for a two-hour session, one-half of which was occupied by essays, and the other half by general discussions on the points brought out in the essays and additional points presented by members of the class. The heavier subjects usually required two evenings, sometimes more—one for the discussion of laws, and one or more for their application."<sup>13</sup> That is, Norris again very likely had cause for discontent. The fact is, he had nothing good to say in his 1896 essay on what it meant to study in Berkeley's English Department.

Lacking are the means of determining exactly what transpired in Norris's writing over the four years he spent at Berkeley, but the textbooks he used as a composition student are known and available for study. According to Morace, his texts were George Henry Lewes's *Principles of Success in Literature* and William Minto's *A Manual*

of *English Prose Literature*.<sup>14</sup> Both books took a rational approach to writing, but they diverged radically in the methods they prescribed. *Principles*, first published in 1865 in the *Fortnightly Review*, was the older work, but the *Manual*, which appeared in its first edition in 1872, evidently served as the main text for the required undergraduate writing classes. The differences between them and the effects they appear to have had on Norris add to what may be inferred about the budding author's training and development.

Minto's *Manual* emphasized the analytic method that Norris abhorred. In the 1889 printing of the third "Authorized American Edition" of the *Manual*—probably the same edition that Norris used—Minto, a "Professor of Logic and Literature in the University of Aberdeen," introduced his subject with a short discussion of "elements of style," "qualities of style," and "kinds of composition."<sup>15</sup> He based his approach on the ideas of authorities such as George Campbell and Hugh Blair, eighteenth-century rhetoricians who emphasized the importance of appealing to readers from a practical, "philosophical" perspective, stressed locally correct grammar, and made no distinction between rhetorical and belletristic excellence. Minto referred most frequently to the authority of Alexander Bain, a nineteenth-century psychologist and author of *English Composition and Rhetoric: A Manual*, who devised "a psychological approach to composition," formulated "the modes of discourse—description, narration, exposition, and persuasion," and developed "the notion of paragraph unity."<sup>16</sup> Minto's enthusiastic embrace of Bain can be seen in his discussion of "The Paragraph" where he relates that "Professor Bain was the first, so far as I am aware, to consider how far rules can be laid down for the perspicuous construction of paragraphs. Other writers on composition, such as Campbell, Lord Kames, Blair, and Whatley, stop short with the sentence."<sup>17</sup> Following the ideas of Campbell and Blair when it came to "Figures of Speech" and "Qualities of Style," Minto again appealed to authority and the need to study established examples. Most of Minto's *Manual* comprised models of literature for analysis. Among the authors he presented, he emphasized three: "De Quincey, Macaulay, and Carlyle [who] show greater command of expression than any prose writers of their generation."<sup>18</sup> Thus it was no coincidence that Norris parodied the style of these

three in essays published in the *Occident* during the spring of his freshman year: "'Stepterfetchet,' by Dick Wincey"; "'Stepterfetchet,' by Karl Aisle"; and "'Stepterfetchet,' by 'Mick' Aulay."<sup>19</sup>

After Norris's death, his college friend Harry M. Wright wrote that "Minto and the prose composition of the freshman course in English were an abomination" to Norris.<sup>20</sup> Norris was not alone in his feelings toward Minto's approach. Walker notes that Norris's classmates ritually burned the *Manual* during an end-of-year street festival and that in the young author's "freshman year, he was appointed to be one of the orators" at the event.<sup>21</sup> That is, Norris could assume when he wrote the parodies that the entire student body would recognize the distinctive prose styles that all were encouraged—or forced—to imitate.



Norris had a more positive encounter, on the other hand, with George Henry Lewes's *Principles of Success in Literature*. With good reason, Morace comments that it was "perhaps the most important influence . . . [on him of anything he] read while a Freshman at the University of California."<sup>22</sup> In it, Lewes expounds upon three ideas: "the *Principle of Vision*, . . . the *Principle of Sincerity*, . . . and the *Principle of Beauty*."<sup>23</sup> His long essay that originally appeared six years after the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* took a scientific approach to writing and was informed by an evolutionary perspective. For example, he began his discussion of writing with this observation:

In the development of the great series of animal organisms, the Nervous System assumes more and more of an imperial character. The rank held by any animal is determined by this character, and not at all by its bulk, its strength, or even its utility. In like manner, in the development of the social organism, as the life of nations becomes more complex, Thought assumes a more imperial character; and Literature, in its widest sense, becomes a delicate index of social evolution. . . . Success in Literature has become not only the ambition of the highest minds, it has also become the ambition of minds intensely occupied with other means of influencing their fellows—with statesmen, warriors, and rulers.<sup>24</sup>

For Lewes, insight was the foundation for "the principle of vision." "All good Literature," he wrote in opposition to those like Minto who fixated on models worthy of emulation, "rests primarily on insight. All bad Literature rests upon imperfect insight, or upon imitation, which may be defined as seeing at second-hand."<sup>25</sup> He believed that the ability to see clearly, which enabled a painter to create masterpieces or an actor to move audiences, empowered an author to write successfully. From this principle, he reasoned that "personal experience is the basis of all real Literature. The author must have thought the thoughts, seen the objects (with bodily or mental vision), and felt the feelings; otherwise he can have no power over us [the readers]. Importance does not depend on rarity so much as on authenticity."<sup>26</sup> Or, put negatively, in "Literature we see a few original writers, and a crowd of imitators: men of special aptitudes, and men who mistake their power of repeating with slight variation what others have done, for a power of creating anew."<sup>27</sup>

Lewes's second principle, "Sincerity," expanded on the idea of writing from experience. He interpreted sincerity as plain candor and embraced the "maxim of honesty [is] the best policy."<sup>28</sup> "It is not enough to have the eye to see; there must also be the courage to express what the eye has seen, and the steadfastness of a trust in truth,"<sup>29</sup> he wrote. In his view, honesty gave art strength, and he urged writers to be true to their vision: "In all sincere speech there is power, not necessarily great power, but as much as the speaker is capable of. Speak for yourself and from yourself, or be silent. It can be of no good that you should tell in your 'clever' feeble way what another has already told us with the dynamic energy of conviction. If you can tell us something that your own eyes have seen, your own mind has thought, your own heart has felt, you will have power over us, and all the real power that is possible for you."<sup>30</sup>

Lewes regarded "Beauty," his third principle, as "only another name for Style, which is an art, incommunicable as are all other arts, but like them subordinated to laws founded on psychological conditions."<sup>31</sup> It involved the ability to "shape" vision. Thus, writers need "a rich verbal memory from which to select the symbols best fitted to call up images in the reader's mind, and . . . the delicate selective instinct to guide . . . the choice and arrangement of those symbols."<sup>32</sup> He explained that "the power of

seizing unapparent relations of things is not always conjoined with the power of selecting the fittest verbal symbols by which they can be made apparent to others: the one is the power of the thinker, the other the power of the writer."<sup>33</sup> And, as with Vision and Sincerity, so with the Beautiful. Imitation is the stumbling block to be avoided in all of the arts:

if the purpose of Literature be the sincere expression of the individual's own ideas and feelings it is obvious that the cant about the "best models" tends to pervert and obstruct that expression. Unless a man thinks and feels precisely after the manner of Cicero and Titian it is manifestly wrong for him to express himself in their way. He may study in them the principles of effect, and try to surprise some of their secrets, but he should resolutely shun all imitation of them. They ought to be illustrations not authorities, studies not models.<sup>34</sup>

That such notions directly informed Norris's criticisms in "The 'English Courses' at the University of California" can not be known for a fact. Norris never mentioned Lewes's name—nor, for a more self-apparent reason, Minto's. On the other hand, Norris's dislike of the imitation method of studying writing was at least as strong as Lewes's. Also, Lewes's emphases on both sincerity and the need to write from one's own experience resonate fully with Norris's 1901 "True Reward of the Novelist" essay and his 1902 "Salt and Sincerity" series of articles. And while it is a commonplace in the scholarship to cite Rudyard Kipling, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Emile Zola as "models" for Norris, it is perhaps truer to say that they provided "illustrations" for better ways of storytelling rather than stood as "authorities" to be mimicked.

One other concern of Lewes merits attention in that, before Norris advanced to formal literary study at Berkeley, his reading of *Principles* very likely provided his first experience with aesthetic theory having to do with realism. Lewes considered it inferior to other modes of literary art unless it was grounded in psychology and grew from an author's insight, honesty, and style. When dealing with Vision, he wrote:

the rage for "realism," which is healthy in as far as it insists on truth, has become unhealthy, in as far as it confounds truth with familiarity, and

predominance of unessential details. There are other truths besides coats and waistcoats, pots and pans, drawing rooms and suburban villas. Life has other aims besides those which occupy the conversation of "Society." And the painter who devotes years to a work representing modern life, yet calls for even more attention to a waistcoat than to the face of a philosopher, may exhibit truth of detail which will delight the tailor-mind, but he is defective in artistic truth, because he ought to be representing something higher than waistcoats, and because our thoughts on modern life fall very casually and without emphasis on waistcoats.<sup>35</sup>

His point of view is, indeed, similar to Norris's in the 1896 essay "Zola as a Romantic" writer, in which a like censure is administered to William Dean Howells; moreover, the character of Zolaesque art that Norris finds compelling, and superior to Howellsian realism, comes to mind when later in *Principles* Lewes returns to realism in his discussion of Beauty and holds forth on the noblest achievements of which art is capable:

It is a higher difficulty, and implies nobler art to represent the movement and complexity of life and emotion than to catch the fixed lineaments of outward aspect. To paint a policeman idly lounging at the street corner with such verisimilitude that we are pleased with the representation, admiring the solidity of the figure, the texture of the clothes, and the human aspect of the features, is so difficult that we loudly applaud the skill which enables an artist to imitate what in itself is uninteresting; and if the imitation be carried to a certain degree of verisimilitude the picture may be of immense value. But no excellence of representation can make this high art. To carry it into the region of high art, another and far greater difficulty must be overcome; the man must be represented under the strain of great emotion, and we must recognize an equal truthfulness in the subtle indication of great mental agitation, the fleeting characters of which are far less easy to observe and to reproduce, than the stationary characters of form and costume.<sup>36</sup>

"Subtle" is not the word normally associated with Zola's

treatments of great emotion and mental agitation. Norris himself described just the opposite qualities when exalting Zola in 1896. And yet the essential point is the same: the artist must rise above realism—or superficial fidelity to nature—to the fuller "truthfulness" characteristic of great art.



Lewes would, very likely, have been pleased to find that, when Norris left Berkeley for Harvard in 1894, it was possible to enter a writing course in which the Mintonian hegemony was not in evidence and his own orientation largely prevailed. This was in the two-semester English 22 course for sophomores that Norris took there. Noteworthy in the closing paragraph of "The 'English Courses'" is Norris's echoing of Lewes's "principle of vision" and insistence on the value of writing from "personal experience" as he celebrates the fact that "at Harvard the literary student has little to do with lectures, almost nothing at all with text books. He is sent away from the lecture room and *told to look about him and think a little*. Each day he writes a theme, a page if necessary, a single line of a dozen words if he likes; *anything, so it is original, something he has seen or thought, not read of not picked up at second hand* [italics added]."<sup>37</sup> Ten months later in "Fiction Is Selection," Norris repeats and expands the same point, adding his thoughts on the mechanics of fictional creation. The essential, he declares, is "the matter of selection of details" and their arrangement—an apparent reprise of Lewes's dictum concerning how Beauty ("another name for Style") is achieved.<sup>38</sup>

That the writing program at Berkeley was not suited to students like Norris, who at Harvard was permitted to treat English 22 as a creative writing course, was hinted at by Gayley. His report on the curriculum failed to mention any courses in creative writing at Berkeley for undergraduates, and the lack of such courses was underscored when Gayley commented that "to graduate courses of information and of research might legitimately be added courses having a third purpose: The encouragement of literary creation. We have as yet none such . . . unless one denominated Special Study, . . . may be construed as sufficient for the emergency."<sup>39</sup> Having a course of the kind was obviously not a priority.

Norris's long-delayed discovery of an approach to

writing that he preferred was a more than fortunate development. Franklin Walker has related that Norris knew of "courses in creative writing for which Harvard had become famous through the work of Barrett Wendell and his assistants."<sup>40</sup> But neither Walker, nor Norris when later lauding Harvard for conducting writing courses the way they should be, registered what it was really like to be an undergraduate in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1894-95. Barrett Wendell himself in "English at Harvard"—an article in the same series to which Gayley contributed—made it clear that "English Composition" could be as dreadful there as at Berkeley.<sup>41</sup> Wrote Wendell,

In the course prescribed for Freshmen, Professor A.S. Hill's "Principles of Rhetoric" is used as a text-book. Lectures based thereon are given and also lectures dealing with some aspects of English Literature. Of these lectures students are required to write summaries. Besides this written work, every member of the class writes a composition in the class-room once a week; and these compositions are carefully criticized by the teachers. In the half-course prescribed for Sophomores, lectures are given on Exposition, Argument, Description, and Narration; and during the year the students write twelve themes, of from five hundred to a thousand words. These are carefully criticized by teachers, and generally rewritten by the students, with this criticism in mind.<sup>42</sup>

That is, both Berkeley and Harvard taught freshman composition according to what has been called the "Eighteenth-Century" school of rhetoric<sup>43</sup> which evolved into what is known today as the "current-traditional method" and has been characterized as preoccupied with "with superficial correctness" and single-minded devotion to training students in the use of traditional "forms of discourse" such as description, analysis, classification, and comparison.<sup>44</sup> In keeping with the trend of the Eighteenth-Century school, Harvard separated rhetoric and literature in 1876; and Adams Sherman Hill filled its chair of rhetoric, "content to teach style, usage, and editing."<sup>45</sup> Harvard, however, allowed "that each teacher's best method is his own." And thus Norris's good fortune. "When a course is given into a man's charge, then, he is absolutely free to conduct it in any way he chooses. The

natural result is such a wide divergence of method in detail that no valuable generalization concerning such detail can be made."<sup>46</sup> Thus also the record of his stroke of luck that Norris provided as he celebrated his experience in English 22—Sophomore Composition under Lewis E. Gates. Characterized as having an "enthusiasm . . . founded on thorough scholarship and tempered by a critical sense which came near to genius in the faculty of appreciation," Gates was flexible enough "to encourage Norris in the method to which he seemed best fitted."<sup>47</sup> A philosophy that made sense to Norris may have derived from Lewes, but the method that worked best for him came from Gates. The philosophy and method may have been related to the "Romantic" school of rhetoric that developed in the nineteenth century as an alternative to the Eighteenth-Century school. Certainly Lewes's and Norris's ideas on composition would support the modern "expressivist" school of composition which has been described as evolved from Romantic rhetoric.<sup>48</sup>

Norris was not likely to have been aware of these alternative schools of composition and rhetoric. But his reactions to them can help scholars understand the schools' effects, negative and positive, on bright students who are eager to learn to write.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>*The Wave*, 15 (28 November 1896) 2-3; rptd. in *The Apprenticeship Writings of Frank Norris, 1896-1898*, 2 volumes in 1, ed. Joseph R. McElrath, Jr., and Douglas K. Burgess (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1996), I, 179-82 Regarding Norris's undergraduate work, see Franklin Walker, *Frank Norris, A Biography* (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran, 1932) 53-59; Robert Anthony Morace, "A Critical and Textual Study of Frank Norris's Writings from the San Francisco Wave," Ph.D. dissertation, University of South Carolina, 1976, 30-32; James D. Hart, "Introduction," *A Novelist in the Making: A Collection of the Student Themes and the Novels Blix and Vandover and the Brute* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1970) 8-12; Allys Palladino-Craig, "Heroic Resonance in the Canon of Frank Norris: His Use of Classical and Northern European Sources," Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1996, 11-25; and Craig E. Westman, in "Frank Norris's Early Writings, 1889-1896: A Critical Edition," Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1997, 464.

<sup>2</sup>Palladino-Craig provides the most comprehensive treatment to date of Norris's studies in English at Berkeley, 15-25; she writes: "Although this chapter summarizes all available Norrisean scholarship regarding the reconstruction of his educational experiences, there are many lacunae in young Norris's educational history" (15).

<sup>3</sup>James D. Hart, "The Freshman Themes of Frank Norris," *Frank Norris Studies*, No. 2 (Autumn 1986), 1.

<sup>4</sup>Norris, 2-3. <sup>5</sup>Morace, 31.

<sup>6</sup>Charles Mill Gayley, "English in the University of California," *The Dial*, 16 July 1894, 29-32.

<sup>7</sup>Gayley, 30. <sup>8</sup>Gayley, 30.

<sup>9</sup>Hart, 1. Armes's impression of Norris's writing remained mixed, as illustrated by his comments in "Concerning the Work of the Late Frank Norris," *Sunset*, 10 (December 1902) 165-67; rptd. in McElrath., "Frank Norris: Early Posthumous Responses," *American Literary Realism*, 12 (Spring 1979), 23-25. See also Walker 54-55.

<sup>10</sup>Palladino-Craig, 16. <sup>11</sup>Norris, 2. <sup>12</sup>Gayley, 31.

<sup>13</sup>Isabella M. Andrews, "Open Letter," *Century*, 41 (January 1, 1891), 479.

<sup>14</sup>Morace, 31.

<sup>15</sup>William Minto, *A Manual of English Prose Literature, Biographical and Critical, Designed Mainly to Show Characteristics of Style*, 3rd ed. rev. (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1889). *The Principles of Success in Literature* was published as a pamphlet for the University of California students during Norris's years at Berkeley. Professor Albert S. Cook arranged for its printing with San Francisco's Bosqui Engraving and Printing Company (1885); Norris's instructor, Armes, next oversaw its publication by Samuel Drew (1891) and by the Students' Co-operative Association (1901). Quoted here is the more easily accessed edition (Farnborough: Gregg, 1969).

<sup>16</sup>Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, eds. *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present* (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1990), 654-58 and 662-64.

<sup>17</sup>Minto, 11. <sup>18</sup>Minto, 2.

<sup>19</sup>*Occident*, 20 (27 March 1891), 79; (3 April 1891), 86-87; and (10 April 1891), 104; rptd. in Westman, 36-40.

<sup>20</sup>In Memoriam—Frank Norris: 1870-1902," *University of California Chronicle*, 5 (October 1902), 241; rptd. in McElrath, "Frank Norris: Early Posthumous Responses," 14.

<sup>21</sup>Walker, 50. <sup>22</sup>Morace, 15. <sup>23</sup>Lewes, 11.

<sup>24</sup>Lewes, 1-2. <sup>25</sup>Lewes, 12. <sup>26</sup>Lewes, 13.

<sup>27</sup>Lewes, 4. <sup>28</sup>Lewes, 42. <sup>29</sup>Lewes, 44.

<sup>30</sup>Lewes, 45. <sup>31</sup>Lewes, 57. <sup>32</sup>Lewes, 55.

<sup>33</sup>Lewes, 55. <sup>34</sup>Lewes, 58. <sup>35</sup>Lewes, 41.

<sup>36</sup>Lewes, 65. <sup>37</sup>Norris, 3.

<sup>38</sup>*The Wave* (11 September, 1897), 3; rptd. in *Apprenticeship Writings*, 124-27. See also Morace, 32-35.

<sup>39</sup>Gayley, 31; see also Palladino-Craig, 22.

<sup>40</sup>Walker, 90.

<sup>41</sup>Barrett Wendell, "English at Harvard," *The Dial*, 1 March 1894, 131-33.

<sup>42</sup>Wendell, 131.

<sup>43</sup>See James A. Berlin, *Writing Instruction in 19th Century American Colleges* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984).

<sup>44</sup>Berlin, *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1990-1965* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987), 37.

<sup>45</sup>Bizzell and Herzberg, 664.

<sup>46</sup>Wendell, 132.

<sup>47</sup>Walker, 94-95.

<sup>48</sup>Berlin, *Rhetoric*, 42-46.

## Norris's Parents Not a "Marriage of True Minds"

Jesse S. Crisler

*Brigham Young University*

May 15 [1870] Benjamin Franklin[,]  
Benj. F. & Gertrude G. Norris

So reads the entry in the Parish Register of Trinity Episcopal Church in Chicago of future novelist Frank Norris's baptism.<sup>1</sup> Although the devastating fire that ravaged Chicago on the night of 9 October 1871 destroyed not only much of the city and masses of irreplaceable government and historical records but also the church building itself—then located on the south side of Jackson between Michigan Street and Wabash Avenues—the register, a heavy buckram-bound folio volume fortunately kept not in the church office, where it, like many other priceless chronicles of the city's past, would likely have been burned in the night's conflagration, miraculously survived, safely ensconced in the home of Reverend Edward Sullivan who had ministered at Trinity for a little over two years. Sullivan himself baptized the ten-week-old Norris, just as he had previously baptized Norris's older sister, Grace Colton on 4 April 1869, not a quite a year after commencing his ministry in Chicago.<sup>2</sup>

Besides its interest to students of Norris's life as the earliest available written document pertaining to him, this entry in the parish register is significant for two other interrelated reasons, of which the first can be quickly dispatched: it forecasts an important aspect of Norris's future, that is, his training in and life-long affiliation with an organized religious sect. Second and less distantly, it reveals an uneasy truce agreed to by parents profoundly dissimilar in many respects. At this time Norris's parents, Benjamin Franklin Norris and Gertrude Glorvina Doggett Norris, maintained a fairly lavish household at 904 Michigan Avenue between Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth Streets, having moved the previous year from a house located at 789 Wabash Avenue, a block west and several blocks north of their 1870 residence.<sup>3</sup> Besides themselves and baby Frank, living with them were Gertrude's aging parents, Samuel Wales Doggett and Harriet Wotton Doggett, and two "domestic servants," Mary Johnson and Susan Hapt.<sup>4</sup> Chicago's storied South Side, an area becoming increasingly desirable for their

residence by the city's elite or those aspiring to become so, had beckoned B.F. for several years; indeed, a mutual desire to join what novelist Henry Blake Fuller twenty years later would term "the procession" composed of wealthy Chicago business magnates such as George M. Pullman, Marshall Field, and Philip D. Armour was probably the major bond between the senior Norrises, for certainly thirty-year-old, beautiful, strong-willed, pretentiously aristocratic Gertrude would have assumed herself eminently qualified to dwell among Chicago's financial and social *crème de la crème*, while her nouveau riche husband doubtless hoped his steadily multiplying assets as a self-made wholesale jeweler with offices in two states certified his being similarly suited.

Notwithstanding this parallel lust for recognition by people they yearned to call their peers, B.F. and Gertrude exhibited few other similarities. In the first place, their family backgrounds differed markedly. The disparity between genealogy and family history is one of degree: where the former tabulates dates and tracks places, the latter unfolds stories of living people that in turn reveal traits and characteristics common to their descendants. Thus, an awareness that many of Norris's ancestors emigrated to New England almost at the beginning of America's history may be interesting, but knowing the tales, the stories, the legacy left by those progenitors and their effects on their authorial descendant makes Norris's own story much richer.

As a Doggett, Gertrude could claim an illustrious past not just in America but also across the Atlantic in England and even on the continent. While the first Doggett to come to America, Norris's sixth great-grandfather, Thomas Doggett, sailed from England on the *Marey Anne* in May 1637 as a virtually penniless yeoman, his great-grandson and namesake in 1728 married Joanna Fuller, great-granddaughter of Samuel Fuller, a passenger on the fabled *Mayflower*. Other noted early forbears of Gertrude's include two more of her son's sixth great-grandfathers: Nathaniel Wales whom Richard Mather, father of Increase and grandfather of Cotton, mentions in his journal as a shipmate on the *James* which docked in Boston on 17 August 1635, and whose father-in-law, Humphrey Atherton, served as a Massachusetts legislator;

and the Reverend John Forbes, a distinguished divine in the Church of Scotland who was expelled by James I because of the growing influence of Scottish Presbyterianism, thence moving in 1611 to Middleburg, Holland, near the English Separatists then living in Leiden before they took passage to Plymouth in the New World.<sup>5</sup>

Family traditions established thus early continued. Successive generations added measurably to the farming lands that that first Thomas luckily acquired through the inheritance of the second of his three wives, Elizabeth Humphrey; beyond a flourishing farm, his grandson, also named Thomas, by his death in 1736 had discovered a new avenue for the family's financial well-being in shipping interests on the North River in Marshfield, Massachusetts, where the original Thomas Doggett had eventually settled, about thirty-five miles southwest of Boston. Though the next Thomas continued the family's interest in shipping, he seems to have realized, like his immigrant ancestor, that farming held the most promise for what was becoming a clan to be reckoned with in Bristol County. Why he then sold his property in Marshfield cannot now be determined; quite possibly, he simply took advantage of an opportunity to multiply his real estate holdings by moving to Middleboro, certainly a wise step given his three sons, each of whom would rightly expect an inheritance. The youngest of these, Simeon, made the most of his share by learning carpentry and erecting a substantial house in Middleboro, marrying a devout Episcopalian, Abigail Pratt, from North Carolina, remaining a staunch Tory during the Revolution, yet managing to die a respectable citizen at age eighty-seven in 1823.

With Simeon the Doggett family had attained a position that allowed it to contemplate other vocations besides farming and river transport: of Simeon's three sons, the oldest inherited his land, the second became a merchant in Middleboro, and the youngest entered Brown University in 1785, primarily because his "father . . . though not rich, was in easy circumstance, and was able to . . . maintain him there."<sup>6</sup> Duly graduating in 1788, Simeon junior, after diligent study of the classics and prolonged debate with his conscience, concluded that the Episcopalian "order" so esteemed by his parents lacked meaning for him; rather, deeming Congregationalism "the original form of church polity," he was ordained a minister in that



denomination in 1793. Further theological examination prompted him to espouse Unitarianism, his second but permanent change of creed; indeed, while laboring as a minister in Rhode Island in the mid-1790s Samuel delivered a sermon subsequently published as one of the first to defend Unitarian doctrine openly. Like many ministers of the period, Simeon augmented his income by teaching. When the good townsmen of Bristol decided to establish an academy in Taunton in 1796, they engaged Simeon as its first preceptor, a position he held until he retired from education in 1813. The liberal religious bent of the founders of Bristol Academy permitted Simeon free indulgence of his own spiritual beliefs unencumbered by conservative restrictions. Upon his retirement he moved with his wife and eight children to Mendon, Massachusetts, where at last his Unitarian principles fully flowered when he accepted the offer of the church there to be its preacher but only after it altered completely a Congregational "creed and covenant, which he neither believed nor understood." After over a quarter century in Mendon he took his final ministerial post in the small town of Raynham where he labored from 1831 to 1845, dying there in 1852, the last survivor of his college class, the second oldest living graduate of Brown, the oldest teacher of any Massachusetts public school, and the oldest Unitarian minister in the country.

As Simeon's father's success in farming culminated the pattern begun by his emigrant forbear of physically tying his progeny's fortune and position to property, so Simeon's own career reached the pinnacle of another family tradition. The ministry as a vocation had skipped several generations of the descendants of John Forbes who was graduated from St. Andrews University in 1583, ordained a Presbyterian minister a decade later, appointed head of the general assembly of the Presbyterian church in Scotland by 1605, and banished from his native soil the next year by a redoubtably shortsighted ruler. He became a distinguished clergyman of transplanted English worshipers in Holland and ultimately an *Anglican* bishop. Two and a half centuries later one of his descendants in America followed the way paved so dedicatedly by his eminent ancestor, doing so with characteristic energy. This was the Reverend Perez Fobes—"Forbes" having been altered to "Fobes" by the bishop's son, also named John, when he emigrated to America. Like his third

great-grandfather, Perez was also graduated from a renowned institution of higher learning, in his case Harvard in 1762; and, like Bishop John Forbes, the Reverend Perez Fobes, while he never lost his spiritual fervor, did manifest it in various forms, serving successively as a Unitarian preacher, a Congregational minister, an Army chaplain during the Revolution, a professor of Natural Philosophy at Brown (and later vice-president, acting president, and College Fellow there), and a pastor at the small church in Raynham, succeeding his father-in-law, the Reverend John Wales, himself Raynham's first minister. When Simeon Doggett married Anonima Warner "Nancy" Fobes, daughter of Perez and his wife Prudence Wales Fobes (daughter of the Reverend John Wales and a member of another Massachusetts family of consequence, Hazadiah Leonard), in an important way he was merely extending a commitment to ministerial life begun generations earlier by Bishop John Forbes in Scotland. When he accepted the post of minister in Raynham, he became the last of three generations of clergy there—Wales, Fobes, and Doggett—allied not just by spiritual occupation but by marriage as well. Thus, when Norris's younger brother Charles, long the only source for information on Norris's ancestry, affirmed that a "long line of Doggetts—probably Unitarians—[were] buried in Taunton," and when Charles Caldwell Dobie, whose own source was doubtless Charles, surmised that, if available, the Doggett "family Bible" would disclose an equally "long line of Unitarian ministers in the lists of births and deaths" therein, they are both partially correct,<sup>7</sup> for, as seen, at least one of Norris's progenitors fully embraced Unitarianism and another flirted with it, though none is buried in Taunton. Even so, Charles's hazy statement and Dobie's uninformed supposition cloud more than they clarify: the clerical tradition among Doggett and allied family lines, while obviously a strong one, ranged over a wide variety of religious beliefs—Scottish Presbyterianism, English Anglicanism, New England Congregationalism, and Southern Episcopalianism—before coalescing in Unitarianism in mid-nineteenth-century Massachusetts.

Besides farming as a tool for achieving solid social prestige and preaching as a means for realizing notable religious respectability, Norris's maternal antecedents also established another family tradition, that is, a

commitment to community service. Beginning with Humphrey Atherton who had been a legislator in the fledgling colony of Massachusetts Bay and Thomas Doggett who regularly discharged town appointments in Marshfield as juryman, constable, and surveyor, official colonial records enumerate the names of many Doggetts, Athertons, Waleses, Fobeses, Fullers, and Leonards, all performing useful services in their communities. A case in point is the family of Gertrude's grandparents Simeon and Nancy Fobes Doggett. Of their five sons who lived to maturity, one co-founded Jacksonville, Florida, which he named for the U.S. President who had appointed him a territorial judge, another was a representative of the Massachusetts General Court and served on various town committees in Mendon, a third became a medical doctor well-known for his professional commitment, a fourth entered the ministry, serving for many years in Bridgewater, Massachusetts, and the last had embarked on an auspicious legal career before dying at 22.

A final family tradition traceable to Gertrude's ancestors has previously been intimated: a devotion to both education and knowledge. Again, Norris's great-grandfather, the Reverend Simeon Doggett, serves well as model. Although he was not the first college graduate among Norris's progenitors—both the Reverend John Wales and the Reverend Perez Fobes were graduated from Harvard—in combining his own love of classical learning with his wife's inheritance of university training, he bequeathed to his sons a desire to acquire as much education as possible. Perhaps the life of his second son, Gertrude's father, most convincingly illustrates this desire. Like his older brother, Judge John Locke Doggett, Samuel Wales Doggett (born in 1800), studied law and migrated south from Massachusetts. Settling first in Abbeville, South Carolina, where he opened a law practice, he soon moved on to Charleston. Here in 1824 he married Harriet Wotton (born in Charleston in 1804), daughter of James Wotton and Chloe Campbell. In Charleston two educational enterprises attracted him: first, he founded and for more than fifteen years directed a female seminary for the daughters of wealthy Charleston aristocrats; second, with his brother-in-law Jonathan A. Wotton, likewise an educator, he instituted the first free public school in Charleston in an area of the city known as Hempstead.

Having imbibed a taste for education from his father, Samuel in turn engendered a predilection for it in his sons. In 1838 when a cholera epidemic forced him and his family to flee the seemingly unhealthfully humid Southern climate and return to Mendon where he bought his father's holdings, his oldest son, Samuel Wales Doggett, Jr. (born in 1824 in Charleston), accompanied him, but the younger Samuel returned to Charleston in 1844 after teaching school in Raynham and Bridgewater, useful preparation for the seminary he opened in Jacksonville the next year. During the next few years he worked as a teacher in New Orleans and then as secretary of the board of education of San Francisco where he had moved by 1858 after a stint of mining in California's Eldorado County. Simeon Locke Doggett (born in 1829 in Charleston), having become a lawyer like his uncle the judge, was admitted to the Massachusetts bar in 1856. Moving the next year to Dubuque, Iowa, he followed family precedent by opening a "Select High School" at which his wife Mary Ann White taught English and piano, while Simeon took up what slack remained by teaching German, French, Latin, and Greek. Although the school closed after only six years in 1864, it left an indelible mark on the small community's educational life.<sup>8</sup> Theophilus Melancthon Doggett (born in 1833 in Charleston), like his two older brothers, also left the family farm at a relatively youthful age. By 1858 he had traveled to Chicago where he worked as an attorney with various firms during the next few years.<sup>9</sup> How Theophilus might have become involved in education, beyond garnering his own law degree, can only be a matter of speculation for he was killed at the Battle of Shiloh in April 1862 during the Civil War, leaving a young wife and infant daughter back home in Massachusetts where he had sent them for safekeeping prior to his enlistment on 26 December 1861 as a First Lieutenant in the Fifty-seventh Illinois Infantry.<sup>10</sup> Gertrude's youngest brother, Lawrence Bryant Doggett (born in 1845 in Mendon), also died in the Civil War as a prisoner at Andersonville, Georgia, in August 1864, having enlisted as a private in the Twenty-second Massachusetts Infantry on 16 September 1861, when he was only sixteen.<sup>11</sup> William Alfred Doggett, Samuel's fourth son, the first of his children to be born in Mendon, in 1839, eschewed his older brothers' educational lead, opting instead for a possibly more lucrative business

career, first in clocks and jewelry in Chicago by 1868, and later in Lincoln, Nebraska, in sewing machines by 1880.<sup>12</sup> As for Samuel's three daughters older than Gertrude, Julia Harriet Doggett Wheeler (born 1827), Malvina Campbell Doggett Hale (born 1831), and Narcissa Newton Doggett Carleton (born 1836) married, respectively, a farm laborer, a house painter, and a boot factory worker—suggesting that Samuel, despite his own experience in the instruction of girls in South Carolina, was not as keen that his own daughters, apart from Gertrude as will be seen, benefit from the effects of education as he was for his sons to employ their training well.

Through his mother, then, Norris fell heir to many ancestral conventions. His was a family that firmly recognized its real estate as indispensable in grounding its roots, periodically reviewed and renewed its religious affiliations as necessary for maintaining proper spiritual conviction, responsibly performed public service as obligatory for discharging inevitable civic duties, and, perhaps most telling, consistently enshrined education as requisite for creating an altogether fulfilling life. The Doggetts and families with whom they intermarried, principally in New England but also in the South, represented the pride of what their literary descendant would term "the Anglo-Saxon."<sup>13</sup> Presumably, when Norris wrote his essay, "The Frontier Gone at Last," he little realized that in casting the "Friesland swamps" as the ultimate home of such Anglo-Saxons, he was actually referring to his own distant progenitors, some of whom, like Bishop John Forbes, the Scottish émigré, had dwelt not far away from that Dutch province during their religious exile from England and Scotland.<sup>14</sup> Nor would Norris probably have known that the Anglo-Saxons he describes as ever moving Westward in what would become America, "pushing the Frontier ahead of them, scrimmaging with the wilderness, blazing the way," mirror the history of his own family who conquered an unforgiving and inhospitable land in Massachusetts before sending forth its sons, in the broadest sense, further west to settle in Chicago, Iowa, Nebraska, and, finally, California.



What of Norris's father's people? The ancestry of B.F.'s mother, Lydia Colton (born in 1805 in Longmeadow, Massachusetts), in some ways resembles

Gertrude's. George Colton, Norris's fifth great-grandfather, like Thomas Doggett, also appeared in Massachusetts, antecedents unknown, with little more to recommend him than gritty determination.<sup>15</sup> That determination, however, was enough, for he settled in Longmeadow where his progeny remained for two centuries, slowly adding to both their salience there and their property. Inevitably, of course, family lands, continually subdivided, cannot support all descendants, a situation forcing B.F.'s grandfather Henry Colton (born in 1771 in Longmeadow), oldest of three sons of Ebenezer Colton and Deborah Chandler, to try his fortune first in upstate New York and then in eastern Michigan as a farmer. And herein, of course, lies the major difference between Gertrude's and B.F.'s families. Where the Doggetts remained in, or in the case of Gertrude's father returned to, Massachusetts until her own generation, B.F.'s family began its western migration two generations earlier; where the Doggetts surrounded themselves with extended family, all, like themselves, deeply entrenched in native soil, the Coltons exchanged the relative security represented by a familiar past for the potential hazards augured by an unknown future; and where the Doggetts continued to farm family lands, producing an income adequate to educating children for a variety of other careers, the Coltons left Massachusetts in the fond hope of finding conditions more amenable to any existence.

Apparently, they succeeded in Michigan—to a point. Henry Colton and his wife Lydia Booth (born in 1770 in Enfield, Connecticut) both died not far from Pittsfield where they had initially located. Meanwhile, Lydia, one of the three children they had brought with them, had in 1825 married Josiah Norris (born in 1803 in New York) when the family had been living in New York for a time on their way from Massachusetts.<sup>16</sup> The newlyweds accompanied her parents to Pittsfield, but after their deaths, Josiah and Lydia migrated further west, settling just east of Grand Rapids in Austerlitz, Plainfield Township, Kent County.<sup>17</sup> The Norrises had five children: David B. (born 1827), James Henry (born 1830), Sarah M. (born 1833), B.F., and Josiah B. (born 1839 in Pittsfield).<sup>18</sup> David, heir to his father's property, died in 1857, leaving a three-year-old daughter whom his parents subsequently reared. His death suddenly altered the prospects of his next younger brother; despite unexpectedly inheriting the

family farm at his father's death in 1865, Henry, as he preferred to be called, sold it four years later and moved to Grand Haven in Muskegon County where he became an engineer in a sawmill owned by a relative of his wife. In 1900 he died tragically from burns he sustained in an explosion at the Grand Rapids Vapor Steam Co., where he had worked as a night watchman after his retirement.<sup>19</sup> Of Sarah M., B.F.'s sole sister, nothing more is known.<sup>20</sup> Realizing their probable fates as younger sons, both B.F. and younger brother Josiah B. eventually left the farm for greener pastures. For Josiah the first place he grazed was the Civil War during which he served in the Sixth Michigan Cavalry as a wagoner from September 1862 to March 1863, later re-enlisting and serving until his honorable discharge in April 1864. After the war, Josiah may have returned to Michigan, but by 1866 he had moved to Chicago. Associated in business with B.F. until 1872, Josiah described himself as a "traveling agent" in his military pension application in 1882. He continued to reside in Chicago until his death in 1922.<sup>21</sup>

Within less than forty years of Henry Colton's death in 1831, his daughter Lydia and her husband had also died; furthermore, their son Henry had sold their farm out of the family, none of their descendants remained in Kent County, and only Henry and his family had even stayed in Michigan. Yet, as he did from his mother's forbears, Norris also inherited family traits on his father's side. Great-grandfather Henry and other Colton ancestors bequeathed their persistence to him: when family holdings could no longer sustain Henry in Longmeadow, he moved elsewhere; similarly, his daughter and her husband Josiah fearlessly made their way on their own farm across the state from her father, just as their younger, landless sons met potential economic disaster by adapting themselves to urban life and supporting themselves in the teeming metropolis of Chicago. From grandfather Josiah, Norris inherited a sense of family loyalty that would mark his own adult life as evidenced by his close ties to his mother and even to his father whom he eventually had much reason to dismiss completely. And from the examples of both his paternal and maternal uncles he learned that patriotism sometimes necessitated tangible demonstration, especially in time of war.

Aside from dissimilarities in family backgrounds, Gertrude and B.F. also differed dramatically in how they emerged from the cocoon of a comforting family to confront the rigors of young adulthood. Gertrude was born on 20 May 1841 in Mendon, the last daughter and penultimate child of her parents; unlike her older siblings, Gertrude knew none of the delights and ease of a relatively languid existence in the South where even her staid New England father acquired pro-slavery sympathies during his years there.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, life in Mendon was probably not particularly burdensome: in 1870 her father estimated his personal and real estate together at \$50,000.<sup>23</sup> As her brothers and sisters steadily left their father's farm, so, too, did Gertrude herself, answering a call from brother Simeon in Dubuque, Iowa, to teach in his newly opened school.<sup>24</sup> What she taught remains unknown, but that Simeon considered her accomplished enough to utilize her talents at all suggests that she had received an education suitable to a young woman of the period. Indeed, when Gertrude left Iowa to relocate in Chicago in 1861, her experience in teaching at her brother's high school obviously helped her gain employment at the Kinzie School, located at the corner of Ohio and La Salle Streets.<sup>25</sup> According to Kinzie School records published in various *Annual Reports* of the Chicago Department of Public Instruction, beginning in 1862 Gertrude taught there for four academic years,<sup>26</sup> during which period she climbed the school's promotion ladder with astonishing celerity, even considering the necessarily truncated length of that ladder in an institution which during her association with it never boasted more than fourteen employees. In her second year, Gertrude earned between \$300 and \$425, depending on how much her previous experience at her brother's Iowa academy counted; hers is the last name on a list of Kinzie's twelve teachers, one "Head Ass't.," and the principal in the annual report for 1863. Even if she had earned the maximum salary available to her as a fairly new public-school teacher, the next year she increased it by nearly a fourth to \$525, more than any employee at her school earned, save Ira S. Baker, the principal, and one other teacher whose salary matched Gertrude's; ironically, even the "Head Ass't." made twenty-five dollars less than Gertrude. Her healthy raise accompanied a promotion as well: now listed as

"Principal" instructor, she taught approximately eighty-two students in both ninth and tenth grades; her name, again at the end of the faculty list, suggests that she had been the school's most recently hired instructor. For services rendered during her fourth year at Kinzie Gertrude earned \$625, representing nearly a twenty percent raise; again, one other teacher earned a similar amount, though two assistants at \$700 made more, as did the principal. This year, Gertrude taught some seventy-five eighth- and ninth-grade students.

Despite her clear success as a public school employee after four years on the job, Gertrude determined that education as a vocation lacked continuing charm for her, as confirmed by a Kinzie faculty list, dated 1 October 1866, which does not include her name. Instead, she focused her considerable youthful energies on more overtly cultural activities, electing to prepare herself for an acting career. As Richard Allan Davison has documented, throughout her married life and after, Gertrude carefully nursed a flair for the dramatic, frequently performing favorite roles in full costume and reading aloud from beloved authors such as Browning and Meredith just as her counterpart in *The Pit*, Laura, periodically reads to her husband Curtis Jadwin and surprised him one evening by donning costumes and acting out scenes from Victorien Sardou's *Théodora* (1884), Racine's *Athalie* (1691), and Bizet's *Carmen* (1875).<sup>27</sup> But Gertrude's interest in the theatre began much earlier than her post-marriage years, as her nephew, Laurence Locke Doggett, Simeon's son, avers in his autobiography: "Father took a great deal of pains to train [Aunt Gertrude] in elocution and literature, especially the plays of Shakespeare."<sup>28</sup> Accordingly, her desire to try her hand at acting is perhaps less surprising than one might think for this daughter of New England gentry and southern privilege. In fact, Gertrude began studying with Anna Cruise Cowell, a leading actress in Chicago and New York, before she quit her teaching position, if one can trust the "Amusements" column of the *Chicago Republican*: "Miss Gertrude Doggett . . . has for some time been a faithful teacher in our public schools, pursuing her dramatic studies after a hard day's work in the school-room."<sup>29</sup> However long she enjoyed Mrs. Cowell's expert tutelage, it evidently repaid her handsomely, for Gertrude debuted at the famous McVicker's Theatre on Monday, Christmas Eve, 24 De-

ember 1866, to ecstatically positive reviews in major Chicago newspapers. Starring as Elvira in August von Kotzebue's repertory standard *Pizarro* (English translation, 1799), in which her mentor played the subordinate role of Cora, Gertrude in her "first appearance" on stage exhibited

sufficient . . . prepossessi[on] to inspire favorable feelings in all hearts. She is youthful, fine-looking, and graceful in her movements; absolutely perfection in her part, and much more self-possessed before the footlights than is often the case in "first appearances." Something too mechanical, perhaps, in her gestures, but not more than was to be expected from a lady anxious to perfect herself in the "business" of the stage. As she gains experience, and learns to rely upon her own resources rather than the instruction of the teacher, this mechanical action will become easy and natural, and, of course, all the more perfect because of the long and careful drilling she has received in the *minutia* of stage attitudes and expression. Miss Doggett certainly has reason, and her friends also, to be satisfied with her first appearance. She has many of the elements of success, and we have reason to know that they are backed with a determination to rise in her profession that would win laurels under far less favorable auspices.<sup>30</sup>

Heady over such unqualified praise, Gertrude continued her conquest of Chicago theatre, acting next in two performances a week later on 31 December 1866 and New Year's Day 1867 as the Duchess de Torrenueva in James Robinson Planché's comedy *Faint Heart Never Won Fair Lady* (1839) in which, once again, her gracious acting coach took a lesser role, that of King Charles. While only the *Chicago Times* reviewed the play, other Chicago papers duly advertised "the second appearance on any stage" of "Miss Doggett," noting her previous "favorable . . . impression" on area theatre-goers.<sup>31</sup> But even before she completed her engagement in *Faint Heart*, the drama columns in Chicago newspapers began advertising Gertrude's forthcoming appearance in *Othello* as Desdemona on Saturday, 5 January 1867.<sup>32</sup> In the event, when McVicker's did stage Shakespeare's tragedy, not Gertrude but Mrs. Cowell herself played Desdemona, with her star

student taking the role of Emilia, "read[ing] the part well, and act[ing] creditably," according to the *Republican's* columnist.<sup>33</sup>

And then, as abruptly as the Chicago theatre world applauded her talent, following her acting ascent with unparalleled newspaper coverage, Gertrude's career as rapidly terminated: if she appeared in any more plays in Chicago during the winter of 1867, no newspapers recorded such a continuation of her dramatic work—which would be more than passing strange given their previous enthusiasm. Although Charles told Walker that after her intoxicating two weeks of success in Chicago his mother joined a road company which traveled to Cincinnati, and Dobie stated that "an engagement in St. Louis follow[ed]" her Chicago debut, surviving evidence does not support either contention.<sup>34</sup> No, triumphant as Gertrude may have been as a dramatic neophyte, that triumph was as spectacularly short-lived as it was remarkably unanticipated, relegating Gertrude to an equally unexpected limbo.



Unlike his wife-to-be, B.F. knew little contentment as a youngster. Born on 10 January 1836 on his father's place in Pittsfield, a small town near Ann Arbor, he was the third son and fourth child in the family. After he turned fourteen, the Norrises moved across the state to Austerlitz, another rural community in close proximity to another modestly sized town, Grand Rapids. The eighty-acre farm his father purchased just north of the Grand River northeast of the village provided at best a scanty, hardscrabble existence for the family, even after B.F.'s older brother David moved away when he married in 1858. Still, the Norrises were not altogether destitute, since a house girl, Francis Knickerbocker, and a hired boy, Aaron Morse, had boarded with them before the move from Pittsfield.<sup>35</sup> Unfortunately, B.F.'s noticeable limp, a result of "chronic disease of the hip," according to Walker, made him a less productive contributor to the family's livelihood than others.<sup>36</sup> Perspicacious, as his later business acumen attests, B.F. saw the proverbial handwriting on the wall: when his father decided to take his son to a boarding school in the thriving town of Grand Rapids, B.F. alternatively decided that he much preferred the opportunity to support himself. Family legend holds that when Josiah stopped for lunch in Grand Rapids, B.F.,

attracted by the wares displayed in the window of a watch and jewelry store, entered it with all the pluck of that exemplar of American self-reliance, Benjamin Franklin, offered himself as an apprentice to its owner, and was accepted forthwith. While no documentary evidence confirms this story, one Aaron Dikeman, the first jeweler in Michigan west of Ann Arbor, did own a jewelry store on Monroe, Grand Rapids' main street, just north of the Michigan Central Railroad line bringing goods to be shipped on the Grand River to Lake Michigan at Grand Haven; B.F. probably learned the intricacies of watchmaking and the trade of jeweler under Dikeman.<sup>37</sup>

The next period of B.F.'s life, a time of several clearly eventful years, is by far the murkiest, customarily passed through quickly and with sparse commentary, if any, by Norris biographers. Charles contended that after two years as an apprentice his father, armed with both a knowledge of and stock in his trade, became a traveling salesman for a New York jewelry firm; Walker elaborates this point by noting that the unnamed New York house dispatched young B.F. to Chicago as its "representative."<sup>38</sup> Both of these statements lack authority, however. What can be stated unequivocally is that B.F. considered Grand Rapids his home in 1853, when he was seventeen, corroborated by his signature thus dated in his personal bible; that four years later, he married Ruth A. Rossiter on 9 May 1857, when she was seventeen, in Lockport, Illinois, a small town southwest of Chicago; that the couple had one daughter, Florence, in the late spring of 1859; and that in 1860 the young family was still living in Lockport where history was repeating itself. Listed by a census taker as a watchmaker with real property valued at \$800, the one-time apprentice employed his own apprentice, eighteen-year-old Theodore B. Sterrin, who also boarded with the Norrises.<sup>39</sup> By 1860 as well, B.F. had also established his own firm, proudly designated B.F. Norris & Co., a wholesale business specializing in "Watches, Clocks & Jewelry," as noted in its *Thirteenth Annual Price-List*.<sup>40</sup> While the company eventually maintained offices in both New York at 197 Broadway and Chicago at 123 Lake Street, it had begun on a far less grandiose scale in Peoria, Illinois, where, according to an undated write-up in the *Peoria Transcript*, the local newspaper, B.F. had opened his first store on Adams Street near the center of town. Since Peoria lies over a

hundred miles southwest of Lockport, presumably B.F., if not his entire family, moved there while he operated his business in north central Illinois. The newspaper account further observes that the author of the write-up had “lost sight of [B.F.]” for several years but had recently met him again at his New York office, which “rank[ed] in every respect with the best and most successful in America.” Even B.F.’s peers remarked on his enviable success: a trade journal, *The Watchmaker and Jeweler*, at this time advised that those visiting either New York or Chicago should “call” on B.F. Norris & Co., “and to those who do not we would suggest that they write to the firm for one of their catalogues, which is one of the most complete issued by any in the trade”; certainly, the extent of tasteful goods offered in the catalogue for 1872 confirms this pronouncement. If B.F. ever lived in New York, city directories from the 1860s and 1870s do not list him; most likely, he commuted between his two stores, preferring to make Chicago his principal base. Though he continued to live in Lockport until 1867, his name first appears in a Chicago city directory in 1865, by which date he had evidently taken on as a partner Henry D. Rossiter—probably a relative of his wife—to manage the New York house. He had also hired as clerk and bookkeeper William M. Alister, a young Scot who had recently arrived in the city, and who would become a partner himself within two years. In 1866, B.F. replaced Rossiter with his brother Josiah, who boarded at the Matteson House at the corner of Randolph and Dearborn. The next year saw B.F. himself boarding alone at Revere House, located at the corner of Clark and Kinzie, having previously divorced Ruth and thereby freeing himself of familial encumbrance.<sup>41</sup>

Given the lack of similarity in their pre-marital lives as teenagers and young adults, Norris’s parents, not surprisingly, also differed in temperament, taste, and interests. Certainly, the “very distinguished” woman “with dark eyes . . . rather tall . . . of great talent, with a fine sense of the dramatic” whom daughter-in-law Jeannette Norris recalled to Walker in an interview contrasts starkly with B.F.’s “genial manner [and] always temperate and industrious” personality recalled by his Peoria friend.<sup>42</sup> Where Gertrude loved books—not only to read and re-read but also to savor aloud—B.F. had little time for such

pursuits, concentrating his entrepreneurial vigor instead on building a respectable business, the profit from which he expected to sustain him and his dependents in a fashion quite removed from that of his childhood on a poor farm. For her part Gertrude appreciated the value of a liberal education well buttressed by classic literature such as Shakespeare’s plays and English novels (her mother had given her a two-volume edition of Bulwer-Lytton’s *Devereux* [1829] in 1854), while B.F.’s apprenticeship ended his formal education, rudimentary at best, entirely.<sup>43</sup> The young Gertrude also seems to have been more interested in her family than her soon-to-be husband was. She came west to Iowa because her brother Simeon expressed a need for her abilities in his school; she abandoned that school in favor of greater independence in Chicago where a second brother Theophilus had established his law practice; still a third brother, William, had also come to Chicago by 1868, remaining there for at least four years. Nor did this pattern cease after Gertrude married: her aging parents lived with the Norrises for almost three years until 1872, when Samuel returned to Mendon to die; Harriet continued to make Chicago her home until the Norrises moved to San Francisco permanently in the summer of 1885. While visiting her aunt and grandmother, Gertrude’s niece, Ella S. Carleton, fortuitously met her uncle’s partner, Alister, an encounter which led to their subsequent marriage on 31 December 1873; and Ella’s mother, Narcissa Carleton, had joined her relatives by 1880, when she was living west of the city in Batavia with three sons.<sup>44</sup> Aside from brother Josiah and his small family, however, B.F. evidently kept in touch with none of his relatives, either before or after marrying Gertrude.<sup>45</sup> A long-suffering husband, he clearly was, though perhaps not a dutiful brother. Finally, that Gertrude yearned for social recognition is not secret; unlike many people in mid-century America, she found no clash between a respectable social position and a budding stage career. When her marriage neutralized the chance to accomplish the latter, she devoted herself to promoting the former. B.F., on the other hand, less covert, more bluff, saw the love of money not as the root of all evil but as the ticket, if not to paradise itself, then to a reasonable facsimile thereof. In a short decade he parlayed a meager \$1300 in property and personal assets in Lockport to a whopping \$70,000 in Chicago, despite having divorced

and married, closed one store and opened two others, and moved several times in that same decade.<sup>46</sup>

The marriage of the two highlights a last crucial difference between them. Notice of that marriage on 27 May 1867 was printed in the *Chicago Tribune* two days later: "At 295 Chicago av. by Rev. Robert Collyer, Mr. Benjamin F. Norris and Miss Gertrude J. [sic] Doggett, both of Chicago."<sup>47</sup> Born in Keighly, England, in Brontë country near Haworth parsonage, Collyer had originally been a blacksmith before entering the ministry full-time as a Methodist and emigrating to America. In 1859 he converted to Unitarianism, preaching the inaugural sermon in May of that year of the newly organized Unity Church in Chicago, which he founded and for which he served as first pastor for twenty years.<sup>48</sup> Why he elected to perform the Norrises' marriage ceremony at his home rather than his church at the corner of Chicago and Dearborn Streets is uncertain. Far more important is the couple's choice of minister. Charles asserted that his father was "a good Presbyterian," a memory substantiated by B.F.'s uniting himself with Chicago's Second Presbyterian Church on 5 May 1876;<sup>49</sup> opposed to this is Gertrude's religious heritage stemming most recently from her grandfather, the Reverend Simeon Doggett, whose denominational career had been peripatetic until he ultimately selected the Unitarianism he found more to his liberal tastes than the stricter Puritanism-infused Congregationalism of his Doggett ancestors and the high-church Episcopalianism of his southern mother, Abigail Pratt Doggett. Gertrude may have lost her bid for dramatic fame by marrying a persistent suitor in B.F., but she won the first skirmish in an ongoing ecclesiastical clash with him by engineering that the city's leading Unitarian minister marry them. When she accepted the Episcopalian faith a year and a half later through baptism at Trinity Church on 18 October 1868, she defeated her husband in a pitched battle. Finally, Gertrude declared the field hers: an 1882 list of "Communicants" at Trinity includes not just her name but that of her husband as well, six years after he had transferred his "letter" to Second Presbyterian.<sup>50</sup>

Thus, the Norrises settled into an outwardly stable existence as husband and wife, projecting a placid exterior which effectively camouflaged tensions lurking just beneath it, tensions inevitably the result of the many dissim-

ilarities between them. The first blow to their happiness came when their baby daughter, Grace Colton, died on 20 April 1869, less than four months after her birth on 31 December 1868, and only two weeks after her christening.<sup>51</sup> The birth of their first son, Frank, nearly a year later on 5 March 1870 partially eased their pain, as it would again at the death of a second daughter, Florence Colton, over two years later in September 1872.<sup>52</sup> Not increased wealth nor rising social prominence could compensate the suffering couple in their grief. In some ways, perhaps, B.F. endured greater pain, for this was the third child he had lost, but for Gertrude, younger than her husband, less experienced in the world, and acclimating herself not to her second but to her first marriage, the deaths of both her daughters must have caused almost unendurable anguish. Yet go on the couple must. Contriving to repress the effects of the present, concrete cares they had experienced and the sublimated, abstract oppositions they harbored, Gertrude and B.F. together channeled their energies toward improving their family's lot and status in Chicago, naturally lavishing attention on their surviving child whom his father ardently viewed as the scion of his ever prospering company, a commercial force to be reckoned with in a city known for its powerful mercantile tycoons, while Gertrude saw "Frankie" as the fulfillment of her thwarted cultural aspiration in a western locale far removed from her aristocratic roots in New England and South Carolina.<sup>53</sup> Though definitely an inheritor of personality traits from both his parents, as well as from their ancestors, Norris would eventually choose the cultural over the commercial option for his own life's work.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>*Records of Parishioners, Communicants, Baptisms, Marriages, Confirmations, Burials, and Offerings, of the Parish of Trinity Church, Chicago, Illinois, Diocese of Illinois, Archives, St. James' Cathedral, records the baptism of both Frank Norris and his older sister, Grace Colton Norris.*

<sup>2</sup>Sullivan preached his first sermon at Trinity on Easter Sunday, 12 April 1868, and continued to labor there until 14 April 1879.

<sup>3</sup>See *Edwards' Official Chicago Directory for 1869* (Chicago: Richard Edwards, 1869), 661, and *Edwards' Thirteenth Annual Directory . . . of the City of Chicago* (Chicago: Richard Edwards, 1870), 614; "Birth-place of a Novelist," *Chicago Tribune*, 4 December 1939, 14, clarifies confusion regarding the Michigan Avenue address. Charles told Walker his parents had first lived in a single room above a photography shop; possibly this was at 25 Washington Street, the last



address for B.F. before city directories locate him on Wabash Avenue (*John C. W. Bailey's Chicago City Directory, 1867-68* [Chicago: John W.C. Bailey, 1867], 724).

<sup>4</sup>The entry for the Norris family in the 1870 Illinois Census for Cook Co., Chicago, Fourth Ward, taken 1 July 1870, incorrectly lists all three Norrises as Doggetts, the census taker assuming that Gertrude's father was the head of the household.

<sup>5</sup>Information on Gertrude's ancestry derives from Samuel Bradlee Doggett, *A History of the Doggett-Daggett Family* (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, 1844); [www.familysearch.com](http://www.familysearch.com), Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; [sml.simplenet.com/smlawson/wales.htm](http://sml.simplenet.com/smlawson/wales.htm); and Lawrence Fobes, *The Fobes Family in America* ([Atlantic Highlands, NJ]: n.p., 1976).

<sup>6</sup>Charles H. Brigham, *Biographical Sketch of Rev. Simeon Doggett* (Boston: Crosby, Michaels, 1852), 6.

<sup>7</sup>Interview of Charles G. Norris, 8 July 1931, Franklin D. Walker Papers, Bancroft Library; Charles Caldwell Dobie, "Frank Norris, or, Up from Culture," *American Mercury*, 13 (April 1928), 415.

<sup>8</sup>Lawrence K. Hall, *Doggett of Springfield* (Springfield, Mass.: Springfield College, 1964), 10.

<sup>9</sup>*D.B. Cooke & Co.'s Directory of Chicago for the Year 1858* (Chicago: D.B. Cooke, 1858), 73.

<sup>10</sup>Dobie's declaration that Theophilus "establish[ed] a private school just outside of Chicago" (415) where his younger sister Gertrude began teaching at age sixteen has been endlessly repeated in Norris biography. Even so, no evidence survives to support this supposition, nor is it likely that a young lawyer in Chicago had any spare time to devote to such an enterprise.

<sup>11</sup>Most Union states have published multi-volume sets of official records documenting the military record of their own soldiers serving in the Civil War.

<sup>12</sup>See *Bailey & Edwards' Chicago Directory* (Chicago: Edwards & Co., 1868), 246; *Edwards' Official Directory for 1869*, 242; *Edwards' Thirteenth Annual Directory*, 224; *Edwards' Fourteenth Annual Directory . . . of the City of Chicago* (Chicago: Richard Edwards, 1871), 265; 1870 Illinois Census for Cook Co.; and 1880 Nebraska Census for Lancaster Co.

<sup>13</sup>"The Frontier Gone at Last," *World's Work*, 3, (February 1902), 1728.

<sup>14</sup>One could argue, of course, that Bishop Forbes, as a mere transplant to Holland from his native Scotland hardly qualifies as Frisian ancestor of Norris. But while his Separatist ancestors, the Fullers, temporarily sojourned in Leiden, one of them, Edward Fuller, who, as mentioned above, arrived in the New World on the *Mayflower*, married Bridget Mary Lee, daughter of Dutch native Joos Lee, three years before the Pilgrims departed Holland. As for Norris's Anglo-Saxon origins, not only were most of his progenitors' roots English, but Joos Lee's wife, Anne Hungerford, descended from a Wiltshire clan traceable to the 1100s.

<sup>15</sup>John Milton Colton, *A Genealogical Record of the Descendants of Quartermaster George Colton* (Philadelphia: Wickersham Printing, 1912) provides information on B.F.'s mother's ancestry.

<sup>16</sup>Their marriage is recorded in Fred Q. Bowman, *10,000 Vital Records of Western New York, 1809-1850* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 1985), 163. Research has not discovered the identities of Josiah Norris's parents.

<sup>17</sup>Josiah's farm, consisting of eighty acres or one-eighth section, can be seen in *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of Kent, Michigan* (Chicago: H. Belden, 1876), 31.

<sup>18</sup>The 1840 Michigan Census Index, volume 5, 125, suggests that there may also have been an older sister, name unknown, who would have been at least ten at the time the census was recorded but not more than fifteen; if the "female 10-15" on the census is indeed a daughter rather than a hired girl living with the family, by 1850 she had either married or died, since no such daughter was enumerated with the family in that year's census. Richard A. Reinhardt of Carmel, Calif., supplied much of the information herein on the family of Josiah Norris, his great-great-grandfather through Josiah's second son, James Henry Norris; see also the 1840-1880 Michigan Censuses for Washtenaw, Kent, and Ottawa Counties and the 1870-80 Illinois Censuses for Cook Co.

<sup>19</sup>See "Night Watchman Hurt by Explosion in Vapor Stove Works," *Grand Rapids Herald*, 14 September 1900, and "Died from his Burns," *Grand Rapids Herald*, 6 October 1900.

<sup>20</sup>Charles Norris told Franklin Walker in a 1 November 1930 letter that Curtis Jadwin in *The Pit* was "the best portrait my brother ever drew. He is my father to the life" (Franklin D. Walker Papers, Bancroft Library). Noteworthy then is the scene in which Curtis recalls to his friend Sam Gretry his childhood memories of his "little sister" Sadie (*The Pit* [New York: Doubleday, Page, 1903], 200). Of course, Sarah was in fact B.F.'s older, rather than younger, sister, but the facts that Sadie is a diminutive of Sarah, the real sister's name, and that B.F. and Sarah were less than two years apart in age seem more than coincidental. If so, then Jadwin's lament of his own sister's unexpected death from consumption when she was eighteen perhaps provides an explanation for why B.F.'s sister does not appear on the 1860 Michigan Census rolls.

<sup>21</sup>*Edwards' Annual Directory* (Chicago: Edwards' New Directory Office, 1866), 704, is the first directory containing Josiah's name; his pension papers are in the U.S. Army archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>22</sup>In the 8 July 1931 interview conducted by Walker, Charles reported that Gertrude's mother had been given a personal slave, a little girl, to play with by her father, and in Charles' novel *Pig Iron* Mary Smith, the character he loosely patterns after his Southern grandmother, brings with her a former slave when she moves North with her husband and children, "faithful old Cora, who . . . refused to leave her beloved mistress" ([New York: E.P. Dutton, 1926], 5). Charles can be pardoned for accidents of time and place: he was not alive when his older brother was born, nor did his parents have much contact with extended family members during his youth. Far less exculpatory is how he used, or, more specifically, misused what he did and didn't know. A case in point is *Pig Iron*, tenuously based on Gertrude's parents' lives in Massachusetts after they moved back to Mendon from Charlestown, in which Charles haphazardly names characters after Gertrude's immediate family with no thought given to their real-life relationships. This novel and Charles's random remarks on his family's history in letters to and interviews with Walker accentuate much of the problem in previous Norris biography: a few facts, a great deal of speculation, and considerable twisting of the truth to fill in gaps constitute much of it. An observation offered by Eunice Maverig, a character in William Dean Howells's 1888 novel *April Hopes* seems incisively applicable here: Norris biographers have too

often been guilty of "explor[ing his] ancestral history on both sides for the origin of [his] traits, and there [are] times when [they have] reduced them in formula to mere congeries of inherited characteristics" ([New York: Library of America, 1989], 585).

<sup>23</sup>See the 1870 Illinois Census for Cook Co.

<sup>24</sup>Hall, 10.

<sup>25</sup>While *Halpin & Bailey's Chicago City Directory for the Year 1861-62* (Chicago: Halpin & Bailey, 1861), 100, lists Gertrude as living at 130 North Carpenter Street and employed in a "school," published statistics of the Kinzie School do not include her as a teacher there until the tenth annual report for the calendar year 1863, meaning that she probably secured a job at Kinzie at the beginning of the 1862-63 academic year, though she could certainly have taught somewhere else the previous winter, thereby certifying her occupation in the 1861-62 city directory (Department of Public Instruction, City of Chicago, *Tenth Annual Report of the Board of Education for the Year Ending December 31, 1863* [Chicago: Chicago Times Book and Job Printing House, 1864], 60).

<sup>26</sup>Statistics on Gertrude's teaching career appear in the tenth through twelfth annual reports of Chicago's public schools covering 1 January 1863 through 1 October 1866 (Department of Public Instruction, City of Chicago, *Eleventh Annual Report of the Board of Education from January 1, 1864 to August 31, 1865* [Chicago: Jameson & Morse, 1865], 56 and 88; Department of Public Instruction, City of Chicago, *Twelfth Annual Report of the Board of Education, from September 1, 1865 to August 31, 1866* [Chicago: Rounds & James, 1866], 118 and 145).

<sup>27</sup>Richard Allan Davison, "Gertrude Doggett Norris: Professional Actress, Dramatic reader, and Mother of Novelists," *Quarterly News-Letter* (Book Club of California), 56 (Winter 1990), 8-9, quotes a letter from Alice Norris, Gertrude's granddaughter-in-law, concerning family "memories" of Gertrude's dramatic penchant. Charles wrote Walker on 1 November 1930 that "there is no question that my brother had my mother in mind for the character of Laura Dearborn"; see, for example, *The Pit*, 215-16, 309-11. In San Francisco Gertrude later helped organize the Browning Society for which she served as reader and program chair for years. Kathleen Norris, her daughter-in-law, recalled that on her honeymoon with Charles, Gertrude read nightly for two weeks to them from his brother's works (all of *McTeague* [1899] and *The Pit*), Kipling, Noyes, Francis Thompson, and, naturally, Browning's *The Ring and The Book* (manuscript, "Family Gathering," 4, Norris Family Papers, Bancroft Library).

<sup>28</sup>*Man and a School* (New York: Association Press, 1943), 2.

<sup>29</sup>24 December 1866, 3. Mrs. Cowell, a native of Scotland, had climbed dizzying theatrical heights in New York City, playing Rosalind in *As You Like It* before coming to Chicago where she became part of the McVicker's troupe in 1865 (Davison, "Gertrude Doggett Norris," 5).

<sup>30</sup>"Amusements," *Chicago Republican*, 25 December 1866, 2. Encomia similar in both length and content appeared in three other Chicago dailies: the *Evening Journal* predicted that Gertrude "will assuredly attain a high position in the profession" ("Amusements," 24 December 1866, 4); the *Tribune* noted that her "entrance was the signal for a unanimous cordial burst of applause. Her form is singularly graceful and dignified. . . . Her countenance and the . . . tone of her voice are indicative of deep and fine sensibilities. . . . Her

rendition . . . evinced, besides a natural adaptedness to the part, much careful study and a correct conception of the character . . . she has asserted herself as an artiste of no ordinary promise, of no ordinary talent" ("Amusements," 25 December 1866, 4); and the *Times* termed her debut "a flattering success" (qtd. in Davison, "Gertrude Doggett Norris," 10). All four papers had in several previous issues been monitoring Gertrude's forthcoming performance, the *Times* and *Tribune* beginning their coverage as early as 16 December 1866 to be joined by the *Evening Journal* and the *Republican* on 24 December in their respective "Amusements" columns.

<sup>31</sup>For the review, see "Amusements," *Chicago Times*, 1 January 1867, 4. See also the "Amusements" columns in the *Chicago Evening Journal*, 31 December 1866, 4; *Chicago Republican*, 31 December 1866, 3 and 8, January 1867, 8, and 3 January 1867, 7; and *Chicago Tribune*, 30 and 31 December 1866, 4.

<sup>32</sup>See "Amusements" in *Chicago Evening Journal*, 31 December 1866, 4; *Chicago Republican*, 31 December 1866, 3; and *Chicago Tribune*, 30 and 31 December 1866, 4.

<sup>33</sup>"Amusements," 7 January 1867, 3.

<sup>34</sup>Dobie, 417. Later commentators, notably Walker, Kathleen Norris, and Donna Danielewski have also attempted to extend Gertrude's acting career either in terms of time or plays she performed in. Walker, 7, assigns her roles in *Ticket-of-Leave-Man* (1864) by Tom Taylor, author of the more famous *Our American Cousin* (1858), and Bulwer-Lytton's *The Lady of Lyons* (1838); to the latter Kathleen ("Family Gathering," 39) adds Planché's comedy, *Diplomacy* (1838), Charles L. Young's *Jim the Penman*, and an English adaptation of Alexandre-Louis de Villheterque's *Enquermond sire de Rosemont* (1793), asserting that in all four she played opposite Lester Wallack after whom she named her third son; Danielewski ("A Biography of Frank Norris," Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1997, 8) augments the list with H.T. Craven's *Miriam's Crime* (1863). But contemporary newspaper accounts in Chicago mention no performances of any of the plays Walker and Kathleen note, one of which, *Jim the Penman*, was most likely not ever performed until 1887, twenty years after Gertrude's Chicago debut; Norris's younger brother was named Albert Lester, rather than Lester W. (Wallack) as Kathleen maintained; and Danielewski misreads a theatre advertisement in the *Chicago Tribune* which states the John Dillon will play in *Miriam's Crime* to be followed at night only by *Faint Heart* with Gertrude ("Amusements," 1 January 1867, 5; see also "Amusements," *Chicago Republican*, 1 January 1867, 8).

<sup>35</sup>See the 1850 Michigan Census for Washtenaw Co.

<sup>36</sup>Facts concerning B.F.'s early existence are meager. Dobie, 414, and Walker, 9, both refer to his limp, their source being Charles, of course, who told Walker in the 8 July 1931 interview that B.F. "limped noticeably." Norris himself never mentioned his father's physical disability, nor did it apparently curtail either B.F.'s energy or his accomplishments.

<sup>37</sup>Grand Rapids had other jewelers, but only Dikeman seems to have been in the market for an apprentice. Josiah did not move to Kent Co. until after the 1850 Census was taken, thereby eliminating Wright L. Coffinberry who had closed his store by then; Vernon Shaw, who had only arrived in 1848, probably had not acquired enough business yet to take on an apprentice, and certainly William Preusser, arriving in 1850, had not. The even later arrival of two other jewelers, N.T.

Butler and Henry Brinsmaid, precludes their candidacy as B.F.'s patron. Thus, Dikeman logically seems the most likely possibility. "The Jewelers of Grand Rapids," *Jewelers' Weekly*, 4 (32 August 1887), 1612, 1615-16, and 1619-20, notes the dates when various jewelers came to Grand Rapids; Ernest B. Fisher, ed., *Grand Rapids and Kent County, Michigan*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Robert O. Law, 1918), vol. 2, 96, 206, and 808, covers Dikeman's career in detail.

<sup>38</sup>Walker, 9.

<sup>39</sup>B.F.'s bible is now part of the Frank Norris Collection, Bancroft (see Crisler, "Norris's Library," *Frank Norris Studies*, No. 5 [Spring 1988], 2). His first marriage is recorded in "Illinois Statewide Marriage Index, 1763-1900"; see the 1860 Illinois Census for Will Co. for information on the names, ages, occupations, and financial worth of members of B.F.'s household.

<sup>40</sup>The only known copy of this unpaginated 1872 catalogue, located by Danielewski (11-12), is now part of the Chicago Historical Society's collections; no catalogues for either previous or subsequent years for the firm have surfaced. Fortunately, this one appeared at a strategic moment—after the great Chicago fire—and reprinted several useful items from various periodicals in New York and Illinois, referred to hereafter, which help track B.F.'s career. Attempts to find originals of the promotional news items B.F. included in his catalogue have largely proved fruitless.

<sup>41</sup>Chicago city directories from 1865 chronicle vicissitudes in the location of B.F. Norris & Co. in Chicago and among its various partners as well as changes of address for B.F., his partners, and his own and Gertrude's relations. Those drawn on for information here include *J.C.W. Bailey & Co.'s Chicago City Directory, For the Year 1865-6* (Chicago: John C.W. Bailey, 1865); *Halpin's Eighth Annual Edition Chicago City Directory 1865-6* (Chicago: T.M. Halpin, 1865); *Edwards' Annual Directory* (Chicago: Edwards' 1866); *John C. W. Bailey's Chicago City Directory* (Chicago: John C. W. Bailey, 1866); *Edwards' New Chicago Directory* (Chicago: Edwards', 1867); and *John C. W. Bailey's Chicago City Directory, 1867-68* (Chicago: John C.W. Bailey, 1867). The probate records of B.F.'s estate, filed in the Cook County courthouse and extensively investigated by James Stronks ("B.F. Norris [Senior] in Probate Court, with New Light on Frank Norris as Son," *Frank Norris Studies*, No. 12 [Autumn 1991], 3-5), reveal not only that B.F.'s divorce "must have been in 1867," but that both Ruth and Florence had preceded him death, *i.e.*, before 28 October 1900 (Stronks, 3).

<sup>42</sup>14 May 1930 interview of Jeannette (Franklin D. Walker Papers, Bancroft Library).

<sup>43</sup>Gertrude subsequently "transferred" *Devereux* "to her son Frank Norris on July 13, 1899" (Crisler, "Norris's Library," 2); the volumes are now part of the Frank Norris Collection, Bancroft Library.

<sup>44</sup>Chicago city directories list Theophilus and William (*D.B. Cooke & Co.'s Directory of Chicago for the Year 1858* [Chicago: D.B. Cooke, 1858], 73; *Smith and Du Moulin's Chicago City Directory for the Year Ending May 1, 1860* [Chicago: Smith and Du Moulin, [1860]], 110; *D.B. Cooke & Co.'s City Directory for the Year 1859-60* [Chicago: D.B. Cooke, 1859], 114; *Halpin & Bailey's Chicago City Directory for the Year 1861-62* [Chicago: T.M. Halpin, 1861], 100; *Bailey & Edwards' Chicago Directory* [Chicago: Edwards & Co., 1868], 246; *Edwards' Official Chicago Directory for 1869* [Chicago: Richard Edwards, 1869], 242; *Edwards' Thirteenth Annual Directory*

[Chicago: Richard Edwards, 1870], 224; and *Edwards' Fourteenth Annual Directory* [Chicago: Richard Edwards, 1871], 224). See also the 1870 Illinois Census for Cook Co. In a letter to her son Samuel in San Francisco, dated 1 February 1883, Harriet Doggett Norris introduced B.F. as a son-in-law "with whom I have lived for the last thirteen years" and reminded him that his "own father . . . lived with Mr. Norris for the three years preceding his death" (Frank Norris Collection, Bancroft Library). Alister's marriage is recorded under Cook County Marriages in Volume 85 of the "Illinois Statewide Marriage Index, 1763-1900." For information on Narcissa Doggett's family, see the 1880 Illinois Census for Kane Co.

<sup>45</sup>Following the death of his wife Julia Warner Norris on 28 June 1873, Josiah quickly married a second time to Leomara Jewett West, doubtless to help him care for his infant daughter, Jennie Blanche Norris, then less than a year old. Interestingly, William Alister was living with Josiah's family in Chicago when the 1870 census was taken that summer.

<sup>46</sup>See the 1870 Illinois Census for Cook Co.

<sup>47</sup>"Married," 4. The "Illinois Statewide Marriage Index, 1763-1900" also records this marriage, as does the *Chicago Republican*. The latter is remarkable for its multiple errors: "Harris-Daggett—May 27, at 295 Chicago avenue, by Rev. Robert Collyer, Mr. Benjamin F. Harris to Miss Gertrude S. Daggett, both of this city" ("Married," 29 May 1867, 8).

<sup>48</sup>Information on Collyer derives from *Historical Sketch of Unity Church, Chicago* (Chicago: Press of Ingersoll Bros., 1880), 1-3, and *Robert Collyer: A Memorial* ([Chicago]: n.p., [1912]), 7.

<sup>49</sup>*Church Register Years 1842 thru 1942*, archives, Second Presbyterian Church, Chicago, 40.

<sup>50</sup>When Gertrude was baptized at Trinity Church by the Reverend Sullivan, who also baptized at least three of her children, B.F. acted as one of her sponsors, an office her own parents filled for her first two children (*Records of Parishioners . . . of Trinity Church*).

<sup>51</sup>In noting her death the *Chicago Tribune* ("Died," 21 April 1869, [4]) "friends of the family" were invited to attend her funeral on 21 April "from the residence of her parents." Included was a two-quatrains poem: "She is not dead, the child of our affection, / But gone unto that school / Where she no longer needs our poor protection / And Christ himself doth rule. / In that great cloister's stillness and seclusion, / By guardian angels led— / Safe from temptation, safe from sins' pollution, / She lives, whom we call dead."

<sup>52</sup>Born 11 September 1871, Florence would die just two days short of her first birthday on 9 September 1872. A brief memorial verse accompanied her obituary in the *Chicago Tribune* ("Died," 11 September 1872, [1]): "And the mother gave, in tears and pain, / The flower she most did love. / She knew she should find her yet again / In the fields of light above." Gertrude's father had died but two weeks earlier, on 27 August.

<sup>53</sup>*The Third Annual Catalogue of Allen's Academy* (Chicago: C. H. Blakeley, 1877), 8, lists Norris as B. Frankie Norris, Jr., in the school's "Preparatory Department." In a letter dated 16 February 1909, Kathleen Norris told her fiancé Charles that Gertrude "likes to tell me that your father promised that she could go on [with] her theatrical career, before they were married and did not for an instant think of keeping his word" (Charles G. Norris Collection, Bancroft Library). Whether Gertrude had much hope for a continued "theatrical career"

is debatable, of course, since she performed publicly for less than two weeks at the turn of 1867.

### Joseph Leiter: Frank Norris's Model for Curtis Jadwin in *The Pit*

Joseph R. McElrath, Jr.

Florida State University

Douglas K. Burgess

University of Central Florida

Readers of *The Pit*, even after closely attending to the details of Curtis Jadwin's rise and fall, may find themselves as perplexed by what takes place at the Chicago Board of Trade as Frank Norris was when he began his research for that novel—or as Laura Jadwin remains at the end of the work. Most welcome for many, then, will be the clarification provided by an unnamed author who, at some time before the fall of 1899, focused on the real-life counterpart of Curtis, Joseph Leiter, and chronicled his adventures as the "Napoleon" of LaSalle Street. His explanation of what transpired in 1897-98 made its first known appearance in 1911 in *The Ticker and Investment Digest* (8 [August 1911], 155-60). An editorial headnote relates that the author was "intimately connected" with Leiter's deals in wheat and that he "got much of his information at first hand."



#### The Story of the World's Greatest Corner

It has often been said that some one who knows it thoroughly ought to write an impartial history of the Leiter deal. It was the greatest commercial undertaking ever attempted by a single individual, was carried out with wonderful boldness, and was powerfully influenced by national policies at home and abroad. The author hardly feels qualified for the task, but as he was in a position to know all the important developments of the deal, he will tell the story in as brief and straightforward a fashion as possible, leaving others to judge as to its completeness.

Mr. Leiter's first important ventures were in June, 1897. Wheat was then selling between 65c. and 70c. There was plenty of it for immediate use. Statisticians figured out that the crop just about to be harvested was so short that there would not be wheat enough to supply the

consumptive necessities of the year—that the world needed more wheat to eat than it had raised. But the speculators had been deceived so often by such prophecies that they were not willing to back these predictions with their money. Leiter began as an ordinary speculator, buying "options," or contracts for the future delivery of wheat, holding his purchases until the price had been advanced sharply, and then selling them in the open market at a profit. At one time he was "short" a heavy line—that is, he entered into contracts to deliver a large amount of wheat in September which he did not have on hand at the time—but most of his transactions were on the "long" or buying side.

The more he studied the wheat situation the more he became convinced that "this was the one year when it would pay a man to buy wheat and hold it." He was new to the business and had not been, like most of the older operators, severely punished on sundry occasions for placing confidence in statistical calculations as to the size of the world's wheat crop. He investigated the matter carefully and made up his mind that wheat must sell much higher.

As he had plenty of money at his command, he began to accumulate the September option. No one except Leiter himself can tell whether or not he thought he could "corner" this option—that is, buy up so many contracts for the delivery of wheat in September that the other parties to these contracts could not possibly secure sufficient wheat to fill them, and could thus be forced to pay any penalty he might elect for the privilege of canceling their obligations. Certainly the "September shorts," or those who had contracted to deliver wheat in September, thought a corner was intended, and all those who did not have the wheat at their command for delivery made haste to "cover," or buy back the contracts they had sold. On this demand the price of September contracts was rushed up from 63-7/8c. June 22 to \$1 August 21. On the latter day the September option closed at 99-1/2c., and Leiter gave an interesting example of his ignorance of the value of money by "calling" 1,000,000 bushels at \$1—that is, he paid \$1 for the wheat when he might just as easily have bought a considerable part of it for less. Calls sold that night at \$1.14, indicating that many traders feared the price would go above that point the next day.

At this time Leiter was by no means alone on the bull side. Many other heavy traders were also long of

September contracts and most of them thought \$1 was high enough to follow this young Napoleon of the wheat pit on his meteoric career. On the morning of August 22, they began to dump their holdings on the market. The price dropped from \$1 to 95c. in a few minutes, recovered to 99-½c., and finally closed at 96c. There were also enormous offerings of new "short" contracts for December delivery.

By the following day Leiter had made up his mind that it was desirable to reduce his holdings, and under his and others' sales the price shot down to 91c. But he retained a considerable line, and on August 26 September sold at \$1.03-½ on the demand from those who were trying to buy back short contracts. The trade in this option was then very light and practically nothing was for sale except what Leiter chose to let go.

During the month of September all the contracts Leiter had bought were fulfilled to the letter, involving the delivery to him of several millions of cash wheat. The corner, if such was intended, had proved a failure, as the entire short interest had either canceled their contracts by "covering" in the pit or had delivered the wheat. It was about this time that Leiter began to talk about "merchandising" and wanting the cash wheat. This marked an entirely new phase of his deal. Thereafter his principal object was to accumulate cash wheat and hold it, rather than to make money by trading in options. What speculating he did in the options was strictly supplementary to his cash wheat deal. This in itself shows the absurdity of the claim that Leiter was defeated by unlimited offerings of "wind," or short contracts. There is no way of selling cash wheat short. No one can sell cash wheat unless he first buys it.

Leiter now began to accumulate the December option around 90c., and the history of the September deal was practically repeated. At first he had the assistance of several other wealthy Chicago bulls, but on October 29 December contracts sold at 98-½c., and all the other prominent bulls sold out. Leiter did not sell. During all this time there was no scarcity of wheat—only a prospect of scarcity. Speculators as a whole were "bearish" on the situation, believing that the offerings of Argentina and India, just about to come upon the market, with the unexpectedly large deliveries from American and Russian farmers, would prevent any real lack of wheat for actual

use.

It is the general opinion of the trade that, whatever Leiter may have intended in his September deal, he thought he had the December option cornered. Contracts for some 9,000,000 or 10,000,000 bushels of wheat for December delivery had been made with him, and there is little doubt that he believed the wheat could not be secured for delivery. But most of these contracts had been made by the two largest local elevator companies, Armour and Weare. They had every facility for getting wheat if there was any in the country. They scraped the Northwest and kept the Duluth straits open with ice-crushing boats until they got it all to Chicago. Unquestionably they lost a great deal of money by the operation, but Leiter's contracts were again filled on time, and he was the owner of 12,000,000 or 15,000,000 bushels of highgrade cash wheat. He had proclaimed his desire to be a merchandiser of wheat, and he now had ample opportunity.

His theory was that there was to be a great scarcity of cash wheat during the spring months, and the more of it he could buy now the more money he would make. But it was necessary to support prices in the meantime so as to start from an advantageous position when the pinch began to be felt. Therefore he took all the cash wheat that was offered him at \$1 or a little above and supported the May (1898) option at 90c. To do this he was obliged to buy an enormous amount of contracts for May delivery, as a great many speculators believed the deal would collapse before May, and were therefore willing to enter into contracts for delivery at that time. Some of them paid as much as \$1.85 a bushel for these contracts in May, when they had to buy them back from Leiter. He also supported prices in the Northwest, where he was assisted by Peavey and Pillsbury, and did considerable buying at Liverpool. He must have been badly scalped in the execution of his orders, sent in this fashion all over the world, but he was playing for millions and was not paying any attention to the thousands.

Affairs remained in this position for two or three months. Nearly all experienced grain men were on the bear side of the market during this time, believing that the scarcity upon which Leiter was counting would never become actual. Whenever the market acted weak they would make new short contracts, in the expectation that

Leiter would be forced to let go. But he took all they offered, and they were compelled to buy back their contracts at a loss again and again. It seems as though Leiter must have made some profit from these fluctuations, but it is not definitely known whether he did or not. Meanwhile more and more of the active trade was going over into the July option.

By the middle of February the May shorts gave it up and began to make serious efforts to buy back their contracts. They were stimulated somewhat by the prospect, then considered remote, of war between the United States and Spain. On February 19 May sold at \$1.09 and at the same time a concerted buying movement by about a dozen Leiter brokers advanced the July option violently from 88- $\frac{3}{4}$ c. to 94- $\frac{1}{4}$ c. The amount of July contracts actually purchased by him at this time was small compared with his holdings of May, and it does not appear that he had then any serious notion of trying to support the July option. The bidding up of the price was done simply to give the shorts a scare, and was thought by experienced traders to be a good move. As the new crops were all looking well and would be available to fill July contracts, it was not considered possible that he would attempt to support this option.

He apparently gave it no further attention at that time and the price sagged off to 88c. He then gave out a "tip" to buy July and pit traders followed his advice, having learned by experience that it did not pay to "buck" against him. The price of July advanced to 92c. without any particular effort on Leiter's part, but within ten days it began to topple again. Speculators could not get rid of the idea that enormous crops would be available by July, and everyone was afraid to buy. Leiter made moderate purchases from time to time, but seemed to be making no effort to do more than retard the decline. March 25 the price touched 81- $\frac{1}{4}$ c.

Then came another of those kaleidoscopic changes that made the Leiter deal such an exciting experience for Board of Trade men. The war was now beginning to be taken seriously and prices began to stiffen on that account. At first the advance was gradual, then rapid. On April 14 the price went above 89c., and local longs mostly took their profits, being afraid to follow the advance further in the face of the good crop prospect. Whether or not Leiter sold any on that day is not certain, but on the

following day he astonished everybody by selling contracts for over 6,000,000 bushels for July delivery, depressing the price to 84- $\frac{3}{4}$ c. This left him short several millions of July contracts, and was esteemed by the traders a shrewd move. It was assumed that he was selling out his cash wheat on the war bulge as fast as possible and was further protecting himself by making contracts for July delivery.

From this point the story becomes a tale of national destinies, and not the history of the Leiter deal. Up to that time Leiter had practically controlled the market; thereafter he was merely a chip upon the stream, and it was his failure to recognize this that was his final undoing. The short interest in the July option had been large to start with; then Leiter sold 6,000,000 bushels; then the trade in general, thinking that Leiter's conversion to the bear side made it a safe and sure thing to work for lower prices, sold also. The resulting sales of short contracts were enormous, but prices did not go down. For ten days they remained practically steady, fluctuating within a few cents range.

The firm of Dreyfus & Co., the largest grain dealers of France, had been familiar with Leiter's plans all along. They were also on good terms with the French minister of agriculture. They now received definite information that the French duty on wheat, amounting of 36.8c. per bushel, would be removed. They determined to profit by this information, and accordingly began buying July contracts at Chicago—the most active option of the largest speculative market in the world. It is probable that other foreign houses also got wind of the matter and bought, and a considerable number of courageous American speculators, outside the professional class, were also buying in expectation of a further war scare. On April 23 the volcano began to be active and in three days prices leaped 10c. to 98c. Shorts were thoroughly alarmed and the trading was so excited that it was difficult to execute large orders. There was a moderate reaction, but on May 3 prices again plunged upward on wild trading, and continued rising without an important interruption till \$1.25 was reached on May 10. The advance resulted in the failure of the well-known house of Robert Lindblom & Co., and nearly all large Chicago speculators suffered enormous losses before they were able to cover their contracts. Somewhere on this wild advance Leiter bought back the large

amount of contracts he had sold around 85c. Traders thought he paid from \$1.15 to \$1.20. At any rate this transaction on the short side of the July option was very expensive to him. On the 9th calls were sold as high as \$1.60, showing plainly what speculators feared for the morrow. Much further advance would have probably resulted in widespread disaster to commission houses.

Meanwhile the cash situation was not less remarkable. Foreigners were taking all wheat offered, no matter what the price. As much as \$1.60 was paid, and perhaps even more in some cases. The May option touched \$1.85 on bidding by shorts, and would have gone higher had not Leiter supplied the demand at that price. The war scare was on with a vengeance.

Here was Leiter's opportunity, and had he seized it by the forelock, sold out all his wheat and quit the business, he would have been to-day considered the greatest commercial prodigy in the history of the world and would have achieved fame—not merely notoriety. But he made the fatal mistake of supposing that these wild prices were the result of actual famine for cash wheat which he alone could relieve. Instead of selling out at once he attempted to support prices at the absurd level which they had reached, while he peddled out his enormous accumulation of cash wheat at the very top notch. To hold the price up, he was obliged to buy all the cash wheat offered him. The farmers scraped their bins all over the country and sold the wheat to Leiter at \$1.50 a bushel or over. His cash holdings piled up with great rapidity at Chicago, Minneapolis and Duluth. His sales abroad went on slowly. In order to be sure to get "all there was in it," he had made arrangements with foreign dealers to sell wheat for him for a share of the profits. No provision seems to have been made as to losses.

Returning to the story of the July option, on the same day that it sold at \$1.25 it subsequently broke 20c. a bushel, bounding downward a cent at a time, with absolutely no demand. This was not due to any bad news or to any decline in the price of cash wheat. It was due solely to the complete elimination of the short interest. When the decline began there were no shorts to cover, and no one else dared to buy after such a sensational advance. Those who believe that sales of short contracts for future delivery are responsible for low prices should notice that the high prices, \$1.85 for May and \$1.25 for July, were

made on the buying back of short contracts, and that the break of 20c. in a single session was due entirely to the absence of a short interest. In point of fact, the July option never manifested any further important rallying power after touching \$1.25, but went out ignominiously at 66c. a bushel.

The highest point touched by the September option, the last delivery in which Leiter dealt, was 95c., at about the time July was selling for \$1.25. Of course everyone knew there would be plenty of wheat by the next September, as crops all over the world were promising an abundant yield. The price dropped immediately to 87- $\frac{1}{8}$ , but one of Leiter's "tips," with some purchases by him, and the general fear that May would be marked up to \$2 or over late in the month, rallied it to 92c. on a small trade. Shorts had been punished so severely and so repeatedly that they were afraid of their shadows. No one dared to sell the September option, though everyone knew it was certain to decline, and that any efforts on the part of Leiter to sustain it would have but temporary effect. It is a curious fact that the short interest in September remained insignificant until it got under 80c. a bushel. Then traders began to pluck up courage, and the short interest was increased.

Leiter made another blunder by trying to retard the decline in the price of September contracts. He seems by this time to have gotten the idea that supply and demand were of no particular importance in making prices—what was needed was "support." He kept gradually buying September on the decline, but the more he bought the more he found for sale. Meantime he was getting more and more cash wheat all the time at ridiculously high prices, was buying options at Minneapolis and Duluth at above \$1 a bushel, and was accumulating a big line of options at Liverpool. There was only a moderate demand from foreigners. They had been filled up with an enormous amount of wheat on the war scare bulge, and every bushel they had bought showed a big loss. Naturally they felt disgusted, and were not disposed to buy more. Big crops were just ready to ripen. It is no wonder that under these circumstances Leiter's father, who had been furnished the money, thought it was time to call a halt.

A striking illustration of the resources of the Chicago Board of Trade was afforded on that "blue Monday in

June" when Leiter gave orders to sell contracts for the September delivery of 8,000,000 bushels of wheat "at the market," owing to his failure. The opening price was 71- $\frac{3}{4}$ c., and the closing price was 71c. That a speculative market should be able to absorb such an enormous amount of offerings and still close only  $\frac{3}{4}$  cent under the opening would appear a paradox to an Englishman, accustomed to the narrow trade of the Liverpool market. Last summer (1898) the entire official visible supply of wheat in the United States was at one time less than the amount of September contracts thrown over by Leiter in that single session. Yet the market took it easily enough. The novice will naturally inquire who bought the contracts. The answer is, the shorts. On May 10 the price of the July option broke 20c. on sales of a few hundred thousand bushels. On June 13 the September option broke only  $\frac{3}{4}$ c. on sales of 8,000,000 bushels. To those unfamiliar with the grain trade this indicates to some extent the value and functions of the short interest. Nor was Leiter forced out at bottom prices. Except for an uncertain recovery of 2- $\frac{1}{2}$ c. immediately following his failure, prices continued declining until 60c. was touched by the December option, and did not again sell as high as 71c.

Leiter's failure was due to his apparent belief that he could set aside the law of supply and demand. He failed to recognize the difference between a fictitious price of his own creating, at which but little wheat could be sold,

and the natural price, dependent on legitimate conditions, wheat which eventually fell of its own weight, burying him in its ruins. Circumstances favored him wonderfully, at which any reasonable quantity of wheat would be easily absorbed. He raised a top-heavy structure of cash but he failed to take advantage of them. He showed himself to be a thorough gentleman, generous, courteous and talented. His campaign cost Board of Trade members an enormous sum, not only in their own losses to him and his followers during the winter, which were very heavy, but in the almost complete breaking up of their commission business. The average commission trader dared not trifle with such a wild manipulated market.

Leiter's deal benefited the farmers, but not to such an extent as sometimes stated by imaginative newspaper reporters. The farmers got what Leiter lost, because he lost it in paying excessively high prices for their cash wheat. They were also benefitted by the higher prices that foreigners were compelled to pay for all the wheat purchased at that time; but off against this must be placed the fact that subsequent prices to the farmers were a good deal lower than they would have been if foreigners had not been overloaded with the Leiter wheat. Farmers were also injured by the total absence of speculation from the Chicago market, and, in fact, from all the wheat markets of the world for a long time after the Leiter deal, as speculation nearly always tends to raise prices.

*Frank Norris Studies* is published annually in November at Florida State University for the members of The Frank Norris Society, a non-profit educational organization affiliated with the American Literature Association. Annual dues of ten dollars (U.S.) should be addressed to the society at the Department of English, Florida State University, Tallahassee FL 32306-1580. Manuscripts should be sent to the same address. Joseph R. McElrath, Jr., is the editor. The members of the editorial advisory board are Robert C. Leitz, III, Donald Pizer, Jesse S. Crisler, Benjamin F. Fisher, Charles L. Crow, William B. Dillingham, Richard Allan Davison, Donna Campbell, Patrick K. Dooley, and Don L. Cook.