

Frank Norris: Biographical Data  
From *The Wave*, 1891-1901  
Joseph R. McElrath, Jr.  
Florida State University

Blix Smith and David Scannell are among the individuals mentioned in the high-toned San Francisco weekly, *The Wave*; their namesakes later appeared in *Blix* and *The Pit*. A description of a wheat harvest in an illustrated article would later be reworked for *The Octopus*. A Kitty Moran described as having been punched in the face by a particularly ungentlemanly fellow is related to the heroine of *Moran*, who felt her lover's knuckles in much the same manner. One assumes that the law firm of Ward & Lloyd mentioned in *The Wave* had something to do with the naming of the principals in *A Man's Woman*. Norris's canon, in short, became proof positive of his claim in "An Opening For Novelists" that San Francisco abounded in the stuff from which not only news items but fiction might be wrought: real-life referents repeatedly reveal themselves in *The Wave*.

The critic, however, is not the only one served by this magazine. A reading of all of the surviving issues of the magazine—microforms of which James D. Hart assembled at the Bancroft Library—is essential for Norris biography. The rich harvest that is possible will be seen in the following descriptions and extracts considerably expanding the data base for future articles and books on Frank Norris's life. The previously unknown biographical data regarding Frank and members of his family especially help us to flesh out our spare conception of the years immediately following the sojourn in Paris: the B.F. Norris who absented himself from family life in 1892 is found in New York City then; the niece who lived with the Norrises, Ida Carleton, assumes clearer definition; the only mention of young Charles G. Norris reveals him the affable fellow seen in his correspondence of later years. The social status of the Norrises is fully clarified: they were, indeed, patricians—though not of the highest order. Further, indications of the way in which Norris was perceived by *Wave* writers such as John O'Hara Cosgrave, John Bonner, and Helen Borden make clear the high esteem in which Frank was held locally. Indeed, the principal image that emerges is that of hometown boy who made good.

Simple typographical and spelling errors in *The Wave* have been silently emended.

## Volume 6: 1891

2 January 1891

Ida Carleton is at the Hotel Del Monte in Monterey for New Year's festivities ("Splashes" by The Witness, 1).

7 February 1891

Ida Carleton attends party of the Club of '90s, a young women's organization, given at the McMillan residence on the corner of Ridley and Guerrero (untitled paragraph, 2-3).

4 April 1891

The last party of the Club of '90 will be given at the home of Ida Carleton, "a charming hostess," on 14 April at 1822 Sacramento Street. "This is a commodious residence that will afford ample floor room for the dancers" ("Splashes" by The Witness, 3).

11 April 1891

"The Club of '90's party on Tuesday evening next, at the residence of Mrs. Norris, on Sacramento street, promises to be very successful. Miss Carleton will be assisted in entertaining her guests by the members of the club and by her sister, Mrs. Alister, who is visiting the coast with her husband, W.M. Alister, of the firm of Norris, Alister & Co., of Chicago" ("Splashes" by The Witness, 2).

18 April 1891

"To say the concluding party of the Club of '90, at the residence of Mrs. B.F. Norris on Sacramento street, was the most enjoyable of the series, would be invidious. It was certainly an agreeable affair, especially noticeable for the number of very pretty girls present. The decorations, consisting of ferns, foliage and flowers, ... set off the interior of one of the most charmingly-furnished residences in San Francisco. A suite of three large rooms afforded ample space for dancing. For those not interested in Terpsichorean exercise, there were numerous pleasant corners screened off with portieres. Miss Ida Carleton, who wore a charming toilet, made a most admirable hostess, devoting all her energies to promoting the enjoyment of her guests. A *tête-à-tête* supper was served at midnight. [Noah] Brandt supplied the music" ("Splashes" by The Witness, 1).

On Tuesday, 28 April, there will be a "Bachelors' cotillion" at Pioneer Hall; Mrs. B.F. Norris will be one of the chaperons ("Splashes" by The Witness, 3). (This "cotillion" was postponed until 5 May, "Splashes" by The Witness, 25 April 1891, 3.)

## Volume 7: 1891

28 November 1891

Frank Norris first listed as one of the authors whose work will appear in the Christmas issue of *The Wave* (1); announcement repeated in the 5 and 12 December issues (1 and both cover and 1, respectively), and same notice in the Christmas issue ([19 December], 22).

Volume 8: 1892

30 January 1892

"This week the crop of betrothals is large. The engagement of Chaplain Thompson of the 'Charleston' and Miss Ida Carleton has already been made known. Miss Carleton is the niece of Mrs. B.F. Norris of 1822 Sacramento Street. She is an exceedingly pretty and vivacious girl. Mr. Thompson is both good-looking and popular. He is at present Chaplain of the 'Charleston,' and is the son of Bishop Thompson of Missouri. The marriage will take place when the cruiser goes out of commission—about one year hence" ("Splashes" by The Witness, 2).

"Mrs. B.F. Norris gave a musical on Wednesday evening in honor of her niece, Miss Ida Carleton.... Mrs. Mariner Cambell and Mr. Cambell, and Mrs. Birmingham, whose fine contralto organ has often been heard at concerts, rendered vocal selections. Noah Brandt played two violin solos with artistic success. A delicious supper followed. The occasion was the first function this season at which all the members of the Club of '90 were gathered" ("Splashes" by The Witness, 2).

7 May 1892

California writers' works will be displayed at the World's Fair ("People and Events," 14). (A bookplate in a copy of *Yvernelle* at the Bancroft Library indicates that it was exhibited there.)

Volume 9: 1892

10 September 1892

"The marriage of Miss Ida Carleton and Chaplain Frank Thompson is to take place earlier than either prospective bride or groom anticipated. Invitations are out announcing the ceremony for the evening of Tuesday, the twentieth. The ceremony is to be performed at St. Luke's, to be followed by a reception of the residence of Mr. and Mrs. B.F. Norris, on Sacramento Street. Miss Carleton is an exceedingly pretty girl, and should make a charming bride. I believe that Bishop Thompson, the Chaplain's father, expects to be out here from the East to officiate at the ceremony" ("Splashes" by The Witness, 2).

17 September 1892

"Of approaching events the most interesting is the wedding of Miss Ida Carleton and Chaplain Thompson, of the Navy, on Tuesday evening next. The Pacific Squadron being now in harbor, ensures the presence of a multitude of ensigns, lieutenants, and captains, and as the Chaplain is a *persona grata* at Mare Island, it is more than probable that the headquarters of the official population thereof will be at St. Luke's for the occasion. The officers of the 'Charleston,' 'San Francisco,' and 'Baltimore' are to attend in all the glory of full regimentals. The bridal party will be imposing in gold lace and brass buttons—in fact, the nuptials promise to be the swellest the community has seen in years. The bride is to be given away by her cousin, Frank Norris. Pretty Miss Goewey is to be maid of honor, and Dr. A.M.D. McCormick, U.S.A. will act as best man. The reception to follow at the residence of Mrs. B.F. Norris,

on Sacramento Street, will certainly prove a pleasant affair, as that lady is a most competent hostess" ("Splashes" by The Witness, 2).

24 September 1892

"Nuptial splendors had a magnificent realization on Tuesday evening at St. Luke's Church, where Miss Ida Carleton and Chaplain Frank Thompson, spiritual advisor of the 'Charleston,' joined hands and hearts in matrimony. The wedding was spectacularly beautiful, and I have seen nothing to equal it in San Francisco. The army and navy were represented by officers, whose uniforms gold-embroidered, tasseled, corded, and epauleted, made a handsome background for the exquisite costumes of the ladies. The rows of blue and gold, grouped as if by an artist, and dotted with the creamy white of bridesmaids' robes, or the brighter shade affected by more matronly on-lookers, formed a picture as harmonious as a chancel ever held.

"The entrance of the bridal party was charmingly arranged, and the officers appeared to be on a dress parade that had in it more than the ordinary importance and pleasure. Miss Carleton, who was a belle of the town, came in with her cousin, Frank Norris, and the traditional beauty that is the possession of every bride was hers in a marked degree. She wore a beautiful costume of white Russian velvet, draped with a robe of old point lace, and carried natural orange blossoms. Her maid of honor was Miss Gertrude Goewey, and the bridesmaids were the Misses Helen Gibbs, Minnie Horton, Celia O'Connor, Salie Huie, Virginia Gibbs, and Susie McEwen. At the chancel were the officiating clergy, Bishop Nichols, Rev. R.C. Foute, Chaplain J.K. Lewis, U.S.N., Rev. E.B. Church, and Rev. William Ballard, of Vallejo. After the ceremony the bridal party were driven to the residence of Mr. and Mrs. B.F. Norris, where congratulations were offered to Mr. and Mrs. Thompson. An early supper was served, and the bride and groom disappeared.

"The reception was a delightful affair, and opportunity was taken by all to look at the handsome presents that testified to the high regard in which the bride is held. Among the ladies noticeable for the beauty of their attire were: Mr. B.F. Norris, who wore a Pompadour robe of black and blue brocade; Mrs. O.O. Burgess was resplendent in diamonds; Mrs. Cornelius O'Connor wore pale blue silk, with pearl trimmings, and ably chaperoned her daughters; Miss Maud O'Connor looked pretty in pink silk, cut *décollete*; Miss Mary Porter appeared in orange-hued silk; Mrs. Laura Buffandeau was in pink, and Mrs. Spear wore blue; Mrs. F.V. Wright wore her wedding robe of white silk, and Mrs. E.A. McCarthy also appeared in her wedding robe; Miss Lolita Monteverde looked lovely in blue silk; Mrs. Harry Williams wore an elegant toilet of white silk; Miss Grube was also in white silk; Mrs. C.F. Mullins wore a handsome robe of lavender-colored silk; Mrs. R.C. Foute appeared in golden-hued silk.

"Mr. and Mrs. Thompson went to Santa Barbara on Wednesday, and will spend the honeymoon there. It was regretted that the bride's uncle, Mr. B.F. Norris, and the groom's father, Bishop Thompson, of Mississippi, could not be present. The former is in New York, under a physician's care, and the latter was too ill to make the trip to California. It is probable that Chaplain Thompson will be ordered to New York with the 'Charleston.' In that case San Francisco will lose one of the handsomest girls in Society

("Splashes" by The Witness, 2).

1 October 1892

"At George Riddle's reading on Friday evening he presented 'request' programme, a special feature of which was Sir Caverlaye's *Midnight Ride*, 'Yvernelle,' by Frank Norris, son of Mr. and Mrs. B.F. Norris, of this city. It is a legend of mediaeval France. Sir Caverlaye has gone forth, after the manner of knights-errant in search of adventure. In Spain, forgetful of his vows to fair Yvernelle, of Brittomarte, he fell a victim to the charms of the beautiful Guhaldrada, of whose exactions he soon wearied. Returning to Brittomarte, Sir Caverlaye learned with consternation that Yvernelle had resolved to take the veil that day at midnight. Mounted on the fastest steed that could be brought, Sir Caverlaye rode to the nunnery at Kaerenais to rescue Yvernelle. This is the plan in brief, and Mr. Norris made quite a dramatic story out of it, which Mr. Riddle interpreted excellently. Many friends of Mr. Norris were present, several parties having been formed especially to hear the selection" ("Splashes" by The Witness, 6-7).

Volume 10: 1893

4 March 1893

Mrs. B.F. Norris is identified as one of the women involved with the California display at the World's Fair ("Splashes" by The Witness, 2-3).

13 May 1893

"The 'Skull and Keys' entertainment at Berkeley, last night, occurred rather too late for my notice. The performance gives promise of being good, however, and I have no doubt it met expectations. 'One Bat' was the name of the play given, and the principal parts were taken by Miss Marian Albright, Miss Durham, and Miss Gertrude Bayley. Frank Norris, Milton Latham, and Dave Low made up the male end of the *dramatis personae*. Nowadays Berkeley is quite gay—indeed, there is more occurring there than in San Francisco—which would not be saying a great deal" ("Splashes" by The Witness, 3).

20 May 1893

"The 'Skull and Keys' private theatricals at Berkeley, on Friday night, was really a Society event. Everybody was there. The first sets from San Francisco, Oakland, and the exclusives of the college town were all represented. The play itself was fine and the performers did well. Frank Norris acted his part of the brainless English swell to perfection and everyone applauded him to the echo. He said he was nervous, but he didn't show it at all, and his mother was awfully proud of him. The girls in the piece all did nobly enough and had opportunities for the display of pretty gowns. Marian Albright was an heiress, but took a rather serious and tragic view of her part. Gertrude Bailey was bewitching in a very *décollete* gown of yellow, with all her pale gold hair piled on top of her head. She had never been in theatricals before, but she did finely and was very coquettish—that is natural.

"Mary Dunham made a sweet old maid aunt, and looked fair, fat, and forty. Ned Mays was Belinda, a maid of all work. Once he

spoke in his natural voice and gave his identity away, but everyone knew before, because one can never mistake Mays' profile. Everybody wondered how he enjoyed seeing Marian in the arms of Milt Latham. Milt would make a better lover if he wasn't so hopelessly gone on M.S. Latham. In the audience were Fred Clift and Minnie Bailey, apparently unconscious of the warning given on the stage against *marriage de convenance*.

"Frank Goewey and Blix Smith cooed throughout the performance, and Belle Hutchinson, Miss McNutt, and lots of the other girls were there with chaperons.

"On Monday night the festivities at Berkeley were continued by the Commencement Ball. This social function took place at the Gymnasium, which was lit by electric lights placed in parti-colored paper lanterns. The decorations were tasteful, and effectively concealed the unsightly walls. Professor and Mrs. Moses, Professor and Mrs. LeConte, Professor and Mrs. Rising, Professor and Mrs. Bacon, and President Kellogg graced the event. The Faculty used not to allow their light shine on student gaiety, but things are changing now. Professor Moses talked to the prettiest girls, and Mrs. Moses, who was charming in brocaded satin, danced.

"The crowd was large and, for a wonder, fashionable. Several of the Oakland belles were there, because the poor things have so little to amuse them at home. The whole thing was jolly, as college affairs always are. Mrs. Benjamin Lathrop was there. She is visiting her mother and sisters in Berkeley. As Belle Harris, she was one of the burg's best known girls, and on Monday evening was surrounded by the men and maidens who formed her bridal procession a year ago. Her young husband is at Fresno, where they reside, but the Lathrop marriage seems to be one of the successful ones, in spite of the fact that the wife is five years her husband's senior. He is not twenty-one yet. Mrs. Lathrop used the privilege of the married woman to wear a gown that was the most remarkable in the room.

"Among the girls who danced, and displayed pretty gowns were Miss Maud Wilkinson, Helen Richardson, the Misses Tibbs, of San Francisco, Miss Craft, Miss Juliet Garber, Marian Albright, Bertha Couch, Miss Annie Howell, Miss Helen Cashman and Miss Marian Power, of Alameda" ("Festivities at Berkeley," 10).

Volume 11: 1893

11 November 1893

"Next to the football contest between the elevens of the two universities the most exciting topic of conversation at Berkeley, these days, is the theatre party to be given at the Grand Opera House, in this city, on Thanksgiving Eve, for the benefit of the Boat Crew and '95 *Blue and Gold*. The affair is being managed by H.H. Lang, of '95 *Blue and Gold*, and William D. Jewett, President of the University Boating Association. Among the features of the entertainment will be a farce comedy, written by one of the students, and as many of the boys and co-eds are to take part, the interest felt is absorbing. Inasmuch as the managers contemplate expending over fifteen hundred dollars upon the accessories to the affair, I can easily imagine that it is to be the very swellest event of the season. The proceeds are to be devoted to the boat club and the publication of a stupendous number of *Blue and Gold*" ("Splashes" by The Witness, 2). (A program for this event, at the Bancroft Library,

identifies Frank Norris as author of the words and music.)

Berkeley's Skull and Keys organization held its annual initiation last week: a candidate had to fish in the dry Strawberry Creek; another had to sell *War Cries* ("Splashes" by The Witness, 3).

18 November 1893

Announcement of theatre party on Thanksgiving evening ("Splashes" by The Witness, 3); advertisement for the same as a show by the U.C. Minstrels (15).

25 November 1893

All tickets for the theatre party on Thanksgiving evening have been sold ("Splashes" by The Witness, 3).

#### Volume 12: 1894

31 March 1894

"The second entertainment [at the university] was the 'Low Jinks' given by the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity at its clubhouse, near Stiles' Hall. Frank Norris was the leader of the jinks, and had prepared a distinctly amusing programme, somewhat on the order of that in vogue at the 'De Young Mardi Gras entertainment.' Among the amusements furnished was a musical parody of 'Romeo and Juliet,' which proved especially good. Character skits and banjo specialties formed a rather laughable feature. The programmes were very long yellow affairs, somewhat on the order of circus bills, printed in staring black letters. There were many there who intended going to the reception [given by Mrs. Kellogg] afterwards, but who were so much interested that they remained, while those who first attended the reception voted the jinks infinitely more amusing. After the programme came dancing and refreshments. Rosy-hued dawn was appearing in the heavens ere the merry crowd dispersed" ("Splashes" by The Witness, 4).

12 May 1894

Graduation festivities at Berkeley: "... on Tuesday night, the fashionable Skull and Keys fraternity give their annual play at Stiles' Hall. This year, 'Engaged' is to be given and the female parts will be presented by young men" ("Splashes" by The Witness, 4).

"The Phi Gamma Delta fraternity of Berkeley University gave a yachting party around the bay last Friday. There were forty guests present, and the White Wings carried a merry throng. They lunched at Belvedere. This fraternity entertains in this fashion annually, and invitations are eagerly sought after" ("Splashes" by The Witness, 4).

19 May 1894

"The funniest part of the Skull and Keys performance was the fact that the boys made their own costumes with marvelous results in lace and dazzling effects in embroidery. Really, the whole thing was well done. Gilbert's bright farce comedy, 'Engaged,' cleverly interpreted to the last minor character, and the actors enthusiastically encouraged by a brilliant and friendly audience. Frank Norris was a tremendous success and blushing responded to innumerable recalls, which were offered also to Douglas Waterman, who was immensely clever as 'Belinda,' and gotten up in a most lovely

manner. Decidedly a society house—Oakland and San Francisco both, in best gowns, white ties and the most amiable of moods. Everybody, I think, knew his neighbor, and a little ripple of sympathy ran from tier to tier, giving an inspiring and electric quality to the vociferous applause, which scarcely permitted the boys to make a hit before bursting out afresh. The Crockers, Dimonds, Kittles and Addison Mizner were on one side of the nave, the Prathers, Clements, Scotts, Mastens, Garbers and Millers grouped at the other—and the flowers went showering down on the stage from every box and chair. Supper afterward at half a dozen houses, on both sides of the Bay, and the Skull and Keys, 'wreathed with flowers and garlanded with smiles' was appropriately feted and sent away to dream of histrionic triumphs of the future" ("Splashes" by The Witness, 3).

#### Volume 14: 1895

12 October 1895

"Decidedly interesting to Californians is the progress of our intellectual lights. Here is Miss Tompkins' *Her Majesty* securing prestige and a large sale in the East. In the autumn list of Houghton-Mifflin & Co. appears the announcement of Miss Ina D. Coolbrith's poems. Wm. Doxey is on the verge of bringing out Miss Flora McDonald-Shearer's poems, together with Annie Laurie's stories for children, which Jimmy Swinnerton has illustrated. Frank Norris, one of the most promising of our writers, has had a volume of short stories accepted by Lovell, Coryell, and, I venture to believe, will have a reputation with the appearance of his book...." ("Personalities and Politics" by The Witness, 6).

2 November 1895

"Not for the mines alone has South Africa potent attractions. C.P. Huntington asserts that, were he young again, he would adventure to the country of Cecil Rhodes and repeat there his triumphs; our best engineers are flocking to Johannesburg, and there is announcement yet of but one return, that of Mr. Wiltsee, who fortunate investment has converted to a half-millionaire. The latest to leave California for that Southern clime is Frank Norris, who goes to the Transvaal for purposes of literary observation. He is to send letters to the *Chronicle*, and from them it may be possible to obtain a fair impression of that region. Mr. Norris, I have long believed, is one of the men destined to win a reputation. He writes in a manner essentially literary. He has an excellent style and a trained faculty of observation. For this paper he described the recent shooting function at Del Monte in the manner of an artist—the proper blending of reflection and description such as a writer should present. He has written several stories, some of which the *Overland* has published; a volume of his manuscripts has recently been accepted by Lovell, Coryell & Co. He is to be in South Africa two months or more, and I am sure his descriptions will make excellent reading" ("Personalities and Politics" by The Witness, 6).

#### Volume 15: 1896

25 January 1896

"The *Chronicle* supplement, though rather overburdened

with heavy matter, is picking up. It had two interesting features last week—a short story by Stephen Crane and the first of Frank Norris's letters from Cape Town. Mr. Norris has written a great deal for THE WAVE, and is, without question, the most promising of the California *littérateurs*. There is a veritable literary quality in his style, and I am sure his letters from the Cape will prove interesting apart from the excitement incident to the Transvaal trouble. By the way, it is alleged Norris was with Dr. Jameson in the raid on the Rand. That was the opportunity he always sought" ("Library Notes," 9).

15 February 1896

"Our fellow townsman Frank Norris has described South Africa for the *Chronicle* in such graphic phrase that it lives under his pen. We see the country with the naked eye. But so far as opinions are concerned, he was evidently absorbed, swallowed, and assimilated by the Englishmen among whom he fell. He sees with their eyes, hears with their ears, speaks with their tongue. His indignant rebuke of the impudence of the Boer's attempt to prevent their country being gobbled by the English, recalls Thackeray's cockney on the Rhine, who called the Germans he met 'a lot of nasty foreigners, who don't even speak English' " ("Causerie" by John Bonner, 5).

7 March 1896

"The March *Current Literature* reprints the *Saturday Review's* critique of *The Red Badge of Courage*; a fine chapter entitled 'Chonita's Surrender,' from Gertrude Atherton's *Doomswoman*, and 'Q's' charming 'Visit to Gunnel Rock,' surely a most graceful and delightful idyll. It also reprints a capital article from THE WAVE describing a vintage on a California vineyard" ("In the Library," 8). (Reference to Norris's "A California Vintage.")

9 May 1896

"That curious little 'school,' or 'cercle,' or 'coterie,' called 'Les Jeunes,' who have of late furnished literary gossip from San Francisco to New York, assembled to a characteristic supper last Friday eve, at Martinelli's Cafe in the Italian quarter. The supper was given by Frank Burgess, editor and promoter of the terrifying little bibelot, *The Lark*. Mr. Burgess also designed the weird individual menus. These latter were most unique, a feature of the design being a border of 'goups' with interlaced arms and legs. (N.B.—A 'goup' is the type of that awful formless creature that you see in *The Lark*; the shape which shape has none; the boneless, jointless horror with the staring eyes.) To be a 'Jeune' it is necessary to have had a contribution accepted by *The Lark*. Among the inner circle of 'Jeunes' at Martinelli's were Ernest Peixotto, Porter Gannett, Bruce Porter, Willis Polk. The 'Jeunes' of the outer circle, the un-Larked 'Jeunes,' were Karl Howard, Frank Norris, Mr. Cochran, L.S. Vassault, Phil Brown, Morgan Shepherd, Mr. Raymond. Toward the middle course a hugh *pâté de volaille* was served. Mr. Burgess, cut it open, and, lol a flock of tiny larks flew out, and filled the room with their singing. The effect was pretty in the extreme" ("Things and People" by The Witness, 7).

12 December 1896

Announcement that Frank Norris is among the writers who

will contribute to the Christmas issue (1).

19 December 1896 (Christmas issue)

Note with photograph of Norris at the head of "In the Heat of Battle": "Frank Norris, who has been a frequent contributor to 'The Wave' during the past year, is chiefly known as a writer of fiction that has appeared in Eastern and local publications. Mr. Norris's best work is in the 'very' short story, wherein a suggestive bit of action is condensed into the smallest possible space. During the winter of 1895-6 Mr. Norris was the correspondent for 'Harper's Weekly' and the San Francisco 'Chronicle' in the Transvaal, South Africa, at the time of the Uitlander insurrection and Jameson's raid. Mr. Norris took an active part in the rising, and was expelled from the country on that account by the Johannesburg authorities after the Boer government had regained its supremacy" (6).

Volume 16: 1897

30 January 1897

"Little has been said about the performance of 'Caste' which is to be given some time in February at the Bush Street Theater by certain ambitious amateurs. The performance is in aid of the Children's Hospital and the Armitage Orphanage for Boys. A good deal of interest is centered in the performance. Miss Leila Burton, Miss Rose Hooper, and Messrs. Frank Mathieu, Frank Norris and Charles Dickman are to have the leading roles" ("In Society," 10).

6 February 1897

"There is much interest in the production of 'Caste,' the rehearsals of which are proceeding apace. The Shiels estate has kindly loaned the Bush-Street Theatre for the preparatory performances, though the play itself will be given at the California" ("In Society," 10).

"On Wednesday evening next, February 10th, the 'Doctor's Daughters of Dr. McKenzie's church [First Presbyterian] will give a musicale at the residence of Mrs. B.F. Norris, 1822 Sacramento street. Every member of the organization has taken an enthusiastic interest in this affair and no pains are to be spared to make it one of the most attractive concerts of the season. Tickets, seventy-five cents—including refreshments—may be had from any of the 'Doctor's Daughters.' The proceeds of the entertainment will be devoted to the furtherance of the many charitable schemes that this organization has in hand. Among other local talent, the Mandolin and Guitar Club of the University of California and the Press Club Quartette have volunteered their services" ("In Society," 10).

13 February 1897

Photograph of Frank Norris and others playing the lead parts in the performance of *Caste* (7).

"The Doctor's Daughters of Rev. Dr. Mackenzie's church gave a musicale at the residence of Mrs. B.F. Norris on Wednesday night of this week. The 'Daughters' are among the most popular and entertaining charitable organizations of this city, and their 'functions' given from time to time for sweet charity's sake are invariably well attended. This, their latest musicale, was made the occasion of a most delightful gathering. The mandolin and guitar

clubs of the University of California, as well as the Press Club quartette, and other talent, were called upon to furnish the entertainment, and did much toward making the affair one of the most successful of its kind this season" ("In Society," 10).

20 February 1897

"The performance of 'Caste' by a company of young society people of this city promises to be quite an affair, and is already exciting considerable interest. The play will be given at the California Theatre a week from Monday, and the company is now hard at work putting on the finishing touches, under the coaching of Leo Cooper. I understand the boxes will be sold at auction by the comedienne, Fanny Rice, at the California Theatre on February 27th" ("In Society," 10).

6 March 1897

"Mammas with marriageable sons and daughters were not pleased with the selection of Robertson's play of 'Caste,' which was presented at the California Theater last Monday evening. 'Caste' deals with low life and a mesalliance in which a penniless girl of lowly birth who takes small parts in cheap theaters is made the heroine, and the hero is a young aristocrat who falls desperately and shockingly in love and marries contrary to the plans and ambitions of a proud and aristocratic mother. Society is not enamored of this sort of story, and it has little if any interest in the love affairs of plumbers and the like. Young ladies who take small parts in theaters, and who have, besides, drunken and disreputable fathers, and who live a miserable existence in wretched attic apartments, are in real life shocking, and upon the stage quite unbearable as possible wives for impressionable aristocrats. So 'Caste' in view of all the circumstances, was not a wise selection for the occasion. I have this upon the authority of one of the mammas. But the staging and production of the play were quite another thing. There was a polish and a finish to the performance that was quite unexpected, and pleasing as well. The company of ladies and gentlemen who presented the play did not have behind them an experience of three hundred consecutive nights in New York, so it would have been unfair to have expected from them even as clever a performance as they gave. Indeed, so clever was their handling of the play that it served to emphasize the extreme badness of some of our professional performers. The tendencies of the amateur are always to overact, and to a greater or less extent this fault was manifest in all of the young performers, with the exception of Dickman. His Eccles was from any point of view really superb, quite worthy of a professional. His makeup was artistic, his dialect admirable, and the whole presentation a finished piece of work.

"The Polly of Miss Rose Hooper was sprightly, bright and vivacious, and the Marquise de St. Maur of Miss May Robeson was presented with grace and naturalness. Miss Burton, who essayed the role of Esther, was manifestly playing under a high tension, which led her at times to overact her part. Doubtless it was the result in a high state of nervousness. The young lady gave indications of capabilities along strong emotional lines, but at the same time it was apparent that she needs training down, rather than training up. Mr. Norris, as Sam Gerridge, astonished his friends a good deal. His makeup was so accurate that he might have stepped

out of a south-of-Market-street plumber's establishment and been taken for one of the journeymen. Mr. Seldon Hooper as Captain Hautree was quite acceptable. Young Dr. Robinson appeared at short notice as George d'Alroy. Originally Mr. Mathieu was cast for this character, but two deaths in his family prevented him from taking part. Mr. J.C. Wilson, who would have made an admirable d'Alroy, was next pressed into service, but the death of his father, Captain Wilson, made it necessary to look elsewhere. Young Dr. Robinson was then induced to take the part, and in view of the circumstances, did remarkably well. Taken as a whole the performance was distinctly creditable, and that it was remunerative to the charitable institutions in whose benefit it was given the crowded house testified" ("The Theatres," 11).

13 March 1897

"... Then I scurried home to dress, for I was bidden to the dinner given by Mrs. B.F. Norris in honor of her son's birthday. We had ever so much fun. Fourteen were invited. You know it was a progressive dinner, and we changed partners at each course. I never expected to find enjoyment at a dinner party. They are usually so horribly stiff and one usually either gets a man who simply eats and eats and won't talk or else a bore, and then I never can find topics of conversation to last through eight or nine courses. But when one has a partner for a course the attractiveness of each is doubled. Between times little trays bearing quaint cuttings from advertisements, tied up with ribbons, were passed around and later on read aloud by each recipient to the merriment of the others" ("A Debutante's Diary" by Miss Cricket, 10).

8 May 1897

Photograph of children at the May-Day festivities at the Lester Norris Memorial Kindergarten on Pacific Street (9).

6 November 1897

"... The short stories in *McClure's* are out of place and should have appeared in *Munsey's*. Save for the Kipling stories and the William Allen White contributions, the fiction in this magazine is generally inferior. I am quite sure S.S. McClure, who is one of the most progressive editors of the day, does not himself attend to this department. The yarns read as though they were selected by the president of a feminine press club for publication in the *Young Ladies' Journal*. I may suggest to Mr. McClure, that tales by Mr. Jno. R. Spears, Cutcliffe Hyne, Conan Doyle, W.W. Jacobs, Frank Norris, Quiller-Couch and Owen Wister, have the strong masculine flavor his publication requires" ("November Magazines" by C. [John O'Hara Cosgrave], 12).

20 November 1897

"The system of private vengeance which prevails among our Mongolian fellow citizens is no respecter of persons. To the feuds of the *tongs*, priests as well as laymen are sacrificed. The latest victim of the gentle controversy between Sam Yups and See Yups is a priest of the Temple of the King of the City, who, on Sunday afternoon was stabbed to death in the presence of his joss. Of course, the assailant escaped, and among the authorities mystification reigns supreme. It seems the priest of this temple has fallen

under the ban of the warring clans because he admitted the rivals to worship there. He refused, it appears, to choose between Sam Yups and See Yups, and for his impartiality, has a knife in his heart. Both insisted that he bar the other, and promised dire punishment if he went his own way, but, being an obdurate divine, this priest of the Temple, he did go his own way, and is now with the gods. Quite medieval it sounds, this practice of summary vengeance, but Chinatown is full of just such episodes, which is one reason why it is such a capital background for the stories that no one seems to write, save, at intervals, Frank Norris" ("Things and People" by Boswell Jr., 4).

#### Volume 17: 1898

5 March 1898

"Mr. Frank Norris having gone on to New York, there has occurred a delay in forwarding the MSS. of 'Moran of the Lady Letty,' the continuation of which did not arrive in time for insertion in this issue" (2).

"Frank Norris is the last of the band of California writers to shake off the San Francisco sand from his sabots. Gelett Burgess and Juliet Wilbor Tompkins, both of whom served in an editorial capacity on *The Wave*, are in New York—the former contributing to periodicals in general and the latter editing *The Puritan*. Geraldine Bonner is writing for several of the weeklies and monthlies in New York, and Bruce Porter is in Europe. It behooves us now to raise a new crop of *littérateurs* to take the places of those who have gone on. There are some promising candidates maturing, whose debut will be made in due course in the early future" ("Things and People" by Boswell Jr., 7).

30 April 1898

Mrs. B.F. Norris is described as one of the founders and past presidents of the Century Club ("Women's Clubs," 3).

7 May 1898

"Fakes in the name of charity are generally excused, the end being thought to pardon the means. Sometimes, however, a good thing is perpetrated in the name of charity and everyone is surprised because expectations are realized instead of disappointed. I have just received a copy of 'The Mariposa,' a magazine published by the ladies of the Relief Society of Oakland, which is really a first rate publication. It is not a bit amateurish in appearance, but is gotten out in thoroughly professional style, contains new poems by Edward Rowland Sill, also verse by Charles A. Keeler, Elizabeth Gerberding, Mary Mapes Dodge, Clarence Urmy and Regina Wilson; articles by Mrs. Bernard Moses, Harriet Levy, Mabel Craft, Eli Sheppard, C.A. Murdock and James D. Phelan, and stories by Frank Norris, Ednah Robinson, Mary Bell and Cromwell Galpin. Interspersed through the magazine are some excellent illustrations. The cover is a beauty, and altogether the publication does the highest credit to its editors" ("Things and People" by Boswell Jr., 3).

21 May 1898

"A letter from Frank Norris, who is now special war correspondent for *McClure's Magazine* and syndicate, is dated on board the

New York *World's* dispatch boat 'Three Friends,' two miles off Matanzas. The opportunities which the war will afford Mr. Norris of becoming a prominent personage are many, and there is no doubt in the minds of those who are acquainted with his abilities that if he ever gets half a chance at describing a sea fight he will be equal to the occasion" ("Things and People" by Boswell Jr., 3).

4 June 1898

Article on war correspondents at Key West and Fort Tampa. Noted is Richard Harding Davis's air "as an English gentleman of leisure." Remington wears a yellow canvas outfit, "set off with knee boots and enormous spurs." Stephen Crane, "a small and sententious young person," is to do "fine writing, not journalism, if you please." J.F.J. Archibald was shot in the arm during an attempt to land arms for the Cuban insurgents. "Jack Kline, who got the Samoan story for the *Examiner* years ago, is one of the *World's* men, and he with Archibald and Frank Norris, who represents *McClure's*, and Rathom of the *Chronicle* are the only San Francisco men I have met." Journalists have to contend with strict censorship of their stories ("Correspondents at Tampa" by Reuben Flax, 7).

#### Volume 18: 1898

2 July 1898

Mrs. B.F. Norris is listed as one of the guests registered at the Castle Crag resort for the Fourth of July celebrations (untitled paragraph, 13).

9 July 1898

"The glorious Fourth was duly celebrated at the Tavern of Castle Crag. An elaborate banquet was provided for the occasion and the visitors were entertained at a concert in the evening by some of their number. The following programme was rendered: Music, Mrs. Coleman, Miss Goewey, Miss Kate Ivancovich; reading, 'Declaration of Independence,' Mrs. Norris; song, 'Heart Sorrow,' Miss Greenwood; recitation, 'Kitty of Coleraine,' Mrs. Ramon Wilson; piano solo, Miss Ivancovitch; recitation, 'I am not Mad,' Mr. John Ivancovitch; specialties, 'By the Coon Family,' Misses Goewey, Pickerman and Coleman; 'Battle Hymn of the Republic,' Mrs. Howard; National Airs, Mrs. Brayne" (untitled paragraph, 16).

27 August 1898

"Frank Norris, so long connected with the editorial department of *The Wave*, has returned from Cuba, where he witnessed the Santiago campaign as correspondent for *McClure's Magazine*. He suffered under the hardships and rigors of the climate, had malarial fever, but saw all the fighting, including the great infantry charge at El Caney. Mr. Norris is by way of becoming a literary success, his story, *Moran of the Lady Letty*, which was written for *The Wave*, having since been used as a serial by the *Evening Sun*. It is about to appear in book form, from the press of Doubleday & McClure. His descriptions of the fighting, which ought to be first rate, will appear in due course in the magazine, illustrated by snapshot photographs. Mr. Norris tells me that he caught the only view of the surrender of General Toral, he being the one correspondent present armed with a camera. Another Californian, J.F.J. Archibald,

of the *Evening Post*, captured the sole photo of the flag-raising over the Court-house at Santiago. Mr. Archibald has had four attacks of fever and is now laid up in the hospital" ("Things and People" by Boswell Jr., 3).

1 October 1898

"Moran of the Lady Letty, by Frank Norris (Doubleday & McClure Co.) made its debut in *The Wave*, and since has appeared serially in the *Evening Sun* of New York. It is a brilliant excursion in story telling, and bound to familiarize the reading world with the unique literary talent of its author. There is swing, vim and originality in this yarn, and it will be extraordinary if it does not have a wide sale" ("The Newest Books," [16]).

15 October 1898

"In London, California literature is having a fine boom. The exaltation of Miss Coolbrith in the *Outlook* has been followed by the eulogy of W.C. Morrow in the *Sketch*. The eulogist is rather florid in his appreciation and institutes undue comparisons with Kipling and de Maupassant, but the spirit of his screed is so appropriate that his enthusiasm becomes pardonable. The names of Ambrose Bierce and Emma Frances Dawson are introduced into the context in terms of great respect, so in due time the impression will go abroad that this is a literary Klondyke. Thus far no one has discovered Frank Norris, though George H. Fitch of the *Chronicle*, in a critique of *Moran of the Lady Letty* pronounced the book as in the class of *The Wrecker*. Mr. Fitch has no bad bouquet-throwing habits, and his commendation is a notable compliment to the young author's talent. By the way, Mr. Norris went East this week to his old place with the *McClure's*, having partially recovered the flesh and color lost in the Santiago campaign. His next appearance is in the *Century*, which will publish his impressions of the charge at El Caney" ("Things and People" by Boswell Jr., 3).

19 November 1898

"Among the new men, one thinks at once of Winston Churchill, who gave us *The Celebrity*—a delightful farce-comedy novel—of Bernard Capes, and Frank Norris, whose book, *Moran of the Lady Letty*, is full of ability. This trio will be heard from nobly, I think, and will surely develop into great writers as Gilbert Parker has. About the books of these men there is the suggestion of an ability that is independent of its material. This capacity to write will not be bound to a particular *metier*. Style and the sense of form are well marked characteristics in Capes and Norris, while Churchill has discovered a rare humor and a pleasant facility of craftsmanship..." ("Books of the Year" by C. [John O'Hara Cosgrave], 10).

3 December 1898

"The literary reputations of California, with few exceptions, are feminine. Why this should be passeth the comprehension of the writer, but it's the fact. One thinks of Joaquin Miller, Ambrose Bierce, Frank Norris, John Muir, and one or two more whose names are known across the continent, but there are surely several dozen women whose signatures are familiar in the magazines..." ("Literary Californiennes," [6]).

10 December 1898

"McClure's has the first instalment of 'Stalky,' the new serial by Rudyard Kipling. It makes a ripping narrative and introduces some new terms in the language of the hero and his friends. For instance, 'stalky' means clever, well considered, wily; 'goats' expresses the supreme of delight; and 'fids' is felicity in the abstract. Frank Norris contributes 'Miracle Joyeux,' a version of the Christ story which is very cleverly rendered. Mr. Norris is one of the coming men among the younger generation of authors..." ("Christmas Magazines" by C. [John O'Hara Cosgrave], 10).

Volume 19: 1899

7 January 1899

"On Saturday night I went to the Saturday Evening Cotillion Club and had a fine time.... Some of the boys belonging to this club are particularly pleasant and jolly. Charley Norris is, perhaps, the most popular, although Ike Upham, Paul Jones, the Carrigans and Dick Adams run him pretty close..." ("Babblings of a Belle" by Miss Cricket, 11).

14 January 1899

"Good fortune seems to follow the Californians who have shaken the sand of the Pacific from their feet. Gelett Burgess has had a story in the *Illustrated London News*, and has written a novel of San Francisco life which is destined to bring him fortune and greater fame. Frank Norris has a novel of life on Polk street accepted by the *McClure's*, while *Munsey's* is soon to publish *Blitz*, a novelette he finished last year. Ernest Peixotto has developed into one of the leading magazine illustrators, and has more work from *Scribner's* and the *Century* than he can do. Juliet Wilbor Tompkins still presides over the destinies of *The Puritan...*" ("Things and People" by Boswell Jr., 3).

11 March 1899

"You revolt a little at first: What (you say to yourself) is this vigorous, intrepid young person going to do? Why does he thrust my nose into Polk-street smells and drag me against this great beast of a stupid McTeague and this loud-mouthed braggart Marcus Schouler. You think, longingly, of *Moran's* clean, salty freshness, and at her name; long yellow braids sweep across your face and with them the smell and feel of the sea. It is with difficulty that you come back to Polk street and the dentist's 'parlors,' with its odor of ether, coke gas and stale beer and cheap tobacco. You sicken at McTeague, 'crop-ful, stupid, warm,' with a jaw 'salient like that of the carnivora;' at his hands—hands of the old-time car-boy, hard as wooden mallets, strong as vises. You shrink from him with dim forebodings of what is to come, with hazy pictures scurrying through your mind, of this great brute roused, enraged, prodded into action. But something makes you read on. The slow, steady, strong current of the story grips you and carries you forcibly along with it: at first slowly, then it sucks you a little closer, a little faster, and yet a little stronger, the interest augmenting with every chapter, until with one long, final, powerful sweep you are carried to the end.

"It is a remarkable production, this story of *McTeague*, vivid



virile, powerful. Admirably constructed, and yet without any suggestion of laborious planning or any visible machinery, the story seeming to grow rather than to be propelled, as is ordinarily the case. The work throughout is singularly even and unspotted, there not being so much as a bald or congested place in it.

"That all-pervading thing which we call style is here neither thin nor turgid, neither desert nor jungle, but something clear, firm, vigorous and expressive. It is possible that the effect—the haunting effect—produced by the repetition of certain phrases, such as the description of McTeague, and Trina's 'intuitive feminine fear of the male'—it is possible that some minds may find this effect gained at too great a cost, at a certain sacrifice of simplicity. To me the strange impression created by this insistence would not be dear at any price.

"If both Zola and realism had not become almost terms of reproach in America, I would be tempted to say that Mr. Norris has much that is best in both. Perhaps, after all, it would be more accurate to call *McTeague* an experimental novel. It is certainly an event in the literary history of California, as it is the first story, since Bret Harte's, which really smacks of the soil. Bret Hart's scenes and men are past and gone, Mrs. Atherton's never existed. It has been left for Mr. Norris to transfer our city's individuality to paper. That he is fully equal to the occasion is quietly but clearly demonstrated in *McTeague*. To be sure, he gives us only a little humble stream of life in an accommodation street—Polk street—but it is San Francisco and not 'any old thing.' The extract which follows is not by any means the best the book contains, but it loses less in transplanting than would some of the more dramatic scenes. It is difficult indeed to remove anything from the fine mosaic of Mr. Norris' story without great loss to the fragment. The picture of Polk street itself could stand alone, but space forbids. The battles between McTeague and Marcus, and the fine description of McTeague's flight from the mine and into the desert should be read in the book alone. They are needed in the story's terrible crescendo. There you feel them to be inevitable, here they would fall like an unexpected blow. This is the marriage of Trina and McTeague, solemnized in their apartments on Polk street near Bush. The Sieppes are Trina's parents. Schouler had been McTeague's intimate friend, but they had quarreled over Trina: [two extracts from 160.17-169.31 in the first edition]. ("McTeague" by H.B. [Helen Borden], 5).

"Mr. Hubert Henry Davies, whose signature has been appended to the dramatic and musical critiques of a local paper, is about to follow the footsteps of Gelett Burgess and Frank Norris and travel eastward. The departure of another of San Francisco's younger *litterati* is a subject for regret, though the occasion thereof is a matter upon which Mr. Davies is to be complimented and congratulated..." ("Things and People" by Boswell Jr., 7).

"Another piece of war literature worthy of note is Frank Norris' 'Comida: an Experience in Famine,' in the *Atlantic*. It describes the feeding at Caney of the refugees from Santiago, and the episode is superbly painted. That memory of the thousands of struggling Cuban children, with their cries of 'Comida!' (*co-mee-dah*) which means 'food,' fighting for a scant ration of corn meal, is one not lightly to be thrust down. The article is real and picturesque, and suggests some measure of Mr. Norris' literary powers, which are well in evidence at the moment. *McClure's* publishes also a story from his pen, 'This Animal of a Buldy Jones,'

which will not be new to readers of *The Wave*. It has been renovated and re-written since its first appearance, and is really as vital a tale as this magazine has had in a year" ("In Bookdom," 15).

18 March 1899

"Frank Norris has really achieved a success with *McTeague*, the novel of San Francisco life which has just been published by Doubleday & McClure. It is no fanciful tale about society maidens and frock-coated youths, but a sober and very serious study of contemporary low life on Polk street. A distinct method is used, and the development of the characters and their *milieu* is masterly. The book attracted attention at once in New York, and the critics are dealing with Mr. Norris as the latest literary arrival. The *New York Tribune* reviewed the book for a column, and, though criticising certain phases of it, welcomes the author as a man to be reckoned with. Hamlin Garland has reviewed *McTeague* also, and emphatically compliments Mr. Norris. Indeed, the *San Franciscan* 'got there' at last, and his friends are duly jubilant. *McTeague* is too serious and realistic a story to make pleasant reading for babes and sucklings, and it may fail to win the popularity of *Moran of the Lady Letty*. It is a bold and uncompromising work, and so important as to compel attention. *McTeague* and his creator will be topics in the literary press for some time to come. Whoever knows Mr. Norris, and he has many acquaintances in San Francisco, will be surprised at the grim realism of this novel. They will wonder how he ever made the studies or acquired the familiarity with Polk-street life which is evinced in *McTeague*. The fact is, he has an extraordinary faculty of intuitive observation, and absorbs scenery and conditions without the aid of the note-book process. Mr. Norris is a very remarkable young man, whose powers are only unfolding. Whoever followed the series of short stories which he wrote for *The Wave* will have a fairer conception of his versatility than a reading of *McTeague* might induce. That book was commenced five years ago, and finished in November, 1897, up at the Big Dipper Mine, Placer County, where Mr. Norris was the guest of Mr. Waterhouse.

"But Frank Norris is not the only San Franciscan who is 'getting there'..." ("Things and People" by Boswell Jr., 3).

22 April 1899

"With his laurels fresh upon him Frank Norris has returned to San Francisco. He is enamored of California, thinks it affords the finest literary background in America, and is disposed to make it the theatre of his future endeavors. He proposes to locate the scene of his next story in the grain fields of the San Joaquin. The material of it will be 'Wheat,' with such problems as the subject develops. It is his intention to gather impressions and information at first hand, and he intends to spend some months to come on one of the big wheat ranches of the interior valleys. Mr. Norris has two books under way. *Blix*, now appearing in the *Puritan*, will be out in book form in October and his novel *The Heroine* is also slated for an early appearance" ("Things and People" by Boswell Jr., 6).

Book review in the form of a dialogue between the reviewer and his wife. Discussing the preciousness of language in Ada Cohnfeldt's *A Tent of Grace*, the wife defends a description of love-making to which she has positively responded:

"That chapter where Hans and Jette meet in

the vegetable garden is charming," she said.  
"Isn't it cute where Hans nibbles Jette's fingers?"  
"How about *McTeague*?" I suggested.

She shuddered. "But there's truth to nature in *McTeague's* bites, too," she said with an air of giving the devil his due.  
(" 'A Tent of Grace,' " 15.)

10 June 1899

"Outside the features [of the *June Century*], the best contributions are undoubtedly General Sherman on 'Franco-Prussian Battlefields' and 'With Lawton at El Caney,' by Frank Norris..... Mr. Norris evinces in his brief article on the fighting before Santiago an extraordinary keenness of perception and a rare ability at rendering the sights and sounds of battle. But the article is important for quite a different reason. It introduces a new stylist. Read it, and note how admirably vivid the scene is set out before you, how every touch, every word and phrase tells and is impregnated with the subject. Compare this brief sketch, then, with the ornate journalese of Richard Harding Davis, or the labored banalities of Caspar Whitney. You will realize where the artist comes in. Here there is no effort at all—no striving after picturesque effects, but you have a veritable impression of the firing, the advance, and of El Caney, 'a spread of red-tiled, fluted roofs, surmounted by a cathedral tower just on the other side of a deep gully where ran a stream'" ("In Bookdom," 11).

24 June 1899

"Frank Norris is soon to be introduced to the English public under excellent auspices. Grant Richards, the well known publisher, has promised to produce *McTeague* early in September. He submitted the book to Dr. Conan Doyle for his approval, who thus records his impressions of it: 'What I think is that you have got the great American novelist, and I am not sure that you have not got the great American novel. It is tremendously good—splendid—and if it does not sell at once must have a steady demand. Such a book cannot go under.' Mr. Richards published *Moran of the Lady Letty*, under the title *Shanghai'd*, in England, where the book is having a large sale" ("Things and People" by Boswell Jr., 7).

#### Volume 20: 1899

29 July 1899

Review of Winston Churchill's *Richard Carvel* ending thus: "In closing, it may be said that *Richard Carvel* and *McTeague* are the most important and promising contributions to American literature within the decade" ("In Bookdom" by C. [John O'Hara Cosgrave], 15).

5 August 1899

"An interesting engagement just announced is that of Frank Norris, the clever young novelist, who is in San Francisco on a literary quest, and Miss Nettie Black of 1324 Octavia street. Miss Black is a decidedly handsome and attractive girl, and Mr. Norris is to be congratulated on his good fortune" (untitled paragraph, 19).

12 August 1899

"... The reception accorded *Richard Carvel* across the Atlantic will be interesting to note. Apart from the American setting of its first and latter chapters, it is a first-rate story of George III days, and should appeal to our cousins and allies on that account. About the same time they will have the opportunity of judging *McTeague*, which Grant Richards publishes early in September" ("In Bookdom" by C. [John O'Hara Cosgrave], 15).

21 October 1899

"In *Blix* (Doubleday & McClure) Frank Norris has veritably written a novel of San Francisco life. So many writers have tried to embody the distinctive characteristics of the city of the Golden Gate in fiction and have failed, that *Blix* should be notable for this if for no other reason. Why it should be difficult to utilize successfully the picturesque values of Chinatown and Barbary Coast is hard to define, but since *The Wrecker* no one but Mr. Norris has reflected aught of their individuality. Indeed, Stevenson's has long stood as the sole description of the burg the San Franciscan would admit to be either appreciative or accurate. Since then, a dozen ambitious pens have juggled with the nomenclature of both state and city in fiction, but its spirit and character have eluded them. Their flavorless generalities have meant nothing and were as applicable in Cincinnati as in the Pacific metropolis.

"Apart, then, from its virtues as fiction, *Blix* represents the successful embodiment of certain aspects of San Francisco. The scene is set there; but the *dramatis personae*—there are really but two of them—get to know one another and, very unconventionally, go wandering over the city, into Chinatown and Spanishtown and the Presidio. They watch the sunset from Washington street hill, dine *a la Mexicano* at Luna's restaurant, have picnic luncheons out on the cliffs beyond Baker's beach, and go fishing in the Spring Valley lakes. Indeed Condry's stories—the stories that make his reputation—are all written in the library of the Bohemian club. There is no denying the local flavor nor the absolute verity of the rendering. At last, then, San Francisco has found an appreciative interpreter.

"It has been observed by the present writer that of all the younger men who are now before the public, Frank Norris alone has a distinguished style. Crane and Davis certainly write cleverly; Ella Darcy's narrative is an admirable instrument; Marriott-Watson's sentences have the vigorous flavor of a strong individuality, together with both elegance and spirit; Henry Harland infuses his style with a poetic charm which is in artistic keeping with his subjects. Norris, however, has a natural style, clear, unhesitating and singularly true. It is not the style of Stevenson nor of Kipling, but a brilliant and decisive note that rings with its own elegance and beauty. What this style is capable of in general descriptive impressions was made manifest by Mr. Norris' articles in the *Atlantic* and the *Century* on the Cuban campaign. What it can suggest with a more familiar theme the following extract denotes.

They looked swiftly around them, and the bustling, breezy water-front faded from their recollections. They were in a world of narrow streets, of galleries and overhanging balconies. Craziest structures, riddled and honeycombed

with stairways and passages, shut out the sky, though here and there rose a building of extraordinary richness and most elaborate ornamentation. Color was everywhere. A thousand little notes of green and yellow, of vermillion and sky blue, assaulted the eye. Here it was a doorway, here a vivid glint of cloth or hanging, here a huge scarlet sign lettered with gold, and here a kaleidoscopic effect in the garments of a passer-by. Directly opposite, and two stories above their heads, a sort of huge 'loggia,' one blaze of gilding and crude vermilion, opened in the gray cement of a crumbling facade, like a sudden burst of flame. Gigantic pot-bellied lanterns of red and gold swung from its ceiling, while along its railing stood a row of pots—brass, ruddy bronze, and blue porcelain—from which were growing red, saffron, purple, pink, and golden tulips without number. The air was vibrant with unfamiliar noises. From one of the balconies near at hand, though unseen, a gong, a pipe, and some kind of stringed instrument wailed and thundered in unison. There was a vast shuffling of padded soles and a continuous interchange of singsong monosyllables, high-pitched and staccato, while from every hand rose the strange aromas of the East—sandalwood, punk, incense, oil, and the smell of mysterious cookery.

"Chinatown!" exclaimed Travis.

Though the importance of *Blix* is mainly because of its local color, the two characters, Condry Jones [sic], the young newspaper editor and the young woman with whom he falls in love, Travis Bessemer, with whom the book is concerned, emerge as singularly life-like figures. They have no prototypes in current fiction, nor do I remember an analogous succession of incidents to those which are her brought off in fairly logical sequence. You may dub *Blix* trivial, and superficial, as undoubtedly it is, quite unworthy of the author of *McTeague*, but it is extraordinarily individual, and for so slight a plot, told with irresistible vim. It goes, from first to last. The supreme faculty of the story teller is shown in thus holding one's interest through a succession of arbitrary incidents unrelated to either character or story. *Blix* may not be important, but it is really clever and interesting and, as I have said, thoroughly San Franciscan. Who that has ever watched a sunset from the top of the Washington street hill will deny the accuracy of the following—the accuracy and the beauty too.

Below them the hill fell away so abruptly that the roofs of the nearest houses were almost at their feet; and beyond these the city tumbled raggedly down to meet the bay in a confused, vague mass of roofs, cornices, cupolas, and chimneys, blurred and indistinct in the twilight, but here and there pierced by a new-lit street lamp. Then came the bay. To the east they could see Goat Island, and the fleet of sailing-ships anchored off the water-front; while directly in their

line of vision the island of Alcatraz, with its triple crown of forts, started from the surface of the water. Beyond was the Marin County shore, a vast streak of purple against the sky. The eye followed its sky-line westward till it climbed, climbed, climbed up a long slope that suddenly leaped heavenward with the crest of Tamalpais, purple and still, looking always to the sunset like a great watching sphinx. Then, farther on, the slope seemed to break like the breaking of an advancing billow, and go tumbling, crumbling downward to meet the Golden Gate—the narrow inlet of green tide-water with its flanking Presidio. But, farther than this there was nothing, nothing but a vast, illimitable plain of green—the open Pacific.

("In Bookdom," 13.)

#### Volume 21: 1900

24 February 1900

"I received the announcement cards of the wedding of Jeanette Black and Frank Norris, which took place in New York, February the twelfth' ("*Babblings of a Belle*" by Miss Cricket, 11).

28 July 1900

"Will there soon be reaction from the present craze for historical fiction? That is a question of deep interest among the publishers. To-day a story is not a story unless it is studded with incidents and great names. Accuracy is not especially in demand—indeed it is surely a lack of originality to fail in supplying new settings for eminent personalities. I have heard recently that much is expected of the debut of two Chicago men, whose novels emerge this Spring under the auspices of the new Doubleday-Page firm. They are Theodore Dreiser and Arthur Henry—both young, on the right side of thirty, newspaper men by calling and great friends. Frank Norris read the manuscript of *Sister Carrie*, Dreiser's book, for Doubleday-Page, and accepted it at once. He describes the style as grim, direct realism, tremendously strong. *When Dreams Come True*, Henry's novel, is very fanciful and idyllic. There is a pronounced individuality in the work of both men and they may be the leaders of a new school" ("*Things and People*" by Boswell Jr., 6).

#### Volume 22: 1900

18 August 1900

"There is immense competition these days among the publishing houses. All are on the look-out for new men and are willing to do great things for the promising young author. The McClures' set the fashion of capturing the youthful celebrity and binding him to their establishment with silver chains. Silver is used advisedly, because under the conditions exacted the embryo is not equipped to reside at the Waldorf-Astoria. Frank Norris was one of the first to have a New York opportunity given him at McClure's. William Allen White's reputation has been fostered in the same quarter. Booth Tarkington, whose *Monsieur Beaucaire* is accepted in

quarters that would have none of his *Gentleman from Indiana*, is another..." ("Magazines and Their Makers," [18]).

Volume 23: 1901

17 August 1901

"The Selby robbery has divided attention with the strike this week. It is a record crime, not only for the size of the 'sack' taken but for its astonishing boldness. A quarter of a million dollars taken from the bottom of a safe while a whole smelter force was working just outside! The careful attention to detail, the neatness of the job, made the world believe that it was the work of experts. And then it turns out to be the work of a simple smelter who had never, so far as can be learned, committed another serious crime in his life. To finish the paradox, the man who had the originality to see the chance and the genius of thievery to carry it out, failed to cover up the evidence by dropping his tools in the bay, but left them loose in his own cabin, and was as wax in the hands of the detectives who captured him.

"There are still two more curious coincidences in this curious case. Frank Norris, the California novelist, outlined step for step just such a crime in his novel 'Blix,' issued two years ago. Winters says that he never read that novel; if it is true, it is a case of great minds in the same channel. Again, the last heavy robbery in San Francisco is directly connected with the Selby Smelting Works. It transpires that Walter Dimmick, chief clerk at the Mint, to whom the Federal detectives are trying to nail the robbery of \$30,000 in gold, had been taking small sums from the returns made by the Selby people and it is the theory of the officers that he stole in a lump to cover up the sum of these little peculations. These things would be called strained if they were put into a story, but here they are in the newspapers and the police records" ("Through the Week," 3).

16 November 1901

"Frank Norris, the most striking figure among California writers of fiction today, began his literary work at a very early age. When only seventeen, he produced a romantic poem, in six cantos, called 'Yvernelle.' The poem deals with the life of the French nobility during the middle ages. The book was beautifully embellished with pictures. Nowadays Norris does not depend upon the artist's pencil. There is probably no other writer in American fiction who wields a more trenchant pen than he" ("By the Way," 6).

## The Annual Meeting of the Society, 1991.

The sixth annual meeting of the Society will be held at American Literature Association Conference in Washington, D.C. The conference will extend from 24 to 26 May 1991; and, once the program is available, the Society will schedule its meeting for the late afternoon of either the 24th or the 25th. As at the last ALA convention in San Diego, for which Milo Shepard generously donated two cases of Kenwood Winery's "Jack London" cabernet sauvignon and zinfandel—both first-rate, by the way—there will again be a wine-tasting. Because of our close relationships with the

newly-formed Jack London, Stephen Crane, and Theodore Dreiser societies, their members will be our guests. Please consider coming. Our rate at the Mayflower Hotel—in an upscale neighborhood with the Metro a half-block away—is \$60.00 per night. Let Joe McElrath know if you wish to receive reservations information; his phone number is below.

## The Executive Committee

James R. Giles (Northern Illinois University) became the Secretary of the Executive Committee at the last business meeting, during the MLA Convention in Washington, D.C., on 29 December 1989. Benjamin F. Fisher, IV (University of Mississippi) is now the Vice-President, and Mary Lawlor (Muhlenberg College) is President. A new Secretary will be elected this spring in Washington. Nominations are in order.

## The Norris Session at the ALA Conference

The title of the session on Norris will reflect its mixed character so different from last year's when the focus was on *McTeague*. "Frank Norris: *Pot-Pourri*" features Don Graham (University of Texas) as respondent to the following presentations:

"Why Men Hate Women: A Reading of *Moran of the Lady Letty*," by Thomas Blues (University of Kentucky);

"Narrative Technique in *The Octopus*," by Charles Duncan (Florida State University); and,

"The Damnation of *McTeague*: Frank Norris's 'Morality Play,'" by Nan Morelli-White (St. Petersburg Junior College).

*Frank Norris Studies* is a publication of the Norris Society and is issued twice per year for the members. Membership for individuals requires the payment of dues of ten dollars per year to The Frank Norris Society, Department of English, Florida State University, Tallahassee FL 32306-1036 (904-644-1522). Library subscriptions at the same rate may be directed to this address or initiated through the EBSCO or FAXON subscription services.

Manuscripts should be addressed to either of the editors: Jesse S. Crisler, Division of Language, Literature & Communication, Brigham Young University—Hawaii Campus, Laie, Hawaii 96762; or Robert C. Leitz, III, Department of English, Louisiana State University in Shreveport, Shreveport LA 71115.

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Joseph R. McElrath, Jr., Florida State University, is the managing editor. Correspondence regarding subscriptions and back issues should be addressed to him.