

**CONTEMPORARY  
AMERICAN  
NOVELISTS, 1900-1920**

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Contemporary American novelists, 1900-1920 by Carl Van Doren

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**BY  
CARL VAN DOREN**

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To  
FREDA KIRCHWEY



## PREFACE

*The American Novel*, published last year, undertook to trace the progress of a literary type in the United States from its beginnings to the end of the nineteenth century; *Contemporary American Novelists* undertakes to study the type as it has existed during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Readers of both volumes may note that in this later volume criticism has tended to supplant history. Only in writing of dead authors can the critic feel that any considerable portion of his task is done when he has arranged them in what he thinks their proper categories and their true perspective. In the case of living authors he has regularly to remember that he works with shifting materials, with figures whose dimensions and importance may be changed by growth, with persons who may desert old paths for new, reveal unsuspected attributes, increase or fade with the mere revolutions of time. All he can expect to do in dealing with any current type as fluid as the novel, is, seizing upon it at some specific moment, to examine the intentions and successes of outstanding or typical individuals and to make the most accurate report possible concerning them. Whatever general tendency there may be ought to appear from his examination.