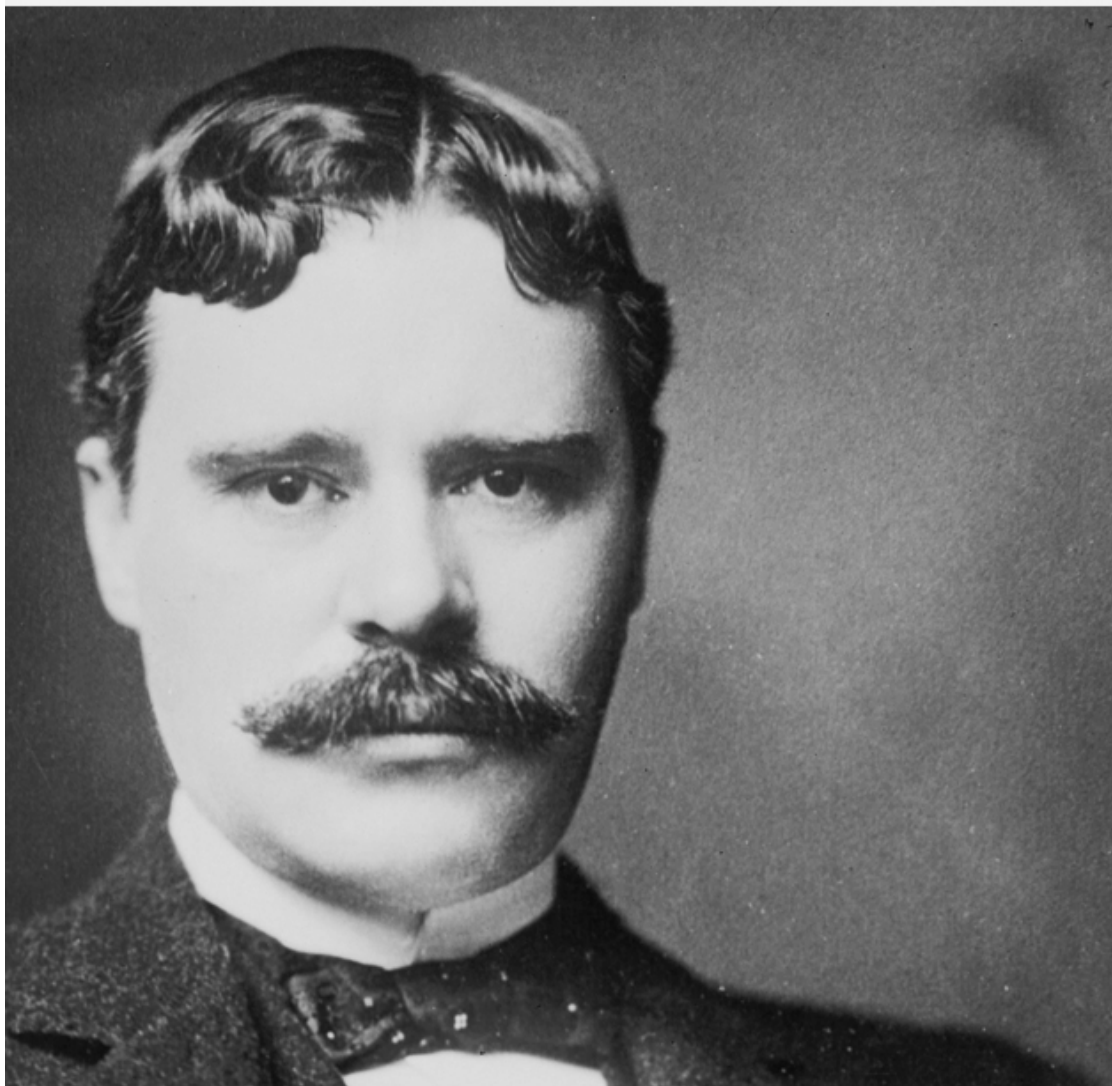




DELPHI
CLASSICS

Owen Wister
Complete Works



Series Fifteen

The Complete Works of

OWEN WISTER

(1860-1938)



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The Delphi Classics Catalogue

A stylized, handwritten signature of Owen Wister in black ink. The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent 'O' at the start and a long, sweeping tail on the 'er'.

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Version 1

The Complete Works of

OWEN WISTER

With introductory material by Fred Burwell



By Delphi Classics, 2025

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Complete Works of Owen Wister



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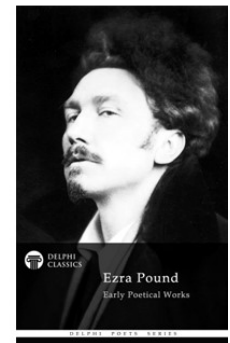
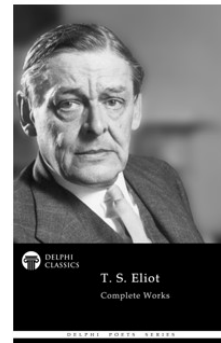
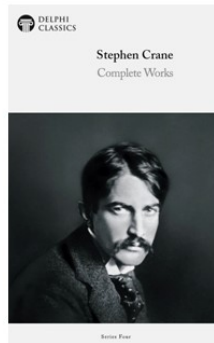
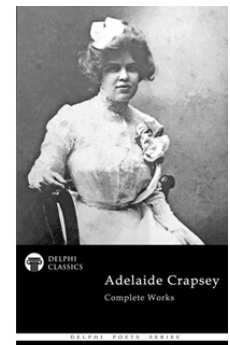
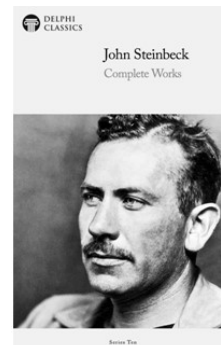
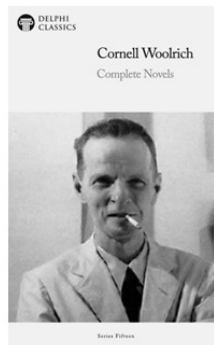
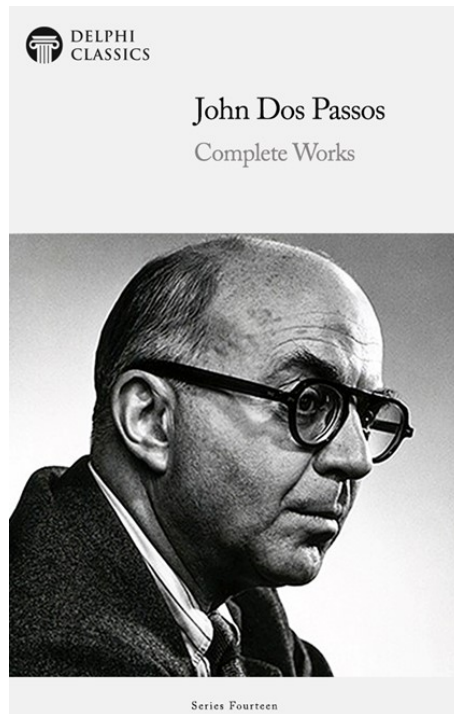
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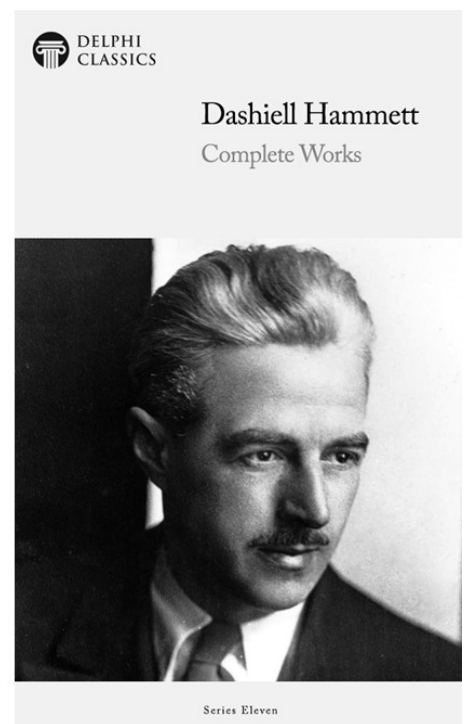
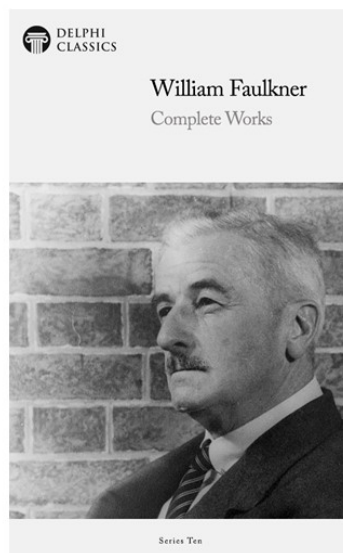
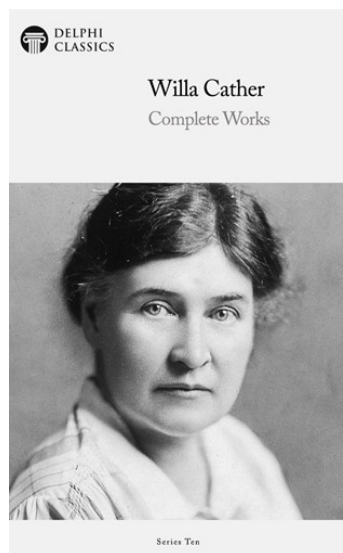
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The Novels



Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, c. 1860 — the year Owen Wister was born in the city



The birthplace of Owen Wister at 5203 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia

The Dragon of Wantley (1892)



HIS TALE

J. B. Lippincott published one of Wister's first books, *The Dragon of Wantley*, in 1892, illustrated in pen and ink by John Stewardson. The title was marketed as a gift book in time for Christmas and it seemed designed to appeal to readers of all ages. Reviews were generally favorable and the book proved popular enough to run through four editions over the next decade. Wister was delighted to receive accolades from fellow author Mark Twain, who quipped in a letter, "I have taken *The Dragon of Wantley* away from my wife and daughter – by violence – I am reading it with a delicate and tingling enjoyment."

Wister based his tale on seventeenth and eighteenth century accounts of the battle between a dragon and a knight that led to the slaying of the dragon on Wharnccliffe Crags in South Yorkshire. The legend became most famous after the publication of Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* in 1767 and through a popular comic opera adaptation by Henry Carey and John Frederick Lampe in 1837. Wister described his own interpretation as a "burlesque romance" and dedicated the book to his Harvard University classmates.

The Literary World neatly outlined Wister's comic version of the legend:

"Mr. Owen Wister has imagined a solution of the legend of the "Dragon of Wantley," unknown to historians and poets. He sets forth, in this very amusing volume, how Sir Godfrey Disseisin, the fourth baron of Wantley, missed some of the best wine from his cellar. Like all the rest of the mysteries which happened to the neighborhood, this loss was attributed to the ferocious dragon. When all the monks of Oyster le Main had been slain by a band of roving members of the guild of "Go as you Please," the monks' bodies were buried in the monastery, the adventurers clothing themselves in monastic array whenever they became visible to the outside world. Sir Francis, the grand marshal, ravaged the country at night in the disguise of a crocodile breathing fire. How the dragon was slain and how Elaine, Sir Godfrey's daughter, found a husband, must be left to the readers of the entertaining chronicle."

Since Lippincott marketed *The Dragon of Wantley* as acceptable fare for children, some reviewers expressed relief that the book avoided moral sermonizing, as *Book News* noted:

"If it has any lesson to teach it is so admirably concealed that we have been unable to find it. We, with a party of boys and girls, have enjoyed its absurdity and fun and pass it on to the next group hoping they will also find much pleasure in it."

In later editions, Wister took pleasure in excerpting both positive and negative reviews. He seemed especially amused by *The Congregationalist's* panning:

"*The Dragon of Wantley* is too extreme an extravaganza and there are too many suggestions of profanity. The idea of the book is good and in some respects it is carried out well, but the result does not exhibit a degree of skill quite equal to the proposed task. The illustrations, however, are telling and doubtless many readers will laugh heartily over the story."

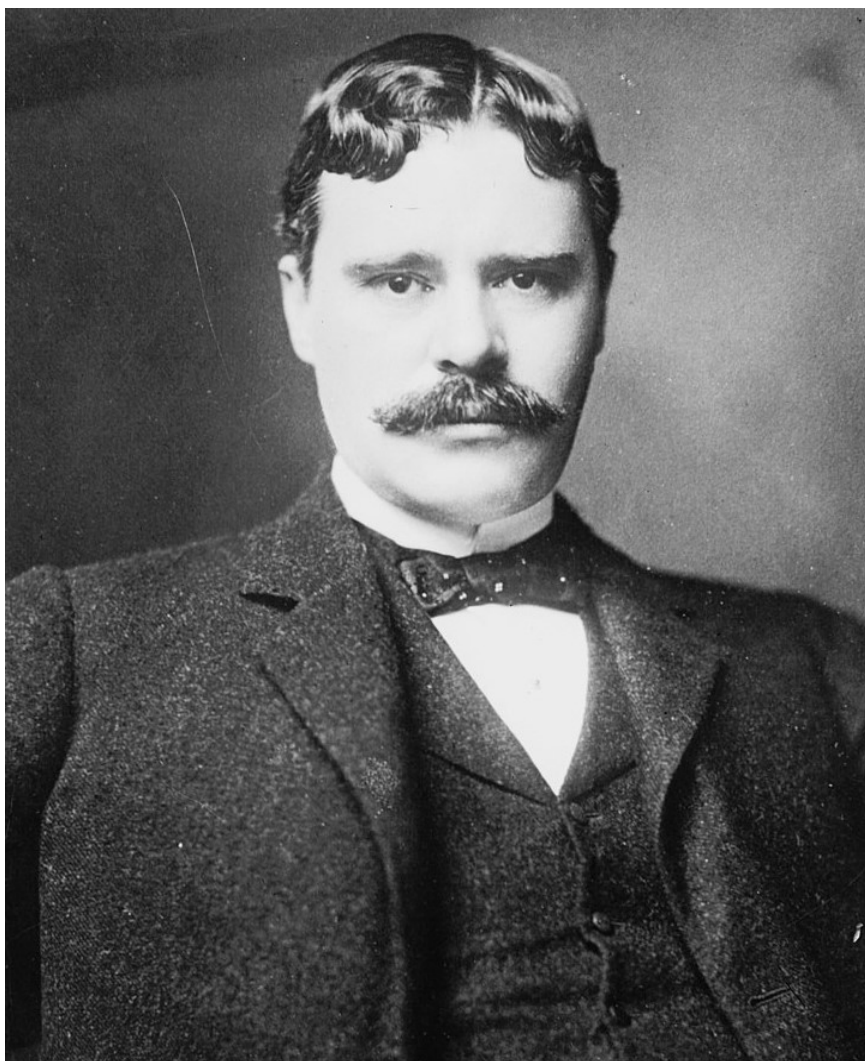
In fact, some reviewers found Stewardson's illustrations more noteworthy than Wister's prose. *The Daily American*, from Nashville, Tennessee, praised Stewardson's rare "rollicking humor" and said, "In truth, they are better and more amusing than the tale." *The Atlantic* commented that "The pictures are as spirited and

telling as the story. We are not sure, but they deserve even higher praise.” It appears, however, that Stewardson did not pursue a further career in book or magazine illustration.

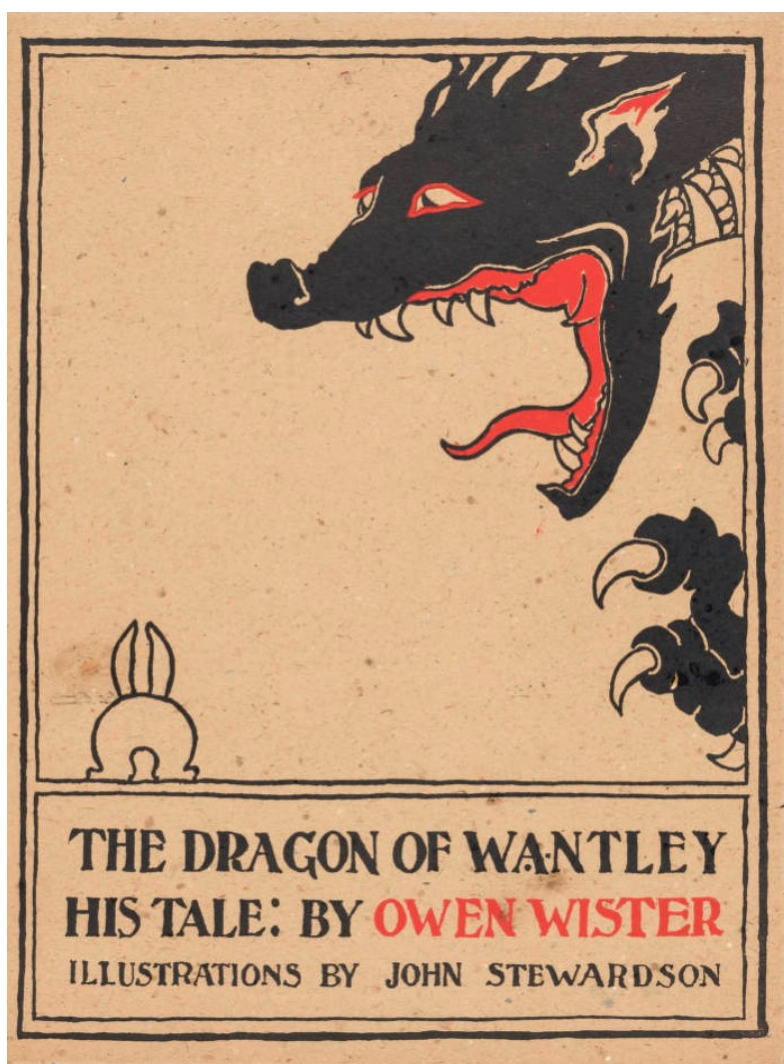
The Dragon of Wantley continued to receive good press, especially in 1902 when Lippincott published the fourth edition. Reviewers reminisced about their enjoyment of the book over the years, including one from *The Sun* in Baltimore:

“Many and divers have been the criticisms of this skit, of which the author of ‘The Virginian’ was always proud. Some critics have regarded it as sense, some as nonsense. Some have called it unfit reading, others have prescribed it as a classic among its kind. We read it a decade ago and laughed heartily. We read it today and are still amused. Fun that holds its charm through 10 years and is sufficiently appreciated to sell three editions of ‘The Dragon of Wantley’ must be pretty good sort of fun and so, in fact, it is.”

The Dragon of Wantley remains a singular title in Wister’s oeuvre. Although it includes his trademark humor, he found his métier in other topics and themes that ultimately led to his renown.



Wister as a young man



The first edition

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PREFACE

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

CHAPTER I. How Sir Godfrey came to lose his Temper

CHAPTER II. How his Daughter, Miss Elaine, behaved herself in Consequence

CHAPTER III. Reveals the Dragon in his Den

CHAPTER IV. Tells you more about Him than was ever told before to Anybody

CHAPTER V. In which the Hero makes his First Appearance and is Locked Up immediately

CHAPTER VI. In which Miss Elaine loses her Heart, and finds Something of the Greatest Importance

CHAPTER VII. Shows what Curious Things you may see, if you don't go to Bed when you are sent

CHAPTER VIII. Contains a Dilemma with two simply egregious Horns

CHAPTER IX. Leaves much Room for guessing about Chapter Ten

CHAPTER X. The great White Christmas at Wantley



Wharnccliffe Crag in South Yorkshire, where the legend of the dragon originated

TO
MY ANCIENT PLAYMATES IN APPIAN
WAY CAMBRIDGE THIS LIKELY
STORY IS DEDICATED FOR REASONS
BEST KNOWN TO THEMSELVES

PREFACE



When Betsinda held the Rose
And the Ring decked Giglio's finger
Thackeray! 'twas sport to linger
With thy wise, gay-hearted prose.
Books were merry, goodness knows!
When Betsinda held the Rose.

Who but foggy drudglings doze
While Rob Gilpin toasts thy witches,
While the Ghost waylays thy breeches,
Ingoldsby? Such tales as those
Exorcised our peevish woes
When Betsinda held the Rose.

Realism, thou specious pose!
Haply it is good we met thee;
But, passed by, we'll scarce regret thee;
For we love the light that glows
Where Queen Fancy's pageant goes,
And Betsinda holds the Rose.

Shall we dare it? Then let's close
Doors to-night on things statistic,
Seek the hearth in circle mystic,
Till the conjured fire-light shows
Where Youth's bubbling Fountain flows,
And Betsinda holds the Rose.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION



We two — the author and his illustrator — did not know what we had done until the newspapers told us. But the press has explained it in the following poised and consistent criticism:

“Too many suggestions of profanity.”
— *Congregationalist*, Boston, 8 Dec. '92.

“It ought to be the delight of the nursery.”
— *National Tribune*, Washington, 22 Dec. '92.

“Grotesque and horrible.”
— *Zion's Herald*, Boston, 21 Dec. '92.

“Some excellent moral lessons.”
— *Citizen*, Brooklyn, 27 Nov. '92.

“If it has any lesson to teach, we have been unable to find it.”
— *Independent*, New York, 10 Nov. '92.

“The story is a familiar one.”
— *Detroit Free Press*, 28 Nov. '92.

“Refreshingly novel.”
— *Cincinnati Commercial Gazette*, 17 Dec. '92.

“It is a burlesque.”
— *Atlantic Monthly*, Dec. '92.

“All those who love lessons drawn from life will enjoy this book.”
— *Christian Advocate*, Cincinnati, 2 Nov. '92.

“The style of this production is difficult to define.”
— *Court Journal*, London, 26 Nov. '92.

“One wonders why writer and artist should put so much labor on a production which seems to have so little reason for existence.”
— *Herald and Presbyterian*, Cincinnati.

Now the public knows exactly what sort of book this is, and we cannot be held responsible.



End of Sample