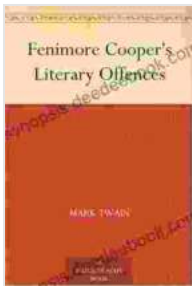


Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offences



Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offences by Mark Twain

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 92 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 35 pages
Lending	: Enabled



By Mark Twain

In the republic of letters, the man who stands next in importance to Shakespeare is James Fenimore Cooper. His Indians are Indians; and his sailor his sailor; and his backwoodsman his backwoodsman; and his soldier his soldier; and his villain his villain; and his hero his hero; and his young lady his young lady; and his young gentleman his young gentleman; and his old gentleman his old gentleman; and so on.

He has done wonders in the way of realism in literature. No man has ever drawn a cat that is so like a cat as Fenimore Cooper has drawn a cat. And no man has ever drawn a dog that is so like a dog as Fenimore Cooper has drawn a dog.

But to get back to Fenimore Cooper's literary offences.

These, briefly stated, are:

1. He does not know what to do with his personages when he has once got them on his hands.
2. He has no invention when it comes to situations.
3. He is unacquainted with the rudiments of that craft which he exercises with such confidence.
4. Whenever he finds himself in deep water he waits to catch the reader asleep and then throws a brick at him.
5. He introduces a person who stays to the end, simply to tell something that somebody else is to tell.
6. He makes little children swear.
7. He puts English words into the mouths of Indians.
8. He makes the villain talk like an undergraduate.
9. He always makes the old clergyman a prosy, narrow-minded, self-righteous windbag.
10. He cannot tell a story straight through, but allows his characters to usurp his functions and tell it in their own way.
11. He does not understand the difference between dialogue and narrative.
12. He does not know the value of the definite article.
13. He mixes up his pronouns.
14. He is not familiar with the rules of grammar.

15. He is not a master of punctuation.

These are some of the reasons why many thoughtful people consider Fenimore Cooper the worst literary artist in the world.

And yet he has his admirers. There are people who believe that his Indians are genuine, and that his backwoodsmen are real, and that his sailors are true to life. But these people are deceived. Fenimore Cooper's Indians are not Indians; they are white men dressed up in Indian clothes. His backwoodsmen are not backwoodsmen; they are farmers dressed up in backwoodsmen's clothes. His sailors are not sailors; they are landsmen dressed up in sailors' clothes. And so on.

Fenimore Cooper's characters are all constructed on the same plan. They are all alike. They are all noble, brave, generous, unselfish, and so on. They are all perfect. And they are all dull.

Fenimore Cooper's stories are all alike. They are all about Indians and backwoodsmen and sailors. They are all full of adventure and excitement. And they are all dull.

Fenimore Cooper's style is all alike. It is all simple and straightforward. And it is all dull.

Fenimore Cooper's books are all alike. They are all long and dull.

And yet he has his admirers. There are people who believe that he is a great writer. But these people are deceived.

Fenimore Cooper is not a great writer. He is not even a good writer. He is a bad writer. He is the worst writer in the world.

And that is why he is so popular.

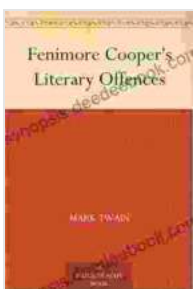
People like to read Fenimore Cooper because he is so bad. They like to see how bad he can be. They like to laugh at him. They like to point out his mistakes. And they like to feel superior to him.

Fenimore Cooper is the literary punching bag of the world.

But he is not a bad man. He is a good man. He is a kind man. He is a generous man. He is a brave man. And he is an honest man.

But he is a bad writer.

And that is why he is so popular.

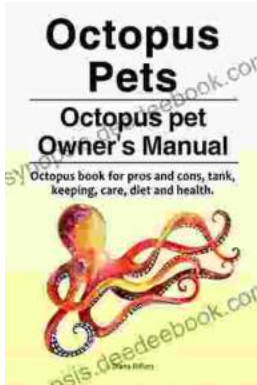


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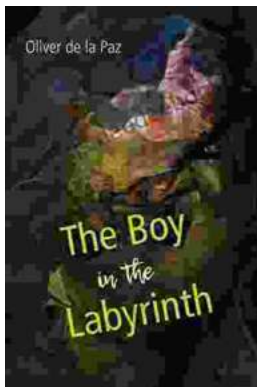
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