

Esther Gould's Book Corner

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A NOVEL OF PRESENT DAY NEW YORK

"THE MOTHER'S RECOMPENSE"

By Edith Wharton
D. Appleton & Co.

A new novel by Edith Wharton is no small event in the publishing season and many have been the bookstore windows during the past 10 days, resplendent with the blue or crimson gold flecked covers of "The Mother's Recompense." And it is no wonder that this is true for Mrs. Wharton has built for herself a reputation based on a high type of artistry. Her books while they naturally vary in excellence, can be depended upon in some degree to excel.

In "The Mother's Recompense" Mrs. Wharton again takes New York for her setting. But instead of old New York it is the present city which Kate Clephane sees after having been away from it for nearly 20 years. "She looked down on Fifth Avenue. As it surged past, a huge lava-flow of interlaced traffic, her tired bewildered eyes seemed to see the buildings move with the vehicles, as a stationary train appears to move to travellers on another line. She fancied that presently even the little Washington Square Arch would trot by, heading the tide of sky-scrapers from the lower reaches of the city..."

Kate Clephane ran away from New York and her husband and her three year old child because she was so tired of being hemmed in by stuffy conventional walls. She went with a man she didn't love and she soon found that this was not freedom either. Then through unbelievably dreary years she learns that freedom is not the absence of the things which she has left behind her. With "Chris" the young artist, a new life seems to begin, her first real life, but soon he is gone leaving her in the darkness.

It is this woman, shrewd, sophisticated, passionately regretful, that the morning Riviera sun reveals wakening to a day of empty activity—like all her other days. But on this day something different is to happen. A cable informs her that her unforgiving mother-in-law is dead, a message from her daughter says "Come." She goes back to the life from which she ran away so gladly, but she is a different, a chastened woman. The story is the adjustment of these two, mother and daughter, and the mother's "recompense."

It is done with Mrs. Wharton's usual

perfection and ease of writing, but somehow we are remote from the characters. Mrs. Wharton is often praised for her artistic detachment from her work, but sometimes it seems as if she carried this to such an extreme that she didn't quite breathe into the characters warm enough life to make them live for us.

MISS KAYE-SMITH AT HER BEST

"THE GEORGE AND THE CROWN"

By Sheila Kaye-Smith
E. P. Dutton & Co.

The "George and the Crown" is up to Miss Kaye-Smith's rather high standard.

The story of a Sussex village, with few characters, in whom a Fate stronger than themselves seems to be working out its ends, the book suggests a comparison with Thomas Hardy. It attains in places his stark simplicity but it does not maintain it as a whole.

The village of Bullockdean had two inns, the George and the Crown. They faced each other across the main street over which their signs creaked decisively to each other, invitingly to passersby. The gentlefolk, sedate farmers and the like, went unswervingly in to the Crown, the rowdier elements went perhaps more swervingly in and out of the George. Each of the innkeepers had a son and they were fast friends, Ernley Munk with his motor bike and his college education, Dan Sheather with his honest face and ill fitting clothes.

For months Ernley had been in love with Belle Shackford and in their stormy wooing Dan had been the go-between. But at last comes a quarrel which even Dan seems unable to patch up, so instead he tells Belle that he loves her. In desperation because she thinks that Ernley has turned to another woman she turns to Dan. From the Crown to the George—twice in the book Belle is destined to make this change and both of Ernley for the love not of Dan but of Ernley.

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whose only conceit seemed to be a desire some time to appear romantic or "interesting," a conceit which he relinquished bravely in the end, the author has drawn his life unerringly. He finds romance in a short idyllic marriage on the rocky little island of Sark and then in the end he is claimed by a life which is romance—the life of the sea.

MOO! BA-A-A! QUACK! !

To be a successful motion picture director one must know how to bark, bleat, squawk, grunt, bray, moo and cackle! Such is the assertion of Sidley Olcott, Paramount producer, who directed Pola Negri in "The Charmer." For a Spanish street scene in "The Charmer," 34 assorted domestic animals and fowls were used. There were eight dogs, one lamb, one parrot, four donkeys, three pgs, one pair bullocks, eight goats and eight chickens.

Directing these animals and preventing them from fighting among themselves, according to Olcott, was a job fit for a menagerie keeper. He claims that to accomplish it, he and his assistants had to do all of the things above mentioned,

such as barking, bleating and grunting. "The Charmer" is a story blending old Spain with new America. Supporting Miss Negri in the cast are Robert Frazer, Wallace MacDonald, Trixie Firganza, Cesare Gravina and Gertrude Astor.

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