

# Esther Gould's Book Corner

Are You Interested in books of Fiction, Biography, Travel, or History? For lists write to ESTHER GOULD care your local paper.

## AN UNUSUALLY FINE NOVEL

### "BARREN GROUND"

By Ellen Glasgow  
Doubleday Page & Co.

Once in a while someone in England, seldom in this country, is compared to Thomas Hardy. It becomes a matter of classification rather than personal comparison. Recently, Sheila Kaye-Smith in her "The George and the Crown" achieved the distinction, surely Ellen Glasgow of our country as richly deserves it.

"Barren Ground" is the sort of book that one finds only once in a long time, a book that might have taken a lifetime to write—one that seems more lived than written.

Life, to Dorinda Oakley, as it was to "Tess", is an inscrutable force which pushes her on into situations which are not of her own making, which are not even remotely related to her character. Yet Dorinda has more control over her inner life than Tess had, in spite of everything in the world which seems against her, she finally wrings victory out of defeat.

"A Girl in an orange-colored shawl stood at the window of Pedlar's store and looked, through the falling snow, at the deserted road. Though she watched there without moving, her attitude, in its stillness, gave an impression of arrested flight, as if she were running toward life. Bare, starved, desolate, the country closed in about her."

Dorinda's mind had always been full of dreams, always reaching out for something which she felt was happiness, something which would give a meaning to life. At 20 she finds that love is that fulfillment and her whole nature goes out to it. Then as if a cup of cold water had been struck from the lips of a thirsty traveller her cup of romance is thrust to the ground. And she is left a woman of infinite possibilities to live a life of emptiness—empty except for one memory. Yet out of the soil, out of the "barren ground" of rural Virginia she wrests her victory.

There is a tremendous simplicity, unity, force in the book. It is a new sort of "southern novel." The gallant colonels tossing off their whiskey, and descending the broad steps of the ancestral mansion to mount their

thoroughbreds seem a bit "thin" in retrospect. They are blown away like paper dolls before the breath of reality which prevades "Barren Ground."

## AGAIN THERE IS MICHAEL ARLEN

### "MAYFAIR"

By Michael Arlen. Geo. H. Doran.

Surely no one else has the faith in human nature that has Michael Arlen. For no one else would believe that human nature could see itself exposed with all the irony with which he has exposed it and yet live. And surely no one else has the faith in Michael Arlen that has Michael Arlen. For no one else would believe that he could write a book as entertaining as "These Charming People" and then write a sequel and have it just as entertaining. And he has done it.

"Mayfair" is a collection of short incidentals as unforgettable as those earlier ones we have mentioned. Most of the characters are new—they have to be as most of them are left dead in the end and Mr. Arlen hates to kill

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old friends. But here and there a familiar face—that of Hilary or George Talyron—peers through the printed page at us and is gone. Enough so that we know we are among friends.

And London is the same. That London in which young men with silk hats tipped slightly over one eye have nothing better to do than walk in Green Park and talk interesting generalities or perhaps step into their clubs for a hand at cards.

And Michael Arlen has not forgotten how to turn a phrase—even at times to turn it inside out: "The world was very dark. He looked upon the sea and found it odd, and he looked upon the land and did not find it at all."

That there is not much that Michael Arlen misses or forgets is proven by such figures of speech as "Now have a look at that house we passed. Don't stare as though you were an American tailor looking at the Prince of Wales. Casually. The corner one."

# Lord's

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### BEST SELLERS

"Mayfair," by Michael Arlen. "A Mother's Recompense," by Edith Wharton. "The Great Gatsby," by F. Scott Fitzgerald. "Arrow-smith," by Sinclair Lewis. "Barren Ground," by Ellen Glasgow. "Sea Horses," by Francis Brett Young. "So You're Going to Italy!" by Clara E. Laughlin. "Troubadour," by Alfred Kreyborg. "Travel Diary of a Philosopher," by Carl Count Keyserling.

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But after all is said we have only said again that Michael Arlen is still Michael Arlen.

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By

E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

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