

loquy between Lawson and Steven which leads to the latter's departure; and the open quarrel between Hester and her husband, which completely disconcerts the family until Edith issues orders and controls the situation. The style is sometimes slovenly, as in the frequent use of the superfluous indefinite article after "kind of", and in the violation of the number of "none", but in general the writing is briskly, if rather too consciously, workmanlike. The closing of the story upon the note of War, while balancing with the social and political values suggested in the case of Edith's marriage, is not particularly effective, but impresses the reviewer as a rather deviceful effort to bring the story "up-to-date".

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### SISTERS

By KATHLEEN NORRIS. Toronto: S. B. Gundy.

"SISTERS" is a very physical book. Its crisis turns upon bodily shock and the distress of seeing human blood and a womanly figure crumpled at the bottom of a ravine "with every bone broken". A man on a rug in the dust with a ruined back and a fractured leg and arm, and moaning, is Kathleen Norris's picture of tragedy. In a limited sense this is legitimate. Domestic infelicity sometimes ends in gun-fire or a thrown butcher knife or, as in the case of this book, in achieved suicide and attempted and nearly achieved murder. But analysis needs to turn the event to something that may be called spiritual account before literature is produced.

A sickly sugariness with which Kathleen Norris envelopes this bitter blood and broken bones makes her offering specially unhappy. Her literary pill (if there are such things, even in a reviewer's imagination), is highly coloured and fairly palatable. One supposes that young ladies of the grill-room type and certain men might even swallow it. But it is only in the very slightest degree a tonic. It is really—perhaps Miss Norris intended

this, having grown more worldly-wise than artistic—only sugary and, if too long indulged, sickening. What bitter content it has is neither a good purgative nor a good restorative. It misses therefore the possible justification it once or twice comes in sight of. A batter of blood and bones covered thick with coloured sugar deserves only repudiation if, when offered and taken, it does an insignificant minimum of good, and only doubtfully that.

Certain of the out-and-out realists do accomplish good. But they are generally bluntly bitter from the beginning. And the only way in which they attempt to justify themselves is as necessary tonics, hard to take, hard to absorb, but cleansing and restoring. We take such with seriousness. They may indeed sometimes inveigle the palate for a moment but they never deceive the deliberate brain.

Kathleen Norris's story is about two sisters who lived in the hills and redwood country of California. Peter, the wealthy bachelor in the cabin up the hill, marries Alix, though he thinks he loves Cherry. Cherry marries Martin and finds him uncongenial and possibly untrue. Visiting Alix and Peter, she and Peter decide to "forsake and give up everything" (we suppose Alix and Martin included) and elope. They think that Alix doesn't know and apparently imagine—at least so the story seems to imply—that she will not know after they are gone. It seems that to the conspirators, not their selfish indulgence but Alix's knowledge of it would be the crime. Alix, however, does know and drives the car with herself and Martin in it over the cliff, leaving a note to say it is the best way out. But Martin unfortunately (?) doesn't succumb, though he is to be an invalid for life, and Cherry, developed suddenly from a young chit to a very serious woman, decides she'll be his mate and care for him. Peter finds Alix's note and this bothers him. He goes off with her dog into the hills and to travel.