

The lines of De Morgan's literary ancestry are to be traced, we think, to both Dickens and Meredith, perhaps even more definitely to the latter than to the former. Certainly, there is a good deal of the influence of Dickens to be discovered at times in De Morgan's earlier style, but somewhat less as the novels grew (compare "Alice-for-Short" with "When Ghost Meets Ghost"). The Meredithian quality in De Morgan's spirit, however, was actively at work throughout his life as an author, although we are not aware that he read Meredith extensively. The authors to whom he refers most frequently in his novels, either directly or indirectly, are Browning and his wife, Tennyson, Dickens, Thackeray, Shakespeare, and Spenser.

Nancy Fraser ("Elbows") in the present novel is as likable a girl as Lossie, Alice-for-Short, or Sally Nightingale. She is straightforward, sympathetic, and wholesomely fresh, and we are delighted that she marries at last her fellow-townsmen Charley Snaith. Of his first tragic marriage with Lucy Hinchcliffe; of her destructive lure for Fred Carteret, Charley's best friend, who breaks his engagement with Cintra Fraser for her sake ("the story is sorry for Fred"); of the old, unhappy, far-off love of Fred's father's brother for Mrs. Carteret, a finely delineated mother-woman; of the mysterious disappearance of that brother, Dr. Drury Carteret, in the early chapters of the novel, and his equally mysterious return at the end; and of the final solution of the mystery (supplied in a last chapter by Mrs. De Morgan, who was in the secret, after her husband's death), the story tells through thirty-four chapters in its own quietly thoughtful, companionable way. It is a story extraordinarily rich in character, analysis, humour, and rememberable *obiter dicta*. On the structural side, the plot is unusually well charted, the exciting force, the successive turning-points, the prophetic incidents, the chief crisis, and the cross-correspondences being handled with conscientious

skill. If any other than unimportant weaknesses are observable, probably these arise in some seven or eight instances from the desire of the author to furnish adequate signposts during the evolution of a psychologically complicated plot, but in these instances the signposts appear inartistically superfluous. "A story," says the writer, "may be at a loss to account for the thoughts and actions of its characters, and its safest line may be to simply *tell* them, and leave its reader to analyze and understand them as best he may. But some stories have a certain fussiness of their own, that will be always probing for motives and impulses, for the sources of ideas that seem to spring from nowhere, and the blindness to others—gross as mountains, open, palpable—in eyes most concerned to see them."

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THE BUILDERS

By ELLEN GLASGOW. Toronto: The Musson Book Company.

THIS is a disappointing novel. Its background is Virginia (Richmond in particular) immediately before and during American participation in the Great War; its characters, for the most part Virginians; its *motifs*, a love affair impossible of realization, and a political programme almost equally impossible. The latter is so loftily indefinite, indeed, that it is more than once uneasily sketched in, by way of argument, oratorical conversation (in itself an inartistical contradiction in terms), and a long letter from its chief exponent, David Blackburn, to the girl he loves. The characteristic self-consciousness and moral complacency of a certain type of contemporary American writers is far from absent here. American idealism is to save the world. We raise the query: Is there an *American* idealism? Is not true idealism idealism everywhere? Some of the idiosyncrasies of manner in the chief persons are cleverly suggested, but the psychology is mediocre, and the net impression is one of effortful ineffectiveness.