the honourable man provided for his wife and family. The moral welfare of the country was indissolubly bound up with the maintenance of the sanctity of the marriage tie, added Canon Deedes, and it seemed to him the practice was one that struck at that sanctity in a very grievous fashion.

The true Christian spirit was apparent in the attitude of Archdeacon Escreet, who said that if a man had lived faithfully with a woman for years, because he had not legalised her position (though he would wish the man had) and sought God's grace in the solemnisation of marriage, he saw no reason why the State should not respect the position of the man. He did not think they ought to talk of "impurity" or of "looseness" of men and women who had lived together like that.

Are men born out of wedlock excluded from serving their country in our Navy and Army? If not then their mothers have given of their flesh and blood to defend it, and let the State recognise its obligations and be thankful.

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"THE THREE SISTERS."*

"The Three Sisters," by Miss May Sinclair, is, before all, a study in Eugenics—from which it must not be understood that it is dull, Miss Sinclair is never that; but the characters whom she pourtrays are frankly animal, except Mary, the eldest daughter of the Vicar of Garth—a man who under an ascetic moustache, hides a sensual mouth, and who has played a part for so long that he even deceives himself—and Mary is not animal, only because, like the serpent, she is more subtle than any of the beasts of the field—crafty in love-making, and cold-blooded in torturing her victims.

The Vicar, Mr. Carteret, had brought his three motherless daughters, Mary, Gwenda and Alice, to Garth—isolated and remote—throwing up a living which would have led to preferment, for one which could lead to nothing at all, because the indiscretion of his youngest daughter had made his former parish uninhabitable for him. But, man-like, the remedy he chose was the one least calculated to effect the end he desired. Close occupation, many and varied interests might have kept her mind and the minds of her sisters from undesirable channels; as it was, the new doctor, Stephen Rowcliffe, offered the only eligible outlet for their unwholesome emotions, and when, listless and inert, one evening the sisters heard the wheels of his cart on the road, "life, secret and silent, stirred in their blood and nerves. It quivered like a hunting thing held on the leash."

"Not one spoke a word to the other.

"All three of them were thinking.

"Mary thought, 'Wednesday is his day. On Wednesday I will go into the village and see all my sick people. Then I shall see him. And he will see me. He will see that I am kind and sweet and womanly.' She thought, 'That is the sort of woman that a man wants.' But she did not know what she was thinking.

"Gwenda thought, 'I will go out on to the moor again. I don't care if I *am* late for Prayers. He will see me when he drives back, and he will wonder who is that wild, strong girl who walks by herself on the moor at night and isn't afraid. He has seen me three times, and every time he looked at me as if he wondered. In five minutes I shall go.' She thought (for she knew what she was thinking) 'I shall do nothing of the sort. I don't care whether he sees me or not. I don't care if I never see him again. I don't care.'

"Alice thought, 'I will make myself ill—so that they'll *have* to send for him. I shall see him that way.'"

Little as the Vicar realized it, the temperament of the girls was a heritage from himself and from a yet more remote ancestry; and the lesson of the book is that the best things which parents can bequeath and demonstrate to their children are clean living, pure thinking and self-control.

The Vicar had had three wives—Mary Gwendolen, the one the children called "Mother," and who died when Alice was born (Gwenda said quite frankly that "papa killed her; he was told that Mother would die or go mad if she had another baby, and he let her have Ally"); Frances, the one they called "Mamma," "who had turned into a nervous invalid on his hands, before she died of that obscure internal trouble, which he had so wisely and patiently ignored"; and "Robina, the one they called 'Mummy,' who had run away from him in the fifth year of their marriage, against whom his grievance was that her infidelity condemned him to a celibacy for which, as she knew, he was utterly unsuited."

It was Stephen Rowcliffe who, realizing the fundamental cause of Alice's illness, told her father in plain terms, that "if she were kept shut up in the Vicarage much longer she would die or go out of her mind, but that she would be all right—perfectly all right—if she were married"; and Gwenda, loving and beloved of Stephen, learning the truth, made her supreme act of renunciation, and left home, having confided her reason to Mary, in order to leave the field clear for Alice, and so save her from the catastrophe which threatened. But it was Mary who ensnared Stephen.

Even Alice—Alice, for whom Gwenda's sacrifice was unavailing—was horrified. "I couldn't do a caddish thing like that," she said; and it was true. Not that she cared for Rowcliffe. The astute doctor had diagnosed her complaint perfectly accurately; and she speedily, and unspeakably, consoled herself.

The book deals with an unpleasant subject, but it is a remarkable one, and arrests attention by the profound knowledge of a certain phase of human character drawn from the well of truth, on which it is based.

P. G. Y.

* By May Sinclair. Hutchinson & Co., Paternoster Row, E.C.

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