

## BOOK OF THE WEEK.

## "LINDA CONDON."\*

This book is a departure from the kind of environment with which we have become accustomed to associate Mr. Hergesheimer's writing.

Linda Condon, the daughter of a light woman, is its subject. "A black bang was, but not ultimately, the most notable feature of her uncommon personality—straight and severe and dense across her clear brow and eyes. Her eyes were the last thing to remember and wonder about; in shade, blue, they had velvet richness, a poignant intensity of lovely colour that surprised the heart. Aside from that she was slim, perhaps ten years old, and graver than gay.

"Her mother was gay for them both, and therefore for the entire family. No father was in evidence; he was dead, and never spoken of, and Linda was the only child. Linda's dresses, those significant trivialities, plainly showed two tendencies—the gaiety of her mother and her own always formal gravity."

She spent her childhood in hotels, where her mother lived, it was more than hinted, not entirely at her own expense. By nature the child was cold and fastidious, with a spirit of resolution, which latter quality was a cause of humorous dismay to her mother.

"I declare, Linda," she would observe with an air of helplessness, "you make me feel like the giddy one and as if you were mamma. It's the way you look, so disapproving. I have to remind myself that you're only—just how old are you? I keep forgetting."

Her mother's character was openly discussed by the other women frequenters of the hotels, who in her mother's absence drew her into a laboriously light inquisition.

"How long would Linda and her mamma stay at the Boston? Had they closed their apartment? Where was it?"

"Wasn't Linda lonely with her mamma out so much—they even said late—in rolling chairs? Had she ever seen Mr. Jasper before his arrival last week?"

No, of course she hadn't.

"Wouldn't she rather have one papa than, in a way of speaking, a different one in every hotel?"

"Linda was assaulted by the familiar bewildered feeling of not understanding what was said, and at the same time passionately resenting it from an inner sensitive recognition of something wrong.

On the certainty that her attraction was waning, Linda's mother decided to marry the kind and wealthy Jew, Mr. Moses Feldt, and from thenceforth Linda's childhood was surrounded by luxury.

"Linda, however, wasn't particularly impressed by such show, she saw that Judith and Pansy (the daughters) expected that of her, but she was

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determined not to exhibit a surprise that would imply any changes in her mother's and her condition.

In addition, she calmly took such surroundings for granted. Her primary conception of possible existence was elegance; its necessity had so entered into her being that it had departed from her consciousness."

As the girl grew and developed, her worship of beauty and her cool aloofness became an inherent part of her nature. Perhaps her character is best summed up in the words of a man friend of Judith's.

"So young and yet so formal. If with the rest you had Judith's temperament, you would be the most irresistible creature alive. For see, my dear child, as it is you stir neither tenderness nor desire; you are remote and perfect and faintly wistful. I can't imagine being human or even comfortable with you."

Her temperament no doubt stood her in good stead, and successfully counteracted heredity from her mother, so that at her tender age, thrown as she was into a society of easy morals, she came through, fundamentally unscathed—unawakened rather than shocked.

There were those who commented on her superiority—the young men who appeared in the evenings who tried to engage her sympathies in their persons and prospects.

But without apparent effort she discouraged them, principally by her serene lack of interest.

It was certainly a liberal education of the wrong sort for a girl of sixteen to go to a party at Markue's.

She wondered if she'd care to go. There was a great deal of drinking at such affairs. She didn't like to sit in a corner and be hugged—even that she could now assert with a degree of knowledge—but it wasn't because she was shocked. Nothing, she told herself gravely, shocked her. It was as if her mind were a crisp dress with ribbons which she hated to have mussed or disarranged.

It was at Markue's party that she first met Dodge Pleydon, the sculptor—a big, carelessly dressed man. His features Linda saw were rugged and pronounced; he was very strong. He swung about, and from the heavy shadows of his face, he looked down at her. Then he bent over her and seriously removed the man beside her.

The weight of Pleydon's body depressed the entire divan.

"An ordinary man," he told her, "would ask how the devil you got here. Then he would take you home with some carefully chosen words for whatever parents you had. But I can see that all this is needless. You are an extremely immaculate person."

She passionately needed beauty in love as in all else, and though she came near to surrender to Dodge's wooing, her innate refinement was repelled by it, though at the same time she struggled against her coldness. "They were alone in the drawing room, and he arose sweeping

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