The book which immediately suggested the foregoing line of thought is the latest story by Mr. W. B. Maxwell, entitled *The Devil's Garden*. Mr. Maxwell is always an interesting and stimulating writer, and it is high time that he was accorded in America the widespread recognition that has long been given him in England. It seems to be the consensus of English critical opinion that this new volume is his biggest, strongest achievement, and strong it undoubtedly is. There are other works of his which the present reviewer prefers, notably *In Cotton Wool*, which was also strong, besides being structurally a more artistic and symmetrical piece of work. In *The Devil's Garden* Mr. Maxwell has taken certain liberties with his scheme of construction that do not wholly justify themselves, and the reader has a right to feel unfairly treated,—and yet, by this means the author achieves effects which could have been gained in no other way. The story opens quietly in a little English village. William Dale, the village postmaster, stolid, dictatorial, over-burdened with a sense of his own importance, has incurred the disfavour of the department because in too zealous execution of his duties, he ejected a disorderly soldier from the post-office. The incident might easily have been passed over; a word of apology would have satisfied the local authorities; but Dale, doggedly insistent that he was in the right, appealed over their heads to the General Post-Office, and now he has been suspended from duty and summoned to London, to un-

dergo a searching investigation. Every one but Dale realises that the result is likely to be serious for him, it may even mean dismissal. His wife, Mavis, begs him to appeal to Mr. Barradine, ex-cabinet minister, who is the big man of the neighbourhood, and who in the past had been very kind to Mavis and her aunt. But Dale will not listen; he was in the right and his case must stand on its merits. So he goes to London to face his ordeal, and before long, as his trial drags out its tedious course, even his slow mind grasps the fact that he has no friends, that everything he says is twisted against him, in short, that he is practically judged in advance. And then, all of a sudden, at the eleventh hour, the door opens and the elderly, bent figure of Mr. Barradine appears. A few compliments are exchanged with the chiefs of the postal department, a cordial endorsement of Dale's admirable qualifications is given, and on the hint that lenient treatment of Dale will be regarded as a personal favour to Mr. Barradine, the charges are dismissed and Dale finds himself reinstated, with a two weeks' leave of absence into the bargain. Exultant at this unexpected turn of affairs, he returns to his hotel, and finding that Mavis, anticipating his telegram, has already come and is waiting for him, he promptly plans a hilarious celebration, including dinner at a fashionable restaurant, supplemented by the wild extravagance of champagne and theatre tickets. Nothing could be more simply and minutely true than even the most casual detail of this evening, so commonplace as an average human experience, so momentous and exceptional an experience in the narrow, methodical life of William Dale. Slow and methodical is the account of every minute, the feeble little jokes that passed as wit of a high order, thanks to the happy exhilaration begotten of the unaccustomed stimulant. Then at last the couple are back in the seclusion of their hotel room, and Dale is thinking that he had never before fully appreciated his wife's prettiness, when Mavis, suddenly sleepy from the wine and the heat, lets fall a few unguarded words that bring about a cataclysm. "What train did you say you took this morning?" asks Dale, in a voice she never heard before. And as she stumbles and contradicts herself, the man's suspicions increase, and then, his slow wits begin to piece the facts together, and his questions multiply, and before long blows follow and punctuate the questions, measured, deliberate blows, calculated to wring forth the last syllable of the woman's confession. "Are you going to kill me, Will?" she gasps, and he answers, "Probably, but not till I've had the truth." And so she does have the truth, sordid, pitiful, and yet in a way pardonable, if the man could ever be made to see from any angle but his own. As a mere girl, she had been sold to Mr. Barradine, and it was not until he tired of her that her aunt would listen to a suggestion of her marrying. Since her marriage, she had been unfailingly true to Dale,—until now. But she foresaw that Barradine was their sole hope, the only person willing or able to save Dale his position,—and Barradine made his own terms. Well, after the hideous night at the hotel, Dale sends his wife home alone; what he means to do with her, whether kill her, divorce her or try to live down the memory, he does not yet know. Then, after a week of suspense, the little town of Rodchurch is horrified by the news that Mr. Barradine is dead; he was out riding, on a new and mettlesome horse, and evidently was thrown and dragged, for his face was battered almost out of recognition. It is possible that one reader out of three would at this point have suspicions that Mr. Barradine's death was not accidental. But as chapter succeeds chapter, and the even tenor of life goes on in the Dale household, this momentary suspicion is likely to be dismissed. The author's plan of construction from the hour of Barradine's death is to see Dale only from the outside, only as his wife and acquaintances see him; not for an instant do we hear him think,—until in the last chapters, the point of view shifts, and

we relive all these later years of his life, suffering with him all the tortures of remorse that have never given him one moment's peace. Of course, he killed Barradine, and the curious psychological fact that made his chief difficulty was that, from the moment of Barradine's death he ceased to hate him, ceased to resent what Barradine had done, ceased to feel any bitterness toward his wife. Yet he knew that he must keep up the pretence, must feign resentment, and delay reconciliation. Children come to him, and prosperity and local positions of honour and responsibility, — and through it all he bears the burden of his secret, hourly expecting the discovery that never comes. But finally, on the threshold of middle age, he discovers that, like Barradine, he has his human weaknesses. There is a young girl who loves him, and for whom he in turn conceives a mad, reckless passion, which is held in check by just one thought, "I should be no better than Barradine; I should destroy my only justification for killing him!" So, instead, Dale pronounces sentence of death upon himself; and a kindly providence gives him an opportunity of passing out of life in the performance of an act of bravery that enshrines him as a hero in the memory of a world that has not understood.