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WILL N. HARBEN'S "THE DESIRED WOMAN"*

Speaking of the Georgia mountaineer in the October BOOKMAN, Mr. Harben says: "They really make story-telling easy for a writer, for they are story-tellers themselves. I have often been surprised as I sat in some country store, or in some whittling or checker-playing group in a court-house yard, to find that a man in brown jean pants, hickory shirt and slouched hat was telling an experi-

*The Desired Woman. By Will N. Harben. New York: Harper and Brothers.

ence in the best possible form for print. He would be leading up to his situation, keeping back his climax as skilfully, and quoting the speakers of his yarn as naturally as O. Henry at his best."

Perhaps it is this story-telling knack of the Georgia mountaineer, coupled with Mr. Harben's skill in reproducing him in print,—which latter item the author modestly fails to mention,—that makes Mr. Harben's stories of Northern Georgia so popular. And it is perhaps for the same reason that the hill folk in *The Desired Woman* are so natural, and convincing, and impress one as true to life.

The Desired Woman is the story of a man who holds fast to the image, not of his first love, but of his best love. Something of a scamp, with more than a dash of goodness in him; something of a strong man with a noticeable vein of weakness in him, he appreciates a little mountain flower of a school teacher whom he meets on a vacation in the Georgia hills. And after his first marriage, desirable enough financially and socially, but lacking in other respects, comes to a dismal end, he drifts back in time to the hills and the school teacher. And for her sake and by her influence he undergoes regeneration.

People who don't know Georgia ought to read *The Desired Woman*. There is no old "cunnel" in it; no one says "suh," or prates about chivalry, or "totes a gun," or "plays cyards," or says or does any of the things which Northern readers expect to find in a novel about Southerners. In *The Desired Woman*, Georgians, especially the city folk, are hustling and money-grubbing just as they would be if they were natives of New Jersey or Iowa, which is true to the facts.

It may be objected that Mr. Harben's novel is melodramatic. Well, the existences of some few people in real life fortunately are melodramatic. And as for the rest of us, who lead quiet, even, uneventful lives, we sometimes love to sit down and read about the ups and downs and sudden upsets and ultimate rightings of melodramatic lies. Melo-

drama, the writer holds therefore, is not a taint in a novel.

Newell Cutts Hardwick.