

*The Better Man*, by Cyrus Townsend  
Brady, is a book which one prefers to be-  
lieve was not wholly sin-  
cere. It has been the  
fashion for some years  
now to put together sto-  
ries that have justified themselves by a  
lamentable degree of popularity, in which  
the well-to-do, highly educated and deli-  
cately nurtured heroine has deliberately  
chosen to go against tradition, expediency  
and the wishes of family and friends and  
select between two suitors—in this type  
of book there are always two suitors,  
neither more nor less—the one who is the  
inferior in birth, education and manners,  
but who has the greater amount of push  
and self-reliance and those various phys-  
ical qualities which we are apt to think  
of as making up the successful American.  
That this particular conception of life  
quite belies our own personal observations  
of what is true seems to carry no weight  
with the modern novelist. We remember  
within the past five years just one novel  
entitled, if we are not mistaken, *The  
Right Man*, which, in spite of numerous  
shortcomings, gave a good many people a  
keen sense of joy, because it was a  
courageous negation of the current false  
attitude of fiction and showed a young  
woman who very wisely threw over the  
big, strong, hustling American for the  
sake of the man of good birth and good  
breeding—the man with traditions and  
culture to match her own. Mr. Brady's  
new volume, in spite of some clever sit-  
uations and a few admirable pages of  
characterisation, exasperates the reader  
who loves the truth. It asks us to believe  
that the daughter of a New York million-  
aire, with all New York society open to  
her from which to choose, limits her  
choice in the first place to a clergyman  
and secondly, when this choice narrows  
down to two young ministers of the Gos-  
pel, one of them a prosperous and pop-  
ular preacher to the rich, and the other a  
raw-boned, uncouth missionary to the

lower east side, not only rough-mannered, but rather proud of being so; that she deliberately consents to antagonise her father, to defy popular opinion and sacrifice all worldly advantages for the sake of the humbler and more primitive man;—and in asking this, the book asks a little too much. No matter how much the author sugar-coats his problem and emphasises the stirring manhood of his hero, his unvarnished truthfulness and noble abnegation, the book somehow leaves behind it a sense of something wanting, a fundamental lack of sincerity.

Even in such an artificial type of story as the detective novel, the element of sincerity is an indispensable quality. That is why the new volume by A. E. W. Mason, entitled *At the Villa Rose*, is a book that stands out rather conspicuously from amidst the great mass of fictional murder mysteries. An old woman found mysteriously strangled in her own villa; her companion, a young Englishwoman

known to have lost heavily at the gaming tables, promptly accused of the crime; a wealthy young Englishman openly espousing the young girl's cause and enlisting the aid of the most famous living Paris detective; a tangle of circumstantial evidence, an absence of motive, and a baffling intrusion of spiritualism—these are only the superficial and preliminary features of a mystery which actually fulfils the stereotyped formula of the reviewer, namely, that it “keeps up a breathless suspense until the closing page of the thrilling narrative.” In other words, although Mr. Mason usually employs his talents in more serious work, he quite understands the rules of the game; and while he obeys them, even to the extent of introducing the real criminal in rather close proximity to the opening page, he keeps the reader groping quite helplessly through pretty nearly two-thirds of the volume—and, as detective stories go nowadays, this is rather ample praise.