

The Hermit and the Wild Woman. By Edith Wharton. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. \$1.50.

The stories in this volume are written in Mrs. Wharton's usual literary style of elegance and excellence. In fact, the worse the story, the better she writes it. The moral consists always in how literally and delicately she can produce and interpret vice according to the best social standards. And even when she abandons the gilded stage of society life and chooses two saints of ancient times for the hero and heroine, as she does in the initial tale in this book, she casts about them a situation so scandalous in its significance that the reader naturally wonders how they remained sanctified. However, it is really the most significant of the series that make up the volume, the remainder being the usual social studies in temptation with which Mrs. Wharton usually deals. But the scene of this first one is laid upon a barren ledge of rocks somewhere in the early Catholic times. She has made an exhaustive and instructive study of the religious asceticism of this period, and has dramatized in the life of *The Hermit and the Wild Woman* some of the barbarous beliefs and customs of the pious in those days. The effect of the tale upon the reader is the same as that produced by her stories of social life—that of revulsion. There can be no doubt that Mrs. Wharton can write a fascinating story, but it would be a matter of interest to some who are interested in psychological phenomena to know whether she could conceive of a pleasant story that would attract as well as fascinate.

Amédée's Son. By Henry James Smith. New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$1.50.

There are places where the very earth seems to end in poetry—not a summer madrigal merely. Nature makes of her meadows and mountains a sonnet, a dirge of her barrens, a deep-sea verse of her sea—and it is put together so that it lasts year after year, age after age, like Homer's epic. In such a place as this Mr. Smith has laid the scene of his story of *Amédée's Son*, in a fisherman's village on Cape Breton, in sight of all weathers,

beneath the wings of on old religion, out of the arms of good women, companioned by the sea and by legends as old as the sea. And the story itself is of no great importance, only of a youth whose ambitious old grandfather hides him from himself, and who finds himself in a chance letter left by his own father, long since dead. But the way it is told amounts to a very great deal. There is the color in it of old doorways, dark and sober as honesty, the dash of wind and waves, the flavor of the salt, and there is a fineness in the author's friendliness to wisdom, like one who has been at home a very long time with good human hearts and knows all their beauties, superstitions, hopes and weaknesses. He is already well known as a short-story writer. Some day he will make a great book. This one is merely a character sketch of the earth and the man in a remote place, but even at that it is a notable piece of work.

The Great English Letter Writers, with introductory Essays and Notes by W. J. Dawson and C. W. Dawson. New York: Fleming H. Revell Co. \$1.00 each.

This anthology of English letters, well chosen and well classified, makes good reading and let us hope may be used largely as inspiration in the "Gentlest Art," as Mr. Lucas calls letter writing in his recently issued and finer selection. The present little books have been compiled with appreciation, as the list of authors and the running titles to the letters show. Omissions there surely are. The Autocrat is not here, nor is Dean Church, but the line had to be drawn. The indices—but let us illustrate: One title is "How Athens Taught Her Historians to Write." This is indexed under "How" and nowhere else. Really, it is almost as laughable as it is slovenly.

The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln and Its Expiation. By David Miller Dewitt. New York: The Macmillan Company. \$2.25.

Mr. Dewitt has studied the official records of the conspiracy trial, of the trial of John H. Surratt and of the impeachment investigation of 1867, and has sought to sift the actual incidents of the plot from the mass of myth and legend in which they have become in-

volved. The care and patience with which the work has been prosecuted are evident. Not so much can be said for its judicial temper; it is in parts extremely passionate and violent in statement; and its account of the conspiracy trial seems rather like an impassioned plea for the defense than a historical account of what happened there. Mr. Dewitt throws doubt upon the shooting of Booth by Boston Corbett. He draws a curious parallel between the death of the assassin and that of Robespierre, and if he does not plainly state that Booth committed suicide, at least leaves the reader to infer that his own judgment is in favor of the theory of suicide. The theory is a crotchet, with nothing to sustain it.

