

for the Padre, the youth Arthur retires from the scene—sailing as stowaway on a steamer for South America.

Thirteen years later there arrives in Italy a bitter and cynical man, reckless of his own life and regardless of the lives of others, "a gentleman of many adventures and unknown antecedents," whose attitude toward the church and its priests, especially toward Monticello, is one of ineradicable hatred. Frightful sufferings both mental and physical, sufferings which have scarred his body and wrecked his nerves, have turned the, noble pure-minded youth into a vindictive, heartless man.

The weakest point in the novel is the transformation of Arthur into The Gadfly. Ought not the writer to have prepared the reader for this change of character by showing evil traits in the youth which might develop into wickedness in the man? Arthur is too virtuous to seem quite natural, and The Gadfly is too base. The laws which should govern the evolution of character are disregarded here, and circumstances are made responsible for all of The Gadfly's sins.

And what a remarkable, original character The Gadfly is! A perfect dare-devil! There is nothing wicked and cruel that the embittered atheist does not attempt. He has a courage born of a contempt for life. His desire for revenge is relentless. The love and tenderness that were in his heart have turned to gall and wormwood.

The last half of the book is written with unusual dramatic power. It is full of novel adventure and incident. The Gadfly becomes the leader of the Revolutionary party. He is constantly brought into association with Monticello and Gemma, but for a long time is not recognized. The account of his final capture and his death, with all its harrowing details, is almost too painful to read. Some of the last scenes, the prison scenes, are exquisitely touching. The meetings between the father and the son are bitter and passionate. The moment when Monticello recognizes in his insulting prisoner—who is before him awaiting his death sentence—his long-lost and much sorrowed-for son, is an intensely thrilling one. The Gadfly tells the Padre to choose between his son and his God, and even at such a moment as this cannot forbear to denounce the church and its priests.

The writer has a forceful style, an entirely original conception for his plot, a wealth of unbackneyed incidents, and several strong characters. Gemma's calm and serene nature and breadth of view make of her a woman of a new and noble type. Even the gypsy woman, whom The Gadfly had attached to himself, is alive. With a few powerful lines Voynich is able to portray living, breathing, human beings.

In the last chapters we deplore a certain diffuseness in style, a lack of restraint, as if

the writer did not know how to end his book artistically. Once The Gadfly disappears, the reader's interest wanes.

It is a powerful and picturesque story, however—a canvas glowing with color and life—and the few striking characters stand out in firm, resolute outlines. We heartily commend *The Gadfly* as a clever, almost a brilliant, novel.

### THE GADFLY.\*

A DEARTH of good novels has been felt this year, so with unalloyed pleasure we recognize in Mr. E. L. Voynich a new writer of exceptional ability, and in *The Gadfly* an intensely interesting and dramatic novel. Although not equal to *Quo Vadis*, it is yet the most powerful story which has come to us since Sienkiewicz's remarkable book.

The scene of *The Gadfly* is laid in Italy, modern Italy, the Italy of Garibaldi, and there is much in the experiences of The Gadfly which recalls Garibaldi's own exciting career. The fierce struggle between the eager young group of revolutionists and the ecclesiastical or conservative party—this is the leading motif of the book. But the reader's interest centers chiefly in two strong and original characters—The Gadfly and the Padre Monticello.

When we are first introduced to The Gadfly he is an idealistic, sensitive young student called Arthur, sitting at the feet of his adored preceptor, Monticello, who is a priest famed for his nobility of character and pureness of life. The political movements of the day awakened the young man's ardent enthusiasm, and his presence at certain political gatherings caused his arrest. During his imprisonment efforts were made to induce him to betray his political friends—efforts accompanied by torture,—but he was brave enough to keep their secrets. When released he found that words he had uttered under the seal of the confessional had been the means of betraying his best friend. Weak and discouraged with long months in a dungeon, Arthur came out to find that the girl he loved—Gemma—believed him to be a coward, and that his adored Padre Monticello was the seducer of his mother, and that he himself was only a child of shame. This accumulation of misfortunes drove him nearly out of his mind with grief and rage, the whole world seemed to him a cheat, and God a gigantic fraud. Leaving behind him a bitter note

\*The Gadfly. By E. L. Voynich. Henry Holt & Co. \$1.25.