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ELIZABETH DEJEANS'S "THE HEART OF DESIRE"*

Beginning with a prologue that occurs on a trans-continental train on its way to California, *The Heart of Desire* tells a love-story sufficiently crowded with incident and mystery to make the reader impatient of interruption until he reaches the end. All the important personages of the main narrative are introduced in the first few pages of this prologue in a manner both easy and convincing; when they meet again it is under very different circumstances, half a generation later.

There is a good deal of skill and charm manifest in the character drawing, while the progress of the various men and

**The Heart of Desire*. By Elizabeth Dejeans. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company.

women along the paths already marked in their youth is cleverly indicated. The strong are stronger and more efficient, the weak have sunk a little under the stress of temptation and the hazard of their fortunes; the characteristics in each are more marked.

Kate, the heroine, who at first annoys the reader with her melodramatic actions and the unaccountable silence she maintains under all sorts of misunderstandings, for one suspects a ruse of the author's to enhance the suspense, proves to have had ample reason for behaving as she did. This is certainly none too common in books. Moreover, the more one sees of her, the more one grows to like her, and the fact that the hero never wavers in his passion for her during the entire fifteen years of their separation, albeit he knows no more of her than the slight information he secured aboard the limited, does not, finally, seem preposterous; on the contrary, one is distinctly inclined to admire his good sense.

Paquita, the little dancing flame of a girl, is portrayed with colour and comprehension. The setting of the story is Southern California, being for the most part in and near Los Angeles, and Paquita belongs to it, while her ruined old house and rascal of a father give an added sharpness to the impression of Spanish antecedents in both land and people. Mrs. Dejeans knows her environ-

ment and loves it, and furthermore succeeds in making the reader do the same.

Aunt Silence is, so to speak, the comedy old woman of the piece, for the book, although showing originality and vital force, is nevertheless constructed according to the conventional design and supplied with the conventional array of characters. But there Mrs. Dejeans's conventionality ends, for she draws her personages with relish and humour and with a pleasing freedom. Aunt Silence, her pet goats and Hop, her Chinese factotum, are well worth meeting; and if the old lady proves useful in straightening out the last kinks of the plot, it is precisely what she would have done in real life.

There is a cheerful philosophy in the book, not too insistently shining, but lending the pages a certain glow—a sunniness belonging to the State in which its story is laid. The frailties of human nature are neither slurred nor denied; but the equally sure nobility and fineness inherent in it are never lost sight of, and remain the major note in an entertaining book that has more than mere entertainment to recommend it.

A colloquial use of the verb, as in the sentence "*We would better let good enough alone,*," strikes the ear unpleasantly, and is much too frequently employed.

Hildegard Hawthorne.