

Beauty and Pathos

IT is difficult to know how to recommend Isabel Paterson's "The Singing Season" (Boni, Liveright). It is a brilliant costume novel, filled with beautiful writing and with scenes of color, magic, and power. I have seldom enjoyed an historical novel so much; yet it is not written in the current mood. It is, perhaps, too well written for the casual reader of casual novels. This is a mellow book, long planned, I imagine,

and worked out with great care. Its appeal is quiet. The story is one of clashing wills and pathetic and unfulfilled love, Spanish in its moods and colors, its grace and its rhythmical style. There is in it a curious philosophy of love, which comes sometimes quaintly from the mouth of the cleric Don Jorge:

Don Jorge made a gesture of flinging away a sword, his rosy face taking on a rueful and comic aspect. "Needs are not wants. Do you think Sigismund wants you wedded? With all his great riches, what hath he in the world but you? I am just a doting old man, Isabella; you know it. How women do know us! What are we in their hands but unwieldy infants, to whom they dole out pap or slap to fit the occasion? Even when they love us, they laugh at us. Our most labored wisdom is folly to them; and God knows, seeing what that wisdom leads to, of strife and misery and empty show, they are right. They know there is but one good in life and follow it; whileas we pursue chimeras. What shall insure the favor of a king? Forget all I have said." But he knew perfectly she would remember; it lay with her to protect Sigismund. And he thought with Roderigo; if she could once see Alexander, inclination and prudence might join hands. That was what he told Sigismund.