

“THE DOMINANT PASSION”

The Dominant Passion, by Marguerite Bryant, is best explained by the words which the author puts into the mouth of one of the characters, who is addressing the artist, the central figure in the story: “You people who are servants of this Dominant Passion of creation don’t seem to have any medium. When *It* is there, there’s no room for

anything else, when *It* is gone, you are at the mercy of everything." Andrea Bradon, the artist in question, may best be described as a vampire. He ruins the career of his only son, Lawrence, who has divine gifts as a musician, because he wants to keep the boy near him, where he can use him as a model, and draw inspiration from him. Over and over, he keeps the boy for hours posing, until he faints from sheer fatigue, and until his exhaustion is read in lines of suffering that are precisely the lines which the artist has diabolically striven to produce. He almost ruins the life of his cousin, Anthony, who has married Honor Passfield, the novelist. Without loving Honor, Andrea is curiously sensitive to her influence; until he met her, he had done nothing great in his art, he had simply given brilliant promise. It was Honor, her sweet, strong personality, that taught him the power of simplicity in colour and purity of line. Therefore, when her husband Anthony, forced to live in Italy, where he is studying the causes of pellagra, acquiesces in Honor's wish to return to England, the only spot where she can find inspiration for her books, and Honor herself, secretly hurt at his willingness to let her go, is too proud, as the years pass by, to ask him to take her back, Andrea, intrusted by her husband with a message for her, refrains from delivering it, because he wants to keep her near him, and use her as a stepping-stone on which to gain the heights. And lastly, he almost ruins himself, his reputation, his joy in life, because when Honor learns through Lawrence of his duplicity, and Andrea avenges himself upon his son by one crowning act of cruelty, Honor rejoins Anthony in Italy, vowing never to see Andrea again. From the moment that she casts him off, Andrea begins to deteriorate, his work becomes steadily worse and worse, over-elaborate, full of affectation and pretence. He knows that there is just one thing for him to do, and at any cost, and that is to make his peace with Honor, to buy her forgiveness, no matter to what depths of hu-

mility he must descend. She is right in despising him, in casting him off; but by doing so, she has crippled an artist's soul, blighted a genius,—and this, he feels sure, is a greater punishment than she meant to inflict. There are certain compelling qualities about this volume that make one not only eager to read it but to argue about it afterward. Nevertheless, it leaves the impression of being rather overdrawn and exaggerated. Andrea's repentance and regeneration somehow fail to carry conviction.