

The best economy that Mr. Harrison Rhodes could have practised in regard to the structure of his first novel, *The Flight Into Eden*, would have been to cut it ruthlessly in two in the middle and

"The Flight
Into Eden"

make two stories of it. One is apt at the first reading to think the book rather better than it really is. There is a grim tensity about the initial tragedy that grips the attention at once; and the transition to the lighter mood that dominates the subsequent chapters, and the idyllic charm of the Florida episode, come as such a distinct relief that you are not apt to realise at once that the second section of the book is, in Mr. Kipling's stereotyped phrase, another story. Basil Forrester, with a beautiful young wife far too good for him, continues his life-long habit of making love to every pretty woman who will let him; until suddenly one of his foolish, fugitive infidelities comes to the wife's knowledge and kills her, just as surely and as brutally as though he had stabbed her through the heart. What reason she could have had for wishing to die, whether indeed she died by accident or by design, forms a matter of ten days' wonder in the social circle which once knew her. But only the dead woman's mother, to whom she left a farewell letter, is in possession of the truth; and she in her bitterness vows that she will proclaim the truth abroad, hold Forrester's infidelities up to the world's scorn, make his life an intolerable shame,—excepting on condition that he will buy her silence by going into exile, and placing himself so far from his old home that no other English woman will ever be in danger of suffering through him. And here of course is the logical end of the story, unless the author

had designed to bring his exile home again, determined to face exposure and live it down. As a matter of fact, Basil Forrester does not come home. In the wilds of Southern Florida he starts life afresh, enters upon a new romance, and eventually marries and settles down to a life-long idyl. There is no question that Mr. Rhodes knows how to portray people and incidents in a way that forces you to see them. But he has something still to learn about the unities of construction.

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