

solid information, too, about roads and pathways and hotels; tells you which places are crowded and which quiet; where you may be in the shade of forests or sun-baked and sea-blown on a flowery plain. She begins her wanderings with an adventure that would have put most people out of humour. Her maid and she jump from the carriage to avoid a motor car, and her coachman August never misses them, but drives on for miles. They have to trudge through the dust, hot and tired and hungry, and finally jolt into Putbus in a cart. "Poor August had the worst of it," says Elizabeth when her remorseful coachman finds her again. At Lauterbach she had a bad supper in "the loveliest nook in the world." Next day she hires "a fishing smack with golden sails and a fisherman with a golden beard," and sails to the islet of Vilm. "If you love out-of-door beauty, wide stretches of sea and sky, mighty beeches, dense bracken, meadows radiant with flowers, chalky levels purple with gentians, solitude, and economy, go and spend a summer at Vilm." She goes on to Göhren and finds it crowded. In the hotel restaurant "all the children of Germany" are "putting knives into their artless mouths," and "devouring their soup with a passionate enthusiasm." The only bedroom she can have here has eight beds in it, and one small iron washstand containing a basin and a water-bottle. She can only have this one night because next day eight people are coming to occupy the beds and share the washstand for six weeks. This will surprise English readers until they get further on in the book and come to the eminent professor who travels with his night attire under his clothes and a spare pair of socks in his pocket.

When Elizabeth leaves Göhren she goes to Thiessow, and there the thing she dreads befalls her. She meets some one she knows. Her silent maid and her coachman have not disturbed her. For three days she has journeyed in the peace and solitude her soul desires. But from the bathing hut at Thiessow she slips from a wet plank into the very arms of her cousin Charlotte, the young wife of the celebrated Professor Nieberlein. Charlotte is strenuous and emancipated. She has not seen her husband for a year, she talks like her pamphlets, which are all about the wrongs of women, and she

asks Elizabeth "what she done with her life." Elizabeth mentions "a row of babies," and Charlotte observes that "a cat achieves exactly the same thing." But next day she thrusts her company on Elizabeth, and when the ladies get to Binz they meet the Harvey-Brownes. Mrs. Harvey-Browne is an English clergywoman, the wife of a bishop, and she pursues Charlotte for the sake of the celebrated Professor. The Harvey-Brownes are forever talking about the Professor. They spent a whole winter in Bonn hunting him. But Mrs. Harvey-Browne avoids all contact with obscurer foreigners, and when an old man in a waterproof and a green felt hat takes a seat at her table she sends him on. Of course, he turns out to be the Professor, and of course he is amusing and lifelike as every one else in this delightful book. He puts one arm round Elizabeth, and one arm round his wife, and makes love to both. He comes near making love to Mrs. Harvey-Browne's maid, whom he takes for her daughter. All he asks of women is that they should be "little and round and soft," and he absolutely refuses to take any woman seriously. Perhaps it is not surprising that his wife was dissatisfied. But Elizabeth seems to like the little old rosy Professor, and with her usual insight she wishes her cousin could laugh at her husband instead of taking him seriously. But to Charlotte the rift is very serious, and the rest of Elizabeth's adventures turn on her efforts to bring the husband and wife together. She does not get rid of them, or of the Harvey-Brownes, until the eleventh day, when she has to return home. She was happiest, she says, at Lauterbach and Wiek. She was most wretched at Göhren. But she makes her readers happy from the beginning to the end.

*Cecily Sidgwick.*

## VII.

### MRS. ATHERTON'S "RULERS OF KINGS."\*

WE have never been among those who profess to regard Mrs. Atherton's novels as unworthy of serious attention. From the time when we first read *Hermia Suydam* we have always admired her very

\* *Rulers of Kings.* By Gertrude Atherton. New York: Harper Brothers.

real gift for portraying certain types of character and for delineating certain definite aspects of life. She has the real story-teller's talent; and while some of her books are naturally better than others, she has never published anything that was immature or dull. She knows her California intimately and she is very much at home in New York and Washington; while in at least two of her novels her Adirondack setting is superb. Likewise, she has got below the surface of English life, so that one of her most popular books has a sort of international character. Her chief success so far is represented by *Senator North*, a very powerful and moving novel.

But Mrs. Atherton's talent, like many another's, requires its own proper *milieu* in order to produce the best results. Her latest book is unfortunately a good example of what may happen even to the most experienced author when this *milieu* is not taken into account. *Rulers of Kings* begins most admirably and fastens at once upon your attention. This first part—the American part—is as good as anything that Mrs. Atherton has ever done; and especially interesting is her story of the calf-love of an inexperienced youth for a pretty, anæmic, foolish girl, common and cheap and incapable of any real sentiment, yet one who, just because she is a girl, and because the young man meets her at what is both the psychological and the physiological moment, is idealised by him into a creature of wondrous charm. This little episode is one thing in the book which remains with us after we have laid it down, and another is this bit of philosophy with regard to the nature of early and evanescent love:

Nothing in the vagaries of nature is more inexplicable than nine-tenths of what, for want of a better name, is called love. It is a wanton waste of good energy and a lamentable waste of spiritual forces; for the passion moves the victim to all sorts of unselfish impulses, exalted emotion, and even religion, all of which, in the reaction when delusion is over, are finely scorned. That love which is composed of an instinct for companionship, and a complete honesty of emotions, and is lacking in sentimentalism and the tragic note, delays its arrival, to people of ardent imagination, until so late that they must have much richness of nature and large recuperative powers to dismiss into the past the memory of all they have spent. The theory that the blind

passion of youth springs from the relentless instinct of reproduction is true only in part, for some of the maddest passions are inspired by anæmic and useless women, and the earth has its full measure of sickly children. If Nature has any well-defined plan she has as yet hesitated to reveal it, and it is probable that she is still amusing herself in her laboratory. Most love would appear to be a momentary fever of the imagination to which the body responds, and the soul, always struggling for utterance, tries its wings, flies a little span, and flatters the brain: when a man is in love then is he most pleased with himself; he never imagined that for heights and depths, within an apparently trite exterior, he was so remarkable a being; and until the wave recedes he bestows a like approval on the chance object who, in the prettiness of her hour, or by some trick of manner, bulged his ego into grander proportions.

As for the rest of the book, however, we can only say that in it the author seems to have lost her bearings altogether. A young American, one Fessenden Abbott, frequently spoken of as "Fess," inherits four or five hundred million dollars and certainly lives up to his income. He boards the yacht of the German Emperor, tells him that he must not hope to secure a foothold in South America, offers to let him subdue all Europe, and in general parcels out the world with the most magnificent *insouciance*. Later "Fess" gets control of all South America himself, thus forestalling the Kaiser. He also benevolently raises the wages of labour all over the United States, and then goes to Europe to seek for diversions of a more tender nature. His sister is an intimate friend of the daughter of the Austrian Emperor, and "Fess" falls in love with this imperial Princess, not in a weak, ineffectual sort of way, but just as a man naturally would who had offered the Kaiser to lend him the money with which to conquer Russia. When Mrs. Atherton gets to this point she really loses all sense of proportion whatsoever, and becomes absolutely extravagant, dropping, moreover, her sense of humour. We like the scene where the Emperor of Austria, the German Emperor, Fessenden Abbott, and Fessenden's father sit down together to decide the fate of nations. Fessenden was quite at his ease, but his father was not. He wore a frock coat, and sank down in a rather crumpled way in his chair, being tortured with dyspepsia and having to take tabloids all through the