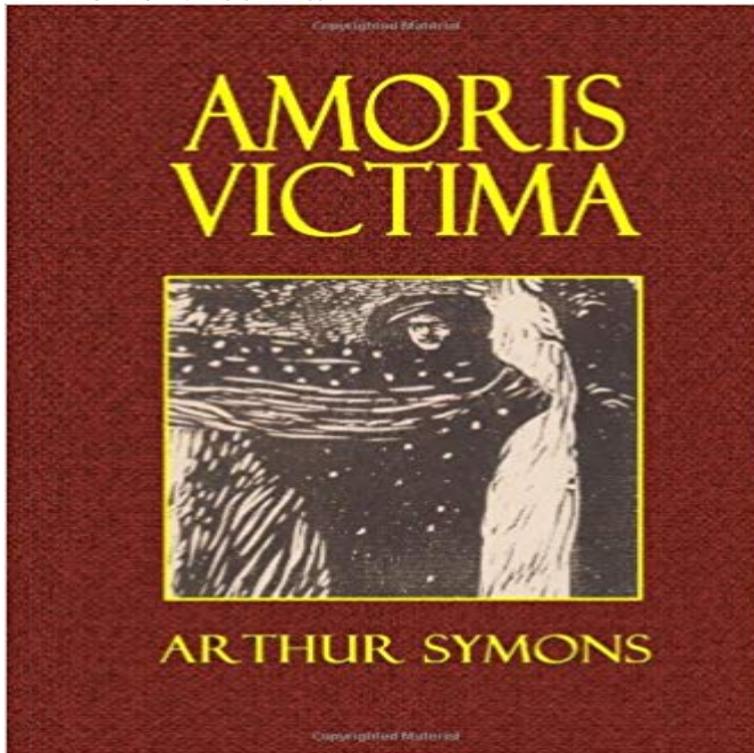


Amoris Victima



An excerpt of a review from The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art: THE imaginary hero of Amoris Victima has led a light life of pleasure without meeting with passion, until he discovers in a certain girl the physical type which inexorably appeals to him. She responds in full to his advances, and his infatuation in her survives the gratification of the senses. She, on the other hand, is by nature fugitive, and he wakes up one morning to discover that she has flown. At this point the poem opens, and save for the minute event that she offers on one occasion to return, and that by his pride, acting against his will, she is rejected, nothing whatever happens from cover to cover. The entire volume is occupied by analyses of the, shades of desperation, rage, desire, futile and dishonourable pain, which sweep over his mind, and prevent it from being occupied by any other sensations. This obsession of the loved and hated object is described in terms of real power, and nowhere with more psychological insight than in The Rat: Pain gnaws at my heart like a rat that gnaws at a beam In the dusty dark of a ghost-frequented house; And I dream of the days forgotten, of love the dream, The desire of her eyes unappeased, and the peace of her brows. I can hear the old rat gnaw in the dark by night, In the deep overshadowing dust that the years have cast; He gnaws at my heart that is empty of all delight, He stirs the dust where the feet of my dreams had passed. Never was the grinding pain of a memory that will not be put aside better expressed than in these almost distressingly powerful verses. .Coventry Pat more in an amusing passage remarks: How strange a thing a lover seems To animals that do not love! and we are afraid that to those who are not actually suffering from the acute phase of amatory disease which Mr. Symons so ably diagnoses, his Amoris Victima will seem a

little dull. We confess that ourselves, although desirous of being intensely sympathetic, have been conscious, as we walked beside the hero and listened to his confidences, of an occasional tendency to put the masking hand hurriedly to the expanding jaws. When the lover feels for a moment a little better and notices the scenery, our attention immediately revives, and we are grateful to his changes of metres and other cunning literary devices which carry us over passages which it would be rude to call tiresome, because they are so cleverly written, but which certainly are not exhilarating. Again, the typical modern man of Mr. Symonss imagination is here displayed in the simplicity of a savage. In the two great poems which it is a compliment to Mr. Symons to mention in connexion with his *Amoris Victima* *Epipsychidion* for its form, *In Memoriam* for its matter we shall see, if we examine them from this point of view, that in spite of their monotony of tone, the tact of the poet has in each case lightened the task of the reader by an infinite and appropriate variety of detail. But this is what the writers of the school to which Mr. Symons is so fond of assuring us that he belongs will not attempt to do. To give the impression is all that they deign to intend. Let us say, at once, that the impression of the peculiar malady of amorous physical instinct thwarted, in a man of limited intellect and entirely neglected altruism, is given with exactitude and skill in *Amoris Victima*. To give more, or to give it otherwise, would, we suppose, seem to Mr. Symons a concession to the commonplace. If so, he must be content to seem a strange thing to animals that are not passing through the precise paroxysm of disappointed passion which he describes; and as those are the vast majority of even such human animals as read verse, he must be satisfied with a very small, though doubtless a highly appreciative, audience.

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