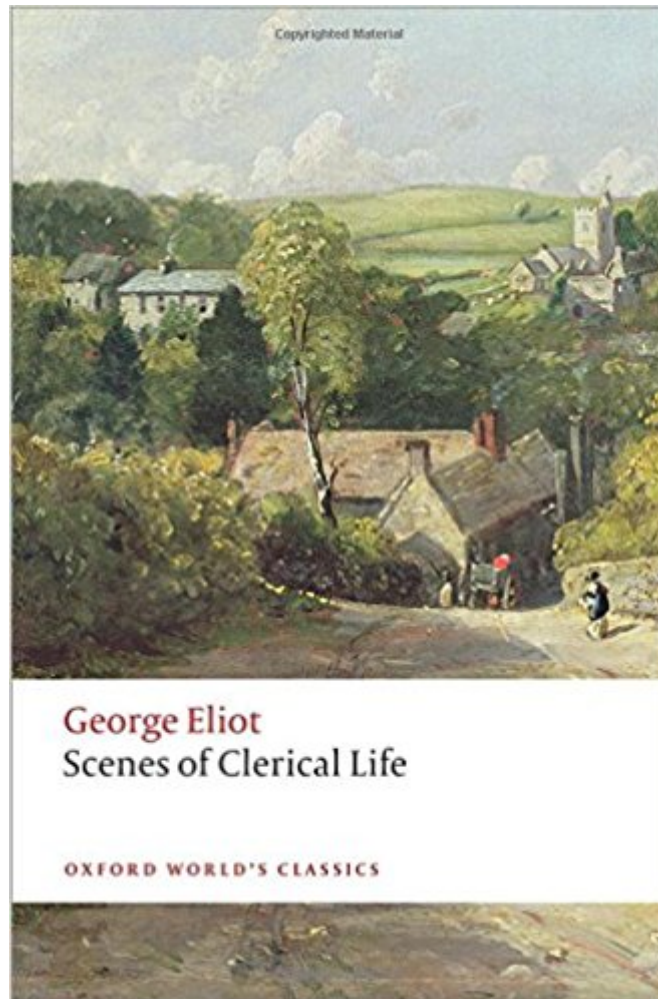


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Scenes Of Clerical Life (Oxford World's Classics)



Synopsis

'the only true knowledge of our fellow-man is that which enables us to feel with him' George Eliot's first published work consisted of three short novellas: 'The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton', 'Mr Gilfil's Love-Story', and 'Janet's Repentance'. Their depiction of the lives of ordinary men and women in a provincial Midlands town initiated a new era of nineteenth-century literary realism. The tales concern rural members of the clergy and the gossip and factions that a small town generates around them. Amos Barton only realizes how much he depends upon his wife's selfless love when she dies prematurely; Mr Gilfil's devotion to a girl who loves another is only fleetingly rewarded; and Janet Dempster suffers years of domestic abuse before the influence of an Evangelical minister turns her life around. These stories are remarkable for the tenderness with which Eliot portrays a bygone time of religious belief in a newly secular age, giving literary fiction an alternative language to religion and philosophy for the observation and understanding of human experience.

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Customer Reviews

George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans) was born in Warwickshire in 1819. Her father was an estate manager and farmer. Little Mary Ann knew life in rural England. She would make rural Britain during the time of the industrial revolution her main fictional focus. She is the author of great classics "Middlemarch" "Adam Bede" "The Mill on the Floss" "Romola" and "Daniel Deronda." Prior to the publication of these classics there is the charming and touching work "Scenes of a Clerical Life." Mary Ann was living without benefit of clergy with the author/scientist/man of letters George Henry Lewes who couldn't divorce his mad wife to marry the homely but brilliant Mary Ann (she spoke seven languages and had written widely on biblical criticism, science, book reviews and essays of erudition and wit). Lewes suggested she try her hand at fiction. The result is this collection of three stories which was published monthly in the liberal "Westminster Review" owned by the Blackwood Family in 1857. It was later published in book form under the pen name of "George Eliot". Charles Dickens was the only critic who correctly observed that these stories had to have been written by a woman. The three tales are: 1. The Sad Fortunes of the Rev. Amos Barton - The setting for this story as for the other two is the mythical Midlands town of Milby. Barton is an average clergyman who is not well liked by his parishioners. He is in dire poverty supporting several children and a sickly wife Millie. When Mrs. Barton dies we see how the church folks support Barton in his grief. The story is short and touching. 2. Mr. Gilfil's Love Story. This second clergyman in the trilogy of tales is a kindhearted old minister of the gospel. Eliot takes us back to 1788 to the story of his lost love for the beautiful Caterina.

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