



Scenes of Clerical Life (Oxford World's Classics)

George Eliot, Josie Billington

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'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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