

**MOTHWISE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649151073

Mothwise by Knut Hamsun

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Cover @ 2017

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**KNUT HAMSUN**

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*Original Title: "Severmere."*  
*Translated from the Norwegian by W. WORSTER, M.A.*









## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE publication of *Growth of the Soil* in the spring of last year (1920) set critics and readers asking for information about the author and his works. Later in the year further interest was aroused by the news that Hamsun had been awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. In December, an article on Hamsun, giving a brief general survey of his works, appeared in *The Fortnightly Review*. This article, with some slight alteration, is now reprinted here, the proprietors of that journal having very kindly granted their permission, an act of courtesy which is the more to be appreciated considering the brief time which has elapsed since the original publication.

Knut Hamsun is now sixty. For years past he has been regarded as the greatest of living Norwegian writers, and one or two attempts have been made previously to introduce his work into this country, but it was not until this year (1920), with the

publication of *Growth of the Soil*, that he achieved any real success, or became at all generally known, among English readers.

*Growth of the Soil* is very far indeed from Hamsun's earliest beginnings: far even from the books of his early middle period, which made his name. It is the life story of a man in the wilds, the genesis and gradual development of a homestead, the unit of humanity, in the untilled, uncleared tracts that still remain in the Norwegian Highlands. It is an epic of earth; the history of a microcosm. Its dominant note is one of patient strength and simplicity; the mainstay of its working is the tacit, stern, yet loving alliance between Nature and the Man who faces her himself, trusting to himself and her for the physical means of life, and the spiritual contentment with life which she must grant if he be worthy. Modern man faces Nature only by proxy, or as proxy, through others or for others, and the intimacy is lost. In the wilds the contact is direct and immediate; it is the foothold upon earth, the touch of the soil itself, that gives strength.

The story is epic in its magnitude, in its calm, steady progress and unhurrying rhythm, in its vast and intimate humanity. The author looks upon his characters with a