

THE COMMON WAY

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The common way by Margaret Deland

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MARGARET DELAND

**THE
COMMON WAY**

BY
MARGARET DELAND

AUTHOR OF "DR. LAVENDAR'S PEOPLE"
"OLD CHESTER TALES" ETC.



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CONTENTS

	PAGE
ON THE SHELF	3
AUNTS	30
THE PASSING OF DORA	51
"LOVE MY DOG"	72
✓ THE TYRANNY OF THINGS	92
CONCERNING CHURCH-GOING	112
ACQUAINTANCE WITH GRIEF	133
CONCERNING GLASS HOUSES	152
CONCERNING CHRISTMAS GIVING	168
TO THE GIRL WHO WRITES	186



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ON THE SHELF

THERE are very few men and women who, between the ages of sixty and seventy years, escape a certain humiliating experience, which is known as being "laid on the shelf." If their children's affectionate hands lift them to this dusty eminence, the experience may come a little before sixty. If they climb up to it themselves (with some slight assistance from nephews and nieces), the unpleasant moment is generally postponed, because, not recognizing that in virtue of years the shelf is where they really belong, they refuse to take their place upon it. However, sooner or later, all of us

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(unless we are of the elect) find ourselves upon the shelf—a narrow, uncomfortable platform, generally dark and dingy, with the single advantage of height, which enables us to look down upon the next generation with bitterness or pity, or both.

One very curious thing about people who are thus packed away—just as unappreciated wedding-presents are packed away because there is a certain sentiment about them; or inartistic portraits of plain ancestors, that human decency will not destroy; or shabby Bibles, which superstition preserves behind rows of smart, new books—the human creatures who are shelved, because sentiment or decency or superstition will not permit their destruction, these useless persons do not always know that they are on the shelf. They still presume—we still presume (let us suppose that we have reached at least the beginning of the shelf age!)