

The Country of the Blind and Other Stories



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Anyone could say of any short story, "A mere anecdote," just as anyone can say "Incoherent" of any novel or of any sonata that isn't studiously monotonous. The recession of enthusiasm for this compact, amusing form is closely associated in my mind with that discouraging imputation. One felt hopelessly open to a paralyzing and unanswerable charge, and one's ease and happiness in the garden of one's fancies was more and more marred by the dread of it. It crept into one's mind, a distress as vague and inexpugnable as a sea fog on a spring morning, and presently one shivered and wanted to go indoors . . . It is the absurd fate of the imaginative writer that he should be thus sensitive to atmospheric conditions. But after one has died as a maker one may still live as a critic, and I will confess I am all for laxness and variety in this as in every field of art. Insistence upon rigid forms and austere unities seems to me the instinctive reaction of the sterile against the fecund. It is the tired man with a headache who values a work of art for what it does not contain. I suppose it is the lot of every critic nowadays to suffer from indigestion and a fatigued appreciation, and to develop a self-protective tendency towards rules that will reject, as it were, automatically the more abundant and irregular forms. But this world is not for the weary, and in the long-run it is the new and variant that matter. -- From Wells's introduction to THE COUNTRY OF THE BLIND AND OTHER STORIES.

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