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D.E. Stevenson

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From Reader Review Still Glides the Stream for online ebook

Ann says

Another "nice" post-WWII book by DE Stevenson. And I mean this without sarcasm. Her books are populated largely by nice, decent folks, who try to do the right thing in difficult circumstances. Family, the ancestral home, the faithful retainers, the old friends one has known since the nursery, all of these have a prominent place in the stories.

In this book, Will Hastie decides to leave the military and return to his - there you have it- ancestral home. He is both looking forward to, and dreading, returning home, because nothing can be the same since his closest childhood friend, Rae, died in WWII 10 years before. And yes, the great estates have been neglected, Rae's mother is developing dementia and his father has lost his zest for life, but Rae's sister, Patty, is still the same. Except that she's gotten engaged to a rather pompous cousin, who is in line to inherit her - there you have it again -entailed ancestral home. Will discovers that Patty has been brooding for the past 10 years over Rae's last letter home from France. Something was up, something he wouldn't commit to paper. But what? Will decides to take a holiday in France, largely to escape the having to see Patty and her fiance, and visits the village from which Rae's last letter was sent. And he finds out that the great news that Rae couldn't write about was that he was getting married to a French girl. Will traces the girl, Julie, down to the South of France, and discovers to his stupefaction that there is a 10-year old boy, the spitting portrait of Rae. Of course Tom must come to England and take his rightful place as the heir of the - you guessed it- ancestral home. This takes some doing, because Julie and her mother are not that keen on taking Tom to England. But they do come to England, bringing new joy to their grandparents. Patty, in the meantime, has broken her engagement and is beginning to realize she really loves Will. But Will seems entranced with pretty Julie. Will they all find love in the end? Rest assured, they will.

Some of the attitudes in the book were outdated. For instance, the idea that Tom must come to England, leaving his mother and grandmother in France behind, seemed to be taken as a given, and very little thought was spent on the feelings of the two women who were asked to give him up. Julie decides to marry a wealthy French neighbor of hers, and this shocks Patty and Will. To marry without love, how appalling. But the idea that she might just be trying to compensate for the loneliness she will feel while Tom is being educated in England, does not seem to cross Will's and Patty's head. So there is a bit of Anglo-chauvinism here, which is entirely consistent with the time it was written (1950s). Apart from that, it is a fun read for a couple of hours of escapism.

Caro says

The gentlest of gentle reads. It takes place in Scotland and France just after WWII and features two couples who, to the reader's great satisfaction, find each other despite the odds. The cover on my copy (which I'm giving right back to the Friends of the Library sale for another lucky reader) features an impressionistic photo of the Scottish countryside instead of this insipid young woman.

Bree (AnotherLookBook) says

A novel about a man who retires from the military and returns home to Scotland, where the wartime death of his best friend and neighbor is still strongly felt. 1959.

Full review (and other recommendations!) at [Another look book](#)

Probably not my favorite DES of the ones I've read so far--they're like delicious candy, gotta dole them out slowly--but a strong contender. It's very different from her other books I've read, too, in that the main character is a man...oh yeah, and the main character is not alive! Much of the book is about memory, but it also manages to contain a plot that moves well in the "present day." I'd recommend it if you like quiet postwar novels or books about memory and families. Oh yes, and if you love the Scottish and/or French countryside!

Alisha says

Intriguing story that got more interesting as it went. Will Hastie is coming home after being away for a while, and he is home to stay, to help his father run the farm. A big part of his homecoming is his reunion with his next-door neighbors. There was a son and daughter, Rae and Patty, who grew up with Will and felt like his own siblings. Rae died in the war several years back. Will has a hard time contemplating the house without his friend, but finds that he is just as comfortable as ever with Patty and her parents. At one point Patty shows Will a letter that Rae wrote shortly before he died. Rae indicated that he had something exciting to confide but that he wanted to do it in person. They never found out what that was. Will has no idea, either, but the idea stays with him strongly enough that he decides to take a "vacation" to France and see if he can unearth anything from the family that Rae stayed with during the war. He finds out something that, to most readers, will not really come as a surprise. But what happens from there on out is more difficult to predict. The results and decisions that come from his discovery are bittersweet in one way, but also satisfying and a generally good ending.

Evelyn Foss says

Part of this book is set in France complete with stereotypes. Reading D E Stevenson takes me to a simpler world.

Theresa says

Will Hastie is home from the war. But everything has changed. Will's childhood best friend, Rae Murray, will never come home, and his family will never be the same.

One of the tragedies of war is the lasting effect on families and their heritage. Will knows that his friend Rae's estate is entailed and therefore will go to a cousin, a change that Will himself cannot seem to come to terms with.

Change is difficult for us all, and Stevenson does a good job of portraying how the small things in life bring comfort:

"So far he had avoided the old play-room - there were too many memories - but he wanted to see Patty and she might be there. He mounted the steep wooden stairs - which still creaked noisily in the same places - and pushed open the door.

The room was empty and tidy but obviously it was used, not abandoned as Will had feared. Patty was the only person likely to use it so probably she came up here when she felt in need of peace - when she wanted to be alone.

Will looked around and saw that nothing had been changed. Except for the tidiness it was just as he remembered. The shelves were crowded with books of all kinds and in various stages of dilapidation....In this room Will and Rae had swapped stamps and practised conjuring tricks; they had played card-games on wet afternoons; they had made toffee and tied flies....and how they had talked! They had talked about school, they had discussed religion; sometimes they had talked sense, but more often absolute nonsense. They had quarrelled and made it up and become closer friends than before."

When Patty, Rae's sister, shows Will a last letter that Rae had written to her, Will decides to take action and the story unfolds from there. The language of the letter is mysterious enough that Will decides to travel to France and discover for himself the circumstances of Rae's death.

This has been called a 'gentle' novel by others, and so it is. It is a pleasant read, although with a few surprises. I enjoyed it more than some of Stevenson's other novels, but that could partly be because I have missed reading her novels so much lately!

I read this delightful novel of post-war England in less than a day. It is fairly simple and yet it does make one question the reasons why people act the way they do. Hugo, Patty's fiance, is well-liked by everyone and stands to inherit the family estate....and yet he makes a decision that has lasting consequences and his treatment of Patty bears its fruit. Julie, a French woman, makes a decision of a different kind, one that is self-sacrificing and very very practical....and Patty has a hard time understanding. But Julie's decision also has a great effect on Patty's own life.

"Does the weather matter so much?"

"Perhaps it is a small thing," admitted Julie. "But life is made up of a lot of small things. I miss the hot golden sunshine and the bright colours of the flowers and I miss the people in the market - talking very fast and waving their hands and laughing - or perhaps getting a little cross when I drive a hard bargain. It is all so different here. It is not amusing to go marketing in Torfoot. The people here are nice and kind, but they are so quiet. All your friends are nice and kind. Your friends ask me to go to tea and they talk to me with pleasant voices but all the same I do not belong. I am outside the fence. I am a stranger."

Marriage and the decisions we make and how we make them are always fun conflicts to read about in literature. "Still Glides the Stream" is also a novel about change; the changes that come from war, from loss, from life itself, and our attempts to understand and adjust.

"I'm crazy, said Patty to herself. Will has always been my friend; he has always been my brother - or almost - so what more do I want? But Will was not really her brother and the fact remained that when she had seen Will and Julie look at each other "like that" it had given her a strange pain in her heart. He's the same but I've changed, thought Patty. Well, I'll just have to bear it."

Carolyn says

A gentle read which soothes the frazzled soul.

Will Hastie returns from his army duty to begin a life as a gentleman farmer. He finds that his best friend Rae Elliot Murray has died in the war and the family has become depressed and dispirited without him.

He reads a strange clue in Rae's last letter home and decides to travel to France and find Rae's burial place. Instead he finds Rae's wife and child and takes them to Langford to meet Rae's parents and sister. He finds that Rae's wife is very attractive. But she is not happy in cold, rainy England.

Meg says

Caro found on library book sale table and rated it highly, so I took it from her, and will re-donate next week. A lovely read, lovely setting and the datedness just makes it charming. Set on the Scottish border (with a trip to the south of France) after WWII. We have some other D.E. Stevenson titles that I will be picking up.

Cricket Muse says

Coping with loss from the war is a topic Stevenson often wrote about. In this story the loss is especially difficult because the young man who died was loved by so many people. The characters learn, for the most part, to move on with their life, and while there is sadness, the happy ending is quite fitting. This is a story of romance, mystery, and for good measure, a travelogue. Once again, Stevenson seamlessly builds the plot of expectation, only to neatly change its course in the last few pages.

CLM says

Another book in which the hero returns to Scotland after the war to begin a new life, and is buoyed by old friends, neighbors, and an unexpectedly charming father. However, Will's childhood friend has died, and Will's intervention is needed to find that family something to substitute for their grief. This is a little unusual for Stevenson - the three books in this series are more melancholy than humorous, and contain vivid depictions of what families have lost in the war yet offer hope for the future. Here is a link to my review:

<https://perfectretort.blogspot.com/20...>

Pat says

I have just discovered D. E. Stevenson and really enjoy her character development and slowly unfolding plots.

Eileen says

?1959 Pleasant, entertaining, enjoyable.

Judy says

After loving the two Ayrton family books, Amberwell and Summerhills, I couldn't resist reading the book which GR bills as 'Ayrton Family 3'. However, in fact the Ayrtons only put in a cameo appearance in this 1950s story.

The hero this time round is Will Hastie, who returns after years in the army to his family home in the Scottish borders. Will is irritated to discover that a childhood friend, Patty, has become engaged to her conceited cousin, Hugo, who (shades of Mr Collins in *Pride & Prejudice*) is due to inherit the entailed family estate. Will then discovers there is a mystery surrounding Patty's brother, Rae, who died in the Second World War, and he travels to France to find some answers.

The book is very charming and readable, as with the Ayrton books, but I found the story here rather slight. Although there are some lovely French scenes in particular, I don't think there is quite as much humorous detail of everyday life as in the previous books, and the romance plot is rather predictable. All in all, I enjoyed this, but I don't think it is one of Stevenson's best.

P.S. just on the Ayrtons... I was delighted to meet some of them again, however briefly, but was sad that a loose end hanging over from Summerhills is left untied.
