

Special Holiday Book Sale Offering

Three great books by E. M. Delafield will be sold as a set at the Holiday Book Sale December 4. Thanks go to Carolyn Cline for this wonderful contribution. The following was submitted by Carolyn.

Diary of a Provincial Lady

It's Bridget Jones grown up, written even before Bridget's mother was born.

When the journal *Time and Tide* asked "E.M. Delafield" to contribute a serial, the *Diary of a Provincial Lady* (1930) was the result. At the time, living quietly in Devon with her husband and two children - though she was also a magistrate and a pillar of the Women's Institute, Delafield had nothing to write about. Except her own life, which is what she did.

The Provincial Lady of the title suffers from the foibles of her servants, but otherwise her problems are familiar. She has strained finances that give her headaches, neighbours with whom she must keep up, and a husband who falls asleep over *The Times*.

It was E.M. Delafield's deprecating turn of phrase that turned the inauspicious ordinariness of her diary into a star turn. *Diary of a Provincial Lady* has never been out of print. It was followed by *The Provincial Lady in London* (1932), and *The Provincial Lady in America* (1934).

The Provincial Lady tries so hard, and invariably fails. Her children don't care and her husband ignores her aspirations. Move over Slummy Mummy. The Provincial Lady is the Grand-Mummy of them all.

One reviewer's view of *Diary Of A Provincial Lady* by E. M. Delafield
Witty, stay at home mum's life, dated and timeless too.

I reread this every year or two, and love it each time. Admittedly, a product of its time and place, capturing life among the genteelly-poor gentry in an English village between the wars (WW's I & II). The diary format makes the provincial lady's narration of and commentary on the events around her doubly funny, as she struggles to run her household and not be driven crazy by nice but dull husband, snobbish wife of husband's boss, disputes among servants, quandaries about children, etc. - and to find time to keep a sense of herself as a professional writer. Not deep, but funny and often touching.

Read an excerpt at <http://www.starcourse.org/emd/>

The Provincial Lady in London

Here's what one reviewer had to say:

I never read the first one, just landed on this, and I can see why people so admire the author, who conjures up an irresistible atmosphere of wit and embarrassment, and has made herself the butt of most of the jokes, so that she nowhere fits in, and always winds up feeling ridiculous. Her opposite number is a schoolfriend who has kept her girlish looks and sex appeal far beyond their selling point, yet who manages still to turn heads everywhere she goes, a selfish and avaricious woman in a way, but one to whom our narrator still looks for excitement and reflected glamor: she never puts her down fully, she remains as marvelous as she herself believes she is - she's the immortal "Pamela Pringle," so often married that the narrator can never remember what her current surname is.

The Provincial Lady in America

The third in the delightful "Provincial Lady" series finds our pungently witty English lady travelling the United States. Her two earlier books were set in Devonshire and London respectively, where she set down her observations of life and letters as they affected her and her menage of husband, two children and assorted servants, friends and acquaintances.

In this volume she comes to America on a literary tour. She visits New York, Cleveland, Chicago and the World's Fair of 1932, Boston, Philadelphia and Washington, among other cities-confiding to her diary as she goes her shrewd and barbed thoughts and queries. Here is no British What's-Wrong-with-America, but rather a delightful See-Yourself-as-the-Other-See-You: a challenge to the American sense of humor.