

**SHALLOW SOIL**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649703760

Shallow Soil by Knut Hamsun & Carl Christian Hyllested

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**KNUT HAMSUN & CARL CHRISTIAN HYLLESTED**

# **SHALLOW SOIL**



## SHALLOW SOIL

*I have the honor to announce that I have been appointed the sole authorized American publisher of*

## **Knut Hamsun**

Winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature 1920

*The following novels are now ready:*

**Hunger** [Sult] *Translated by George Egerton.*  
*With an Introduction by Edwin Björkman.*

"This very unusual and notable book . . . the product of a most remarkable imagination, so real is it, so vivid, so moving, so compelling is its claims upon the reader's emotions and sympathies."—*New York Times*.

**Growth of the Soil** [Markens Grøde]  
*Translated, with an essay on Hamsun,*  
*by W. W. Worster.*

"I do not know how to express the admiration I feel for this great book without seeming extravagant. One of the very greatest novels I have ever read."—*H. G. Wells*.

---

**Pan** *Translated by W. W. Worster.*  
*To be published in July, 1921*

**Dreamers** [Svaermere]  
*To be published in October, 1921*

---

*The following are scheduled for later appearances at regular intervals:*

Victoria

Under the Autumn Star [Under Høststjernen]

A Wanderer Plays with Muted Strings  
[En Vandrer Spiller med Sordin]

Children of the Time [Børn av Tiden]

The Village of Segelfoss [Segelfoss By]

*Alfred Knopf*

# Shallow Soil

Translated from the Norwegian of

**Knut Hamsun**

by Carl Christian Hyllested



New York

Alfred · A · Knopf

1921

College  
Library

PT

8950

H 3 N 9 E

## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

IN the autumn of 1888 a Danish magazine published a few chapters of an autobiographical novel which instantly created the greatest stir in literary circles throughout Europe. At that time Ibsen, Björnson, Brandes, Strindberg, and other Scandinavian writers were at the height of their cosmopolitan fame, and it was only natural that the reading world should keep in close touch with the literary production of the North. But even the professional star-gazers, who maintained a vigilant watch on northern skies, had never come across the name of Knut Hamsun. He was unknown; whatever slight attention his earlier struggles for recognition may have attracted was long ago forgotten. And now he blazed forth overnight, with meteoric suddenness, with a strange, fantastic, intense brilliance which could only emanate from a star of the first magnitude.

Sudden as was Hamsun's recognition, however, it has proved lasting. The story of his rise from obscurity to fame is one of absorbing interest. Behind that hour of triumph lay a long and bitter



struggle, weary years of striving, of constant and courageous battle with a destiny that strewed his path with disappointments and defeats, overwhelming him with adversities that would have swamped a genius of less energy and real power.

Knut Hamsun began life in one of the deep Norwegian valleys familiar to English readers through Björnson's earlier stories. He was born in August, 1860. When he was four years old his poverty-stricken parents sent him to an uncle, a stern, unlovely man who made his home on one of the Lofoten Islands—that "Drama in Granite" which Norway's rugged coast-line flings far into the Arctic night. Here he grew up, a taciturn, peculiar lad, inured to hardship and danger, in close communion with nature; dreaming through the endless northern twilight, revelling through the brief intense summer, surrounded by influences and by an atmosphere which later were to give to his production its strange, mystical colouring, its pendulum-swings from extreme to extreme.

At seventeen he was apprenticed to a cobbler, and while working at his trade he wrote and, at the cost of no one knows what sacrifices, saved enough money to have his first literary efforts printed and published. They consisted of a long, fantastic poem and a novel, "Björger"—the latter a grotesque conglomeration of intense self-analytical studies. These attracted far less attention than they really deserved.

However, the cobbler's bench saw no more of Knut Hamsun.

During the next twelve years he led the life of a rover, but a rover with a fixed purpose from which he never swerved. First he turned his face toward Christiania, the capital and the intellectual centre of the country; and in order to get there he worked at anything that offered itself. He was a longshoreman on Bodö's docks, a road-labourer, a lumberjack in the mountains; a private tutor and court messenger. Finally he reached the metropolis and enrolled as a student at the university. But the gaunt, raw-boned youth, unpractical and improvident, overbearing of manner, passionately independent in thought and conduct, failed utterly in his attempts to realise whatever ambitions he had cherished. So it was hardly strange that this the first chapter of his *Odyssey* should end in the steerage of an American-bound emigrant steamer.

In America, where he landed penniless, he turned his strong and capable hands to whatever labour he could find. He had intended to become a Unitarian minister. Instead of doing so he had to work as a farm-hand on the prairie, street-car conductor in Chicago, dairyman in Dakota; and he varied these pursuits by giving a series of lectures on French literature in Minneapolis. By that time he probably imagined that he was equipped for a more successful attack on the literary strongholds of his own

country, and returned to Christiania. Disappointments and privations followed more bitter than any he had ever known. He starved and studied and dreamed; vainly he made the most desperate attempts to gain recognition. In despair he once more abandoned the battle-field and fled to America again, with the avowed purpose of gaining a reputation on the lecture platform.

Once more he failed; his countrymen resident in the Northwest would have none of him. Beaten back in every attempt, discouraged, perhaps feeling the need of solitude and the opportunities for introspective thought which he could not find in the larger cities, he exiled himself to that most desolate of existences, a life on a Newfoundland fishing-smack. Three long years he spent as one of a rude crew with whom he could have nothing in common save the daily death-struggle with the elements. But these years finished the preparatory stage of Hamsun's education. During the solitary watches he matured as an artist and as a man. In his very first effort upon his return to civilisation he proved that the days of aimless fumbings were over: in "Hunger" he stands suddenly revealed as a master of style and description, a bold and independent thinker, a penetrating, keen psychologist, a realist of marked virility.

Since "Hunger" was written Hamsun has published over thirty large works—novels, dramas,