

an individual. There is to be said of them as a family that they stand for a tradition out of which has grown the "Kentucky Colonel" who for thirty years has provided comic relief in second-rate plays.

The glamorous is all very well, but it must spring out of something which warms the heart and fires the imagination. The bluegrass tradition does neither, for it lies too close to caricature and too distant from authentic romance. It exemplifies nothing but a childish and unverified boast—the highfalutin boast that the women of the bluegrass were the loveliest, the horses the fastest, the men the bravest and the liquor the strongest that could be found anywhere in the world. People like the Sashes and the Abels originated this boast, and believed it. And what can be the ethical or psychological importance of such people—people whose protracted gallantries and incessant heroics meant wasted, deluded, inconsequential lives?

At no point has Mr. Hergesheimer really allowed these people to come to grips with life. When a situation overwhelms them, when they reach an impasse that might serve to enlarge their souls or widen their understanding, they slash their throats or shoot their cousins dead.

At the end of the book it appears for a moment as though Mr. Hergesheimer were going to turn ironical. A young man named John Dixon Foulkes, a descendant of the early Sashes and Abels whose immediate family have lived for two generations in Paris, where he has been brought up in worldliness and Continental culture, visits his Kentucky relatives on the family estate. These grand people with their provincial noses in the air and their sacred traditions impress him about as much as Ozymandias must have impressed the traveller in the desert. But where the traveller must have chuckled over Ozymandias's modest claims, John Dixon Foulkes, sitting at his great-uncle's knee and hearing the family history, is moved to tears. Parisian to his finger tips

though he be, overnight he decides to live forever after in the bluegrass at which he had sneered the day before.

So the irony—which though pat enough would have seemed to be inevitable—dissolves before our eyes, and the last of the Abels settles down where the first began. It is all—no other word will do—absurd. The rest of the story might just have happened, but that a worldly young Parisian who adored his Paris would embrace Kentucky is out of the question. But of course John Dixon Foulkes wasn't really worldly for the very good reason that Mr. Hergesheimer isn't really worldly. His story, from start to finish, is never a comedy; it is always a romance. And it is only the more lacking in honest worth because it is pretentious. Mr. Hergesheimer did not mean it simply to be a yarn; he meant it to sum up part of our national history, to serve as interpretation, as re-creation. But it is none of these things, either as realism or (as for example Miss Roberts's *The Great Meadow* is) as poetry.

Glamour is of necessity an illusion. But the greatest of all illusions is one indulged in by Mr. Hergesheimer here: the belief that what is glamorous has significance in addition to having charm.

LOUIS KRONENBERGER

TWENTY-FOUR HOURS by *Louis Bromfield* (STOKES. \$2.50)

To anyone interested in the literary development of a novelist whose work is preëminently vital, *Twenty-four Hours* (published serially under the title *Shattered Glass*) will have special significance. Louis Bromfield has tended more and more to work away from subjective probings into character toward a broader, almost panoramically impersonal representation of the whole machine called life. And in *Twenty-four Hours* he is trying to give us an X-ray cinema of the machinery at work. When Savina Jerrold, in the story, beholds (with Victorian embarrassment)

just such an X-ray of her old friend Hector's stomach, and murmurs: "I will cling to the soul and not think about the machinery", she voices the ironic antithesis of Louis Bromfield's behavioristic psychology.

The story begins with a dull dinner party at Hector Champion's and ends the next day with a tea at Savina Jerrold's. The guests, either by birth or by personal achievement, belong to New York's upper social level. In opposition to these cogs in the wheel of Society is a group drawn from a lower stratum. Each of these people reaches a particular climax in his or her life during the twenty-four hour period. The murder of Rosa Dugan, night-club singer, fuses the action between the groups.

Since the characters are obviously types, we must look beneath their labelled exteriors to discover Mr. Bromfield's intention. Their lives, in other words, are meant to have a social or moral significance rather than an individual significance. The implication is that people who have had to work, to overcome real obstacles in order to survive, have greater social significance than those whose sheltered minds and untrained hands are soft, and who—like old Hector—will rot, not develop, with age. At the underworld extreme, Rosa Dugan has been courageous enough to live boldly and passionately to get what she wants from life.

The flash-back method employed in the narration, with its rapid, revolving-stage movement, produces upon the reader an effect of artificial haste. At the same time there are passages in which too little pruning has been done. Yet no writer has reflected more completely than Bromfield the nervous pace of contemporary American life. No one—least of all in the medium of a best-seller the surface-pattern of which is designed for Hollywood—has so clearly perceived the pathetic, adolescent fear beneath its sex-obsessed leisure. One must admire Mr. Bromfield for having so nearly done what he set out to do. It was, after all, a fairly large order.

PARADISE CITY by Henry Channon
(DUTTON. \$2.50)

THE author of *Paradise City* is a young man who, we believe, deserves immediate recognition. His first novel, *Joan Kennedy*, published last year, excited probably less favorable notice than it should have done in consideration of a literary quality far above the average.

Paradise City is a novel made up of six loosely connected episodes. The scene of the first is a small Wisconsin town on the eve of a prosperity boom which brings about inevitable changes in the financial, social, and emotional relationships between certain prominent families and persons. For the five remaining episodes, which radiate outward from the complex network of the first, Mr. Channon has lifted five characters, and traced the development of their separate life-patterns in settings as diverse as London, Paris, Venice and Chicago.

Amy Plank, frustrated in love, goes on a lonely adventure abroad, to find at Ravenna her ideal in the effigy of Guidarello Guidarelli; Danny Springer shakes off the alien dust of Paradise City to discover a spiritual kinship with the Viennese; Polly Peacock, capitalizing on her unusual beauty, moves ever upward in the social scale to become mistress of a famous old English estate. The last episode traces the apotheosis of Jim and Bridget Barlow in Chicago. It is, however, with the story of commonplace, jolly Rosie Tyler, who becomes a *succès de guerre* in Paris, that Mr. Channon's swiftly developing talent is at its best.

The disjointed, episodic method leaves much, technically, to be desired. One feels that as unrelated short stories these five sketches, pared of non-essentials and less vaguely outlined, might have been more effective. But there is a great deal to be said for Mr. Channon's penetrating analysis of character working either in or out of harmony with its environment. He has, moreover, suc-