

Those are not, of course, Italian anthems, but they would be superb to spin around to, as I cranked up the revolving machine. If I had money and leisure enough to proprietor such an undertaking I should have money and leisure enough to give everyone a ride free—one ride—oh, well, maybe two. I shouldn't look too closely for "repeaters." Why doesn't some millionaire invest in a philanthropic fleet of such things to make Spring a truly gala occasion for the grubby infants of New York? I suppose what we really need are far greater projects, to do away with slums, for instance, and properly to house and environ the community. But the great thing when you are young, that you ever after remember, is the occasional miracle of a merry-go-round or an organ-grinder with a monkey, or something like that. Still, I shouldn't want to put that stout Napoleon of the maroon roundabout out of business. He is at present the god from the machine. He deserves the pennies he gets. He seems to me a public benefactor. Maybe he will eventually become a Woolworth of Merry-go-Rounds; one on every corner. It would be splendid to see some merry-go-rounds on Fifth Avenue. It would make the noon hours a lot brighter. Sidewalk cafés, merry-go-rounds, open dancing-platforms,—but of what am I dreaming? I must think I'm in Paris—or else a candidate for election!

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT  
(To be Continued)

## A Norwegian Saga

THE NORNS ARE SPINNING. By ANDREAS HAUKLAND. New York: Macy-Masius. 1928. \$2.50.

Reviewed by PHILLIPS D. CARLETON

HERE is a book for the reader to wedge on his shelves somewhere between his copy of the "Grettir Saga" and the great trilogies of Sigrid Undset. It explains the first and prepares the way for the second. The racy and idiomatic style of the sagas leaves the casual reader often at a loss for a background to the strange world to which he is abruptly introduced—and "The Norns Are Spinning" gives this background. The author is careful to show conditions on the mainland of Norway before the great chiefs left for Iceland. Sigrid Undset's dark probings into the mind of medieval man are admirably complete in themselves, but Mr. Haukland's historical novel throws light on the pagan era just preceding, a civilization lawless and fierce, unbitten as yet by introspection, whose surplus energies turned lightly to vigorous feuds.

Mr. Haukland has here turned from the sea to the inner dales of the great land owners and shown us a different mode of life. He touches this life with a none too tender pen; there is no rosy mist upon the pages. A drunken feast of betrothal; an insult offered; a feud smouldering, suddenly breaking out into house-burning, the slaughter of a whole clan; an outlawed man forced to flee with his infant son; the life of the outlaw and the terrible ending when the prophecy of the old spæwife is fulfilled—a list of incidents that is grim enough. But the author has done more than simply tell his story; he unrolls along with it some carefully worked historical backgrounds; there is a definite and successful attempt to show the civilization in which the story has taken place. He has been most fortunate, however, in his depiction of the outlaw's life—a period of almost idyllic rest in the turmoil of the book. His outlaw has distinguished predecessors in Norse literature from Grettir the Strong to the last of his line in Iceland who furnished Sigurjonsson the hero for his play "Bjerg Egvind." Thorstein, cut off from the outside world, lives back in the mountain valleys of an unsettled land, trapping elk, fishing, and with his growing son working the bog iron until the fated moment of his discovery. This section of the book shows in the author a pleased and intimate knowledge of the hills.

The reader will not find in "The Norns Are Spinning" the delicate artistry with which Sigrid Undset or Hamsun has probed into the recesses of human nature. Indeed, in the quick running plot some of the characters are left ill-defined; Grima, modeled after the fierce, proud women of the sagas,—the source of the tragedy of the book—never becomes wholly real. But he will find an historical novel that does what it sets out to do—to envisage a definite period of great interest and to tell a rousing story well. Mr. Haukland has not tried to expand the saga form or to bring it up to date. His

modern framework has given him more freedom and made a better tale.

Mr. Ten Eyck should be complimented on his translation; he has kept the style of the book fluent and idiomatic, and solved many difficulties by the use of an adept diction. The publishers have supported him well with the glittering volume they have put out.

## The Human Comedy

THE TORCHES FLARE. By STARK YOUNG. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1928. \$2.50.

Reviewed by BRAY HAMMOND

THERE are two occasions when one is moved to feel that the finest grace of a novel is thoughtfulness: once in reading one that lacks that quality and again in reading one that possesses it. Thoughtfulness, by virtue of its last two syllables implies patience, feeling, openness, and beyond those virtues a love of life and a love of consciousness, which is the reflection of life. Without it a story may be observant, it may burst with action, its characters may shine like flames, and still it remains a lumpy bundle of stuff, like kindlings in a sack. Thoughtfulness is the condition that brings about fusion. It is a condition, only, however—never an end in itself.

"The Torches Flare" is written out of a mind that is attentive both to life and to the manner in which it shall be presented. It is not written merely to rattle off a story, but to isolate and weigh certain related circumstances of human life. And this is true even though merely as a narrative it is direct and animated—for it would not do to give the impression that Mr. Young's pages are laden with philosophy. On the contrary they are full of conversation and action, but conversation and action intelligently and purposively worked out. In other words, Mr. Young writes as an artist, just as his Henry Boardman, who tells the story, wanted to write. For he said: "I wanted my writing to be what life is—exact, most precise and actual, like the ground under my feet, like my eyes seeing, like my feet walking, my body, my hands, but exalted too, rising into its exaltation."

Well, Mr. Young does what his hero wanted to do.

There is a combination of coolness and affection about his writing that expresses an unusual personality: as of one who can never look too much on life, and yet is never thrown off his balance by what he sees—one who loves and still remains discriminative. The first part of the story is set in New York, in the midst of its hard-boiled world of artists and Villagers and Columbia professors; the second part in a small college town in the south, the usual course of events being simply reversed; and by moving his modern people thus from their metropolitan modernity to an Arcadia of eld and quietude he gets reliefs and contrasts that are fascinating, and yet at the same time unconcocted.

In the matter of character, he succeeds in presenting people who are undeniably human and yet carry with them an unobtrusive but inescapable symbolic value. They differ prodigiously therefore from the note-book or filmed type of character which has a factual value in one dimension, and stops right there. His heroine, whom one believes in implicitly, becomes the very earthly lover of one man and the sublimated ideal of another, and though the earthly relationship goes to smash the inference is that the ideal one never will—so long at any rate as there is ink, for what she was, says Henry Boardman, "had passed into me and the things I wrote, forever."

To accept that sublimation is the hardest thing a worldly-minded reader is asked to do. One wonders indeed if Mr. Young really expects it, or if he was not moved less by idealism than by the horrible alternative of leaving his hero and heroine where Jane Austen always left hers. To be sure, Henry Boardman and the lady are still alive and young and unencumbered at the end, so that the flesh may triumph over the beautiful after all.

Meanwhile, in the most innocent way in the world, the other man is allowed to become perfectly damnable. But Mr. Young does everything innocently. He points no fingers, hangs out no signs. He merely says this and that—delightful, amusing, unpretentious things—and you find yourself knowing much more that is left unsaid. To write as he has is a notable thing.

## Main Street in Ukraine

THE LEGEND CALLED MERYOM. By JOSEPH GAER. New York: William Morrow. 1928. \$2.

Reviewed by LOUIS GOLDING

Author of "The Miracle Boy"

IF Mr. Gaer's first novel, "The Legend Called Meryom," had no more absolute value, it would remain a historic document worthy of some attention. Mr. Gaer has provided us with the character and aspects of a Jewish Main Street in Ukraine, with rather more humor and considerably more economy than those with which an English contemporary, Mr. Bernard Gilbert, has sought to perpetuate the character of Main Street in Rutlandshire. Around the personality of the maiden called Meryom, he has built up, in Lipcova, a portrait of the typical pre-revolutionary Jewish small town, a task which merits applause; for the Lipcovas are almost as certainly dead as the Roman city of Timgad in the Sahara and the Frankish city of Mistra over against Sparta; and unlike these, will present to the curious eyes of posterity no paved forum, no slabs of mosaic, by which the curious may reinterpret them. Lipcova is dead. The revolution in Russia did more to annul it in a few brief years than ten centuries of Muslim wrath and Saharan sand-storm to annul Dougga or El Djem.

It might have been of use to Mr. Gaer and ourselves if he had made up his mind whether his primary intention was to present a portrait of Meryom subsidiary to the portrait of the small town she lived in, or a portrait of Lipcova interpreted by the stages of her evolution. She obstinately refuses in our minds to become legendary in the dramatic or heroic aspects of the word, not even in that climacteric moment when she arises in the tiny library where the progressive spirits of the village are gathered together and there delivers herself of such a homily as would do no discredit to a lady typist employed by Mr. Sidney Webb. She remains obscure. She remains, despite all Mr. Gaer's covert insistences upon her fragrance and valor, much less interesting than we had hoped. It is perhaps a defect of Mr. Gaer's inexperience that he has not learned how to occupy passionately the marrow and blood of his protagonist.

With the minor characters, who do not need so forceful and exhausting a spiritual process, he has been wholly successful. There is the authentic illusion of vitality in Beila, Meryom's sharp-tongued mother, in Azriel the shoemaker and teller of tales, in Elka, in Shloimke Shimon's. The consequence is that the work is static; or at most that it proceeds in a mere chronologic sequence, as a frieze proceeds in a typographic sequence. The coordination which a living Meryom would have introduced into these pages, is lacking. She dies. There is no reason for the book to end with her death. It does not, in fact.

Mr. Gaer has failed, therefore, in the nobler task of the novelist—the enrichment of our experience by a character of such impetus that, whether we love or detest it, it has added itself permanently to our world. In the lesser task he has succeeded, the rendering of a community, a state of society. It will be interesting to speculate how Mr. Gaer will succeed when he turns his attention from an atavism, however picturesque, however worthy of academic chronicling, to the delineation of groups and individuals actuated by living and important impulses; to the very progeny of Lipcova, perhaps, in the conditions which now beset them, "midway between the swiftly flowing river Pruth and the gently gliding Dniester, prostrated forlornly upon the breast of the vast Bessarabian corn-fields." And if the author has had no direct experience of these conditions, the very opportunity will be provided him for the exercise of those faculties of imaginative creation which are the privilege and responsibility of the novelist, those faculties he has not brought to the evocation of Meryom and with which he must not fail to evoke Meryom's granddaughter. But there are certain affectations in Mr. Gaer's language, which that young lady will disapprove of strongly. She will not have him speak of a "gallinaceous chorus," when he means a "chorus of cocks." She will not have him talk of the "dolorific" cry of birds; and she would rather he said of her she was downright ugly than accuse her of "feminine pulchritude."

## The BOWLING GREEN

### Off the Deep End

SHE'S what yachtsmen call one of the 12's; which means, I think, that she measures twelve meters on the water-line. But I won't be too sure about that, for the lingo of scientific yachting is full of conventional and arbitrary terms. As education for a philosopher I recommend a deep-water voyage in a racing craft on her maiden trip. For here is a beautiful plaything, a perfect theory, an algebraic equation of stresses (or guesses) and strains, existing previously in blue-prints only, suddenly put out to earn her first offing in the dirty weather of the Nova Scotia coast. It is Jonathan Edwards embarking on life in some gay abstraction about the Fall of Man. Do you wonder that when you go to sea in a paradox, an hypothesis, and she weathers it all, comes through, you love her? I am not skilful enough to conjure up all the fabulous essence of that voyage; but if you'll be patient I'll tell about it as it comes back to me. I see her again, a white fancy in the opal shine of noon, as the tug *Togo* cast us off in the fog of Halifax bay. New, untried, with stiff gear and 1952 square feet of canvas and all her pretty little brass winches still unverdigrised by salt. A doctrine, an ecstasy, a theory going out with a letter of introduction to Fact. Yes, the right place for a philosopher!

So I won't be sure about her water-line, but her long beautiful overhang, almost identical forward and aft, gives her 69½ feet over-all. If you lie on deck looking overtern (in a gentle weather) and see how smoothly she slips through water, you'll perceive that she's more than mere theory. Afloat in calm, with her white canvas up, she looks like a figure drifted from the pages of Euclid. Perhaps the idea is to make these racing craft as near an isosceles triangle as possible. Her tall mast (incredibly, terrifyingly tall to one accustomed only to knockabout craft: 80 feet above deck, 8 feet below) is stepped nearly amidship; and with Marconi rig (a triangular mainsail, no gaff) and a boom that does not project outboard you can imagine her an almost perfect segment of a huge circle. Her fore and back stays are the chords, her white hull the curve of the arc. To one all ignorant of racing boats everything about her in rig and gear was an astonishment. But certainly the internationalist finds her a good omen, for she was planned by a famous New York designer, built in Germany, her canvas is signed by Ratsey of Cowes and she was delivered in Halifax. *Iris*, her name, and I expect you'll see her picture in the rotogravures, leaning flat over in some gusty racing weather on Long Island Sound. The Commodore will be at the tiller and the New York Yacht Club pennant aloft. I hope it'll be the same pennant and not a new one: the little flag that whipped away four inches of its length in that wind we had off Cape Sable.

I shall always associate the adventure, in a left-handed way, with Edmond de Goncourt; who would, incidentally, have been a good man to record it. He would have felt all its suggestions to the full, but how (I kept thinking) he would have hated it. The lover of Parisian cafés and salons, the endless gossip upon æsthetic niceties, devotee of the lamplit foolscap and the leisurely phrase, how delightfully ill he would have been and how unhappy in oilskins. As I write this, I get out my Halifax oilies again, to smell them and try to imagine what de Goncourt would have thought of that fascinating horrid whiff. To get it at its best, of course, you must be prodded up at 3 A. M. to go up for the dawn watch—the lobster trick as newspaper men used to call it. Gaping, sodden, stupefied, heavy in half a dozen layers of clothing, propped against the bulkhead of a reeling cabin, colder than the eye of Calvin Coolidge (such was the irreverent phrase we invented to describe the gray water of New Scotland) you stumble into those clammy crinkly gelatinous yellow overalls. And you will never do it without an ironic thought of their trade name. BANKERS' IDEAL is the phrase stamped on them; and you think of various merry bankers of your acquaintance, warm in their beds to looard of Park Avenue. Of course it's a different kind of banker that the oilskin merchant has

in mind: the fisherman of the Grand and lesser banks. But thereafter, if ever you're inclined to complain of the heat, you can summon up that smell, and see the patient Commodore (a great contemner of sleep) outlined against a speckle of stars waiting to be relieved at the helm. De Goncourt, I believe, would not have been at his best. There is no reason for my bringing him into the picture, except that his *Journal* (a copy of which I had just found at Mendoza's) was the book I took along to read on board the *Nerissa*, the comfortable Red Cross ship that took us to Halifax. But in the *Iris* de Goncourt remained on the shelf unread. I used to see him there and think how unhappy he would have been. He was too sensitive. He describes how once, travelling in a railway train, he saw seven Englishmen wind their watches simultaneously, in a sort of automatic unison. The symbolic horror of this made him feel quite ill, so much so that he moved to another compartment.

It was in the *Nerissa*, during the two-day run to Halifax, that my spirit, always a lively foreboder, became aware of the fact that there is a great deal of water between Long Island Sound and Nova Scotia. Yet one did not brood this excessively, for as one shipmate remarked, when the voyage was first discussed, "the bar opens as soon as she gets to City Island." And let it be affirmed here that if there should be in this narrative any reference to gentlemanly potatoes, all were strictly legal. For aboard the *Nerissa* (why is not the Red Cross Line more advertised?) you are in a British steamship; and in Halifax, though it is a dry town, there is an admirable government warehouse, the Vendors' Stores, where with perfect legality Ships' Medical Supplies may be taken on for the comfort of the crew of seagoing vessels of over 26 tons. Duly signed on as Able Seamen in the consul's office, the Commodore's associates were justified in expecting fortification in case of emergency. Only a madman, it is my conviction, goes to sea without some Jamaica rum in his locker. And equally, only a madman drinks other than medicinally while actually navigating. The sea is not kind to tipplers.

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The efficacy of this adventure, as education in philosophy, lay partly in its complete contradiction of the student's customary way of life. The Commodore and the Personal Representative (this latter so-called because an associate of the boat's designer) were lifelong yachtsmen. Even the Younger Generation, so to identify the junior member of the outfit, was a man of some experience in the humors of racing sloops. But for the chronicler, though not unfamiliar with salt water, this was all a transposition into quite a different key; so much so that it operated as an Aristotelian catharsis. Even the libations were different. Yachtsmen, I can affirm, drink Martinis and champagne, two fluids that are not often on my menu. The admirable *Nerissa* is an ocean liner in miniature. If the *Olympic* were to calve (or yean) in mid-sea, *Nerissa* or her sister *Sylvia* would be the offspring. It's a girl! So there was an odd feeling in being surrounded by every evidence of ocean voyage, yet with the knowledge that we were never, by steam reckoning, very far from land. Also there was a large deck-load of cabbages on their way to St. Johns, a reassuringly earthy sight. On the other hand, there were the familiar bathtubs and lavatories of Shanks and Co., Barrhead, one's favorite maritime plumbers. So everything agreed to instil that sensation of unreality, of incredulity, which is the healthiest tonic for too docile servants of routine. And in spite of *Nerissa's* well-chilled champagne there was a queer sentiment of inversion in so luxuriously traversing those long rollers of gray sea, those white nowheres of fog, which we were to revisit within a few days under our own canvas and our own wit. The PR, whose cabin I shared, had a great roll of blue-prints which purported to give every possible cross-section of *Iris's* comely person; he had a long inventory of her gear, from anchors down to napkins and silver. Communitated realist in matters that concern safety at sea, I could not help reflecting that we had no blue-print nor inventory of the next week's weather. In the snug smokeroom of the *Nerissa* is a painting of Cabot Discovering Newfoundland, in a vessel somewhat slenderly rigged. One overtook oneself in a comic feeling of kinship with the hardy mariner, who was obviously glad to see land. For the object of this expedition was to make testimony, not testament. *Nerissa* is a little floating island of Britain, as

British ships always so sturdily are. From the bread-sauce that accompanied the roast chicken, to the after-dinner parade of the junior officers doing a marching foursome up and down the deck, not without an eye to see how any lady passengers were taking it, she is British to an extent that only an American can savor. I don't quite know why, but I shall long remember a little episode of the smokeroom. Together with those who were going to sail *Iris's* sister, *Tycoon*, we had spent a long evening in palaver. Bill, the orator of *Tycoon's* crew, was in notable form, and had held the floor to the great pleasure of all hands. His soliloquy, enriched by a bottle of champagne which was propped among the cushions of the settee to avert accident, had touched upon stage reminiscence, horse racing, the textile industry, and a lengthy anecdote dealing with a crisis in the life of the New York Credit Men's Association. During all this an elderly Scot, sitting near, had lent an attentive silence. For perhaps two hours he had sat, following Bill's humors with an appreciative but solemn eye. Finally, a pause arriving, he spoke, and there was something charmingly random in his inquiry: "What would you do," he said, leaning forward gravely, "if you were in a community where 250 men had sworn to take your life?"

"I'd get out of it," said Bill.

*Iris*, when we first saw her, together with *Tycoon* and several other German-built craft, was on the deck of the freighter *Lorain* which had arrived from Bremen only a few hours earlier. Securely frapped in cradles they had made the voyage without mishap, but the hoisting them off by the big floating crane *Lord Kitchener* was an anxious business. That day it rained in a way that surprised even Halifax, a connoisseur of moisture. We stood about for hours in the downpour watching while the complicated job of unlashing and lifting the hulls was cleverly done. There was a curious eagerness in those two graceful shapes as the wire hawsers were gradually unbound. *Tycoon's* blue body, *Iris's* white, like pinioned gulls. They rose slowly, hung suspended from the crane, and were lowered overside. It was strange to see them come alive then. As *Tycoon*, unloaded first, was towed away, there was a sharp crack of thunder, almost like a salute.

By the time *Iris* was unloaded, after we had had a stout freighter's lunch of pea soup and corned beef and cabbage aboard the *Lorain*, the weather had cleared. *Iris* took the water without mishap. Riding a little high, without the weight of her big stick still to come, she dipped and swung gracefully. She knew her element. Now she was more than a blue-print.

If there were any ladies in the Halifax Hotel who wanted to do any writing that evening, they had to do it elsewhere than in the Ladies' Writing Room. For in that chamber the crews of both *Iris* and *Tycoon* dined privately in honor of their ships. That night they were captains bold in Halifax. That was the end of ease. The oilskins had been bought, and work was to begin.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

(To be continued)

Barry Pain, the English novelist, died recently. He was the author of a number of British literary works of lesser renown.

At Cambridge, where he held a classical scholarship, Pain was a leading contributor to *Granta*, the university magazine, in which several of his parodies and sketches appeared. For a time he acted as a tutor, but as early as 1889 he had met with literary success, his "Hundred Gates" appearing in the *Cornhill Magazine* of that year. He wrote for *Punch* and the *Spectator* and was on the staff of the *Daily Chronicle* and later with *Black and White*.

Succeeding the late Jerome K. Jerome, he was for a time editor of the weekly *To-Day*. The larger part of his earlier writings were humorous. Later he displayed a mastery of the short story.

The National Library of Wales is exhibiting an unrivaled collection of manuscripts of the Laws of Hywel Dda, one of the greatest of medieval Welshmen, who 1,000 years ago peacefully united Wales and codified the laws and customs of its people.

The oldest existing manuscript of the laws was written on vellum some time about A. D. 1175-1200, in Latin, and is illustrated throughout by crude, but graphic colored drawings depicting the King and his chief officers—the judge, the chief groom, the cook, and others.