

Chicago Boy

JUDGMENT DAY. By James T. Farrell.
New York: The Vanguard Press. 1935.
\$2.50.

Reviewed by EUNICE CLARK

STUDS LONIGAN is dead: after a 1500-page story of his superb mediocrity he has been killed. No single thing was important about Studs Lonigan, but the unimportances out of which his creator made him were, seen together, Chicago, the American Mid-West, the twentieth century.

"Judgment Day" is the third volume in a trilogy of which the first two were "Young Lonigan" and "The Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan." The first two books took Studs through adolescence and youth to his early twenties, which fell at the peak of prosperity. Studs was a cocky Irish-American bad boy. His father, a hard-working, God-fearing man, had prospered in the contracting business. Pool rooms, brothels, baseball fields, moviehouses, and dancehalls were Studs Lonigan's natural habitat.

The Studs Lonigan of "Judgment Day" is the same old Studs in many ways. He still mentally undresses every girl he passes on the street. He still alternately makes and breaks fine resolutions. He still dreams of being a big shot. But he has become tired and flabby. The down curve of Studs's personal vitality coincides with the national depression. Studs has bought stocks in a vast and much touted public utility company which goes bankrupt. The banks in Chicago are failing and old Lonigan cannot collect money for his work, or rent from his tenant. Mortgages are foreclosed all around them, families evicted on the street. "Judgment Day" would make an admirable primer for students of the business cycle.

James Farrell is admirably equipped to write authentic American city life, because he does not approach his world as a lonely soul-starved dreamer caught in the toil and moil of it all. He is, or was in his youth, a "regular guy," as democratic as Dreiser in the writing of "An American Tragedy," and he never writes down to Studs Lonigan. The Lonigan family, with its social aspirations, vices, virtues, and prejudices are the boundaries within which Farrell deliberately sets his own mind. No single perception is allowed in the writing which Studs Lonigan himself could not have had. Having thus fore-sworn the literary pleasures of interpretation, psycho-analysis, or poetizing, Farrell has proceeded to develop a technique which has been called "dictaphonic." His memory is phenomenal: in the voluminous recorded conversations of the Lonigans and of people in the street, he is, as one critic said, word-perfect. The undeniable power of Farrell's writing springs entirely from this unvarnished veracity.

For Farrell projects no world-doom, fall of Rome, or dying out of race into his picture. In "Judgment Day" there is a particular doom, Studs's life sordidly petering out in the midst of a people frantic with insecurity. There are going to be fights in Chicago, and Farrell knows it. The race and religious chauvinism of the Lonigans reaches a frenzy as the trilogy closes. Their tirades against the international bankers, Jews, hunkies, reds, niggers, and nigger-lovers become more frequent and vitriolic. It is also evident that in a better society Studs might have gotten a job, married his girl, and survived

in spite of himself. Studs Lonigan was a regular, but he didn't put up much of a fight and he was beaten. It wasn't entirely his fault; his world was on a down-swing.

For a reader who wants to know a one hundred per cent American fellow inside and out, and who is adult enough to demand neither a spiritual giant nor a horny-handed son of toil for a hero, the Studs Lonigan books will do very well. "Judgment Day" is dignified by a more tragic sense of life than the other volumes, and is closer, historically and personally, to those of us who have spent the last ten years outside of a cloister.

Hammered Out of Experience

(Continued from first page)

of his body, his mind is restless and, lying there, he tries to frame an orderly understanding of his own life and that of an aunt, the woman who on the whole has meant most to him. (With that simple instrumentality and two pages at the end of the first half of his book, Mr. Boyd accomplishes the time-symbolism to which Mr. Wolfe devotes a hundred thousand words.) His effort comprises fifty years and four generations of the Rand family. It creates twenty or thirty characters of the utmost brilliance. It also creates a community and a history—time vividly felt flowing through a city whose parts and castes and ages are completely integrated. It involves also an economics—mentioned here only to appease the young crusaders—and, what is much more important, the best presentation of the A. E. F. that has yet been printed. It is, in short, what a good novel must be: a novel made up of many novels which are fused so thoroughly that they are indistinguishable but which pile up significance many layers deep.

It brings to the understanding of human experience in fifty years of American life wit, subtlety, strength, profundity, and tenderness. Whether he is smiling at the Yale of Dink Stover's time, exploring a marriage between a romantic gentleman and a sexually ignorant woman, watching their nephew deal ignorantly with a frigid woman, casually checking deserters and fatalities in an attack, or examining the blend of timidity and disenchantment in middle age, Mr. Boyd knows his people down to the last symbol of their repressions. His detachment is at once clinical and kind—imaginative creation of the very highest order. To maintain it as sympathetically among the coquetties of the eighties as among the bewildered franknesses of the twenties is a feat of main strength. And to write dialogue which seems equally brilliant and equally from the idiom of its time through all those periods of flux is a performance which cannot be overpraised.

There is no great hope that it will be widely acclaimed in the press. Mr. Boyd writes about individuals instead of classes, and, what is worse, one of his characters speaks skeptically of Labor and another capitalist is displayed in a heroic action—so one-half of the cheerleaders will find him lacking in *Zeitgeist*. The other half will look in vain for the flatulent giantism which, at the moment, they hold to be the purest vision of America. But he has brilliantly written a searching, wise, and very profound novel about the people of our time and their heritage. His people and their triumphs and tragedies will not be forgotten by readers who classify fiction among the fine arts.

Bright Surfaces of Two Worlds

DON'T EVER LEAVE ME. By Katharine Brush. New York: Farrar & Rinehart. 1935. \$2.

Reviewed by BASIL DAVENPORT

WITH her new novel Miss Katharine Brush definitely takes her place as the most skilful reporter of surfaces now writing. In her previous novels she has already shown that you could give her the name of any year since the war and she would tell you what people were wearing and what furniture they liked, what steps they were dancing to what tunes, what catchwords they were using, and what were the superficial mass-emotions of the crowd. She could do all this with a peculiar vividness that would make a man enjoy reading about her women's dresses, and with an economy in the choice of detail that seemed to condense a year's file, not indeed of newspapers, but of women's magazines, into a few pages. But it was not until the present book that one could acquit her of the suspicion of having deliberately engaged, like so many of the slick-paper writers, in a luxury trade, in purveying imaginary splendors to middle-class readers. But "Don't Ever Leave Me" turns aside, part of the time, from the rich and the Bohemian. It is laid in a mill town in Pennsylvania, where there is a small rich group at the top and a mass of workers at the bottom; and it is concerned with a Babe Cunningham, whose first husband was killed in the war and who after various vicissitudes is now the wife of the local magnate, having an adored son by her first marriage, a sullen, difficult boy who is carrying on an affair with the wife of a mill hand.

The action takes us into both worlds, and one thing becomes abundantly clear, Miss Brush is intensely interested in everything that comes under her eye, like Browning's Fra Lippo Lippi, just because it looks as it does. It is quite clear that she is not a tradeswoman, she is a reporter. But her deficiencies are as remarkable as her qualities. She has the same interest in what may be called the front-room furniture of people's minds, that she has in other furniture; she takes keen delight in contrasting the "doll" of the twenties with the "wench" of the thirties, as shown by their stock-in-trade of ideas; but she cannot in any real sense penetrate beyond this. Her attempt here to analyze the relations of Babe Cunningham with the husband she likes, the lover she loves, and the son she idolizes, remains for all her effort slight and unmoving. And still more, she cannot make characters develop so as to find their own way out of a situation. In "Night Club," it will be remembered, there was only a series of beginnings; in "Young Man of Manhattan" a shameless cutting of knots; in "Red-Headed Woman" there was no progression of the characters, but only of the scenery. There is evidence that in the present book Miss Brush has tried to minimize this by her always brilliant technique; the actual action takes place in a single evening, at a Country Club dance. But here again the characters stand still.

Nevertheless, when all is said against it, "Don't Ever Leave Me" remains a brilliantly painted picture of a part of the contemporary scene. The historian of the future, looking for details of the way



KATHARINE BRUSH

we live now, will find more here than in thumbing sheaves of periodicals; and if in his chapter on morals he cautiously weighs this against "Appointment in Samarra," and decides that though one witness says that the rich in Pennsylvania mill towns go to hell sullenly, there may be some credibility in the other testimony that they go to hell gaily, he will not be so far wrong.

Rumanian Stories

WINNING A WIFE. By Peter Neagoe. New York: Coward-McCann. 1935. \$2.50.

THE primary impression received from Mr. Neagoe's stories is one of freshness and abundant vitality. The strong and simple rhythms of his prose are well suited to the evocations of Rumanian peasant life which constitute the greater part of his new book, and it is only after reading a considerable number of them that an occasional technical insecurity becomes apparent, and the sameness of the characters begins to be monotonous. Mr. Neagoe's Popa Radu is much like his Popa Anghel, while the ripely beautiful peasant heroines have about as much individuality as the grains of the corn which they cultivate when not engaged in more intimate affairs with the village blades. The author's work is interesting, therefore, largely because it treats authentically of people and manners which are still strange to us, and unfamiliar in the English literary canon. Yet in "The Shepherd of the Lord" a more sincere emotional note is achieved.

Throughout the book as a whole, Mr. Neagoe amply proves his ability to convey in English the picturesque atmosphere and highly colored dialogue of his native Transylvania, but he sometimes does not seem to know quite what to do with figures and background once they are created. Some of the stories thus remain lustily humorous anecdotes without pronounced narrative value. Also, the four pieces which are deprived of Rumanian local color are clearly less effective and spontaneous than the others, though they indicate the route which Mr. Neagoe must follow if his talent is to outgrow the limitations imposed upon it by the formulas which he is employing at present. And this talent is so evident that such expansion seems highly desirable.



JACKET DESIGN FOR "ROLL RIVER" BY ROGER DUVOISIN

The BOWLING GREEN

"Barabbas"

CHRONICLES OF BARABBAS, 1884-1934, By George H. Doran. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1935. \$3.50.

AMONG the obscure New York hotels to which, for reasons of my own, I have sometimes made sentimental pilgrimage, is the Aberdeen on 32nd Street. It was an occasional overnight refuge for Grub Street Runners when I first had a publishing job. In those days there were a number of publishing offices on 32nd Street. I wonder if anyone else remembers a little chophouse on that street called the Blossom Heath Inn? It was almost next door to Doubleday's office at 11 West, and often—with a Pink Slip cashed by Augie Murphy (now as then Doubledays' admired exchequeress in the New York office)—promising authors were well grunted there at lunch time. Surely the great success of Ken Roberts's fine historical novels on Doubleday's list really dates from an all-afternoon lunch at the Blossom Heath twenty years back. Dear old Guy Holt, who died a year ago, would remember those lunches. There was a brand of cigar obtainable there, called *Nabocklish*; the name sounds Gaelic, I have no notion what it means, but it became a kind of password among us; it had a sort of care-free sound and became an ejaculation suggesting "We should worry." Among the young writers who were entertained there were two who happened later to write two very different books with the same title. One, a novel now known to all the world; the other, earlier by several years, a little book of agreeable verses. Both were called *Main Street*. It was disturbing to learn, after cajoling Miss Murphy to O. K. the pink slip for Editorial Expense, that these two authors belonged to a rival house. Joyce Kilmer was faithful to George Doran; and Sinclair Lewis was at that moment Doran's literary scout.

But what I am leading toward are not my own small recollections but those of a much livelier fellow. I mentioned the old Aberdeen Hotel because George Doran once lived there to be handy to his office at number 15. It was from the Aberdeen that he looked down and saw his office building on fire—just after he had providentially paid a premium for \$10,000 extra insurance. It was there too, I think, that the most important accident of his whole publishing career took place. It was in 1908, soon after Mr. Doran had started his own business. Mrs. Doran, ordered by the doctor to take a few days' complete rest, needed some books to read. Among those sent up for her by G. H. D. was Arnold Bennett's *Old Wives' Tale*, newly out in England. After a day's reading she telephoned her husband and begged him to cable for the American rights. He did so, and 1000 sheets were ordered. It is pleasant to hear that it was the enthusiastic selling of young Fred Melcher, then a clerk at Lauriat's in Boston, which exhausted the first importation and started the book moving. Not only for Bennett's own books, and the intimate friendship that ensued, but also for the succession of brilliant young writers who came to Doran at Bennett's suggestion, this was a turning point in the publisher's career.

George's book is one which will have very great interest for all who are concerned or curious about our little world of publishing. Memoirs of publishers are always exciting because there is no other career that brings a man so intimately and frequently in touch with egregious people; and on terms of immediate social freedom. George tells a delightful anecdote of sprightly little Buffy (Elizabeth) Cobb, Irvin's daughter, when the Dorans arrived as strangers to live next door to the Cobbs in a well-mortgaged Suburban-on-Hud-

son. "They must be nice people," said Buffy, who had been watching the new neighbors' kitchen premises; "they have such nice garbage." Even the garbage of the publishing business, if you'll condone the phrase, is attractive. Combining the charm of the arts with all the hilarity and headache of commerce, in a trade of great social influence, it is a business of compelling allure. It is overcrowded, and it breaks hearts, but those who know it would exchange for no other.

And George's book is George himself. To tell you the truth I had no idea he would be so good a writer. Except for an

occasional over-use of the word "precious" or for the description of Mary Roberts Rinehart's smile I would not edit away any of his vivacious zeal. The homage to Mrs. Rinehart is well-deserved—not only for their affectionate personal relation as grandparents of the same child, but because she was at that moment autographing innumerable books for customers at Marshall Field's. And George is not only a sentimentalist but also an intensely alert business man.

This book, which describes 50 years of adventure in the book trade, has the same quality of infectious impulsive charm, high spirits, mixed Irish emotionalism and mischief, together with something hard and canny at bottom, which we have always relished in G. H. D. I find a parable of sadness in the book reaching us just at the time that the *Mauretania*, which George loved and travelled in so often, sails to be broken up.

The pleasantest phase of this excellent book is its spirit of youthfulness, its sympathy with the younger generation in publishing. There was always a touch of gallantry, swank, panache, in G. H. D. When he carried a cane he swung it and went along the street as if he were going somewhere. Young authors were fascinated by him at sight. When beautiful and powerful booksellers came to town, his handsome car was at their disposal. In his own office I rather guess he might be a pretty exacting taskmaster. I remember that poor Ivan Somerville his manufacturing man used to look pretty haggard sometimes. He made a very bad mistake (he admits it handsomely) in not understanding Gene Saxton who is one of the real editorial geniuses of our time. I hope all this doesn't sound like epitaph; but George speaks with such honest candor in his book that he invites his friend to talk blunt shop. On the final and fantastic error of the Doubleday merger he touches only lightly. It was an error of the first magnitude on both sides. George thought he was safeguarding the future of his young men. Doubledays' thought they were securing the remarkable literary prescience which had marked the Doran imprint. But the publishing business is (on its creative side) an intensely individualized affair. Like the theatre it revolves on hunch and temperament. It's all very well to draw up stock agreements, but personalities, diverse ambitions and methods, don't merge so easily. The long illness of Frank Doubleday, and then the era of declining business, helped to complicate matters. The union was en-

tered into in good faith on both sides. It didn't work. In the detached perspective of the outsider its most important result was the founding of one of the ablest and most successful of younger houses, Farrar & Rinehart. I keep, as a rather pathetic souvenir, one of the special copies of Tarkington's *Claire Ambler*, bound in white bridal vellum, issued in 1928 as a consummation of the marriage. "This first volume over the new imprint," it says, "has been autographed by the author and the publishers." In 1930 George fled to the embrace of the Iron Maiden, Mr. Hearst—where he became a "notable prisoner." That, by the way, is St. Matthew's description of Barabbas. The line "Now Barabbas was a robber," which Lord Byron jocularly altered to "was a publisher," occurs in St. John, XVIII, 40. George, as an old Bible salesman, should have checked this.

It's odd that a man who was himself a brilliant salesman says nothing in this book of his own sales boys who helped him build up so remarkable a business. It grew from \$200,000 in 1908 to 2½ millions in 1927. I wish there were space to suggest the whole story, which he tells with most infectious good humor, and with many vivid little character sketches of his authors and associates. It begins in the familiar way: the ambitious boy of 14 who sees the sign SMART BOY WANTED. That was in Toronto, where G. H. D. was born of

North of Ireland Presbyterians in 1869. He just escaped being christened, for his mother, George Oliver Doran, which would have given him embarrassing initials. After early experience in a Tract Depository he joined an evangelistic publisher in Chicago, "the predatory Fleming H. Revell." Nothing in this book is more agreeable than George's deliciously ironic and yet fair-minded description of the humors (and occasional hypocrisies) of evangelical publishing. As a boy of 15 in Toronto he had met old Matthew Hodder of the famous English firm Hodder & Stoughton. Twenty years later he became the official representative of H. & S. in America, and their publications were the nucleus of his list. His description of old Hodder, and his brilliant grandson the lamented Ernest Hodder-Williams, is rich in mirth and affection. Dulac's edition of the *Rubaiyat* horrified old Mr. Hodder until he learned it was earning £800 a year profit. The early connection with pietistic publishing helped to tinge the Doran list for many years, and sometimes was a source of humorous incongruity—as when G. H. D. was reproached for bringing out, almost simultaneously, Moffatt's New Testament and *The Green Hat*.

The chronicles of this very lovable Barabbas are full of good stories. His first capture outside the devotional field was Roswell Field's *Bondage of Ballinger*. He became an American citizen; heard Bryan give the Cross of Gold speech. Like all publishers he has errors of judgment to look back on. Ralph Connor was Revell's big fiction seller, but G. H. D. agreed with his employer to turn down Harold Bell Wright and also Sheldon's *In His Steps*—showing that even then our young editor had germs of admirable literary taste. His valiant attempt to find a public for Mary Webb was an example. There is refreshing candor in some of his confessions: that he never understood why all the excitement about *Revolt in the Desert*; that Marie Corelli's pique (because he did not mention her name in an interview) caused her to cancel her contract and saved him

\$20,000 in promised advances; that he was always incapable of appreciating really great poetry. (He is evidently at a loss to know how to comment on Elinor Wylie, the greatest poet on his list.)

I have given you no notion of the richness of anecdote and comment in this valuable book. George's lively blend of British and American temperaments makes him a unique officer of liaison between the two countries.

Similarly his paradoxical mixture of sacred and profane makes him the most enchanting of companions. Vivid and frank as his chronicle is, he has been more discreet than you might suppose. I think of many things he might have told; some of them were generous kindnesses done by him to people in trouble. When he says that the book he would best like to have written is *Of Human Bondage* he tells much of himself. Ambitious, high-strung, sensitive, sometimes a bit of a snob, a multiple soul. It is impossible to believe that he will not again have his suite at the Savoy and throw the most intelligent frolics in the publishing business. Blessings, George, from a friend and beneficiary of long standing! If some of the copies of *Barabbas* look a little worn in the shops it will be because the booksellers themselves have been reading them.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

Quiet English Humor

THE ELIGIBLE BACHELOR. By Humphrey Pakington. New York: W. W. Norton & Company. 1935. \$2.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

I MUST say that I found this quiet novel a decided relief from the machine-gun quickfire of many modern American novels. It seems amazing and incredible to a New Yorker that there should be such drowsy hamlets as the village of Compton Marley. It seems also amazing that there should remain in this age such a simple yet satisfying love story, of young people, as that of Crispin and Mary. Verily simplicity and its enduring charms have not passed altogether from the earth!

But that is far from the whole story of the merit of Humphrey Pakington's book. He is distinctly amusing. He possesses a characteristically English type of humor in which you either find great relish or to which you prefer a more rushing and rowdy American brand. I don't see, myself, why one can't like both—or either—at different times. I settled down with "The Eligible Bachelor" and soon found myself actually laughing (or snorting) out loud every once in a while. This was not the riotous phrase of Wodehouse. But it was a way of saying things that sneaked up on you insidiously! Mr. Pakington has a decided way with his family, the Warmstrys—that reading from Shakespeare!—and the character of Admiral Harbottle, and the terrific dominance of Susan Canfield in her Pageant of England. I shall not mention more delights, though there are plenty more—but it will be long before I forget the Pageant or the misfortune overcoming Mr. Podmore-Jones in the Boscobel Oak. It was a cedar, and there was suddenly "an ominous cracking sound." . . .

Yes, decidedly, Mr. Pakington has a way of putting things that brings out the richest colors of any situation! Yet his eye on the petty failings of humanity, of which he makes such delightful copy, does not miss their agreeable side.

My only criticism of the novel would be that it is a trifle too long for the actual weight of its matter. And, of course, to many hotfoot Americans it will seem too leisurely, and rambling, to be bearable. As for me, I should like nothing better than to retire to some spot in a summer countryside, at the present moment, with an armful of novels like this one. Maybe then I could forget the dire state of the world, and the calamity that is howled from every side, in the certainty merely that Crispin was a young architect who was building a house for Miss Bowdler-Smith, and that Mary Parker was a perfect corker of an indigent heroine whom he was sure eventually to meet and fall in love with!



GEORGE H. DORAN ABOARD THE MAURETANIA