

The chapter dealing with the anti-Nazi opposition is probably the weakest in the book. Major Shulman apparently is not familiar with such recent publications as those of Dulles, Gisevius, von Schlabrendorff, and the von Hassell diaries, and shoots badly beside the mark in interpreting the motivation of the principal participants. Goerdeler, an idealist who as early as 1936 told the present reviewer that Germany's most pressing problem was the restoration of "ordinary human decency," is pictured here as dominated by economic considerations.

Lack of familiarity with such works as those cited also made it easier for Major Shulman to conclude (wishfully) that the failings of the Abwehr (Wehrmacht Intelligence Department) were to be ascribed solely to the inability of the rigid and methodical Teutonic mind to evaluate the available data, and he insists that the anti-Nazi feelings of the senior Abwehr officers had nothing to do with "... the many stupid blunders of the German military intelligence. ..." We do, however, have chapter and verse on innumerable instances of this very type, involving not only deliberate garbling and misinterpretation of intelligence data but transmission to the Allies of the most vital information, for example the date and hour of the western offensive of 1940.

Having said so much of a critical nature, I must repeat that this book is indispensable for students of World War II. It not only introduces a good deal of material not yet published elsewhere but tells a clear and straightforward story in masterly style.

FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT: No. 239

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 239 will be found in the next issue.

MZ BMY KGPQFZF

ZCZGOVYWO KGPQFZF

XYVYWO.—F. RYMXFYX

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 238

Honest bread is very well—it's the butter that makes the temptation.
DOUGLAS JERROLD.

Fiction.

The most promising American novel to be reviewed this week is Kenneth S. Davis's "The Years of the Pilgrimage." Its story of a prosperous farmer's son who turns fascist reflects a world struggle in microcosm. In "The Bennett Place," Michael De Capite records the suicidal frustration of a middle-aged woman whose loves and hates are more Freudian than universal. Or is that controversial? We also have one oddity: Gwynn Thomas's philosophical comedy of love strangled in the poverty of a bleak Welsh valley, where men, says the author, marry just to keep warm. The novel's terse and lilting language may also baffle American readers. . . . As asides, it is interesting to watch one of the best of last year's novels, "The Garretson Chronicle," climb the ladder of best sellers. But, if the critics' comments on Ross Lockridge's lusty historical novel are any criterion, it won't be long before "Raintree County" succeeds in topping them all with the book-buying public.

Clash of Symbols in Kansas



THE YEARS OF THE PILGRIMAGE.

By Kenneth S. Davis. New York: Doubleday & Co. 1948. 372 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by WALTER HAVIGHURST

IN THE town of Beecher, Kansas, in the dead-center of America, Mr. Davis slowly unfolds this probing story of the socio-psychic troubles of the mid-twentieth century. Beecher is a country town, with its burning summer pavements spread out beneath the statue of General Jonathan Harcourt on the courthouse tower. The ceaseless Kansas wind blows over it, farmers come in with their loads of grain and livestock, and the seasons change. But the town remembers, like a dark legend, the story of Harcourt Stevens and the lives enmeshed with his. For a few years that quiet town was the scene of crucial encounters—clashes of will, warfare of ideas, and acts of violence.

Primarily the novel is the story of Harcourt Stevens, bitter, brilliant son of an aloof Kansas farmer. To the big farm Harcourt Stevens returns from the East with his motherless daughter, and with a reputation as an iconoclastic young man of letters. In the rolling Kansas lands he goes on with his studies, developing his fanatical theories of fascism. But it is also the story of Ferris Morehead, the ascetic and idealistic young min-

ister, and of the lumbering Hunky Mirak who brings his ripe and ready wife to the Stevens farm. Mr. Davis tells the tale deliberately, following the strands of these lives from their widely separated origins until they become so tightly knotted only violence can free them.

It is a teeming novel, teeming with ideas and with experience. There are memorable passages—Hunky's childhood in Milwaukee and at the Catholic orphanage, the child Kathryn's troubled and eager reaching out for understanding and participation. There is clear, revealing analysis of the minds of Stevens and Morehead. There is a sweeping sense of the Kansas country and of its vibrant past. Yet "The Years of the Pilgrimage" is not fully satisfactory as a novel. Its central characters are embodiments of human attributes and attitudes, and they seem too deliberately counterpoised to give the illusion of life. In retrospect it seems less a novel than a fable, written with learning, urgency, and conviction, in sound and solid structure. The fable quality appears in Mr. Davis's conception of his characters—as "pilgrims" moving to their appointed struggle which will signify the clash of forces in the modern world. That conception burdens his characters, who seem dragging enormous shadows after them. Their clash is a

FICTION

clash of shadows, so that the primitive man murders the diseased intellect, and the humanitarian, inheriting the cynic's fortune, launches a liberal movement to arouse the conscience of the world.

"The Years of the Pilgrimage" leaves a feeling that Mr. Davis would rather have his ideas remembered than his people.

Crime and Comedy

VAIN CITADELS. By Bryan S. Morgan. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1948. 311 pp. \$2.75.

VENUS AND THE VOTERS. By Gwyn Thomas. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1948. 254 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by ERIC L. MCKITRICK

LITTLE, BROWN and Company are bringing out two books this month which support the fact that even the run-of-the-mine British novelist can most generally be counted on to write pretty well. Both Bryan S. Morgan and Gwyn Thomas do, though neither has much of anything to say.

In "Vain Citadels" Paul Leger, in a moment of passion, kills the man who threatens blackmail over his liaison with a schoolmistress, Helen. Detective Sergeant Roger Payne is put on his trail with instructions to wait until sufficient incriminating evidence turns up before arresting him. Four months go by, with Sergeant Payne following Leger all over England before the inspector back at headquarters discovers that he has had the evidence all the time. Meanwhile Paul has served as a moral rod for the measurement of four diverse characters to whom he confides his secret: a clergyman, Helen, his sweetheart, an Oxford don, and a recluse chemist. All are found wanting in one way or another and in the course of Paul's macabre progress his religious conversion is effected.

This English Rodion Raskolnikov is quite unconvincing, his search for



certitude uncertain at best. The story has been conscientiously planned, scrupulously laid out—but apparently not as a pressing representation of truth, for its content is rather like that of a half-inflated balloon. The chase is somewhat of a game; Mr. Morgan plainly does not intend to let his fugitive get caught until he is good and ready and has all his business transacted.

James Hilton's favorable critical reception of Gwyn Thomas's "The Dark Philosophers" clears the way for "Venus and the Voters" and is a good example of *anglais oblige*. I agree, running up the white flag, that the "high comedy and fantastic humor . . . set Mr. Thomas in a field of his own."

The main problem in the miserable Welsh valley of the Terraces is that of poverty and want. The four philosophical protagonists of "Venus and the Voters"—"my friends Ben and Arthur and Walter, and I"—have addressed themselves to it for years, mostly by talking about it in the evening on the back wall. Even love, which ought to feed on itself, hasn't a chance in the Terraces. A case in point is that of one Morris, who has been collecting unemployment insurance since the first war. Love, for Morris, has never meant more than a means of keeping warm and has only produced for him a string of half-clothed, ill-fed offspring. All the hopelessness of the valley seems to symbolize itself in the person of Morris's eldest daughter Eurona, starved for food, clothing, and love. The efforts of "Ben, Arthur, Walter, and I" to provide her with a little of each, to save her from nasty Rollo Watts, the successful bus-driver, and to

thwart the "Creative Will" of the grocery entrepreneur Shadrach Sims, form the narrative thread of the story.

The ideas of the novel are not, as we generally say in a case like this, so important as the way they are set forth. This is obvious from Mr. Thomas's enchantment with his metaphors, going as he does on the assumption that if you labor a point long enough it will succeed in being humorous. If he had confined this material to a short story, there might have been a chance to avoid such tediousness, but how he does run on.

Gaudy Heritage

THREE FIELDS TO CROSS. By Frances Tysen Nutt. New York: Stephen-Paul Publishers. 1947. 368 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by RAY PIERRE

HERE is another in the endless stream of historical novels pouring off the presses. One wonders if these "sentimental adulterations of the past," as Janko Lavrin calls them in his "Introduction to the Russian Novel," testify to a desire for escape from a troubled present into an equally troubled past, or to a patriotic effort to paint our heritage in its gaudiest colors.

The period Mrs. Nutt has staked out for herself is the American Revolution, and she describes its impact on the Blakes, a well-heeled, peace-loving family of homesteaders on Staten Island. The author knows her terrain well and presents it with fidelity. As the dust jacket announces, she was born in a Victorian house on the Island and gleaned a good deal of her material from family documents.

Her novel is at its best when depicting the conflict between Tories and rebels among the Islanders; the arrival of the great British fleet off Sandy Hook, commanded by the inflexible Lord Howe, who read the Declaration of Independence to his officers at the Rose and Crown Inn in Oude Dorp, Staten Island; the battles of Long Island, Richmond, and Monmouth; the withdrawal of Washington's motley troops across the East River. Historic figures move through the book with lifelike credibility—the rugged old sea dog, Admiral Howe, his older brother, Richard, in command of Britain's land forces, the cruel Hessian General Knyphausen, the debonair Major John Andre, later executed for treason.

The Blakes are divided in their loyalties. Sky Blake, cynical and

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 720)

WALTER WHITE:
WHY I REMAIN A NEGRO*

I am a Negro. My skin is white, my eyes are blue, my hair is blond. There is nothing within my mind and heart which tempts me to think I am white. Yet I realize . . . there is magic in a white skin; there is tragedy, loneliness, exile in a black skin.

*From *The Saturday Review of Literature*, Oct. 11, 1947.