

words of Elihu Root—to admit the need for “a fundamental change in the principle to be applied to international breaches of the peace.” “The view now assumed and generally held,” Root wrote Colonel House on August 16, 1918, “is that the use of force by one nation to another is a matter in which only the two nations concerned are primarily interested.”

This was the view obstinately adhered to by Professor Halvdan Koht in April 1940, when, as foreign minister of Norway, he protested the action of the British Government in interfering with the German traffic in iron ore within Norwegian territorial waters. He did this only a short time after Germany had violated a whole parcel of treaties and destroyed the whole fabric of European peace—an offense against the moral system of which law is but a part. At that very moment the Germans were using those same territorial waters to proceed to the seizure of Norwegian harbors and the enslavement of the Norwegian people. Yet Professor Koht, he has since told us, had actually decided to give orders to the Norwegian Navy which involved a serious risk of a conflict with the British Navy, which was at that time playing the part of a world police force.

If Professor Koht had deliberately tried, he could not have shown more clearly the difference between “world law” and diplomatic etiquette. If he had tried, he could not have demonstrated more vividly that, however desirable insistence on obedience to traffic lights may be for the routine of everyday life, it is a crime against mankind when the whole town is on the point of being wiped out by a conflagration.

“The requisite change”—again to quote Elihu Root—“is an abandonment of . . . [the traditional] view and a universal, formal, and irrevocable acceptance of the view that an international breach of the peace is a matter which concerns every member of the community of nations. . . . *At the basis of every community lies the idea of organization to preserve the peace. Without that idea really active and controlling there can be no community of individuals or as nations.* [Italics mine.] It is the gradual growth of this idea of community interest in preventing and punishing breaches of the peace which has done away with private war among civilized people.”

The far-reaching implications of these words were not generally understood at the time. True, Root's suggestion was embodied in Article XI of the League of Nations Covenant, which asserted that “any war or  
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**Fiction.** *The lead novel reviewed this week, Graham Greene's “Heart of the Matter,” is certain to be widely read in this country. Thousands of American readers know this fluent writer for his immensely popular and dramatic novels of the secret service, “The Stamboul Train,” “The Confidential Agent,” etc. They are unaware that his reputation as a story-teller, in tradition of brutal and heroic deeds, is now overshadowed, in the opinion of British and American critics, by a new contribution to contemporary literature, the search for the soul and nature of the man consecrated to an ideal. His new novel has the outward trappings of the jungle-shrouded, purgatorial colonies beloved by English novelists. Its inner nature is a subtle and moving account of the downfall of a virtuous man betrayed by his innate kind-*

## A God-Smitten Man

**THE HEART OF THE MATTER.** By Graham Greene. New York: The Viking Press. 1948. 306 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by HENRY MORTON ROBINSON

GRAHAM GREENE belongs to that rare and happy breed of writers whose excellences disarm criticism. He is first of all a frank story-teller who makes no apology for setting a swift narrative pace. Few living authors surpass him as a discernor of spiritual subtleties, and he is admittedly a stylist in the ever-to-be-envied English manner. These gifts, cordially remarked by readers of his earlier novel “The Power and the Glory,” will be found again, heightened and intensified, in “The Heart of the Matter”—a work that will unquestionably add another cubit to Mr. Greene's creative stature.

Narrative tempo, subtlety of perception, and a prose-master's style would be more than enough, one might think, to account for Mr. Greene's mounting reputation. Yet none of these gifts, either singly or in combination, explain the strength of the claim that this writer makes upon our attention, or disclose the nature of his contribution to the contemporary novel. What then is the charismatic secret of this man whose name is quite properly being bracketed with those of Mauriac, Faulkner, and Kafka?

The simple truth appears to be that Graham Greene has rediscovered, and put to his own uses, some extremely vital novelistic material. While lesser writers—a few of them able and sincere—struggle to extend the boundaries of a played-out naturalism; and while others desperately traverse the dark pastures of psychopathology, Mr. Greene calmly takes possession of a rich but long-neglected field quite near

at hand. This field, to give it a title and a name, is the soul of the God-smitten man. Surveying this rain, Mr. Greene reveals both the measurability of man's spirit and still vaster stretch of God's love. An audience weary of inch-worm naturalism and the vernier-scale observations of psychoanalysis, Mr. Greene's spiritual dimensions are refreshingly wide and welcome.

Not that he casts his work in the bronze. Quite the contrary. The most striking aspect of Graham Greene's

### FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT: No. 26

*A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 264 will be found in the next issue.*

N EMNBFGA HMCAFZ F

FZM DPF OMKNAMA

PRQAMBS RZ XPM TNRZ

NZO RYZFKBM MSSFCX X

ORAWCMORX FXPMCA.

NCWPRKNBO CGXBMOMY

### Answer to Literary Crypt No. 26

The whole secret of life is to be interested in one thing profoundly and in a thousand things well.

HUGH WALPOL

talent is his ability to disclose by means of colloquial speech and (for the most part) commonplace incident, the profound entelechy of God's way with man. This knack of understanding the supernatural is given superb illustration in "The Heart of the Matter." Major Scobie, the hero of the tale, is a middle-aged police official in a run-down British colony on the West Coast of Africa. "Poor old Scobie," his colleagues call him; to all appearances he is an utterly undistinguished piece of human furniture. Fiftyish, tired of knocking at preferment's door, and hopelessly out of love with an unattractive wife, Mr. Greene's protagonist is a challenge that few novelists would dare set for themselves—or their readers.

Quietly, however, and with enormous narrative skill, the author begins fastening his loops about us. Before we are finally bound to the stake alongside Major Scobie, we discover that he is a man endowed with an overwhelming sense of pity, and that his unwillingness to cause suffering in another human being is the secret character flaw (if it be a flaw) that determines his fate. We see also that he is an official of blameless honesty and a man of unstained personal purity. Furthermore he is a devout Catholic, the possessor of a talent for religion which



Stephen -

foredooms him to suffer, dare, love, and understand in particular ways—and to martyr-like degrees—made clear to us by Mr. Greene's insight and artistry.

"The Heart of the Matter" moves forward with the stalking terror of a Sophoclean tragedy. Mr. Greene coolly proposes that his hero shall break, one by one, the tablets of the moral law that he respects so highly: that he shall become, in short, a sinner. And no dabbler in venial sin either. By exquisitely casual steps, Major Scobie becomes an adulterer, a defamer of the Blessed Sacrament (he receives Holy Communion while in the state of mortal sin), and finally a suicide. In breaking this last most-fatal canon against self-slaughter, Scobie condemns his soul to everlasting Hell.

Major Scobie's unfolding ordeal is a

painful spectacle, yet it is strangely relieved for the reader who perceives the author's intended symbolism. Perhaps it is too explicit to say that Mr. Greene equates his hero with the universal "philosophic man" who must always seem to fail in the battle against the complex evil in the world. And it may be going too far to suggest—though the idea keeps recurring to me—that Major Scobie is, in his obscure station, an all-suffering *alter Christus*. But whatever the depth or radiant power of the symbolism, it comes very close to "the heart of the matter" that Mr. Greene is writing about. And at the end of his tale the author intimates, not too obliquely, that God is quite competent to perform the necessary miracle of forgiveness that lies at the core of His love for erring mankind.

If I may close on a modest note of dispraise, I might say that Mr. Greene cements together this powerful and original material with binders slightly too exotic and melodramatic for my north-temperate taste. I have never subscribed to the literary convention that white men deteriorate more interestingly in a rainy climate than in a reasonably dry one. I feel that Mr. Greene, or any author, cheats a bit when he sends his man to perdition against a backdrop of steaming jungle, mosquito-netting, and pink gins. How much more honest (and difficult) is the task of creating character and action that will be credible in the common gray light of suburbia. I am sorry that Mr. Greene is so bent on being entertaining that he brings his story down to the meteorological level of "Rain" and "White Cargo." I regret also that at times he spices his tale too highly (for this puristic palate) with the melodrama of gem-smuggling and counterespionage. At his characteristic best Graham Greene sets an exalted table; he needs no exotic drapes or tropical chutney to make his work relishable to readers hungry for spiritual fare.

Henry Morton Robinson is the author of "The Great Snow," and now has in preparation a 1,000-page novel entitled "The Cardinal."



**THE AUTHOR:** To Graham Greene at thirteen Good and Evil were cleft by the green baize door which opened from home onto hated Berkhamsted School, where his father was the headmaster. Doubtless mindful of cousin Robert Louis Stevenson, he solemnly took the quill a year later, and in twelve months was published. At seventeen, bored, he taunted death by occasionally firing a revolver into his temple—presumably unaware that the sportingly-spun chamber's lone bullet was blank. Since then, save for wartime Foreign Service and ten coltish days at British-American Tobacco, his imagination has found less mortal expression: fantasy and poetry at Balliol, the verse volume "Babbling April," and, with intermittent offices as editor and cinema critic, nearly twenty books. Among his famed "entertainments" are "This Gun for Hire," "The Ministry of Fear" (both filmed), "Orient Express," and "The Confidential Agent." His novels include "The Man Within," "It's a Battlefield," "England Made Me," "Brighton Rock," and "The Labryinthine Ways." The last was sequel to "Another Mexico," his findings below the border after churches were suppressed. Another travel book, "Journey Without Maps," reported a Dark Continental walk from Sierra Leone through the Liberian forests to the coast. A confidential war mission in West Africa added jungle color to "The Heart of the Matter." Yet to be published is "The Third Man," a Viennese tale which Alexander Korda will screen. He is director of London publishers Eyre & Spottiswoode, but submits his own copy to Heinemann. Twenty-two years ago, on his majority, he was converted to Catholicism—through "an intellectual, if not an emotional belief." Tall, stooped, with bleak blue eyes, he is not incautiously called "complex." Admirers say he is shy, sardonic, sensitive, misanthropic, profoundly Christian, disdainful of the common man, who he believes can become uncommon, unaverage, unsensual.

—R. G.