

and critic full justice. Forty pages in 280 pages give him an average of seven pages to each essay, and that is inadequate. He is at his best in the longer studies in this volume, where he sits down and has his talk out; in his articles on the Adams family, on Tom Paine, on General Jackson, and on "The Enigma of Abraham Lincoln." We might add a special word for the lively pages on "The Dilemma of the American Rich," which tells our business magnates what they must do if they are really to save the

country from "radicalism." The first and almost the last rule, says Mr. Brogan, "is that the rulers must deliver the goods, that they must share some of the winnings of the game with their clients, with the great mass of the American people, and that these winnings must be absolutely more than any rival system can plausibly promise."

A stimulating appendage, this, to Mr. Brogan's volume on "The American Character" — and something more than an appendage.

Honey and Gold.

SIERRA-NEVADA LAKES. By George and Bliss Hinkle. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co. 1949. 383 pp. \$4.

Reviewed by DALE L. MORGAN

PROBABLY none of the ten books in the American Lakes Series has dealt with lakes so likely to bring a blank look when their names are mentioned as "Sierra-Nevada Lakes." You in the back row, where is Honey Lake or Meadow Lake, Webber or Mono? Tahoe, Pyramid, and Donner have a more familiar sound, but where is Gold Lake?—a question, for that matter, which exasperated Forty-niners would have paid high to be able to answer. The lakes that make up the theme of this book lie mostly on the Great Basin side of the Sierra crest, some of them in California, some of them in Nevada, where almost all of them would lie had Congress in 1850 known anything about Western geography, or had California in 1862 been a little less avaricious of tax dollars. Though they extend north and south for hundreds of miles, these lakes maintained by the eastward drainage from the Sierra Nevada make up a mosaic that fits together as a closely unified and engrossing story.

The opening chapters are certainly the least satisfying. The account of Frémont's explorations south out of Oregon in the winter of 1843-44 makes too much, as a literary device, of his mountain howitzer, abandoned finally in the mountains and argued about ever since. The discussion of the first immigrants who came up the Truckee and over Donner Pass, in 1844-45, is also perfunctory.

Beginning with the chapter on Gold Lake, that legend which had an incredible power to humbug even a race of men foredoomed to humbuggery, the book picks up in freshness, color, and pace; I'll be surprised if some readers don't hightail it out to California this summer to look into

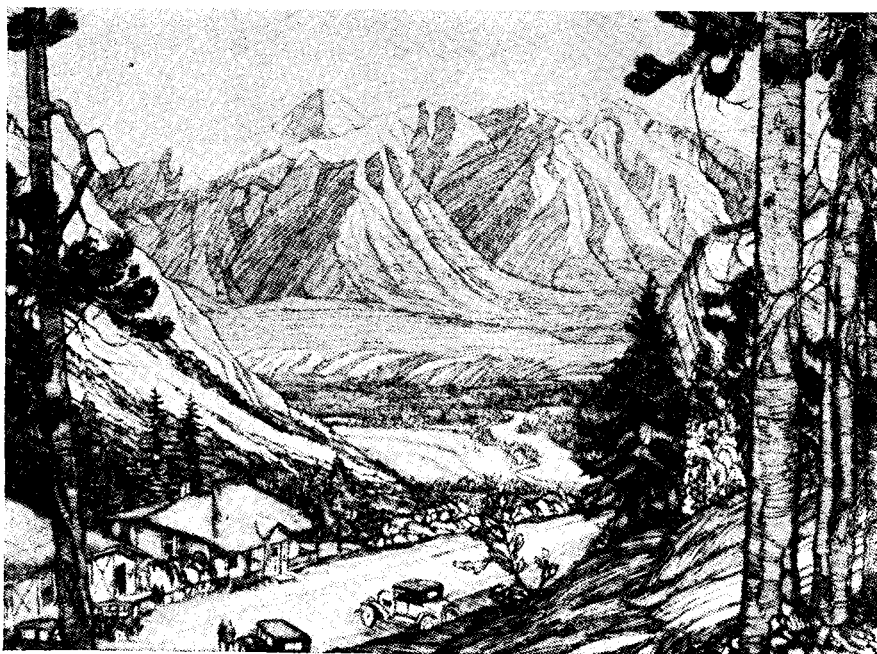
this Gold Lake thing themselves. The Hinkles are quite as good when they move across the mountains to Honey Lake, where Isaac Roop and Peter Lassen settled in the mid-Fifties. Like many another Great Basin play, Honey Lake has come and gone over the years, but its first settlers stuck, lake or no lake. It took some doing to build up a population, a situation epitomized by the bitter, lament of one resident after the departure of an immigrant one morning with his wife and two daughters, "Why in God's name can't some of the women stop here?" But those rugged individualists, the Honey Lakers, stuck nevertheless; it is characteristic of their independence that, despite being in reality Californians, no thanks to Act of Congress or God, they set up the first proto-Nevada territorial government.

Leaving Honey Lake reluctantly, the story moves over a divide to Pyramid Lake, final repository for the waste waters of Lake Tahoe, and

strangely beautiful scene of two bloody combats with the Paiutes in 1860, before wandering south along the base of the Sierra to Walker and Mono lakes. Walker is strongly saline, but far more so is Mono, its waters heavily charged with sodium carbonate, lime carbonate, salt, and borax. These are strange, wild, lovely lakes; and between them bounded up two of the West's most fabulous mining camps, Aurora and Bodie ("Good-bye, God, I'm going to Bodie.").

By now the Comstock was booming farther north, and thus Tahoe is drawn into this panoramic story. Tahoe had been strangely neglected to this time, the main streams of immigrant travel passing it on either side, but the Comstock's rapacious demand for mine timber opened up the Tahoe country and so involved it in the life and times of the farther West as to require four chapters in description. The telling of this story is beset with technical difficulties and not brought off with complete success, perhaps (especially the serial account of Truckee). Moreover, Dr. and Mrs. Hinkle have too far subdued the emotions that surcharge and give meaning to Tahoe's story of recent years—the anguished need of the desert West for that water without which it perishes, set against the passionate and high resolve of many Westerners that matchless scenic treasures shall not be destroyed for merely utilitarian values. As almost nowhere else, Tahoe epitomizes this conflict that will forever rage in the West's own soul.

You in the back row: If you want to know about Webber and Meadow lakes, go buy the book.



"Mountain Valley," by Roi Partridge.

Fiction. Among the books we review below are four which the critics of the nation's leading newspapers have singled out from the season's crop as particularly meriting the average reader's attention. (For the complete list, see page 14.) Robert K. Marshall's "Little Squire Jim" is a Carolina folktale which, our reviewer feels, "restores one's faith in contemporary American fiction." Graham Greene's "Nineteen Stories" is a collection of pieces from a skilled British hand that run the gamut, from miscarriages to minor masterpieces. Isabel Bolton's "The Christmas Tree" is a beautifully written, if not completely realized, excursion into the world of the neurotic. Shirley Barker's "Peace, My Daughters" is that rare article, an historical novel of high merit, dealing with the Salem witchcraft mania. . . . Aficionados of the short story will find entertainment and instruction in Christopher La Farge's "All Sorts and Kinds."

Last Stand for Natural Man

LITTLE SQUIRE JIM. By Robert K. Marshall. New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce. 1949. 255 pp. \$2.75.

Reviewed by VICTOR P. HASS

FOLKTALES of surpassing merit are seldom come by in these days when the sex and sadism novels predominate. But here is a folktale that revives one's faith in contemporary American fiction. It is a story of extraordinary vitality and of depth sufficient to invite the attention of the most discerning of fiction readers.

Robert Marshall has caught the

pulse of the people—it is difficult to think of them as "characters"—who live in these pages. They are the folk who inhabit the remote reaches of North Carolina's mountains.

So long as the Boydens, McVays, Umbargers, Montgomeries, Hollisters, and Tottens continue to live and breed in their isolated valleys there will remain a redoubt where all Americans who would be beholden to nobody can find a refuge for the spirit if not for the body. In that redoubt personal dignity is still one of the most precious possessions of man.

Basically, Mr. Marshall's novel is the saga of the "natural" man in his last stand. In "Little Squire Jim," the protagonist, this man, lives free and strong for a few brief years and then is cut down by a civilization so complex that it can neither understand nor condone his direct approach to life.

Jim died before his time and there is something majestic in the way he lay on his bed and invited death and then accepted it calmly and gratefully. He was still young, still physically powerful. But the hung jury that had saved him from the gas chamber for the accidental slaying of a man had stripped him of both honor and dignity. Bereft of these, he had no reason for living.

Jim was a Boyden and the mountaineers worshipped the Boydens. They were the perfect flowering of a great breed—godlike men who lived violently and invariably died the same way. They were fey, these Boyden men, and even in the 1940's they looked like they were meant to wear the plumes of the cavaliers. Little Squire Jim was the handsomest and most lovable of them all.

That is why the folk of Little Step-



—Olof Carlson.

"Robert K. Marshall has created a woman who alone could have made his novel memorable."

per Valley and the valleys near it turned up in sleepy Tatesboro for Jim's murder trial. It explained, too, why they kept his great stallion saddled and ready for him on the courthouse lawn: if he didn't escape the gas chamber one way he was going to escape it another.

The story of the trial, with most of the book a flashback to the events that had brought Jim to that courtroom, has the inevitability of a Greek tragedy. Here is natural man hopelessly entangled in legalistic machinery that he only vaguely understands and cannot fight. And, in the end, it is no consolation to Jim that he is saved by the very machinery that had drained honor and dignity from him. The death of his stallion, shot down as it stormed the citadel in which his master was held, meant more to him than the hung jury.

Mr. Marshall has dealt superbly with these people he so obviously loves. Jim is drawn something more than life size, as is fitting in a folktale, but the lesser characters are drawn to normal scale even though their tremendous vitality makes them measure up to Jim. In Annie Umbarger, the herb woman, Mr. Marshall has created a woman who alone could have made his novel memorable. In her he has integrated all the wealth of superstition, common sense, granite integrity, and Elizabethan undertones of language of a people who have never forgotten why their ancestors came to the New World.

Here, unquestionably, is a striking first novel.

Victor P. Hass is literary editor of the Omaha, Nebraska, World-Herald.

FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT: No. 303

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 303 will be found in the next issue.

ZYXW X VXT SRQP, TRW

ZYXW YQ OQQNP, WYMTLP,

RK JQNMQHQP, MP WYQ

GTMHQKPXN FXKSPWMEL

RO JQYXHMRK.

J. E. NQQVMTCT

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 302
Great boldness is seldom without some absurdity.

—FRANCIS BACON.