

names. And he spoils almost every attempt to find himself by some literary reference or bit of self-derision. Ridicule becomes sacred, as the safest spiritual armor in the vasty hall of this death-like existence.

In so far as he is saved, it is by his power of symbolic representation. He comes out of his nightmare schizophrenic dreams only when his colored maid, Mealie, tends him in her wonderful language, or under the ministrations, usually horizontal, of his psychiatrist Zoe. Is this the marriage of literature and psychology, or of sensitivity and understanding, or is it simply "love's consummate, pitiful question: 'Are you all right?'" The result, at any rate, is a strong brew in which bitter despair is made bearable by humor, and the small details of daily life—icecubes, dimestiles, cashporiums, pettypants, girls on bicycles—are made significant by a frame of allusions. "Even psychologists don't always realize how rich life is in small jigsaws of reference."

As for the symbolism, you can take it any way you want, provided you do not try to make it square logically

point for point. At the start of the fifth chapter the hero casually alludes to an event that happened after his death. He continues his autobiographical narrative up to within a minute or two of his actual end. His other self, who is real enough to offer him a cigarette (and phantasmal enough to light his own cigarette with a fire-fly), appears in a pleasant brothel as young Doppel, or again as an omniscient taxidriver named Doppelganger. The hero dies trying to rescue a specimen of average humanity (though a Harvard man) named Sharpy Cullen, whose conduct might make one think that his last name had unprintable Chaucerian overtones. The last sentence of the book plays with the recurring symbol of tiger lilies, and in its place hit me harder than any ending I have read since Proust or "A Farewell to Arms." Admittedly it is corn, but the tears are wet, the characters are still standing, they need be sick for home no longer, and the corn is not alien.

Donald A. Stauffer is chairman of the English department at Princeton.

A Woman with Six Men

A WOMAN OF SAMARIA. By James Wesley Ingles. New York: Longmans, Green & Co. 261 pp. \$2.75.

Reviewed by BRADFORD SMITH

SINCE year in and year out religious and historical subjects do best on fiction best-seller lists, it stands to reason that a combination of religion with history should be a sure thing. Lloyd Douglas has proved that this may be the case and now "A Woman from Samaria" not only combines religion and history; its subject is also as earthy as Moll Flanders. To select from the New Testament a story about a woman with five husbands and one lover shows a sharp understanding of what, in addition to religion and history, novel readers want. To pick a theme of such sensational interest and then to handle it with delicacy and restraint marks Mr. Ingles as a man of superb selective judgment.

All we know about the woman of Samaria comes from the fourth chapter of Saint John where Jesus, meeting her at Jacob's well, says: "Thou hast well said, I have no husband; for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that thou saidst truly."

Here Mr. Ingles has found his plot. A woman's relations with six men is matter enough for any novelist!

Most story-tellers who take their material from the New Testament, or the Old too for that matter, generally weave a weary length of unneeded embroidery upon a text already perfect in its severely simple suggestiveness. They retell what we already know. Mr. Ingles has not made that mistake. He has built his conjecture on the mere suggestion of a story, and in doing so he excites the reader with new material instead of wearying him by stretching out the old.

Mr. Ingles has Photina, the beautiful Samaritan, marry in succession a handsome young man, his repulsive brother, a rabbi, a prosperous merchant, a poor Greek potter. Between, and sometimes along with her husbands, she manages an affair with the Roman centurion who uttered at the cross the memorable words, "Truly this man was the Son of God." Thus the principal cultural strains of Christ's day are illustrated—Jewish, Samaritan, Roman, Greek.

Such a subject might easily have gotten out of hand. Yet Mr. Ingles makes the much-experienced Photina seem chaste and lovely. By adopting a straight narrative style with little dialogue, he has achieved a slightly

Your Literary I.Q.

By Howard Collins

A QUIZ OF FAIR LADIES

Lydia Mayfield, of Halstead, Kansas, offers twenty poetic quotations which describe twenty glamour girls. Can you match them up? Allowing five points for each correct answer, a score of sixty is par, seventy is very good, and eighty or better is excellent. Answers are on page 40.

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| 1. A maiden of wondrous seeming
Most beautiful, see, sits there. | () Annie Laurie |
| 2. A neater, sweeter maiden in a cleaner, greener land. | () Bess |
| 3. An attractive girl at Tunbridge. | () Carrie |
| 4. An' she looked full ez rosy agin'
Ez the apples she was peelin'. | () Chloe |
| 5. Archly the maiden smiled and with eyes over-
running with laughter. | () Elaine |
| 6. Beneath her torn hat glowed the wealth
Of simple beauty and rustic health. | () Evangeline |
| 7. Fair was she to behold, that maid of
seventeen summers. | () Guinevere |
| 8. Handsomest of all the women
In the land of the Dacotahs. | () Helen |
| 9. Her air had a meaning, her movements a grace. | () Huldy |
| 10. Her brow is like the snowdrift,
Her throat is like the swan. | () Kate |
| 11. Her color comes and goes, it trembles to a lily,
it wavers to a rose. | () Laura Lily |
| 12. Her eyes were full of liquid light;
I never saw a waist so slender. | () Lorelei |
| 13. Holy, fair, and wise is she. | () Madeline |
| 14. Round her eyes her tresses fell;
Which was blackest none could tell. | () Maud |
| 15. She seemed a splendid angel, newly drest,
Save wings, for Heaven. | () Minnehaha |
| 16. She was fairest of all flesh on earth. | () Phillada |
| 17. The landlord's black-eyed daughter. | () Priscilla |
| 18. The lily maid of Astolat. | () Ruth |
| 19. Was this the face that launched a thousand ships? | () Supiyawlat |
| 20. Wild and shy | () Sylvia |
- As some stray fawn that seeks its mother.

didactic effect suited to the Biblical material and which also neutralizes the excessive heat. He tends to avoid dramatizing the high moments. His characters, seen in a pre-Freudian light of simple vices and virtues, further the impression of impersonal narrative. Yet the very restraint heightens by suggestion the sensual nature of the material. Mr. Ingles, in short, has found a new formula for historical and Biblical fiction which will make his book widely and approvingly read by people who would think *Moll Flanders* scandalous. To cap the achievement, he is perfectly sincere both in his choice of material and in his restraint of manner.

As usual with books built around the life of Christ, Mr. Ingles is weakest when portraying the Master himself, though far stronger than Lloyd Douglas in "*The Big Fisherman*," as his book is on all counts better than that sensational best seller. In conveying the sense of Christ's effect on those who met him Mr. Ingles has failed to use his own device of restraint—the only device that might have worked.

Impressive in its picture of the intimate details of life in Jesus's time, unpretentious in style, sincere and original in conception, memorable in the dramatic contrast of its characters, "*A Woman from Samaria*" though not a great book is historical fiction without the false front and hollow interior which have become associated with the genre.

Bradford Smith is the author of "The Story of Jesus," a rearrangement of the Gospels into a continuing narrative form.

From a Train Window

By Eric Wilson Barker

ALL earth is fluent, flowing like the sea,
yielding strange islands for the mind to wander.
I explore them without moving,
relaxed but observant of these fleeting
that I may never see again,
save what mind's camera eye
(opening and shutting in hail and
farewell sequence)
reserves for its own defense
against gregariousness:
a hunch-shouldered hawk on a fence-
post;
wearing time lichen,
a single rain-starved tree;
and now, low in my windowed vista,
like the closing eye of a desert hermit,
the rayless copper sun.

Fusing Red and White Cultures

BEULAH LAND. By H. L. Davis. New York: William Morrow & Co. 314 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by DALE L. MORGAN

EVER since "*Honey in the Horn*" brought him to view in 1935, H. L. Davis has troubled the critics. They have been disposed to enjoy the fruits of his labor, but to demand in exasperation and some injury, "Is this how novels are written?" The answer would seem to be yes, and if this, his third novel, seems a little closer to the norm, it may be that the change that has come about is less in Mr. Davis than in general ideas of what a novel must be.

No one who read "*Honey in the Horn*" is likely to have forgotten it, that picturesque, not to say picaresque, story of the homestead era in Oregon. Mr. Davis's new novel is laid in a different part of the country but has a great deal in common with his first one, with two youngsters on the move opening up for us extraordinary vistas in American life. Loving the land he writes about, Mr. Davis cannot be said in either novel to have shown himself exactly disenchanted, but ironically observant as he is of those who people and sometimes corrupt this land, it is plain that he does not think the human race was perfected day before yesterday, or that this will come about a week from next Tuesday.

"*Beulah Land*" opens with the flight westward from North Carolina's old Cherokee country of Ewen Warne, who has lived among the Indians for years as overseer of the community's cattle, but who has now made the mistake of killing a Carolina settler. With him go the Cherokee woman Sedaya, Ewen's half-Indian daughter Ruhama, and the white boy Askwani, who has been brought up as an Indian without being accepted as either Indian or white. Their journey west toward what after all is to be Ewen's destruction, across the mountains and then by flatboat down the Tennessee and Mississippi to Natchez, makes a fascinating story, filled with a sense of the richness and vastness of mid-continental America as it existed a century ago, and memorable for its portraits of the extraordinary folk already energetically occupied in forever destroying this primeval America. A particular highlight of the journey is a backwoods wedding, so wonderfully characteristic of Mr. Davis's peculiar understanding of how



people behave, and why, that I reluctantly give up as impracticable the idea of quoting the whole of it.

Ruhama is left for a year in Natchez with an extraordinary couple who manufacture educated boxes for faro houses; Askwani goes downriver to some Choctaw settlements; and Ewen goes with Sedaya to the Indian Nation. But then with Sedaya dead, Ewen returns, and the three of them, reunited, settle on a farm in southern Illinois. There Ewen's old enemies catch up with him, and the bereft Ruhama and Askwani begin a new journey to the Indian Nation, along Ewen's old track. This journey, like the one from North Carolina, is superbly described. No one that I know of has quite Mr. Davis's skill in the use of a journey as a literary device; the country passed over, the adventures had, and the people met with combine in a wonderful portrait of a place and a time. Mr. Davis does not occupy himself with the conventional development of character under the impact of experience; in this novel as in his previous books his characters are pretty much at the end what they were in the beginning. But one is persuaded that this is exactly how people have lived, and that Ruhamas and Askwanis are clear windows for seeing again an American past that has been obscured for us by the dust and distinegration of time and change.

The last chapters of the book, relating what comes finally of Ruhama's
(Continued on page 29)