

of a resort hotel. This brings life to the country community, admiration and excitement to the beautiful young girl, and a consciousness of the outside world.

We sense the rich contentment of the family, appreciate the mother's wisdom and father's heritage of culture. Educated by reading, at home with Shakespeare, Byron, and in the classical sphere, the seventeen-year-old Alice felt there was nothing she didn't know. But there was something. She learned it vicariously at first, and later through her own choice of a dashing English beau. She grew up because of the Springs; they were her source.

Gossip on the hotel veranda, scandal and summer intrigue, jealousy and passion, leading in one instance to murder, stir the land seasonally. Impoverished aristocrats join the *nouveaux riches* in taking the waters, in mingling with the local gentry, and in dotting the tranquil scene with drama. These were days of grace, manner, and leisure. The time was untroubled, unhurried, and unutterably sweet.

That sweetness is for us to savor. Mrs. Winslow allows us to share these lingering memories, breathing for a bit that scented air, partaking a little in the abundant life. But it is past, vanished, finished. The illusion alone lasts, and it is good. Above all, this dream of the departed South is untarnished by sentimentality. A perceptive imagination has vanquished it. Gone are the indigenous, clinging crinolines and saccharine serenades. The pillars may have toppled but experienced splendor stays.

Voyage Through Despair

PORTRAIT IN TWO COLOURS. By Stuart B. Jackman. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1949. 188 pp. \$2.75.

Reviewed by ROBERT HALSBAND

THIS slight British novel, though it is written in prose of poetic texture, manages to convey with remarkable effectiveness the grim truth of General Sherman's dictum about war. It also goes beyond being merely a war novel by describing how the world of civilians appears to a sensibility that has been stunned by its traumatic experiences. In achieving all this it is a powerful book.

"Coming home was the big thing." That is how the story begins. Simon Calder comes home to his mother's and father's house, to their sympathetic welcome and to comforts that seem utter luxury after his agonies in the desert wilderness. But he cannot readjust himself to civilian life, and when he receives an invitation to resume his theological studies at Edinburgh, he answers the letter in his mind:

Dear Mr. Principal, I went away because I didn't know enough, and could say nothing. And now I've come back, and I know too much. And I can say nothing.

Christmas is approaching, and after persuading his parents to spend the holiday with him in Edinburgh, he drives their hired car down to the village gas station. On the way home he is impelled to speed and crash

into a fence. Although he escapes with slight injuries, the doctor orders him to stay in bed, and while he lies in the darkened room he relives the years that have left their festering memories.

In the pictures that flicker in his memory we see him on the long haul aboard a troop transport. This prolonged nightmare leads, when he is stationed in the desert, to a still more horrible and prolonged nightmare on the endless sand under the merciless sun. His struggle is not against any visible enemy but "against the barren beaches of futility." He goes on a routine patrol with his fellow-driver, Alan, and before the trip ends, they have been lost on the torrid wastes, they have lived through a sandstorm (which is described with terrifying power); Alan sickens and dies in torment, and Simon, injured and hysterical, wrecks his truck. He is found by a scout car, and is carried to the desert hospital. It too has its share of squalid suffering. Then the war ends, and he is shipped back to England. In his memory he has thus recapitulated the grim measures of his dance of death, and as he awakens in the snug comfort of his parents' house, he hears carols sung by children outside. His conversation with the anonymous "gray voice" within is ending:

And now, he thought, now I know a good deal more about the way things are. And now it seems that unless there is something to believe in, something bigger than we are, something that goes on being true always, then there isn't any way out of the mess.

After his voyage through despair, he has reached the haven of belief.

But his surrender to faith is unstained by what we are told of his previous history. His sense of religion does not seem to affect his attitude on the troopship or on the desert, nor does it seem to exist, except by implication, in his life previous to enlistment. His resumption of faith is, if the pun may be overlooked, too simply the *deus ex machina* of his drama. There was, once upon a time, a slogan that there are no atheists in foxholes; Simon's (re)conversion after he comes out of his symbolic foxhole requires considerably more proof to knit it to the rest of the compelling story. It is perhaps dangerous for a reviewer to identify a character with its creator, but this story is obviously autobiographical. In 1941 Mr. Jackman, a student of theology and arts at Edinburgh, enlisted and spent three and a half years in the Near East and in Africa; in 1945 he re-



"Here It Comes," by Donald Lester Dickson, USMC.

turned to England to complete his theological studies and become pastor of a Congregational Church in Devonshire. In real life he apparently returned to his faith after his searing adventures, but his spiritual rebirth is far less susceptible of being objectified in the form of fiction than

the dramatic, external actions that preceded it. This in no way belittles his considerable talent. His book, whether or not one is convinced by its resolution, is still a moving account set down with rare sensitivity of a man's descent through the inferno of war.

A Widow, but Still Human

WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY.
By Zelda Popkin. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co. 1949. 320 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by
MARJORY STONEMAN DOUGLAS

THE problem of what to do with widows has long beset human society. The Biblical method of marrying them to their husbands' brothers, the Hindoo one of burning them promptly on the husbands' pyres, the Christian one of shutting them up in convents, evidently did not prove practical enough to persist. The more primitive solution of slapping taboos on them and using them to wash dishes and draw water out of sight somewhere was not enough to keep them out of mind.

None of these simple masculine ideas considered that, after all, a widow is still not only a woman but a human being, with a natural thirst for an adequate life. Modern times acknowledge this with a shrug and have left it to the widows themselves to work out their own problems as best they can. Which is where many a modern story-teller comes in. Zelda Popkin, along with many others, has found that what a widow does to get herself out of the consequences of shock and grief and being half destroyed in the very middle of life, back into some



—Arthur Dobbs.

Zelda Popkin has nothing to say about "widows who look their age and have no special talents."

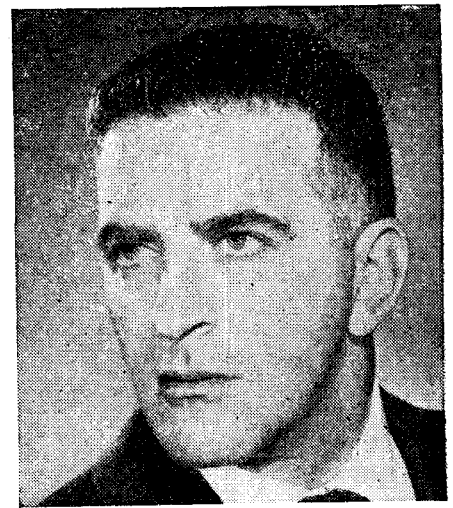
kind of wholeness, mental as well as social, is good material for a book.

Miss Popkin ran the risk of writing a book of interest chiefly to women, not to girls, certainly, and not to old ladies, probably. I don't know what the reaction of the average reading man would be to such a book as "Walk Through the Valley." I don't believe it would be considered dignified or probable for a widower to go through such soul-searchings and despairs. So I am inclined to believe that this is primarily a middle-aged woman's book. Women who have known what it is to experience the shattering of a good marriage by the death of a good husband, will undoubtedly read it with attention.

They may not find that Miss Popkin has done more than solve the problem of this specific widow. Yet she makes Katherine Brewer and her husband, John, into happy and real people. John Brewer's meaty and intelligent humanness pervades the whole story, although he dies in the first chapter. His loss becomes one in which we can sympathize profoundly. Her grief, her sense of lostness and emptiness, seems completely authentic.

Miss Popkin's solution of her widow's problem is to provide her with a mild stage success and a new husband of a singularly baffling and complex nature. It is a specific solution which adds little to our thoughts about what is the best life for widows. It does, however, make a story easy to read which carries one along pleasantly to the happy ending, which is, after all, the end of all women's hopes.

Yet afterward one remembers that there are widows who look their age and have no special talents and no such elegant way of healing what was so deeply broken. Miss Popkin has nothing to say about them. I cannot feel that she has done more than tell a story brightly and entertainingly, holding us chiefly by the real strength of her feeling for character. Her style increases the sprightliness of the effect with an abrupt, staccato, jerky phrasing, as unformed as a monologue. It makes the whole thing seem much more sketchy than I am sure she intended.



"Lenard Kaufman has taken hold of a fascinating situation only to evade the solution."

Idiot's Pann

TENDER MERCY. By Lenard Kaufman. New York: Creative Age Press. 1949. 257 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by SIEGFRIED MANDEL

THIS psychological melodrama comes to the reader in sixteen tightly-packed and neatly-tied prose chapters. It has an unusual angle, a strong dose of sex, competent writing, plus a sort of moral: the kind of recipe which the current commercial market advises for our novelists.

Sam and Alice Ballard hire Elizabeth Powell to take care of their idiot son, Aaron. For three years they lead a pleasant family life until Rudy Powell, Elizabeth's husband, who has been convalescing from tuberculosis in Arizona through Mr. Ballard's generosity, makes his unsavory entrance. Rudy quickly sizes up the situation and threatens to leave with Elizabeth, who has become completely necessary to Aaron's happiness, unless Mr. Ballard pays him huge sums of money whenever the whim seizes him to ask for it.

The Ballards feel that they must cling to Elizabeth at any cost, because without her Aaron becomes quite unmanageable and would have to be sent to an asylum. Because their physical attachment is too strong, Elizabeth will not send away her Rudy, although he is openly blackmailing these people who have been so good to both of them. The Ballards then try to replace Elizabeth, but the results are pathetic and unworkable. Soon they realize that Rudy's departure is only a matter of how long their money can last. Finally, when Rudy demands the ownership of Sam Bal-

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