

to drastic controls. The free-market system, as Mr. Hutchison points out, was undermined; redistribution of incomes came through steeply-graduated, direct taxation; the social services waxed in strength and scope. This reviewer would like to mention another, by no means negligible, moral current. Even the most flinty-hearted employers felt that since the common people had saved the nation (and, incidentally, rich men's property) they deserved a new deal.

After the 1945 elections the Tories had their tails between their legs as a result of their mauling at the polls. There was little snarl or fight in them. Ownership of the Bank of England, the coal mines, the railways, electricity concerns passed into State control with scarcely a whimper of angry protest: shareholders, being adequately compensated, remained quiescent. On steel, however, so stiff a battle was waged that the Labor Government consented to postpone operation of nationalization until the fall of 1950.

Meantime, Tory policy had suffered a sea-change. In an acutely analytical chapter Mr. Hutchison shows how R. A. Butler and his progressive associates produced a new program which, after some hesitation, was finally blessed by Mr. Churchill. "In trimming their windows for the 1950 election," he observes, "the Tories had borrowed a great many ideas from their competitors across the street. There was a marked similarity between the two displays, especially since the Labor Store was not featuring nationalized industry quite as prominently as it had once done." This program and the new, formidable, lavishly-financed political machine created by Lord Woolton reduced Mr. Attlee's gargantuan majority to less than a baker's dozen. Does this mean the end or even a long-term check to nationalization in Britain? Mr. Hutchison, who knows England well through long residence and extensive research, helps in this scholarly book to provide the discerning reader with an answer.

World Notes

ROOSEVELT'S GOOD NEIGHBOR POLICY, by Edward D. Guerrant. University of New Mexico Press. \$3.50. This book records the history of what is perhaps our most sustained success in the field of international relations. It begins in 1933 with Sumner Welles helping to make and unmake Cuban presidents; it continues through the period when American oil companies in Mexico suffered the *sturm und drang* of expropriation at the hands of the Cardenas administration; it re-

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Fiction. *This week a British writer brings England's past to life without the use of the familiar dependence on the clichés, bloodshed, and sex which are wearing out the patience of American readers. J. Delves-Broughton's "The Heart of the Queen" tells of Elizabeth and Essex and her gallery of historic characters teems with living people. Two other new English novels are worth the reader's attention: Charles Williams's "The Greater Trumps" and Robin Maugham's "Line on Ginger." The first is the last of a series of harrowing morality stories which run the gamut from black magic to murder. Mr. Maugham's novel plunges into the dismal life of an ex-soldier. Robert Wilder's "Wait for Tomorrow" is reportedly overweighted with sex, and in "Night Journey" Albert J. Guerard probes the psychology of fear in war.*

Old Thieving Acquaintance

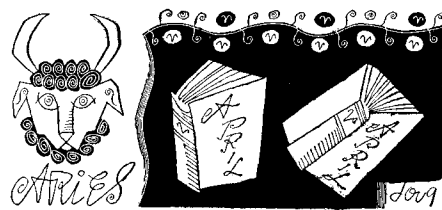
LINE ON GINGER. By Robin Maugham. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 186 pp. \$2.50.

BY NATHAN L. ROTHMAN

THE plot of this short novel, which is easily its most successful aspect, and Mr. Maugham's, too, is best gotten out of the way first. James Merton returns to his London flat one night to find a man in the act of stealing his silverware. More startling still, the thief is an old acquaintance, a fellow named Ginger Edwards, who had been in Merton's squadron during the war. Merton thinks back to those days—after letting Ginger go, of course—and tries to remember what he can of the man and of the others in the squadron: Cope, Wolf, Crawley, the rest. What has happened to Ginger Edwards to bring him to this pass? Where is the responsibility, where is the key to this miserable act? Merton decides then that he still retains some responsibility for the man and feels some guilt, too, at having so summarily dismissed him. More has to be done for Ginger than that. So Merton sets forth in a search for a line on Ginger, tracing him back through some of his haunts and checking with all of the men he can reach: Cope, Wolf, Crawley, Sommers. The story emerges bit by bit; it leads backward along a labyrinthine trail to some particularly revolting experiences in Ginger's youth and early manhood. Merton ends by taking Ginger under his wing, feeling he is his brother's keeper.

Now this is a fine working plot, and a great deal to get inside 186 small pages. Plotting, as I have said above, and in admiration, is the thing Mr. Maugham does best. He tells his tale

with deceptive ease, he illumines it with meticulously chosen bits of dialogue. Everything contributes, everything builds toward the planned effect. There isn't a wasted word or moment and certainly there is no time for boredom. Yet I derived no pleasure from the tale, nor did I from "The Servant," Mr. Maugham's earlier novelette. In both, I was repelled by the writer's marked disinterest in his characters. I felt with growing certainty that Mr. Maugham has no intention of ever getting mixed up personally or emotionally with the people he writes about—rum fellows as he sees them. I believe he regards writing as a kind of fishing in the stream, pulling in his line and regarding his wet and wriggling capture with a certain temporary interest; but, after all, they are fish. If I may twist the title for my own purposes, it is actually Ginger on the line, and not really a line on him at all. Maugham doesn't look hard enough for that, doesn't want to. He doesn't care very much about Edwards. If anybody counts here it is Merton, the narrator, in whose intellectual history Ginger Edwards functions as a peculiarly titillating experience. Mr. Maugham is capable, inventive, and will undoubtedly go on to produce a great many tales of such fish out of the stream as the horrible servant and the desolate Edwards, but I am afraid we shall find Merton, Merton everywhere.



Tarot Trouble

THE GREATER TRUMPS. By Charles Williams. New York: Pellegrini & Cudahy. 268 pp. \$3.

By RICHARD McLAUGHLIN

THIS is the sixth novel by Charles Williams to be published in this country. The first was "The Place of the Lion," which has been out of print several years but will eventually, I hope, find its way back into print among the uniform volumes issued by Pellegrini & Cudahy. For Mr. Williams has not only been snatched up by the *cognoscenti* but has established himself firmly in the imaginations of a steadily growing audience of general readers in this country. This is only right, since what he has to say does not belong to any coterie. It concerns us all; that is, all who are troubled by humanity's fall from grace and have lost touch with Gospel morality.

I suppose the thing most marked about all of Charles Williams's novels is his wit. It accompanies his message that all is not lost while there is faith, running like a bright silver thread through the most harrowing of his morality tales. In his narratives about the continual struggles between the different states of good and evil not all of his characters are certain as to which side they belong. Some are weak and bewildered enough to need "guardians," those same guardians of destiny whom T. S. Eliot introduces in the midst of his moving play "The Cocktail Party." (Incidentally, after seeing as well as reading this play one can see why Mr. Eliot has been such a champion of Charles Williams all these years.) Mr. Eliot has very effectively transferred to the dramatic stage what Williams expressed in his thrillers until his death in 1945. And there is no more cloudiness to the mysticism in Eliot's conception than in Williams's.

There may be some critics who hesitate to read Williams because of the pattern or working formula of the novels. Perhaps they resemble each other in being variations on a single theme—that Christian love will triumph over all evils. Mr. Williams's chilling tales, which employ every frightening device imaginable to make us stay with him in his journeys into Heaven and Hell, require that a proviso clause be added, viz: we must keep untiring vigil over that love at all times. Dealing with archetypes like no other modern novelist of our times, Williams's archvillains and arch-heroes always have their just punishments and rewards meted out to them. As William Lindsay Gresham says in his illuminating preface, "hair-raising



Charles Williams—"Christian love will triumph over all evils."

plausibility" is the keynote to the appeal of these books. In "Many Mansions" he made the stone bearing the Tetragrammaton the center of controversy between a group of morally good, bad, and indifferent human beings. In "War in Heaven" murder as well as the far-reaching powers of black magic help to enliven the chase for the Holy Grail that has unexpectedly turned up in modern-day England. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise to find that "The Greater Trumps," named after the twenty-two cards in the tarot deck, provide the mysterious symbols around which the author has woven another exotic and breathlessly exciting story.

The curtain rises (the theatre could have benefited by Charles Williams's kind of dramatic technique had he gone on after his play "Cranmer") on a somewhat cantankerous but well-intentioned Englishman, Lothair Coningsby, who has just inherited a pack of cards. Trouble begins when the deck is found out to be the original tarot pack. Skeptics, bystanders, and fanatics are soon drawn into a life-and-death struggle to find the secret of the cards. Here again we see what the supernatural powers, in this instance of the cards, do to a group of personable, intelligent men and women, who even talk, act, and think as we do on the surface, but who, in the presence of forces beyond their reach, have their true natures revealed to them. Some even find that murder is not too big a risk in their greed for powers beyond their control. Coningsby represents the skeptic, refusing to believe that the cards have any dangerous influence; Sybil, his sister, true to her name, has an intuition of their violent truth, but Nancy, his daughter, becomes involved in a perilous experiment along with her lover before the real meaning of the tarots is finally made known to them.

Elizabeth & Her Men

THE HEART OF A QUEEN. By J. Delves-Broughton. New York: Whitelsey House. 558 pp. \$3.50.

VICTOR P. HASS

AS I CLOSED this excellent historical novel late one evening I turned to the radio for returns on the British national election. Still under the spell of Miss Delves-Broughton's vivid evocation of Elizabethan England, it occurred to me that perhaps there was a very real connection between the surprising showing of Mr. Churchill's Tories, with their link to Britain's past, and the increasing preoccupation of so many of Britain's novelists with the glories of that past.

Surely, I thought, a novel as good as this one about Elizabeth, Leicester, and Essex; Drake, Hawkins, and Frobisher; Burghley, Walsingham, and Cecil might easily have had as profound an effect upon voting as the splendid thunderings of the great Churchill. "The Heart of a Queen" was widely read in England last year. So was many another historical novel which recalled the days when men dared magnificently as individuals—men who would have scoffed at trading that daring and that achievement for mere security from the cradle to the grave. Even I, whose ancestors rebelled against tubby Georgie, had had a quickening of the pulse as I lost myself in Miss Delves-Broughton's novel.

This, believe me, is no gaudy bare-bosom item complete with endless bed tumblings and the clash of swords wielded by puppets filled with sawdust. Rather, it is a scholarly, happily polished, exciting, richly incidented, and honestly portrayed picture of Elizabeth's reign, with particular emphasis on her love for Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and her rather dreadful infatuation, in her old age, for the handsome, arrogant, swaggering Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex. The novel is not "literature," I suppose, but it is extraordinarily good reading just the same.

Miss Delves-Broughton picks up Elizabeth in those few tense weeks that it took Bloody Mary Tudor to die and make way for Anne Boleyn's daughter. Swiftly she paints in the political situation as sides were chosen and the contest for supreme power began. Then, maintaining a nice balance of politics and romance, she throws Elizabeth together with Dudley.

To any who have read history or some of the seemingly limitless number of novels about Elizabeth and Leicester, the story is familiar enough. There is the life-long struggle with