

some attitude about World War II besides worrying whether a bomb hits a certain street in which a member of her family happens to be living. The bomb does hit it, by the way.

The prose is rather emotional, and everyone is passionate except Deborah's daughter Jane, who is unfortunate enough to be born ugly and to be uninterested in finding a man. Jane is last seen being driven from the house by Deborah, who considers her unworthy the name of woman. Jane was reading a book when she was so rudely interrupted. We wish we knew more about Jane.

—PATRICIA HIGSMITH.

FIRST ON THE ROPE. By Roger Frison-Roche. Translated by Janet Adam Smith. Prentice Hall. \$2.75. This is a suspiciously Freudian allegory. Pierre Servettaz, a young man whose heart and soul are pledged to the mountains, is forbidden to climb by his father, a Chamonix guide. Suddenly his father is struck by lightning on the Petit Dru, which is among the most hazardous of the Alpine ascents. A rescue party is formed to retrieve the body, and Pierre, who joins it, astonishes everyone by his agility in struggling up the sheer cliffs; but halfway to the top he loses his footing, falls, and suffers a fractured skull. He regains his health only to receive the most crushing blow of all: vertigo now overcomes him at high altitudes. He seems doomed never to climb again and rapidly loses his spirit, his interest in life, and his affection for his family and sweetheart (I found this hard to believe). At this crucial point Georges, a porter crippled by frostbite during the same tragic storm in which Pierre's father perished, prevails on him to make a fresh attempt at climbing. Led on by his maimed friend Pierre at last conquers the mountains and himself.

The essence of this idea is beautiful, but the book is not well executed. The author should have either eliminated all his cumbersome detail, including many of his brilliantly done climbing scenes, or he should have made his characters and his events at sea level far more motivated and complex. If "First on the Rope" (or in the original French "Premier de Cordée") is an allegory then it needs the simplicity and rapid movement of an allegory; if a novel it needs the intricacy and depth of conception that goes with that medium: it cannot take the favors of both without marrying one. —CHARLES SPIELBERGER.

A KINDRED SPIRIT. By Richard Sherman. Little, Brown. \$2.50. Miss Naomi Lynch, alias Elizabeth Darcy, was a plain-looking woman of forty-five whose success as a mystery writer

enabled her to travel and live quite comfortably but in no way compensated for the lack of love and companionship in her life. On the flyleaves of books in a neighborhood lending library she discovers the name of a man who has read the very same volumes in which she has found comfort. Unable to control her passion to meet and know this kindred spirit she seeks him out only to find he has committed suicide.

The author consumes 148 pages in telling his story, the impact of which is no greater than that of the above summary. Naomi Lynch is as bloodless as her fictional sleuth, Felicia Flint, and so what might have been the poignant tale of a lonely and frustrated woman is merely an outpouring of much ado about nothing. Not even the atmosphere of Sutton Place South, that unique cobblestone street which so closely resembles a stage setting, is described with any originality.

It is difficult to accept this book as the work of so professional a writer as Richard Sherman, whose third novel, "The Bright Promise," was a Literary Guild selection in 1947 and whose stories have appeared in almost every major literary and slick magazine in America. Since "A Kindred

Spirit" has already appeared in *Cosmopolitan* one can only conclude that its publication between hard covers was made in lieu of the new novel Mr. Sherman has not yet written. As a story it does not merit such distinction or preservation.

—JOSEPH M. GRANT.

BLANDINGS' WAY. By Eric Hodgins. Simon & Schuster. \$3. James Blandings was little more than a comedy stick-figure composed of weathered two-by-fours when Eric Hodgins presented him building his dream house four years ago. Now in "Blandings' Way" the figure is transformed. Mr. Blandings, along with several of the other satirically useful personifications from the earlier tract—The Rural Banker, The Bickering Wife, The Family Friend—has come to life.

The life they have come to in the new novel is seldom pleasant for the participants and seldom comic for the reader. Mr. Hodgins plays more on our sympathy this time than on our capacity for amusement—but he plays with a light touch.

Bewildered liberal, middle-aged seeker for something to engage his loyalties, city hick eternally duped by country slickers, Mr. Blandings strug-

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, and Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
PASSPORT TO PERIL Robert Parker (Rinehart: \$2.50)	American with false passport boards Orient Express on private mission to Hungary, is plunged into cloak-and-dagger web of Germans, Russians, papers, torture, the Girl, etc.	Ex - foreign correspondent Parker knows how to make espionage crackle with action, talk, and scene; desperation real and movement presto.	Will keep you awake
WATERFRONT Ferguson Findley (Duell, Sloan & Pearce: \$2.50)	Cop-killer irks rookie cop Johnny Malone into pursuit of sinister New York waterfront racketeers; solution wild as chase.	Police and criminals both seem quite mad, and violence spills until it is implausible—and only funny.	Your own risk
THE MARBLE FOREST Theo Durrant (Knopf: \$2.50)	The "new" doctor of Red Forks reaps the horrible fruit of inbred small-town decadence. His child kidnapped and supposedly buried alive, he fights time and society.	Tour de force splicing of mad mystery with a prose "Spoon River" of the local dead who help explain the desperate present.	Don't miss it
BOOK OF THE CRIME Elizabeth Daly (Rinehart: \$2.50)	Married at nineteen to handsome crippled hero, Rena is soon loveless and frightened in prison of N.Y. menage. Flees to bibliophile Gamadge who discovers murder.	Gamadge runs the show, enjoying family, friends, books, even the mess of evil before nice solution. Incidental characters authentic.	Pleasant, sans blood or bang
MURDER COMES HOME Anthony Gilbert (Random House: \$2.50)	Eccentric old Miss Fitzgerald dies eccentrically in London, and brother-in-law seems in for it. Arthur Crook cheerfully tracks the real murderer, escaping death narrowly.	Few outdo Gilbert in interest, plot, and weird but credible characters. Same is true in this one, though plot wobbles more than usual.	Good as they come

gles earnestly to do good in the town near his home-site. But school-board membership, local journalism, and community improvement — like Mr. Blandings's hayfield—promise richly only to end in ashes. Hope returns when Blandings sells the country home and returns to the simple, care-free life of the city and the humble toil of an advertising executive.

Mr. Hodgins's conclusion is similar in thought but precisely opposed in content to that of another satirist whose hero tried to take the world on two centuries ago: let us cease, Mr. Hodgins is saying, cultivating our gardens. If the conclusion suggests Voltaire the manner and matter of the story are closer to those used by Mr. Hodgins's smoother but more sedate contemporary J. P. Marquand. Dealing with the things which make tired business men tired, both writers combine slick improbabilities and cunning suspense tricks with passages of thoughtful writing, eloquent description, and rousing burlesque.

—VANCE BOURJAILY.

NO TIME FOR FEAR. By Davenport Steward. Hale Publishing Co., Hopeville, Ga. \$3. All the staple ingredients of the period novel have been tossed into "No Time for Fear," which deals with one aspect of the Revolutionary War—Francis Marion's dogged campaign in the Carolina low country. Like a mixed green salad, it contains selected ingredients: so many grim battles, hard-won victories, and cruel defeats, ruined families and divided loyalties, and, for seasoning, a dash of love. But the success of a salad partially depends on the manner of mixing. In his first novel Mr. Steward, a Southern newspaperman, has exhibited a certain skill in blending his various elements and has produced an edible concoction.

The book has two heroes, who serve as admirable foils for each other—Penn Thomason, a backwoods Quaker

pacifist, who joins the rebels after his father is brutally murdered by a sadistic English officer and Eugene Laurence, a Charles Town aristocrat, who breaks with his Tory father to espouse the Revolutionary cause. With the indomitable little General Marion and his ragged, undisciplined troops they fight in numerous skirmishes, endure grim hardships, help each other out of serious scrapes. Like soldiers in any war, they grow weary of the seemingly endless conflict and beef about rations, ammunition, and weather. Of the lesser characters Ervin, the blunt Scotch-Irishman, and Hertz, the former bondservant who sacrifices his life for his friends, are the best drawn. As for the dressing, the love scenes between Penn and Arline Laurence and those of Eugene and arrogant Pauline Carson are rather spiceless and cliché-ridden. Also, aren't such phrases as "war of nerves" and "you want to make something of it?" anachronistic in 1780? —R. P.

MISS WILLIE. By Janice Holt Giles. Westminster Press. \$3. This is a sequel to "The Enduring Hills," the first book about Miss Willie and her adopted niece, Mary, who married a Kentucky mountaineer. The author has lived for years among the mountain people, and she and her husband have taught there. Piney Ridge is obviously authentic both in setting and in characterization.

Miss Willie, teaching school in El

Paso, is a small, discriminating woman in her forties. Her life is so perfectly ordered that it is like a freshly made bed, neat, cool—and empty. When Mary writes and asks her to come to teach the mountain school Miss Willie, facing the loneliness in her well-ordered life, accepts the challenge.

The mountain school, unsanitary and lacking nearly everything, the parents and board members, "set in their ways," are more of a problem than she has bargained for. It takes all of her courage and ingenuity to meet life each day. Weary and at an age when many women give one last longing glance about for a sturdy shoulder and security, Miss Willie falls in love with Wells Pierce, a widower with several children. It is through the tolerance and quiet common sense of this man that Miss Willie gradually begins to understand the "quare" ways of the mountaineers.

Her emotions fluctuate, with the death of a child whose parents' religion forbids having a doctor for him and with the bitter reproach of Pierce's son, who finds her sanctimonious and condescending. But in the end Miss Willie and the mountaineers accept each other, and she finds a life that is rich, demanding, and satisfying.

The book is frankly sentimental. So are mountain ballads. It has as much flavor as woodsmoke and is as sturdy and clean as a freshly washed "coverlid" patched on a cabin porch.

—CHRISTINE NOBLE GOVAN.

LITERARY I.Q. ANSWERS

1. Poker. ("The Benson Murder Case" and "The Canary Murder Case," by S. S. Van Dine.) 2. Billiards. ("Antony and Cleopatra" Act II, Scene 5, By Shakespeare.) 3. Frog jumping. ("The Celebrated Jumping Frog," by Mark Twain.) 4. Poker. ("The Outcasts of Poker Flat," by Bret Harte.) 5. Whist. ("Around the World in Eighty Days," by Jules Verne.) 6. Pistol practise. ("The Musgrave Ritual," by Conan Doyle.) 7. Euchre. ("Plain Language from Truthful James," by Bret Harte.) 8. Whist. ("Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist," by Charles Lamb.) 9. Manhunting. ("The Most Dangerous Game," by Richard Connell.) 10. Solo whist. ("The Shooting of Dan McGrew," by Robert W. Service.)

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shouldn't murder
other people!

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