

The brothers Marcelin—"the still potent power of voodoo."

Zeline's connection snowballed into a popular and contagious fear of the man which finally infected even him. Diogène's plight of trying to remain in good standing with his own Roman Catholic world while still being unable to cast off the potent power of voodoo beliefs destroys him in the end.

The fascinating contrasts of Catholicism and voodoo which underlie the story serve to underline the vitality of this most intensely vivid tale. Edmund Wilson has contributed an illuminating introduction on the Haitian literary tradition and renaissance as well as on Haitian beliefs and mores, which the Marcelins' earlier books led him to study. The novelty of the material, the literary distinction of its treatment, and "the serious basis, in anthropology and in moral insight, of the Marcelins' work in fiction" make this one of the most interesting books of the year.

Fiction Notes

FOLLOW ME EVER. By Charles E. Butler. Pantheon. \$2.50. The miracle of the stigmata is one that has bemused many writers. Charles E. Butler, a poet of quality, has here essayed a modern parable centering around the reactions of a group of American soldiers stationed in Ireland to the occurrence of this miracle in their midst.

The story is written in the form of a memoir. Pieced together, in spite of the author's rather arbitrary time shifts, it shapes up into the following. One night Ellis, a soldier otherwise undistinguished, observed upon his

hands the wounds that duplicate the wounds upon the hands of the crucified Christ. Frightened, he leaves the camp without permission. Later he is picked up by the military police and unable to explain his actions he is subjected to court-martial proceedings. He is not court-martialed but instead sent into action, where he is killed. Among his company are those who saw the stigmata and believed in it, those who did not see and believed, those who did not see and were not sure, and those who did not see and did not believe. The narrator of the memoir is presented as one who did not see and yet believed.

This is the kind of simple parable that depends upon simplicity in telling to achieve its effects. Mr. Butler has not that simplicity. His structure is irritating and confusing. His prose is over-elaborate and loaded with such "poetic" adjectives as "strange," "terrible," "mysterious," "fragrant," and "beautiful," evasions which obscure rather than illuminate his intent.

—EDWARD J. FITZGERALD.

FAREWELL THE TRANQUIL. By R. F. Delderfield. Dutton. \$3. Perhaps there is need for another story set against the French Revolution. In any event here is one and one a cut above the average. It is complete with scenes of venal or stupid politicians at work, long shots of Danton, Marat, and Robespierre, and a closer-up view of Tom Paine and Joel Barrow. (Happily we get only one brief glimpse of Marie Antoinette.) We see the storming of the Tuileries, the September massacre, and the guillotining of Louis Capet. We are also given reflections on the

nature of democracy, the necessity of violence and of the paths of progress.

These trappings are apparently required, and Mr. Delderfield has provided them with a generous hand. Unfortunately, he has allowed them to interfere with his telling of a story with genuinely exciting possibilities. Wrongfully accused of murder, half-French David Treloar flees from England into Revolutionary France. There, by one of those fortunate encounters which every historical novelist has up his sleeve, he finds lodging in a house which not only provides an opportunity for love interest but also provides practically a box-seat for viewing the Revolution. Here is where Mr. Delderfield trots out those trappings, and the novel bogs down for long passages. It picks up again (along about page 175) when with David married to the fair Charlotte and Charlotte in prison action breaks out all over: murders, journeys in the night, scenes in the caves of the Gironde, the rescue of Charlotte from prison, the flight across La Vendee, and a final fillip of excitement in the last chapter.

The story cannot be said to be well constructed, but there is plenty of it. There would even be enough of it had Mr. Delderfield concentrated on his fairly interesting set of principals, whose adventures are exciting. But those historical figures and that mob are always getting in the way.

—E. J. F.

RENO CRESCENT. By Zola Ross. Bobbs-Merrill. \$3. In its general outlines the story of "Reno Crescent" sounds unbearably trite. Young Abigail Hunter takes a covered wagon trip to the West with her family in 1860. On their way to Nevada she becomes engaged to Martin Fielding, a Southerner, who presently has to leave her to make his fortune. Of course, the Civil War intervenes. She waits for years, living for his letters, then not hearing at all. Meanwhile she takes his name, brings up his child, runs his newspaper in the then struggling little town of Reno, supports his family, and fends off assorted suitors in the complete confidence that Martin is still alive and will return to her. Along the way she scandalizes the good ladies of the town by becoming an aggressive, successful businesswoman, not above doing favors for and accepting them from Chinese laundrymen and prostitutes. Finally she throws in her lot with that of the future of Reno in a way that is more surprising to her than to the reader.

If anything saves "Reno Crescent" from utter banality it is the way in which Miss Ross shares and commu-

nicates her heroine's enthusiasm for Nevada—for the early stages of its towns, the beauty of its desert. Yet this occasional lyrical note is hardly enough. No one who has been reading fiction for the past twenty years can help remembering that Edna Ferber wrote this type of novel first and that Bess Streeter Aldrich wrote it better.

—DOROTHY KOCH BESTOR.

GRAIN OF THE WOOD. By Michael Home. Macmillan. \$3. If Chippendale means no more to you than Grand Rapids stay away from this book. But if you are one of those people whose heart misses a beat at the sight of a majolica dish or a Bartolozzi print reach out for it. For Michael Home has made a hero out of an antique dealer and a novel out of his business. Mr. Home is the most unpretentious of writers. He weaves a modest little tale, tells it in a self-effacing way, and hopes he has not wasted the reader's time. A clear case of a novelist who aims low and hits what he is shooting for.

"Grain of the Wood" is the story of Ted Burling, a Norfolk lad who married pretty Jenny Shadd and set up shop with her in the antique business. They do well, have a son, rescue him when he gets into trouble, and that's all there is to it. But in the process of growing older with the Burlings we also grow a good deal wiser about antiques. Auction sales are the dealer's lifeblood, and Mr. Home is very good at describing the way a dealer gets his piece. The book has an English rural setting, and what the English dealer goes for may not be what the American collector prizes. But the basic technique of acquisition doesn't vary much. When dealers examine pieces they dearly desire with studied carelessness, nod their bids with seeming indifference—this is universal, one imagines. Mr. Home does this as to the manner born.

—J. B.

CAROLINE HICKS. By Walter Karig. Rinehart. \$3.50. Behind Washington's imposing marble façades toils an army of workers whose lives are extremely remote from the newspaper headlines manufactured by Government big-wigs. Walter Karig's novel dissects the everyday existence of these anonymous small-time careerists. His heroine, Caroline Hicks, is one of the thousands of small-town girls who feed the gigantic civil-service assembly line.

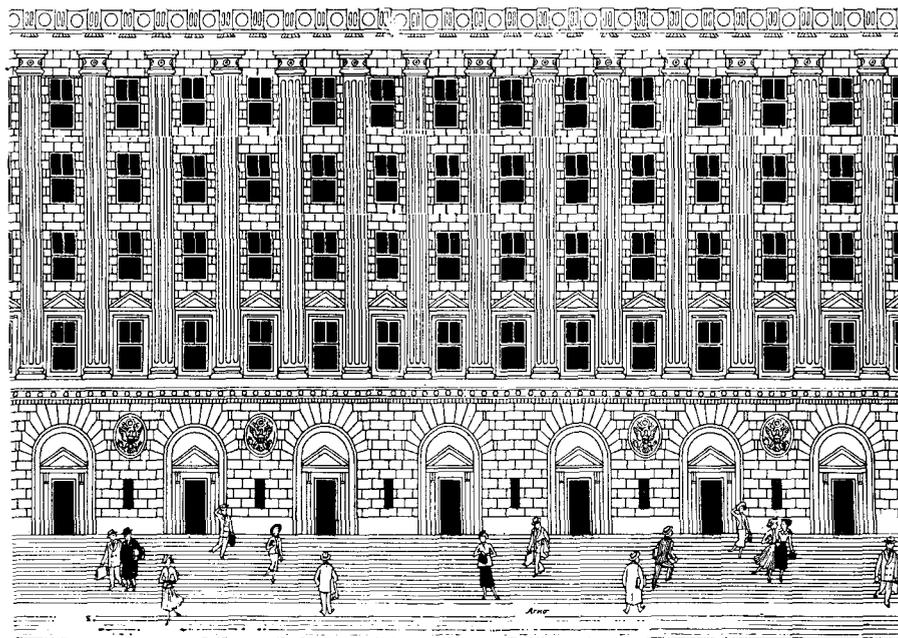
A bright young thing, Caroline rapidly adjusts herself to Washington mores. After moving into a crowded rooming house for refined young ladies she plunges into the Interior Department's stenographic pool. Her roommates, hard-boiled Shirley and prac-

tical Margaret, are old hands and initiate her into Washington's three M's: men, money, and martinis. Competition for the capital's male population is keen, but Caroline eventually acquires a string of predatory young men. She also manages to keep one jump ahead of her meager paycheck and to imbibe more liquid refreshment than is good for her. A brief fling with her wolfish boss is followed by her engagement to an upright veteran with artificial hands.

Mr. Karig is evidently a versatile

love for it. He also discovers his deep love for Ginny Hanscom, whom earlier he had flirted with in light and irresponsible fashion. Then there is the problem of Aunt Tiz Arey and her abortive romance with Amory, the town's police officer. There is also the problem of Polly Hanna and her love for the oppressively mother-ridden Jonesy.

Miss Mayo has supplied enough plots for a dozen soap operas and she has tied them together in a neat package. She convincingly evokes the terror



—From "Caroline Hicks."

writer. He has not only co-authored "Battle Report," a World War II Navy history, but has written two previous novels, "Zotz!," a Book-of-the-Month Club selection, and "Lower Than Angels." In "Caroline Hicks" he displays a flair for realistic reportage. But his pages of girl-chatter and smart-alecky boy-girl banter are monotonous. Long before the end one begins to wish that Caroline would decide on her young man and settle down to domesticity.

—RAY PIERRE.

OCTOBER FIRE. By Eleanor Mayo. Crowell. \$3. In the fall of 1947 forest fires terrified the people of Maine, as the flames swept back and forth over the hills of that wooded state. Eleanor Mayo has here constructed a nicely knit popular novel around the reactions of an average group of town-folks in a threatened Maine village.

Mike Arey is the heretofore irresponsible young man who is her hero. Returned from the wars he is plunged into the fire-fighting problems of the community of Frenchville, already half destroyed by the first consuming wave of the fire. Caught up in the community plight he discovers his

and tension created by the terrible threat of forest fire and the problems of fighting it. As a bit of over-caution she has strung her plot on a mystery line centering about a mad firebug, which could well have been left out. Any self-respecting soap-opera addict who couldn't spot the culprit on his first appearance would be read out of the club.

—E. J. F.

TESSIE: The Hound of Channel One. By Shepherd Mead. Doubleday. \$2.75. For those who haven't yet made a down payment on a TV set it isn't too late to read the account of the meteoric career of "Tessie, the Hound of Channel One." They will be exposed to what may be the video of the future—to a show built around a beautiful but dumb collie, who parlayed a fifteen dollar bit-part in a dog-biscuit commercial into an amazing \$1,250,000 career.

That she became a coaxial wow isn't news to anyone who has followed TV through the next decade, as Mr. Mead has; Tessie even made the cover of *Life*. (Check with your newsstand regularly.)

Simply by sitting back on her haunches, mugging into the camera,