

## Millionaire Mission

**THE SHAPE OF SUNDAY:** *An Intimate Biography of Lloyd C. Douglas.* By Virginia Douglas Dawson and Betty Douglas Wilson. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 372 pp. \$3.50.

By CARL BODE

DURING the last twenty-odd years Lloyd Douglas was our most prominent—almost our only—practitioner of an extremely disreputable literary form, the didactic novel. Critics clearly prefer pleasure to instruction from our novelists, and this is all the more true if the instruction is badly handled. Since Douglas was guilty on both counts, it is no surprise that the critics mauled him. From a belletristic point of view he has, in fact, no significance for us; from a social point of view he does.

The lasting importance of his best-sellers will lie in the way they help to explain some of the needs and cravings of the American public in the 1930's and '40's. His books managed to satisfy these, as they changed, almost by accident. It took the coming of the Great Depression to make his first novel sell its hundreds of thousands of copies. Its message, jauntily delivered and cheaply embellished, was that if you did good to someone and did not let it be known, you thereupon acquired a thing called "personal power." Your personality would become radiant and all sorts of rewards would be yours. That was what Douglas preached in "Magnificent Obsession" and his eight succeeding novels of the Depression period. But with the onset of World War II he abandoned the naive materialism of his original message and in "The Robe" wrote a novel with the Crucifixion as its center. The hero and heroine of "The Robe" choose to die a martyr's death; the rewards are no longer of this world but the next. In "The Big Fisherman," his final novel, Douglas's preachment was "Give up your worldly goods and follow Christ." Both books sold even more remarkably than the ones written before.

"The Robe" and "The Big Fisherman" matched the altered temper of the times. One of the questions that confronts a student of a culture like ours is just how an enormously pop-

ular writer such as Douglas manages to win his mass market, and keep it. Certainly the war affected him as it did most of us. But his daughters' biography shows plainly that Douglas's personal life played an important role in reshaping what he had to say. The authors give a picture of a devoted, closely-knit family which found the material rewards of writing best-sellers rich but later discovered that they counted little when weighed against sickness or death. For Douglas and his family, illness became almost a constant companion. By the time he finished his last novel, his wife had died and he himself was invalidated.

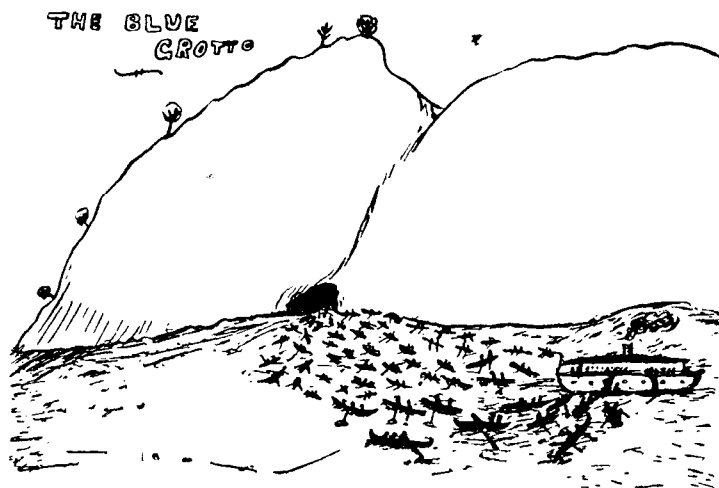
The best thing about "The Shape of Sunday" is the warm yet not mawkish account of Douglas's family life. The perils and severe limitations that go with any biography by relatives are of course well known. With allowance for them, "The Shape of Sunday" is a fair enough job. Starting with his first pastorate, the Douglas girls retraced their father's career faithfully. They went back to the communities where he and they had lived; they talked with people who had known him; and they checked local newspapers and books for references. They added a great deal of family anecdote and in the last few chapters drew heavily on his correspondence. The result might have been impossibly saccharine. It is a tribute to them that it is not. In general they looked at their father with the loving but discerning eyes that good daughters often have. When it comes to dealing with the fact that no literary critic ever saw much to praise in him as a writer, they are uncomfortable but they do not make a scene about it. The book is not sticky nor is its tone annoying. It gives us the necessary complement to Douglas's own volume of memoirs on his early life.

## Notes

**INFIRM GENIUSES:** There is a curious game sometimes played by graduate students of literature who are cramming for their comprehensive exams. It goes like this: What writer was insane? epileptic? hunchbacked? club-footed? dyspeptic? and so on. The connection between the infirmities of geniuses and the writings of (in these cases) Smart, Swinburne, Pope, Byron, and Carlyle is useful when it serves for insights or qualifications. But it becomes a mockery of literature and of biography when the infirmity is assumed to be the most important part of the genius and his work. Yet that is how W. R. Bett goes about his fifteen brief essays in "The Infirmities of Genius" (Philosophical Library, \$4.75). He is aware of their writings and biographies, to be sure, and sketches them in with an amateur, gushy style, along with what he considers of paramount importance—their infirmities.

The idea of genius being inseparable from infirmity is not at all new; Edmund Wilson's "The Wound and the Bow" explored it through the legend of Philoctetes. But such a study must be done with far more subtlety and knowledge than Mr. Bett brings to it. If he wants to continue on the same track, he can add some other writers to his literary infirmary: for blindness Milton and Joyce, for insanity Swift and Collins, for melancholia Johnson, for inversion Proust and Gide, and so on. But it is only a game; cross-word puzzles are more rewarding because they are less pretentious. —ROBERT HALSBAND.

**SAM CLEMENS'S PARADISE:** A fantasy of what happens in the heavenly Paradise can be neat satire on our mundane realities. And if the visitor there is an honest and plain thinker (Continued on page 41)



—By Lloyd C. Douglas from "The Shape of Sunday."

Carl Bode, professor of English at the University of Maryland, has published articles on such American novelists as Lloyd C. Douglas and Peter B. Kyne.

# *The Hunted Men* *of* *Graham Greene*

ANNE FREMANTLE



—Lida Moser.

Graham Greene—"the trembling 'mother-naked' man."

IT is now nearly a quarter of a century since Graham Greene published his first book. In that time he has produced six novels, five "entertainments," two travel books, a volume of essays (mostly book reviews), and a collection of nineteen short stories. (The novels visibly differ from the entertainments only, it would seem, because in the latter the moral is worn inside the plot, whereas, in the former, it is articulated upon the theme, like the exhaust of a racing car engine.) Movies have been made from several of Mr. Greene's books; he has reached the best-seller list in four or five countries; whenever he crosses a frontier he is recognized, interviewed, makes a statement; at least two serious, full-length studies of his work have appeared in French, and no fiction anthology in any language is complete without one of his tales.

His American publishers have now reissued under a new title, "The Shipwrecked,"\* Mr. Greene's "England Made Me," which first appeared in 1935. It is exciting to have his latest novel ("The End of the Affair") and this comparatively early one appear within a year, for it gives his readers a sort of double-entry resume of his work-in-progress.

The hero and heroine of "The Shipwrecked," Anthony and Kate Farrant, are twins; for many years they have met only spasmodically, for Anthony has been primrosing downward, Kate sinning more successfully on the way up. At the book's opening, he is sec-

retary and she is mistress to Eric Krogh, Swedish super-financier (a thin disguise for Ivar Kreuger, whose spectacular suicide was news a generation ago). Anthony is a capsule of all future Greene heroes: he has been thrown out of more jobs than he (or his sister) can count. He can't open his mouth without telling a lie. He is a cheat to the marrow of his bones, and a pompous prig to boot. Living off women but ashamed of them, not of himself, he is ready to blackmail even his sister. He is a rotter, a cad, a snob, and a bore, though he oozes sex appeal and charm.

Kate, decent "after her fashion," self-sufficient, self-respecting, idolizes Anthony, but also feels guilty about him. Once, when bullied and miserable, he ran away from school, she sent him back. Everything he has since become she thinks is the result of her too emphatic insistence. He knows and trades on this guilt-feeling, sponges, battens, and fawns on her, although she persuades Krogh to give Anthony a job as his bodyguard. Eric and Anthony grow fond of one another: Anthony loosens up Krogh, makes him relax, grow vulnerable, generous, almost human. Then, Kate and Anthony combine to blackmail Eric. For no Greene character—and this is a trick he admits magpieing from Henry James—can ever be betrayed except by his intimates. They are almost successful; Eric asks Kate to marry him so that she couldn't give evidence against him. But the twins are foiled by Fred Hall, who flies in in a sort of Satan-ex-machina way, knuckle-dusters a would-be striker, and pushes Anthony into the water, a

lucky fog assisting. Kate knows it is murder. Everyone knows, but no one cares. Anthony has got what he deserves; Kate, having lost her all, will leave; Krogh, since we know he is really Ivar Kreuger, will soon commit suicide anyway, probably the very next time another Anthony catches him predated checks.

THE story is psychologically simple, for Greene is almost naively Freudian in his framework. Anthony rebels against his respectable father, as Andrews in "The Man Within" rebels against his unrespectable father. Even Sarah, in "The Heart of the Matter," has a simple enough Oedipus-complex, which at one level accounts both for her nymphomania and her search for God. Greene is the least intellectual of modern major writers, stemming more from Joseph Conrad, with his inarticulate, ravaged heroes, than from either the distilled, essentially introverted Henry James, or the self-conscious, brutally aware François Mauriac.

"The Shipwrecked" is theologically bold. Its assumption is that it is only the desperate, the destitute, the crooks, and the utterly abased who can save. Only Anthony could help Krogh, but Hall has him killed. In other novels it is the pure who more conventionally represent Grace; in "The Man Within," for example, it is Elizabeth who offers Andrews a peace

Anne Fremantle is the author of the novel, "James and Joan," and "Desert Calling," a biography of Charles de Foucauld.

\*THE SHIPWRECKED. (ENGLAND MADE ME.) By Graham Greene. New York: Viking Press. 244 pp. \$3.