

Fiction

Continued from page 19

dipsomania, and murder. Yet the characters remain curiously manicured and static, like porcelain figures, and totally fail to understand the kind of family role that Grandfather Woodcock had intended them to play. Or perhaps it is the author himself who doesn't understand. In any case, the wickedness and weakness of the Woodcocks does not seem an indictment of New England family tradition because the trappings—silver evening dresses, coiffured hair, beige silk shoes, and pompous flower arrangements—more closely resemble the North Shore of Long Island than anything else. —ELIZABETH BAYARD.

ENGLISH IDYLL: Basil Davidson's "Ode to Young Love" (Houghton Mifflin, \$3.50) is a compelling novel, highly imperfect but memorable; ultimately an artistic failure, yet of greater impact than many works of higher artistry.

Its astringency derives largely from a plot with ironic background. Lindy Wellin, an illegitimate, unwanted child in an English village, tells of her growing love for Jacob, an equally unwanted, undeveloped young Heathcliff. The hideaway in the woods and the plans to escape to Australia are treated with a convincing dignity that suffuses the whole love story. It is orchestrated by Lindy's observation, sometimes bordering the lyrical, of the seasons and countryside. The sexual side is minor, an afterthought, a confirmation.

But the topical background is ironically worldly. Lindy's mother, Poppy, is wild, strong, vigorous; Ted, Jacob's father, is a fading wanderer living on his wits. They settle down to a quiet little business in small-time prostitu-

tion to serve the nearby American air base.

By using Lindy as the story's narrator, the author invites comparison with "The Catcher in the Rye," which had, however, the natural yet gripping idiom of Holden Caulfield to sustain it, while the youngster in this book is only a sensitive village girl, whose expression is simple, childish, and necessarily conventional. Moreover, to achieve a child's view Mr. Davidson employs a deliberate crudity of narrative technique—a self-destructive weapon. The book abounds in phrases like, "But I've been running ahead with my story."

"Ode to a Young Love" is idyllic, yet with its background it becomes a satiric ode indicting the postwar atmosphere. This dramatic double-edge, however, is weakened by diffuseness until it becomes blunted, the irony merely bittersweet. There are studies of American reactions to Britain, criticism of the British school system, comparative analyses, by the privileged and otherwise, of contemporary England.

Yet this is an exceptional novel. The story never loses interest. The structure—a series of journal-like, episodic accounts—is admirably functional. There is a sense of whimsy: the counterpoint conversation between two American airmen in a car, one grimly advocating the bombing of Russia, the other verbally atoning for his ravages on his floozy's brassiere, is delightful.

Above all, Mr. Davidson says what he means. Without this blessed gift he could not be so consistently touching, nor at times so deeply moving.

—DEREK COLVILLE.

BONDS OF IVY: In "The Sun Is My Undoing" and the novels of her Spanish trilogy, Marguerite Steen brought most vividly to life those characters farthest away from her readers: royal mistresses, matadors, and eighteenth-century slave girls.

Her new novel, "The Woman in the Back Seat" (Doubleday, \$3.95), though it allows the lovers, Ellen and Paul, to find each other in the pavillon of a luxurious estate on the Riviera, carries them north quickly to marriage in one of England's ugliest industrial cities.

It is as if the author had deliberately lifted a pampered heroine out of historical romance, set her down in the grimly realistic present, and demanded that she make a place for herself there. Ellen's struggle to fit into the life of Paul, a professor who finds it easier to give fidelity to his work than to a woman, takes place against a background of academic violence. Battling those who would give the university

over to atomic scientists are the valiant few who make a last stand for literature and the humanities. Paul and his loyal, rioting students take the side of "Lit. Hum.," and so, within the confines of her temperament, does Ellen.

She finds it hard to forget her dead husband and her sense of having failed him sexually. And thus she overcompensates in her devotion to his gifted daughter, Lavinia, who grows up into one of those students whom Ellen, unlike Paul, finds so hard to accept. The perilous surges of feeling between the girl and her stepfather bring the novel to its crisis.

As seriously as the author has tried to engage her talents with a vital contemporary issue, and as ardently as she defends the ungracious new generation, it is clear that this matter has not evoked the virtuoso's magic. One suspects that Miss Steen found writing about university life, as Ellen found living it, a rather arduous chore.

—HOPE HALE.

Criminal Record


MURDER MUST ADVERTISE. By Dorothy Sayers. Harper. \$3.50. Eighth restoration to print of works of this fine practitioner finds Lord Peter Wimsey (in false whiskers, sort of) drawing down £4 a week in a London publicity outfit where death has just struck—and continues to strike. First published in 1933, this yarn is still top-flight.

CATACOMBS. By Jay Bennett. Abelard-Schuman. \$2.95. New York industrialist (Dartmouth alumnus) is gentle to wife's California niece, but gal is suspicious, and with good cause; three perish; cop absent. Linked sweetness long drawn out.

SOMETHING FOR THE BIRDS. By Amber Dean. Crime Club. \$2.95. Buffalo bank heist works fine up to a point, but amateur ornithologists make strange discoveries and that makes things different. High-I.Q. toughie is unusual, effective job.

THE CASE OF THE MYTHICAL MONKEYS. By Erle Stanley Gardner. Morrow. \$2.95. Perry Mason takes on defense of beautiful miss who finds male corpse in California mountain cabin; Della Street and Paul Drake earn their keep, and Prosecutor Ham Burger's stand-in is left gnashing his teeth. Ageless counsellor's fifty-seventh case is right down the alley.

—SERGEANT CUFF.



David Loovis

"has fixed with humor and precision a new sort of modern hero: the Outsider who wants In."

—GORE VIDAL

TRY FOR ELEGANCE

\$3.95 SCRIBNERS

Mars

Continued from page 21

sapiens, so named. Yet we cannot forget that the victors had to a large extent a free hand to make a new world. It could never have come up to their hopes. They could have made something better of it than they did.

And America withdrew into isolationism, the most expensive of luxuries.

"The Great War" is primarily an account of land warfare, but sea and air are given their due: there is a fine chapter on Jutland, "the last great naval battle in which air forces virtually did not count." Every theatre is given coverage, and the home fronts are treated briefly but vividly. It is startling to be reminded that little English boys stooped to the "degrading absurdity" of stoning dachshunds. Some of those youngsters doubtless grew up to die in the rubble of Caen. "The Great War" is an admirable summary, written with a sureness of pace that makes for easy reading. —JOHN T. WINTERICH.

A CUBIT FOR WASHINGTON: Between December, 1777, and the ensuing spring, which seemed a miracle, a ragged, sickly band of rebels under George Washington created one of

the most cherished of our military traditions. The heroic tragedy of Valley Forge, as recreated by the industrious Donald Barr Chidsey, should add to American pride in those indomitable early soldiers of the U.S.

But "Valley Forge" (Crown, \$3) is not driven by narrative power, and it somehow lacks color, despite the rendering of a winter landscape peopled by men like Washington, Steuben, Henry Knox, Nathanael Greene, and Lafayette. The book, in fact, is hardly more than a descriptive essay.

Yet it is more than a by-product of a novelist's research, and in addition to the charm of unexpected nuggets from documents, there is the ring of truth in the unflattering pictures of many Congressional leaders, of those who conspired against Washington, and of the troops themselves. By indirection, the work is an added cubit to the gigantic reputation of Washington, a man inscrutable then as now, without whose example, it is certain, there could have been no Valley Forge, and perhaps, no free nation.

That appears to be Mr. Chidsey's central message, though between the freezing rains and snows of December, when the huts were built, and the incredible shad run of April, which delivered the camp, much else is left unsaid. The book has modern photographs and contemporary maps and portraits. —BURKE DAVIS.

Ideas

Continued from page 17

in the conscious states column, and is somehow associated with the fact that this is not a deterministic column." It is thus apparent that his hypothesis of the brain as an "organ of consciousness" does not lead the author to a conviction that one's actions are subject to physical determinism in the brain.

Bridgman concludes that as a social being a person operates on two levels. There is the level of daily social life, which is the level of free will, and there is the deterministic level, in particular the level of scientific operation. This deterministic level, he points out, is overwhelmingly successful on the inanimate material level; except for quantum phenomena, it is "the best we have on the biological level, and on the social level has little more status at present than that there is nothing in sight to indicate that it is a logically impossible program."

I SHOULD myself feel that he would have represented the scientific facts more accurately if he had stated that the degree of determinism observable in nature presents no logical inconsistency with the freedom that is assumed as a person operates on the level of daily social life.

There is one point on which Bridgman lays especial emphasis with which I find myself in radical disagreement. He states: "The scientist has no place for 'faith.'" Only a few days before I read this statement I told a university audience in Indiana, "It is a noteworthy characteristic of the scientist that he is a man of faith." Assuming that each of us is trying to represent accurately the world as he sees it, it is clear that we understand differently the meaning of the word "faith." In the adequate understanding of this word is centered, as I see it, a major part of the difficulty of fitting the activity of the scientist into the human life of the modern world.

Professor Bridgman's meaning in his use of the word "faith" is indicated, for example, by his phrase, the acceptance of the laws of nature as a reliable basis for drawing up a program of action. He explains that one may follow such a program assuming that it is "the best bet" that there are natural laws, but being ready to follow an alternative program if it should be found that the supposed laws are unreliable. He sees little in common between such an assumption of a best bet

On Completing His Hundredth Year

By Hollis Summers

I HAVE bathed, and loved one woman, often;
Kept regular, as they now say openly
In magazines and television; kept
Irregular hours consistently. I soften
My bread with milk, preferring tea
And coffee. I drink. I have slept

Poorly, but also often. None of these
Details is important except perhaps the woman,
But there, too, the virtue is not mine.
I relish chocolate, hamburger dishes, and cheese,
The same food I liked as a child. I began
Smoking early. My mind refuses to resign

My body, but this, too, is not vital
For you young reporters. Say to the public,
If you have to have five quotes, say he writhed
In many directions without accepting banal
Excuses for writhing. Say he was heretic,
Hoping for heaven. Say he tithe

Time, admitting the sudden fact of happiness
At least one day out of ten.
Say he approved of weather and the lovely dance
Of seasons. And say, if falsely, he was pitiless
Of men who dared to call other men
Finally stupid. I attribute my age to chance.