

Destination Despair



Erich Maria Remarque—meaningful.

The Night in Lisbon, by Erich Maria Remarque, translated by Ralph Manheim (Harcourt, Brace & World. 244 pp. \$4.95), bares the life-in-death anguish of a couple destined to be fugitives ad infinitum. William S. Lynch, who devotes much of his time now to literary criticism, has been a professor of the humanities at Cooper Union.

By WILLIAM S. LYNCH

THE MAN on the run from the Nazis, all too familiar as he may be in recent history and fiction, never fails to command our attention. Lost in the only world of meaning to him, that of consulates, police stations, internment camps, the one thing that counts is a passport—a valid one preferably with the necessary visas. Loneliness, homesickness, and universal indifference were his lot in the late Thirties and early Forties. Even now his plight shocks us, as does the memory of the millions of other Nazi victims.

This is the story of one such refugee as told to another the night before he was to sail to America, the goal for

which he had struggled for years, only to have at this last moment all purpose taken away from him by a fate as cruel as any from which he had fled. The adventures of this man whose passport named him Schwarz, recounted by an old master like Remarque, provide a tale of suspense and intrigue on the order of those of Ambler or Greene. But to leave it at that is not enough. For here, too, is a tragic love, complicated and desperate, as Schwarz, driven by compulsions he does not himself really understand, returns to Germany to find his wife, Helen, from whom he has not heard for five years. He finds her, flees again, this time with her in a frantic effort to escape from the Europe in which there is nothing for either but barbarism and fear. In pursuit are not only the usual forces of German officialdom, but a special nemesis in the form of Helen's brother Georg, a high-ranking member of the Gestapo. To report what happens would not be fair. It can be said that the events incidental to their efforts to escape are exciting and chilling.

More meaningful than the thriller side of the book, though, is the life-in-death relationship of the two, clinging together in a world where there is "no going back and no destination, just flight, flight together, and despair." Sometimes tenderly, sometimes fiercely, sometimes even with distrust and loathing, they move on and on, lost in the terrible jungle in which they are trapped. In revealing their lot to us, Remarque displays his already proven talent for setting and incident. Things are real as he describes them; they can be felt as well as seen. Remarque long ago mastered the art of keeping a story moving without at the same time appearing too glib or slick. His tortured characters here are convincing as well as sympathetic. No *All Quiet on the Western Front* (how could there be another?), this is first-rate Remarque, with less philosophizing than some of his others, but meaningful and pertinent.

And So to See Again

The Blind Heart, by Storm Jameson (Harper & Row. 217 pp. \$3.95), deals with the moment of recognition that comes to three persons whose vision has been clouded by love or hate. The latest literary study by British novelist and critic Walter Allen is "The Modern Novel in Britain and the United States."

By WALTER ALLEN

THE THEME of Storm Jameson's new novel is the restoration of sight to hearts blinded by love or by hate. There are at least three such blinded hearts described, and this, in view of the book's brevity, is probably one too many. Of that, more later; the other two are most effectively done.

The setting is the countryside around Grasse in Provence, which Miss Jameson, an unsentimental lover of France and the French, renders most vividly, both in its heat and aridity and in the idiosyncrasy of its people. At the center of the scene is Aristide Michal, Greek by birth, a cook of near genius, and the landlord of a small restaurant. The chance of buying it comes to him; he loses it, together with his life's savings, by an act of generosity. One says, "by an act of generosity"; but beyond this as the real precipitant of Aristide's troubles is the fatal flaw in his character: his blind love for his adopted son, who betrays him doubly by stealing his money and seducing his wife.

With Aristide, Storm Jameson attempts one of the most difficult tasks a novelist can set himself: the creation of a positively good man—and she is largely successful. Aristide is not a tragic figure; but in his generosity of spirit and in the stoicism, even in the common sense, with which he accepts the consequences of his uncritical love for a psychopathic son, he may stand as representative of the ancient Greek virtues.

Miss Jameson is almost as successful with the second of her portraits, that of an Englishman who is consumed with bitterness against the young wife who has cuckolded him and who seeks revenge by writing a novel about her, to be published after his death. In the end, he forgoes his revenge and burns his book. Again common sense—in the recognition of the limitations involved in being human.

With her third instance of a blind heart the author fails, by comparison, to convince. This is the tale of the son of a Frenchwoman deported to Germany during the war, who is adopted as a baby by German foster parents, and who returns years later, against his will, to his

"FASCINATING"
—N. Y. Times



"BRILLIANT"
—N. Y. Daily News

ROBERT MURPHY'S

bestselling book about a career "never surpassed by any other individual in the history of our foreign service"—*Saturday Review*. 16 pages of photographs; 4th large printing; \$6.95 at all booksellers. **DOUBLEDAY**

DIPLOMAT AMONG WARRIORS

real mother in France. His story is insufficiently integrated with the others and, somehow, crowded out by them. To satisfy, one feels, it would need to be expanded, even to the extent of becoming a separate novel.

Storm Jameson is a tough-minded writer. She is haunted by human cruelty, especially that cruelty which may be called gratuitous, whether between men and women, parents and children, or arising out of war. Never sensational or sentimental, her prose is sharp and precise.

Christian Endeavor: Elizabeth Jenkins, English novelist and biographer, doesn't believe in the social interpretation of crime. Miss Jenkins believes in Christian responsibility. She also believes that there are good people and bad people, but that a Christian must learn to forgive.

To illustrate all these worthy sentiments, Miss Jenkins has written *Brightness* (Coward-McCann, \$3.95), an extremely tedious novel—which is, alas, hard to forgive. We have Marion Sugden, a grasping and materialistic rich woman who has raised a dangerous oaf of a son. We have her neighbor Una Lambert, a gentle though impoverished widow who has raised a theological Peace Corps type in a Cambridge blazer. We have Marion's slogging, bewildered husband and Una's dominating sister. We have a defiant young girl named, of course, Faith. And, oh yes, the town prostitute, poor girl. Naturally, there has to be a contrived tragedy so that everyone can get the message: be responsible, learn to forgive, and make the old Cambridge try for Christianity.

The setting is a small English town near a big industrial complex. Miss Jenkins is very good on gardens.

—MARGARET PARTON.

**FRAZER YOUNG'S
LITERARY CRYPT NO. 1081**

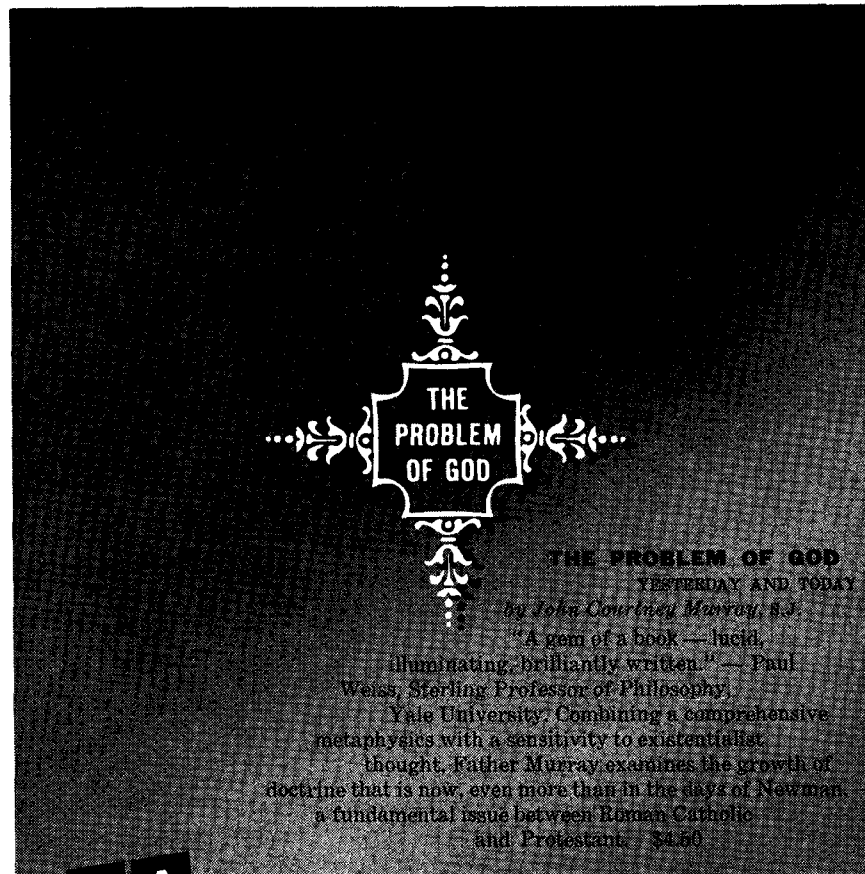
A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 1081 will be found in the next issue.

CSAHA AWAHNSLMP LK FRQ
LO UBKO FA PTTQ OT XMTC
OSA CTHKO.

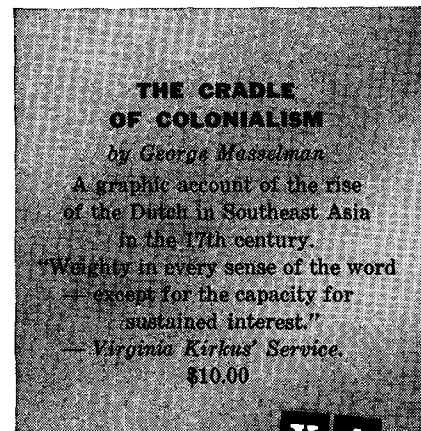
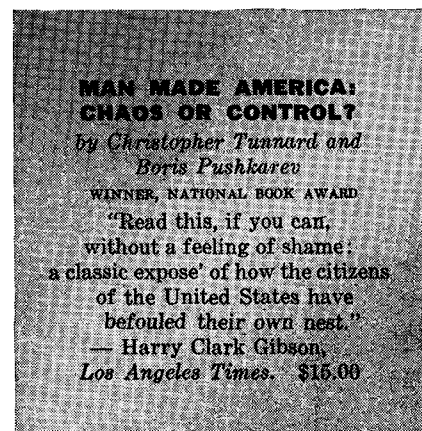
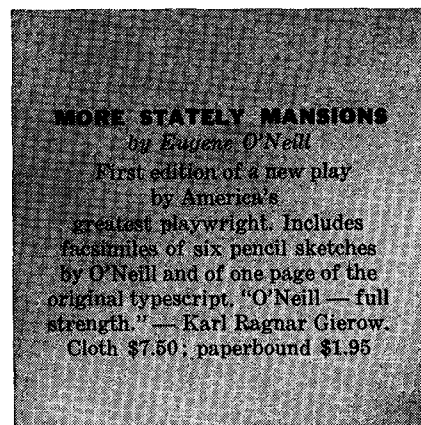
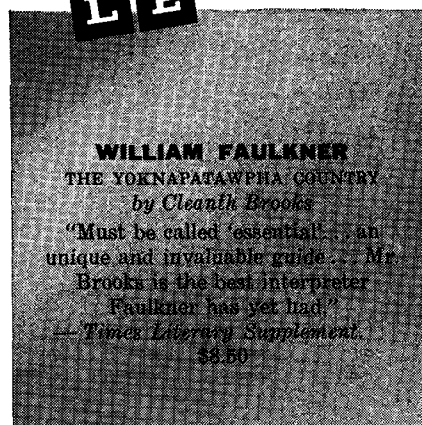
FHRQGAN

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 1080

If one considered life as a simple loan, one would perhaps be less exacting.
—DELACROIX.



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