

(continued from previous page)

between then and 1941. All were written because a producer wanted them, and three have been staged. They are done in poetry, with a mixture of elaborate imagery and simple expression, and the treatment at times is startling to the point of eccentricity. Charles Williams was concerned with the conflict between good and evil, and to get his effects he manipulates Christian characters and personifications in a highly unorthodox way. In *Seed of Adam*, Adam appears with Joseph and Mary, changes into the Emperor Augustus, and orders a census of the whole world. A Negress representing Hell becomes midwife at the Incarnation. In *The House by the Stable*, Pride wins Man's love, and Hell and Pride try to steal Man's soul, which he has left lying somewhere as of no account, but Joseph and Mary arrive, and against Pride's opposition, Man gives them lodgings in the stable. Pride and Hell slink away defeated, to re-appear a hundred years later in a knockabout morality farce called "Grab and Grace." Pride now goes under the name of Self-Respect, but is again thwarted. There is a touch of comedy in the Archangel Gabriel, and Grace is depicted as an impish boy concerned about the household accounts, the silver, and the dinner. In the end Man confesses to Faith that he loves Pride, and Faith leaves him with a blessing. It is clear the conflict is not over, that Faith will be needed in the future, which is in line with all religious experience. The battle never ceases. Reading the plays is difficult at times, and it would be very interesting to see how they act, whether, for example, Williams's method of hitting the audience on the head with apparent incongruity of character and thereby compelling their attention, helps him to put across his rather abstruse moral ideas. There is enterprise in this field in New Zealand, so perhaps these plays will be staged here.

—A.M.

DON'T NEVER FORGIVE NOBODY

JOSHUA BEENE AND GOD. By Jewel Gibson. Eyre and Spottiswoode.

THE American frontier hero is very hard to kill, whether his name is Paul Bunyan, or Buffalo Bill or Joshua Beene. He is hard to kill because the American people want to read about

HOPE IS DEAD

"L'Esperance Morte," by Edmond Pilon

THREE Queens, lol bending so
Over the river that flows below,
The Red, the Blue, the White in a row;
Green as hope the waters flow;
'Tis their beauty draws them so,
Mirrored in the stream below.

THREE Queens bending, one lets fall
Into the river rings and all,
Rings and roses and jewelled ball,
Into the river she lets them fall;
Bending low, the three Queens tall,
Blue Queen bending lowest of all.

THREE Queens bending, the second one
there,
The Red one, and she of the hands so fair,
Three Queens bending, the Red one there,
Watching the star that the waters bear,
Drops her lilies; the other fair,
The Blue-eyed Queen, lets fall her hair.

THREE Queens bending low the head,
Three, the Blue, the White, and the Red,
Bending low where hope has fled;
The water flows over hope that is dead;
Under the feeds the fishes red
Silently cross the sleeping dead.

—G. W. von Zedlitz

him, and imagine that they too are frontier heroes; a rather necessary compensation if you happen to live in the middle of one of the more noisome of the larger American cities. Whether the New Zealander wants to identify himself with the American frontier hero too is a dark secret local booksellers will, no doubt, keep clasped to their bosoms.

Jewel Gibson has evidently observed that these heroes smack strongly of the Old Testament. Joshua Beene, her creation, has some of the certainty, the narrowness, the crudity, and all of the long white beard of the Old Testament prophet. The book, which is too episodic to be called a true novel, deals with the last year of his life. God has set down three score years and ten as the limit, and Joshua, who has followed his conception of the Lord all his life, is quite ready to claim his golden crown at that age.

During his last year he triumphantly routs his enemies; the Baptists, the Holy Rollers, and in short, any sinner who did not agree with Josh. The book, a first novel, abounds with local colour familiar to readers who have staggered through *Gone With the Wind*, or any other Southern pantechnicon; cotton mouthed moccasins, purple verberna oozing delicate nectar, lynchings, whip-poorwills and swamp water. Josh is quite a character, and Miss Gibson makes the most of him, but it is hard to burn with any sort of emotion over the book, which I left with the faint hope that it might be the last of the genre.

SAD BICYCLING

DIRTY EDDIE. By Ludwig Bemelmans. Hamish Hamilton, London.

BEMELMANS, riding the bicycle of his prose, proceeds without effort. There are no wheel squeaks, the cotter pin is tight in its socket, the chain is oiled. Feet can be seen on the pedals, the knees go up and down, but effort is not apparent. On this occasion he freewheels smoothly about Hollywood, carrying in one hand a flashlight with which he picks out chromium facades, intelligent pig actors, people fearfully scrabbling for a foothold, and a terrible lot of emptiness. He does a very competent job, so competent that one is tempted to compare *Dirty Eddie* with Evelyn Waugh's *The Loved One*, but after a little thought one realises that the two men have worked on different planes. Bemelmans is the sad clown on a bicycle; he doesn't like Hollywood, but he doesn't hate it. He is a humanist. Waugh is not a humanist; he is very conscious of original sin, and of the death and damnation that, he thinks, come to those who are not redeemed. Redemption and the good life are uncommon in Hollywood, and Waugh is repelled and fascinated by the death customs of the natives there, by which perhaps they hope to redeem themselves. He writes about them beautifully and bitterly. In neither book is there any happiness or love, nor for that matter is there in any easily recollected book about Hollywood. Dr. Galup, who doesn't freewheel so easily as Bemelmans, might forget the horrors of the last presidential election by counting up the number of happy people in Hollywood. Shouldn't take him long.

—G. leF. Y.

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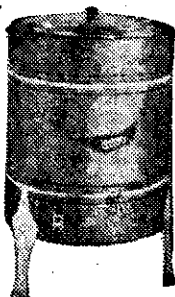
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