



Some Looks At Books

By LOCKIE PARKER

REBEL BOAST by Manly Wade Wellman (Henry Holt \$3.95) Take five young North Carolinians; see them starting off to war, to the battlefields of Big Bethel, Seven Pines, the Wilderness; trace, through letters, diaries and the formal battle reports what happened to them in their minds and bodies, in their spirits. Take them right to the end: to Gettysburg, to Appomattox, to wounds, to death. That was the task Manly Wade Wellman set himself. A heroic task at which he made a heroic endeavor. One cannot say that he failed, for, in fact, he succeeded down to the last detail in missing not one of the events or, one might say, the thoughts, that made up these war years, these, in two cases, final years, in the lives of these young men. But before he could make this a great book, the writer had to make these real people. Given the method he chose, a method scrupulous in its honesty and meticulous use of fact and quotations, true literary greatness must, we believe, have ever eluded him or any other writer who followed his method.

The writer was, it would seem, caught on the horns of a dilemma. The point of this book, what gives it its initial impact, is the fact that these five heroes were very ordinary young men and their tale the story of the ordinary Confederate soldier. This is the material of humanity: pathetic, heroic, infinitely moving. Yet, because they were very simple ordinary young men, this account, made from their thoughts and words, never quite catches fire.

And who were these men? There is George Whitaker Willis, a preacher's son, who went to war as to a picnic. Although he suffered from homesickness, stomach ache, and the whims of a capricious sweetheart, he won promotion and praise in the seemingly endless conflict.

There is "Smiling Billy Beavans," as the girls called George's handsome, dashing cousin. At twenty-one Billy loved music, wrote verse, and fluttered female hearts wherever the army marched.

John Simmons Whitaker was "Old Man Sim" to his nephew George. At thirty-one he was the pattern of a bachelor uncle. Bearded like a minor prophet, he was patient and kindly.

Johnny Beavans, eighteen, may have been overshadowed by his romantic brother, Billy, but he was a brave and fine man, undismayed by wounds, privations, or overwhelming odds.

Cary Whitaker, Sim's younger brother, was twenty-nine when he was sworn into service as a second lieutenant. Intelligent, reliable, and cool-headed, Cary enjoyed life, too.

Probably the very honesty of the writer and his determination to quote, persistently, the trite, simple remarks of those simple men, got in his way. "We get just

the facts. As such the book is a tremendously valuable source of information on the Confederate foot soldier's life, his equipment, treatment by his officers; what happened in camp, on the march, on the battlefield. And what happened when he was carried off that field mortally wounded. During it all, we watch these soldiers, we think about them, pity or admire them... we are not of them. We are not ourselves living, with them, those tragic years.

We wish Mr. Wellman had read all the letters and the diaries, and studies the photographs; then thrown all his source material away, and cut loose.

He has it in him to cut loose: there is fine writing in this book; stark, rhythmical writing that catches you up and carries you forward. Some day he will write it all that way.

THE HOKINSON FESTIVAL with an appreciation by John Mason Brown and a biographical sketch by James Reid Parker (Dutton \$5.00). There is little to be said about a book of good cartoons except, "Look, look!", but it is pleasant to be able to carry the news to Helen Hokinson's admirers that her publishers have now given us a comprehensive collection of 450 cartoons plus four New Yorker covers in full color.

From 1925 until her untimely death in 1949 Helen Hokinson delighted readers of the New Yorker with her affectionate portraits of middle-aged dowagers still young at heart and mentally immature. It is gratifying to see that these cartoons are just as amusing as you thought them the first time, and "the girls" have not dated except for their hem lines. There is the opulent lady who sits at the desk of a speculated official of the Bureau of Internal Revenue and says sweetly, "If there are any of these deductions I'm not entitled to, please don't hesitate to say so."

And remember Miss Hokinson's "girls" going to picnics, art galleries, beauty parlors, pet shops and tangling up the traffic?

Those who never saw them have a treat coming.

THE TRIBE THAT LOST ITS HEAD by Nicholas Monsarrat (Sloane \$4.95). It is not surprising to find that the author of "The Cruel Sea" has written another powerful narrative. Here again we see civilized men pitting their intelligence, their character against the onslaught of elemental forces. Only this time it is more complicated, for the force that threatens is human, too, the force of a savage tribe, and the first chink in the

dam that has controlled the tribal energies and guided them into useful channels is made by a London journalist whose creed is anything for a sensational story.

The book is a marvel of plot structure, and the reader keeps a numerous cast of characters straight without effort. To achieve this the author has made most of them types and sacrificed subtlety in character delineation to get the total effect he wanted.

This sacrifice does not impair the impact of the book as a story, but it does weaken his thesis. And the book has a thesis. The island of Pharamaul off the west coast of Africa had been under British rule since the early years of Victoria's reign. "Like countless other parts of the inhabited globe," says the author, "Pharamaul owed its entire existence as a country to Great Britain; otherwise... it would have remained a global nonentity, eternally torn by strife, weakened by disease and indolence and condemned to remain in the jungle shadows for another three or four hundred years."

Mr. Monsarrat believes this passionately, he has intense admiration for the men who have administered the British overseas territories in many a lonely station, and he considers much of the current clamor for giving backward peoples is sentimental, ill-advised and dangerous. Current troubles in the Middle East remind us that cries of democracy and freedom are no guarantee that an illiterate people will use the ballot intelligently, and newlv enfranchised nations easily fall under the control of dictators or shrewd oligarchies.

It is not a problem that yields to any easy formula.

IT'S SATURDAY! by Virginia H. Ormsby (Lippincott \$2.00). For beginning readers this book offers a happy experience. There are lively pictures on every page from the first spread where the children wake up on a fine morning, through pancakes for breakfast, feeding the pets, building a tree-house and all the fun that can be crowded into a good Saturday with its many hours of playtime. The text is simple and uses large type on a pleasant open page. Every page has pictures in two colors.

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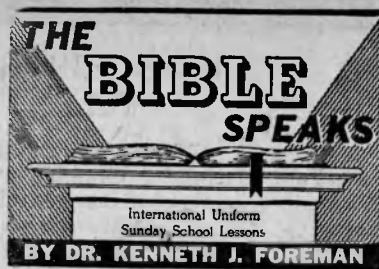
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Background Scripture: Micah 4: 6. Devotional Reading: Isaiah 1:1-17.

This Is It Lesson for November 11, 1956

THREE questions are asked over and over again by people who take life seriously but are still groping for the answers. First, What is Good? Is it altogether a matter of taste? Is there anything that is never good and anything that is always good, no matter what? Second, What does God want of us? What does it take to please him? Is there any simple ordinary way of knowing what God wants? Third, Why doesn't God speak to us as he used to do to the prophets of old? Why doesn't God, who knows all the answers, share his knowledge with us?

Country Preacher Long ago a country preacher had these questions thrown up at him. His name was Micah. He was not a preacher in the regular sense, for he had no church, and in fact he had no connection with the regular official religion of his country. But he did speak and preach, so far as we know, only to his fellow-villagers; but what he said was remembered. We have extracts from his sermons in what we call the Book of Micah, among the minor (that is, shorter) prophets of the Old Testament. Maybe he never preached a full-length formal sermon. Maybe he just stood or sat around in the market-place, and talked to any who would listen. At any rate it is plain that he was asked much the same questions as those three just now mentioned. The country of Judah, in which Micah's small town of Moreshah was located, was either in a very prosperous condition or was running down, depending on where you lived. In the capital city of Jerusalem everything seemed to be booming. But in the farmlands and in the little villages it was a different story. Even in the cities there were some who suspected the boom would not last. There was a kind of revival of interest in religion going on, but it was confused. People had an idea they ought to be better, but what was "good"? They felt sure they ought to obey God more carefully; but what did God want, really? Why didn't God come right out and tell people what they would have to do to "get right" with him?

This Is It If the answers to such questions as these were written on gold plates in a strange language and kept on top of a seven-mile mountain guarded by savage men, archangels, the roads to that mountain would be jammed, and people would pay the archangels big money to translate the mystic words of wisdom. But a country preacher talking in the simple words anybody ten years old can understand? Yes; the people of that village already had the answers only they didn't realize it. Why doesn't God speak? He has already spoken. Why don't we have prophets? We do have prophets, right there in your Bible. Yes, but they are hard to understand! Well, Micah says, it's not so hard to understand. What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? Oh, somebody in the crowd might say, "old stuff! Yes, exactly. Amos the prophet spoke of Justice, and Hosea spoke of Love and Kindness, and Isaiah spoke of humility before God Most High. This is it, you don't need to write away to find out, this is it right here. What is Good, what God wants of us, God has already spoken. He does not change his mind.

Simple and Final Looked at in one way, these three great requirements of God are not simple. Justice—how easy to say, how hard to make sure what is really the just and fair thing in every action! Kindness—yes, but who knows what is the kind thing to do every time? Isn't what is just in one case perhaps unjust in another? Yes, to be sure: No commandment of God is going to save us from having to think. This is not so simple as to be automatic. Nevertheless this is simple in the main. We can see the lines along which the good life must be built. We always know: if it is not just, if it is not kind, then it is out of line with God's will. And all this is final, too; again not in the sense of saving us any further thought. But final in the sense that this is God's word. We can't now or ever get beyond or above,—we can't graduate from,—justice and kindness and humble reverence before God.

Bookmobile Schedule Tuesday—J. D. Lewis, 9:30; Michaels Store, 9:45; Paul Green, 10:15; Ben Blue, 10:30; Farm Life School, 10:45; Miss Velma Primm, 12:00; John Blue, 12:30; Miss Flora Blue, 12:45; C. F. Wicker, 1:00; H. A. Blue, 1:30; Love's Store, 2:00; E. B. Cook, 2:30; Lewis Short, 3:00.

Thursday—W. G. Inman, 10:00; High Falls School, 10:30; High Falls 11:30; Putnam, 12:30; Glendon, 1:00; L. W. Edwards, 1:30; R. F. Wilcox, 2:00; Miss Irene Nicholson, 2:45; Carthage, 3:15.

Friday—W. E. Graham, 10:00; Jackson Springs post office, 10:30; J. C. Blue, 11:00; James Hicks, 11:15; Carl Tucker, 11:45; Miss Margaret Smith, 12:00; J. W. Blake, 12:45; Miss Adele McDonald, 1:15; George Hunt, 1:45; Garden Hill Road, 2:00.

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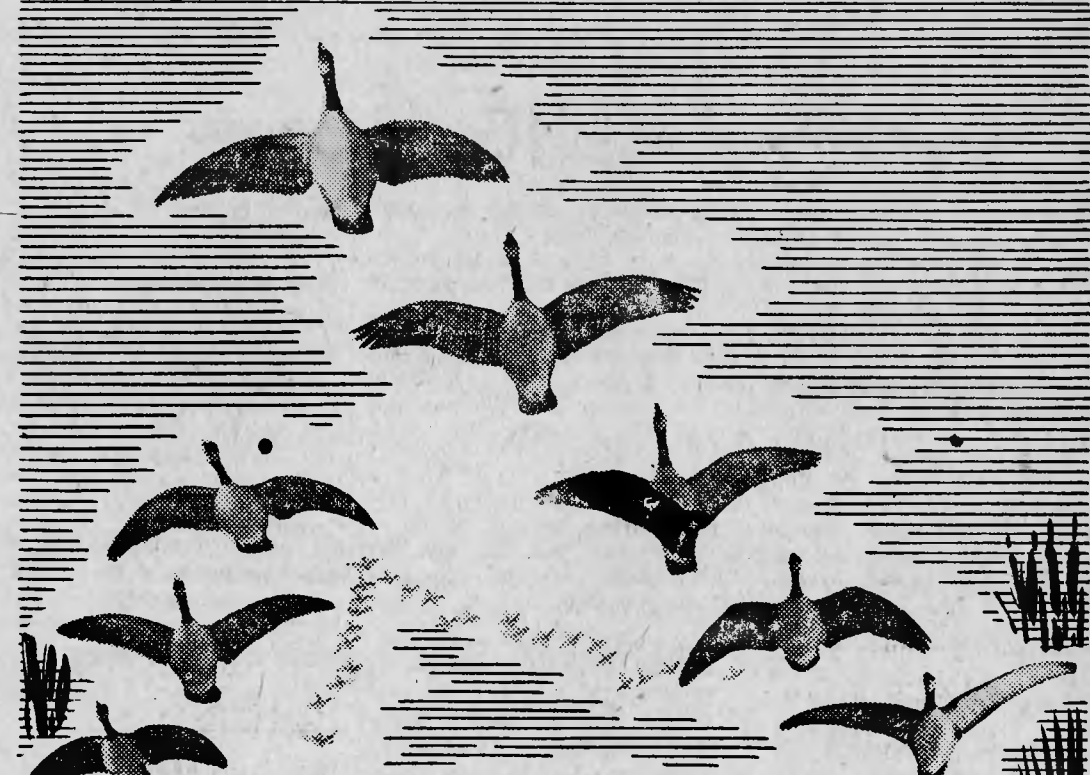
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The Youth Fellowship meet at 7 o'clock each Sunday evening. Mid-week service, Wednesday, 7:15 p.m.

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SOUTHERN PINES METHODIST CHURCH Robert L. Bame, Minister

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