



## Some Looks At Books

By LOCKIE PARKER

**BEYOND THE ALPS; A Summer in the Italian Hill Towns by Robert M. Coates (William Sloane \$4.00).** Every traveller in Italy has caught tantalizing glimpses of small towns a few miles from the main road and wished he could explore them or hurried through others where he longed to linger. Robert Coates, novelist and art critic of the New Yorker, took a summer to visit such towns in Umbria and Tuscany, towns he had missed or seen too briefly. These towns were picked partly from mental notes of earlier trips and partly at random. They range from the famous Assisi where he stayed a week to Alviano, a "compact little village; no more than a wedge of houses, really, set on top of a similarly wedge-shaped eminence overlooking the Tiber and its valley below." Yet, tiny as it was, Alviano had a long and complicated history. As one would expect, Mr. Coates speaks with knowledge and appreciation of the architecture and paintings he finds in these towns. He is refreshingly candid about his personal reactions to such objects, however, admitting that the moment and the mood may influence these as much as aesthetic quality. He sometimes derived as much pleasure from a small village church under its plane and chestnut trees as from a distinguished cathedral.

Mr. Coates has some interesting things to say about the pleasures of the traveller—why one place of deserved renown may arouse only respectful attention and some obscure little town enchant you and make you want to stay on and on. "It seems to me that the mood arises from a sense

of harmony. As with some of the landscape views one gets from the hill towns, there are times, too, when the whole pattern of life inside a town falls into a pattern of complete serenity and accord. Time stopped, one feels, when the town reached perfection, and it arrived at that stage generations ago."

He also shares experience of a more homely sort with the reader, glimpses of busy markets and chance contacts, having the novelist's skill at catching and expressing character and local color. One engaging incident was that of an old, old woman buying tobacco in Orvieto. It was a busy market day, and she had been sent to the tobacconist with the money and a list of purchases. She recited the list like a well-instructed child, but when the time came to part with the money she held in her hand, her bony fingers tightened around it, her head went down stubbornly. It held up business, but no one got impatient. The usually dour shopkeeper, the waiting customers coaxed and cajoled "granda" until the brown fingers finally opened. It is glimpses such as this that give people a warm feeling toward the people of a country.

**STRANGER AT KILLKNOCK by Leonard Wibberley (Putnam \$3.75).** Leonard Wibberley was born in Ireland, and neither an English education nor some years of residence in America has made him any less Irish. Starting with rather droll, homely pictures of everyday life, he likes to lead you imperceptibly on into the world of fantasy while making the fantasy so logical that you cannot re-

sisit him. This story is laid in a fishing village in Galway that faced the Atlantic and had a great mountain behind—a mountain about which there were legends that ante-dated Saint Patrick. How much did the people still believe these legends, look to the older gods? How much confidence did they have in the priest and his religion or in the district doctor and his modern cures? This thread runs through the book with many subtle variations.

The story centers around the Stranger who came to Killknock, a kind man, a friendly man, whose mere presence made some people happier and others very uneasy. No one could say why. How he affected the course of several lives and how his identity gradually became clear makes a fascinating tale.

**ILONA by Hans Habe (Harcourt, Grace & World \$5.95).** Three generations of women are portrayed in this absorbingly romantic novel by noted European novelist Hans Habe. Spanning the years from the time of Emperor Franz Joseph and the age of Viennese gaiety to the present, the book is the fascinating story of beautiful Iлона; her ill-fated daughter, Zita; and her lovely granddaughter, Eva.

Against the panorama of two world wars the great cities of Europe—Budapest, Berlin, St. Petersburg and Vienna—are brought to life in vivid detail. For those who feel perhaps they were born a generation or so too late the excitement of elegant society in the early twentieth century is recreated, as Iлона, the daughter of a stationmaster in a small town in Hungary, captivates royalty and leads a charmed life, to become a great lady.

Habe, whose work has been

compared to that of Stendhal and Balzac, has created an epic novel. It is not merely a book of lush description and love affairs, it is a novel of ideas and events, as only a good story by a fine storyteller can be.

—NATALIE LOMBARD

## JACKSON SPRINGS NEWS

Mr. and Mrs. Amos Amundson, with Mary, Valeria, and Lois Ann of Huron, S. D., arrived Wednesday for a visit with her mother, Mrs. Geneva McLeod. With North Carolinians shivering, the Amundsons are enjoying the balmy weather, having had temperature drops to 20 degrees below zero in South Dakota. They also boast they are missing a severe snow storm. Mrs. McLeod had the family of the late K. A. and Mary Patterson McLeod, including 33 descendants, with her on Sunday. Calling on the McLeods in the afternoon were Lt. and Mrs. Kent Maness, who are vacationing with her mother, Mrs. Otis Poole, and Robert Clark.

With the Marvin Pooles for Christmas dinner were the Dick Dickerson family and the Bob Vickery family of Seneca, S. C. The Rev. and Mrs. Bud Ellington and family of Chandler arrived Tuesday for their Christmas visit.

Mr. and Mrs. Dick Dickerson attended a reunion of the McNair family on Sunday at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Harold Lichtenberger in High Point.

Mr. and Mrs. John Walden were Christmas day guests of the Carl Osbornes in Lexington.

With Charlie and Sam Dilling for the holidays are Mr. and Mrs. Doc Dilling and Clara of Monks Corner, S. C.



## Are We Growing

Lesson for December 31, 1961

BEFORE the Old Year dies, it is well to look back over it and do some serious thinking. How are we different from what we were a year ago? The world has changed, but have we changed? We are a year older, each one of us. But "older" means different things at different stages of life. A child has grown larger and stronger by growing older; his grandfather has perhaps shrunken and grown weaker by growing older.

But the question is about our real selves. Do our souls have to shrink, grow sickly and feeble with age, as bodies do? The Apostle Paul felt his age, as we say; he was conscious of becoming an old and shaky man. But he can write of himself, "Though our outward nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day." (II Cor. 4:16.)

**Measure of growth**

How shall we measure the growth of a soul? How can we measure our true selves? A child's progress can be shown by pencil-marks on a wall. A young man's progress can be seen by his passing examinations in more and more difficult subjects. But to grow taller is not necessarily to grow better; and a mind may be highly developed while the soul is shrinking. Paul gives us a standard by which we can test ourselves—the standard of the one perfect Life, Jesus Christ. We are to "grow up in every way" into him.

Let it be remembered that only God is the true and final Judge of us all. Our own opinion of ourselves may well be distorted by pride. Nevertheless we need to examine ourselves, and the one basic test and standard is this: Are we growing more, or less, like the Christ whom we say we adore, and whose name we bear?

One way to make this test is to read over the Gospels and pay special attention to the things Jesus said. Do they seem, from time to time, more true, more living, are they more attractive, do they reach us,—or do they seem, from year to year, stranger and stranger to our ears? Are we, or are we not, more sympathetic and responsive to the mind of Jesus than we used to be? Or is he becoming a kind of eccentric stranger?

**Goal of growth**

Some one may object at this point: "Isn't this impossible? How can I ever be the man Christ was?" Two answers can be given to this question. One was put by Dr. E. D. Soper years ago: "If you're not aiming at perfection then you're aiming at imperfection." And the other is, that in all walks and activities of life, people do aim at more than they may ever accomplish. Every breeder of horses aims at the perfect horse; every artist tries to produce the perfect painting, poem or what not; every minister tries for the perfect sermon;—even criminals attempt the perfect crime. They never succeed—though maybe some criminals do; it's easier to be perfectly bad than perfectly good! But even if they never succeed, "Not failure, but low aim, is crime." And the fact remains that perfection, in any line, is the bright background against which we can trace our direction up or down.

**Secret of growth**

So Christ is the standard, Christ the goal, of the Christian's life. Yet we are troubled by a dark thought. That question, "Isn't this impossible?" haunts us. Humanly speaking, it is impossible. Yet if the New Testament makes anything clear, it is this: the Christian life is a supernatural life. It is spoken of as "life in the spirit" or "life in the Christ" or "life in God." The process of becoming Christ-like is not something we do all by ourselves. The secret of Christian growth—that is to say, the growth of a Christian's inner and true self, is that we have a Power that is not our own.—Or do we? If in this year now past we can detect no signs of growth, is it perhaps because we have not wanted to grow? Our heavenly father is ready to give the Holy Spirit to all who ask him. In the year now dawning, we may pray for many blessings; but what are other blessings worth, if we do not welcome God himself?

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Boy Scout Troop No. 873, Wednesday 7:30 p.m.  
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Sunday School, 11 a.m.  
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Church School, 10 a.m.  
Morning Service, 11 a.m.  
Young Peoples' Service League, 6 p.m.  
Holy Communion, Wednesdays and Holy Days, 10 a.m. and Friday, 9:30.  
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