

Library Signpost

By Rev. Benedict Egan

THE PULL OF THE LAND

God has placed the hope of life in the land. The land is able to do more. There is something genuine in our thought of it, for both are bearers of life. Because the life between woman and the land is strong, she senses more things about it than a man. That is why a novel about the land by a woman holds a number of much interest. A later what is such a novel, and it is appropriate that it should be reviewed by a woman. This week's reviewer is Erica Keemans, a senior at Nazareth College, who came to this country from Austria after the first occupation.

Winter Wheat, by Mildred Walker
Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York, 1911

There is something intensely human and dignified about love of soil. Especially now when we are at war it is good to meet persons whose lives are dominated by the land we are defending. For the character of the land enters into the very feelings and acts of those who love it.

It had shaped the personality of Ellen Webb by the time she had left High School and knew little beyond the home ranch in Montana—her Russian mother and New England father, and wheat. And the wild fields and white sky were with her during her years at college in Minnesota, where she met and fell in love with Gil. And it was precisely that land which appeared to Gil as nothing but dreary space and muddy roads that made him afraid of Ellen and drove him away from her. Again when she was broken under the pain of her lost love—it was that strong tie to her land that supported her during a hazy summer and a lonely winter at teaching at a tiny country school. During that winter the war takes Gil from her forever—but Ellen cannot despair while new life comes to the ranch with the young wheat.

The characters are strongly drawn and living. The central group is the family Webb—and we clearly see the New Englander Benjamin Webb, a little out of a place on a ranch over after twenty-five years—and Anna Petrova, the woman he had married in Russia during the last war. She still speaks broken English but as true peasant she was deeper rooted on the ranch than her American husband. And we certainly know Ellen through whose eyes we see it all.

The main problem is not the love story but the deep and involved relationship of those three people. It is the story of a child willing in judgment over her parents, for she has reason to believe that Dad and Mom never really loved each other, that it was life New England sense of duty that brought her from Russia to the West. And the great differences of temperament and background between her parents—differences which had left their mark on her own character—puzzled her. She thought of those long years they had lived together out here—and like Gil she thought they hated each other. She had been insensible to that hatred but Gil had felt it at once—he was more refined, more sensitive. Or so she thought! But only after a "dark, hard winter" does she realize that what Gil sensed and made her believe was but the ice and frozen ground which do not touch the secret winter wheat lying in it. Not until the "heavy, dark Northern Spring" comes does she understand the deep, quiet love between her parents, ever present and real like the underground seed—no matter what appears on the surface. And with that recognition hope comes again to her.

Mildred Walker must know the country and type of people she describes intimately. There is a great deal of detailed shading in her descriptions of nature and character. However there are times when the carefully studied details seem more than the intensity of the situation requires.

There is one strange, almost frightening trait in these people. That is that although they are so intimately united with earth and nature and the miracle of the seed—none of them has an adequate conception of God. Ellen herself, having been brought up completely without religion, has no more impulses in that direction than a sentimental attachment to a little icon her mother brought from Russia. To her father, going to church is a convention which he would follow back in Vermont, but does not bother with out here. In her mother, religious feeling exists as a memory from her Russian youth—but it is converted by hardness and never allowed to come to the surface. The only outspoken views come from a neurotic little pupil of Ellen's who had them poured into him in infancy by an equally neurotic mother that belonged to some eccentric rigoristic sect. As I said, through this absence the characters lack something that would logically complement their background.

The lesson of the novel, as the lesson of any field that grows green and splendid in the spring, is expressed in one of the quotations from Antoine de Saint-Exupery that preface each part: "I shall not fret about the loss if somewhere in it a seed lies buried."

ERICA KEEMANS,
Nazareth College

(Next week there will be a review of Camille Clément's "The Valley and the War," contributed by Dr. Robert McNamara, professor of history at St. Bernard's Seminary.)

"Nothing does more harm to the progress of Christianity and is more against its spirit than race prejudice among Christians. There is nothing more widely spread in the Christian world."—Jacques Maritain.

It is always fun to catch instances of "pronunciation by ear." There was the boy, for example, who startled his family by announcing to a rival that he was "going to beat him to a pulp."

"Since the beginning of the world, and to the end of it, Our Lord has decreed that nothing shall be accomplished without much suffering."—St. Catherine.

STRANGE BUT TRUE

Little-Known Facts for Catholics

By M. J. MURRAY

Fatal fall of a MASON'S APPRENTICE from the tower of GLOUCESTER CATHEDRAL.

ARBEY ENGLAND.
It commemorated by the MASONIC MONUMENT.

HUNGARIAN FUNERALS ARE IMPORTANT FUNCTIONS.
This is part of a village funeral procession.

AMNESTY CALLED FOR THREE STATES: INNOCENT XI, PUSKIN, DUKAK
ONE UNDER CONSIDERATION: SPAIN (1686-1712) AND THE LAST PART OF 1713.

Despite outside the usual Anglo-American PARLOR ROOMS MANY BRITISH AMBASSADORS HAVE REMARKABLE SENSE OF HUMOR AND LIGHT HEARTEDNESS.
GAIL OF BATHON IN COLUMBIAN COLLEGE, CALIFORNIA '00

AS WE SEE IT

By DAN PATRICK

This is a ghost writer speaking. We were going to bluff our way through this column, but something tells us that "honesty is the best policy." The truth—the very embarrassing truth—is this: We have reached the "deadline." The presses are waiting and as yet the elusive "Dan Patrick" has not appeared with his copy for this column. As a matter of fact, "Dan Patrick" never does appear around our editorial office. The most that we ever see is his copy and how he gets it here without us seeing him is one of the minor mysteries of modern journalism.

But this is going too far. We can tolerate the "phantom-of-the-opera" antics of "Dan Patrick" and overlook his tantalizing "Man in the Dark" role, but when his copy becomes as elusive as himself we must call a halt. Many readers of this paper have asked us who "Dan Patrick" is. In our present state of mind we are fiercely tempted to tell you. A journalist who falls his paper at the deadline is an unscrupulous scoundrel. We should expose "Dan Patrick." But "unmasking this villain" of journalism would not solve the present crisis.

More important to the Editors of this paper right now is not "WHO is Dan Patrick?" but "WHERE is Dan Patrick." Better yet, WHERE is his weekly stint to fill this column? (The Editor just warned me to stop worrying about "Dan Patrick" and finish this column. The Editor gives me only three more minutes.)

In this difficult situation of trying to "ghost" for the too-greatly "Dan Patrick" we find ourselves wondering how such celebrated journalists as Westbrook Pegler or the late Heywood Brown would meet this crisis. (The editor says to stop wondering and do some writing.) We have often heard stories of how men like Pegler and Brown dashed off a minor masterpiece to make the deadline. But now we are suspicious. At this moment we are convinced that all those stories are just fanciful fables concocted to enhance the reputation and genius of the Fourth Estate.

If we could only tell you something about "Dan Patrick" this job would be easy, but we must refrain from even this. If we should let slip the slightest clue about our irresponsible columnist we might betray his cherished role of going through life incognito. We wish that we could tell our readers about the time that "Dan Patrick" . . . (The Boss stopped us from finishing this sentence. I wonder if the Boss is "Dan Patrick" and is just hanging a job on me? No, I guess not.)

The thought suddenly strikes us that if "Dan Patrick" or at least his copy should never appear again, there is the unpleasant possibility that the Boss might give us this job every week. Come to think of it though, maybe we could make good. Maybe we could become a great success. After all, the world has never found anyone to take the place of Arthur Brisbane. Maybe we could become another Ernie Pyle and gain fame as a war correspondent in World War III. Anyway, what's "Dan Patrick" got that we haven't got? (The Editor says, "Everything.") Well, maybe "Dan Patrick" has a little talent but what good is he if he doesn't show up? At least I am reliable. What I lack in talent I'll make up for in perseverance.

Even though ghosting for "Dan Patrick" is not exactly the same thing as pinch-hitting for Walter Lippman, at least it is something. At least it is a start. Editor's Note: "And also your finish!" Now that I have actually saved the public respect of this paper, I am going out and talk with "Dan Patrick" if he is the man that I think he is. As one columnist to another, I owe something to "Dan Patrick" for this opportunity of feeling my journalistic feathers. Besides, it takes a ghost to catch a ghost.

"Till we meet again"—THE GHOST.
Editor's Note: We regret the non-appearance this week of "Dan Patrick" and sincerely apologize for substituting "The Ghost," but we trust that our readers appreciate the labor shortage. Next week we guarantee "The Return of Dan Patrick."

LATE MASS GOERS

Those guilty of tardiness at Mass may know their moral theology, at least the section which says only a venial sin is committed by missing a minor part of a Mass of obligation. It is a sad demonstration of love of our Blessed Lord to take the matter lightly. A little sin is still a sin, a deliberate insult thrown into God's face. It may not have caused torrents of Blood to flow from the wounds of Christ, but it did draw the Precious Blood.—Notre-Dame U. Bulletin.

SOMETIMES FORGOTTEN

To be really cosmopolitan a man must be at home even in his own country.—T. W. Higginson.

"This is the way you should cultivate your soul: first root out the weeds, and thus prepare it to receive the good seed of the good God."—Cure of Ars.

Training and tradition may have cast us in dissimilar molds, but the basic stuff of our humanity is pathetically the same.—Henry Morton Robinson.

It is no little thing to be able to bear the vexations and the sorrows that attend our way without wearing our hearts upon our sleeves.

We should constantly, and with all our strength, tend toward the most intimate and complete union with God.

Can an Absent Soldier be a Godparent? —'Yes', if He Sends His Consent

Many people are asking these days whether, during the war, is it possible for a soldier to be a sponsor for his sister or brother's child when it is baptized, even though he cannot be present at the baptism, and if he can be sponsor, what provisions must be made?

The answer is yes, even though Uncle Johnny may be with the Infantry in England, he can be sponsor for his new-born nephew—providing he knows that he is to be godparent—to the child, that he gives his consent, and that he sees that a proxy is present physically to "hold or touch the one baptized."

Such is the answer to this problem outlined in the "Question Box" of the Catholic University Bulletin.

"The Code of Canon Law states at least implies that valid sponsorship in baptism may be contracted through a proxy," the "Question Box" says, adding that it is important that the sponsor have the intention of discharging the office of sponsor as provided in the law.

"The Holy Office has ruled" the explanation continues, "that the intention to undertake the office of sponsor is so necessary that it is not sufficient for the parents or guardians of the infant to just select someone to be sponsor; the person must manifest his consent and appear either in person or through a proxy appointed by him to assist at the baptism."

Hence if a soldier's sister wishes him to sponsor her child, she must write to him and tell him of her desire and he must send back his consent to assume the serious responsibilities involved.

And while the absent fighting man may appoint the proxy himself or he may, the law provides, "direct the appointment to take place through another, that is, he may ask his sister to select someone to act for him."

The Military Spirit

A letter from a soldier boy, whose parents have been dead, A youth of buoyant daring, 'Twas thus his message read.

"Today I got my first promotion, A Corporal in the ranks, You should see me sport in camouflage, And maneuver with the tanks.

Outdoor life is just O Kay, But the job is rather tough, Training men on Tinker Field, When we haven't help enough.

I thank you for those papers, I missed the news so much; With the progress of the Yanks, I want to keep in touch.

Whisper a prayer for your soldier boy, There is nothing else I need; I'll thank God when I get thru To the front I'll fly with speed.

—St. M. T.

Five and Ten Years Ago

From Apr. 19, 1931, Edition
The right of workmen to favor labor unions and to bargain collectively was called an inherent right and was eloquently defined in a statement which the Administrative Committee of Bishops, National Catholic Welfare Conference asked to have filed with the Committee on Education and Labor of the U. S. Senate.

From Apr. 20, 1936, Edition
Death of the Rt. Rev. Msgr. John P. Brophy, pastor of St. Monica's Church, Rochester, and diocesan consultant, which occurred on Apr. 17, 1936, was widely mourned throughout the diocese. His Excellency, Bishop Kearney officiated at funeral services in St. Monica's Church.

Feast Days

Sunday, Apr. 21.—SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

Monday, Apr. 22.—ST. PEOLEUS OF SIGMARINGON.

Tuesday, Apr. 23.—ST. MARK.

Wednesday, Apr. 24.—SOLENNITY OF ST. JOSEPH.

Thursday, Apr. 25.—ST. PETER CANISIUS.

Friday, Apr. 26.—ST. PAUL OF THE CROSS.

Saturday, Apr. 27.—ST. PETER MARTYR.

Mistaken Identity

In Anchorage, Alaska, the mother of a very small boy was stopping in a drugstore. While waiting the child was hanging over a mezzanine railing and greeting all and sundry who passed along the main floor below: "Hello, girl. Hello, man. Hello, waiter. Hello, corporal. Hello, sailor. Hello, boy."

Then suddenly and loudly enough so that it stopped all traffic, he called, "Hello, God."

It developed he was hailing a priest who had entered.

Think Well of Others

"To have an opinion of ourselves, and to think always well and commendably of others, is great wisdom and high perfection."—Imitation.