

The TIMES Book Page

Social, Moral Problems Emphasized in Three Important New Novels

"DUKE" A novel. By Hal Ellison. New York, Scribner's, \$2.75.
"THE PRICE IS RIGHT." A novel. By Jerome Weidman. New York, Harcourt, Brace, \$3.
"TENDER MERCY." A novel. By Lenard Kaufman. New York, Creative Age, \$3.

By HENRY BUTLER

THREE important new novels deal with social and moral problems.

The first, Hal Ellison's "Duke," is less a novel than a vivid document of Hardin juvenile delinquency.

The second, "The Price Is Right," a new novel by Jerome Weidman, is a study of the morality or immorality of success.

And the third, "Tender Mercy," by Lenard Kaufman, who won acclaim with "The Lower Part of the Sky," poses a very special kind of moral problem: What are a devoted, responsible and kindly married couple to do with an idiot son—chronologically a man, but psychologically a human vegetable?

NONE OF THE three books can be recommended to readers who seek mere diversion, though Mr. Weidman's book probably is the most entertaining, despite its fundamental seriousness.

"Duke" is the chronicle of a 15-year-old Hardin gang-leader, as told by Duke himself. Mr. Ellison bases his story on notes he has taken in years of work as a recreational therapist helping delinquents.

So Duke is a composite character. He's real; he's an individual with his own tragic problems, but he's also representative of countless similar youngsters throughout the country who annually run up the bill we must pay for continuing to tolerate slums.

The fact that he is a Negro is only part of Duke's trouble. True, the Spanish girl he loved—the only girl he's loved—moved out of the neighborhood when her parents saw the growing interest and feared it. "You can't change your skin," Duke tells himself miserably.

DUKE'S STEPFATHER and older brother work. So does his mother, who spends all day getting meals for white people and then comes home to the tenement to get supper for the family.

The only honest work Duke could get would be something like shining shoes. He wants no part of that. It's easier and more profitable to use his wits running dope-errands for marijuana peddlers. Besides pay, he collects a small supply of the weed for himself. It helps him forget sadness and boredom.

Duke is president of the Mighty Counts, a destructive and sometimes murderous adolescent gang. When temporarily they have made peace with the Kings, their chief rivals, the Counts start a lucrative prostitution business in an abandoned house, with their teenage "molls" as the girls. Money means flashy clothes, "reefers" and plenty of liquor.

AS MR. ELLISON lets Duke tell his story, the reader gets new insight into the "essentially sick minds of young delinquents. Duke has sickening fears, even hallucinations associated with guilt and frustration. The drugs he uses to ease his mental pain eventually lead him to murder.

Reading Duke's own story well documented, according to Mr. Ellison's preface, you can see more clearly the "why" of delinquency. It's a sickness of privation, like TB or rheumatic heart trouble.

Mr. Ellison's grim and powerful book will help you understand things you may find shocking in newspaper stories even here in Indianapolis.

"THE PRICE IS RIGHT," Mr. Weidman's study of a battle for prestige and profit between New York news syndicates, strikes me as better than some other recent novels in much the same field.

With admirable gifts for satirical writing, Mr. Weidman brings to life in his pages a

Rare Chinese Flower Print Shown Here



A rare Chinese print is this one of wind-blown flowers, one of 80 in the noted "Mustard Seed Garden" series, a complete set of which is in Herron Art Museum's permanent collection. The print shown here currently is on display in the museum, together with other examples of Chinese and Japanese flower prints.

'Howlin' Mad' Evelyn Waugh's Newest Satire In New Book

"CORAL AND BRASS." By Gen. Holland M. Smith. New York, Scribner's, \$3.

"Today I live in a little white house by the side of the road, strive to be a friend to my fellow man, and raise flowers, vegetables and grandchildren."

Thus ends "Coral and Brass," the war memoirs of Gen. Holland M. (Howlin' Mad) Smith, commander of fleet Marine forces in the Pacific.

Well, maybe so. Maybe he's not "howlin' mad any more, but I'm inclined to doubt it, judging from the preceding pages of vituperative and unscrupulous competitor Hallock Ruyper also wants the columnist.

From then on, experience is a series of ironic disasters for Henry. Each time he thinks he's being clever, his plans miscarry.

After the final dreadful debacle, following a series as closely knit and surprising as something in an early Alfred Hitchcock film, Henry realizes bitterly the emptiness of pursuing success.

He has antagonized friends. The only person whose loyalty he can still depend on is Irene.

Mr. Weidman has an ear for dialog and a keen eye for pretensions. He makes one especially memorable point when he has

Henry momentarily reflect on the waste of talent in the battle for profits. The same brains, Henry thinks, "could make deserts bloom, diseases vanish, war a hideous memory."

"TENDER MERCY" is a prettily rugged story of Sam and Alice Ballard and their hopelessly defective 21-year-old son, Aaron. Under unusual circumstances, they find Elizabeth Powell, a kind-hearted, cabbie young woman, who agrees to live with them and take care of Aaron when prosperous Sam offers to pay hospital bills for Elizabeth's husband, Mr. Kaufman.

Aaron takes to Elizabeth, becomes totally dependent on her and refuses to eat or sleep or keep quiet if she's not around. When Rudy Powell, his TB-arrested, returns from the hospital, he comes to share Elizabeth's room at the Ballards.

With a blackmailer's mind, Rudy immediately sees his chance. If Elizabeth is indispensable to the Ballard household, how much will Sam pay Rudy not to take her away? So on money insolently demanded from Sam, Rudy plays the horses and makes himself a little big-shot in the small Virginia city's gambling crowd.

IN THREE months, Rudy uses up \$10,000, and in a big, climactic scene, lets Sam know he'll be satisfied with nothing less than ownership of Sam's newspaper.

A desperate situation demands a desperate remedy. But it's Alice, not Sam, who makes the decision.

Mr. Kaufman writes with economy, distinction and vividness. He has chosen an exceedingly difficult and painful subject, but has dealt with it admirably and tactfully.

CIVILIZATION STUDY

Vanguard Press will issue in the fall an appraisal of American civilization in this century chiefly as revealed in its newspapers, magazines, comic strips and above all, its advertising. Profusely illustrated and given the tentative title of "Guide to Chaos," the book is by Prof. Herbert E. McLuhan of the University of Toronto.

THE DETAILS of this amazing war are set out in "The War of 1812" by Francis Beirne. New York, Dutton, \$5.

Many a bright page of history has been made in the seven major wars the United States has fought, but few of them occurred in the War of 1812.

It was a war that need not have happened if communications had been faster. The battle of New Orleans never would have been fought.

The two chief reasons for the war were the Orders in Council of Great Britain and impressionment of American sailors. The first was rescinded two days before war was declared by the United States. Impressionment wasn't mentioned in Madison's message to Congress.

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This two-and-a-half-year war saw the Americans making nearly every possible mistake on land and winning some brilliant victories on the sea—a reversal of what had been expected.

This war also saw militiamen stand on the south bank of the river dividing the U. S. from Canada and permit regulars on the other side to be cut to pieces by the British. The militia was not required to leave the country.

It also saw New England merchants and traders sell supplies to the British—throughout the war, even when their coasts were being raided.

The Americans burned York (now Toronto) and the British retaliated by burning Washington.

Atrocities were common by the Indian allies of the British Americans retaliated in kind.

THE WAR didn't produce many victories. It made heroes.

Perry and MacDonough emerged as heroes in lake warfare. A young colonel named Winfield Scott distinguished himself.

Most of the land commanders

were ineffectual holdovers from the Revolution. Only late in the war at the battles of Plattsburg, Baltimore and New Orleans did the young men get into action and win.

The writer noted that the Japanese are "noticeably trying to help themselves—more than most other Asiatic countries and even some European nations."

Evelyn Waugh's Newest Satire Seems to Lack Usual Bite

"SCOTT-KING'S MODERN EUROPE." A novel. By Evelyn Waugh. Boston, Little, Brown, \$2.

nothing but Latin because he believes "it would be very wicked indeed to do any thing to fit a boy for the modern world."

SCOTT-KING'S MODERN EUROPE" is not one of Evelyn Waugh's major works. He himself calls it a "light tale." It first appeared in *Cosmopolitan* as a novelette under the title of "A Sojourn in Neutralia."

The latter is a Balkan totalitariast state to which Scott-King, an English public school Latin teacher, is invited to honor an obscure poet, Bellorus.

Here is the usual Waugh situation, a man utterly out of place, the dupe of numerous treacheries, aimlessly buffeted about by people with no feeling whatsoever.

Scott-King soon finds that the white celebration for his beloved 17th century poet is a fraud.

Neutralia has tricked him and his

companions into posing before a memorial of a treacherous purge carried out by the ruling party 10 years ago.

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Scott-King himself is something of a king. He is passive, but he is also good. He stands for something which Mr. Waugh loves and therefore has none of the absurdity of William Boot in "Scoop" or Basil Seal in "Black Mischief."

Lacking an extremely absurd personality, Scott-King cannot be comic figure he should be.

There is Miss Bonham the communist, Miss Svenning the athlete and Dr. Fe, propaganda cultite, all of whom present excellent possibilities. But they disappear before we come to know them.

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I THINK another reason Mr. Waugh's sword edge is blunted in his newest approach to life is he has adopted since joining the Catholic Church. In his early novels he was utterly destructive of all middle-class values and often nothing in their stead.

When he finally gets back to Granchester, his school, he makes no mention of his trip, but he reaffirms his intention to teach.

IT IS difficult to accept this verdict, or to link China and India, for instance, in world perspective. Most of the "World" set out to do just this, however, by a series of detailed analyses or radical cultural, historical, educational, political and geographical studies of each of the 10 major areas involved and their component peoples and nations.

Opinions are expressed freely by the various authors, whose scholarly thoroughness at times tends to enumerate more difficulties than solutions. Most are unanimous in emphasizing that it is man, not nature, who must be conquered, gilded and developed.

Psychoanalysis, as Dr. Brill explains it, consists of finding out what is bothering the patient and causing the neurotic or psychotic symptoms that need treatment.

Once the fundamental wish is laid bare, so to speak, the patient understands the relationship between the wish and the symptoms and theoretically is able to make an adjustment.

Mr. Scott, who will stay at the Lincoln Hotel, will look at manuscripts in all fields, fiction and nonfiction, except textbooks, juveniles and poetry, according to the publishing firm.

THE WISH, Dr. Brill avers, is buried in the "unconscious" and must be tracked down by means of clues offered through free association, or uninhibited discussion of unconscious thoughts. The dream is the most important type of unconscious mentation and its interpretation therefore furnishes the majority of clues.

The book, Dr. Brill admits freely, leans heavily on the theories of Sigmund Freud. It might be called an American adaptation of Freud's theories, which were propounded and tested in a European setting. Dr. Brill uses American case histories to illustrate his points.

"Basic Principles of Psychoanalysis," by Dr. A. A. Brill is essentially a primer on the functions of the unconscious. Dr. Brill states his thesis in a postscript:

"All unconscious mentation is motivated fundamentally by the wish."

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