

A Long Journey

BRIDE OF THE SABBATH. By Samuel Ornitz. New York: Rinehart & Co. 410 pp. \$3.75.

By LOUIS FALSTEIN

AT THE turn of the century New York's East Side had a large and well-defined Jewish ghetto, hemmed in on three sides by Irish, Germans, and Italians, and on the fourth by a dirty river. Despite the powerful thrust of the Outside, the *goyish* world, most inhabitants of the ghetto clung to ways and customs inherited over the long span of the *Goles*. Many orthodox women wore wigs over their short-cropped hair, and some of them, like Baba (Grandmother) Brass, knocked cigarettes out of the mouths of Sabbath-breakers, be they Jews or Christians. On the eve of Sabbath "the pushcarts vanished, leaving mounds of refuse like manure. The whir of sewing machines stopped. It felt as if the big wheel that turned the world round had stopped, such was the hush. And the stars came down to shine on earth, the Sabbath candles a-glimmer in all the windows."

The story of the ghetto, which takes up Book One of this two-part novel, is placed against the rich tapestry of Jewish folkways and myths. The characters emerge vividly, some of them attaining Biblical stature. Mr. Ornitz writes here out of his own past, although this is by no means an autobiography. His main character is the

shy, timid Saul Cramer. Both his parents worked "by cloaks," his mother succumbing to T.B., or "Jewish Asthma," as it was known in the needle trade. His father died of a bad heart, though the neighbors swore it was a "broken heart." Saul and his little brother Sholom were guided through boyhood by their strictly orthodox and saintly Baba, and the somewhat less pious but equally devoted Zade (Grandpa). Uncle Mendel helped too, despite Baba's protests. Mendel was a rebel who wrote fiery editorials attacking manufacturers, assimilationists, and the hush-hush Jews whom he dubbed "Anonymoes."

Book Two shows Saul—name changed to Saal—abandoning the ghetto, taking little with him beyond Baba's Menorah candles. In his wanderings he adds a silver crucifix inherited from his deeply devout Catholic wife to his meager baggage.

In writing about a long journey from orthodox childhood to mature liberalism Mr. Ornitz has deliberately chosen a character like Saal given to vacillations and indecision. These matter little so long as the character is surrounded by the turbulent and feverish life in the ghetto; they matter a great deal on the Outside where in addition to having no problems of his own he has embarked on a career of ministering to others.

"Bride of the Sabbath" is magnificent when it deals with the ghetto, its full and tragic life and its dignified humanity. That alone is well worth the price of admission.

Don Quixote in Texas

I AND CLAUDIE. By Dillon Anderson. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 247 pp. \$3.

By JOHN T. WINTERICH

HERE IS Don Quixote in Texas, complete with Sancho Panza, and even a windmill. Their names, in this Southern-style version, are Clint Hightower and Claudie Hughes. They are an engaging pair of rascals, and their adventures make gay reading—in a world full of problems, they impose none on the reader beyond the choice of the right chair.

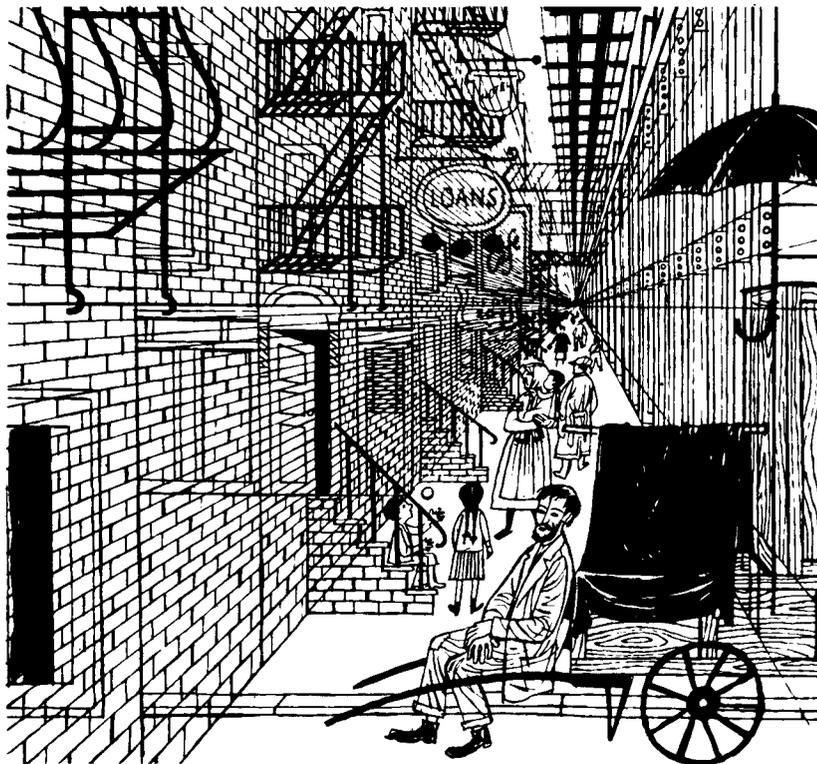
Clint and Claudie meet in New Orleans under moderately unusual circumstances and thereafter are as inseparable as Mutt and Jeff (whom they also resemble). They drive or are driven across much of the Lone Star State, and the reader learns a lot about the geography, climate, and fauna of Texas, and about the mores and idiosyncracies of its people, as viewed, of course, by the narrator, who is Clint Hightower, the member of the team who does all of the brainwork and none of the manual labor.

What happens to the pair is exactly the sort of thing one might expect—they get into tremendous jams and turn all of them to at least temporary advantage, and a temporary advantage is all they ask for.

"I and Claudie" is not a novel, and it is not an assemblage of short stories; there are plenty of incidents, but they blend and overlap and cohere, and the result is something on the order of "Huckleberry Finn." These, in fact, without the sociological implications, are much the same sorts of experience that Huck and Jim would have had if they had flourished a century and a quarter later and used a trailer instead of a raft. Clint Hightower, who is the Huck of the present combination, has one quality which Huck lacked—maturity. It is a sort of arrested maturity, but it functions on all eight when the going is rough, as it frequently is.

It is just possible that there are hidden meanings all through "I and Claudie," and underlying subtleties, and all that. It may be a "Hudibras" of contemporary life in Texas. This, however, is extremely doubtful. Here is a book that doesn't set out to prove anything, but aims merely to amuse. Here is a worthy mission worthily carried out. It is a goal rarely attempted in this era of grim realities and grimmer portents, and a goal infrequently reached when it is attempted.

This is picaresque writing in the



—Jacket design by Arno from "Bride of the Sabbath."

time-honored tradition. It is a noble tradition, and Clint and Claudie are noble exemplars of its efficacy and durability. Mr. Anderson, who pulls the strings (and obviously has a fine time doing it), is a Houston lawyer, and his legal training stands him in good stead, because Clint and Claudie sometimes run pretty close to the border-line (and not of Texas) and could frequently use a good lawyer or any lawyer at all. It's a mighty good thing Mr. Anderson is on their side.

Fiction Notes

DR. LOGAN'S WIFE. By Diana Gaines. Random House. \$3. A woman's struggle to grow into full emotional maturity has been used as a theme in countless novels, good, bad, and indifferent. Here we have it with a dazzling array of up-to-the-minute angles. Jennet was the beautiful and apparently devoted wife of the distinguished Dr. Logan. Carelessness with x-rays as an interne had made it impossible for him to give her any children, but he had worked himself literally into heart failure to surround her with luxury. Although she had come to hate her husband she loved their life, loved even more the state of pampered and protected little girl in which, mentally and emotionally, he delighted to keep her.

Then she fell in love with young Peter Surinov. A brilliant scientist, working in a "hot" laboratory on means of using atomic energy in medicine. Peter was the son of Russian emigrant parents and already under a cloud because of his reaction to the California loyalty oath. Peter's immediate and passionate attraction for her awoke Jennet to the utter emptiness of her life. After she attended a meeting on better housing with Peter (which also introduces the Negro problem) Jennet found herself swept into a whirlpool of tragedy. Peter was accused of Communist sympathies and dismissed, one calamity follows another, but Jennet is released from the traumatic scars of her unhappy childhood by psychoanalysis (which in current fiction increasingly turns the maladjusted goose into the poised and mature swan) in time to face an indubitably happy future in the arms of her vindicated lover.

—PAMELA TAYLOR.

THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN. By Eunice Pollard Williams. Dutton. \$3. When a professional or a business man decides to change his vocation the impact, if there be any, is largely upon his immediate associates. When a clergy-

(Continued on page 36)



—Illustrations from "Life in America."

"A Country Fair in Pennsylvania, 1824," by John A. Woodside.

The Current of a Strong Faith

LIFE IN AMERICA. By Marshall B. Davidson. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. Vol. I, 573 pp. Vol. II, 503 pp. \$20 the set.

By JOHN A. KROUT

FROM the world's Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893, Hamlin Garland enthusiastically wrote to his aged parents: "Sell the cook stove if necessary and come. You *must* see this fair." Marshall Davidson records the incident in his profusely illustrated "Life in America." With similar enthusiasm this reviewer is moved to write: "Sell anything that is necessary in order to buy Mr. Davidson's two volumes." Here is one of the most impressive examples of what Francis Henry Taylor has aptly described as "a visual-literary form as revolutionary in our time as was the novel in the eighteenth century and the short story in the nineteenth." It belongs in the same tradition with the "Pageant of America," edited by Ralph H. Gabriel almost a quarter century ago, James T. Adams's "Album of American History," and Roger Butterfield's "The American Past."

Mr. Davidson has studied these earlier works, but his own reveals the hand of the master rather than the imitator. As a former associate curator of the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and its present

editor of publications, he has become expert in his understanding of our social history. But his gifts as editor and writer are not limited to mere knowledge of our arts and our artifacts. Throughout his two volumes there runs the current of a strong faith in our democratic ways and a high hope that, in the hard struggle which we now face, we shall never put away from us "the habit of the free." Such faith and hope make this pictorial pageant significant and exciting.

The editor's intensive work for more than five years is an impressive achievement. With fine discrimination he has put under tribute the treasures of libraries, museums, historical societies, and private collections on both sides of the Atlantic; his search was rewarded in the Rijksmuseum, the National Portrait Gallery, and the Bibliothèque Nationale, as well as in scores of American institutions. Mr. Davidson has been fortunate in finding, for most phases of American life from the days of discovery to the present atomic age, illustrations which reproduce the work either of eyewitness

John A. Krout is associate provost of Columbia University and dean of Columbia's graduate faculties. His books include "The Origins of Prohibition" and "The Annals of American Sport."