



BOOK REVIEW

OUR OWN KIND

Edward McSorley

New York and London: Harper and Brothers; 1946. 304 P.

To young Willie McDermott, Jr., life was a struggle between the English and the Irish, between Catholics and Protestants and Jews, between his grandfather, Ned McDermott, and his grand-aunt Nora, who had tried to win Ned away from her sister Nell, even while Nell was nursing one of Ned's children, a struggle between the good the Ned had enthused into him and the bad influence of Joe Riorden and his gang. For any other orphan boy, these obstacles would almost suffice to bar from him the enjoyment of life. But he had his grandfather, his dog Peg, Father Joe, and Catherine, the despised Uncle Chris' fiancée, and it was these four who made life worth the effort. Grandfather Ned with his wild stories of English atrocities perpetrated against the Irish, and of the staunch hearts of the noble sons of Ireland, Robert Emmett, "Dan" O'Connell, the "emancipation man", Parnell; loveable old Ned who had known nothing but hard work and who was determined that Willie would have a different life. Nora, who was to inspire Willie to an education, who was so clean and pure that he was proud just to know her, who had "stuck up" for him when he and Joe broke into Kelly's store, and said he wasn't really a thief. Father Joe McCaffrey, the teacher at Catholic University, who taught him about the higher things of life the summer he, Father Joe, stayed with his brother, Father Jim. These Willie had to fall back on. And then there was Uncle Pat, who had turned Socialist, and his two boys, but they were cousins; and there was Ned's brothers, who couldn't even be serious or quiet at Ned's funeral.

Mr. McSorley has packed a lot of story into three hundred pages. It is at times sordid, at times sad, at times humorous, sometimes it becomes devout, and sometimes it becomes dogmatic. But nowhere does one theme hold the spotlight for a sufficient length of time to make the others subservient to it. **Our Own Kind** was not intended for much more than a story but it does teach us a few things. We come to realize the futility of bigotry, the deep devotion of the very poor, who have much cause to be bitter; we sym-

pathize with Ned in his determination to educate Willie, in his realization of the fact that attempting to seek a future without education is like trying to grow roses on a sidewalk.

Our Own Kind is a well-written story, a good story, for adults. It contains some suggestive scenes, and much language that is noticeably absent from the dinner table — just enough to make it a successful movie, if it should ever be filmed, but not enough to prevent our enjoying it. If you are broad-minded, read it. If you are easily offended you can always skip over some lines fast.

Ed.

YELLOW TAPERS FOR PARIS

Bruce Marshall

Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.; 1946

294 P.

The underlying causes of France's fall in 1940 supplies the subject-matter for this most recent book of Bruce Marshall. The central character is Bigou, an honest, hard-working, but irreligious and immoral accountant employed by a rich industrial firm in Paris, which, like most of the business enterprises of the time in France, was making huge profits by scheming out of paying its legitimate taxes. Bigou's life from 1934 to the defeat of France is depicted. The reader is given a picture of his family life, the friends he makes, the people he meets in his business life, and the moral and social customs of the time. In this way the author endeavours to show that France was a decadent nation, composed of individuals lacking in discipline and moral integrity. Money and pleasure were the only goals which were sought with any earnestness. Even religion, when it did exist, was little better than an outward display. France had lost her virtue, particularly among the upper classes of society. The Church had sunk into the status of just another corporation, interested in little besides money and the world. The common people, deprived of the just rewards of their labor, and without exemplary spiritual directors, became mired in immorality, spiritually and physically impoverished. France lost her vitality, her soul; she became a victim of herself, not of Germany.

Such is the picture painted by Mr. Marshall. His opinion should carry considerable weight for he has spent many years in France. But surely conditions are not as bad as he has described them. He speaks as if there were no religion worth mentioning left in that country. No doubt Paris was steeped in vice; but Paris is not all France, and

even in it one cannot easily conceive the almost complete absence of all that is commonly held good and holy. Besides, the author takes most of his characters from the social gutter. If the reformed "Yellow Tart" is the only character to represent religion in France, then sad indeed is its plight. Moreover, although the author holds up a return to God as the most essential factor in France's restoration, at the same time he speaks of God, His ministers and religion in most irreligious and flippant terms. Even non-believers rarely speak of "The flutter of their . . . (girls making their first communion) . . . veils smeared the world with daubs of Christ" . . . "frail flakes of God" . . . "spewed forth the Church's magic" . . . "The witchery . . . (funeral mass) . . . was over" . . . "you could pump them full of Host and the Holy Ghost." The use of such expressions in the book makes us doubt the author's sincerity in the matter of religious revival.

In my opinion, *Yellow Tapers For Paris* is just another mediocre book. There is little in the way of elevating thought or language; the characters, with the exception of L'Abbe Pecher, are far from uplifting; Baco, Madame Turbigo, Odette and Bigo are the scum of mankind. **Since there are so many really good books to be read, I can see no reason for wasting time in reading one such as this.**

—J. CAIRNS '49

OURSELVES INC.

Leo R. Ward

New York and London: Harper and Brothers

Price \$2.00 232 P.

This is a story of Consumer Free Enterprise, a story of Co-operatives. Much of the book is dedicated to accounts of first-hand personal experiences and contacts with various co-operative enterprises throughout the United States, in particular those co-operatives that have achieved the greatest success, in consideration of the many obstacles that, from the very first, hindered them. The remainder of the book contains the author's viewpoint on such topics as Co-operative Medicine, Adult Education, Labor and the Co-operatives, his opinion on the relationship that exists between Co-operatives and the Community, Co-operatives and Religion and worship, and Co-operatives and Play. He concludes with a treatise on the affects of Co-operatives on our attitude towards God and the Love of Him in us, toward people — our neighbors — and towards life itself.

He begins his book with a description of his visit to a consumer Co-op. store in Dillonvale, Ohio. This enterprise began with only thirty-three members and a capital of less than \$1,000. To-day it is acclaimed as the outstanding example of successful co-op. mercantile business in the nation, with about 1500 members, representing at least 5,000 or 4,000 persons. It has played a vital role in setting miners of that area on their economic feet. Since its inauguration in 1908 it has returned an average total of about \$800 to each family, and that includes the first penurious years and the depression years. Compounded, that amounts to considerably higher.

At Superior, Minnesota, was organized, in 1917, a Central Co-op. Wholesale to handle goods for the many small community Co-ops in that state. In its latest report it showed an annual business of well over \$5,000,000. Included in that business is that derived from handling much of the goods of the Producers' Co-operatives.

At Virginia, Minnesota, there is a Co-op. Community Centre, co-op. stores, creameries, funeral parlors and undertaking service, and co-op. insurance, all of which bring better service to the people at cheaper rates, and all of which have proven, without exception, to be successful.

At other places in Minnesota there are co-op. hatcheries, flour mills, credit unions, co-op. gas and oil, machinery, electrification, insurance, co-op. service stations, meat shops, refrigerated store houses for meat and other perishable supplies owned by the farmer, and many other ventures too numerous to mention. Mr. Ward provided enough evidence to prove that all these enterprises were successful at least to some degree. To provide reader stimulus he injects into the book bits of conversation from, and descriptions of meetings of co-op. members which serve to give the reader some idea of the simplicity of the movement and of the people who are making it such a success, and who are being so successful in making for themselves a new and better way of life. To quote . . . "Ah, we had an awful difficulty. The people were afraid and the merchants were all against it. But still we didn't stop" . . . "All my life I've been struggling for co-operation, and now I'm seventy-seven. My motto is, 'We'll do this to-gether.' Let's all pull together for the new day, and the new dawn."

One example of the fight co-operatives had: in Dakota a farmer marketed grain at a ten cent spread between the farmer and the grain elevator. He organized the farmers and began a Grain Marketing Co-op. They learned that it was easily possible to market at a six-cent spread. The

shippers then cut down to a four, and even a three cent spread. This forced the co-operatives out of business and the spread went back to normal. The next time the people stayed behind the co-op. and it lived.

The people are beginning to organize and buy factories and oil wells, and are making a venture, somewhere, in nearly every field. These first beach-heads have been consolidated and new territory is being won.

This book contains far too much to be done justice to in any review. From reading it I have gained an entirely new viewpoint of the co-operative movement. Hitherto I had regarded co-ops purely from the economic side. After **Ourselves Inc.** I realize that this is by far the lesser aspect of co-operation. I feel now that co-ops represent a genuine democratic effort to restore justice and charity as a basis of all our dealings with our neighbors. The great god greed, the profit motive, is not a feature of true co-operation. Rather, co-operation represents an effort to replace the sin of greed with the spirit of charity. It is much more than a system of economics. It is a feeling, a way of life, and a way of living. Co-op. recreation, co-op. medicine, co-operation among laborers in unions, co-operation in adult education, these all testify to the new spirit in the people. Co-operators are as yet the minority, but I fail to see how it will be many years before co-operators form the majority of the people of our nation, Canada, as well as in all other nations which have been initiated in co-operation.

Ourselves Inc. shows, more than anything else, the spirit behind co-operation in the numerous anecdotes found in its pages and it is far beyond my power to express that spirit in words and do it justice.

—Ed.