

BOOK REVIEWS

THE LITTLE WORLD OF DON CAMILLO

Gionvanni Guareschi

New York Pellegrini and Cuahy 1950 205 p.

A little town along the Po River in Italy provides the setting for this captivating story that you will find delightfully different. Don Camillo is the parish priest of this particular community which is his small but very human little world. His deep interest in the problems of his parishioners is clearly revealed each time he kneels at the rail to ask Christ's assistance in bringing about the solutions that will preserve and promote the interests of the little community. Even though Christ often forbids or disproves of his intentions or aspirations, the little priest is never discouraged and always emerges from the door of the village church happy and with the assurance that the trials and problems will be dissolved regardless of how intricate they may become. His parishioners are hospitable, vivacious, and pious and are entirely devoted to their spiritual leader.

Peppone, the Communist Mayor of the town, is his main adversary, and the two often come to blows both verbally and physically. Both are aggressive, big in stature, and being completely devoted to their respective causes, their conversation is typically that of men who are antagonistic towards each other. The burly Communist, however, recognizes the esteem and respect the little community holds for Don Camillo.

Peppone and his supporters go to Church regularly—Peppone even goes to Confession, after eighteen years—the priest restrains his pride and finding nothing very serious, lets him off with twenty Our Fathers and twenty Hail Marys.

One big problem is the lack of financial aid for the repair of the crack in the Church tower. Each day the priest measures the crack until one day he becomes so anxious and impatient that he sends the sexton to the Mayor to come and look at the damage. When Peppone refuses, the

irritated priest threatens to use physical force if any of them turn up at Mass the next day, Sunday. But to his surprise, all the 'reds', even those from surrounding districts, are led to their places in Church by Peppone just as Mass commences. Don Camillo makes his appeal for financial help through the parable of the Good Samaritan and, when Mass concludes the congregation files past, Peppone coming last and laying three red handkerchiefs full of money on the table.

The episodes on other events including the strike of the farm-hands, the annual procession for the blessing of the village, and the problem resulting from the bishop's visit by car, will be a source of refreshment to all classes of readers. You will laugh at the folly and uncertainties of the Communists; you will sympathize with the hopes and ambitions shared by the parishoners who are so disposed to increasing the social well-being and happiness of each others. At times tears will threaten, but you will assent to the keen sense of comprehension and insight which the author has portrayed Don Camillo's realistic problems in a little community exposed to modern Communistic influence.

—J.C.M. '52

TRUTH IN THE NIGHT

Michael McLaverty

New York The MacMillan Company, 1951 218 pages

If you are interested in a novel with a true notion of reality, you will find in this one a few hours of profitable and enjoyable reading. The author, Mr. MacLaverty, has the ability to bring to his readers his characters which he describes so understandingly well that they immediately come to life in the imagination of his readers. In *TRUTH IN THE NIGHT* he paints us a picture of a woman who never adjusts herself to the humble society around her and she seeks some class of society into which a woman of her dignity could adjust herself.

Martin Gallagher is born on the island and he goes to the mainland against the wishes of his parents. Disgusted with the emptiness of the city life, he decides to return once more to the scene of his youth. He then returns to the island and settles down on a farm among the many rolling hills. When he visits his neighbours he meets Vera

Reilly and in neighbourly fashion tries to help her with the tasks around the farm. Vera is a mainlander who had come to the island and married Tom Reilly, yet she always hated its confinement and longed for the attractions of the city. After the death of her husband Tom, she plans to marry Martin and to use him as an agent to escape from the island.

The author contrasts two classes of people who have different outlooks on life and who have two opposing philosophies. The philosophy of the people on the island is a simple one. To them happiness consists in living in frugal comfort on the island and upholding the name and traditions of their ancestors as good honest farmers. The antithesis of this philosophy is suggested by Vera Reilly. She typifies the bourgeoisie mind, a philosophy which insists upon respectability as its motto. Mr. McLaverty gives us a clear knowledge and understanding between these philosophies as he contrasts them in his characters. It is with the idea of advancing her position that Vera marries Martin.

At this time her daughter becomes seriously ill and must be taken immediately to the mainland. Against the wishes of her husband and friends Vera makes the hazardous journey to the mainland by boat with her daughter. When she realizes that her daughter is dying and that she herself is dangerously ill as the result of the trip, she sees the folly of her past ways spent in making those around her miserable. She finally confesses, "We can't run away from ourselves." This is the theme which spiritualizes the whole book. It is the realistic picture of a woman vainly trying to escape from herself by merely changing her environment. Yet we sympathize with her, realizing the frailties of our human nature. It is a novel filled with the true genuineness and spirit of human nature and the author succeeds in portraying for us a very realistic picture of an actor on the stage of life.

—Regis Duffy '53

I would desire the fair sex to consider how impossible it is for them to add anything that can be ornamental to what is already the masterpiece of nature.

—Sir Richard Steele.

Hope springs eternal in the human breast:
Man never is, but always to be blest

—Alexander Pope.