

The Mold of a Statesman

"Savrola," by Winston Churchill (Random House. 241 pp. \$3.50), the only novel written by the great British Prime Minister, first issued in England sixty years ago, foretold its author's glorious political destiny.

By Ben Ray Redman

IN THE year 1826 a young man of twenty-two who was destined to be one of his country's most distinguished prime ministers published the first of his many novels. In the year 1897 a young man of twenty-three who was destined to be one of his country's most distinguished prime ministers published his one and only novel. Neither "Vivian Grey," by Benjamin Disraeli, nor "Savrola," by Winston Churchill, can have had many readers in recent years, but the second is almost certain to be read widely now that it has been reissued, and both these novels have a strong claim upon our interest for other than literary reasons. It has long been a commonplace that Disraeli's novels



—The Old Print Seller Collection.

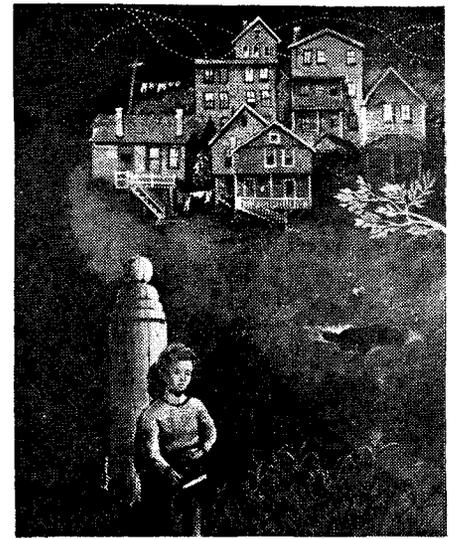
Sir Winston in 1900—"prophecy."

form a kind of serial autobiography in which his ideas, ideals, and ambitions stand revealed; and now that "Savrola" is in print again it should be plain that this tale of an imaginary country, written by an officer of Her Majesty's IV Hussars who was soon to enter Parliament, has a good deal to tell us about the ideas, ideals, and ambitions of its author.

When we read the novel today it is not the rather simple story of a dictator's defeat by revolutionary forces that holds us, nor is it the chaste and somewhat stilted love story of Savrola and the dictator's wife. It is the character of Savrola himself that fascinates us, for we realize that in creating the great republican of Laurania young Churchill was depicting his ideal hero, that he was putting into words the kind of man he wished to be—that he was, perhaps, determined to become.

Savrola was a born leader and swayer of men, at once a sagacious statesman and a cunning politician, wise in council, calm in crisis, brave in action. "His very presence imparted a feeling of confidence to his followers." He might dream of living the life of an artist, but he knew that for him "ambition was the motive force, and he was powerless to resist it." The furnishings of his room were those of a man "who appreciated all earthly pleasures, appraised them at their proper worth, enjoyed, and despised them." Eager as he was for all that life could give, he was still a philosopher who could contemplate the end of the solar system with composure.

But this hero's greatest gift, perhaps, is that of oratory, and it is when we read young Churchill's description of Savrola's reveling in the composition of a speech that we are most keenly aware that we are reading prophecy as well as fiction. "These impromptu feats of oratory," reflected Savrola as he planned to move a multitude, "existed only in the minds of the listeners; the flowers of rhetoric were hothouse plants." We watch him as he calculates how best to force and cultivate these flowers, exclaiming to himself: "What a game!" And, as we watch, the young Lauranian leader fades from sight and the familiar figure of the great Prime Minister looms before our eyes.



—Jacket for "Wine for the Living."

"... Armenians seen from the inside."

Displaced Persons

"Wine for the Living," by Richard Hagopian (Charles Scribner's Sons. 307 pp. \$3.95), is a novel about Armenians living near Boston, their hopes and their disillusion.

By Thomas Gallagher

RICHARD HAGOPIAN's novel, "Wine for the Living," is an insistently honest and therefore not a Saroyanesque book about an Armenian family living in the outskirts of Boston. Poignancy, tenderness, and humor are here, but no foolishness and no unfounded affirmation. Its immigrants, the Armenians seen from the inside, the Italians from the outside, are those tardy spirits who sink their roots in the flatlands around our Eastern cities and whose drab alarm-clock lives are like bleats that it is better never than this late. Living in the shadow of Boston but at once bereft of America's transcendental meanings and failures at making lots of money, they seem to be forever asking themselves the question "Where did it all go?" For, unlike Sherwood Anderson's Midwesterners, they have not forgotten the beauty laboriously built up in Europe. They cannot afford to forget it and, indeed, are not encouraged to in a country where corporations now spend millions on "motivational research" to find out what makes the buying heart of America tick, where defunct theatre marquees proclaim sales on pork, and where the only pioneering goad is upward to executive suite.

It is the ferment in the hearts of neither-nor immigrants, the "Wine"

of the title, and what that ferment does to their American-born children, the "Living," that Richard Hagopian concerns himself with in this book. There is the father, Ara Aroian, whose loutish refereeing between his good intentions and his incapacity to express them makes up some of the most affecting scenes in the book; his only occasionally sympathetic wife, Lucy, who suffers from what might be called the sickness of being simply alive and for which the only cure is death; her brother Atanas, interloper fresh from Lebanon, a more successful embodiment of evil than the minister in "Night of the Hunter" because he is quite sane. And Paul, the son whom experience hits the way headlights hit a deer, who does not want to see his home life shattered completely by his uncle. The elders, tired to their marrow with disoriented thoughts and wishful yearnings, resemble characters in Chekhov who are most alone when they are together.

There are many memorable scenes. At the dinner table, for example, when Atanas berates his nephew Paul for plucking single grapes from a bunch instead of plucking a small cluster of ten or fifteen grapes off the main stem of the main cluster; the party at which the son of Garo Garabed, Ara's friend from the old country, plays the violin; the seduction of Garo's "Kiddo" wife Mabel by Atanas; the moments between Ara and his son Paul when their hearts almost meet; between Paul and the gentle barber Paul Tripo; the mandolin, flute, and accordion concerts at Tripo's home in the apple orchard on Sundays; and, most affecting of all, the passage at the end when Paul tries to lead his tired mother into this country, as it were, by showing her the medal he won at school and then how, failing that, he grips it tighter and tighter in his pocket as he hears his father's footsteps on the porch.

These well-teased scenes are like the parts of a play one leaves a theatre with; they have been disentangled for us as life is not and yet they resemble life. The writing, too, carries its cargo foremost rather than itself: "On Sundays they put on their comfortable clothes and after early morning mass they assembled at John Tripo's house in the apple orchard and thought their several thoughts as they passed around and sucked from the long red tube stuck in the bung-hole of the wine barrel."

Like the boy Paul, straddler of two worlds and potential enricher of this one, Mr. Hagopian becomes with this book an example of that potential realizing itself.



Robert Henriques—"new things to say."

Compulsive Hero

"Red Over Green," by Robert Henriques (Viking Press, 340 pp. \$3.95), is the story of a man determined to make up on the battlefield for the failures of his civilian life.

By Harvey Curtis Webster

LIKE his "No Arms, No Armour," Robert Henriques's "Red Over Green" is both interesting and bound to be successful. It is well-constructed, aptly written, and rapidly paced. Moreover, though it faintly suggests Graham Greene's style and a combination of a Hemingway love affair with a Waugh treatment of men in battle, "Red Over Green" does have some new things to say. The hero is a commando spurred by failure to make his military life less of a mess than his previous "successful" career as a solicitor, husband, and lover. Involved with a hopelessly ill wife, his job, and a mistress who makes adultery seem almost innocent, he is a compulsive hero, a bicycle-borne commando who goes from fatness to fitness and ultimately becomes pretty happy as well as generally respected. All this plus the excitement of Operation Red Over Green (operation concluded; going home) and the satisfaction of a fairly plausible ending that gives more than poetic justice should please even the commonest reader.

But there is more to Mr. Henriques's novel than this. The lost-generation mistress, Kate, who insists on maintaining status as a self-respecting woman, is engagingly ridiculous. Though he swashbuckles a bit too much, Hatherley-Cooke, a commander who prefers daring to protocol, is

"quite a chap." So is his subordinate Ginger, who is good at nearly everything but getting the women to fall for him—and a good many bad-and-good others who end up as commandos. Barry, the protagonist who can't quite become either a proper husband or a good lover, is plausible despite the potentially corny situation in which he is involved. He wants to be good to his sick wife and to believe in something above and better than himself. Indeed, he nearly succeeds.

As perhaps you have gathered, "Red Over Green" entertains (no mere merit), but does not rank with such excellent American novels about war as Alfred Hayes's "All Thy Conquests" or the two excellent novels about men at arms by Evelyn Waugh. Its excellent pace and its almost sensational incidents make it read as well and better than a mystery. But how slick the novel often is! There's just enough sex that never becomes very sexual; just enough horror, never too horrible. The underlying philosophy seems to be that of someone who once thought England won its battles on the playing fields of Eton and, while still believing, knows it's not properly sophisticated to underline such a belief any longer. The sometimes good style can descend into such banality as this: "As he kissed her, with closed eyes, she was still his original and exquisite wife."

Whether I'm persuading you to read or not to read "Red Over Green" I don't quite know. I read it with a pleasure I'm slightly ashamed of. Certainly it isn't as good as such gangling American novels about World War II as "From Here to Eternity" or such uneven English novels about World War I as Ford Madox Ford's "Parade's End." I can't pan a novel that's better than ninety from a hundred, but I do mean to say that Robert Henriques shows a capacity to write a much better novel and that I hope he will.

ENGLISH MADAME BOVARY: H. E. Bates's latest novel departs from the pattern of his tales of violent action in exotic settings to describe a domestic tragedy in a small English town. The result, "The Sleepless Moon" (Little, Brown, \$4), is a drab, featureless, contrived melodrama—"Madame Bovary" without Emma and with a hero who makes poor Charles Bovary seem almost attractive. The heroine is Constance, a young milliner's assistant, who marries Melford Turner, a well-to-do grocer of forty, only to discover that her hope of finding love and security is an illusion. After a few months she is driven by loneliness and frustration into the arms of the piano-player at the local
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