

**Nina Miller
Davidson**



Chronology

- 1850 Nina's father DAVID MILLER is born in Perth. His parents are David, 35, a boot and shoe maker, and Isabella, also 35; he is the first of five children – four sons and one daughter.
- 1859 Nina's mother JANET FRAME is born in Uddingston, Lanarkshire to David, 24, a baker (later "master baker"), and Janet, also 24; she is the third of eight children – three sons and five daughters.
- 21 Aug. 1877 18-year-old Janet Frame marries 22-year-old journeyman baker David Mason in Hamilton. The 1891 census records that the couple are still married, but without children. What happens to David then is unclear.
- 1882 CHARLES DAVIDSON, 24, a monumental sculptor, marries HELEN LAMB, 25, at Kirkden Parish Church, Angus.
- 31 July 1894 Janet Mason, now a 35-year-old widow, marries 44-year-old bachelor David Miller, a Hamilton solicitor.
- 7 May 1895 JANET FRAME (later known as NINA) MILLER is born at Earnock View, Union Street, Hamilton.
- 30 May 1897 Nina's only sibling David is born in Hamilton.
- 4 July 1897 CHARLES LAMB DAVIDSON is born in Brechin, Angus, the fourth son and fifth child of Charles and Helen.
- 8 April 1907 David Miller Snr. dies at 57, leaving Janet, not yet 50, twice-widowed.
- 1911 The 1911 census records the Millers living at Shawburn House, Shawburn Street, Hamilton, where eight people reside: mother Janet (51), Nina (so-named, 15), David (13, the only male), Janet's mother-in-law Isabella (96), three "nieces" Helen, Marion and Winifred Mackay aged 19, 16 and 15 respectively and 21-year-old servant Marion Strang.
- 1914 Private David Miller enlists in the Seaforth Highlanders.
- 26 Aug. 1916 Lance Corporal David Miller, 19, is killed in action "in France or Belgium" (army records, which wrongly give his age as 20).
- 9 April 1917 Captain Charles Davidson is wounded in action at Vimy Ridge, Pas-de-Calais, France but survives.
- 3 July 1926 Charles Lamb Davidson weds Janet "Nina" Frame Miller at the Douglas Hotel, Glasgow. They make their home in Thorntonhall, Lanarkshire.
- May 1930 The Davidsons complete and present to Brechin Town Council a Book of Remembrance which remains on display to this day.
- 1931 Issue 1 (of 37) of *The Red Poppy*; death of Nina's mother Janet.
- 23 Jan. 1948 Charles Lamb Davidson dies of cardiac failure at Greendays, Thorntonhall, aged 50.
- 1950 Nina acquires 50 Montgomery Street, Eaglesham, her last home.
- 5 Nov. 1972 77-year-old Nina dies peacefully at her Eaglesham residence, which she bequeaths to the National Trust.

NINA MILLER DAVIDSON (1895-1972) was an accomplished Scottish artist, graphic designer, illustrator and teacher whose work encompassed a range of disciplines including watercolour, oil and mural painting, lacquerware, drawing, engraving, appliqué, embroidery and stained glass. In the 1930s and '40s she designed numerous book jackets for Ward, Lock and other publishers, including five for early Winston Graham novels, on which more below. Despite this professional connection, there is no evidence to suggest that artist and author ever met or corresponded.



Janet Frame Miller was born on 7 May 1895 in Hamilton, where her father David was a solicitor.¹ She attended the Glasgow School of Art (GSA), where she was known as J. Nina Miller, as a day student of drawing and painting from 1914 to 1919 and as an evening student of modelling and

design and then drawing and painting from 1920 to 1922. According to the *Dictionary of Scottish Art & Architecture*, Miller was a painter and black-and-white artist and teacher who also studied in France and Italy. Her work was exhibited six times at the Royal Scottish Academy between 1922 and 1951, ten times at the Royal Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts between 1922 and 1943 and at least once by the Royal Scottish Society of Watercolour Painters. A report in Volume 88 of *The Studio* on the 1924 Royal Scottish Academy Exhibition states that "attractions amongst the watercolours are ... The Death of the Year by Miss J. Nina Miller."

At the Glasgow Society of Painters and Sculptors' annual exhibition of 1928 "a charmingly wrought panel in lacquer by Miss J. Nina Miller claimed special notice" and the following year at an exhibition in Glasgow under the Duveen Scheme (aimed at "bringing lesser-known British artists into touch with the greater public") her watercolour was described as "an impressive composition, with processional figures seen against a lofty Chinese building."²

A report of the Glasgow Institute's 1930 Exhibition records that "The Moon of Faery" by Mrs Nina Miller-Davidson depicts a gorgeous orange moon with three attendant maidens most wonderfully arrayed" and a second concerning their Autumn Exhibition of 1931 notes:

... in the engraving section the "Mercat Cross, Culross," by Mr William Renison depicts with markedly pleasing chiaroscuro a choice bit of that cloistered town. Two etchings by Mr David Duncan, Dunfermaline, and a fantasy in pure colour, "The Cyprian Maid," by Mrs Nina Miller-Davidson, Brechin, further embellish this section, and, as it includes in its contents several Whistlers, a striking and unusual Rembrabdt, and examples of the marvellous – and sometimes stupendous – drawing of Mr Muirhead Bone, the black and whites alone would make the exhibition memorable.³

Finally, the Society of Scottish Artists' Jubilee Exhibition in 1944 included "two decorative figure pieces in watercolour, 'Attic Argument' and 'Little Mermaid', by newly-elected member Miss Nina Miller Davidson."⁴



Early works by J. Nina Miller:

(i) Untitled (pen, ink and watercolour)

(ii) Untitled (engraving/wood)

(iii) *Oasis* (oil on canvas)



CHARLES LAMB DAVIDSON was born in Brechin, Angus on 4 July 1897, the fourth son and fifth child of Helen and Charles Davidson, a monumental sculptor of stone and marble who attended GSA in 1880-82. Charles L. attended the same School from 1914-17 where, after a break in which he saw active service with the Seaforth Highlanders, he gained a Postgraduate Diploma in 1919 and was awarded a Haldane Travelling Scholarship in 1920. From 1922 he worked as a cartoonist for the *Glasgow Evening Times* and other publications.⁵ Like Miller, Davidson exhibited paintings at both the Royal Scottish Academy and the Glasgow Institute; he also designed stained glass and interiors for décor specialists Guthrie and Wells.⁶ In 1926, whilst working as a decorative artist, he married art teacher Janet Frame "Nina" Miller of Hamilton, who seems soon after to have adopted the professional name Nina Miller Davidson.

In 1930, husband and wife took on a special project dear to both their hearts. Charles was wounded at Vimy Ridge in 1917, whilst serving in France; his brother Alexander had been killed in Mesopotamia the year before. Nina's only sibling David, born in 1897, was a Lance Corporal with the 8th Battalion of the Seaforth Highlanders when he lost his life "in France or Belgium" on 26 August 1916.

What follows is from the *Dundee Courier* of 17 May 1930:

WAR MEMORIAL ALBUM FOR BRECHIN

Local Artists' Work Completed

Brechin's War Memorial Album has now been completed. It only remains for the pages to be bound in vellum.

It is the work of two artists, Mr Charles L. Davidson and Mrs Nina Millar Davidson, his wife.

It happened that the money subscribed some years ago for Brechin War Memorial was in excess of the amount required. It was therefore decided that Brechin should have a memorial album, in which would be written the names of Brechin men who lost their lives in the Great War.

Mr Davidson, a Brechin man, was approached, and he accepted the task.

Everybody who looks at the album will appreciate its beauty. Few but the artists themselves will understand the great amount of work contained in the 21 pages.

Some of the designs were incorporated from sketches made by the artist on the battlefield. Perhaps the most outstanding features of the album are the symbolical designs – pictures that speak more eloquently than words.

On the dedication page a panel embodying a thunderbolt and flames signifies the outbreak of war. In another design the heads of two soldiers are shown. The soldier in the foreground is wearing a "tin" helmet and the other a Balmoral, to show how the Balmoral was superseded by the "tin" hat.

On another page the summer of 1916 is depicted by a crown of thorns. The towns of Ypres, Menin and Courtrai, joined by an arrow, are emblematic of the advance from Ypres in October, 1918, and the capture of Menin and Courtrai, which had been in German hands since 1914.

An intensely interesting design shows the words "Vimy Ridge," attended by several blazing white crosses. The latter represent Easter Monday, and it was at Vimy Ridge on Easter Monday, 1917 that the artist was wounded.

Broadly speaking, the general style of the design is Celtic and for this Mrs Davidson has been mainly responsible. With the exception of the dedication page the colours used are black and gold, and one colour has been added for each page.

The album contains about 300 names, giving the rank and date of death. In most cases the designs have reference to the men whose names appear on that particular page. This called for a great deal of research, and the artists have done their work extremely well.

It is understood that at the beginning of next week the album will be placed in a glass case in Brechin Library, when a page will be turned over each week.

Mr. Davidson, who was born in Brechin, studied at Glasgow Art School, where he met his wife, who was also a student. He saw service in France with the Seaforths.

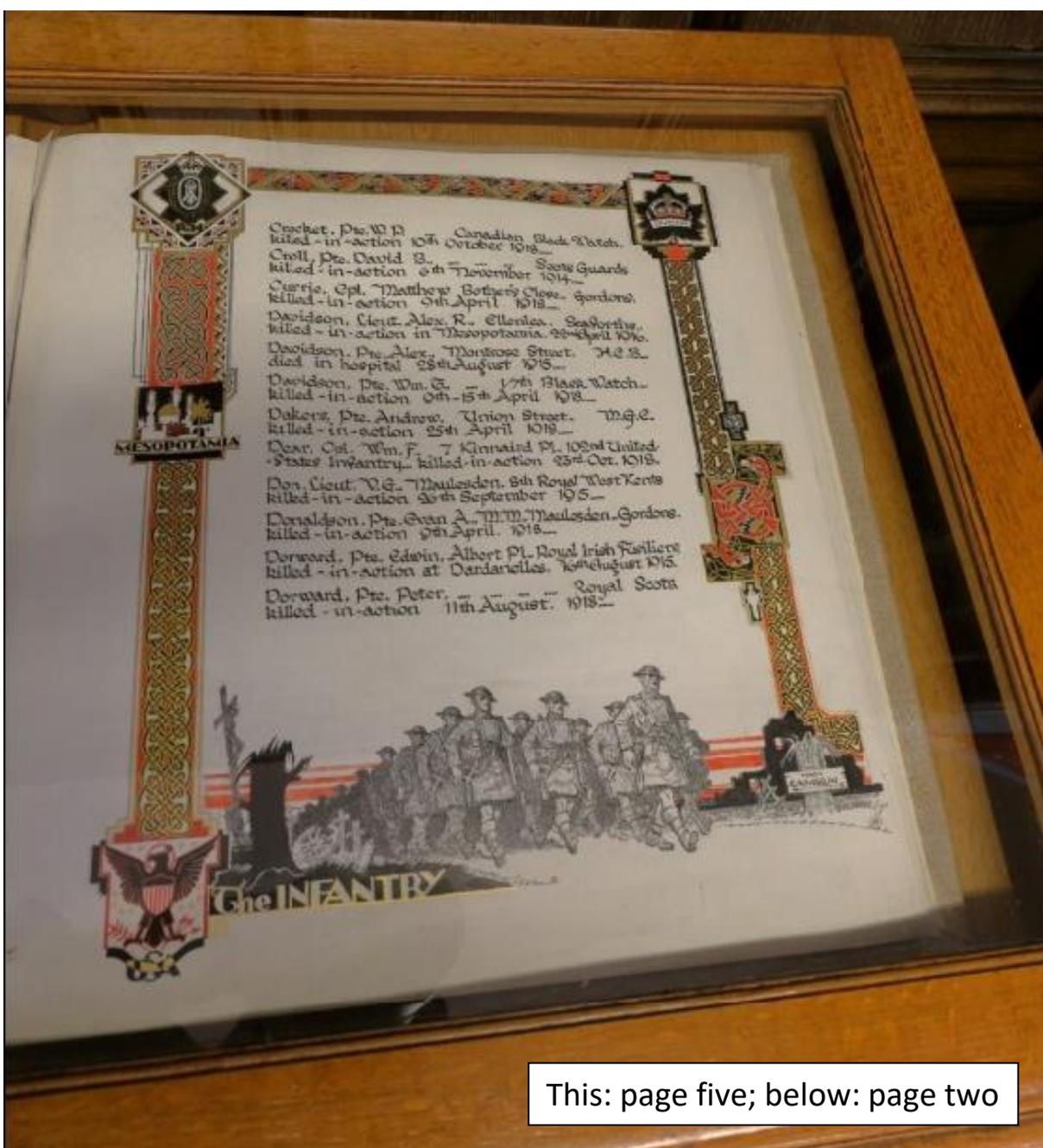
In the *Brechin Advertiser* of 20 May, R.A.F. commented:

It was a fine thought that prompted the Town Council of Brechin to enshrine in a volume of artistic beauty the names "of those who never came back from arid fields of war." And it was good fortune to have the work [done] by one whose comrades were enrolled in the lists of the dead, by a native of the city, who himself was a "sharer" in those barren years of strife. We are little capable of appreciating to the full the delicacy of the design and craftsmanship, the amazing beauty, and the intricacy of the symbolism which we find in this Roll of Honour. We have seen several examples of such books, but this, the work of Charles and Nina Millar Davidson, is the finest example of reverent, inspired and artistic treatment of the theme, for the work is a collaboration, a labour of love, where no pains have been spared, and much thought given

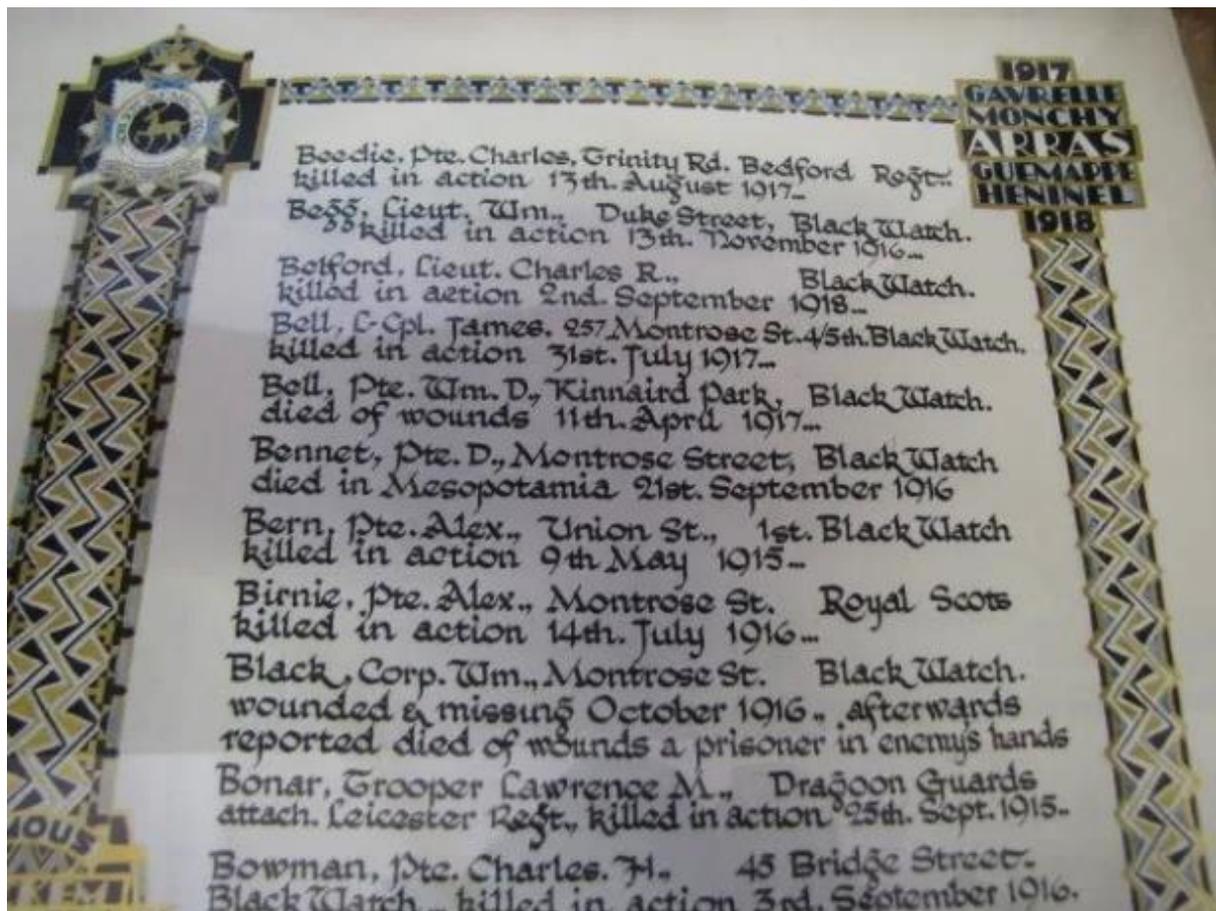
"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever" and the sons of Brechin are commemorated by a volume of surpassing excellence ... Co-workers Charles and Nina Davidson have given to the city of Brechin a work of highest artistic achievement that will be long remembered, and when the moss of age has gathered round the memorial of stone, there shall shine clear in the undying colour of the pages of this book the names of those who

*"In the day when heaven was falling,
The hour when earth's foundations fled,
Followed their mercenary calling
And took the wages and are dead.
Their shoulders held the sky suspended,
They stood and earth's foundations stay;
What God abandoned, these defended,
And saved the sum of things to pay."⁷*

Below: pages from and the display case of the Book of Remembrance presented by Mr and Mrs Davidson to Brechin Town Council in May 1930. Note that the fourth entry on the page below records the death in Mesopotamia of Charles's brother Lieutenant Alex. R. Davidson.



This: page five; below: page two



* * * * *

The Red Poppy

In 1931 the West of Scotland committee of the Earl Haig Fund, a charity supporting disabled ex-servicemen, launched the first edition of *The Red Poppy*, a fundraising magazine, cover price 6d, published in Glasgow, in the design and production of which Charles Davidson played a leading part. A new edition was published in 1932 and then annually until the last in 1967. In eleven consecutive issues from 1936 to 1946, contributions from Nina Miller Davidson can be seen:



From "The Defence of Freedom"
by Liddel Hart, 1936



WILLOW PATTERN

By "The Gangrel"

Then

A sampan on a streaky flood,
A house with quaint and curly eaves,
A lattice bridge across the mud,
A willow tree with drooping leaves,
Two lovers of pursuit aware,
Two doves that tumble in the air.



Now

The sampan 'neath the wave is sunk,
The house's cindered timbers reek,
The willow is a shattered trunk,
The bridge is smashed that
crossed the creek ;
No bourne for lovers
anywhere,
For doves no safety in
the air.

1938

Next page: from "The Great Question Mark" by the Rev. Wallace
Harold Elliott, *The Red Poppy*, 1943





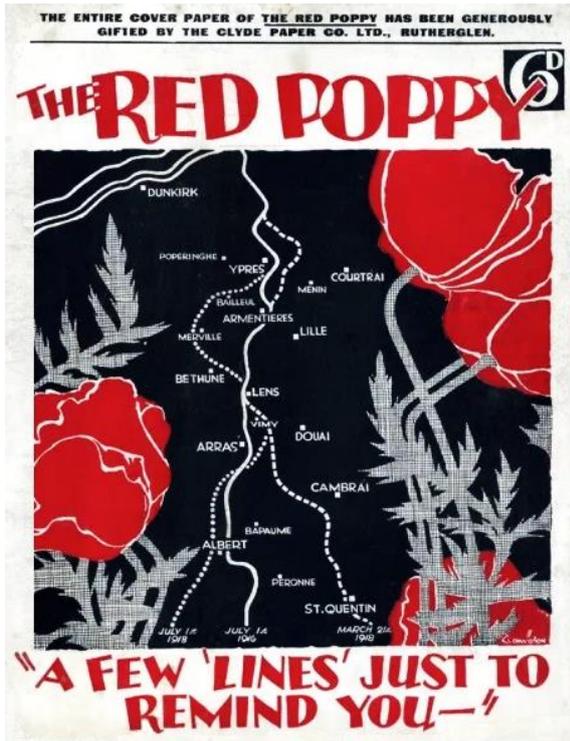
1939



From "When Will This War End?", 1941

Next page: from "Idea to Avoid World War No. 3" by Wyatt Tilby, 1944





Left: *The Red Poppy*, No. 1, 1931 – the first sixteen issues (to 1946) all have cover art by C. L. Davidson

Below: another illustration from "The Defence of Freedom" by Liddel Hart, 1936





Broken China

And King Sho said, handling the powder grains:
"A curious invention, my dear Sir,
But why persist in making useless stuff?"
And tossed the grains aside and turned to read
The Odes and Saws of the Philosopher.

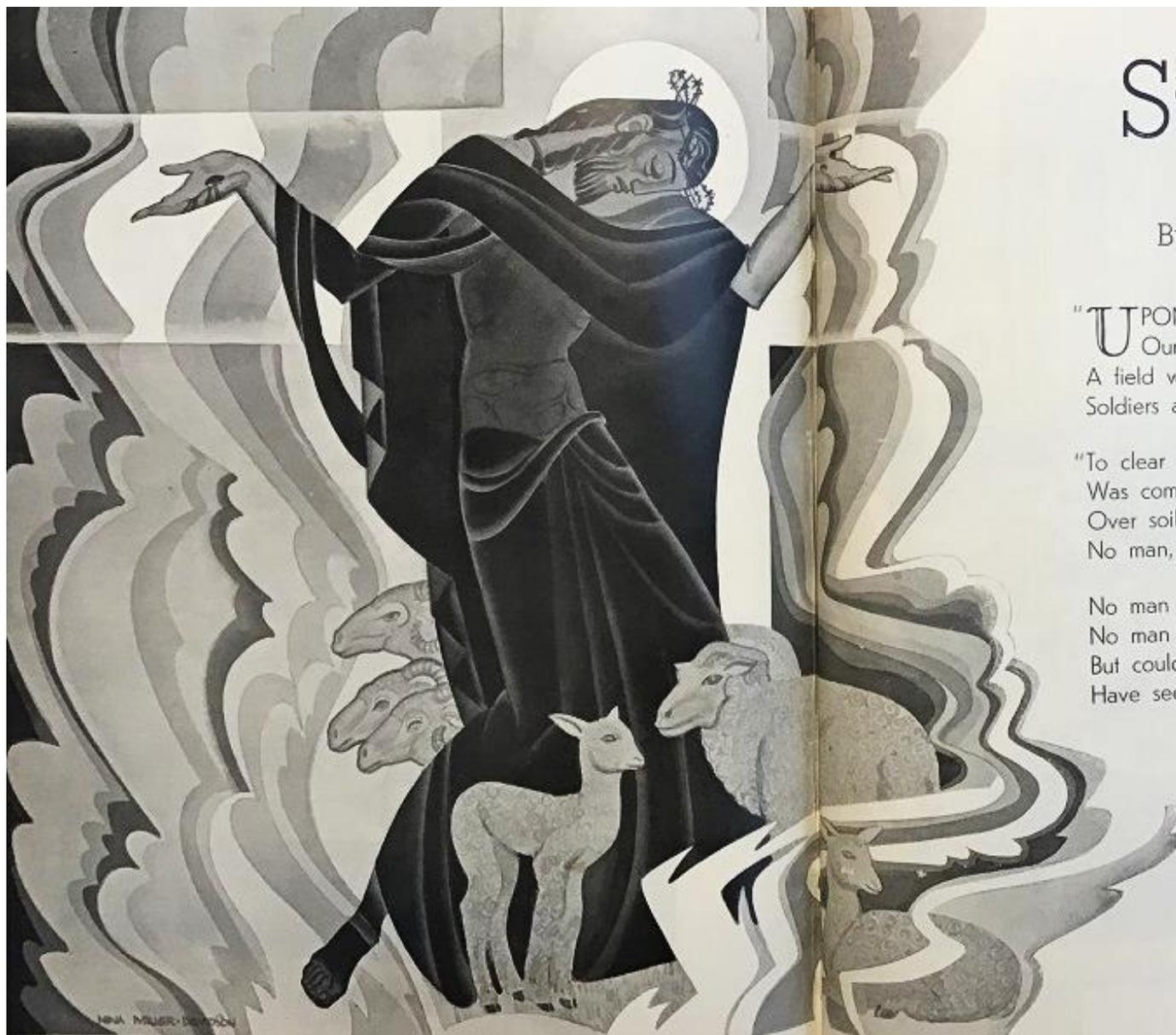
The powder sank amid the feet of doves,
And there by wind and rain and passing suns
Was made a portion of the Dragon's earth.
How different all fates, had Sho been shown
The powder belching from barbaric guns!

By William Jeffrey

China invented
Gunpowder as a
plaything. To-day
China is the play-
thing of Gunpowder

Drau
Nina

1937



Saarland Shepherd

By WILLIAM JEFFREY

"UPON the borders of the Saar,
Our troops, advancing, found
A field well mined, a trap for all
Soldiers and wheels that touch the ground.

"To clear that field, a flock of sheep
Was commandeered and thrust
Over soil and wire. The mines were sprung ;
No man, advancing, joined the dust."

No man was killed, the message said,
No man beside the dead sheep lay.
But could the men that drove the flock
Have seen into eternal day,

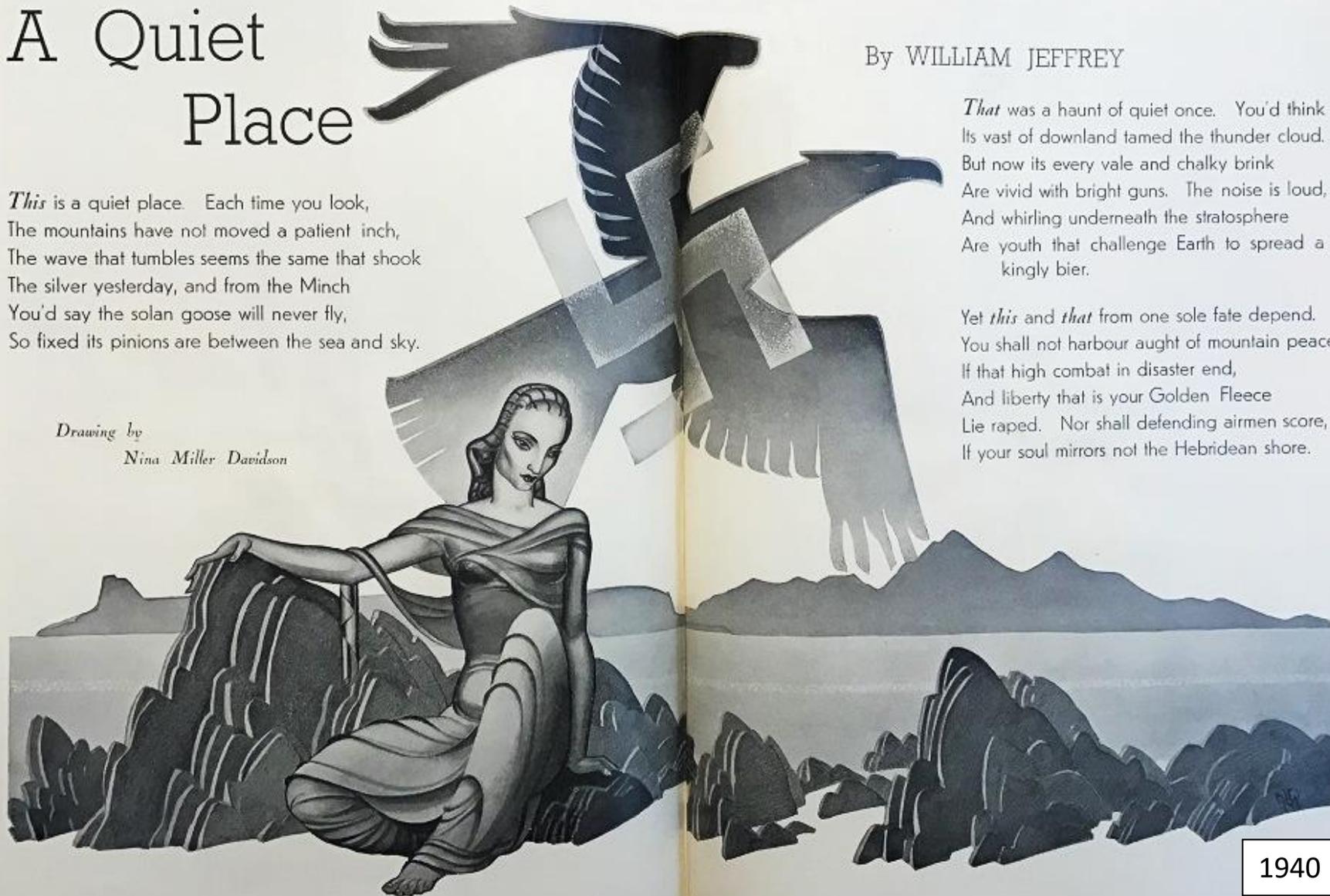
They would have seen a Shepherd
there
Tend upon that dumb and stricken
band,
And seen Him shattered under fire,
Wounded in body, foot and hand.

1939

A Quiet Place

This is a quiet place. Each time you look,
The mountains have not moved a patient inch,
The wave that tumbles seems the same that shook
The silver yesterday, and from the Minch
You'd say the solan goose will never fly,
So fixed its pinions are between the sea and sky.

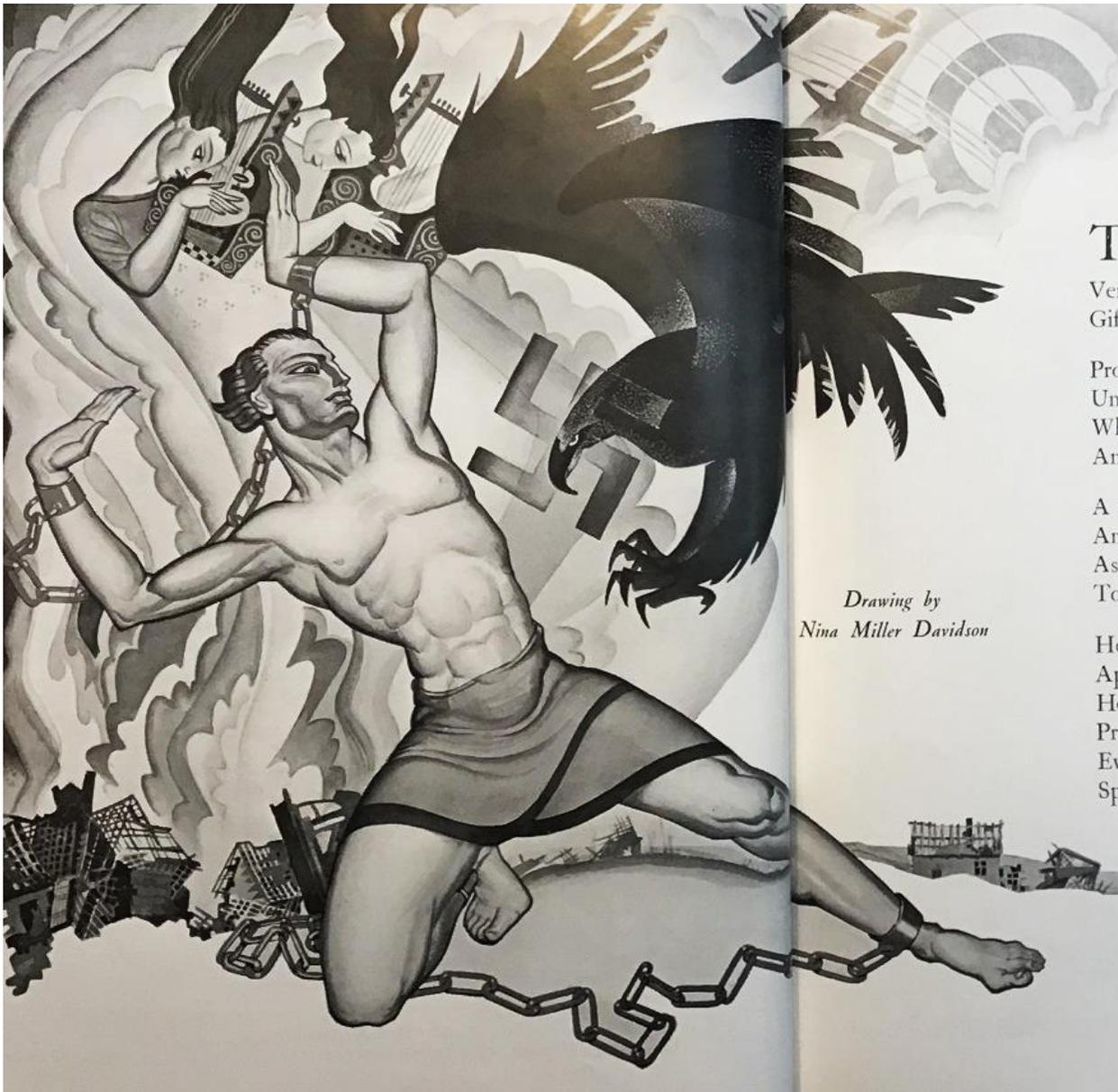
*Drawing by
Nina Miller Davidson*



By WILLIAM JEFFREY

That was a haunt of quiet once. You'd think
Its vast of downland tamed the thunder cloud.
But now its every vale and chalky brink
Are vivid with bright guns. The noise is loud,
And whirling underneath the stratosphere
Are youth that challenge Earth to spread a
kingly bier.

Yet *this* and *that* from one sole fate depend.
You shall not harbour aught of mountain peace
If that high combat in disaster end,
And liberty that is your Golden Fleece
Lie raped. Nor shall defending airmen score,
If your soul mirrors not the Hebridean shore.



*Drawing by
Nina Miller Davidson*

VULTURES IN THE EAST

THE Greeks had a myth that told
Of a god who by vision and plan
Ventured on a scheme overbold,
Gifting fire from the sun on man.

Prometheus that god. And he fell
Under wrath of Zeus, King of the Vast,
Who had him bound by force out of hell,
And on the ice-fanged Caucasus cast.

A bird of prey at his torn side fed,
And his agony endured alway,
As hurtling into Time the ages sped
To thunder-bearing dawns of to-day.

He is tortured still. To his mountain lair
Approach volcanic bomb and gun,
How dare he hope that anywhere
Presumptuous force shall be overcome?
Even now past Ararat's bright air
Speed dove-like wings that flash in the sun.

WILLIAM JEFFREY.

1941

THE WEST RETURNS

NOW shoulders into time the doomful year,
And I, at watch, immortal mortal, stand,
Iron-thew'd embattled manhood of my land,
Her destiny embraced, out-thrown all fear.
Alone we stood, but now upon the ear
Drumming engines beat, a martial band
Gigantic. Surging from the Western strand,
The triple powers of freedom gather here.

O New World comrades ! To this kelp-stained shore
You come not strangers : thence your fathers sailed,
The crofts of stone asleep in their hearts' core,
That never under tyrannous heel had quailed.
In you returned, they vindicate their faith,
And armed in steel shall now receive no scathe.

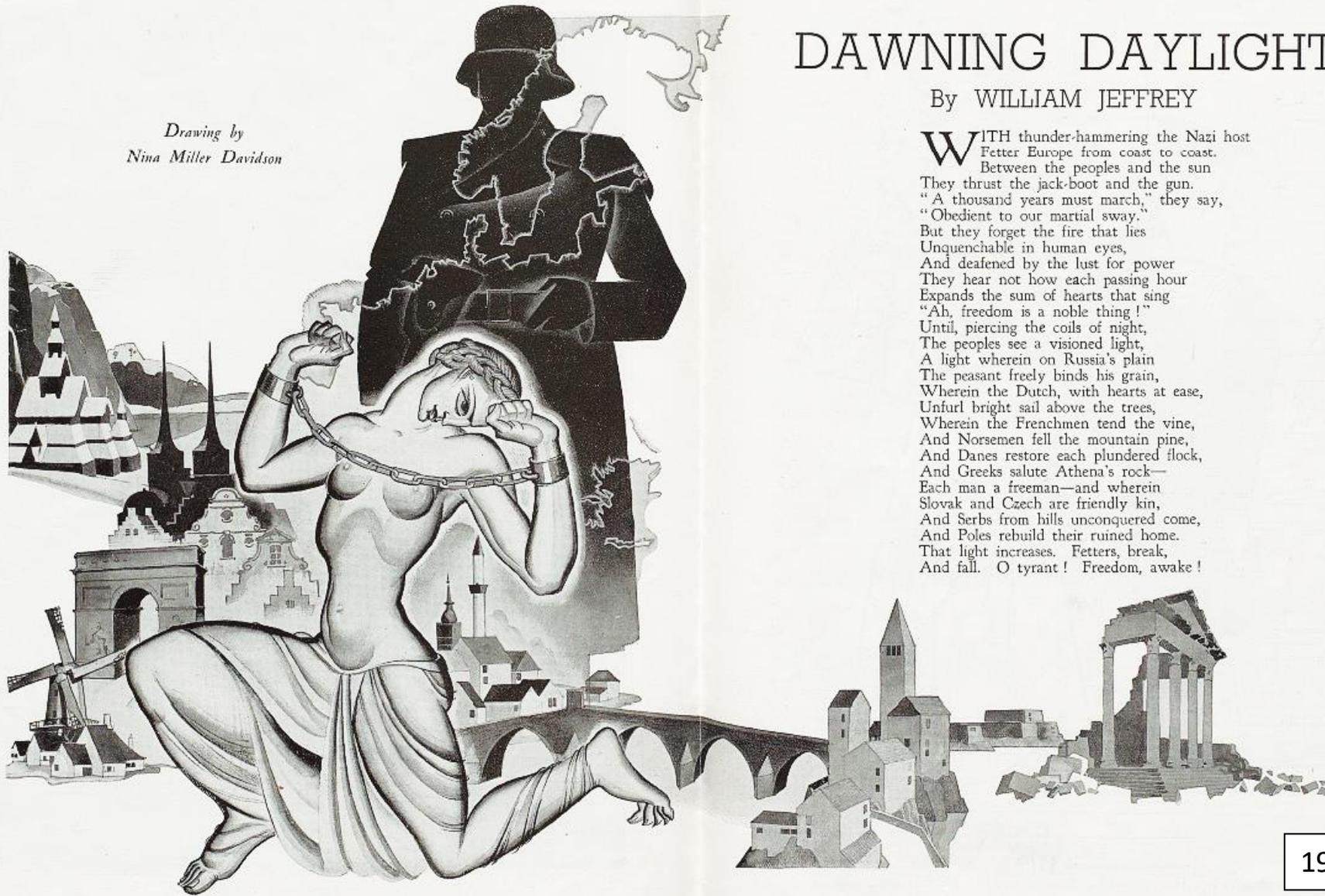
WILLIAM JEFFREY.

1942



g by
N Davidson

*Drawing by
Nina Miller Davidson*

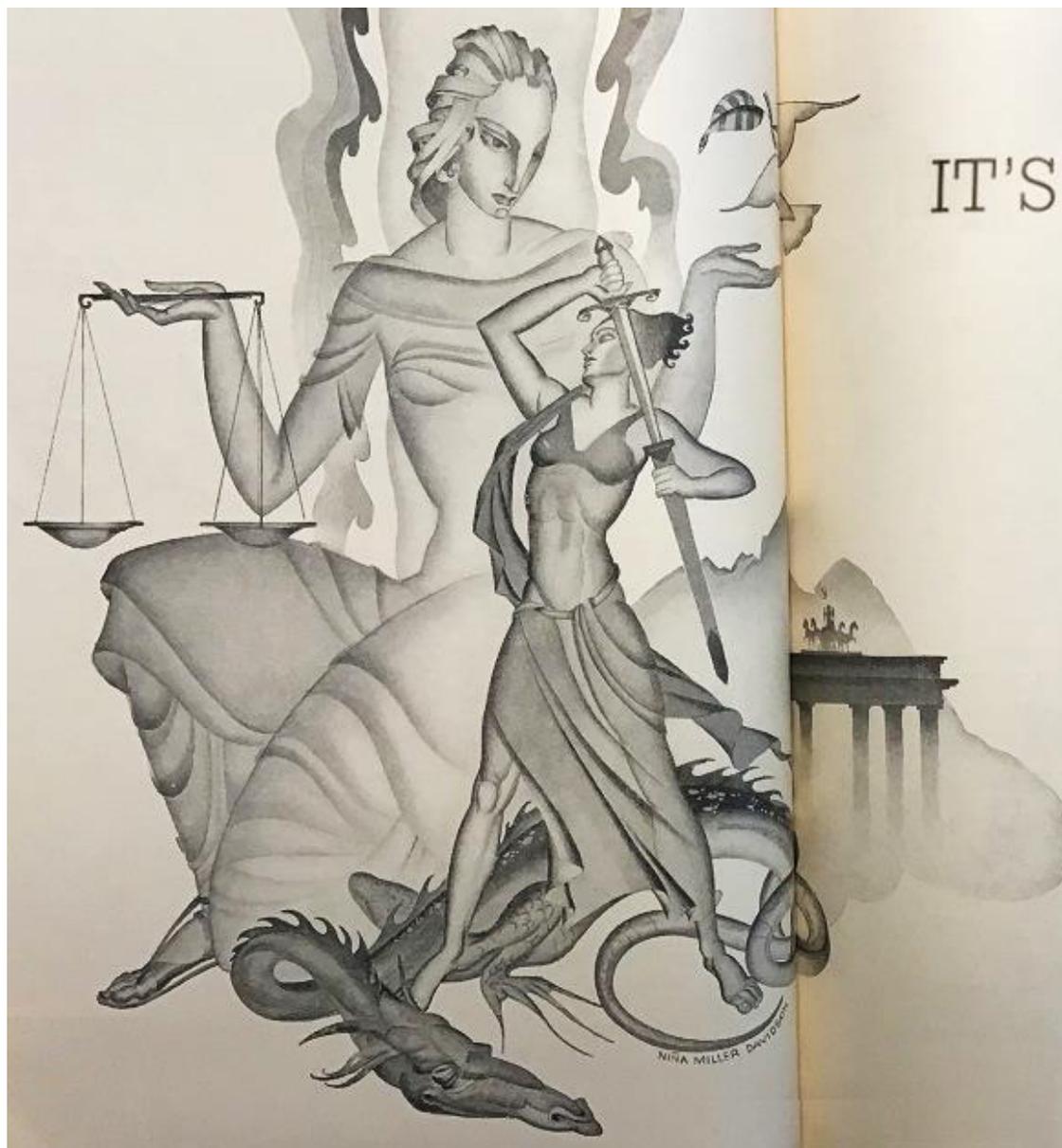


DAWNING DAYLIGHT

By WILLIAM JEFFREY

WITH thunder-hammering the Nazi host
Fetter Europe from coast to coast.
Between the peoples and the sun
They thrust the jack-boot and the gun.
"A thousand years must march," they say,
"Obedient to our martial sway."
But they forget the fire that lies
Unquenchable in human eyes,
And deafened by the lust for power
They hear not how each passing hour
Expands the sum of hearts that sing
"Ah, freedom is a noble thing!"
Until, piercing the coils of night,
The peoples see a visioned light,
A light wherein on Russia's plain
The peasant freely binds his grain,
Wherein the Dutch, with hearts at ease,
Unfurl bright sail above the trees,
Wherein the Frenchmen tend the vine,
And Norsemen fell the mountain pine,
And Danes restore each plundered flock,
And Greeks salute Athena's rock—
Each man a freeman—and wherein
Slovak and Czech are friendly kin,
And Serbs from hills unconquered come,
And Poles rebuild their ruined home.
That light increases. Fetters, break,
And fall. O tyrant! Freedom, awake!

1943



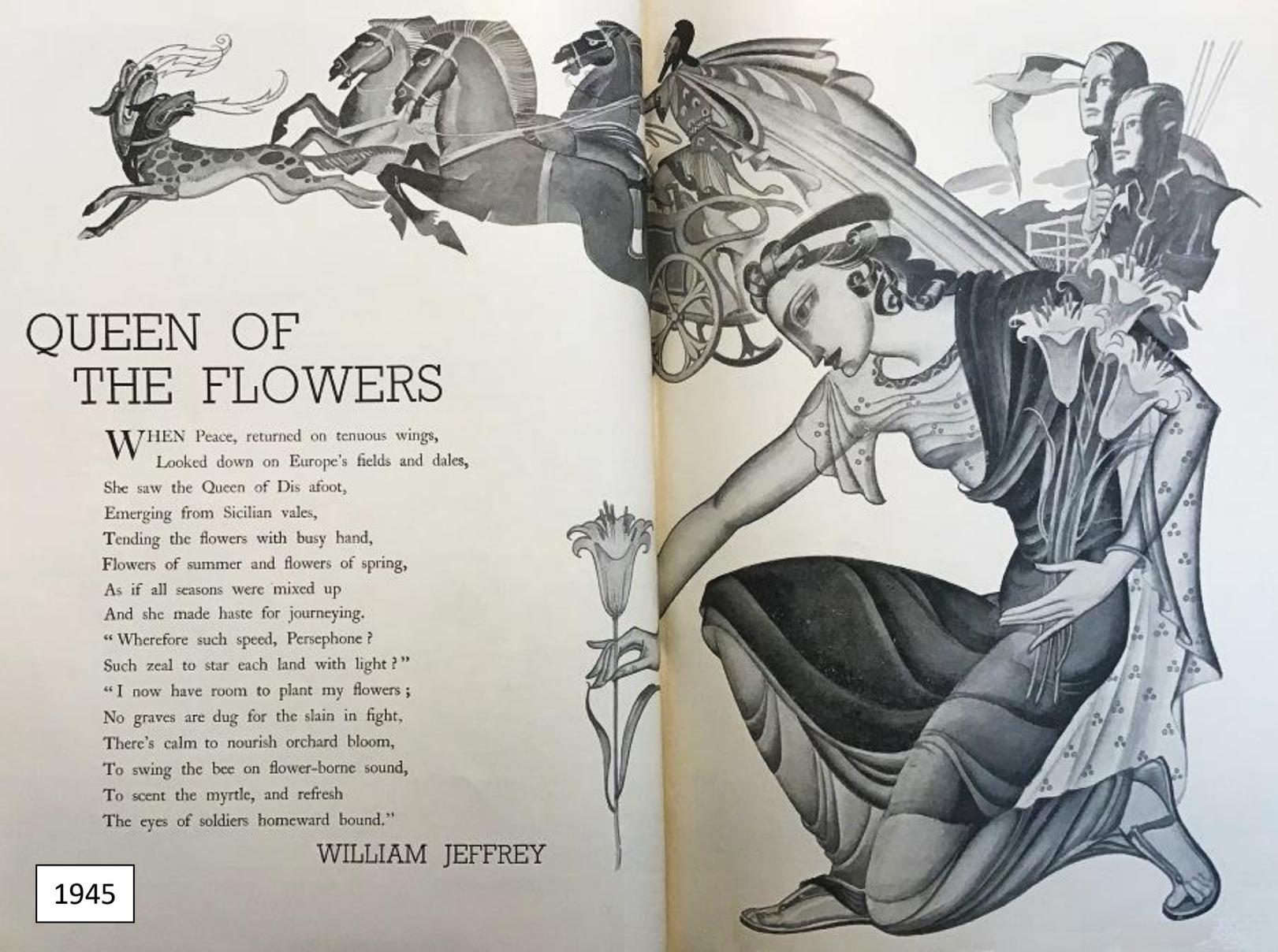
IT'S COMIN' YET FOR A' THAT

By WILLIAM JEFFREY

WITH thund'rous panoply of marshalled
power,
Heaven-souring planes, earth-loud artillery,
The Allied armies, to stamp their victory,
Parade in Berlin's ruin of wall and tower.
The pipes and drums accentuate the hour ;
A myriad hearts beat through them, liberty
Proclaiming, end of brutish savagery ;
A million lips in mountain music flower.

In retribution just the foe lies prone ;
Well merited the triumph : shrill and
clear
The pipes acclaim it, and hope, lo ! returns,
But sounding through a marching Islesman's
ear
The pipes are out of time : they come
from stone
That trembles when through dawn the
Coolin burns.

1944



QUEEN OF THE FLOWERS

WHEN Peace, returned on tenuous wings,
Looked down on Europe's fields and dales,
She saw the Queen of Dis afoot,
Emerging from Sicilian vales,
Tending the flowers with busy hand,
Flowers of summer and flowers of spring,
As if all seasons were mixed up
And she made haste for journeying.
"Wherefore such speed, Persephone?
Such zeal to star each land with light?"
"I now have room to plant my flowers;
No graves are dug for the slain in fight,
There's calm to nourish orchard bloom,
To swing the bee on flower-borne sound,
To scent the myrtle, and refresh
The eyes of soldiers homeward bound."

WILLIAM JEFFREY

1945

More NMD illustrations:



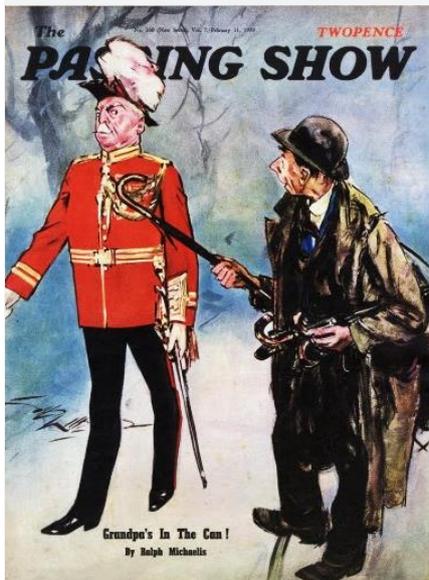
From SCENE IN RESTAURANT by Marvin Sutton in *The Passing Show*, issue 352, 17 December 1938



From "Give us Men
who can Lead!" by
Lady Violet Bonham
Carter in *Nash's Pall
Mall. Magazine*, issue
488, January 1934



From A TALE OF TWO WOMEN by
W. A. Sweeney in *The Passing
Show*, issue 360, 11 February 1939



“X” — “The Unknown Quantity” — is for

From *Britannia and Eve*, December 1936

would refuse the plea of the mother goddess, wife of the supreme deity, the god of wisdom, poetry, war, the dead, and the fruitful fields.

Nest between green and Frigg's to the mountains. The mistletoe, maiden amid the goons of giant trunks and spreading foliage, had been overlooked; and the mistletoe was furious.

So when the evil Loki sought to encompass Balder's doom, he found a willing ally. The one thing in creation that remained unpledged to do the bright young god no harm provided the god of discord and mischief with the wood for the sharp dart which Loki then placed in the hand of the blind god Höder; and Balder fell, pierced to the heart by the javelin the blind god threw.

Of course, there is a happy ending. . . . Balder was restored to life by the united efforts of all the other gods, Loki was overcome by Odin and punished, and the naughty mistletoe promised to be good for evermore—on condition that the goddess took it under her wing, and that it was carefully kept from contact with earth.

And that, my children, is why the mistletoe now symbolises happiness, safety, and good fortune, and why you hang it up in your house at Christmas, and hiss under its now benign green leaves and berries.

An old story, older than the sagas of the vikings and the songs of the scalds—a tale that, in another form, was ancient long before there occurred in the dusty little town of Bethlehem the event which men have celebrated now for nearly 2,000 years (in this island, since the arrival of St. Augustine, 1,340 years ago).

and probe the pagan origin, and you find yourself down among the roots of life itself, peering around wide-eyed in an enchanted realm where nothing belongs to the day-to-day life of a human

earth. . . . Christmas, with its gifts, mistletoe greetings and a fir tree, Santa Klaus and that turkey and mince pies and plum pudding, the more one perceives that what appears to be the most familiar and simplest of all feasts is in reality the most mysterious and complex.

THE threads of our own British Christmas run back and are entangled with the musical watchmen of medieval England, the golden sickle of the Druids, the folklore of Asia Minor, and the tree-haunted life of the early Germanic tribes.

Bethlehem knew no Christmas carol. A carol was originally a round dance, during which the dancers sang. The Greeks had a word for it. The custom of the waits seems to go back no farther than the singing watchmen of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Christmas tree does not belong to the warm southern country where Christ was born. It seems an inseparable part of our Christmas; but it is only 100 years old. Queen Victoria's Consort brought the custom over from his Thuringian home; and the old German custom chanced to appeal to the Nordic in us. More than a million small fir trees are uprooted to fill the demand in this small island now every year.

But in the Latin countries, children will not know whom you mean when you speak of a gift-bringer, wrapped in a furred red robe, white whiskers flying in the wind, who drives a reindeer sleigh laden with sacks of toys. Their bearer of gifts does not come until the Feast of the Gentiles on January 6; and is a homely old lady who distributes toys. They know as little of Santa Klaus as did the people in the days of our

How Much or How Little do you know about Christmas? This Article is a Mine of Information—and Surprises



XMAS: By C. Patrick Thompson

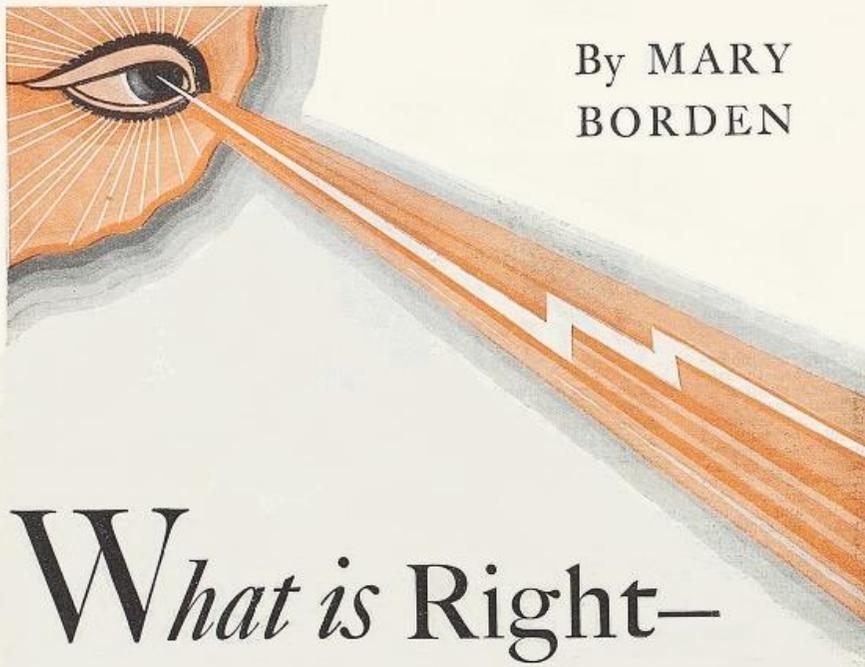
contemporary civilisation. If they ever erect a research station, and find out all about it—as they laboriously investigate sun, moon, stellar, health, crime, industrial and other phenomena, with tabulated lists of facts and figures—they will in time weave together a story to astonish us all.

The first thing they will record, of course, is that we are all at sea in our dates. December 25 is quite an arbitrary date for the birth of Christ. If our December 25 is by chance right, men were celebrating Christmas at the wrong time for about 1,200 years; for the Julian calendar introduced 46 B.C. had a year 11 minutes longer than the astronomical year, so that the date of the vernal equinox had by A.D. 325 become displaced by 10 days, and it was not until 1582 that Pope Gregory XIII restored time order by jumping 10 days, making October 5, 1582, October 15, which made January 4 of the old calendar December 25 of the new one.

Some scholars think (Continued on page 121)



Decorations by Nina Miller Davidson



By MARY
BORDEN

—What is Wrong?

What is Right—

Religion is rejected,
Morality laughed at,
Patriotism, Duty,
Self-sacrifice Scorned

Is
there still
a Code?

I WAS unpacking books. They had arrived that morning. I had been in America for a week. I had been in Anthony Trollope's *Dollittle* and Winnie the Pooh. I had my own books that I had carted from house to house, was such a thing, and I had had a very lively conversation

country to country, for thirty years. Some had come from my own school-room in America. *The Wide Wide World* had belonged to my children's grandmother when she was a child. Its pages were stained; the print was very black; there was a picture of a little girl in pantaloons; a faint rustic innocence breathed from between its black cloth covers. Holding it, I could recapture the atmosphere of my childhood. These books were more important to me than tables and chairs, or anything else in the way of furniture. When they were arranged I would be at home in the new house, not before. I sat on the floor with books stacked round me. I must sort them out before I put them on the shelves; and we must get rid of some. There wasn't room for them all.

What a business it was! I picked up a shabby reddish thirteenth impression, Longman Green and Co. London and Bombay, 1899. Where was volume II? There it was under Arnold Bennett's *Old Wives Tale*.

The History of European Morals from Augustus . . . There was something very comfortable and pleasing about the solid old book in its worn binding. Had I ever read it? I couldn't remember. Perhaps at college in America twenty years before. I had taken a course in the history of the Middle Ages. I had had a very lively conversation



Illustrations by
Nina Miller
Davidson

science; too lively by far for comfort, probably too lively for reasonableness. It had pricked so often, it had nagged and tormented me. That had been the result of my childish upbringing. Everything in my American home had been a moral question. The small silly things: putting my hair into curlers so that I might look prettily at a dance, that American Sunday School, and the parsons who were led in to wrestle with my soul. They had told me that. (Continued on page 80)

From *Nash's Pall Mall Magazine*, November 1932

THE KING WAITS



THE morning was a Friday, the month was May; it was the twenty-eighth year of the Eighth Henry's reign over England, and it needed five minutes to be noon. On Richmond Hill, under the great spring-leaved oak, stood Henry the King. His out-stretched hand commanded silence, and his huntsmen stilled the restless coupled hounds in dumb show, with furtive, sidelong glances, fearing that out-stretched jewel-laden hand, that arrogant glance. Who will disobey Harry the King, calling in that furious voice for silence? Even the midday sun, as a little cloud slipped from its face, poured down such an answering concentration of heat upon the green hill-side that the noon lull seemed an act of grace from one royalty to another. There was instantly no sound at all save the purring of the half-throttled hounds and the dry whisper of innumerable caterpillars hissing in innumerable leaves; for there was a blight that spring in the oak-woods.

For one minute—two—three—the silence endured; then a burst of wind broke it; and all the trees in Richmond Park began once more to strain, creak, rustle, and the scent of the may drifted by again in gusts, and high overhead the clouds, too, renewed their voyage eastward through the heavenly blue. Over the Tower of London, as the wind lulled once more, they banked together again, a white tower of the sky.

Far below the white may drifted over the town and in through the windows, doorways

and courtyards of the Tower, and over the Tower green. Through slits in the wall the river sparkled in the noon sunshine; but still it lacked four minutes to be noon.

Across the green to the new scaffold came Anne the Queen, dressed in black damask with a white cape, and her hat was in the fashion. The Lieutenant of the Tower helped her to mount the steps. She had her glance and her nod for the waiting swordsman; then she looked down upon her friends and upon her enemies gathered close about her harsh death-bed; said to them that which was in her mind to say; adjusted her dress and freed the small neck; then knelt. But she would not let friend or enemy cover her eyes, and though she knelt she did not bow her head, but looked again keenly upon the silenced crowd; and for the last time called upon the ready blood to flush her cheeks.

She had always been able to redden thus into beauty when she chose; and now the hot blood did not fail her. It was at its old trick, brightening her black eyes; and this was ever the sign of crisis with her. With that sudden flush she had won her game—how often?—with this king and husband who had now beaten her. She felt a strange pang of longing to remember, to finger once again her glorious victories over time, absence, malice, envy, a queen, a cardinal, a king—and her own resentful heart.

She was not used to denying herself any wish; so, lifting her head, she let the spell work for the last time; and her executioner, meeting that full glance, hesitated and turned aside, as if his part were not yet ready to be played. Again he advanced; again she looked at him, and had the last triumph of her beauty as she won her respite.

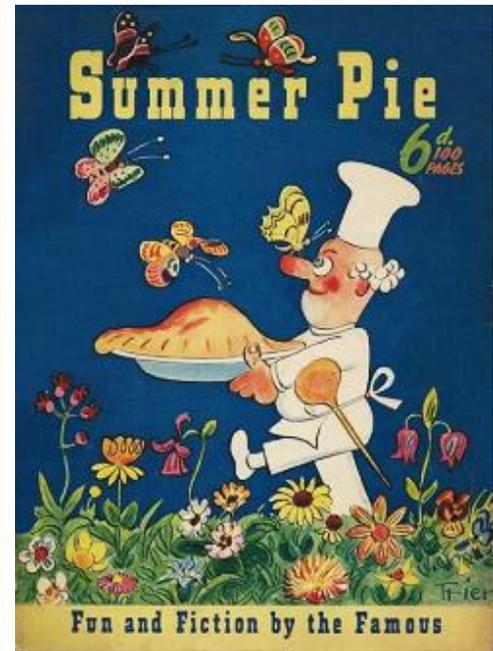


by Clemence Dane

ILLUSTRATED BY NINA MILLER-DAVIDSON

From *Summer Pie*,
August 1939

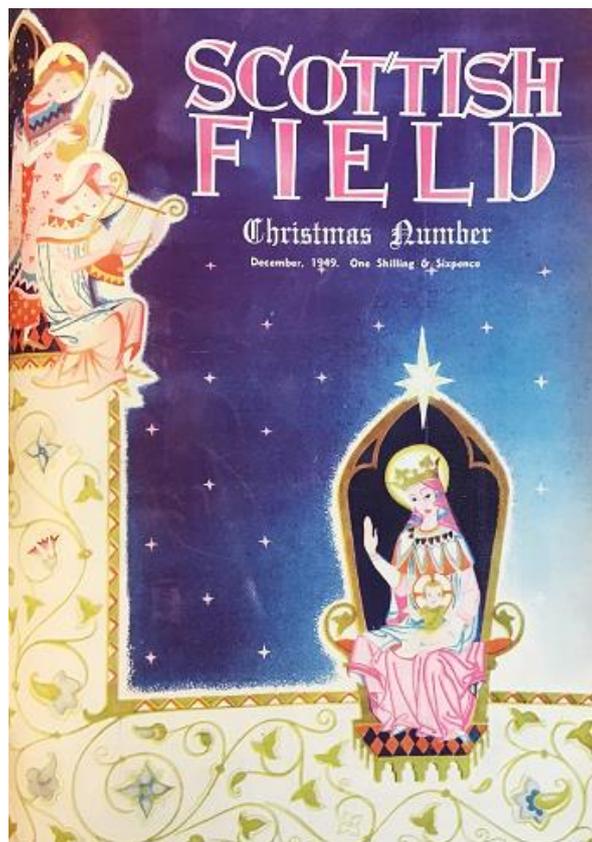
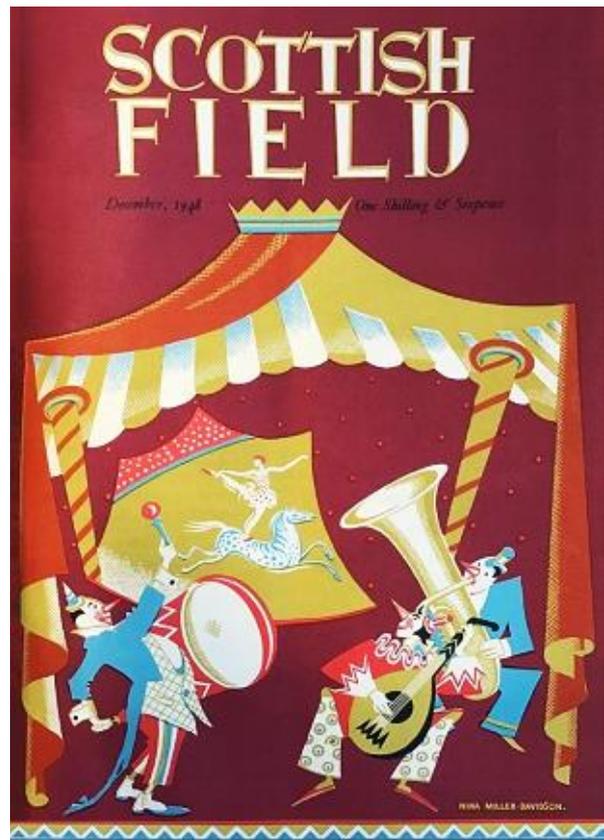
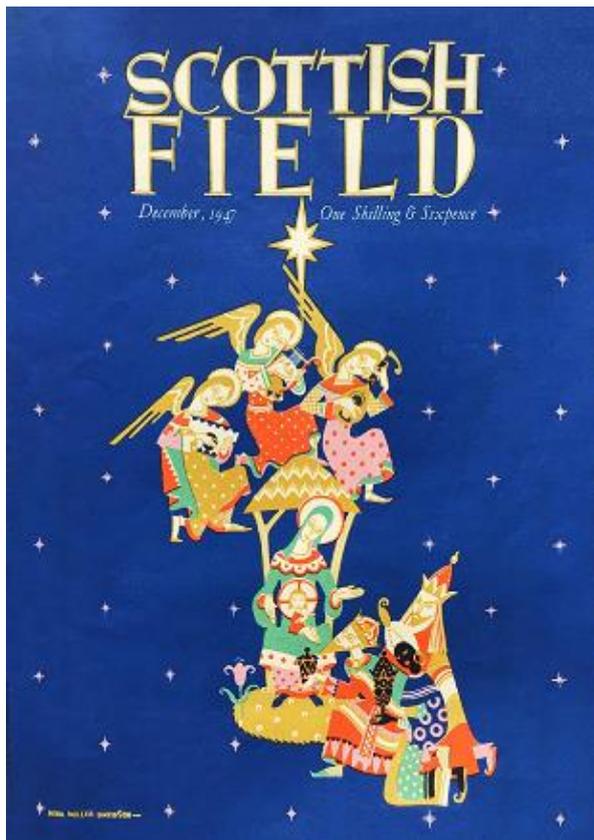
He
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ly:
she looked in turn upon her gaoler, Kingston, on courteous Gwynn clutching in his hand her last gift, on thankless Cromwell, on Suffolk's exultant face. But here her glance checked, her very heart checked on its beat, for beside Suffolk, her enemy, stood a nearer enemy; it seemed to her that her husband's eyes glittered at her, set in a younger, comelier countenance. So



Fun and Fiction by the Famous

In the period 1947-1951, Mrs Davidson provided nine front covers for mainstream rural pursuits monthly magazine **Scottish Field**:





December 1947, '48 and 49 – the last three Christmas editions of the 1940s all bear a Davidson cover, two Nativity-themed, one circus-themed. Six of her *Scottish Field* covers are signed, but three are not.

SCOTTISH FIELD

May, 1948 One Shilling & Sixpence



NINA MILLER-DAVIDSON

SCOTTISH FIELD

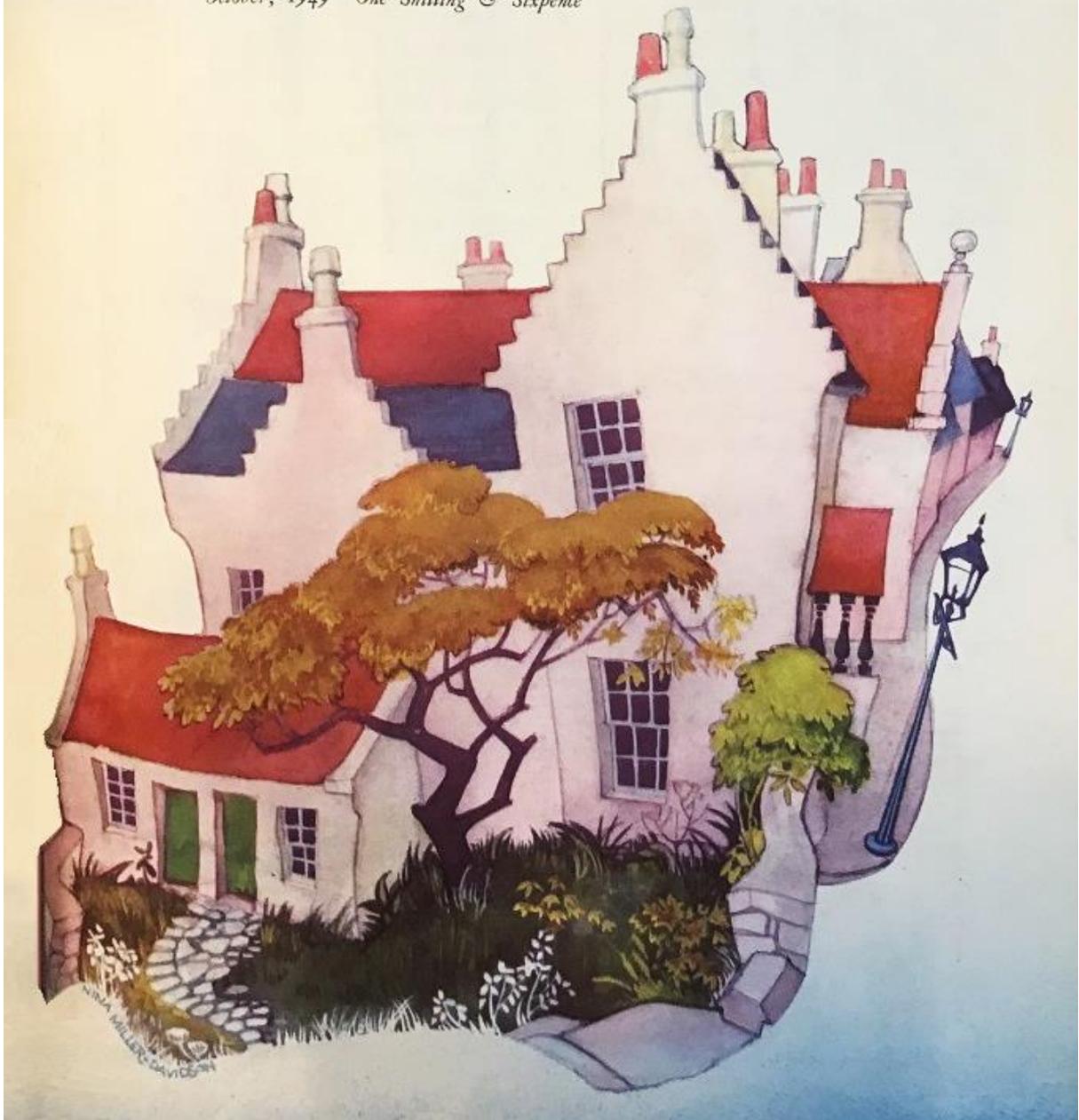
May, 1949 One Shilling & Sixpence



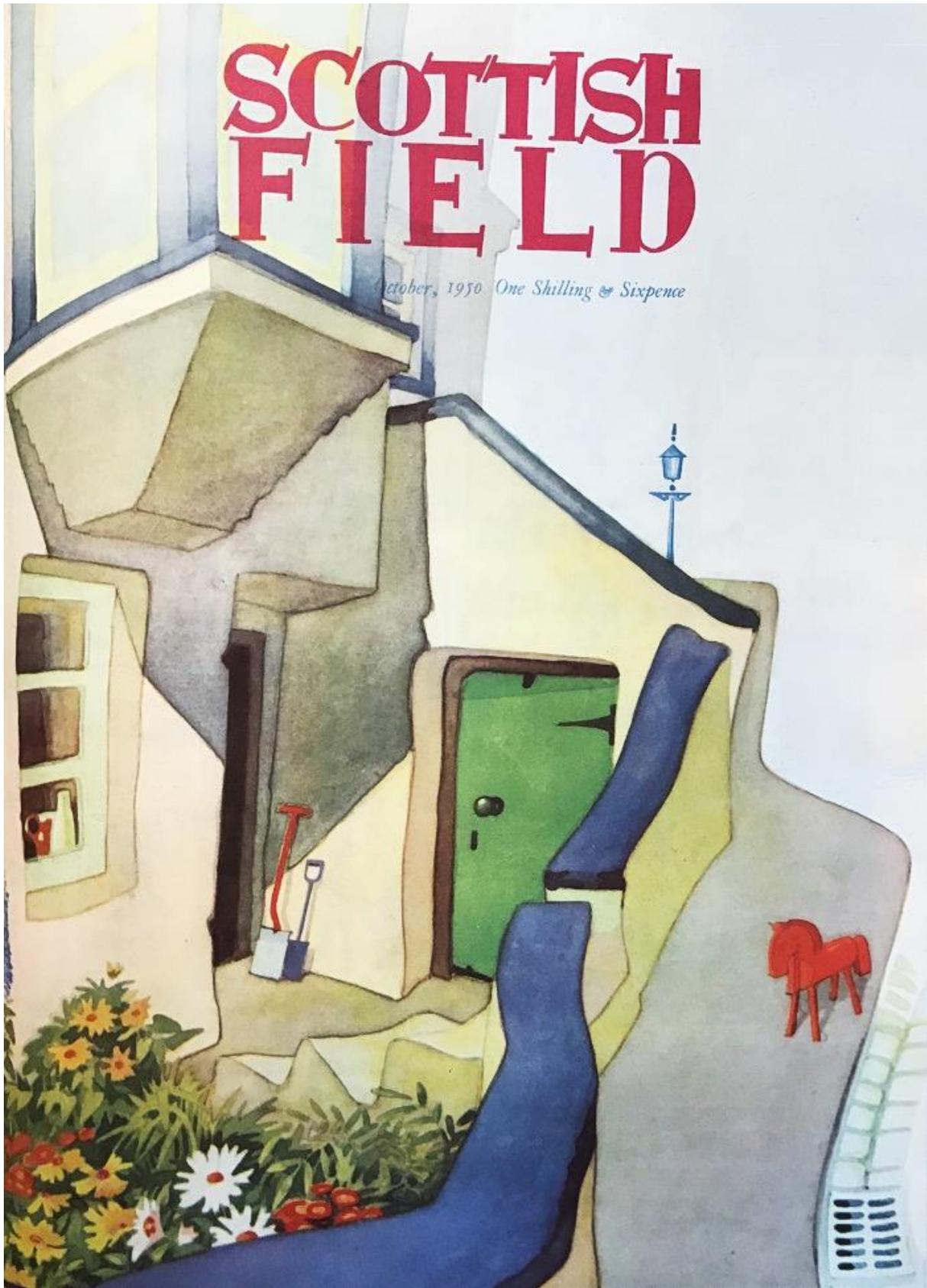
Laigh Braehead, Thorntonhall, Lanarkshire

SCOTTISH FIELD

October, 1949 One Shilling & Sixpence



A house in Elie, a Fife village on the north coast of the Firth of Forth
(see also next page)



Sea Wynd, Elie, where Mrs Davidson stayed through the summer of 1950. She commented that "Scotland's picturesque old houses out-do those in the more published parts of the Continent."

SCOTTISH FIELD

MARCH 1951 ONE SHILLING & SIXPENCE



"Nina Miller Davidson finds designing stained glass windows the most fascinating of all her work. This cover design incorporates an impression of Our Lady of Loretto with one of the completed windows."



"Lion and Lamb" by Nina Miller Davidson, undated

* * * * *

Stained glass design

Charles and Nina Miller Davidson both designed stained glass windows – she probably learnt from him, as his earliest work predates hers – and beautiful examples of their art survive in a number of Scottish churches. All shown below are by either Nina or the couple working in tandem:



Merrylea Parish Church, Glasgow: Mrs Davidson's window is in the vestibule. Describing a tour of the building in the early 1970s, Walter Crichton wrote of it:

And there is that little window by Mrs Nina Miller Davidson, who greatly influenced the establishment of Eaglesham as a conservation village. Doesn't it remind you of something? Yes – it is based on the famous painting "The Light of the World" by Holman Hunt and depicts Jesus knocking at the door. He is, as is Merrylea, standing on the mound and His "I am the Way" surmounts the picture. Together these themes represent the opening of worship under the leadership of the Reverend Julius McCallum, whose ministry is recalled. Other allegories are the corn and the wine, representing the Communion Bread and Wine, while the Phoenix symbolises the replacement of the original "Tin Church" by our present edifice.

* * *

(Photo by Ralph Boettcher)



St Peter's, Morningside, Edinburgh: (i) St Duthac, St Catherine of Sciennes and St Columba (date unknown) (ii) Life of St Giles, 1954 (top panel)



Life of St Giles (panels two and three of five)



Life of St Giles (panels four and five)

* * *



St Margaret's Parish Church, Dalry, Ayrshire (1): the Dorcas and St Cecilia Window *aka* the Crawford Memorial Window by Nina Miller Davidson, 1953.

Dorcas *aka* Tabitha, a resident of Joppa, made clothes for and gave alms to the poor; Acts 9:40 tells how she was raised from the dead by Peter. St Cecilia, a Roman virgin martyr and patron saint of music and musicians, was forced by her parents to marry Valerian, a pagan nobleman, but delivered from harm by the angel of the Lord. About Jeanie and Mary Crawford nothing is known.



St Margaret's Church, Dalry (2): the Miriam and Naomi Window by Nina Miller Davidson, 1953

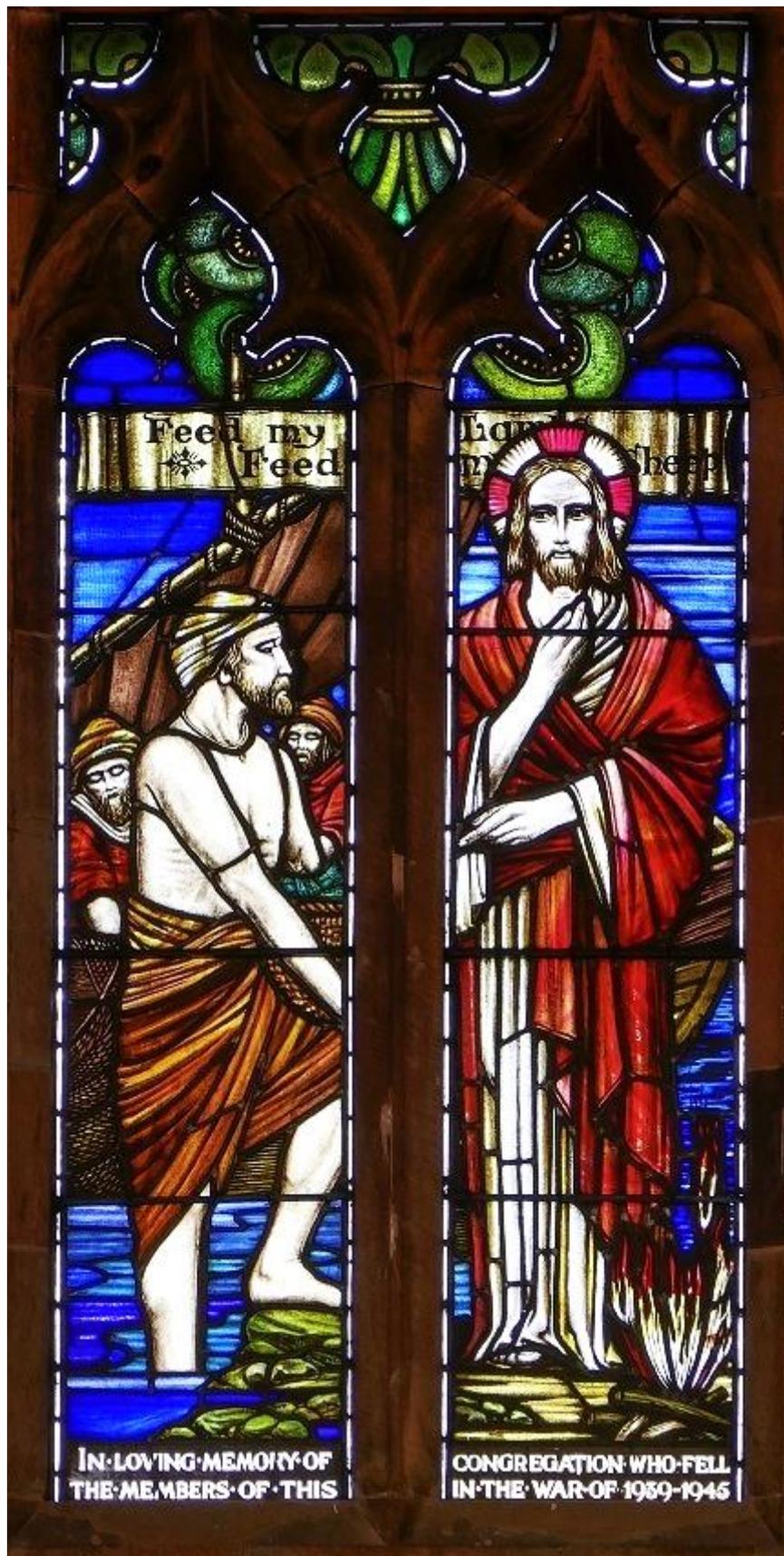
On 3 November 1951 a fire took the roof off the west end of the church, causing extensive damage; the Woman's Guild commissioned this window to give thanks for the Herculean effort which saw St Margaret's restored within two years to something rather better than its former state.

* * *



Jordanhill Parish Church, Glasgow: five memorial windows by Mr and Mrs Davidson were unveiled in April 1946. These two commemorate (i) Rev. Dr.

A. D. Livingstone (Minister from 1899 to 1938) and (ii) the seven members of Jordanhill's congregation who died whilst on active service during WWII.





Above: this photo shows four of the five windows in the north wall of the church. The large Livingstone Window at the top of the west-side aisle can be glimpsed at the left edge of the image; the window on page 49 is the third of the central three. The first gives thanks for those who returned from the war and the second commemorates Rev. G.D.R. Munro (Minister from 1874 to 1902) and Mrs Emma Parker Smith, the donor of the site on which the church (relocated in 1905) now stands.⁸



Left: the fifth and smallest window, high in the north wall and not visible in the photo above, depicts the Burning Bush (described in Exodus 3:2), emblem of the Church of Scotland. The legend reads: "NEC TAMEN CONSUMEBATUR" ("BUT IT WAS NOT CONSUMED").

* * *

Our Lady of Loretto Church, Musselburgh: Towards the end of the war, the Davidsons were commissioned to design four windows for this church and, when they were done, the congregation admired them so much that they raised money to have, first, the six windows in the Nave, then three in the Lady Chapel, three in the Baptistry, two in the Choir and two in the Porch replaced too, all on the theme of "the Life of Our Lady from her Nativity to her Coronation by her Risen Son as Queen of Heaven."⁹ The couple began the project together, then, following Charles's death early in

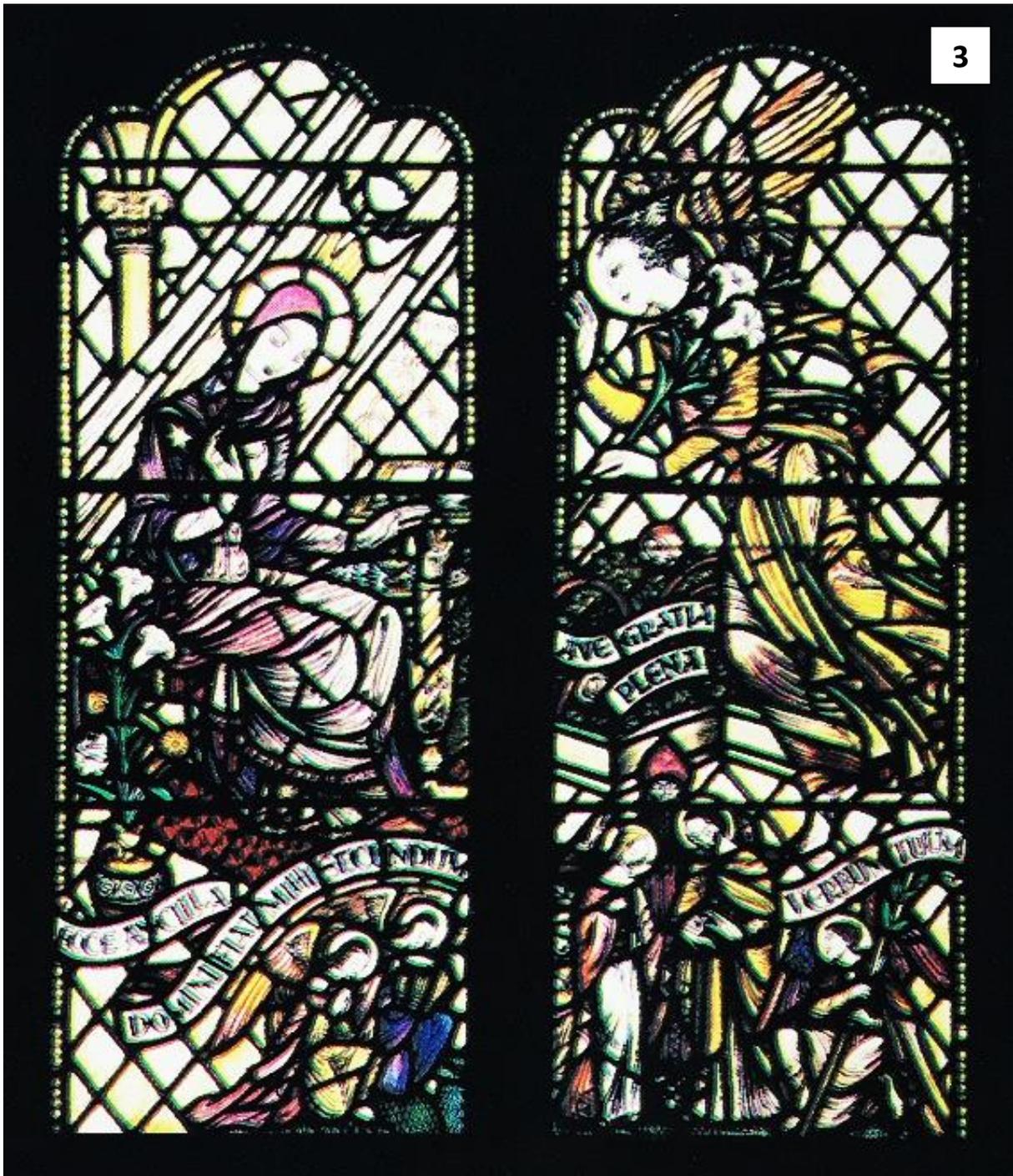


1948, Nina completed it alone.^{10, 11} Brian Heeps states: "Far from being derivative, the finished work has a strikingly fresh and original approach that defies classification but commands a deep and mystical interest."

(1) The Nativity of Our Lady (previous page): the child Mary is shown with her parents, St Anne and St Joachim, pursuing her devotions, studies and youthful recreations. Text: THY BIRTH, O MARY, PROCLAIMS JOY TO THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE.



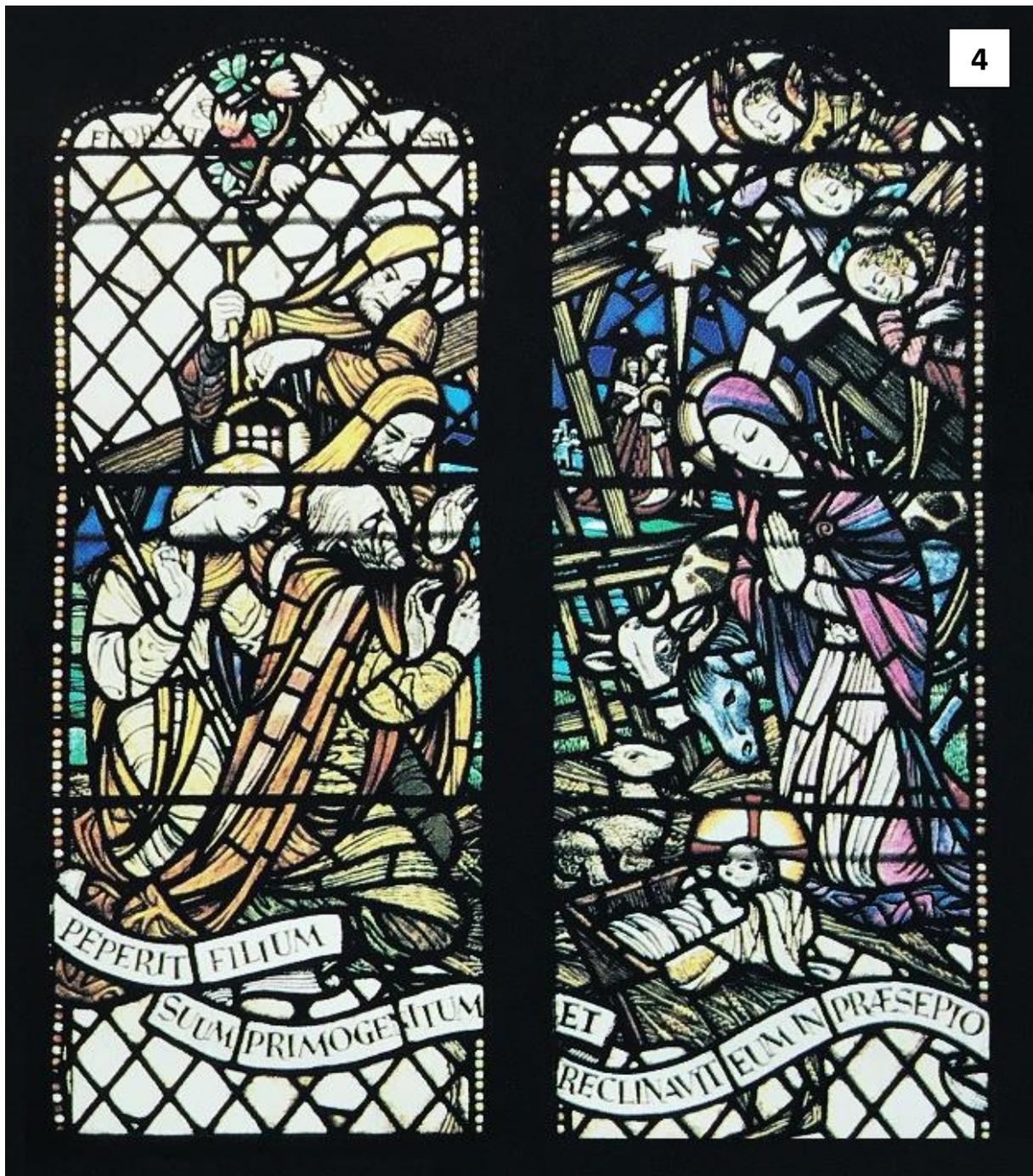
(2) The Divine Mother-to-be is presented to the High Priest: Text: THOU, THE GLORY OF JERUSALEM, THE JOY OF ISRAEL, THE ENNOBLEMENT OF OUR PEOPLE



(3) The Annunciation

Text: *AVE GRATIA PLENA
ECCE ANCILLA DOMINI FIAT MIHI SECUNDUM VERBUM
TUUM*

HAIL, FULL OF GRACE
BEHOLD THE HANDMAIDEN OF THE LORD
LET IT BE DONE UNTO ME ACCORDING TO THY WORD



(4) The Nativity: Text: SHE BROUGHT FORTH HER FIRSTBORN AND LAID HIM IN A MANGER. Inset (see left lancet, top): *VIRGA JESSE FLORUIT: THE ROOT OF JESSE HATH BLOSSOMED*

(5) The Flight into Egypt (next page): Text: TAKE THE BOY AND HIS MOTHER AND ESCAPE INTO EGYPT (Matthew 2:13). Inset: *PORTA COELI / GATE OF HEAVEN*, which is one of the fifty-four names bestowed on Mary in the sixteenth-century *Litany of Loreto*. "IHC" (on the gate) are the first three Greek letters of the Holy Name "Jesus".



(6) **The Childhood of Christ** (next page) in which we see the child Jesus learning his trade in the carpenter's shop watched by Our Lady and St. Joseph. The symbol of the Holy Spirit is shown above the head of Our Lady in all the windows in which she appears. Text: HE CAME TO NAZARETH AND WAS SUBJECT UNTO THEM (Luke 2:51); inset: *FOEDERIS ARCA / ARK OF THE COVENANT*, again from the *Litany of Loreto*, as is *TURRIS DAVIDICA / TOWER OF DAVID*, seen in Windows (2) and (19) also.



(7) Piéta Window (next page): Text: HAIL, MAIDEN, NOBLE AND SUPREME, FIRST-BLOSSOMED ROSE OF MARTYRDOM, WHITE LILY-FLOWER OF CHASTITY.

Windows (7), (8) and (9) are in a north-facing wall. Brian Heeps writes: "These windows, charged with emotion, have their effect heightened by always being shaded from the rays of the sun; also, a lead additive was used by the artists to subtly dull the tints."

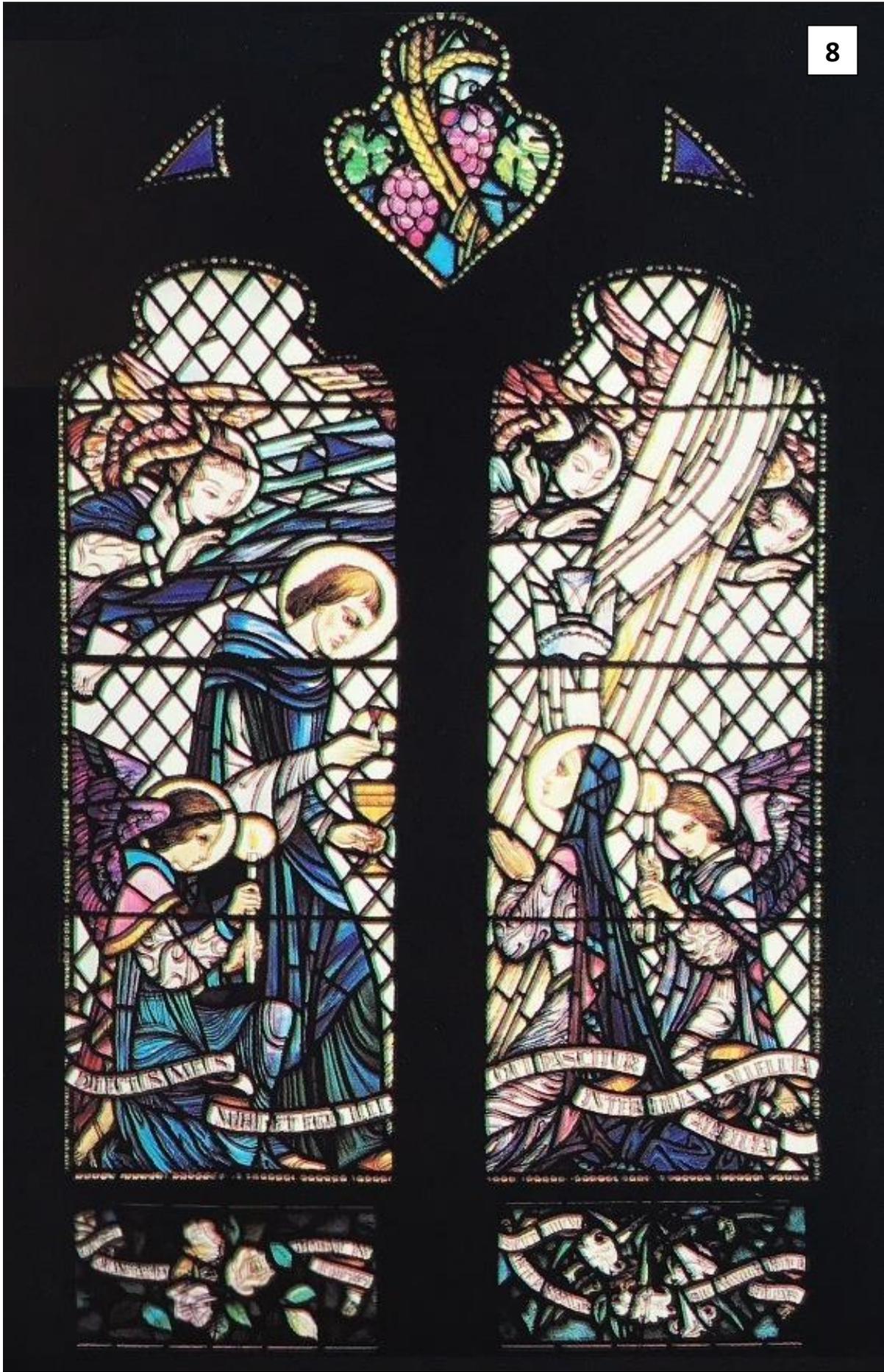


(8) Our Lady receives her Son in Viaticum (next page):

Main text: MY LOVE BELONGS TO ME, AND I TO HIM, WHO FEEDS AMONG THE LILIES; ALLELUIA (Song of Solomon 2:16)

Lower left: AS A ROSE-BUSH IN JERICHO (Sirach 24:14)

Lower right: AS THE LILY AMONG THORNS, SO IS MY BELOVED AMONG THE DAUGHTERS OF ADAM (Song of Solomon 2:2)



A STORY IN STAINED GLASS

IN THE WINDOWS OF A MUSSELBURGH CHURCH

There is to be found, newly completed in the church of Our Lady of Loretto and St. Michael in Musselburgh, a remarkable series of twenty-one stained glass windows designed by Nina Miller Davidson and her husband, the late Charles L. Davidson. On our cover this month (see page 39), Mrs Davidson has combined an impression of the church with a miniature "cartoon" or working drawing of one of the windows.

The series of windows in this Musselburgh church is remarkable in three ways. In the first place, all but two of the windows in the church have been designed by these two artists, thus achieving an effect of unity and continuity seldom found in modern church decoration. Secondly, although two minds worked on the designs, they appear to have been in such perfect accord that it is quite impossible for the casual observer to assign a particular section of a window to one member of the partnership rather than the other. And thirdly, while the richness of colour employed and much of the convention is suitably and traditionally medieval, a detailed examination discloses embellishments drawn from a wide range of additional sources; there is a sense of conscious pre-Raphaelitism, for example, in the treatment of flowers, Celtic feeling in a decoratively conventionalised treatment of the sea in one window, a Byzantine stiffness in the pose of certain figures, a simplification that is as much modern as missal-like about the features of certain faces. All these elements have been fused, like the colours in the glass itself, into something which retains all the properties of tradition, and yet could not possibly have been the product of any other than the twentieth century.

As a general rule, if the truth be confessed, modern stained glass work more often dismays than satisfies me. Like tapestry-weaving, the illumination of windows is essentially a Gothic art. It came to its finest flowering in the Dark Ages when any light was better than none. This was literally true. The vast majority of those early congregations could not read. The dim light shed by the deep red and blue lozenges of cathedral windows was sufficient to increase the devotional atmosphere, and no more was required of it.

Today's congregations want to read their hymn-books and their prayer-books. The modern reviver of the ancient craft is accordingly faced with a dilemma. His desire to employ traditional depths of tone is tempered by the

knowledge that the admission of the maximum amount of daylight is also requisite. The result is too often neither one thing nor the other, an anaemic compromise that falls short of both its objects.

The Davidsons in their windows have not entirely solved this dilemma – no modern craftsman can. But they have, it seems to me, come down on the right side, and with outstanding success. They have gone out for colour and richness first, and left the question of interior lighting in the utilitarian sense to be solved by other means. I suggest this is the only correct decision, because it seems to me that if unobstructed daylight is the first requirement of a church, then that church would be well advised to abjure stained glass altogether. There is no half-way house.

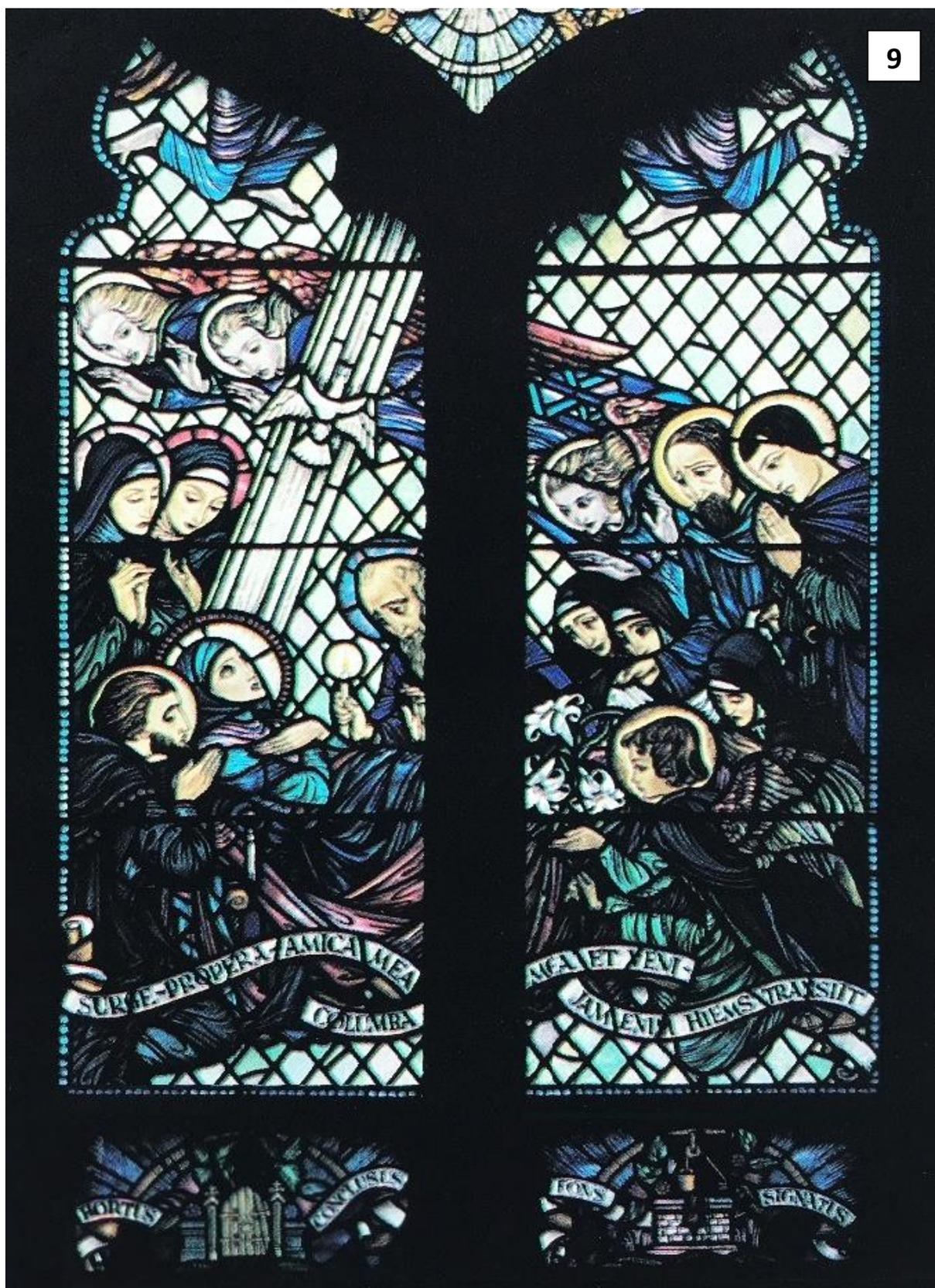
The Davidson windows, which were designed under the instructions of Canon Bernard McLaughlin and executed by Messrs Guthrie and Wells of Glasgow, tell the story of the life, death and assumption of Our Lady of Loretto, after whom the church is named. Each window contains not merely a scene from the life but the appropriate symbol and motto, and the manner in which these details have been incorporated in the general design is particularly impressive. Another of the technical difficulties of the craft, the problem of securing unity of composition where the existing architectural outline – of, say, a rose window or a double or triple lancet – interposes a barrier, has also been surmounted with notable success.

Note, for instance, how the stone division between the two lights of the Flight into Egypt (see page 55) has been so incorporated in the design so as to leave no feeling that the donkey is either unnaturally elongated or split into two halves. This is due not to chance but to fine judgement of proportions and the use of connecting elements that have the effect of drawing the eye smoothly from one part of the composition to that which adjoins it. Another beautiful design is the triple-lighted window showing the "translation" of the House of Loretto across the ocean (see page 64), in which the angels' wings and the frieze of crusading scenes supply the element of continuity.

The finest colour is perhaps to be found in the large windows depicting the saint's arrival in heaven, at the east end of the church, but from the point of view of design adapted to fill a given space, some of the small rose windows of various complicated shapes are certainly no less admirable.

Alec Sturrock (*Scottish Field*, March 1951)

* * * * *



(9) The final moments of the Divine Mother's earthly life: Text: ARISE, MAKE HASTE, MY BELOVED, MY DOVE, AND COME, FOR NOW THE WINTER IS PASSED. (Song of Solomon 2:10)

10



11

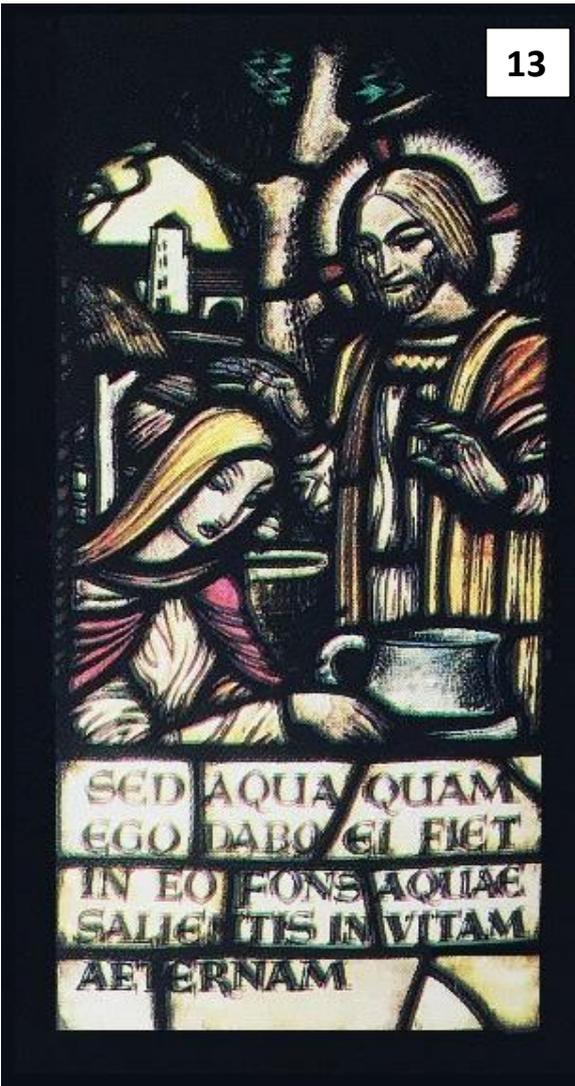


12



AMEN AMEN DICO TIBI
 NISI QUIS RENATUS
 FUERIT EX AQUA ET
 SPIRITU SANCTO NON
 POTEST INTROIRE IN
 REGNUM DEI

13



SED AQUA QUAM
 EGO DABO EI FIET
 IN EO FONS AQUAE
 SALIENTIS IN VITAM
 AETERNAM



(9) (cont): Lower left panel: [*Thou art*] AN ENCLOSED GARDEN [*My Bride*]
 Lower right: ... A SEALED FOUNTAIN (Song of Solomon 4:12)

(10) and (11) (side by side on the church's east wall): **The Risen Virgin is greeted by her Son:** Text: COME MY CHOSEN, THOU SHALT BE CROWNED ... QUEEN OF HEAVEN, REJOICE; ALLELUIA

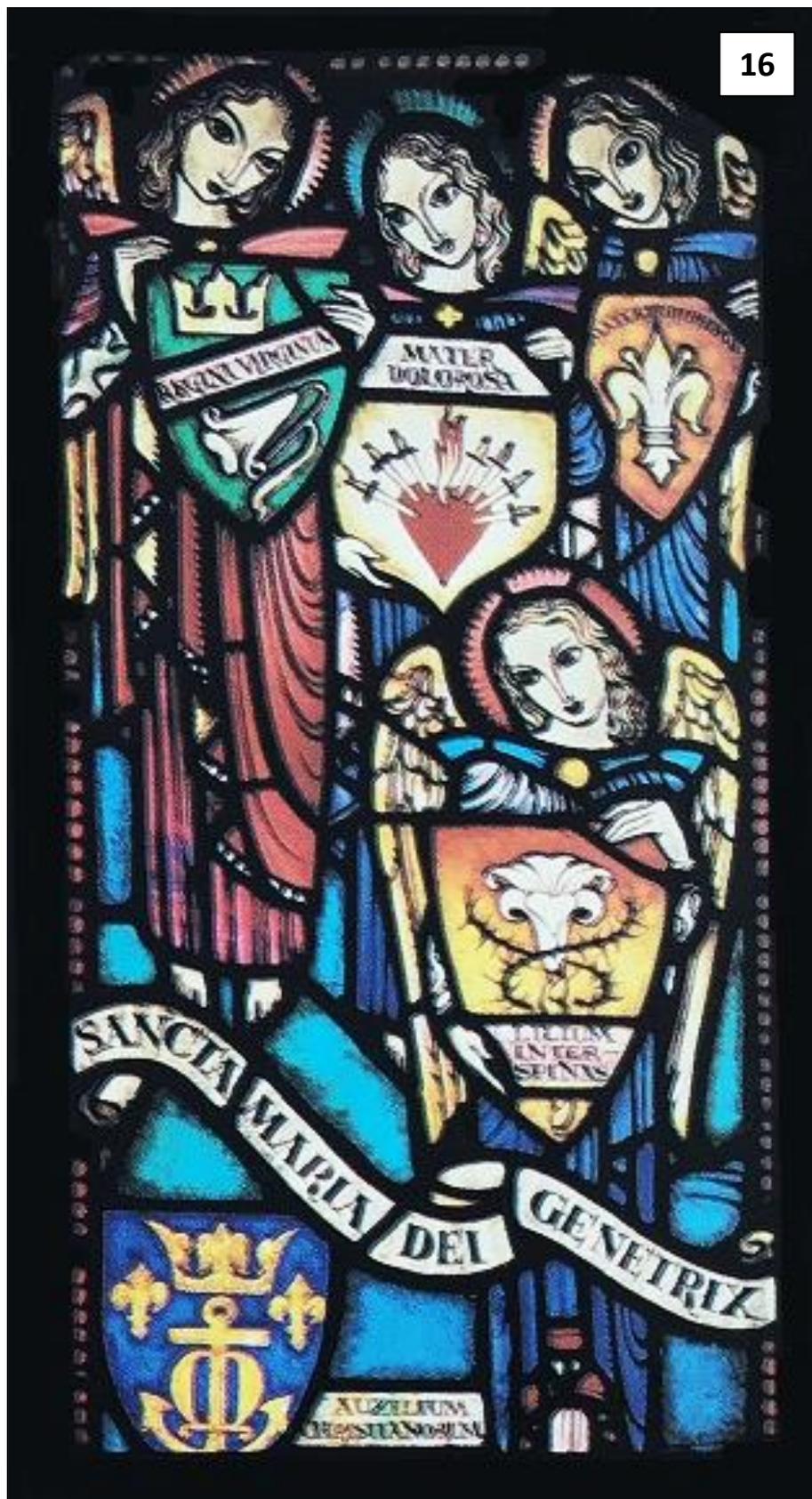
(12), (13) and (14) Baptistry Group: **(12)** AMEN, AMEN, I SAY UNTO YOU, THAT UNLESS A MAN BE BORN AGAIN OF WATER AND THE HOLY SPIRIT, HE CANNOT ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD (John 3:5) **(13)** BUT THE WATER WHICH I SHALL GIVE HIM, LET IT BECOME FOR HIM A FOUNTAIN OF LIVING WATER FOR ETERNAL LIFE (John 4:14) **(14)** St John baptizes Christ: THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASSED (Matthew 3:17)



(15) *TRANSLATIO ALMAE DOMUS LAURETANAE* / REMOVAL OF THE HOLY HOUSE OF LORETO: reputedly the actual dwelling in Nazareth where Mary lived and the Annunciation took place, it is said to have been transported miraculously whenever under threat. The window depicts warring armies behind the Holy House, which is being borne away by angels, assisted by seabirds, to safety in Loreto, Italy. A barque under full sail (lower left) completes the composition.

(16) *SANCTA MARIA, DEI GENETRIX* / HOLY MARY, MOTHER OF GOD (next page) in which four angels present epithets of Mary: (i) QUEEN OF VIRGINS; (ii) MOTHER OF SORROWS (showing a heart pierced by seven daggers representing the Seven Sorrows of Our Blessed Lady) (iii) MATER (illegible)

and (iv) LILY AMONG THORNS. On the lower edge of the frame, *AUXILIUM CHRISTIANORUM* refers to a Catholic prayer association of that name.





(17) SAINT CECILIA: patron saint of music



(18) St Michael: Text: *QUIS UT DEUS* / WHO IS LIKE GOD?
(Hebrew: MI-KHA-YEL – *Who is like God?*)



19

(19) Our Lady of Loretto and her Divine Infant: this window reprises more of Mary's *Litany of Loretto* titles: *SEDES SAPIENTIAE* (SEAT OF WISDOM), *STELLA MATUTINA* (MORNING STAR), *TURRIS EBURNIA* (TOWER OF IVORY), *ROSA MYSTICA* (MYSTICAL ROSE), *REGINA VIRGINUM* (QUEEN OF VIRGINS) and *TURRIS DAVIDICA* (TOWER OF DAVID). These windows were designed by the Davidsons but made by Guthrie and Wells, Glasgow, who liked this one so much that they published its image widely, both at home and abroad, in order to promote their business.



(20) Memorial Window (1946), in memory of the Glorious Dead of WWII.

Text (around the Lamb of God at the top): DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY; on the left lancet, depicting the Crucified Christ: GREATER LOVE than this no Man hath: that a Man lay down His life for His friends (John 15:13); on the right lancet, depicting the Risen Christ: I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE. HE THAT BELIEVETH IN ME, ALTHOUGH HE BE DEAD, SHALL LIVE (John 11:25). The Crucified Christ, on a cross of mauves, violets and purples, the traditional colour of mourning, wears a crown of thorns, with a crown proper above. At His feet, four representatives of the Services pay homage. The decorative frieze beneath bears the crests of the Army and Merchant Navy on either side of the cross of St Patrick of Ireland and the Welsh dragon. The Risen Christ, still swathed in burial linens, stands before a heavenly choir and above two sleeping centurions. This lancet's frieze comprises crests of the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force with the Cross of St George and the Saltire of St Andrew between. The two small inset lights show the crown of thorns (left) and crown triumphal.

A twenty-first window, The Queen assumed into Heaven, in memory of Michael and Catherine Brogan, is not shown, but described thus:

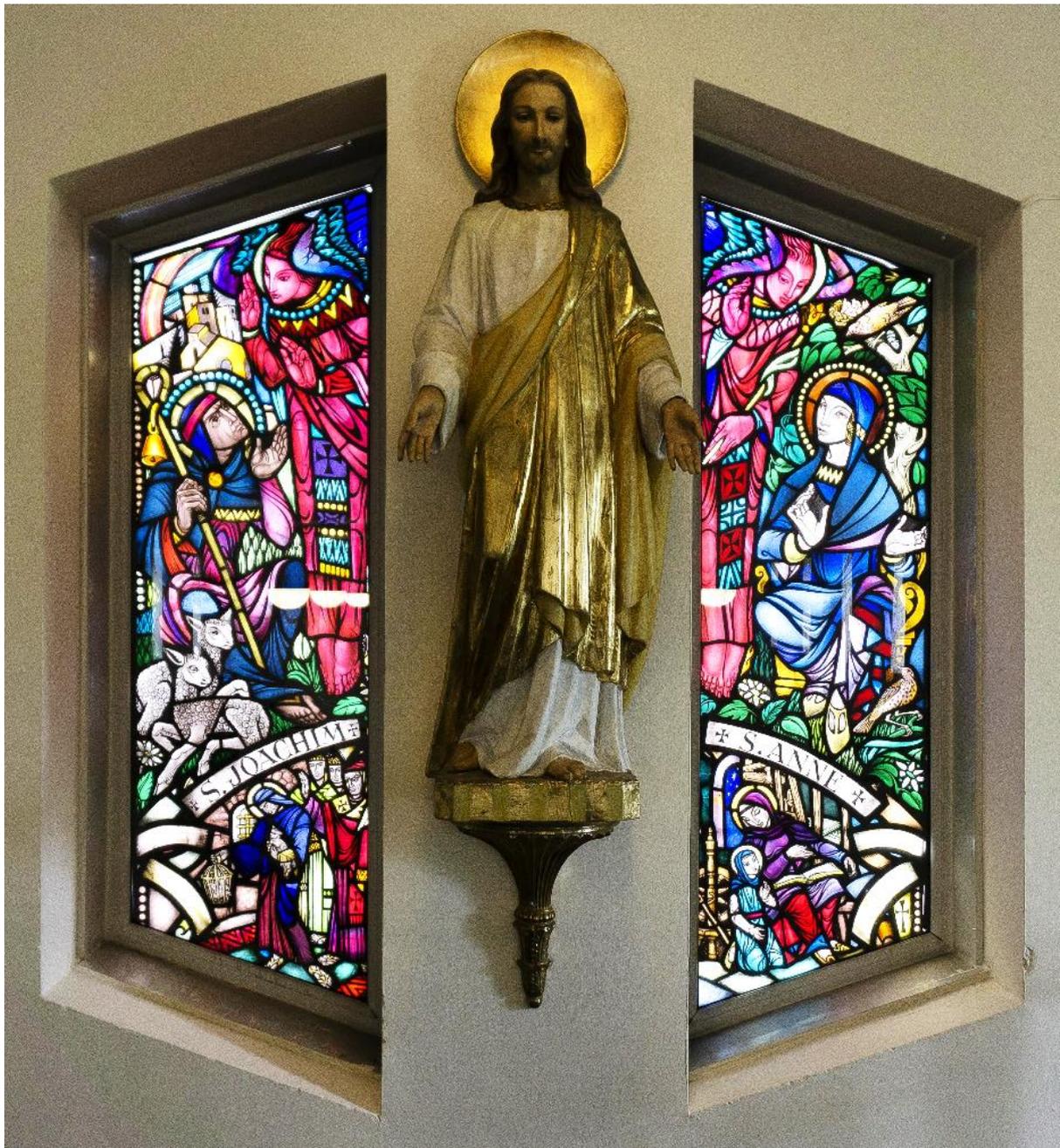
This marvellous window has no inscription, but its design is faithfully transcribed from the words of the Apocalypse of St John the Divine, the Introit for the Feast of the Assumption:

A great sign appeared in the Heavens: a Woman that wore the Sun for her mantle, with the moon beneath her feet, and a crown of twelve stars above her head.

When the full rays of the sun catch the colours, the effect is quite extraordinary.

* * *

St Joachim's Church, Carmyle, Glasgow: two windows depicting St Joachim (left) and St Anne, both gazing up at an angel announcing the Nativity. In the lower part of the left lancet, St Joachim's expulsion from the Temple is portrayed; in the lower part of the right, St Anne is shown with her daughter Mary.



* * *

St Mahew's Church, Cardross, Dumbarton, 1955: from earliest times it has been common practice for churches to be built with the altar on the east wall so that worshippers face the rising sun, and for windows in this wall to portray an image expressing hope. In St Mahew's, the restored east window by Nina Miller Davidson shows an image of Mary as Queen and Mother tenderly holding the infant Jesus, with a prayer "O MATER DEI, MEMENTO MEI" ("MOTHER OF GOD, REMEMBER ME").¹²



O
MATER
DEI

MEM-
ENTO
MEI

St Bride's Church, Brodick, Arran, 1961: During 1960, in order to make St Bride's more attractive to modern worshippers, as well as "to improve the appearance and efficiency and Reverence of Christian Worship", major alterations were made to the interior of the building. The stained glass windows were designed by Mr Douglas Hamilton who was preparing to retire to Corrie and who knew and loved Arran. He was only able to complete the original sketches and plan out the work before his sudden death. However, on the advice of Mrs Hamilton, Mrs Davidson, stained glass artist and friend of Mr Hamilton, very kindly agreed to take on his work and to see the original sketches through to realisation. The windows were dedicated to the memory of Bethia Torrance, whose generous legacy allowed much of the alteration to be effected.



The first window above depicts our Lord as He would have appeared to the disciples Andrew and Peter when they were called to be fishers of men. He is portrayed standing in water, clad in white and green; the red of his robe

symbolises His wondrous love. The call is depicted in the small panel at the foot of the window. (This subject was chosen because St Bride's is a Church beside the sea, whose duty is to call men and women to serve and follow Christ.)



The windows in situ

The second window shows St Bride of the Fiery Dart, a name given to her because of the Pillar of Fire around her head, which tradition holds descended upon her the moment her life was consecrated to God. She carries a pail of milk and a living, green staff; symbols of her purity. Beside her is her little pet wolf. The goose symbolises her fête day, the first of February, because this bird is associated with the end as well as the start of winter. The small panel shows St Bride with the wild boar which took refuge in her Church and followed her wherever she went.

(With thanks to Elizabeth Lawrie, assistant Session Clerk, St Bride's Church)

* * * * *



Needlework

As well as painting and graphic design, Mrs Davidson also worked with fabrics. A Society of Scottish Artists exhibition in Glasgow in 1948 included "*Ophelia and The Little Mermaid ... two specially attractive offerings in embroidery by Mrs Nina Miller-Davidson*"¹³, the piece on the previous page (date unknown) was gifted to an Eaglesham neighbour and this appliqué panel (circa 1930) sold at auction in 2018 for £938:¹⁴



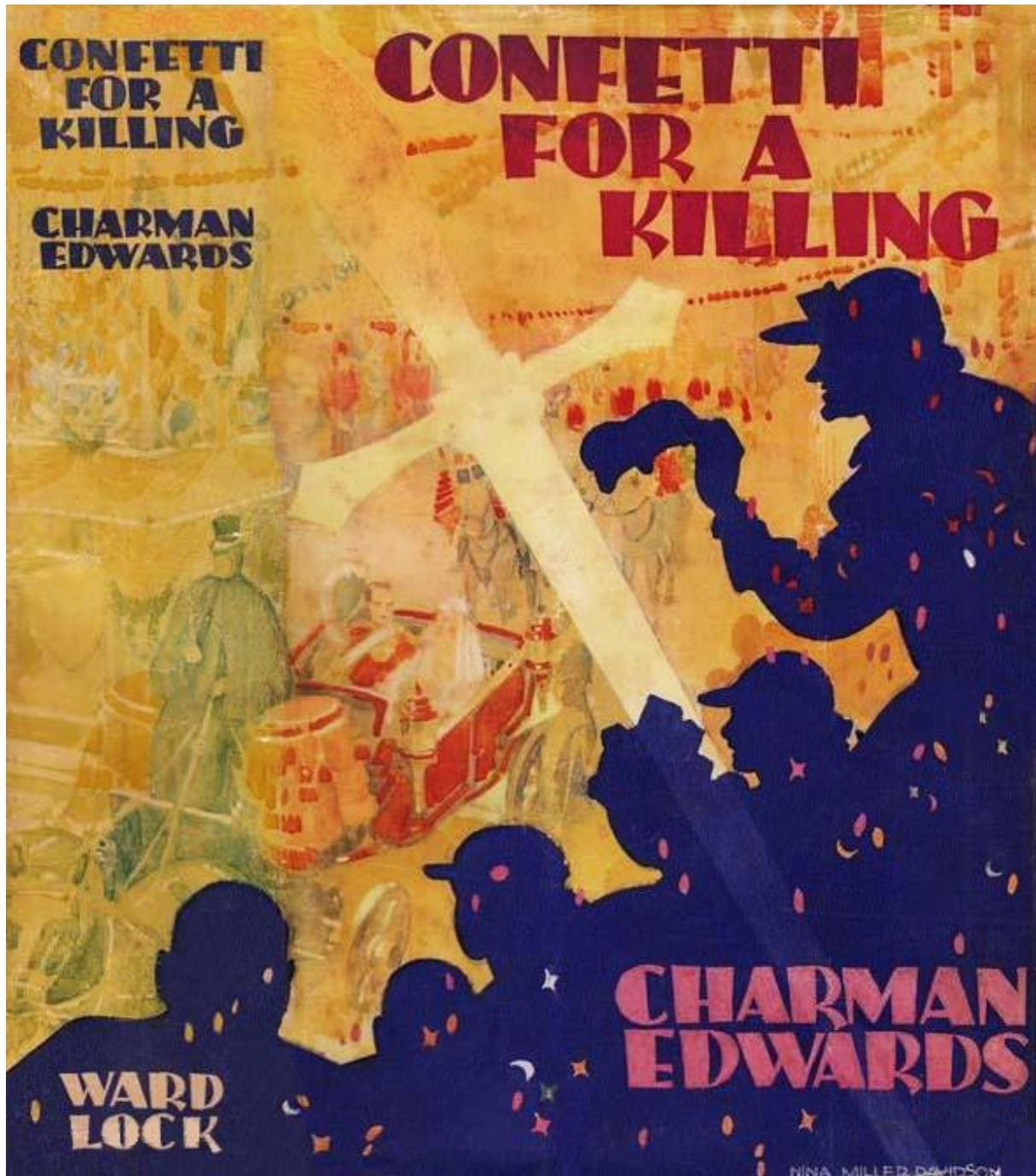
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[Below: see page 103 \(also compare with page 22\)](#)



Book jackets

Five of Winston Graham's first nine book jackets were designed by Mrs Davidson – but she produced jackets for at least four publishers; the forty-one examples of her work below date from 1931 to 1949 and although the majority come, as noted, from Ward Lock & Co. (WL), some derive from Harrap (five), Knopf (one) and Collins (one) also.

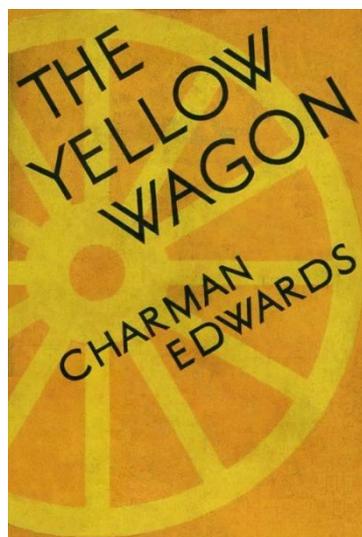
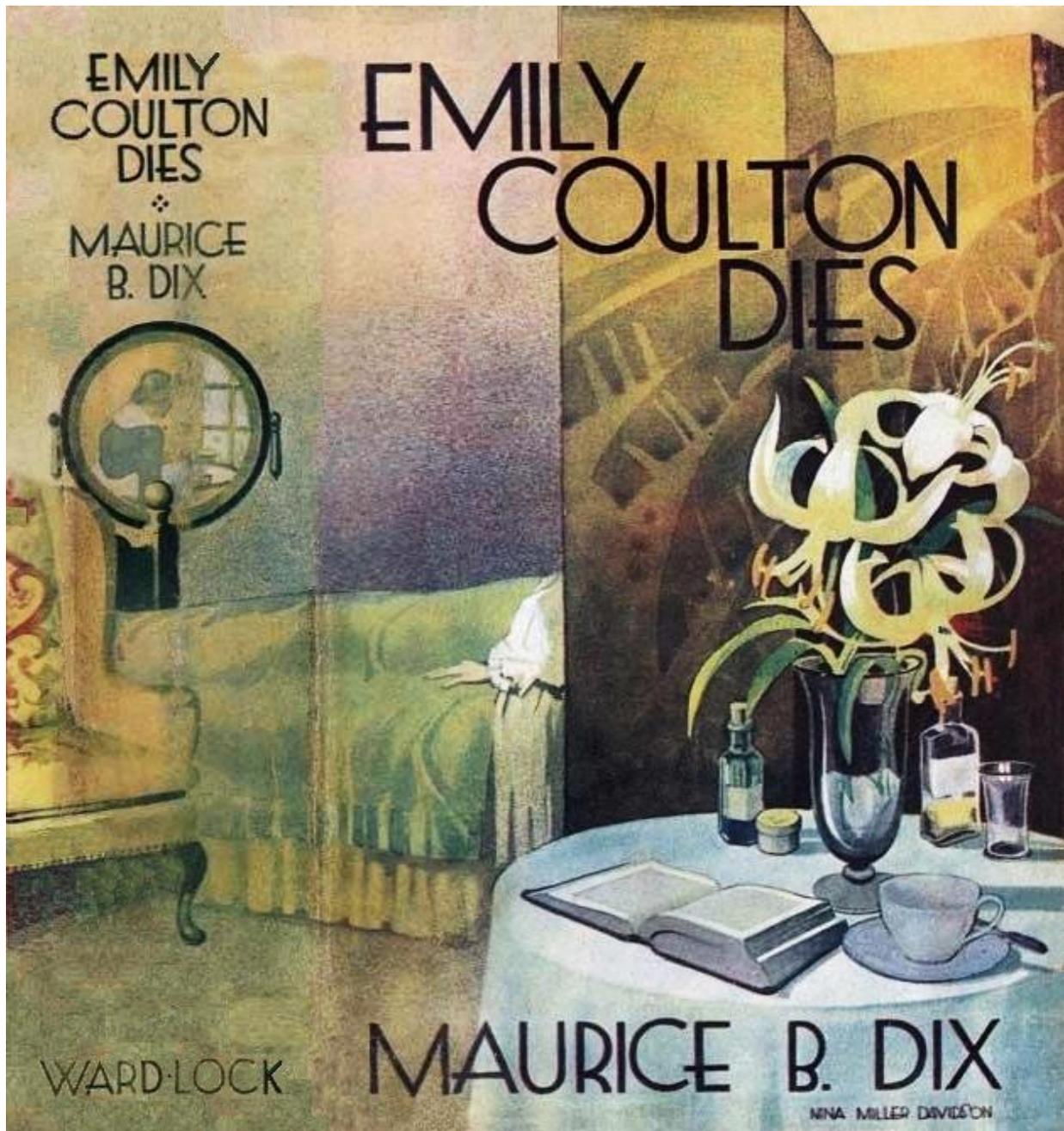


This and next: WL, 1937



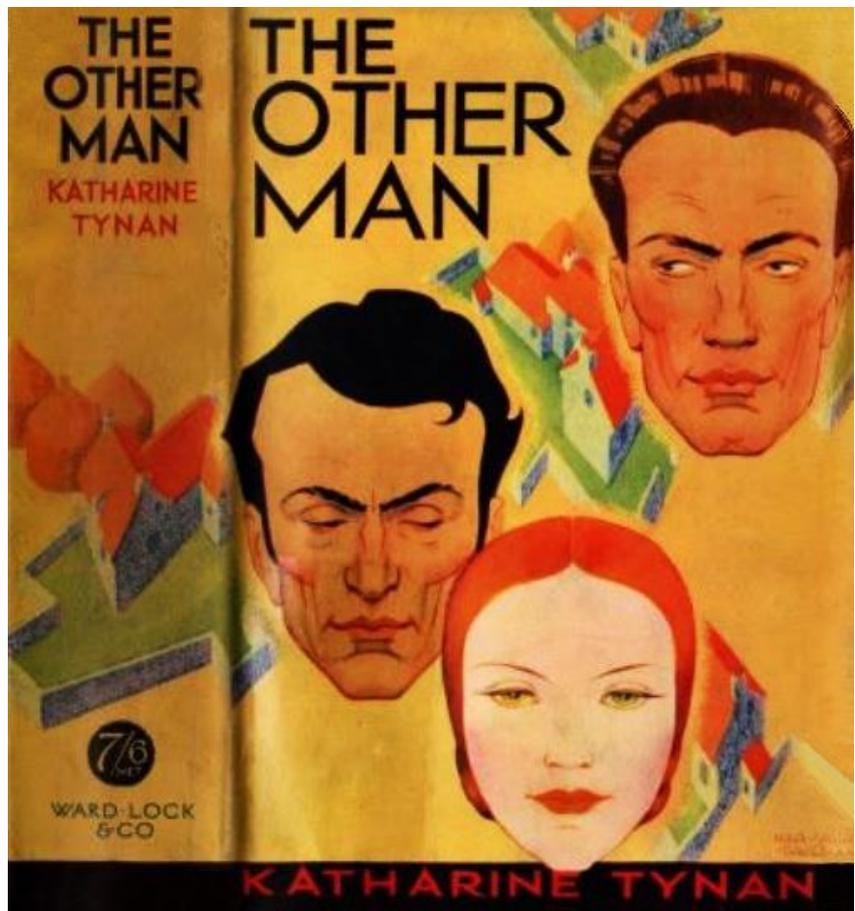
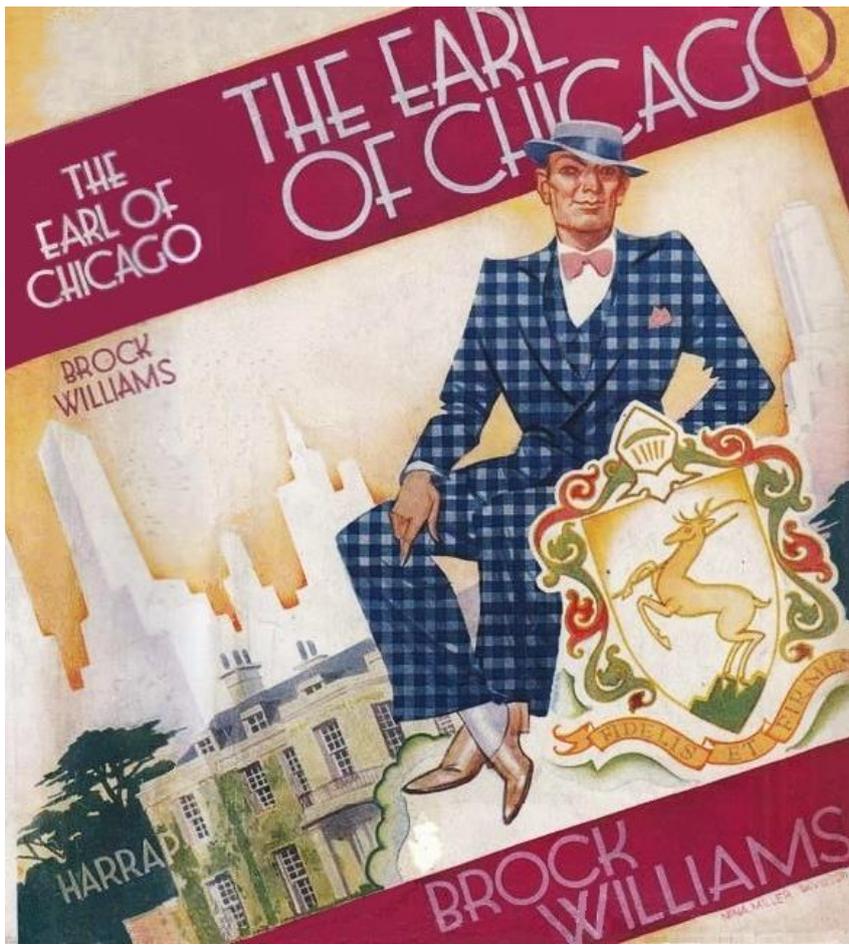
APRON STRINGS

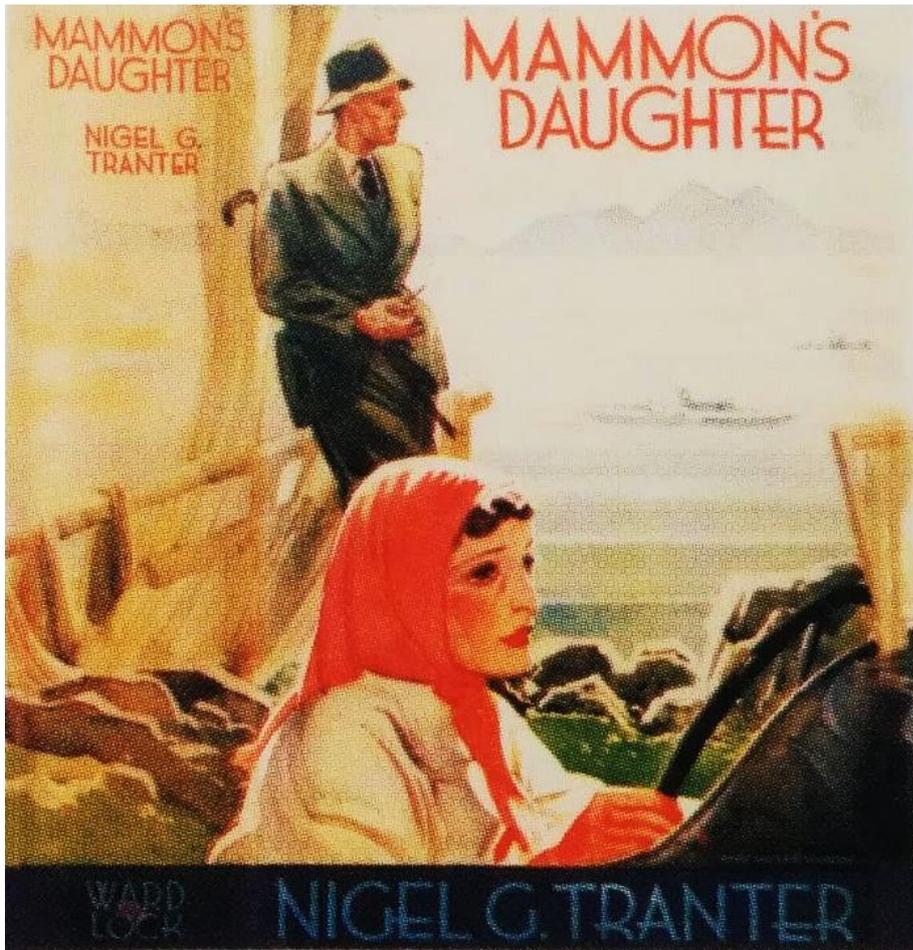
LEILA S.
MACKINLAY



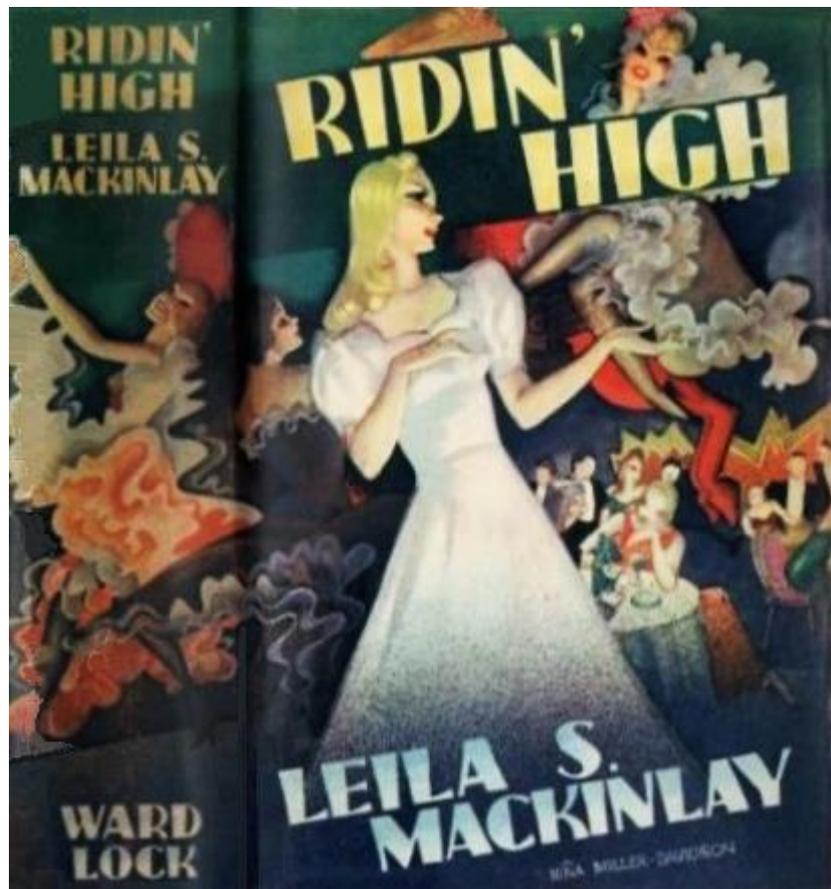
WL: (i) 1936 (ii) 1932

Next page: (i) Harrap, 1937 (ii) WL, 1932

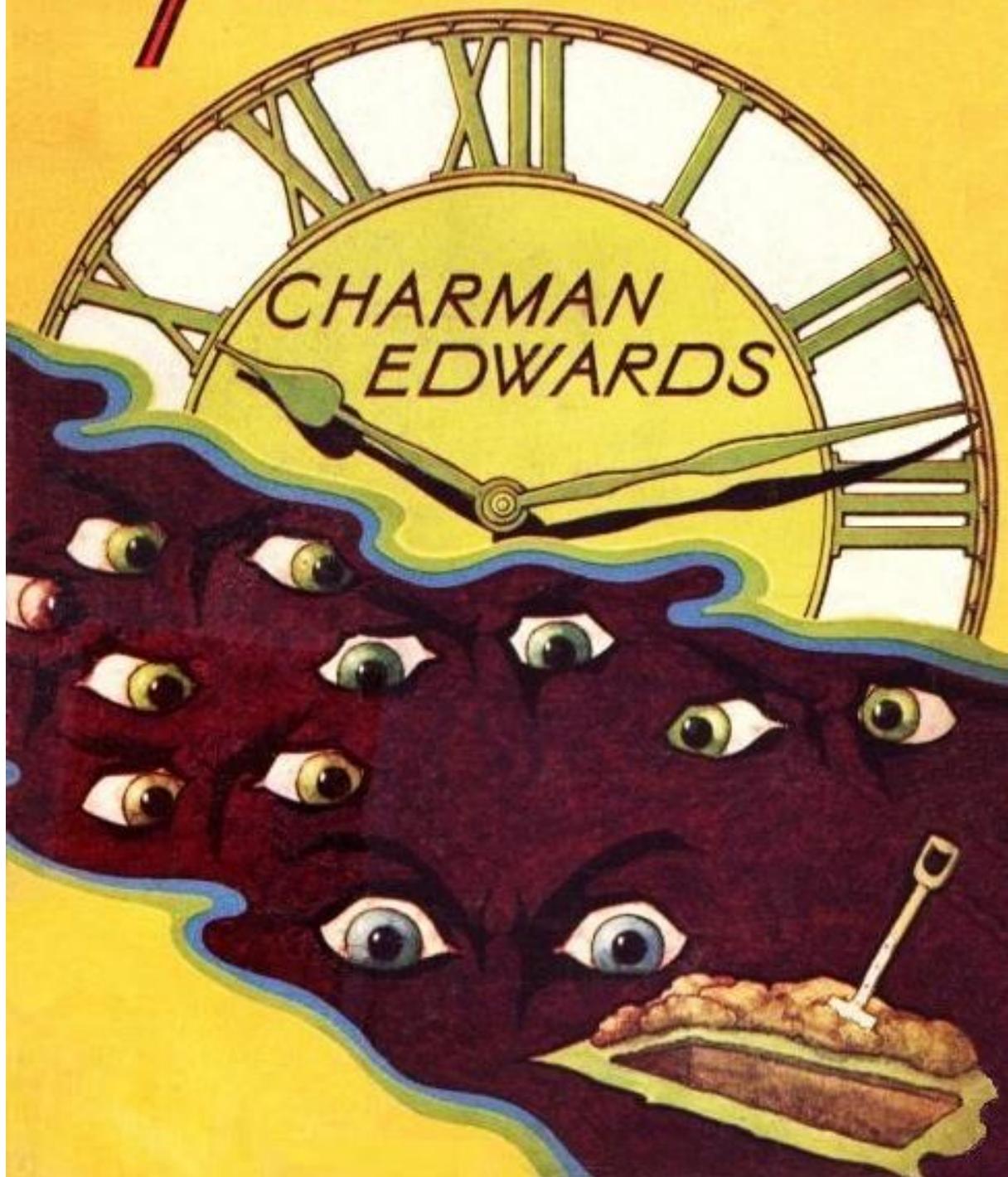




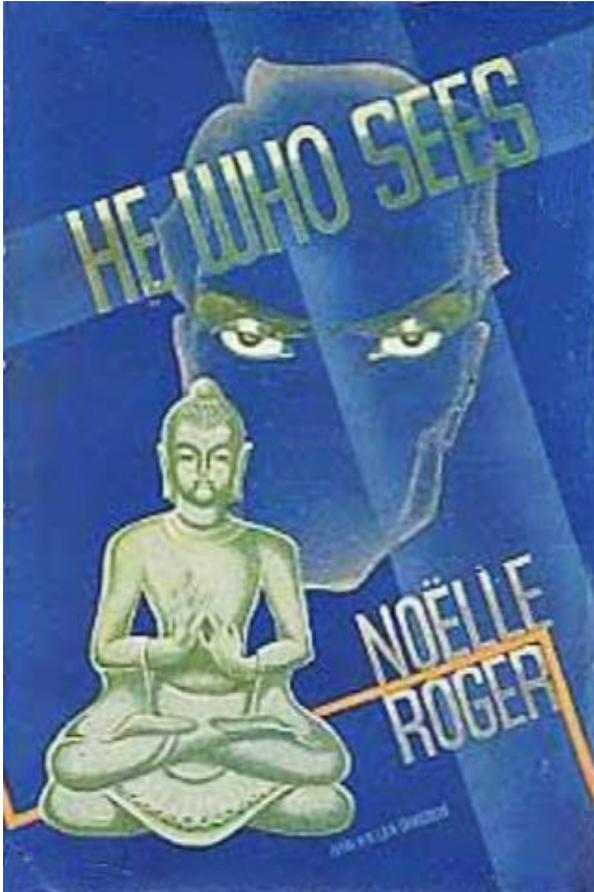
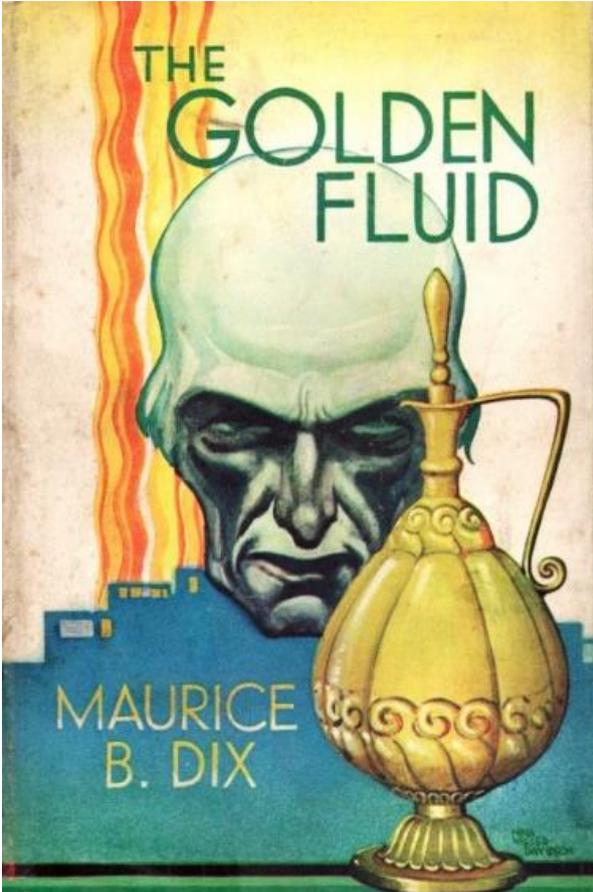
WL: (i) 1939 (ii) 1941



TEN THIRTEEN



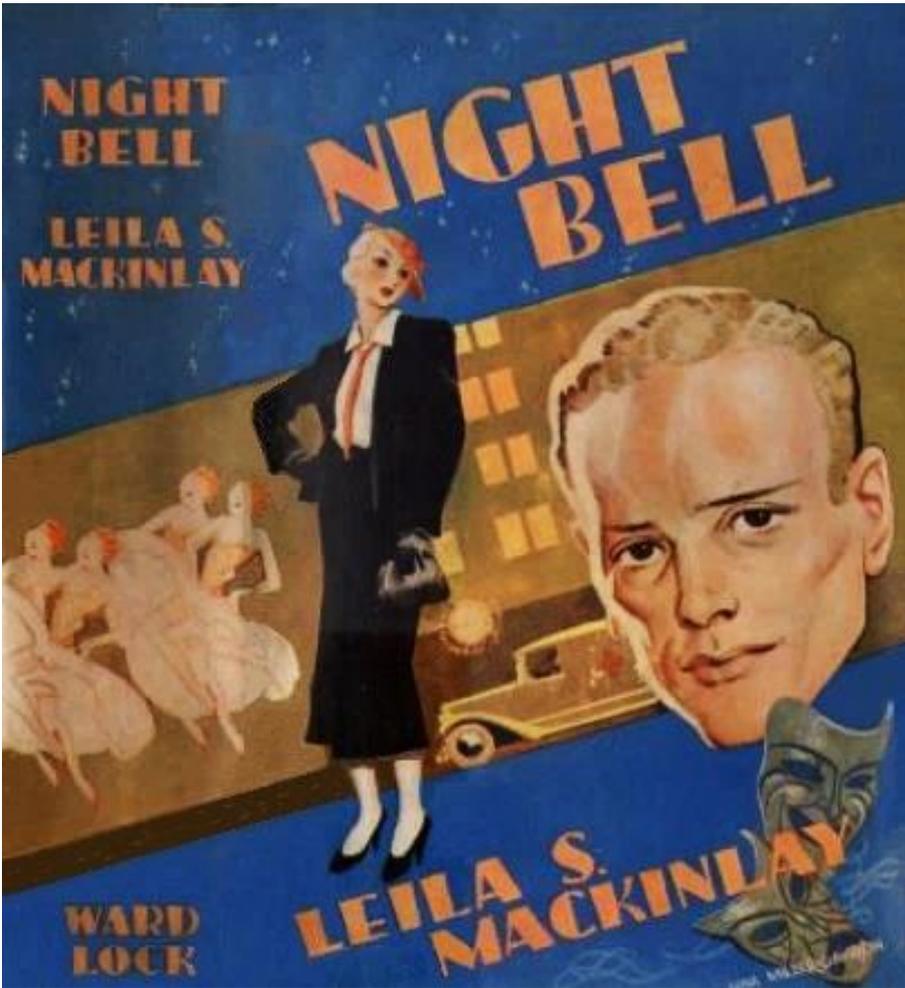
WL, 1936



WL: (i) 1936 (ii) 1939 (iii) 1935 (iv) Harrap 1935



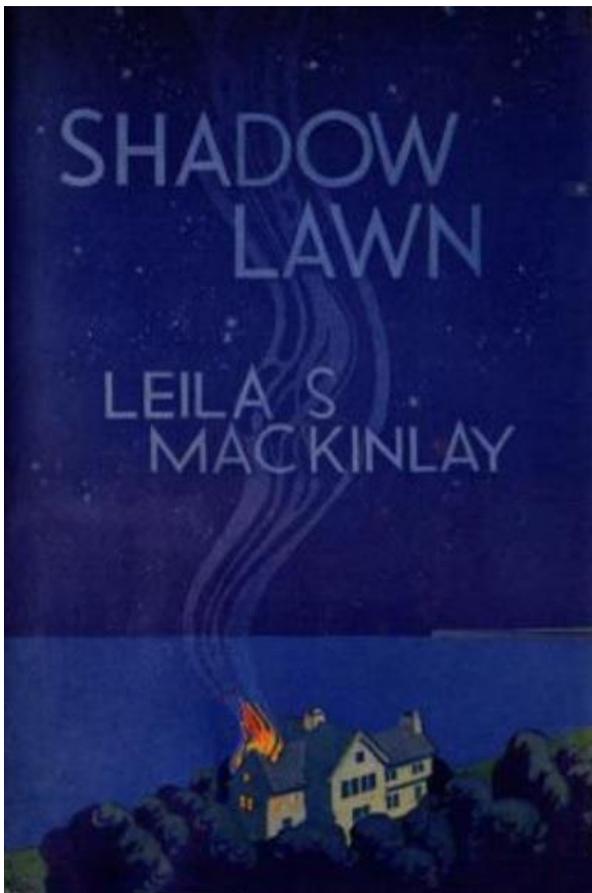
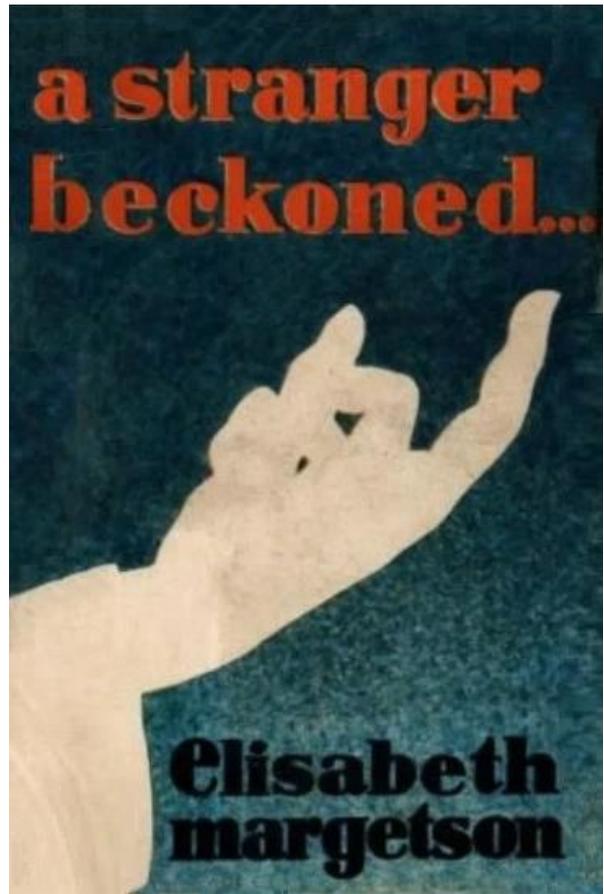
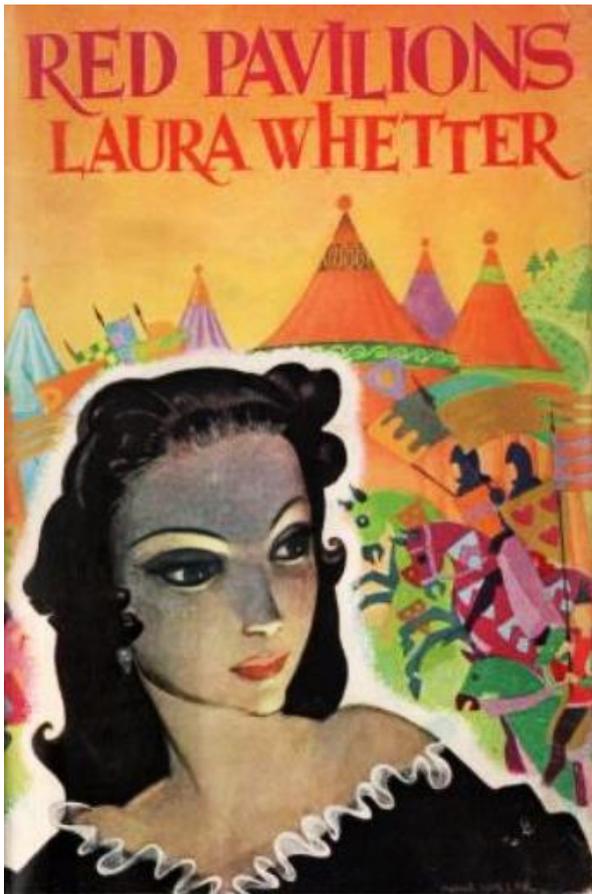
Harrap, 1940



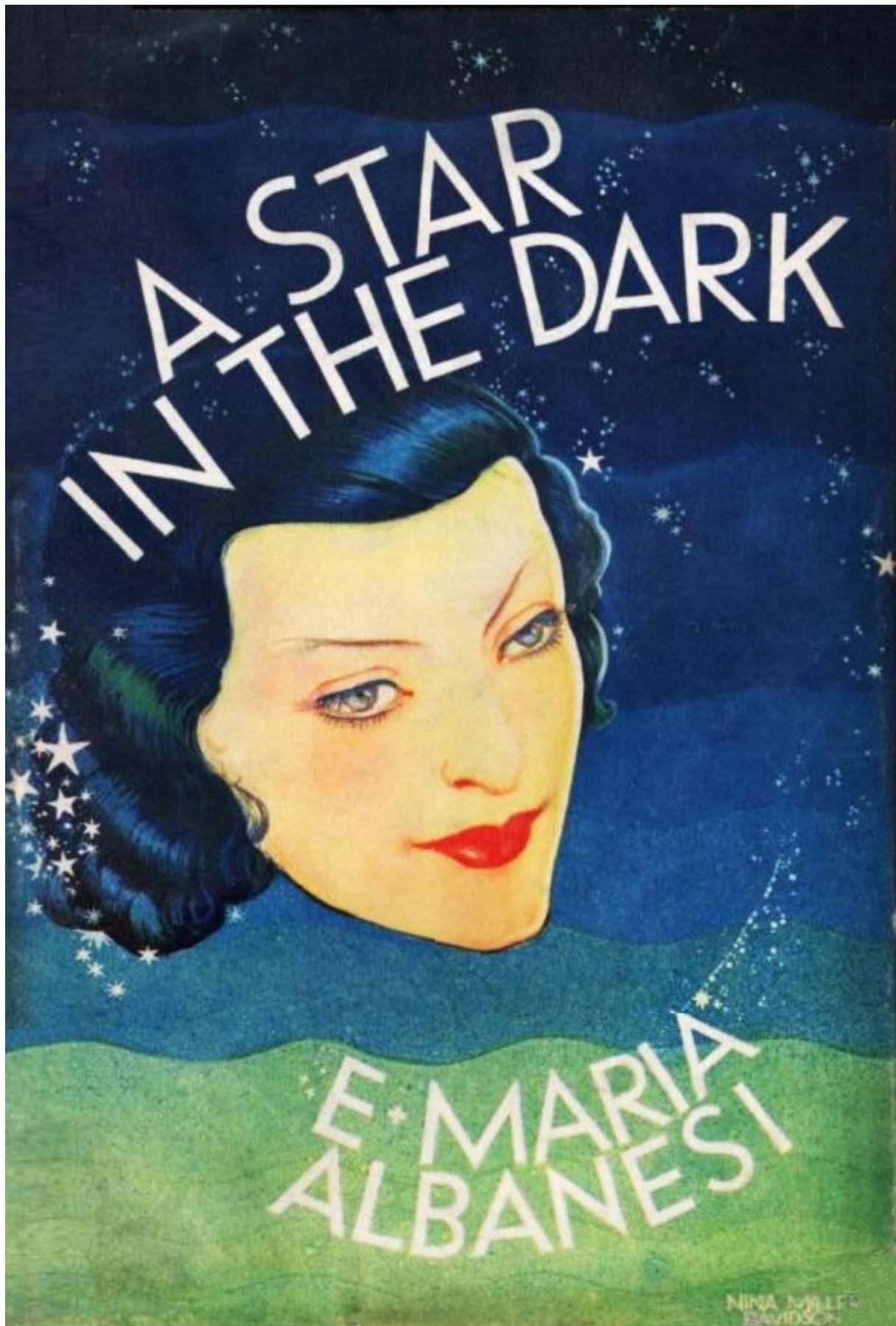
WL: (i), (iii) 1936
(ii) 1948



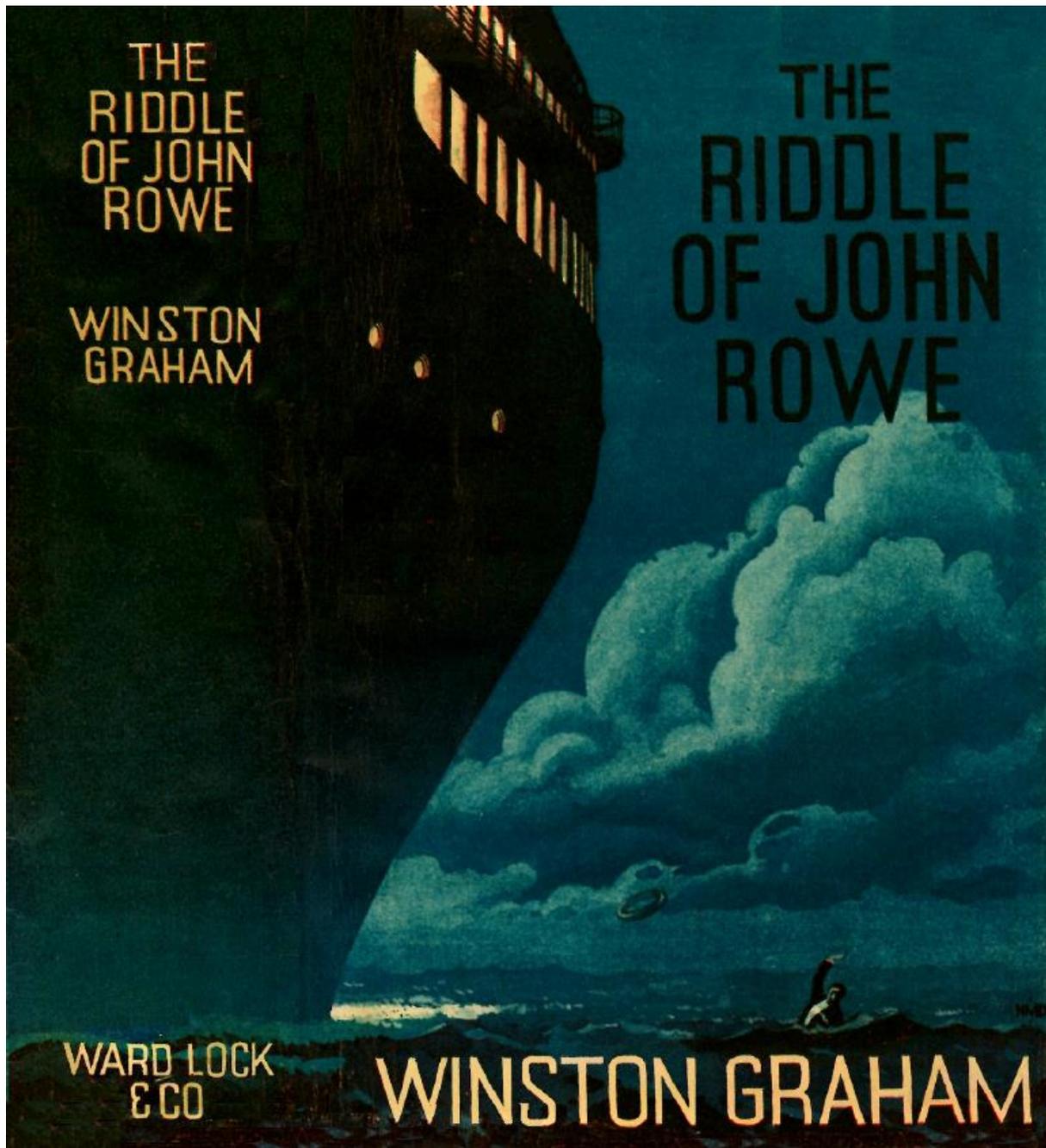
Harrap, 1936



WL: (i) 1948 (ii) 1942 (iii) 1934 (iv) 1936



WL, 1933



Mrs Davidson's Winston Graham jackets (all WL):

Above: *The Riddle of John Rowe*, 1935

Next page: *Keys of Chance*, 1939

Page 92: *The Dangerous Pawn*, 1937 and *No Exit*, 1940 – note the similarity between *Confetti for a Killing* (see page 78) and *No Exit*

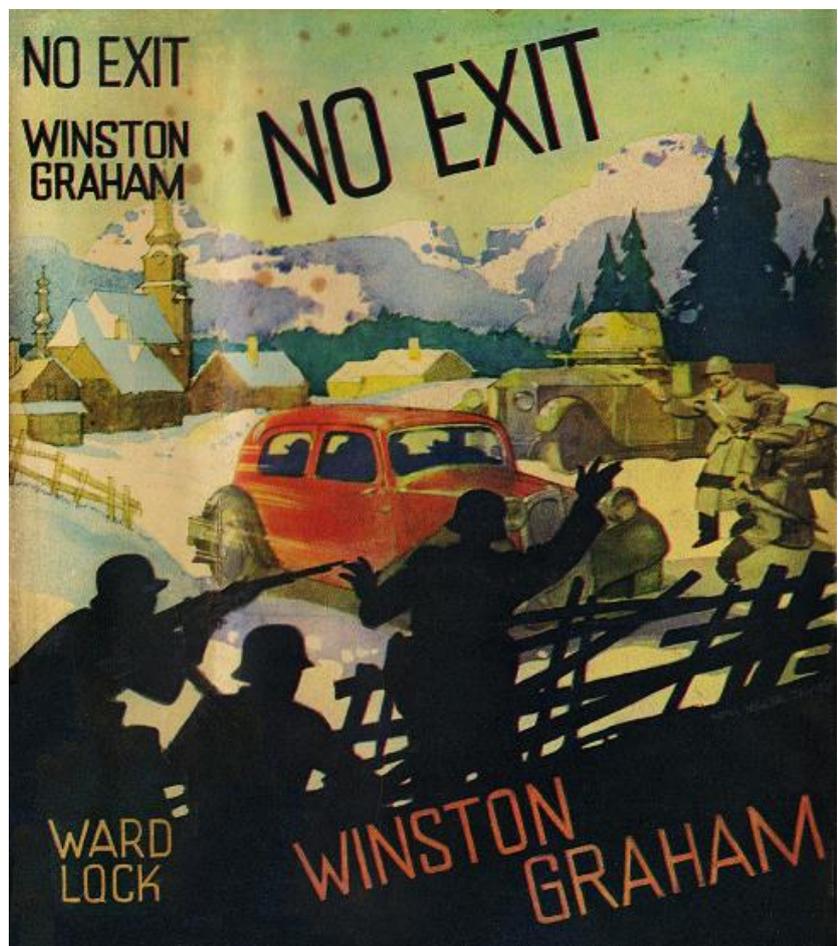
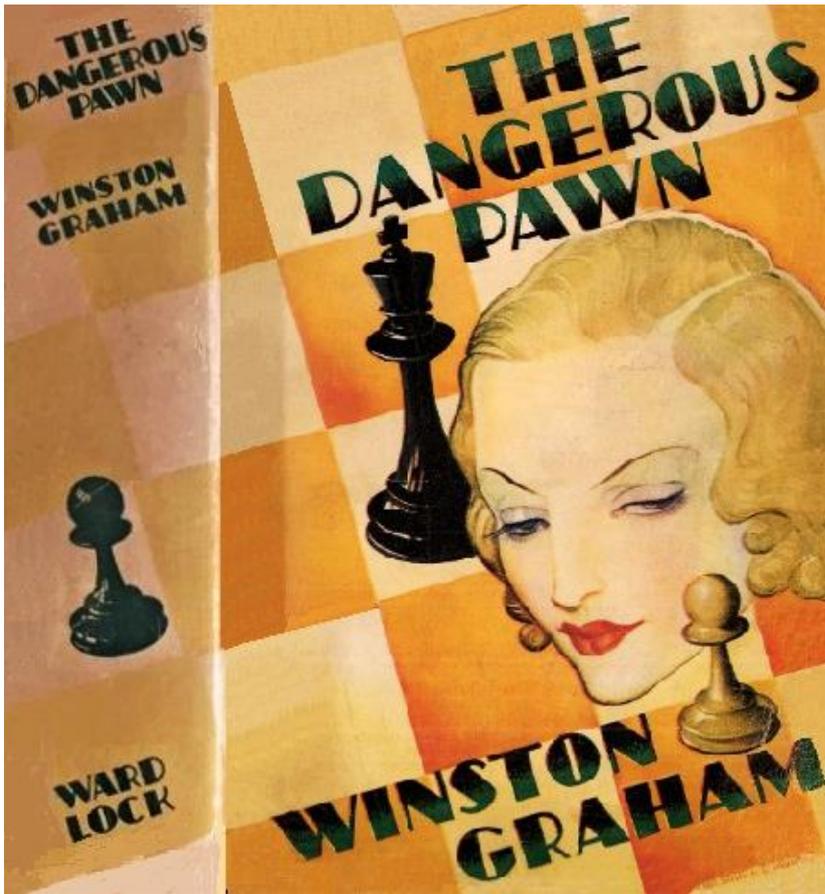
Page 93: *Without Motive*, 1936, featuring a musical stave motif used again on 1938's *Theme Song* (page 101)

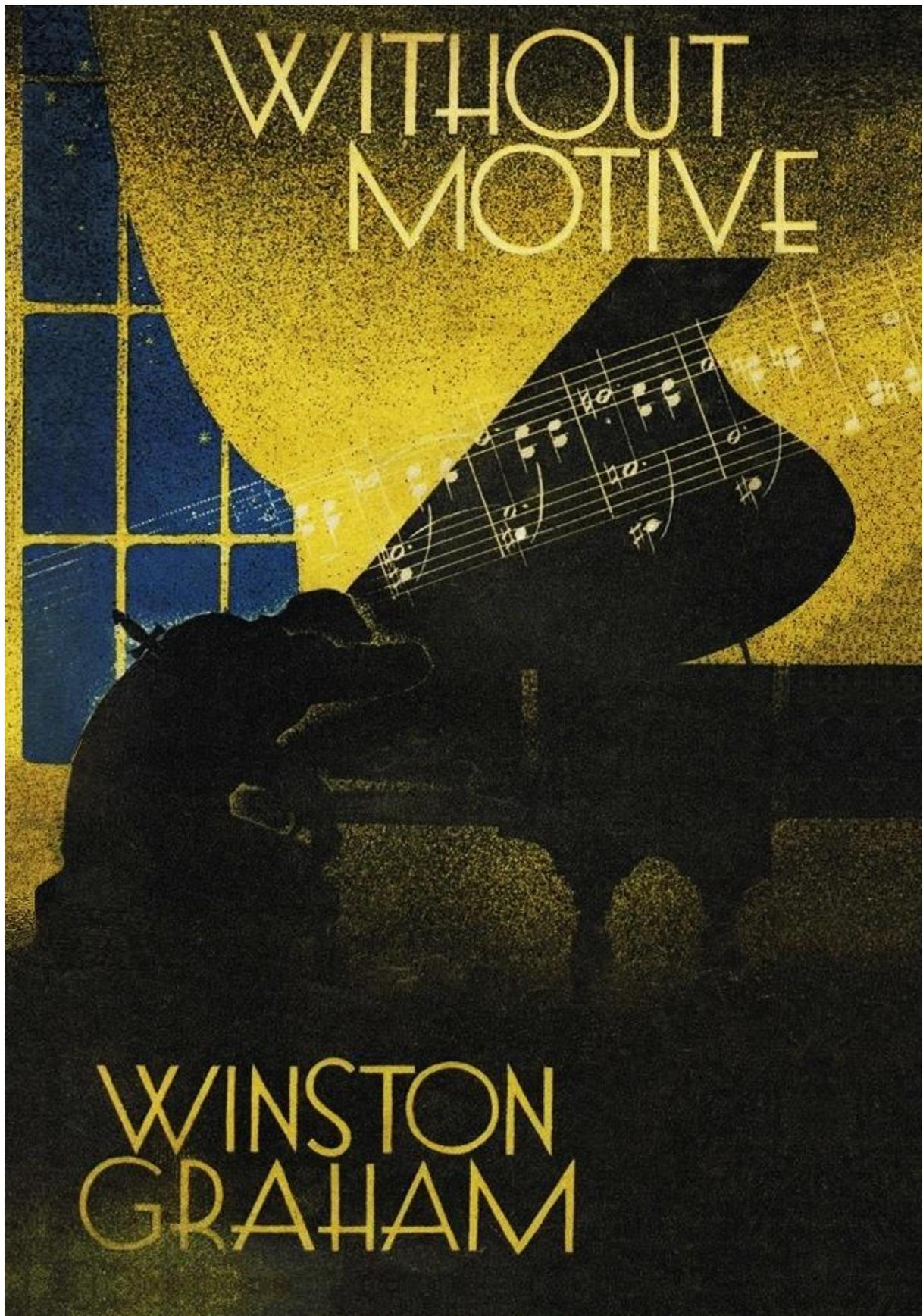
KEYS OF CHANCE



NINA MILLER DAVIDSON—

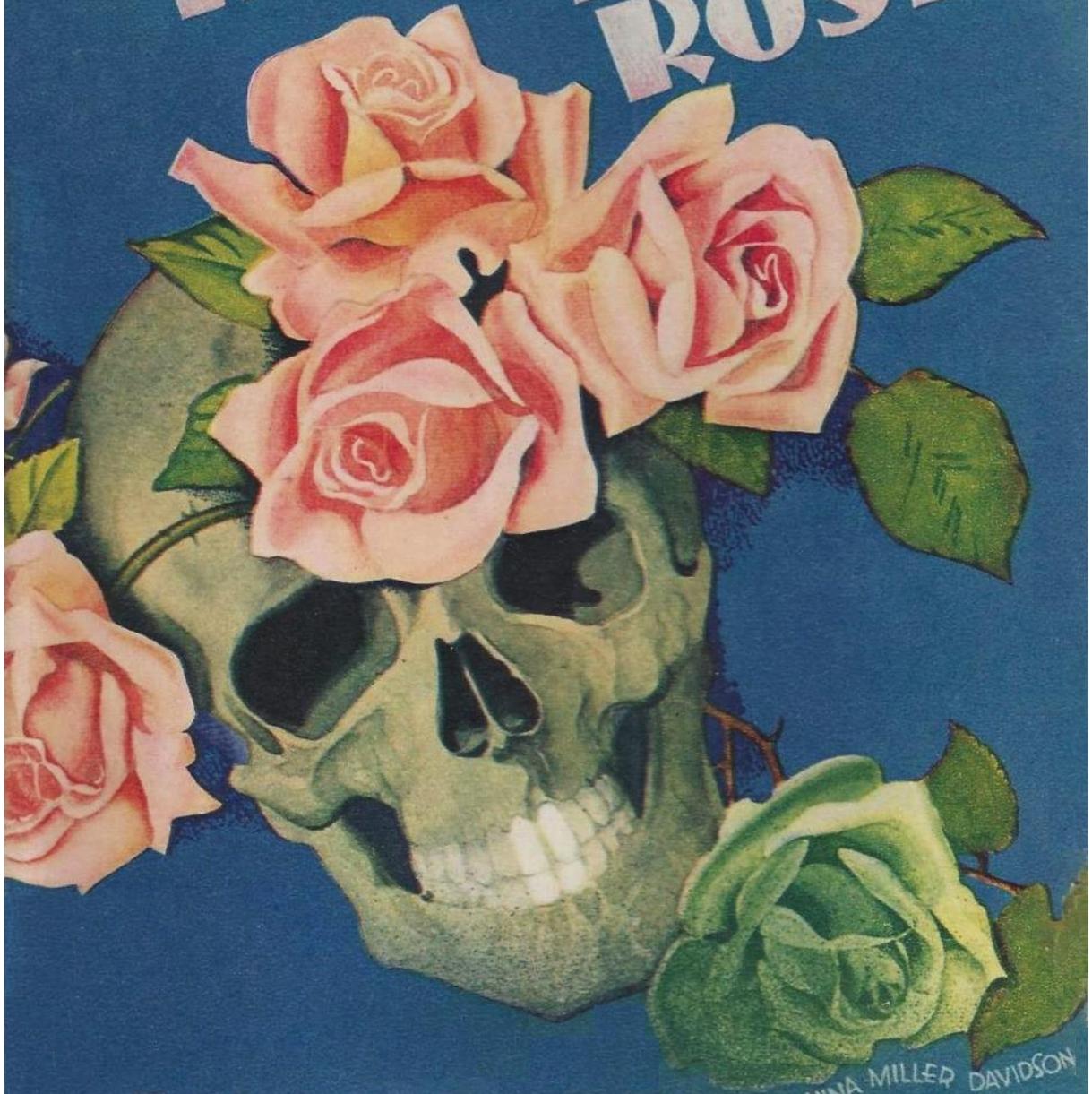
WINSTON GRAHAM





Next three pages: WL, 1936, 1949, 1939

**FEAR
HAUNTS
THE
ROSES**



- NINA MILLER DAVIDSON

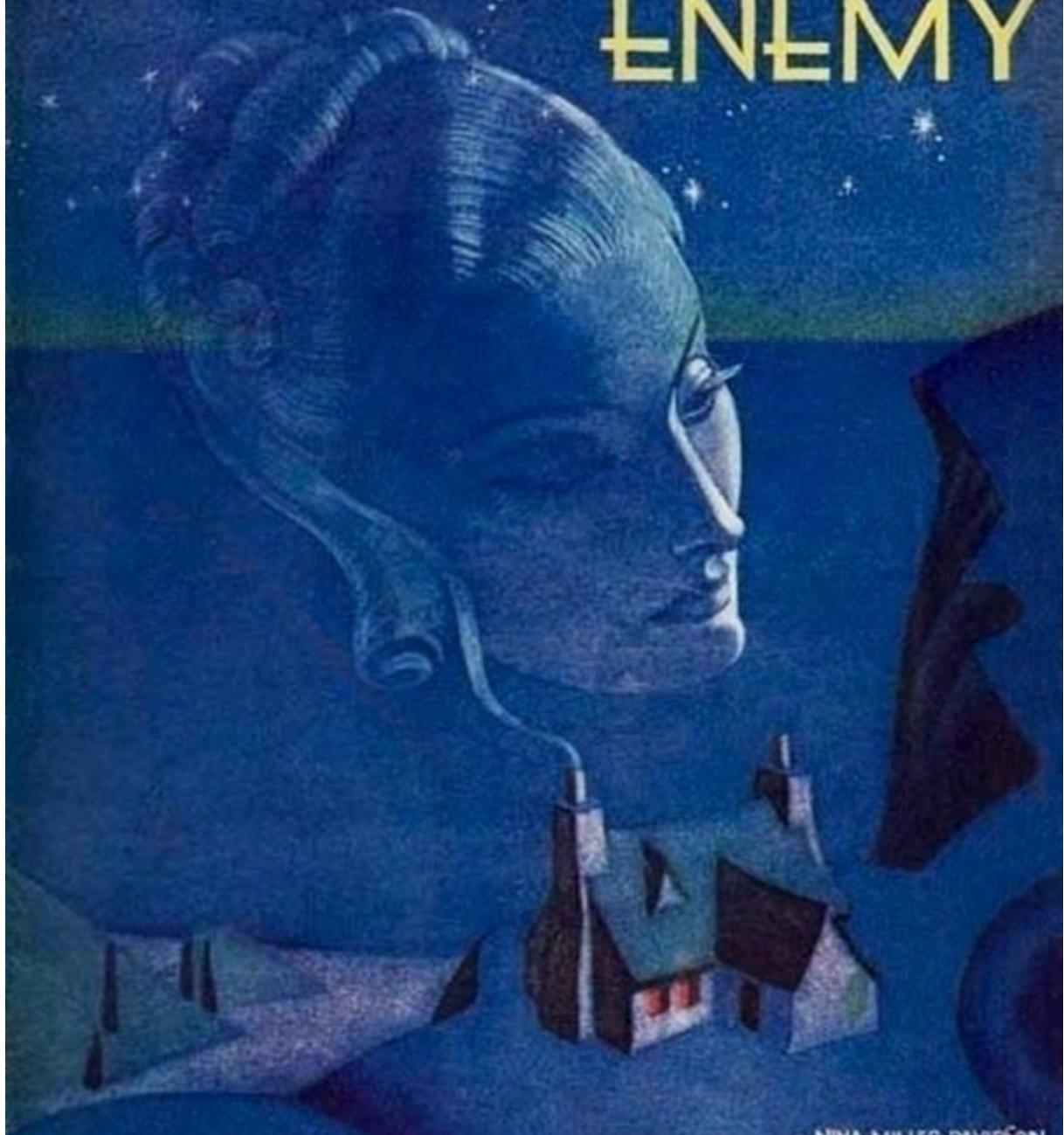
**CHARMAN
EDWARDS**

TALL PINES IN PADDINGTON

CHARMAN EDWARDS

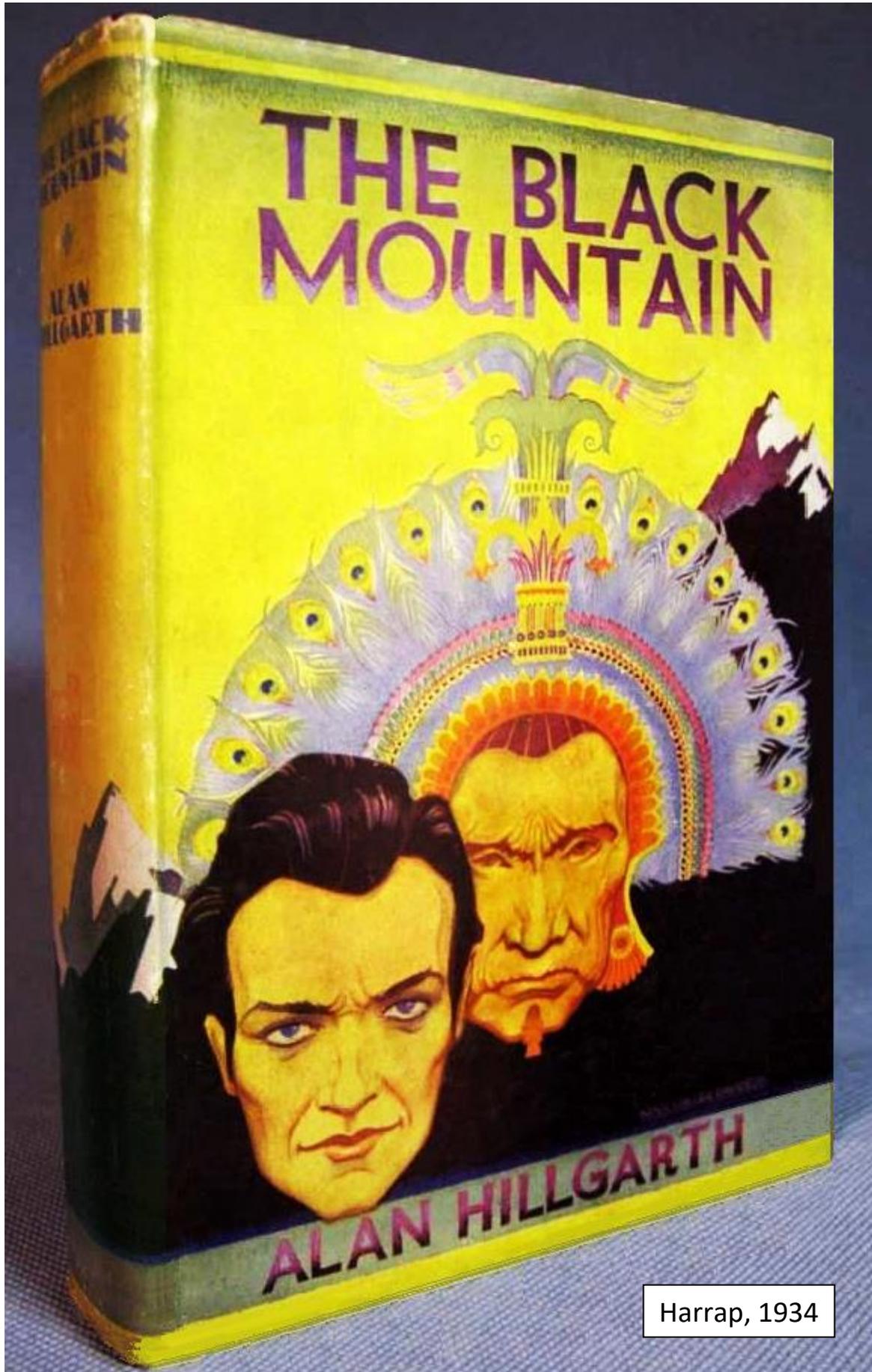


NIGHT IS MY ENEMY

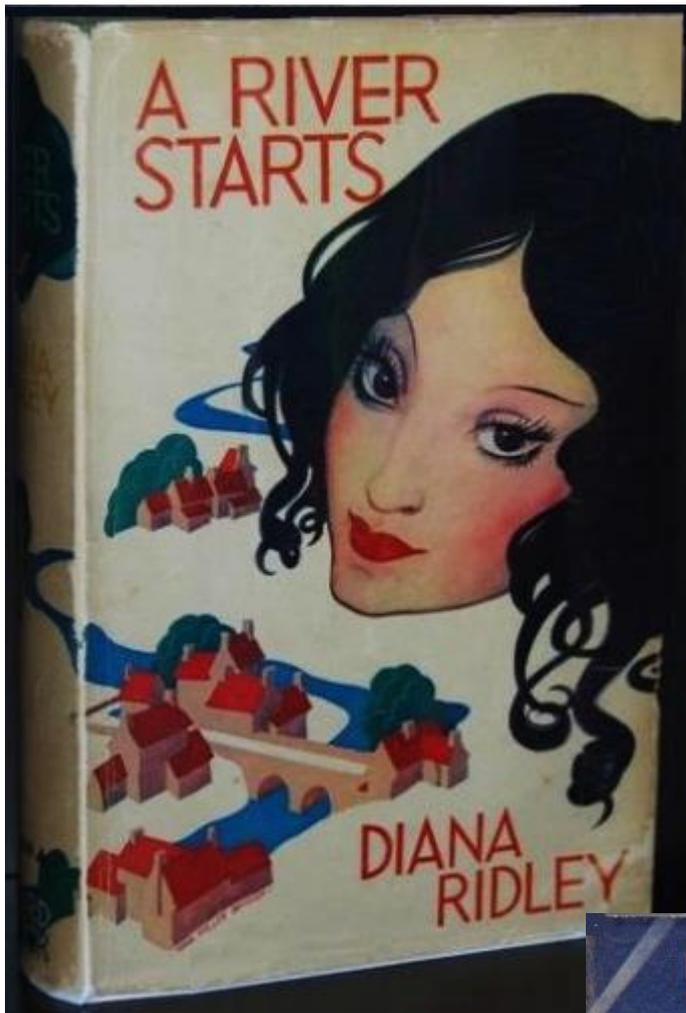


- NINA MILLER-DAVIDSON

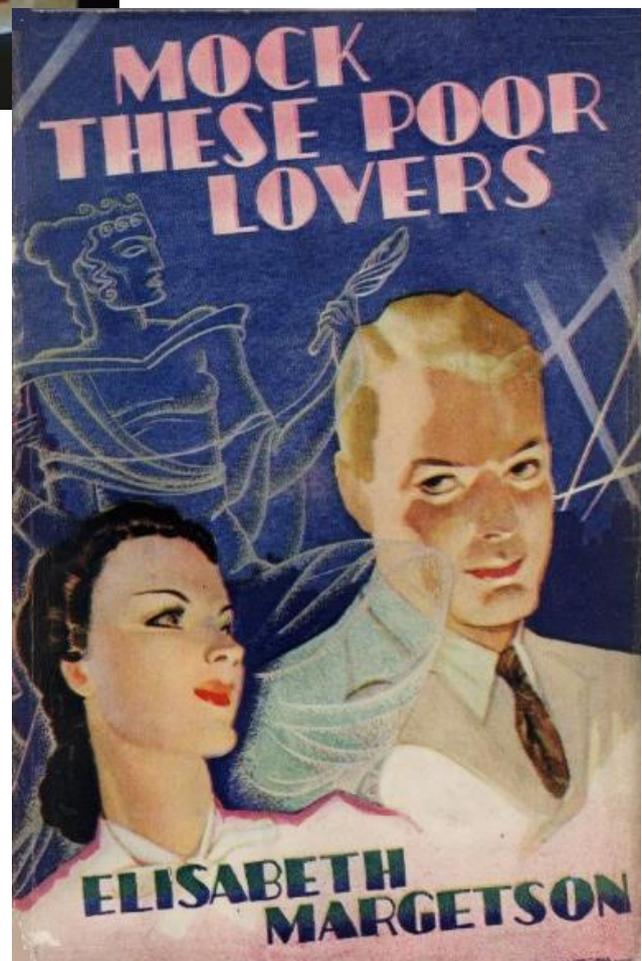
ELISABETH
MARGETSON

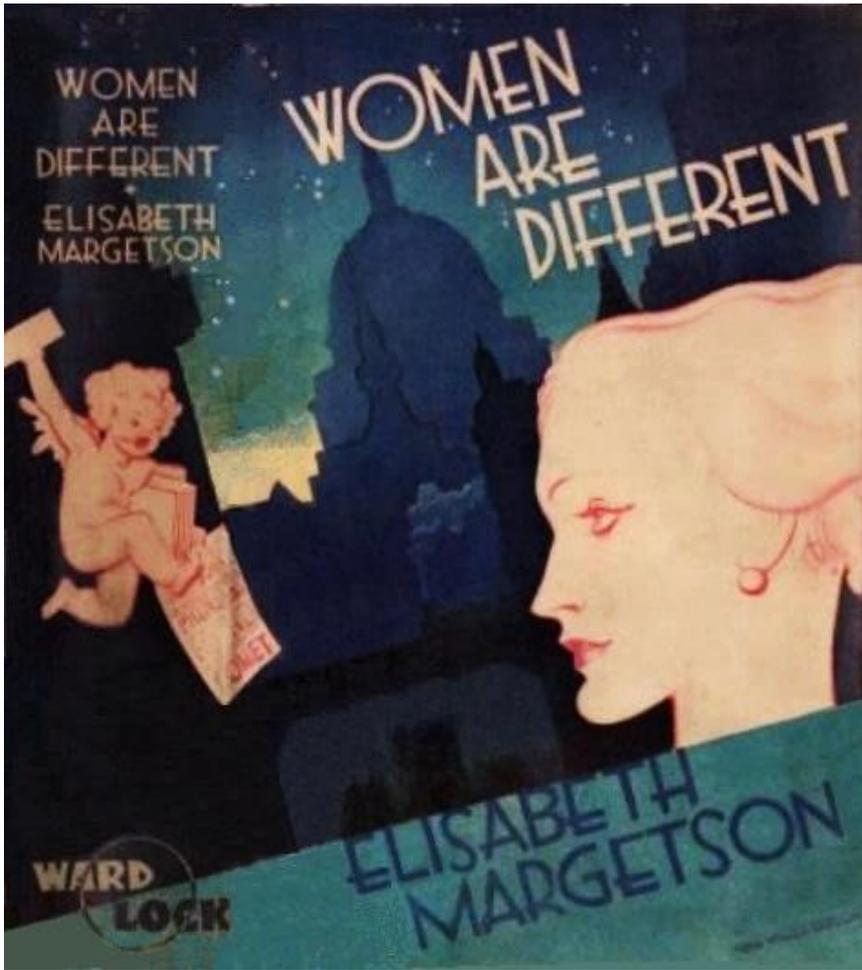


Harrap, 1934



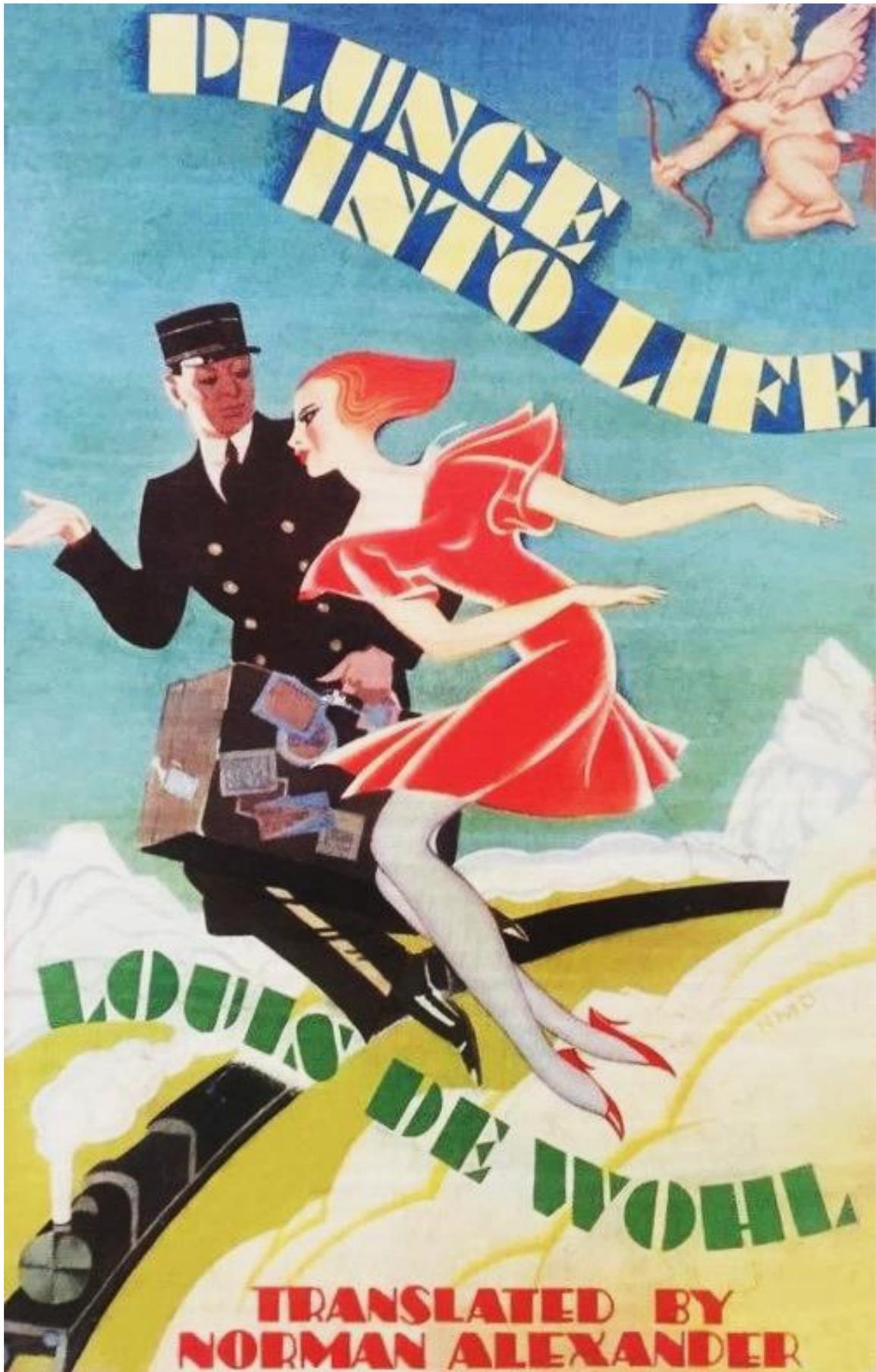
WL: (i) 1938 (ii) 1941





WL: (i) 1936 (ii) 1941

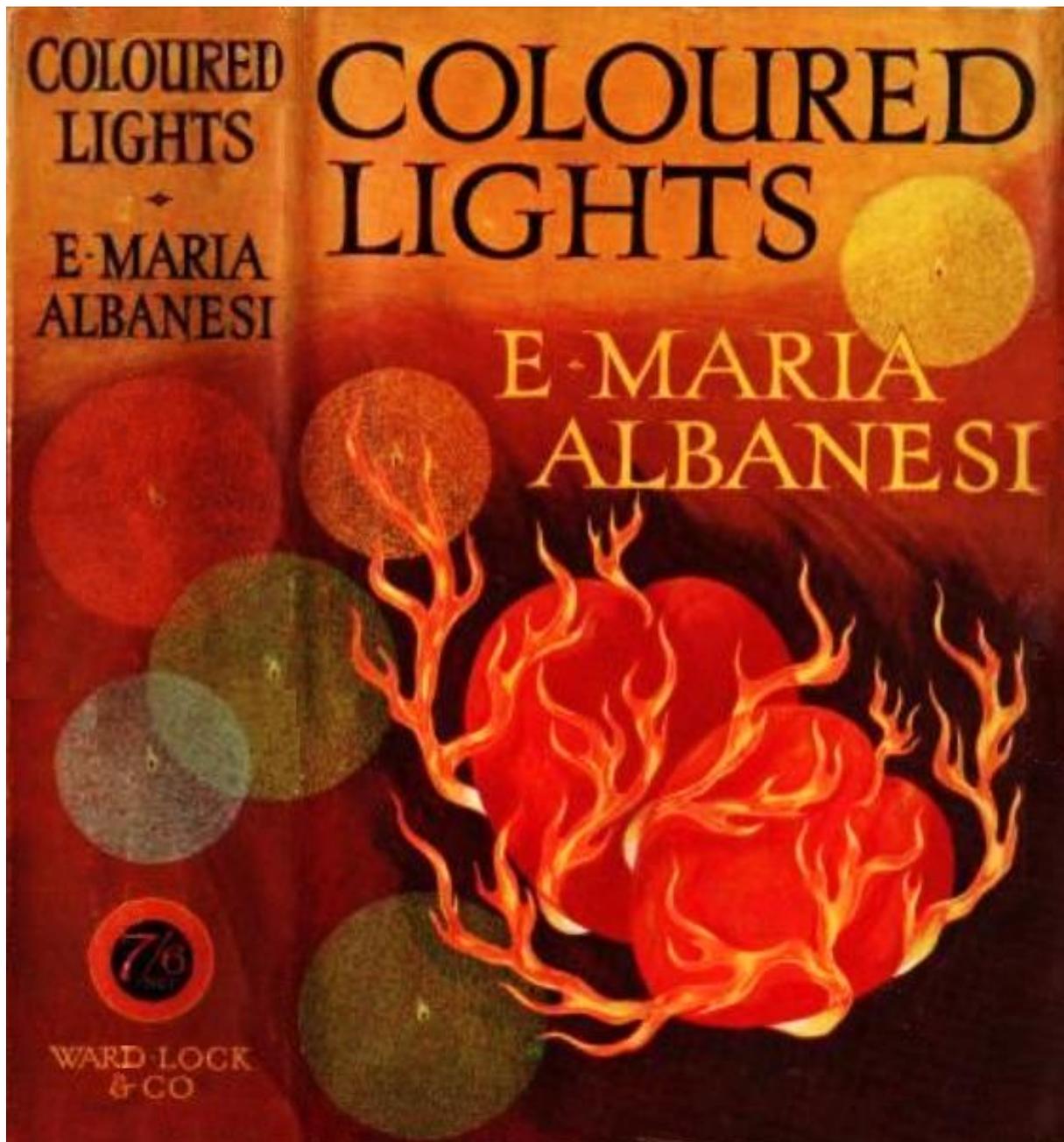




Harrap, 1936

A pair of jackets with very discoloured spines – from WL: (i) 1940 and (ii) 1938

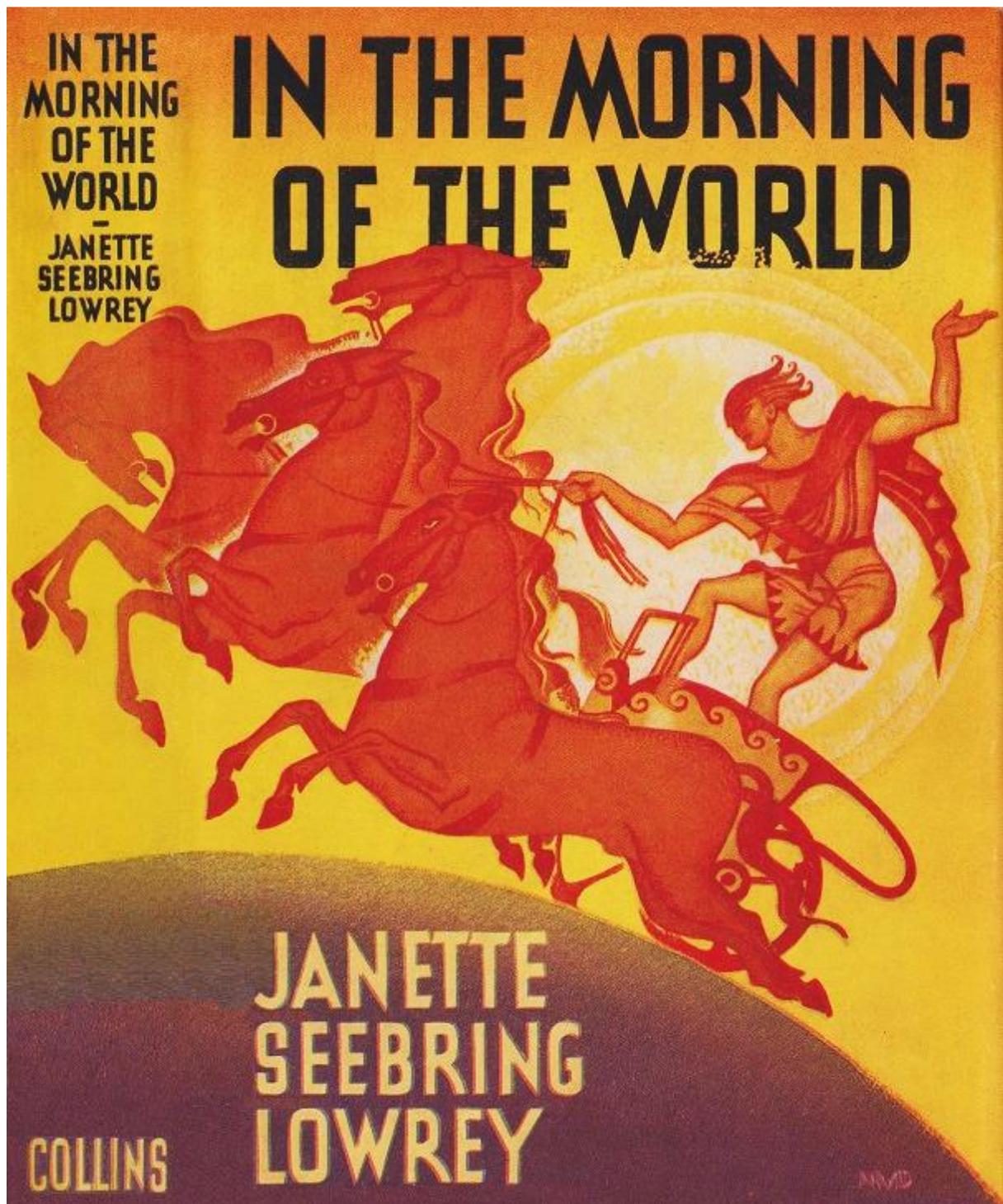




Whose hand?

Not all of Mrs Davidson's early designs bear a signature, so attribution is not always easy. This WL jacket from 1931 looks like her work, but is it? Similar uncertainty attaches to *The Yellow Wagon* (page 80) and *A Stranger Beckoned* (page 88) also.

* * *

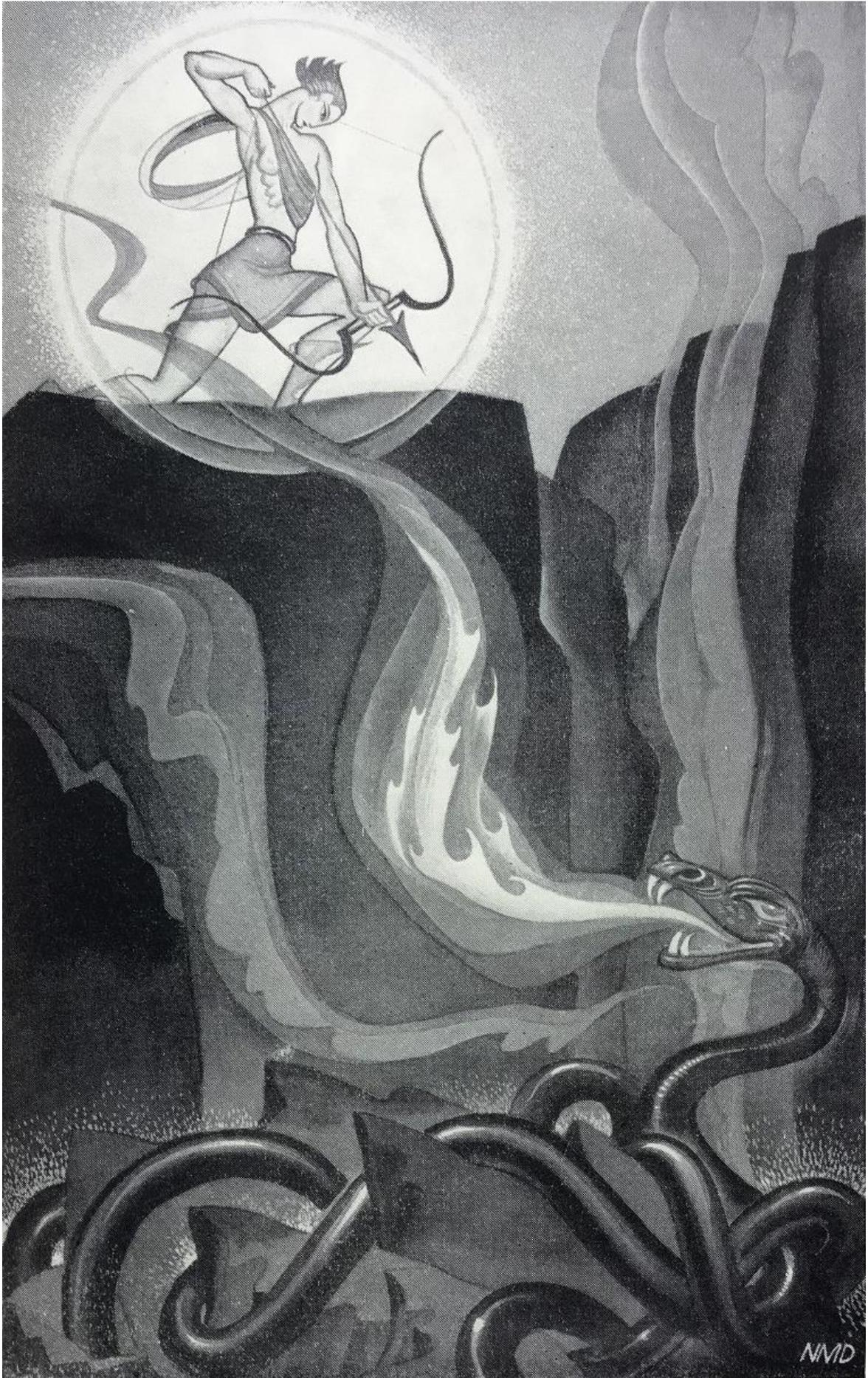


In the Morning of the World – some of the Greek myths retold by American children's author Janette Seebring Lowrey (Collins, 1948) features not only this Nina Miller Davidson dust jacket, but also a frontispiece (below), seven eye-catching full-page illustrations (pages 1, 77, 106 and 107 show four), twenty-one chapter-headings (two of the three in colour are on page 105), six end-of-chapter line drawings and even a small bonus one on the book's front board.



NWA MILLER DAVIDSON







After the death of her husband at the young age of fifty in January 1948, Mrs Davidson appears to have concentrated more of her energies on stained glass design than other aspects of her work. After moving to the Renfrewshire village of Eaglesham, ten miles south of Glasgow, she also took a very active and influential part in that community's life, as recalled by this compilation drawn principally from the *Irvine Herald* of 25 April 1969 and the *Glasgow Herald* of 9 August 2020:

Eaglesham celebrates becoming the UK's first conservation village

It is a picturesque Scots village that was threatened with demolition in the 1930s and remains renowned as the location where the plane flown by Hitler's deputy, Rudolf Hess, came down during World War Two. Eaglesham still has a flavour of the past in the quaintness of its architecture and in the 'Orry' that sits at the heart of the community – 'orry' being an old word for the 'area' that makes up the village's green space. Now, residents are set to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the day Eaglesham became the first conservation village in the UK back on 12 August 1960.

The Eaglesham of today has its roots in 1769 when Alexander Montgomerie, the tenth Earl of Eglinton, began the work of developing the area into an elegant planned village, with housing built around the Orry. This area of common land was at the heart of the community, where the main industries were farming and later cotton spinning and weaving. But, after the New Orry Cotton Mill burned down in 1876, workers drifted away and the population declined, as did the housing, which fell into disrepair. By the turn of the century, Eaglesham, which stands five hundred feet above sea level, was famous only for its clean, bracing air and the holiday homes used regularly by the prosperous inhabitants of smoky Glasgow.

In the 1930s the old houses, with low ceilings and no damp courses, were condemned and slated for demolition. The outbreak of war brought a temporary reprieve – they were requisitioned instead to house blitz victims – but when,

after the war, alternative accommodation was found for these unfortunates, the prospect of extensive clearances returned. Then two villagers, Nina Miller Davidson, an artist, and Kathleen Whyte, Head of Embroidery and Weaving at Glasgow School of Art, stepped in. They started a letter writing campaign to conserve and, where necessary, restore the eighteenth-century village, which led to the launch of a worldwide appeal for funds and the formation of a Preservation Society in 1953 and a Restoration Joint Committee in 1956. Thanks to the efforts of these bodies, supported by the local authority who also recognised the archeological and historical merit of some of the buildings, the status and physical appearance of the village steadily improved until, in August 1960, Eaglesham became the first village to be listed [i.e. officially protected] under The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1959.

Eaglesham Fair

On 24 April 1672, after a successful petition to the Scottish Parliament by the 8th Earl of Eglinton, an Act was passed authorising a weekly market and annual fair in Eaglesham, a "kirk toun" six miles from the nearest royal burgh (which usually had the monopoly on markets and fairs) and "on the king's highway". The Earl was charged with collecting all the tolls, customs and duties belonging to the fair, the original purpose of which was entirely practical, for the "buying and selling of all sorts of merchandise and other commodities necessary and useful for the country."

By the 18th century the fair seems to have been the principal event of the year but, in the 1930s, with the village in decline, as described above, it was discontinued – though not for long. Eaglesham Fair was revived in May 1961 – which is presumably when Mrs Davidson painted the tableau below – and has been held every second year since.¹⁵

On 24 April 1972, three hundred years to the day since passage of the enabling Act, a time capsule was buried on the Orry to mark the tercentenary – it contains a miniature of whisky and a breathalyser kit, a pack of cigarettes (complete with government health warning, introduced the

previous year), deodorant, soap, a zip fastener, a mail-order catalogue, copies of newspapers and the local church magazine and maps and aerial pictures of the village.¹⁶



In her will, Nina left money for the restoration of a footbridge in the woods near the top of the Orry (next page) and also bequeathed her cottage home (page 112) to the National Trust.



Below: **50 Montgomery Street, Eaglesham** before and after renovation. Mrs Davidson bought the property – formerly weavers' cottages, numbers 50 and 51, overlooking the Orry and dating back to 1774 – in 1950 and,

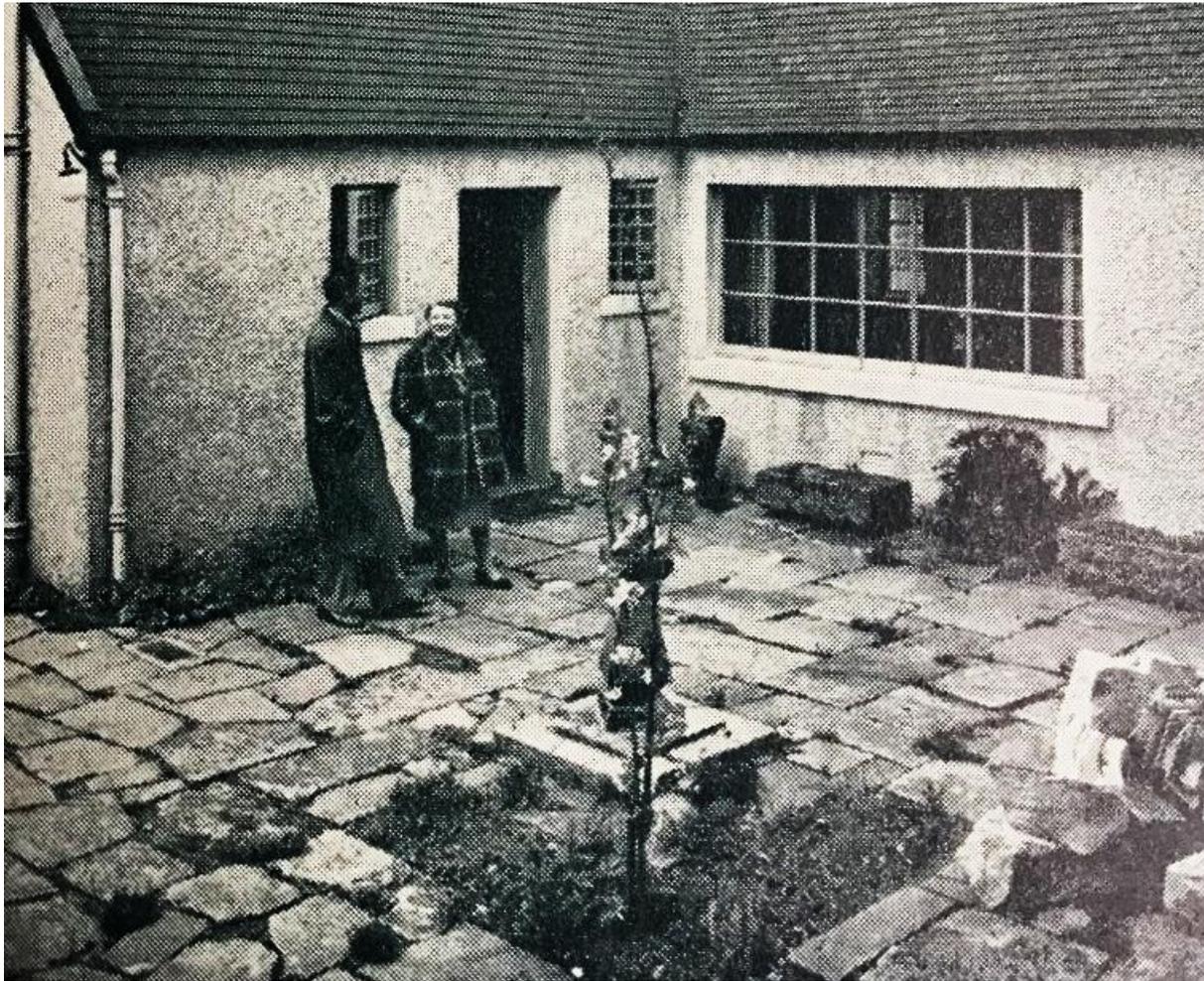
after an eighteen-month wait for planning permission, transformed it into a home. It was here that she spent the last twenty years of her life and





MOST of Mrs Davidson's life is spent in painting, so her home is mainly a studio-cum-living-room. She is seen (ABOVE) relaxing in a corner of the studio end of the room. The window looks out on a courtyard and a long garden. LEFT—Grey and white with citron and white ceilings is the colour scheme in the main room. Three of the windows are curtained in grey, the other in citron to match the ceiling.

Mrs Davidson at home in 1956 (above)¹⁷ and 1960 (next page)¹⁸



here, too, that she passed away, peacefully, on 5 November 1972, aged seventy-seven.¹⁹ A brass plaque attached to the property reads: "This house was the first to be restored in the village, and was bequeathed to the National Trust for Scotland by Mrs Nina Millar Davidson DA (1895-1972). She was the prime instigator and first Honorary Secretary of the Eaglesham Preservation Society." When asked in 1956 what anyone with £3000 to spend might expect for their money, apart from an "old-time" house on the pavement, she replied: "The thrill – and it is a daily thrill – of living in this fine old Scots village and a welcome from people who are happy just because they live here."²⁰

* * *

Though it is clear that Nina Miller Davidson produced exemplary work embracing a remarkably wide range of artistic disciplines, her name is little known and examples of her artistry hard to find, which is sad. But, with

patience, some *can* be found – what is more, the token effort required is likely to be handsomely rewarded. Her hand may be stilled, but her art lives on, which is as it should be.

* * * * *

NOTES AND SOURCES

¹ The biographical information re Nina and Charles comes from contemporary press reports, gsaarchives.com, Findmypast and scotlandspeople.gov.uk, which holds an official record of her birth, marriage and death. Though Nina's father David is repeatedly referred to as a "writer", it is clear from the context that the word in this instance means not "author" but "solicitor". The maiden name of Nina's mother Janet was Frame.

Reporting on the end-of-year exhibition of pupils' work at Bathgate Academy, the *West Lothian Courier* of 21 July 1911 states: "In the watercolour section, two snow pictures by Miss Nina Millar were outstanding." This suggests that Janet/Nina might have been educated at that school, though this is unconfirmed.

² *The Scotsman*, 28 June 1928 + 15 May 1929

³ *Dundee Courier*, 27 September 1930 + 1 October 1931

⁴ *Brechin Advertiser*, 24 October 1944

⁵ From Davidson's obituary in the *Brechin Advertiser* of 27 January 1948: "Mr Davidson developed his skill in various directions, including free-lance advertising and as artistic adviser to different firms. His murals adorn well-known buildings in Scotland, including the Glasgow Locarno. In recent years he has done a lot of newspaper work and his cartoons were popular features in the *Glasgow Herald* and *Evening Times*, the *Bulletin* and *Scottish Field*. His delightful series featuring Philip the Fan in the *Evening Times* was recently collected in book form."

⁶ A Glasgow-based interior design business established by partners William Guthrie (c1851–1939) and Andrew Wells (1845–1918) in October 1897. The company specialised in

the design, production and installation of décor, furniture, wallpapers, stained glass, tiles, carpets etc. Commissions included furniture designs for Charles Rennie Mackintosh and windows for Glasgow Free Church College (1898), Gilcomston Free Church, Aberdeen (1899), Cadder Church, Bishopbriggs (1908), Erskine United Presbyterian Church, Stirling (1910) and Trinity Church, Cambridge (1916). The business continued in various forms until well into the 20th century but was formally dissolved in 2002.

⁷ This article in full gives a detailed, page-by-page description of the Book and is well worth reading.

⁸ The Munro and Livingstone ministries overlap because since in his last years Rev. Munro's health was increasingly poor, Rev. Livingstone was appointed to assist him prior to his own eventual succession.

⁹ The statistical information in the first paragraph comes from the March, 1951 issue of *Scottish Field*; however, the principal source for pages 51-70 is *In Beauty Enshrined – Our Lady of Loretto and St Michael of Musselburgh* by Brian W. Heeps (privately published, 1989)

¹⁰ "Mr and Mrs Charles Davidson ... have been winning fresh laurels in the difficult field of stained glass designing for the Church of Our Lady of Loretto, Musselburgh and for a church at Jordanhill. These windows ... are orchestral symphonies in colour, lifting the heart and taking one back to the quiet centuries of faith and worship. There is nothing in Angus to touch them." (*Brechin Advertiser*, 20 November 1945)

¹¹ Source as note five: "Mr and Mrs Davidson had lately been experimenting and working at stained glass design and had already had gratifying success in this very different medium. Their windows are to be found in churches in Glasgow, Edinburgh and elsewhere. Just before he died Mr Davidson was working on the last of a series of windows for Musselburgh Roman Catholic Church."

The obituary's statement that "Mr Davidson is survived by his wife" suggests that the couple had no children.

¹² Script from St Mahew's web pages

¹³ *Arbroath Herald and Advertiser*, 27 February 1948



Nina gifted this framed appliqué panel to Eaglesham neighbour Mrs Manderson. In pencil on the back the artist wrote:

"As I was walking down the Road
I met a coo – a Bull begod."

McGonnigal (*sic*)²¹

With thanks to Mrs Manderson's daughter Elaine Noble.

¹⁴ lyonandturnbull.com

¹⁵ ichscotland.org

¹⁶ *Glasgow Evening Times*, 24 April 1972

^{17, 20} *The Bulletin and Scots Pictorial*, 6 June 1956

¹⁸ *Scottish Field*, August 1960

¹⁹ *Glasgow Herald*, 7 November 1972, which also records that she was cremated on the eighth, thus leaving no grave.

²¹ Nina references William Topaz McGonagall (1825-1902), a Scot of Irish descent whose circa two hundred poems are widely regarded as some of English literature's rawest work. However, in *William McGonagall and the Folk Scene*, an essay published in 1965, Hamish Henderson observes that "a large sub-literature exists of what one may call mock-McGonagallese. Ask anyone in Scotland to quote a verse of McGonagall and the chances are he will recite:

*As I was walkin' down the road
I met a coo – a bull, by Gode!*

This ... was never written by him."

* * * * *

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The assistance of Ralph Boettcher, Session Clerk, Merrylea Parish Church, Elizabeth Lawrie, Assistant Session Clerk, St Bride's Church, Alastair Todd, Session Clerk and Margaret Macdonald of St Margaret's Parish Church, Father Maloney and David Rainey of St Mayhew's Church, Kenneth Mallard of Eaglesham History Society, Christine McDiarmid (who remembers Mrs Davidson as "quite a character") and Alistair Anderson is much appreciated. The second photo of 50 Montgomery Street is © Mr Mallard and reproduced under Creative Commons licence. Thanks for other photos to David Ashford and Roger.

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