A Review of Don Jackson’s “Archer Pilgrim”

Jean Ross*

*Iowa State College

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serving her front in a harsh society and fighting tooth and nail not to suffer the shame of having no man on the campus ready to take her.

Your ending is good—it snaps off at the right place. There are dozens of things in this story that are “right.” They are “right” in the literary way that is so instantly recognized and is so tremendously hard to explain. It is almost a “writing sense” that makes us put in the right phrases at the right places. That’s where you go well.

So write a thing from your innate senses; but edit it from your cold brain.

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TO MANY persons in American literature Don Jackson’s “Archer Pilgrim,” published late in April, may be a “white hope.” For nearly ten years now there have been voices in the wilderness crying out for a new realism in American literature, one which encompasses something of life beside the sordid, bleak and hopeless.

Other “voices” have anticipated a new literature, to come, they thought, from the Middlewest.

“Archer Pilgrim” is the answer to both these groups. It is, in the first place, a serious attempt at presenting farm life in all its aspects, realistically and beautifully. And it is notably successful in that attempt.

The first section, dealing with nine-year-old Arch, contains some of the best writing in the book. This sensitive little boy, whose love for farming is discouraged by his parents and laughed at by his best friend Grover, who plans to be an engineer, is one of the finest children’s characterizations I have ever read, and one of the most touching.

The second section, dealing with Arch’s failure at college, after he had been forced to attend against his will, of his “success” as a small town garage operator, and of his failure at marriage, is probably less good. The character of Marian, the wife, is less well-done than the others, and is one of the few indications that this is a first novel.

Jackson’s style is restrained, not the lush, wild sort we have been accustomed to from young writers. He has something to say. And he says it. —Jean Ross