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Thomas Hill

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Review

TROUBLE IN THE FINGER LAKES

Lincoln's colorful sleuth Abel Jones investigates civilian unrest

Hill, Thomas

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Parry, Owen *Shadows of Glory*. William Morrow & Company, Inc., 2000-09-01. ISBN 380976439

Shadows of Glory is Owen Parry's second Abel Jones historical suspense novel. The first mystery, *Faded Coat of Blue*, was set in Washington, D.C., at the very beginning of the conflict. It received very favorable reviews. The present installment takes place mostly in the Finger Lakes region of western New York, during the winter of 1862, and is no less deserving of praise.

On the surface a work of genre fiction, which the academic community is often too quick to dismiss, Parry's novel opens after President Lincoln's personal secretary, John Nicolay, has dispatched Major Abel Jones to Penn Yan, New York, to investigate a rumored Irish uprising. Two previous observers have both been killed and Jones soon finds his own effigy hanging from a tree.

The major is, to say the least, an unconventional protagonist for a mystery series. An immigrant Welshman and veteran of England's wars in India, Jones is a teetotaling, extremely conscientious, penny-pinching Union officer, who despises war almost as much as he does horses. Throughout the story, he spouts erroneous forecasts concerning topics such as the likely duration of the war, the fate and value of the suffragist movement, and the length of time it will take former slaves to be accepted as equals. He is also an unending source of such homey maxims as "order is virtue, and too much thought breeds indolence and error."

Aided by an intriguing cast of characters, including his roguish friend Jimmy Molloy, the elephant-eared Sheriff Underwood, and a young, tubercular mystic named Nellie Kildare, Jones soon decides that there is no uprising in the works against the United States. He believes, however, that Nellie's supposed

father, "The Great" Kildare, and the local Irish population are definitely plotting something. Jones eventually uncovers a plan that, if successful, would virtually ensure the demise of the Union he holds dear.

The fact that **Shadows of Glory** is an historical novel, of course, diminishes the level of suspense, but Parry goes beyond the boundaries of a straightforward mystery by exploring larger cultural issues of the time. The most notable example is the contrast between the North's simultaneous zeal for abolition and its gross mistreatment of Irish immigrants.

Some pointless appearances of historical figures, such as Susan B. Anthony and Abraham Lincoln, as well as digressions to Grant's war in the West, may perturb those readers more interested in the mystery than the history. Though not perfect, **Shadows of Glory** is well-researched, lyrically written, and thoroughly entertaining.

Thomas Hill received an M.A. in history from Oklahoma State University and is currently working toward an M.F.A. in writing at the University of Memphis.