

THE BOOK FORUM

Conducted by M. M. C.

AS I WAS SAYING — G. K. Chesterton (Dodd, Mead, \$2.50).

BIRD ALONE — Seán O'Faoláin (Viking, \$2.50).

FOR DEAR LIFE — Belinda Jelliffe (Scribner, \$2.75).

THE SOUTHERN GATES OF ARABIA — Freya Stark (Dutton, \$3.75).

AFRICAN WITCH — Joyce Cary (Morrow, \$2.50).

DEATH IN THE BACK SEAT — Dorothy Cameron Disney (Random House, \$2.00).

THE TRUTH ABOUT COLUMBUS — Charles Duff (Random House, \$2.00).

BLIGH AND THE "BOUNTY" — edited by Laurence Irving (Dutton, \$2.50).

It is a pity that such gaiety, warmth, and high-mindedness as G. K. Chesterton's should be no longer in the world. As one reads *As I Was Saying*, it is hard to realize that that life has left us. These gay, charming essays, so full of wisdom, are those of an all-round literary man; we can find in them the mind of a poet, of a novelist, of a critic. As a poet, Chesterton has written some of the most stirring modern ballads; as a story writer, he has written the brilliant Father Brown series; as a critic and biographer he has written one of the best critical biographies of our time — his life of Browning. The trouble with Chesterton was that he was too generous, too lavish, of himself.

Not all of the essays in this collection are equally profound, and they are on subjects varying from blondes and widows to relativity and Puritanism, but all of them have warmth and charm, good sense and insight. A man has to know a great deal about the world, about England and the English to write the essay on "White Shirt Fronts" — to write even the sentence that begins, "So poetical a people as the English." We are apt to overlook the fact that the English are the most poetical people in the world. He would have to know a great deal, not only about poetry but about almost everything, to write that fascinating essay on Coleridge called "S.T.C." You will hardly find a more illuminating piece of writing on Coleridge anywhere than the page in which G. K. C. writes about that wild and winged poem, *Kubla Khan* — maybe the most beautiful poem in English. "His Pegasus had wings but no feet."

A COMMENT like this — "New movements in literature are those which copy the last century but one. . . . If they

copy the last century they are old-fashioned" — is at least three-fourths true. Certainly part of the modernness of what is called the modern school in literature is a resurrection of the eighteenth century. There is a good deal of the eighteenth-century mentality in the Sitwells, in Aldous Huxley, in Virginia Woolf, and, of course, in Lytton Strachey. What we have that is new in literature, except in the case of a few outstanding geniuses, is a technical approach; sometimes there is a strained effort at a new technique, as in Huxley's *Eyeless in Gaza*.

In *Bird Alone*, the novelty of the technique is not patently obvious: Seán O'Faoláin has learned his technical approach to the revelation of his characters through the Russians — a little from Turgenev, a little from Chekhov, a little from Gorky, a little from Bunin. But the music of his sentences, the rhythm of his mind is Gaelic, and the opening of *Bird Alone* comes out of the mind of a man well-versed in Gaelic literature. "Two parts of the day I love, morning and evening — old men's time for walking — because they cannot sleep. And two walks out of the city I love, the one to see the sun rising, the other to see it set. . . . A relic of March wind in May made the sound of the sea in my ears, and the west was all cold and yellow. . . . But when I looked across the city, the risen moon was there in a ring of mist, the man's face in the shadow." These sentences have come out of a mind alive, as few contemporary writers' minds are alive, to the sound of words.

The scene of the story is an Irish provincial city, Cork; the plot is made up of an old man's history of his youth, the transport and tragedy of which have become a sort of legend to him. The river that flows through the city becomes part of the legend, and when we meet Elsie, the girl whose unwedded love makes the story, she embodies in some curious way the legend of the river. "She imparted to me, and to me alone, by a thousand casual words the ways of the river and the long, meandering valley; it all opened up and out before me, beyond sight, as a river of the imagination, like those rivers in medieval pictures that meander into mountains." This girl Elsie was the beloved of the teller of the tale, Corney, in his youth. She dies as she is about to bear a child, disgraced in the eyes of her family which is proud of its priests and nuns, people vowed to chastity. The novel revolves round a conflict such as today could take place only in a small, old-fash-

ioned, and pious community. Practically all the Irish writers are technical innovators of one kind or another, whether as poets, dramatists, or novelists.

So many novels are autobiographical, with the spotlight turned on the author, who figures as the chief and most interesting character, that an autobiography like Belinda Jelliffe's *For Dear Life* reads like a novel. It is a book worth reading by any ambitious girl who either has to make her living or has a passion for a career. The difficulties before a woman with talent, energy, and resourcefulness can be such as to break the spirit of the most courageous. The heroine of *For Dear Life* was energetic, well-trained, and resourceful, but her struggles have left a wound in her spirit. She earned her living mainly as a nurse; she seems to have been not the ministering-angel type but that hard, efficient, well-trained, and unsympathetic person we meet in hospitals when we are racked on a bed of pain. Even at the risk of death by germs or infection or something else, we should, if very ill, willingly exchange her for one of the gentle, sympathetic, bedizened Arab women who nursed the author of *The Southern Gates of Arabia* so inefficiently through the measles.

FREYA STARK follows a rarer profession than that of nurse: she is a lady explorer or traveler into barely known regions. But she has that strangely sympathetic personality that makes every stranger want to do things for her. She set out to explore that romantic highway, the ancient "Frankincense route," the road by which "all the perfumes of Arabia" entered Europe from the days of the Greeks. Nearly every English traveler who writes about Arabia seems to be able to write not only well but remarkably. Maybe it is because they have such good models — Burton, Doughty, Lawrence. But maybe it is that only the most poetically minded travelers go into the Arabian deserts and, from them, well-written books come as naturally as dates come from palms by a well. The author of *The Southern Gates of Arabia* saw a side of Arab life not shown to the men travelers: she was able to enter the harem and be friendly with the women and children. She is not self-conscious as Lawrence was and does not stage herself as being on any mission; she wanted the romance of being among strange people and seeing strange and lost cities and she was willing to endure all sorts of illnesses for that experience. The

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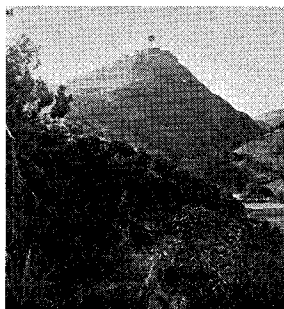
life she lived in these remote Arabian cities was, she tells us, identical with the life in the castles of medieval Europe, where privacy and cleanliness were almost unobtainable luxuries. Her Arab hosts and hostesses are put before us not only in vivid passages of writing but in remarkable photographs; her illustrations are really a continuation of the text. She is a photographer of an exceptional sort, and her pictures of the strange edifices of those remote cities and of groups of people have a dramatic significance that is very impressive. *The Southern Gates of Arabia* is a delightfully written, delightfully illustrated travel book.

ANOTHER book about Africa! This one is a novel, *African Witch*, and it takes us among the negroes and the white officials of a British colony on the river Niger. We note that someone has compared it with *Passage to India*. Its author, however, is incapable of anything like the psychological subtlety of E. M. Forster. It is an exciting story, with something of the atmosphere of Eugene O'Neill's *Emperor Jones* but with no distinction in writing. The sort of reader who will be interested in *African Witch* is he who likes stories of mysterious magical practices and witchcraft. The main character is a native sorceress, Elizabeth, who has mysterious control over the childlike people around her. She is an adept in ju-ju, the local magic. It does look as if the great difference between primitive peoples and civilized peoples is that the former are haunted by fears such as only demented people know among us; they are afflicted with a sort of loose fear which they can be moved to attach to any subject. What witches and the fear of witch doctors and their magic have done to the African jungle is indicated in the life of the child Ibu. "Ibu was an intelligent child. This quality had probably been her ruin. All intelligent, good-looking persons are exposed to jealousy, and jealousy is the subconscious source of the hatred which produces injuries—from injuries, fear; and, from fear, an accusation of witchcraft. In this way Africa has destroyed every year . . . a large portion of its more intelligent and handsome children." Over against the Africans are the white officials and visitors who have no power of making contact with the minds of the people they are supposed to be civilizing. Joyce Cary knows his Africa well, and his knowledge makes *African Witch* an interesting novel.

BECAUSE it has a plot, *African Witch* keeps up a sort of excitement all along. It is well known that when writers of psychological novels or poems want a little recreation they read detective stories. But most of these thrillers are becoming a bit stale; they all follow much the same for-

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Napoleon's Spirit Walks on St. Helena

Octave Aubry, probably the greatest living French authority on Napoleon, traces the slow, tragic unfolding of the banished Emperor's last six years of life. M. Aubry even lived on that stern, forbidding rock in the Atlantic in order to absorb fully its musty, historic atmosphere.

Old Forgotten Documents

Drawing his material from French and English sources, much of it from unedited and truthful documents, he has recreated a dramatic, accurate picture. "The Little Corporal" swaggers majestically through these nostalgic pages. M. Aubry has made this one of the most important, most absorbing works in contemporary literature. "St. Helena," translated by Arthur Livingston, retains the full flavor of M. Aubry's exciting style. "St. Helena" is published by Lippincott, fully illustrated, at \$5.00.

Globe Trotting Jewel Thieves Match Wits

Captain Valentine, the engaging rogue of "Moons in Gold," is reminiscent of Arsene Lupin. This novel, by C. S. Montanye, is one of the three best uncovered by the recent Lippincott Mystery Story Contest. The debonair Captain, his rival, St. Julien, and Baron Grunoff's beautiful daughter, all race from Paris to Shanghai for precious opals. "Moons in Gold" has glamor, thrills aplenty, and suspense to the last exciting page. Published in October, by Lippincott, at \$2.00.

Carolyn Wells Scores Again with Fleming Stone

The popular author of "Murder in the Bookshop," "Money Musk," etc., has again scored a hit with detective story fans in her latest Fleming Stone triple-murder thriller, "The Huddle." A big time promoter is killed under the very noses of his associates, two of whom die subsequently to the mystification of the great detective and the police. Published by Lippincott, at \$2.00.

LOVE AND REVOLUTION BREAK OUT IN MEXICO

Carleton Beals' Fascinating Story of Beautiful Peon Girl Torn in Strife of War and Love

A noted author reveals a vivid picture of the Mexico of today in his latest novel, "The Stones Awake." Esperanza, lovely illiterate peon girl of Milpa Verde, is the brave heroine of this epic saga of modern serfdom.

Karl Marx Portrayed As Man and Fighter



New and Hitherto Unpublished Material from Private Files of Marx and Engels—from Berlin, Dresden, and the First Internationale in Paris.

A new biography and a unique contribution to Marxist literature has been written by Boris Nicolaievsky and Otto Maenchen-Helfen.

Marx from a Different Perspective

Much has been written about Marx's economic and philosophic teaching but there never before has been a single work on Marx as a man and a fighter. Nor, until now, has there been an authoritative source of information on the controversies between Marx and Lassalle, and Marx and Bakunin. This book shows the principal stages in Marx's life of combat; from his stormy, tormented youth in Germany through all the years of his immensely productive life . . . a clear and complete delineation of the man and his age! "Karl Marx, Man and Fighter," illustrated, just published by Lippincott, is \$3.50.

Chemists Make Amazing Discoveries

According to A. Frederick Collins, F.R.A.S., never before in history have there been so many spectacular discoveries in the world of chemistry. To keep abreast of these achievements, and apply them in daily life, one must know how they were produced and what effects they have.

Gasoline from Coal

Mr. Collins explains all this in his new book, "The March of Chemistry," and includes numerous experiments which one can easily do at home. He tells how gasoline and oil are made from coal; all about rayon, fabricoid, streakless paints, etc. He also includes a chapter on Biochemistry, explaining enzymes, vitamins, hormones. "The March of Chemistry" (104 illustrations), just published by Lippincott, is \$3.00.

20th Century Slavery

Life on the Hacienda Magdalena was unspeakably cruel. Esperanza's betrothed is craftily shipped off to the army by Don Joaquin. Serf-born peons, flogged to desperation, join a futile revolt. Rapine, murder and starvation are situations Esperanza must face. How she triumphs over them makes this one of the best books ever written on Mexico and her people. "The Stones Awake," by Carleton Beals, just published by Lippincott, is \$2.50.

Remarkable Book On Game Birds

Seventy-five splendid etchings of America's game birds by the well-known Richard E. Bishop—have been reproduced to constitute a most attractive and reliable illustrated guide. Every sportsman will surely want a copy of "Bishop's Birds" for ready reference in his library.

If you prefer the De Luxe Edition, limited to 125 signed copies, and with an original etching as a frontispiece, the price is \$35.00. The regular edition, handsomely bound in buckram, and limited to 1,000 numbered copies, is only \$15.00 a copy.

New Grace Livingston Hill Novel Published

FOUND: Not only the old-fashioned Christmas he had secretly longed for—but a true love and a new happiness as well! That, in brief, is the résumé of a new romance—and one of the most beautiful ones that has ever come from Mrs. Hill's beloved pen. Title? "The Substitute Guest." Just published by Lippincott, at \$2.00.

Falcon Defies Police; Preys on Gangsters

The Falcon, steel-nerved hero of a new novel by Drexel Drake, is a lone, free-lance "G Man," without authority or credentials. But he doesn't need them. Crooked police officials cringe. And he shows no mercy on racketeers as he swoops down and deals his own brand of quick justice. "The Falcon's Prey," another of the great books discovered in the recent Lippincott Mystery Story Contest, is published by Lippincott, at \$2.00.