

The BOWLING GREEN

Granules from an Hourglass

SOMETIMES, sitting in a crowded smoking-car during a spring epidemic of colds, you hear everyone coughing and sneezing and have that unpleasant feeling that the air about you is crowded with germs. The prudent man settles as close into himself as possible, gets behind his newspaper, drags pensively on his pipe—and reflects that it is exactly the same with the whole mental atmosphere of humanity. The medium we think is more than a little poisoned with false doctrine, sentimental triviality, and all manner of contagious drivel: so you sit tight and chew your own notions and say nuffin to nobody.

I am always pleased by the advertisements about "the smartness of reptile shoes," it seems so very Biblical. For I remember something about bruising the serpent with your heel.

The other day, looking at some grass, I realized better than ever before the extraordinary greatness of Walt Whitman's title for his book. To take as his emblem this commonest, humblest, most disregarded and yet most satisfying of all earth's generousities, that I think was genius.

In a South Carolina town (so we learn from a client) there is a woman who owns a copy of "The President's Daughter." Much pestered by appeals for subscriptions to charity, and also by requests to read the book, she turned her copy into a Loan Fund. She rents it for 25 cents a day and gives all the proceeds to her church and to the Missionary Society. Her waiting list for the book now has 20 inches of names.

I hope Sime Silverman, the editor of *Variety*, doesn't mind my lifting things from his admirable paper now and then; for I do it in pure homage to the liveliest edited journal I know. For several weeks I've been trying to squeeze in here a reprint of Jack Lait's review of *Volpone*; but here is something that can't wait, Jack Conway's remarks about Mae West's play *Diamond Lil*. A little acquaintance with Con's argot will be very instructive to readers of the *Saturday Review*:

Go over and get a hodful of Mae West in "Diamond Lil" and try and get a couple of duckets in the next to the last row. If you do, be sure and take a peek at those stockholders and the relatives. Mae has 50 per cent. of the joint and also gets a royalty. The stockholders can't understand why they can't get some one a little cheaper. Take Mae out of that opera and it wouldn't draw fishcakes.

She remains the stage Babe Ruth of the prosties, and threatens to become an institution. It won't be long before the yokos will be demanding a squint at her, and she ought to prove as popular in the sticks as Odd McIntyre.

The play is a throw-back to the days when Jimmy Doyle used to walk into the Chatham Club, put his iron hat on the piano and coo ballads until the chumps ran out of throw money, and the broads were reefing their own gams for sugar.

"Diamond Lil" has a ward politician, rival heavy, Salvation Army captain who turns out to be a copper, and all the riff-raff that used to haunt the sawdust on the floor joints in the days when a street cleaner could get a workout on the Bowery.

Mae is the leader's gal and has a yen for the sky chauffeur. There is also a spick from Rio, who is supposed to be the magimp of another jane but is making a play for Mae. The other frail cops a sneak on them while her spaghetti bender is giving his arteries a workout in Mae's boudoir. She tries to stick a shive in Mae, but our heroine turns the sticker and croaks the other moll. When they blast in, Mae has covered the stiff's pan with her own hair, and is combing it. (Directors, please note.)

The boudoir would get a rise out of a Grand Rapids furniture salesman. It has a gilded swan bed that looks like it might have come from the Everleigh Club. They also have a junkie who takes a couple of blows and talks about buying New York. That kind of a hophead went out with hoopskirts.

The opera is doing business and the nut must be very reasonable, so it looks like a pipe for eight weeks more anyway.

But don't muff those stockholders. Crashing the window,

you will notice them to your left, lined up like a double octet. As the curtain takes it on the lam upward you will hear them beating the hambos to the punch lines. If anybody in the troupe has on anything new, the stockholders will give you the office, if you listen. Also the salaries.

Jo Jo of the raucous pipes is prominent in the back room scene. He sings his laughing hyena song and goals them. Mae sells "Frankie and Johnny" and "Easy Rider" like Millie De Leon sold hip waving in the old days.

You could take the same book and troupe, spot it in a modern cabaret, dress up the frails in modern clothes and it would play just as well and probably have more appeal. The fillies in long skirts would be safe now on double fifth and wouldn't get a tumble at a longshoreman's picnic. Mae manages to look seductive and voluptuous, after spotting the peasants a couple of armorplate body grippers and three old-fashioned low-necked gowns. She also wears those striped stockings that used to be so popular in the "Police Gazette."

The play will entertain any of the old-timers, due to its reminiscent qualities; the younger generation will get a great kick out of it and a flash at the way they did those things when mother was a girl.

Browsing through the Folder, I find an advertisement, received a year or more ago, concerning a magazine called *Larus* which announced itself as about to begin publication at 12 Baker Street, Lynn, Mass. *Larus*'s description of itself was so engaging that I have several times wondered whether the journal came into existence and lived up to its prospectus. This is what it said of itself:

Although published in New England, it will not be devoted to polite papers by pleasant gentlemen, luting the balm of the Concord woods, or relating with bated breath what dreadful things Mark Twain said about Emerson at that so unfortunate banquet; nor will it be wistful or whimsical.

It will not, having begun well under strong leadership, succumb to females and slip gently into quasi-modern senility.

It is not "smart," God save the mark: one can learn from it neither that fresh and timely epigram made by Jean Cocteau (twenty gold years ago), nor what brand of patent cereal is had for breakfast by that famous horse "on which the son of England never sets," nor whether iguana or armadillo is the correct leather for the tops of button shoes.

It will not be built upon prejudice, nor mould its readers into a self-conscious group, with on the one hand a profession of independent intelligence, and on the other a mob-attitude.

It does not titillate the ganglia by artistic lubricity, nor attempt a literary substitute for glandular therapy.

It is not an organ for a mutual admiration society of nice young people.

It is not a political tract.

It is not hare-brained, appearing with its cover upside-down, or on edge, or, indeed, with its mentality upside-down or on edge, either.

In brief, *LARUS* is not a popular magazine; it is for the very few, and they of the highest order.

If the allusion to "pleasant gentlemen luting the balm of the Concord woods" was by any chance intended as a nifty at Thoreau's expense, the identification is inadequate. What one likes best in Thoreau was his arrogance. The man who remarked that Emerson, shooting at beer-bottles on an Adirondack vacation, was no better than a cockney picnicker, lived on a high serene of ethical certainty which is good to contemplate. It is true that whiles one finds something a little meagre and frosty in the judgments of those vanished Massachusetts mandarins (I myself like to think of Ralph Waldo popping off the beer-bottles with his fowling-piece), sometimes one wonders if the ascetic and eremite, no matter how exquisite his memoranda on pantheism, was not a mere child in the art of living. For there is a certain furious and tragic merriment in the compromises of modern life: to be ground in the hopper and still extract one's silences and Buddhist interludes. Silence should be something advanced upon and won; not something retreated to. There seems to me something tragically negative, for example, in Thoreau's comment on Whitman—"As for sensuality in *Leaves of Grass*, I do not so much wish that it was not written, as that men and women were so pure that they could read it without harm."

It is true that the most enchantingly acceptable philosophizations have usually been written by celibates. Family men are more wary about uttering these lustrous positivisms. Thoreau's contempt for the audiences to whom he lectured was not, I think, an engaging trait. He could fall in love with a shrub-oak but not with a human being. His idea of lecturing was to read a manuscript essay; he regarded the occasion as a success if the gathering was so dismayed that no one dared speak to him afterward. He was courteous to woodchucks and turtles; but aren't we all? It's being courteous to human beings that requires Galilean hardihood. He was

rather pleased with himself when he chased a straying shoat for hours and finally caught him and wheel-barrowed him home. But isn't that what domestic or metropolitan man has to do every day and all day long? The ineffable greased pig of his secret joy, you can see him pursuing it grimly, under the scarps of terraced buildings or in the bewildering discipline of paternity.

But, as I say, it is for this arrogant and fugitive certainty that one loves Thoreau. He was happy, and therefore his doctrine was true; happiness refutes all argument. One laconic entry in his journal always seems to me specially characteristic. "Aug. 9, 1854. To Boston. *Walden* published. Elder-berries." For his books have just the tart sweetness, the acrid refreshment, of elder-berry wine. Perhaps he really knew very little of life; or perhaps he knew more than it is safe for any man to suspect; you can argue it convincingly either way. He left us books that provide one with debate, full of beautiful troubling elixir. Perhaps he was himself a bit like the shrub-oak he fell in love with—"Rigid as iron, clean as the atmosphere, hardy as virtue, innocent as a maiden." He was much more than a "pleasant gentleman." He was the man who cried out, when he saw women wearing jewelry, that a pearl was "the hardened tear of a diseased clam, murdered in its old age"; and said, after lecturing in the basement of a church, "I trust I helped to undermine it." If he had been alive, he would certainly have spent 1917-18 in jail.

I had only meant to make a casual allusion to Thoreau, but having got so far I may as well go on a stick or two further. Some day perhaps I might read some of the books about him; *Walden* and the *Journals* are my only lore. Odell Shepard's admirable condensation, "The Heart of Thoreau's Journals," is an anthology alive with the purest bourbon of the mind. If one were a collector, among the books most charming to own would be one of those 706 copies of *A Week on the Concord* which the publisher returned to him as unsalable (about 215 were actually sold, of the first edition of 1000) and which he carried up to his attic. Who ever forgets his immortal memorandum—"I have now a library of nearly 900 volumes, over 700 of which I wrote myself."

Speaking as a financier, there is bound to be a bull market in Thoreau. H. M. Tomlinson, when he was here a few months ago, was amazed at the low price at which it was possible to buy a First of *Walden*. But we have seen, in ten years or so, *Moby Dick* rise from about \$2½ to \$250. The same will very possibly happen to Thoreau, for he has something to say to us that few have ever said quite so definitely. I know of two men of letters, both ardent dabblers in speculation, who (being hard up) bought a First of *Walden* jointly, and put it carefully in a safe against the anticipated rise. When the price gets up to \$100 they intend to cash in. When that time comes I will tell you who they are.

Thoreau worked for a dollar a day as odd-job man; but his oddest job of all was that of trying to guess the truth.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

Roller Coaster Journalism

(Continued from page 885)

Press, was published last year by Boni & Liveright. "A conspectus of modern metropolitan newspapers in the United States, primarily it is concerned with marked changes which have come to them during this generation." For much of the material of his book the author went to original sources, to pamphlets and trade journals.

There is, of course a voluminous literature on journalism. We cull from it, as particularly germane to Mr. Bent's discussion of the tabloids, the following titles: "Main Currents in American Journalism," by Willard G. Bleyer (Houghton Mifflin); "History of American Journalism," by James Melvin Lee (Houghton Mifflin); "History of Journalism in the United States," by George Henry Payne (Appleton); "Ethics of Journalism," by Nelson Antrim Crawford (Knopf); "Conscience of Newspapers," by L. M. Flint (Appleton); "Commercialism and Journalism," by Hamilton Holt (Houghton Mifflin); "Public Opinion," by Walter Lippmann (Harcourt, Brace).

Nutmegs from Nightingales—A Page of Verse

The New Doll's House

By HUMBERT WOLFE

FOREWORD

WHAT furniture
from what strange stores
must we provide, what
visitors,
now that Christina
Jane has gone,
and bought a West-end
Mansion?

THE DOORPLATE

First we'll inscribe
upon the plate,
"Who enter here,
abandon hate!"

THE SCRAPER

Then on the scraper
sorrow must
be rubbed off cleanly
with the dust.

THE ENTRANCE HALL

Next in the entrance
hall we'll hang
a miniature of
Andrew Lang,
writing below, "Lest
we forget—
from Graziosa's
Percinet."

THE DRAWING-ROOM

Then in the drawing-
room that should
be exquisite with
satin-wood,
emblem of spring immor-
tal, we
will have a bronze
Persephone.

THE BEDROOMS

The bedrooms shall be
gay with hints
of flowered Jacobean
chintz,
and all the beds
designed in pale
mahogany by
Chippendale
(weed wide enough,
as William* said,
to wrap a fairy in
her bed).

* I.e. W. Shakespeare.

THE GARDEN

The garden full of
trees and chickens.

THE LIBRARY

The library of
Grimm and Dickens.

THE KITCHENS

And in the kitchens
we shall come
out strong with
aluminium
and copper pans, but
best of all,
I think, we'll like
the Servants' Hall.

THE STAFF

Because as servants
for this palace
we'll have the footmen
out of "Alice"*

(but not, I think, the
cook, unless
we're short of pepper)
and—oh yes!
to see that people
use the scrapers,
the housemaid out of
"Pickwick Papers."†
* I.e. "Alice in Wonderland."
† By Mr. Charles Dickens.

THE VISITORS

(A) *The Smaller Fry*

Among the smaller fry,
who'll come
at intervals, will
be Tom Thumb,
the little man who
had a gun,
and Jack (I mean the
beanstalk one),
the valiant tailor.
Tiny Tim,
and Mr. Wordsworth's
Little Jim,
Little Miss Muffet,
and Boy Blue,
the young Achilles
whom we knew
not as a hero
sulking in
his Trojan tent, but
as the tin
soldier, although a
toy,
braver than all the
kings at Troy.

(B) *The Rather Immortals*

Then once in every
year for luck
we'll send a telegram to Puck,
and, ringing up the
cowslip's bell,
telephone to Ar-
iel.

(C) *The Immortals*

And finally when all
things seem
not mine and yours, but
Shakespeare's dream,
will tremble, some
Midsummer night,
luminous in the
candle-light
of the long road from
Babylon,
Titania and
Oberon.

CONCLUSION

So furnished shall
the house for us
immutably be
populous
with childhood's loves,
since these and verse
have been the two
upholsterers.

On a New Philosophy

By LEONARD BACON

SHALL we, because the German tire went flat
And an enormous egocentric class,
Full of monomania stiff and crass,
Collapsed, and now is screaming like a rat
Cornered by terriers in a garden-plat,
Believe this tinkling cymbal, sounding brass,
Pregnant with horrors that will not come to pass,
Based on huge evidence of this and that?

Nay! there are art and music, poetry
And shining sciences. So let him gibe.
All the besotted learning of his tribe,
The intellect's sterility and drouth,
Are not sufficient to make clear to me
That ginger shall no more be hot in the mouth.

To Be Concrete

By DOROTHY HOMANS

THE PARAMOUNT BUILDING

CITIZEN, you sprawl upon your throne
With crown askew.
And when you eat, drops of gravy
Fall upon your crimson velvet waistcoat
Trimmed with rhinestone buttons.

THE AQUARIUM

Once famous for the voice of Jenny Lind.
Now famous for the silence of the finned.

FRENCH BUILDING ON A CLEAR DAY

A bronze giant with vermilion hair,
Flapping brass cymbals,
Leaps up a marble stair
To kiss the sun.

NEW YORK SKYLINE—7 P. M.

Behold against an opal sky,
A golden honeycomb.
How do you or how do I
Dare speak of it as home?

Advice To My Daughter

By ROSEMARY CARR BENÉT

IT is not odd that you should mock a voice
Which you have seldom heard; or nightly range
Your shoes as she did by a chair. Nor strange
That you like yellow best which was her choice.
High courage and cut fingers interest you
As they did her. They do not interest me.
Such likenesses might well creep out anew
Thanks to the workings of heredity.

But not, my child, that gaze as of the just
Unjustly blamed. That still, Scotch look that ranked
My youthful sins. Choose something else instead.
Inherit other virtues if you must.
But do not leave me feeling that I've spanked
Your grandmother and sent her up to bed.

The Painted Desert

By ELIZABETH J. COATSWORTH

THE NAVAJO

LEAN and tall and stringy are the Navajo,
Workers in silver and turquoise, herders of
flocks,
Their sheep and goats cover the hills like scattered
rocks,
They wear velvet shirts, they are proud, they go
Through the sage, upright on thin bright horses,
Their speech is low,
At their necks they gather the black smooth cataract
of their locks,
Quick are their eyes and bright as the eyes of a fox,
You may pass close by their encampments and never
know.

IN WALPI

There is an eagle screaming from a roof
In Walpi, a black eagle with pale eyes.
The kitchen smoke
Morning and evening rises in pale columns
About him. At noon the heat beats down
Upon his head and lies like fire on his shoulders.
He never sees the Indians below him,
His captors, all day his look goes out
Across the striped reds of the painted desert,
All day he looks far off to cloud-hung mesas,
All day he screams.

CEREMONIAL HUNT

As the racing circle closed in like a lasso
Of running dogs and horses, as the sage was swept,
Out of the turmoil suddenly upward leapt
A jack-rabbit's fawn and jet, with its great soft eye
And fantastic ears outlined against the sky,
Hanging in life a strange moment, then falling back
From that remote beautiful leap to the teeth of the
pack,
And the trampling hoofs and the Indians' thin
halloo.