

Round about Parnassus

By WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

ARTIST AND POET
THE second volume of the Collected Edition of *Poems of Sturge Moore* is now on my table, the first volume having already been reviewed in this department. Macmillan & Company, London, have made dignified volumes of this edition, the dust-cover design being, it would seem, by Mr. Moore himself, who is a not inconsiderable graphic artist as well as a poet. It was he who furnished the cover design for at least one volume of the poems of W. B. Yeats. In volume one I praised particularly some of the poems in "The Little School," and remarked upon this poet's excursions into blank verse drama and the chronicle play. The body of his work is impressive. He has been inspired by classical legend and painting. The distinguished English painters, Shannon and Ricketts, are his friends, as is that too little celebrated English poet, Gordon Bottomley. A good many Biblical characters are celebrated in the volume before me, and Sturge Moore seems particularly fond of the story of David and Jonathan. His style, which has a peculiarity of its own, is not one to attract the average reader. Rather is he a poet's poet, though not in the sense that he is *precieuse*. His inspiration may be illustrated by this verse from a poem that he declares "adapted from the cover of this book," that is, the jacket-design. The vertical part of that design represents the "incense-breathing tree," with the symbolic phoenix rising from its nest of flame in the miraculous branches:

O rare Arabian tree,
Tethered to thee
The inspired unicorn
From sun-down sleeps till morn;
Him none can ride but she
Who owns the diamond's
Limpidity.
He with his chisel horn
To pride's outrage responds,
Chips names of one-time kings
From ruined tombs, and puts
All pyramids to scorn,

William Harlan HALE

is just twenty-one

Two years ago he was editor of Yale's *Harkness Hoot* when his extraordinary articles were well worth reading and attracted wide praise. Mr. Hale's first book, just published, has moved critics to welcome him to the ranks of "men you will hear from." He has made the direct, vigorous approach of youth to the problems of literature and life. Opposed to the despair of Krutch, Russell, and Spengler, his is a vital, Goethe-inspired manifesto that defeats post-war disillusion. It is the mature expression of a gifted mind, and seems to mark the coming of age of a new generation.

CHALLENGE TO DEFEAT

"A tonic for this bewildered hour."—HORACE GREGORY, N. Y. HERALD TRIBUNE

"One is sure, judging from the tone and vigorous style of the writing, that Mr. Hale will both understand and make a place for himself in whatever world is over the horizon."—N. Y. TIMES

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And then the steep world foots
Shod as with wings.

Despite the undeniable symbolic poetry of those lines, the difficulties they present to the average reader must be apparent. A long poem on "Judas," following next upon this invocation, is dedicated to an old friend of mine, A. Hugh Fisher, etcher and poet. It is packed with detail, the work of ripe scholarship, even vividly pictorial at times, yet for the most part it demands as strict and undivided attention as the longer poems of Browning, an attention few, unfortunately, will have patience enough to give it in this hurried time. I say "unfortunately," because there are passages in it of most remarkable writing. The following excerpt may illustrate this. Judas is lying in a trance of torment beyond the walls of the city:

A smoky lantern swings
Close to his face. The foot of him who
holds it
Prods at his back.
They stared at one another.
The man, whose face was heavy as wet
wool,
Said "What's the matter?" Judas answered
"Nothing!"
The other shrugged his shoulders, and
moved off
With loud but unexpressive clog-shod
feet.
Judas sat up to watch his swaying lantern
Carry its orange eye into the moonlight,
That softened the stars and citied hills
with sheen,
Down and across the bridge; then turning
left
Make for Ge Hinnom's vale, where refuse
burned
Beneath the aqueduct, and on the silver
smoke
The fires impinged bright red: and thence
his gaze
Strayed northward over city and Temple,
varied
More than a dream, so stable, so complete.
Yet he thought "Fool, to let the fellow go
And never ask a bite!" and thereon basins
Assaulted his mind; such had he never
seen;
They over-brimmed with sauces on which
rocked
Bright-colored gobbets of he knew not
what,
But so inviting both to tooth and tongue,
Or smooth to swallow, that his vitals
crawled:
And suddenly he must lean and vomit
bile,
Retching with cruel unrelieved throes
Until he thought his ghost would part
from him.

In that strange poem, "The Gazelles," which contains much beauty but would have greatly benefited by more compression, there is a queer mingling of pedestrian versification and glamour of description. Indeed, Sturge Moore's handling of rhyme and metre seems to me often clumsy. It is his artist's vision, the warmth of his color, his narrative gift which lure us on through certain tracts of dulness. His faculty for organization, granted in the first place—and freely granted—his sensitive appreciation of the best in legend and literature, is often defective. And he allows himself most of the poetic license that this age has come to regard as antiquated lumber. Sturge Moore will rank, I think, as one of the minor poets of his time, one worth delving in for occasional rarely fine things, but a poet too much of the study and studio to strike out any unique contribution to literature.

TWO ANTHOLOGIES

Disliking as I do specialized anthologies covering narrow fields of interest, I encountered *The Garden Book of Verse*, by William Griffith and Mrs. John Walton Paris (Morrow & Company) not without qualms. Mr. Griffith is well-known as a poet and the President of the Poetry Society of America for the years 1929-31, and Mrs. Paris is the Founder of the Federated State Garden Club Movement in America, a rather strange pair of collaborators. However, owing, I am sure, chiefly to Mr. Griffith's poetic perspicacity, the choices in the book are better than one had expected. William Cullen Bryant's "The Death of the Flowers" is rather obviously one of the first, but Lizette Reese, Amy Lowell, Dorothy Parker, and Elizabeth Coatsworth among modern poets serve to offset Ella Wheeler Wilcox, Richard Burton and Robert Loveman; and Shakespeare, Herrick, Herbert, Milton,

Marvell, and Blake bring great verse to bear on the subject out of the past. Shelley's "The Sensitive Plant" and "Epipsychidion" are drawn upon, Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" is here, Tennyson, Browning, and Swinburne are discriminatingly represented, and there are also such excellent things as Robert Bridges's "I have Loved Flowers that Fade," Alice Meynell's "The Thrush before Dawn," Fiona MacLeod's exquisite and rare "The Garden Vision," excerpts from Francis Thompson, Sir William Watson's "April, April," and Ralph Hodgson's "Eve." In fact, there is surprisingly little in the book that is not notable, and a variety and scope to it that satisfies.

Lyra Mystica, edited by Charles Carroll Albertson with an Introduction by Dean Inge, is published by Macmillan. It is, as the title shows, an anthology of mystical verse. Of the several definitions of mysticism to which the gloomy Dean refers in his introduction to the book, we too prefer, "the splendid saying of Isaac Penington, one of the early Quakers."

Every truth is a shadow, except the last. But every truth is substance in its own place, though it be but a shadow in another place. And the shadow is a true shadow, as the substance is a true substance. (This emphasizes that Mysticism is a *quest*, a progressive initiation into the divine mysteries. At each stage, we say, like the Indian sage, of what we are leaving behind us, "Neti, Neti"; "Not this—this is not good enough to be true." Yet what we are rejecting was not worthless; it was "substance in its own place.")

There are first-rate poems in this collection, from Francis Thompson's "The Kingdom of God" to Elinor Wylie's "This Corruptible." One of the finest of the short mystical pieces included is from a Scottish nineteenth century poem, "The City of Dream," by Robert Buchanan. The excerpt runs as follows, and reflects great credit on the astuteness of the anthologist.

The Woof that I weave not
Thou wearest and weavest,
The Thought I conceive not
Thou darkly conceivest;
The wind and the rain,
The night and the morrow,
The rapture of pain
Fading slowly to sorrow,
The dream and the deed,
The calm and the storm,
The flower and the seed,
Are thy Thought and thy Form.
I die, yet depart not,
I am bound, yet soar free,
Thou art and thou art not,
And ever shalt be!

While I feel the collection to be rather too large and that there is a lack of discrimination in some of the selections, there are enough first-rate inclusions, their authorship extending back into the remote mists of time, to give the book a more than average value.

The Italian Theatre

THE ITALIAN THEATRE, Vol. I, Vol. II.
By JOSEPH SPENCER KENNARD. New York: William Edwin Rudge. 1932. \$12.

Reviewed by WINIFRED SMITH

MR. KENNARD'S beautifully printed and richly illustrated history of the Italian Theatre will be useful to all those students of comparative literature, of the stage, and of Italian history who cannot read fluently Latin and Italian. It is based on a long continued and sympathetic study of the chief primary and secondary Italian authorities, and brings up to date its author's earlier volumes on Goldoni and the Venice of his times, and on the Italian Theatre.

Without opening up many new problems or publishing much that is fresh, this work for the first time in English brings together the chief facts known about the early religious plays in the peninsula, the moralities, the *farse*, the academic written comedies and tragedies, the acting companies in the 16th and 17th centuries, the great revival of play writing and production in the 18th century, and something of the contemporary scene. All this literary and theatrical material is related to the historical development of Italian society with some attempt to connect life and art but without much skill or liveliness in painting the large canvas. The writing is heavy throughout. The "gentle reader" is more than once addressed. Truisms abound, as, (I. 79) in a paragraph on the humanistic theatre of the *quattrocento*: "It is, indeed, the mirror which truly presents to our eyes the very life of the age—for, whether by intention or otherwise, every play reveals the author's own mental and spiritual evolution as it developed under the influ-

ence of his age and environment" . . . and, again, speaking of medieval universities, "Between those free and nomadic colonies of scholars, there is nothing in common; and it is this fact that renders interesting the study of those students." Such a labored style reveals a certain lack of individuality in the author's approach to his subject, a perhaps over-conscientious clinging to a now rather outworn academic method, and, especially, a limitation in his imaginative realization of the past.

Perhaps it is some temperamental failure of this sort that accounts for Mr. Kennard's slight treatment of the *commedia dell'arte*, the most famous and individual creation of Italian dramatic genius; perhaps he is merely bored by the emphasis which many recent students have laid on that most lively form of art; perhaps he is only trying to redress the balance by putting special stress on more respectable branches of the drama. The results, however, of his study of the academic and literary plays of Italy justify the general neglect that has befallen them and show that the *commedia dell'arte* was by all odds the most entertaining creation of the Italian theatre and that it has been responsible for all that is most alive in that theatre.

In discussing the term "literary" in a recent *Week-end Review*, "Stet" has the following to say of Kipling:

The most preposterous denial in our time is that whereby Mr. Rudyard Kipling is misrepresented as, if not himself one of Walt Whitman's "powerful, uneducated persons," at least their perfect spokesman. Mark Pattison said that an appreciation of Milton was the reward of culture: for true appreciation of Mr. Rudyard Kipling as a writer, not merely as a force or a man with a message, it is necessary to be steeped in literature—as he is. Not for nothing was he the nephew of Burne-Jones, not for nothing was he free in early boyhood of the library of a headmaster who had been the associate of the second group of Pre-Raphaelites. In his period of greatest susceptibility he was introduced to or came upon books not then conceded their due fame, and it was not a powerful, uneducated writer who so long before puny, educated writers was parodying a then unpopular Omar and drawing for motto and for title on James Thomson.

New Scribner Books

The Financial Aftermath of War by Sir Josiah Stamp

A clear and practical picture of the interplay of finance, politics, and industry in the post-war world, written so that the average reader can understand what international finance is and what it has been about since the war. 149 pages. \$1.75

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The New Books

The books listed by title only in the classified list below are noted here as received.

Fiction

THE CITY JUNGLE. By FELIX SALTEN. New York. Simon & Schuster. 1932. \$2.

Salten's "Bambi" had singular charm compounded of a subtle irony playing beneath sentiment, and much of the charm and more of the sentiment is to be found in "The City Jungle." It is a story of a Zoo, and more specifically a study of animal nature, in which, as in the old fables, the lioness who loses her cubs, the mad fox rushing at his bars and freedom, the gossip mouse, and the little boy chimpanzee are all given those human traits which their behavior suggests. The theme is cruelty, the cruelty of man who tries to make beasts comfortable amidst the great unhappiness which comes from the loss of freedom. The episodes are touching, the description excellent, the tragedy less convincing. For there is a kind of anthropomorphism in Salten's book which makes the reader just skeptical enough to dull the edge of his pity as he reads. The youth who gets himself trampled to death by the elephant as a propitiatory sacrifice is not credible, the tamed wolf separated from his mistress, the lioness always dreading the hour when the cubs will not come back, are all a little too poignant for their animal natures. It is a better book for children than for adults. And yet, Salten is a skilful and impressive writer. You read his book with an interest that persists through sentimentality and the improbable, but in remembering one praises episodes and not the whole.

THE SORREL STALLION. By David Grew. Scribners. \$2.50.

KING'S CREW. By Frank R. Adams. \$2.

BLACK ECHO. By Donald Grey Pegasus.

GOD LOVES A DUMBBELL. By Daria Gray. Pegasus. \$2.

EVERYTHING GOES. By Charles Grayson. Macaulay. \$2.

SUMMER HOTEL. By P. J. Wolfson. Vanguard. \$2.

HELL ROARIN' TEXAS TRAIL. By Robert Denver. Macaulay. \$2.

AGE OF CONSENT. By Clem Yore. Macaulay. \$2.

THE WAY OF ALL FLESH. By Samuel Butler. Jacket Library. 15 cents.

THE LITTLE TIGRESS. By Wallace Smith. Brewer, Warren & Putnam. \$2.50.

TWENTY BEST SHORT STORIES IN RAY LONG'S TWENTY YEARS AS AN EDITOR. Long & Smith. \$3.

LOVE LIGHTLY. By Margaret Sangster. Brewer, Warren & Putnam. \$2.

THE SNATCH RACKET. By Edward Dean Sullivan. Vanguard. \$2.

HERE COMES A SAILOR. By Commander Robert Bachmann. Badger.

Juvenile

DOWN GOOSE CREEK. By WILLIAM SEEMAN. Revell Co. 1932. \$2.50.

This is a ten-year-old boy's own account of a leisurely trip down Goose Creek in a canoe, with pleasant adventures en route, including a night lost in a swamp. Goose Creek is a North Carolina stream and hence the canoeists who launch near the foothills find themselves later in the low country with its cypresses, its trailing moss, and its sub-tropical animals, birds, and vegetation. The story is simply and effectively told, with a good deal of fresh, first-hand information, and, as one would expect, a lot about good campers' foods. There are pictures, too. This is an honest book, a real chronicle, and to be recommended.

THE FLAME. St. Catherine of Siena. By JEANETTE EATON. Harpers. 1931. \$2.50.

This is the second in the series of biographies for girls of which the first one covered the lives of Madame Roland and Jeanne d'Arc. It has the characteristics of its popular predecessors. Catherine of Siena was one of the most attractive of the saints, and she loses none of her charm in Miss Eaton's hands. Written in the modern fictional style of biography, without any religious axe to grind, the book traces the unlettered Italian girl's amazing rise to power and influence in a colorful and sympathetic manner.

Juvenile

CHICKEN TOWN. By GRACE GAWTHORPE. Illustrated by EDNA POTTER. Stokes. 1931. \$1.

Quite a long story all about the Roosters and News of Farmer Hodge's Chicken Yard with illustrations in brown and red for children four and seven years.

THE TWIN LAMBS. By HELEN FULLER ORTON. Illustrated by MARJORIE FLACK. Stokes. 1931. \$1.25.

A country story of two lambs adopted by two children. Suitable for children four to six years, or to seven-year-olds as a supplementary school reader as the type is large and the words easy.

Science

LIFE: OUTLINES OF GENERAL BIOLOGY. By SIR J. ARTHUR THOMSON and PATRICK GEDDES. Harpers. 1931. 2 vols. \$15.00.

Progress in the biological sciences has been so rapid and, in many cases, so profound during the present century that it may well appear to the layman as revolutionary rather than evolutionary. So it is good to pause and envisage the field through the eyes of two veteran biologists who have been sympathetic collaborators in zoology and botany for nearly half a century—Dr. J. Arthur Thomson, Professor of Natural History at Aberdeen, and Dr. Patrick Geddes, late Professor of Botany at St. Andrews and Professor of Sociology and Civics at Bombay. Their new contribution is an endeavor to combine Professor Thomson's genius for putting biological problems in a form at once accurate, interesting, and intelligible to the layman, recalling one facet of the versatile Huxley, with Professor Geddes's breadth of view which extends from botany to civics—the amalgam to be an outline of general biology: Life.

The two large and crowded volumes on Life have, the authors tell us, four main endeavors. In the first place they aim to give an outline survey of biology in all its essential inquiries into the nature, continuance, and evolution of living beings. Next they plan to illustrate in considerable detail the relations between biology and the other sciences—to chemistry and physics on the one hand, to psychology and sociology on the other. And this is to lead naturally and perhaps inevitably to the time-honored, if time-worn, mechanistic and vitalistic doctrines, where the "mechanistic advances, and even formulations" of biochemistry and biophysics are utilized "for all they are worth, and that is much," yet also show the need of complementing these "by no less due utilization of psychologic and neovitalistic viewpoints and doctrines."

Such a stupendous task as the authors have set themselves might well deter all but the most bold. To grant that they have fully succeeded would be to admit the impossible. It is indeed conceding much to say that they have brought together a wealth of material, gleaned from many sources, that is worth amassing between four covers, though without supplying an Ariadne thread to lead the reader through the maze. But perhaps herein the authors show their artistry. After all, the play's the thing—and so they allow individual organisms, including man, to melt in a general picture of the "biodrama." At least it is refreshing to wander desultorily along with these savants as they unfold their view of nature from the fulness of experience.

Travel

LITTLE MEXICO. By WILLIAM SPRATLING. Cape-Ballou. 1932. \$3.50.

There are no cumbersome explanations in Mr. Spratling's book. He seems to write direct from his home in Taxco, where nobody thinks it picturesque that Mexico should be Mexican—nobody but the tourists who stand before the Borda church, watches in hand, and battle bitterly over the problem of starting back for the Ritz at two or at two-thirty. Yet without being insistently introductory he has packed this hour's reading with authentic scenes and persons, as with beguiling sketches. (Not that anyone is capable of drawing Mexican legs.)

"The enduring good humor which is God's gift to the Hot Country" pervades the excursion and may exasperate the

uninitiate, who often confuse it with sentimentality. Others will be refreshed by accompanying Mr. Spratling down the great Balsas and into the Indian privacy of the country beyond the Sierra of Temptation—the still secret regions of Guerrero, where a man from Mexico City is as much a foreigner as one from London, where the Dance of the Tiger is solemnly held and the radio is also heard, where they rent idols and coffins and lend saints. Here are the "little" Mexicans—the real ones. During all of our contemplative, idle sojourn with the artist in Taxco we met only two disappointments, the vagueness of the description of the results of smoking marihuana and the reappearance of that bewhiskered yarn about a cantina named Memories of the Future. The book is dressed in very taking fashion.

Notes of a Rapid Reader

We are glad to learn that a statement made in this column a little while ago that Desmond MacCarthy's excellent *Life and Letters* had been suspended is not correct. It is being continued as a quarterly and a recent number contains a brilliant study of Lytton Strachey by the editor. *** An interesting group of scholarly books is published this week. From the Johns Hopkins Press (\$2) comes Roberta F. Brinkley's *Arthurian Legends in the Seventeenth Century*, in which she shows that the Arthurian literature at that period was written as history rather than as romance and intended in many instances to bolster up the claims of Tudors to the English throne through their presumptive descent from Arthur. *** The Oxford University Press publishes *What Is Beauty?* by E. F. Carrith (\$2), a first introduction to the subject and to modern theories. This is a simple statement of the foundation of esthetics by the author of *The Theory of Beauty*. Mr. Carrith, by and large, is a Crocean. *** The Medieval Academy of America, Cambridge, Mass., adds to its series of publications, *Feudal Monarchy: The Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, 1100-1291* (\$4.50), a series of chapters dealing with the constitutional

development of the Latin kingdom, its administrative machinery, and its political relationships. Particularly interesting is the account of the superimposing of Western feudal methods upon an Oriental base of local law, and the difference between the loose French method of organization in the Near East and the tight and successful Norman organization of Sicily and England. *** G. C. Brooke of the British Museum is the author of a scholarly and comprehensive study of *English Coins: From the Seventh Century to the Present Day*, published by the Dial Press (\$7.50), with a very beautiful series of plates illustrating important coins from the earliest debased copies of Roman coins up to the end of the nineteenth century. *** Readers awake to the new and the excellent will remember Paul Eipper's *Animals Looking At You* with the intimate, humorous, and very interesting accounts of animals in captivity, and extraordinary photographs. *In My Zoo* (Viking, \$2.50) is a sequel with stories of a wider range of animals and even more extraordinary pictures, more alive and often more human than any other photographs of animals which we have ever seen. A book to be very highly recommended to the many who like books of this kind. *** Boomtime Scandal and Brokerage Gossip might be the subtitle of *Confessions of a Former Customer's Man: Being the Inside Story of How Wall Street Separates the Sucker and His Money* (Vanguard Press, \$2), by David L. Salmon as told to Dr. Edwin F. Bowers. It is a rather distressing story of financial parasites and of speculative victims, but more particularly a highly scandalous account of the way in which the public was separated from its money in the jazz years. *** From a different world is Charles Alexander Robinson Jr.'s scholarly attempt to establish the itinerary of Alexander's epochal Indian expedition by checking in elaborate tables the agreements and disagreements of the existing narratives in the attempt to discover their sources. It is a neat example of history arrived at by deduction. The book is entitled *The Ephemerides of Alexander's Expedition* (Brown University).

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DEATH
RATTLE
A NOVEL OF EUROPE 1934

Translated into
Fifteen Languages

BY
HANNS GOBSCH