

The BOWLING GREEN

Notes With a Yellow Pen

VIII. SLACK AWAY

I GOT this narrative as far as S.S. *Malolo*, outward from San Francisco, but I feel uncertain whether it will ever get much farther, so much subject for argument keeps piling up. After lunch I explored the ship and found on the empty top deck an after bridge from which one could get a fine view of her handsome shape. Chadburn's telegraph was there, for use in docking. *Heave Away, Slack Away, Make Fast, Let Go*, were its commands; if one knew when to employ each of these in writing one might come alongside the quay in good order. There was brilliant sunshine along the California coast. Somewhere off there to the left was Monterey, which will always exist for me as the setting of that divine little book, *Amarilis*, by Christine Turner Curtis—published 1927 and now out of print; a masterpiece of tender feeling, as delicate as the colors inside an abalone shell. I think it was the first writing that ever made California real to me; everything else written about that State had been so vigorous, solid, and certain. But *Amarilis* has in it the unextracted square root of minus one. I hope Monterey keeps a few precious copies in circulation. From its very first words you receive that sense of exquisite anxiety so few pens can convey: "There are meridians, moons and moments whose conjunction strikes off a certain heart-melting aroma . . . the salty, wind-scoured plains of Salinas . . . through brown dumpling hills to Monterey." I saw them some weeks later, those smooth hills of the Salinas Valley. Like the haunches of sleeping lionesses, and pink with sunset. And as you drive, despairing to conjure the just word, the roadside poetry of California flicks at the eye. It is serialized on little placards, exactly distanced so that the 50-mile-an-hour motorist will read it comfortably:

WITHIN THIS VALE
OF TOIL AND SIN
YOUR HEAD GROWS BALD
BUT NOT YOUR CHIN—
BURMA SHAVE.

The only other frequenters of the top deck were a man and his dog; the latter a powerful yellow bastard of high intelligence. His master confided to me that life had turned out badly for him and he was on his way to the Islands for a fresh start. The companionship of the pair was charming to see; they loved and understood each other. I was very sorry for the dog when, later in the voyage, his master took to more liquid solace and fell down some stairs. He took to his berth, and one could hear the distant questioning of his lonely friend shut up somewhere below. I was struck by the worth of that dog; he had the strong mongrel mind which is valuable in men also. He was too wise to worry himself (as a lesser animal would have) about the great following of gulls that hovered round the ship, mewing and squawking and sitting on the boats and the rails. One look at them convinced him they were beyond his grab; thereafter he ignored them. For myself, I found the *Malolo* and the gulls a perfect analogy of Shakespeare and his critics—who have followed him down the ages mewing and looking for scraps. You can always find analogies if you're looking for them; and a ship, the most intricately artful of man's contrivances, is happy hunting ground. You'll

see little brass plates in the deck, to be removed for sounding the tanks: so, in Shakespeare's tragedies, you say to yourself, one may sound the deep tanks of human trouble. And the lifeboats, in neat rows, are like the sonnets—many a mind has put off to sea in those cranky craft and never been heard of again. In every shrewd nicety of plumbing, wiring, ventilation, you can please yourself with parable. I used to sit every morning in the writing-room enjoying these notions, which I hope were more than what Hawaii calls *hoomalimali* (viz., flattery or boloney). When a lady sitting at the doctor's table was reported as holding the official title of Supreme Queen of the Nile—some auxiliary of the order of Shriners—Shakespearean parallels were complete.

Yellow dog, yellow hills—perhaps a little yellow in the journalism, too, I thought, when a bold and barren coastline was pointed out as the region where Mr. Hearst has his vast ranch. But among so much strangeness it was reassuring to see that the Pacific has at least a family resemblance to other oceans. Her ships are not exempt from a little rolling now and then. In general comfort, arrangement and spaciousness it seems to me that our Atlantic vessels can learn something from them. Particularly I was pleased by the idea of painting the deckhouses and deck ceilings pale tan and green, which saves the eyes much dazzle. As one who has travelled mostly in British ships it was a special pleasure to find these American liners more than their equal in every respect in which a passenger can judge. And at night, I thought, there seem to be more stars over the Pacific. Then I remembered that since my last Atlantic crossing I have taken to wearing spectacles.

Other people also must have been thinking about Shakespeare when I was in the *Malolo*. I suppose Professor Hotson was putting on paper his glorious discovery (I hope you haven't missed it, in the June *Atlantic*) of the first definite proof of Shakespeare's connection with the Mermaid Tavern. I said once that I almost hoped nothing further would ever be learned about Shakespeare, because it would mean still more footnotes in all the books; but this is exactly the kind of discovery I relish and which we needed. Professor Hotson has convincingly shown that William Johnson, "citizen and vintner of London," who was a co-signer with Shakespeare in the purchase of a house in Blackfriars in 1613, was the actual host and proprietor of the Mermaid Tavern (in Bread Street). So, as Professor Hotson points out, Shakespeare must have known the Mermaid pretty well if he would call on its host "to act as his trustee in a purchase involving some \$5,000 to \$7,000 in our values." The association of Shakespeare with the Mermaid has hitherto rested on tradition only. This William Johnson, born about 1575, was apprenticed as a servant at the Mermaid in 1591, took over the management of the house

about 1603 and seems to have become its owner about 1605. Pleasantest of all is Professor Hotson's discovery that the said Johnson was charged with having illegally sold meat on Fridays (which was Fish Day) for thirty Fridays in succession—and it was the first Friday in every month that Jonson, Donne, Beaumont, and others used to meet at the Mermaid. Shakespeare's humorous dislike of fish dinners appears many times in the plays. Leslie Hotson says, "we cannot down a sense of satisfaction on learning that mine host Johnson took his chances with the enforcement agents of Meat Prohibition." This is the most vivid and congenial Shakespeare trope in a generation. Now won't Professor Hotson dig up something about a previous Mermaid proprietor, Andrew Goodyear, whose name appears on a bill for a Visitation Dinner (1588)? The paper—I think it is the only physical souvenir of the Mermaid premises—belongs to Dr. Rosenbach.

Apropos poets, I was surprised by *Time*'s description (May 29) of Mr. Walter de la Mare. "Broad-shouldered, ruddy-faced, Walter de la Mare looks less like a poet than most poets, more like a sea-captain." *Time* has a way of being a bit brisk in its intimacies; the matter is somewhat irrelevant, but as a friend and admirer of Mr. de la Mare for a number of years I venture that he is not conspicuously broad-shouldered, that he is not ruddy-faced but rather the color of old ivory, and that in the most elvish (and yet resolute) way his outward conforms to what one would expect of a writer of such brooding power. If *Time* is really interested, I have always thought that he looks notably like Charles Lamb.

And that reminds me that the best piece of advertising copy I've seen in a long while, copy with real transmission in it, was the piece on behalf of the Chicago *Daily News* in *Time* of June 5. It shows a picture of a lump of coal alongside a diamond, and begins: "If mere size meant anything, Park Avenue would be hump-backed from wearing lump-coal lavaliers." It was written by Homer McKee, an advertising agent in Chicago: I wish he was doing copy for the *Saturday Review*.

There comes back to my mind a superb comment on the intellectual perils of too much disrespect. Valéry, in his initiation discourse at the French Academy some years ago, said:—

Le plaisir de ne rien respecter est le plus éniyant pour certaines âmes. Un écrivain qui le dispense aux amateurs de son esprit les associe et les ravit à sa lucidité impitoyable, et il les rend avec délice semblables à des dieux, méprisant le bien et le mal.

To this allure a whole decade of young American writers—roughly speaking, 1920-30—easily succumbed. The tendency now seems to be a bit different. But it's worth thinking over.

Representing "the smallest publishing house in the world," viz. Messrs. Henry, Longwell & Another, I attended the first session of the Brentano Sale, when the referee in bankruptcy listened to competing bids for that famous business. Henry,

Longwell & Another's interest in the proceedings was proportionate to their general stature in the book trade; it is a creditor, I believe, in the sum of 67 cents. I was a little disappointed that Mr. Olney, the referee, in opening the affair made no allusion to Literature or to the long and honorable associations of the house of Brentano—which will be well continued under Mr. Kroch, Chicago's brilliant bookseller, in the reorganization. In the Assembly Room of the Merchants Association, in the Woolworth Building, a remarkable group of publishers and booksellers were gathered. What chiefly caught my eye was a booklet which was occasionally referred to at the high table. It was bound in scarlet and waved like a flag of danger in the dim light of the large room. It was the text of the National Bankruptcy Act.

I was very pleased at the referee's decision. The two underbidders looked dangerous for Literature. One wore an enormous diamond ring, and the other chewed gum convulsively.

At this time of year colleges and universities have a sort of intellectual stock-taking. One that interested me specially was Oxford's report on itself for the year 1931-32 recently sent to all graduates. On the lighter side I read:—

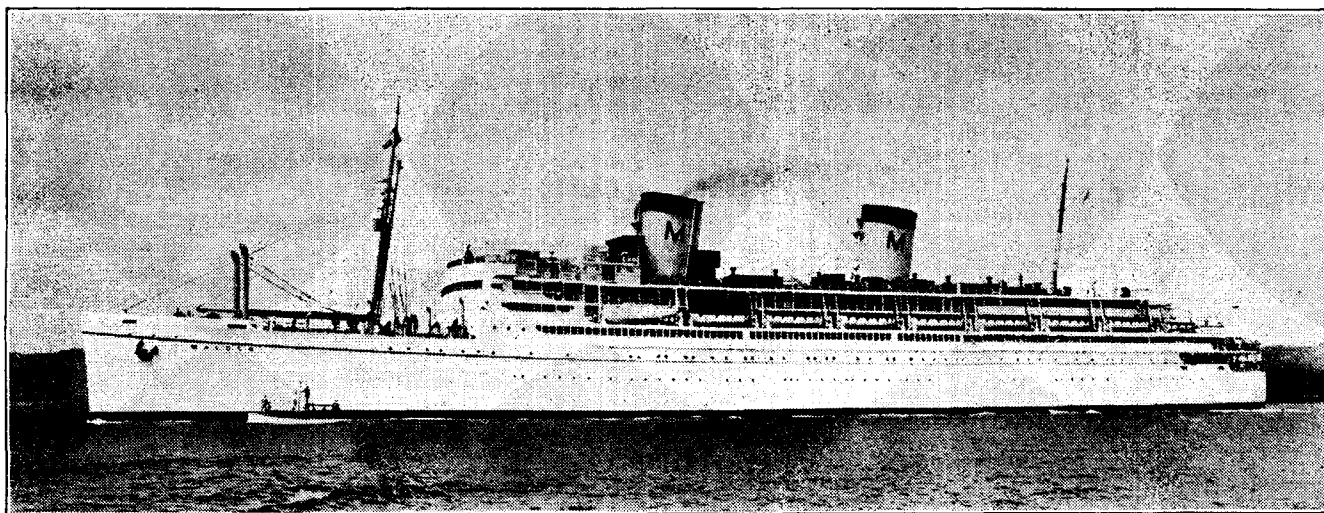
Economic pressure left its mark upon the general life of the undergraduate population—the consumption of beer and spirits fell to about half what it had been the previous year, and the only drink to be found in the normal undergraduate's room was sherry, which since the War has won a place all its own in the life of the junior members of the University. . . . Various reasons for Oxford's decline, none of them valid, were given; the larger number of undergraduates at Cambridge, the admission of women to membership of the University (which were facts but irrelevant), and the prevalence of a perverted æstheticism (which was not a fact). If a cause for our temporary and partial athletic eclipse is to be looked for it must be found rather in the normal swing of the pendulum, and the continued retention of Latin Prose and Latin Unseen (without dictionaries) in Responsions.

And showing how agreeably the world is reticulated in longitudes of coincidence, at this very moment comes a postal card from J. B. and others in Spain showing a ship loading barrels of sherry at Cadiz. J. B. says, "We saw one barrel named Ruskin, whose father was the English agent of the firm."

It was March 4th, an important date, when the *Malolo* tied up at San Pedro, the port of Los Angeles. Other passengers went to spend the day ashore, but I stayed aboard to have a yarn with F. R., who came down from Hollywood where he was working on a moving picture assignment. Distantly we heard a loudspeaker broadcasting the Inauguration from Washington, but we sat peacefully in deck chairs on the deserted promenade discussing our own problems. Captain Wait, *Malolo*'s courteous young commander, was pleased to meet a fellow shipmaster and invited F. R. and myself to lunch with him. Better than the universal Bank Holiday and the political uncertainties I remember we agreed that one of the things the world

needs is an omnibus volume of Cutcliffe Hyne's stories about Captain Kettle. And Felix pointed out on the chart the Revillagigedo Islands, off the coast of Mexico, of which I had not heard. Before the ship sailed that night we even managed, by anonymous diplomacy, a small Anchors Aweigh in *okolehao*, better known as *oke*, that miraculous Hawaiian whiskey which awaits (and deserves) its Robert Burns.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.



S.S. MALOLO—"Flying Fish" (Courtesy Matson Line)

John Bull's Island

ENGLAND, THEIR ENGLAND. By A. G. MACDONELL. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1933. \$2.

Reviewed by GEORGE DANGERFIELD

THIS is a satirical novel. It is the story of a Scotsman who is asked by a Welsh publisher to write a book about England, and of his experiences in search of copy. It is one of the best studies of English life that I have read in a long while. It is not that the book is accurate, for it is not; nor that it reaches into every branch of its subject, for it does not—indeed it omits a great deal more than it states. Its satire is often on the edge of burlesque, its humor is sometimes forced. Its allegiances are obvious, its prejudices conventional. Yet it contains what few books of its kind contain, and that is the essential truth.

And so we might just as well forget the many things which Mr. MacDonell has not chosen to mention for the few things which he has. He is a Scotsman himself, presumably, but a Scotsman with inside knowledge (the internal evidence suggests an education at Winchester); and his book has a real coherence and, therefore, a real value because he subjects his hero only to those experiences of which he himself has a full knowledge, or which have amused or disgusted him; because he is often hilariously funny; and because, above all, he has the courage and the assurance to stick to a single interpretation through thick and thin.

The English, he says, are at heart a kindly and poetical people. This is true, if you are quite sure what you mean when you say it, and Mr. MacDonell is. In order to bring those very obscure but essential qualities to the light, he has to indulge in certain necessary exaggerations. He shows us first some of the unkindly and unpoetical aspects of Englishmen, and then the grave and gentle country which gave them life; so that, by the end of the book, one realizes that even in the new-fangled England which our author despises and dislikes there is still some uncorrupted element of the old. If the concluding chapters of his story seem sentimental to a degree, one has only to remember "Cavalcade" or cast one's thought over English literature from the thirteenth century lyric onward to see that sentimentalism, whether one likes it or not, is a permanent value in English writing and English living.

Donald Cameron, in his search for material, visits a week-end party, takes part in a cricket match, plays two rounds of *de luxe* golf, sees a professional soccer match and the "Varsity Rugby game, helps in a by-election, and so on: and, in the post-war life thus opened to him—foolish, vulgar, ill-mannered, and eccentric as it is—perceives as through a glass darkly some traces of the poet in Englishmen, the poet whom ninety-nine per cent of them would flatly repudiate.

And then, meeting a Yorkshire mechanic on a Polish freighter bound for Kiel, he is suddenly confronted with an older tradition. From this point until the end, the book takes on a new dignity and a new strength, and the satirist becomes a quiet and affectionate writer. Inevitably, perhaps. For MacDonell is aiming his shafts at a whole country, and not at a caste or a clique or a creed or a court; and so there is an irreconcilable *odi et amo* in the heart of his argument, and the *amo* wins—as indeed, with most British writers on England, it always must.

His description of Donald's experiences in a Buckinghamshire village may seem too lush to anyone who has not lived in Buckinghamshire; and in his last chapter, where his hero has a vision beyond the playing fields at Winchester College, he lays himself open to all sorts of sophisticated laughter. Yet it is these things which finally persuade me of the value and the truth of his book; that he is an *assured* writer, following—without arrogance or servility—in a sufficient tradition.

Tales of Mean Streets

VENETIAN BLINDS. By ETHEL MANNIN. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1933. \$2.50.

Reviewed by H. L. PANGBORN

THE necessity for earning a living engulfing the creative impulse, . . . the rising tide of sex swamping all other interests . . . getting on, and shelving your dreams as you went, ceasing to ask very much of life,—the tragedy of frustration is the theme of this admirably done study of life among the unprivileged in this twentieth century; frustrations caused by pov-

erty, ignorance, traditional stupidities, the sorry scheme of things in a badly arranged world. In large part, these are "tales of mean streets," but the book derives less from Arthur Morrison than from H. G. Wells (the pre-war Wells), though, where Wells was angry, demanding that something be done about it, and eager in pointing a way out of the mess, Ethel Mannin is pityingly contemplative, accurately and sympathetically descriptive, and not at all sure that there is any way out. As an indictment of the stupidities and wrongness of the social organism it is more powerful than any denunciation: it is a statement of the case.

But it is a warmly human book; admirable in its detailed, colorful delineation of a number of authentic human beings, in wide variety, shown against a richly drawn background. In construction it is also excellent; orderly in organic development, well proportioned in episodes, and, although very long, carried through firmly, with no weak spots, to the end.

The story is the life history of Stephen Pendrick and his family from the beginning of the century to the present; his rise from "respectable" poverty to the attainment of a semi-detached villa existence in a London suburb and a moderately comfortable income. As a boy, Stephen had dreams; he wanted to be a gardener, a creator of beauty. And he had ideals. But these are sacrificed to the savage god of "respectability." He "rises" not from ambition but under the brute force of circumstances, driving him against his desires and against his will along traditional lines. His father, mother, his sister, Elsie, his wife, Alice, and Mabel, the prim woman who comes near to marrying him, are all full-length portraits.

New and Old Russia

THE NEW COMMANDMENT. Translated from the Russian of Panteleimon Romanof by VALENTINE SNOW. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1933. \$2.

THIS latest novel by the author of "Three Pairs of Silk Stockings" is a contrast between new and old in Russia in the form of a study of the love between Sergei, a "new" man of peasant origin, and Ludmilla, whose psychology is supposed to represent an inheritance from the old régime.

Sergei, energetic, capable, forward-looking, had outgrown his native village and his simple-minded, cowlike wife, left both of them, and become one of those hard-fisted, healthy, socially-minded young fellows who wear a leather coat, carry a brief-case, and help to make the wheels go round in Moscow. He had taught himself and improved his vocabulary and accent by watching others and much reading until he was thoroughly respectable even from a "bourgeois" point of view. As a matter of fact, Sergei doesn't differ, in essentials, from innumerable self-made "second generation" young Americans, but we needn't go into that.

Ludmilla, not precisely of the former upper class, but as the daughter of a supervisor of the estates of a once rich Moscow family, who had received the same education as the daughters of the owner, for all practical purposes as much a "bourgeois" as any of them, fell in love with the young man as they met in the same office. Sergei was flattered, intrigued, at last enchanted. Here was all that delicacy, physical and spiritual, which he had never experienced, which went to his head like strange wine. Moreover, when they finally came to know each other intimately, Ludmilla loved with a self-abandon of which he had scarcely even dreamed.

For a time both were blissful. Then it gradually began to be apparent to Sergei that he was called on to pay a price which was more than he could afford to pay. This woman, so ready to sacrifice herself wholly to him, demanded an equal sacrifice in return. She wanted him to shut out the world and live only for their love.

Have such things not been heard of before, in countries far from Russia and revolution, and been duly set down in various novels, long, long before the collapse of the old Russian order? O yes, indeed—the more things change, the more they are the same things, as the old saying goes, but this particular case happens to be in contemporary Russia, and the study of the course of Sergei's and Ludmilla's love and disillusionment, as such, is well and sympathetically done.

The house at Gravesend, said to have given Dickens the idea of Peggotty's home at Yarmouth, is to be demolished.

To the Editor:—

Letters are welcomed, but those discussing reviews will be favored for publication if limited to 200 words.

Tannic and Tonic

Sir: Leonard Bacon, in a review of C. E. M. Joad's autobiographical "Under the Fifth Rib," has surpassed himself at being both tannic and tonic. For all I know, he may be right in placing Joad (who has been called "Joad, the Obscure") in the category of those "who have discovered how to live in what they call the great world of ideas on nothing a year." But you, as editor of *The Saturday Review*, surely did Mr. Bacon a disservice in printing that picture of Joad along with the review. Any man who takes a picture as animated, as good-humored, as handsome, as that loaned to you by Miss Howard could not be less than omniscient. Surely that is the photograph of a demi-god. George Meredith took a handsome picture. But compared to Meredith, Joad is as Apollo to Thersites.

NICHOLAS HAY.

Branford, Conn.

The Road to Empire

Sir: Theodore Maynard, in his "Preface to Poetry," calls Oscar Wilde's "Ave Imperatrix" insincere. The first surmise of "Ave Imperatrix" is a Kiplingesque summary of England's world wandering with such flashes as the "gilded garden of the sun," "Gray Pillar of the Indian Sky," and "Pathan's reedy fen." The first part is an examination of the relics of Britain's imperialism of the nineteenth century and a prelude to the present pacifism:

Some tarnished epaulet—
Some sword—
Poor toys to sooth
Such anguished pain. . . .
England! must thou yield
For every inch of ground
A son? . . .

The second part asks where is the glory of this "net of gold around the world" if at home remains "that care that never groweth old." Wilde closes the poem very much as Noel Coward does "Cavalcade":

Though childless,
And with thorn-crowned head,
Up the steep road
Must England go, . . .

and Mr. Coward:

Let's drink to the spirit of gallantry
and courage that made a strange Heaven
out of unbelievable Hell. . . .

FRANK LESLIE LOGAN.

Bismarck, Mo.

Davy Crockett's Letters

Sir: I am seeking certain letters written by David Crockett from Arkansas, Louisiana, or Texas in 1835-6, referring to one Harrington or Greene. Hough mentions this correspondence in "The Way to the West." I am hoping that the owner of the letters may give me the privilege of seeing them in transcript or photostat for use in a book on Crockett, now nearly completed, to be published by Harcourt, Brace and Company.

CONSTANCE ROURKE.

Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Cue Ball

Sir: Unless he has used his "Dine at the Oriental" sign for firewood—nights are still cool "on the beach"—and walked to more celestial pastures, a chat with "Cue Ball" Hennessy would interest you. For Cue Ball is a signboard sandwich man with literary ambitions. He even reads the newspapers before he sleeps on them. His specialties are "Letters to the Editor" and, by his own confession, verse. If I knew where his next leading article was to appear, I could tip you off; but not even Cue Ball knows what his next name is to be.

But his verse; he gave me two:

Bored are the kind of people who never
know when to go.
Caustics are another type who up and
tell them so.

Oh thou full moon, I envy you
As you gloat above my head,
I envy you with all my heart,
Would I were full instead.

You can see Cue Ball almost any time either patrolling down Ann Street, or reading the commemorative tablets along William Street. Yesterday he was studying the plaque noting the offices of Edgar Allen Poe on Fulton Street, so next week

he may be absorbing the "Golden Hill Tablet."

Cue Ball can be identified a block away. It's an Oriental Restaurant he's promoting, so he's garbed in a twentieth century New York style mandarin outfit even to a black skull cap and red tassel. He is tall and shallow enough to make a good sandwich man. The sign hangs down on him almost perpendicularly which, sign experts say, is more pleasing than a "gabled effect" such as Heywood Brown would have.

JEFF MILLER.

New York City.

Burbank Spinach

Sir: I was very much interested in the picture of California kale, reproduced from the photographs of Edward Weston, with which Christopher Morley adorned his Bowling Green page of *The Saturday Review* for June 3. Esthetically, it left nothing to be desired. But have you tasted kale! As the little girl said in *The New Yorker* picture, "I say it's spinach, and I say the Hell with it." But perhaps Mr. Morley was not thinking of the taste or the food value of kale. He is, of course, a notorious punster. He writes of a "sense of hollowness in my financial stomach" in an adjoining column as the bank holiday overtakes San Francisco. Could he mean to imply—no, he couldn't!—that Californians substituted kale for money? Give me stamp scrip any day.

JOHN BONBRIGHT.

New Rochelle, N. Y.

But Modernity Began with Bacon

Sir: Jules Romains, whose panoramic novel of Paris, "Men of Good Will," is to extend through many volumes, may pride himself on his modernity, but I wonder just how a reading of Tucker Brooke's essay on Edmund Spenser, which appeared next to the review of the Romains work in your issue for June 3, will affect him? Modern life, so Romains says, is too diverse, too complex, to allow of adequate representation through writing novels about one person or one family. This may very well be the truth, but it is rather curious that Tucker Brooke finds in Spenser's "Fairy Queen" a structure which is precisely that of "Men of Good Will." "Here," says Professor Brooke of "The Fairy Queen," "we have in truth the ideal novel, the picture of life as it is . . . and without a hero or a heroine . . . in each book a different knight is treated, and in the other three a central figure hardly exists. . . ." In other words, the technique of Romains, of John Dos Passos and Leane Zugsmith in America, of Huxley's "Point Counter Point," is at least as old as Edmund Spenser. Modern fellows, those Elizabethans.

MAX GONFALON.

Union City, N. J.

Sleepy Time Gal

Sir: Next to being tester in a mattress factory I'd like to be the fellow who does the preparation for the Criminal Record—hence

The Professor's Dream
A very tired French professor
Said to me, his chief confessor,
"Had I my choice when I retire,
Before I mount the funeral pyre,
Of jobs to cheer my waning days,
I'd satisfy a lifelong craze
And live in good old New York City:
There you'd find me, sitting pretty,
Gay new novels scattered round
On my desk and on the ground.
Every hour you'd find me 'working,'
Never there accused of shirking.
I would make the pace be steady
Till I'd 'The Criminal Record' ready!"

KAY MACKINNON.

London, Canada.

[Editor's note: Try it once and see how easy it is.]

Galsworthy Letters

Sir: I have been entrusted with the official Life of the late John Galsworthy and should be grateful for the publicity of your columns to say how much I should appreciate communications therefor from any quarter—whether in the way of personal reminiscences and anecdotes (which should be sent direct to me), or in the way of original letters (which should be sent to Maxwell E. Perkins, Charles Scribner's Sons, 597 Fifth Avenue, New York). Any letters so sent will be copied in New York under the supervision of Mr. Perkins.

H. V. MARROT.

The Oaks, 59 Park Side,
Wimbledon, London S.W. 19.