

The P.E.N. Club Conference

By HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

THE Annual Congress of the International P.E.N. Clubs, meeting on May 25-28 at Dubrovnik (Ragusa) in Yugoslavia, was a lesson in what may be expected of international gatherings in the troublous year of 1933. The P.E.N. Clubs have fifty-four "centres" in forty nations of Europe, North and South America, with a beginning (unrepresented this time) in Asia. Some 400 official delegates and members were present, a polyglot group drawn from the writing professions of the world, with novelists, journalists, and poets best represented. Jules Romains was there from France, H. G. Wells, as president, from England, Ernst Toller from among the exiled Germans, and an especially strong group of poets, novelists, and journalists from the Danubian countries. The Argentine was ably represented, Holland had a large and, as it proved somewhat agonized delegation; Scotland, which is to have the Conference next year, was led by Edwin Muir; Felix Salten was chairman of the Austrians. "P.E.N." (it may be noted parenthetically) signifies "poets, editors, and novelists."

The United States, that whirlpool into which all translatable books are finally drawn, was represented, I regret to say, only by myself; but thanks to the acumen of our New York Executive Committee, and especially Will Irwin, Robert Nathan, and Alfred Dashiell, I was able to present a Resolution which kept the Conference from being one more disaster on the rocks of Chauvinism.

The sole issue before the Conference, indeed, was the question of Chauvinism vs. internationalism in literature, forced upon the Congress by events and by the delegation from the Berlin P.E.N. Club.

This delegation had been "harmonized" by order of Hitler. Members of the German P.E.N., whose races or opinion did not conform to the Nazi principles, had been ordered dropped. With one exception, Herr Elster, the secretary, no one of the Germans present had ever appeared at a P.E.N. Club Congress, and the really distinguished members of that organization—Heinrich and Thomas Mann, Feuchtwanger, Remarque, Zweig, Hauptmann—were all silenced, or in exile and absent.

The question which immediately confronted the Congress was this—could one of the centres of an organization formed to promote international amity and to uphold the principle that art knows no boundary lines or racial prejudice, expel its members for being Jews or liberals, and allow without protest the burning of all "non-Aryan" books and the exile or disciplining of writers whose art was not propaganda for the state.

In a closely packed opera house, in a tense atmosphere, the debate began. Wells, from long experience with Fabian tactics was an able manager. The French, the Poles, and the Belgians, although they had no plan ready, had come prepared to force an accounting from the Germans. The Austrians, the Dutch, and the Swiss were desirous of keeping the Congress out of politics, which meant letting the Germans escape with generalities. The Germans had been ordered (and were, according to credible report, re-ordered hourly by telephone from Berlin) to accept without protest a general resolution, but allow no discussion which would give the opponents of German handling of German writers in the past few months a chance to get on the record.

The first morning was enlivened by one of those Parliamentary riots with which Americans who have attended a session of the French chamber of deputies may be familiar. The chairman, Mr. Wells, had chosen, from the numerous resolutions submitted, the American motion for submission to the Congress. As adopted unanimously it ran (after a preamble):

We, the members of the American Center of the P. E. N. Club, call upon all other centers to affirm once more those principles upon which the structure of this society was raised and call particular attention to those resolutions presented by the English, French, German, and Belgian delegates at the Fifth International Congress of P. E. N. Clubs in Brussels in 1927 and passed there unanimously:

1. Literature, national though it be in origin, knows no frontiers, and should remain common currency between nations in spite of political or international upheavals.
2. In all circumstances, and particularly in time of war, works of art, the

patrimony of humanity at large, should be left untouched by national or political passion.

3. Members of the P. E. N. will at all times use what influence they have in favor of good understanding and mutual respect between the nations. We likewise call upon the international Congress to take definite steps to prevent the individual centers of the P. E. N., founded for the purpose of fostering goodwill and understanding between races and nations, from being used as weapons of propaganda in the defence of persecutions inflicted in the name of nationalism, racial prejudice, and political ill will.

It will be noted that this resolution is a mandate upon the Executive Committee to expel all member centres who do not conform to the principles of the Club.

It was a gratification to national pride that this resolution was the only action, only principle, brought before the Conference which commanded general approval. Unfortunately the French-Polish-Belgian bloc was determined that another resolution, this time of direct protest against the German Inquisition, should be debated at the same time. They were allowed to present their resolution as part of the discussion. The American Resolution was then carried unanimously as the principle of action to be adopted by the Congress, and the French bloc and the German group were sent out of meeting to agree, if possible, upon a form of protest which could be passed without driving the Germans from the Congress.

So much, so far, was on the surface, but the Congress was seething with an agitation that went much deeper than resolutions. Sholom Asch, the great Yiddish writer, was in the midst of them, quivering with emotion. And from among the exiled Germans, Ernst Toller, the dramatist, well known in New York, a radical who belongs to no party, a playwright of power, a man who has spent seven years in prison, and on whom the German tyrannies had inflicted intolerable wounds, was waiting to speak.

The joint committee returned with a somewhat softened resolution (which was later adopted) protesting the burning of the books and the German injustices to art, but with a provision that the German delegation, while they would not vote for it, would not oppose it, provided there was no discussion of the resolution to be allowed; provided, in other words, that Sholom Asch and Toller should not be allowed to speak. It looked like a triumph for conciliation. Actually the Germans had blocked the French, the Poles and the Belgians, and got precisely what they wanted, a cork in the mouth of dangerous speech.

The Congress also was for the moment blocked,—until H. G., in that squeaky Cockney French of his, his thin voice surmounting a storm, announced that discussion would not be shut off while he remained in the chair and the presidency, that Toller, even if the German P.E.N. had expelled him, should speak, and could speak at the request of the President, in behalf of the long list of German writers and scholars in jail or in exile. Such a verbal riot followed as no Anglo-Saxon country can provide.

It was from one point of view a magnificent comedy, yet of deep significance. For the immediate consequence was a heart-rending appeal from Sholom Asch, now given his tongue, followed by a defense of spiritual liberty from Ernst Toller, a deep-eyed man, humorous, but with fire burning in him of an eloquence and a passion that swept the Congress, and apparently in its press reports all Eastern Europe. On the trip through Serbia which some sixty of us took afterwards, it was everywhere "Toller, Toller!" The young people from the universities mobbed the train and carried him on their shoulders. The opera in Belgrade had to stop, the session at the university where with perfect courtesy I with five other official delegates were cheered as we spoke, broke up at the end into a wild tumult calling for Toller. And this in a rigid dictatorship!

In short, this Congress accomplished three things. It passed a general resolution asserting the principle of a reasonable freedom for art and deep opposition to Chauvinistic tyranny, with a rigorous provision that after time for reformation had been granted, the P.E.N. Clubs should be purged—and not only of German Chauvinism. Thereby it secured its own perpetuation as an organization which for

(Continued on page 670)

To the Editor:—

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

Rube Goldberg Reading

Sir: The letter from Merlin N. Hanson advocating uncut pages, seems to me naive to the point of absurdity. Why not use invisible ink? Why not encase the book in a carton sealed and locked with ball and chain? Why not make the opening and the reading and enjoyment of a book a task for a Houdini?

Books are meant to be read, not to be grappled with.

M. LINCOLN SCHUSTER.

New York City.

A Mathematical Flea Hunt

Sir: A. E. Housman's lecture on "The Name and Nature of Poetry" contains many good bits which the periodicals will be reprinting for weeks to come. His utterances have been so few that I feel certain that your readers will be glad to see the following sentences from an address before the British Classical Association in 1921. "A textual critic engaged upon his business is not at all like Newton investigating the motions of the planets: he is much more like a dog hunting for fleas. If a dog hunted for fleas on mathematical principles, basing his researches on statistics of area and population, he would never catch a flea except by accident. They require to be treated as individuals; and every problem which presents itself to the textual critic must be regarded as possibly unique."

The title of the paper was "The Application of Thought to Textual Criticism."

CLARENCE STRATTON.

Cleveland, Ohio.

Hard To Refute

Sir: Mr. Yarros's reproach of *The Saturday Review* for past editorial gloom is good reading, especially because, to put it glibly, the editorials in question are harder to refute than to affirm. Mr. Yarros is owed a debt; but only, I think, because his contentions would be very pleasant if they were true. Mr. Yarros says that a writer may (and perhaps that was a word well chosen!) do first-rate work provided he possesses discipline and talent; he adds that no particular religious or high ethical principle underlies the best literature, good character creation has nothing to do with beliefs (which he confesses have been shattered), life is now as rich as ever, and justice and humanity will always serve (others failing?) as guiding principles. Now Mr. Yarros's admission about beliefs deprives of reason his remaining thoughts. For, psychologically, any learned verbal response amounts to belief, and learning is the consequence of the discipline (inhibition) and the talent (the special ability to be disciplined) of which he speaks; and, since anything a man writes is composed totally of his beliefs, if his beliefs appear to be disordered and inconsistent and inconstant it is evident that his mental life has been thoroughly disrupted. Discipline has failed, life is not rich for him, he cannot describe justice and humanity: all of his expression will bear the scars of uncertainty.

G. J. WYCKOFF.

Mountain Lakes, N. J.

More About Cue Ball

Sir: This is another installment about "Cue Ball" Hennessey, the signboard sandwich man with literary ambitions. Don't be surprised if you see the signboard advertising an oriental restaurant parked without Cue Ball under it. He may be down in Theatre Alley where the shades of Washington Irving are guiding him to the arms of Morpheus; or as near to Morpheus as one can get in a barrel. If, however, from his vantage point he sees you make a purchase from one of the downtown open shelved book-stalls he may approach you, asking, "What book did you buy?"

That's the opening he made with me. No, I wasn't surprised. I had just purchased "Strictly Business," and after reading O. Henry are you startled at anything?

"Strictly Business?" he asked. "I've read it; but say what could he do with such a title nowadays?"

"You see," he continued (this was our first meeting, too), "I'm sort of on a commission proposition. They give me these

tickets to pass you and if people don't return so many to the cashier—why I'll be discharged. Say, where do you eat?"

Cue Ball reached over to his parked sign, and took one of the little cards which were stuck at handy angles. That's one of his "secrets of success." He doesn't stand and hold the cards appealingly; nor does he belligerently thrust them like pledge cards into hurrying insurance brokers' hands. He lets the public come to him. For most people when they see the sign unguarded will snatch a card. "Maybe," suggested Cue Ball, "they think they're getting away with something."

What's in his name? Just a tattoo mark—a big black ball with the letters "Que." On close inspection it looks like the ball had been patterned over a heart; and the "Que" drawn from "Sue."

But the story would come too high; for he swallows hard and talks rapidly if you ask him more.

JEFF MILLER.

New York City.

Railroad Man's Bible

Sir: On Page 98 of *Human Being* Christopher Morley refers to the Official Guide of the Railways as being "known as 'Bullinger.'" This is not correct. The Official Guide and "Bullinger" or Bullinger's Guide are two separate and distinct publications. Bullinger's Monitor Guide, formerly "The Counting-House Monitor," is devoted primarily to local information, that is, Railroad Time Tables and schedules of other transportation lines into and out of New York City. It was established in 1869 and was published for many years by E. W. Bullinger, a capable compiler and publisher, an esteemed contemporary, and a delightful character generally. "Bullinger's" is in loose leaf form, a new supplement issued each week. It is still published regularly.

The Official Guide, which contains the matter described in Chapter XIV of "Human Being," is published by us and is known as the "Railroad Man's Bible": it was first issued in May, 1868, and has been published as a monthly periodical continuously since that date. Incidentally, I might say that Mr. Morley's reaction to the information contained in the Official Guide is exceedingly interesting. It brings out many phases which have escaped us who no doubt have been too close to the picture.

A. J. BURNS.

New York City.

Gentle Master De Vere

Sir: Tucker Brooke's "Gentle Master Spenser" in your issue for June 3 is fairly interesting. According to *Time* the Professor is Yale's leading "Marlovian." For all his newspaper praise, he does not seem to know that "Edmund Spenser" was a pen-name of Edward De Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. Or that the alleged inscription to Elizabeth Boyle—Sonnet No. I of Amoretti, which Dr. A. W. S. Rosenbach states was inscribed by Spenser to Elizabeth Boyle—is a rank fake. This is demonstrated by Elizabethan acrostic reading. The Sonnet was written by Edward De Vere for Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke. I can demonstrate it for skeptics. Acrostics were part of an Elizabethan writer's work. In everything he wrote—poems, plays, and stories—the Elizabethan wove the names of friend, or foe, and always his own. Because they do not understand, professors of English literature are slow to take up the study. They will in time. The Bodleian Library is interested.

Until we deciphered the Rosetta Stone, the Egyptian hieroglyphics were blank. Until we study the Elizabethan acrostics, the Elizabethan literature will be blank to college professors. A closed mind is a terrible handicap in the search for truth.

GEORGE FRISBEE.

San Francisco, Cal.

John Cowper Powys

Sir: I have been for the past four months engaged in the compilation of a bibliography and check-list of the first editions of John Cowper Powys. As this work is nearing completion, and before sending it to the printers, I should like to get in touch first with any one who may have or know of any material relating to Powys that may not yet have come to my attention.

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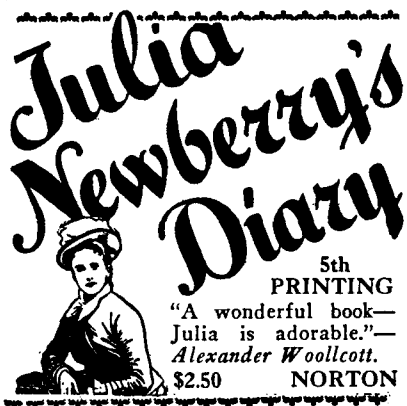
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The Reader's Guide

Conducted by MAY LAMBERTON BECKER

Inquiries in regard to the choice of books should be addressed to Mrs. BECKER, c/o *The Saturday Review*. As for reasons of space ninety percent of the inquiries cannot be answered in print, a stamped and addressed envelope should be enclosed for reply.

LETTERS continue to arrive with news of dolls and puppets: meanwhile a robust and practical book about the latter, "Be a Puppet Showman," by Remo Bufano, has been published by the Century Company and has taken my affections by storm. For I caught marionette fever—along with several community colds—a good while ago in those crowded little ground-floor theatres on the East Side of New York where you could be sure of at least three whacking good battles, a princess or two with large eyes and long hair, and (if you were lucky) perhaps a necromancer in action with red fire. Remo Bufano's art springs from this ancient and vital tradition, however modern it now is. Mrs. K. N. Rosen, 410 Riverside Drive, N. Y., who specializes in Russian picture-books, sent me a tantalizing list dealing with toys and dolls. The former have inspiring titles, like "We'll Make Them Ourselves: Toys Made of Pine-Cones" (Moscow, 1927), "Toys Made from Potatoes" (State Editions, 1931), and other creative enterprises. Mrs. Rosen's list, which she sent me to forward to the original inquirer, arranges doll and puppet books by countries, the Germans having an amazing number. Collectors should add to the English books "The Book of the Queen's Dolls' House," 2 vols.: vol. 1, "The Queen's Dolls' House," vol. 2, "The Queen's Dolls' House Library," a limited edition with innumerable illustrations, some in colors, published by Methuen in 1924. The second volume has sketches and poems written expressly for this little library by some of the most famous English authors. "Toys and Toy-makers," by James Tippet (Harper), should certainly be added to the American list; I unhappily overlooked it. Other entries are A. C. Ellis and G. Stanley Hall's "Study of Dolls" (Pedagogical Seminary, bd. 4, Worcester, Mass., 1896-97), "Dolls of the Tusayan Indians" in the International Archives of Ethnography, vol. 7, 1894, and Philip Kester's "On Dolls" in the *International Studio*, 1923.

Reports continue of doll collections in museums and public libraries, where they seem everywhere popular. Miss Julia Douglas, of the Evergreen Public Library, Colorado, writes that "this library has something more than one hundred seventy, all gifts, as the library lives on nothing certain a year"—this year nothing, more than certain. No salaries, perhaps fortunately just now.

The collection of American Indian dolls, including Alaskan, is small but very good: mostly Southwestern though there are excellent examples of Iroquois cornhusk dolls. Europe and the Orient have a share as well as our mothers and grandmothers; far too few of these last. To the great entertainment of the children, Little Black Sambo is strutting away from the tigers in his recovered finery. Mary Queen of Scots is the prize, made from a portrait by a London doll artist who never duplicates. I brought the doll idea from Newark, when much against my will, I left the library there to try the effect of Colorado's climate on an eastern throat. Three other collections in as many states have been started through seeing this, and of course it all goes back to Newark which makes me glad indeed.

Mrs. Watson, the children's librarian in Denver, has a good collection in the children's room. She was able to get the friendship doll sent from Japan to Colorado, and just imagine my feelings when I see it, even though the Evergreen library can't spare room for the gorgeous creature. Occasionally Mrs. Watson and I exchange treasures for a time, and even from Montclair (N. J.) there came a friendly loan with one from here in return. The library has several of the doll stories you mentioned, as well "Peeps at the World's Dolls."

And L. K., New York City, says:

In Paul McPharlin's "A Repertory of Marionette Plays" (Viking Press) he has an interesting note on miniature theatres with cardboard actors (beginning p. 19, notes preceding "The Scourge of the Gulph" by Jack B. Yeats). Here he mentions two publishers in London who still sell penny cut-out theatres. He also mentions with considerable glee a theatre of this sort he bought in Flatbush when a small boy.

L. K. has been a teacher, whose pupils put on a number of delightful marionette plays that they themselves wrote, "The Boston Sea Party" and "The Friar and the Boy" among them. A good book for prac-

tice in such adaptations is "Puppet Shows for Home and School," by Maude Owens Walters (Dodd, Mead), which is simple and uses ready-made toys as well as regular puppets.

J. G., Independence, Kansas, is haunted by the last line of an old book, "one of those things girls used to read over and over in the dreamy teens," and runs as follows: "And so, making new friends and keeping the old, we leave them." It is not

an Alcott book, and J. G. would be happy to find once more what it is. The same inquirer recommends as a novel quite as exciting and closer to the facts than "Cimarron," the 1920 novel "Free Soil," by Margaret Lynn, called by Howells the best novel of its period. N. M., La Salle, Col., interested in recent books concerning Mark Twain, may add to the list here lately provided "Mark Twain the Letter Writer," a collection of letters by him dating from 1868 to 1910, interspersed with anecdotes by some of those who knew him and edited by Cyril Clemens. (Meador Press). R. A. S., New York, adds to the list on jobs the information that the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* from January 10 to 22, 1933, contained answers to the question "How I beat the depression," from which the inquirer on one-man businesses might get useful suggestions.

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