

## The AMEN CORNER

"I tell you, my lord fool, out of this nettle, danger, we pluck this flower, safety."

Such is the keynote of what the Oxonian considers a very striking volume of poems by a hitherto unknown young English poet which the Oxford University Press brought out not long ago—*The Nettle and the Flower and Other Poems*, by Kenneth Muir. Muir (who was born in London of a Scottish family said to be descended from the Duncan who was murdered by Macbeth) was up at Oxford at the same time as the now famous "new signatures," W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender, Cecil Day Lewis, but he never met them. But he did meet the present Poet Laureate, John Masefield, and acted for him in *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Ghost of Abel*, by William Blake.<sup>1</sup>

A critic in the *St. Paul Daily News* writes: "Kenneth Muir is a new name . . . and it is, I feel sure, the name of a young man of great poetic talent; it may be genius . . . much to attract and stimulate and admire . . . the young poet is fortunate in his publishers and the lovely format they have given his work. The heavy vellum cover with its attractive design, the honest, full-bodied paper, and the craftsmanlike typography, set skillfully on a well-filled page, neither crowded nor padded—all is adequate, satisfying to a lover of formal beauty. . . . Mr. Muir's interest in metrical and stanzaic craftsmanship is evident from first to last. . . . But I do him wrong by dwelling first on formal qualities. This little volume is produced by a fusion of poet and philosopher, feeler and thinker, such as in English has never been long silent. . . ." And Mr. William Rose Benét lately remarked in an adjoining column of this Review that Muir "succeeds in convincing me that he is a young man to watch . . . refreshingly new . . . he seems to be working through rhythmic experiments toward something new in form."

It was Mr. Benét who also said of another volume of new poems from the Oxford Press—*Transvaluations*, by J. Redwood Anderson,<sup>2</sup> that "the man's quality immediately becomes apparent. . . . his is a book for the discriminating."

Another interesting new volume just published is *The Wilderness, and Select Short Poems*, by F. Buchanan.<sup>3</sup>

And then there is *The Modern Muse*,<sup>4</sup> a new anthology which should be the standard anthology of modern verse by contemporary writers in English throughout the world. It includes poets of England, the United States, and all the British Colonies and Dominions—and, of course, the Irish Free State.

THE OXONIAN.

OUR BOOK-OF-THE-MONTH: *The Nettle and the Flower*, by Kenneth Muir. \$2.00.

(<sup>1</sup>) 114 Fifth Avenue. (<sup>2</sup>) The Oxford Shakespeare in 1 vol., \$2.00. (<sup>3</sup>) Blake's Poetical Works in the Oxford Standard Authors, \$1.50. Write for a list of the series. (<sup>4</sup>) \$2.50. (<sup>5</sup>) \$1.50. (<sup>6</sup>) \$2.00.

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## Trade Winds

By P. E. G. QUERCUS

THE BOOKSELLERS' CONVENTION

Breaking swift into a blaze of cocktails and book-gab the two day convention of the American Booksellers' Association opened Sunday, April 29, at the Hotel Montclair, New York City. The repeal of prohibition and the passage of the retail book code brought together the largest gay and happy flock of tome-peddlers since the halcyon days of 1929. Still shocked by the realization that books published within six months, must only be sold at regular publishers' prices, the booksellers dashed about in dazed fashion asking each other whether these facts are true. This convention, too, establishes a record in the fact that none of the members came to the meeting with a grievance. The speeches were short, pungent, and to the point, giving visiting members sufficient time to greet old friends and to meet new ones. Members came from as far west as Dallas, Texas.

The main purpose was to discuss the code, but the convention got away to a good start at a cocktail party Sunday afternoon. The Quercus associates observed the convention in relays, which accounts for the mixture of styles in our report.

First highlight: the attendance was not only large, but it included important booksellers who hadn't been present at the last few years' conventions, like J. M. DeWolfe of DeWolfe, Fiske, Boston. Among many others in evidence: Marcella Burns Hahner of Chicago, Charlie Jackson and Harry Korner of Cleveland, George and Howard Jacobs, Ted McCawley, and Benny Freud of the Philadelphia region, Jim Braim, Chris Ronne, and Mr. DeWolfe, from Boston. . . . Alice Stockell from Nashville, Chris Grauer from Buffalo. . . . the Travers of Trenton, John Kidd, and the famous Marions, Dodd and Bacon.

In the mad periods between the regular business sessions your reporter found Beebe and Pattee, Macmillan gals swapping yarns with Sanford Cobb, P. W. reporter. The ace selling team Beasley and Beer, Britannica, pinch-hitting at the meeting, the former taking in the A. M. session the latter the night cap. Tall Fred Melcher and his orange neckpiece dashing about with shouts of greetings and welcome to many friends. Marcia Passage, the Van Duyns, Miss Ennis, the Double-day-Doran retail group, quaffing a few cocktails. Veronica Hutchinson, Halle Bros., Cleveland; Polly Street, Morrow; Carolyn Marx, World-Telegram; Louis Greene, Publishers' Weekly; and many others holding up the bar at the Montclair.

Social life on Sunday: after the cocktail party on the roof, smaller parties in the rooms. . . . Alice Stockell, Charlie McLean, Veronica Hutchinson, Jack Mullen, and Lambert Grant partook of iced beverages with the staff of a prominent literary review in Room 851. And so to dinner, and to the Alan Villiers movie, *By Way of Cape Horn*.

Monday morning: the business meeting got under way at nine-thirty, with the code discussions. Cedric Crowell, having already spent two weeks talking about the code, showed what a man of resource he is by thinking up some brand new things to say about it. He went over the ground covered in getting the code through, beginning with the somewhat disheartening first arrival in Washington, when he and

his confrères were conducted to the aquarium "to see the other poor fish." Later, however, he learned the technique of looking like a veteran Washingtonian (this involved the process of knowing where to leave his hat). He described how the code, when drawn, had to be submitted to five boards, and go through three stages of executive approval. . . .

Mr. Heinritz, member of the Consumers' Advisory Board assigned to the booksellers' code, made some interesting points. To begin with, the code, as originally presented, was of an unpopular type, inviting adverse public sentiment; in its price maintenance feature, it went counter to the policy of the NRA. The result is a compromise and an experiment. Mr. Heinritz gave four reasons why the code was adopted: first, the fact that every new book is a monopoly protected by copyright; second, the short active life of the usual current book; third, the seasonal character of the book trade; fourth, the social advantages of a well run, well stocked bookstore. The bookseller should accept the social implications of his profession, and consider himself in the class with public utilities, recognizing his public responsibilities.

Like Mr. Crowell, Mr. Heinritz emphasized the point that the success of the code depends on consumer acceptance. The bookseller must prove to the consumer that he is not being obliged to pay list prices for new books without the return of a valuable service. He prophesied a longer average life for new books under the code, and a big bargain month every January.

The morning session continued with a talk by Frank Howard of Dutton on Why Some Good Books Don't Sell. Al Crone of the *Publishers' Weekly*, on The New Significance of the A. B. A., traced the history of the association since it was founded in 1901 to oppose unfair competition.

Adjournment for lunch: again the impression of an overwhelming majority of booksellers over publishers; the remark heard everywhere that this was the most successful and cheerful convention in the memory of—at least—any of the younger members. Frank Magel, Cedric Crowell, Ted McCawley, Alfred Carhart, and Mr. Heinritz at one table; the S. R. L. staff at another, plying with sustenance our staff photographer, Bob Disraeli, who had been up all night developing the pictures he took at the Sunday session of the convention, for the amazement and edification of the assembly at dinner Monday night.

Two more speeches Monday afternoon. O. J. Libert, deputy administrator, NRA, assigned to the booksellers' code, predicted that the trade's main problems will disappear under code operation, basing this on the operation of other codes. . . . Karl Placht of Beacon Book Shop, concluding the session, summed up the feelings of all the trade in a good fight talk.

Final event, election of new A. B. A. officers: E. S. McCawley of Haverford, Pa., as President; Ernest Eisele of B. Westermann, New York, Treasurer; and A. B. Carhart of Brooklyn, present incumbent, reelected as Secretary. Vice-Presidents, John Howells of San Francisco, J. W. Sutton of Urbana, Charles Campbell of Portland.

And so to press.



MESSRS. CHARLES CAMPBELL, FRANK MAGEL, FRED MELCHER, AND GREENWOOD (OF CHICAGO)

Photograph taken by Robert Disraeli at the Booksellers' Convention

## jottings from our own Diary



ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

has belatedly got around to reading Kenneth Roberts' **RABBLE IN ARMS** and agrees with the N. Y. *Times* and many others about this book. He Shouts and Murmurs in the last *New Yorker*:

"If you would read as fine an historical novel as this country ever produced, I hereby throw this old fedora into its accustomed place in the air in honor this time of *Rabble in Arms*, by Kenneth Roberts."

**RABBLE IN ARMS** marches as steadily on to its final victory as that ragged army it tells of, which beat Gentleman Johnny Burgoyne at Saratoga. And with it march its great companions, **THE LIVELY LADY** and **ARUNDEL**, also by Kenneth Roberts, the three, in uniform editions, at all bookstores, \$2.50 each.

WALTER LIPPMANN

in a recent *Herald Tribune* said, in discussing the recent, startling Japanese Declarations, that, since we are withdrawing from the Philippines, and have no special interest in the Asiatic mainland, it would therefore "in the present situation, seem to be the part of wisdom to let the powers most directly concerned take the leadership in it."

May we respectfully call Mr. Lippmann's attention to this sobering conclusion on page 315 of the recently published **EMPIRE IN THE EAST** that says, "The United States cannot extricate itself from the Far Eastern welter. It was drawn into it by its own social evolution, and all the evidence of the last few years is that it is getting in deeper. Our society being what it is, we can only stay in, with the consequence that the conflict already set in will develop until it comes to the climax of formal wars."

Written in a liberal spirit by the people best qualified to write such a book, and with iron conclusions that no one foresaw when the book was started, **EMPIRE IN THE EAST** is said to be, "a book that makes you think furiously" and "a turning point in our realization of our great future problem." (\$3.25.)

STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT'S

beautiful new novel **JAMES SHORE'S DAUGHTER** is a seemingly casual book, so casual that you do not get the full force of it until after you have read it and remembered it—and then you go back to read it again. Like *The Great Gatsby*, we think *James Shore's Daughter* will grow in your memory. And don't forget that this is a good time to re-read Stephen Vincent Benét's **JOHN BROWN'S BODY**. (Each \$2.50.)

DOUBLEDAY, DORAN