

did anything to make his sources more approachable by modern readers; but he does not add any of the background whose want we feel in Herodotus, and his attempts to enliven his original by breaking up the dialogue only rob us of some of the best and most characteristic speeches. In Herodotus, for instance, Candaules's wife says to the man to whom her husband had exhibited her naked,

You have two roads before you, and I give you your choice of them: either you may kill Candaules, or be killed yourself by these guardsmen, in order that in future you may know better than to do everything Candaules tells you.

This delicious, spirited, and "modern" speech is very badly represented by two pages of dialogue whose high point is "Choose between your own death and that of my vain and shameful husband!" Mr. Hellman does not even acknowledge his sources, which, by sending some readers to Herodotus, might have given the book a justification for its existence which at present it lacks.

B. D.

FISH ON THE STEEPLE. By Ed Bell. Farrar & Rinehart. 1935. \$2.50.

This is the picture of a Tennessee small town. Its principal industry is the making of bricks, in one of those old-fashioned brickyards already presented to us by Mr. Harlan Hatcher, where the seasoned hands have the one pleasure of hoping for the exhaustion of newcomers; its second industry is arson, both for the sake of collecting insurance and of stimulating the brick trade. Its chief recreation is the pleasures of sex, including those of sadism as practised by the Ku Klux Klan. Its higher life is represented by various brands of orgiastic religion; one sect induces a form of religious epilepsy, known as "Jesus and the jumps"; the members of the most influential denomination (that with a fish on its steeple) get their excitement more respectably by being baptized by immersion again and again. Its inhabitants are, some of them, to be distinguished from savages by their civilized vices, like old Miss Cannie, who was addicted to any form of drug; otherwise, they all respond only to the coarsest stimuli, and are differentiated from each other by minor eccentricities of speech.

Such a town inevitably suggests the nightmare world of Mr. Erskine Caldwell and Mr. William Faulkner, but the general effect of reading the book is far different. It is partly a matter of incident; there is none of the monstrous imaginings of Mr. Faulkner, nor the cold callousness of Mr. Caldwell. It is much more a matter of atmosphere, for the people in "Fish on the Steeple" do give the impression of getting a good deal of crude pleasure out of life.

It is likely that the book will be praised for its earthiness and gusto. And this is, probably, nearer to the truth, at least to the superficial and objective truth, than are the more cruel writers. The book has its value as a corrective. On the other hand, it is apparent that its accuracy comes not because Mr. Bell is peculiarly devoted to truth, but because he is himself com-

(Continued on page 21)

The PHOENIX NEST

CONTEMPORARY POETRY: BY WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

THIS week being just before Christmas, I should like to refer to a few books of poetry that, for the average person, might be good to give as Christmas gifts. None of these is the best book of the season, or anything like that. Very far from it. They are mostly mere verse, and chiefly for entertainment. And so, in spite of the high-held noses of the hypercritical they have their distinct place. First I may mention a Christmas anthology, "Come Christmas" (Coward-McCann. \$2.50), edited by Lesley Frost, Robert Frost's daughter, and containing a hitherto unpublished poem by him, in facsimile of the manuscript. This little book does distinctly contain literature, ranging from old carols down through the years to Chesterton and Lindsay. Neither is this anthology confined altogether to prose, as witness extracts from Thomas Hardy's "Return of the Native," Victor Hugo's "Les Misérables," George Eliot's "Silas Marner," and so on. There are poems in old English, Latin, old French, even in Huron Indian! There are songs with the printed music. The book ends, after giving the Te Deum Laudamus and the earliest Christian Hymn (which was Clement of Alexandria's in the first century) with Chesterton's "The House of Christmas." This has one verse at least that is as good as anything he ever wrote:

*This world is wild as an old wives' tale,
And strange the plain things are,
The earth is enough and the air is
enough
For our wonder and our war;
But our rest is as far as the fire-drake
swings
And our peace is put in impossible
things
Where clashed and thundered unthinkable
wings
Round an incredible star.*

For people who have pets there is entertainment in "The Cat in Verse," compiled by Carolyn Wells and Louella D. Everett, and "Sonnets from the Pekinese and other Doggerel," by Burges Johnson, with illustrations by the famous Edwina. The first of these books is published by Little, Brown (\$2) and the second by Macmillan (\$1.75). Mr. Johnson's rhymes are all original. The cat book is an anthology. And just as the superior are sniffing, I may remind them that Shelley wrote "Verses on a Cat," Swinburne wrote "To a Cat," Baudelaire wrote "My Cat," Cowper wrote "The Retired Cat," and we all remember Thomas Gray's "On the Death of a Favorite Cat." There's nothing to sniff about. Also I am delighted to find here Josephine Preston Peabody's "Concerning Love," one of the best couplets ever written in the natural language of a child:

*I wish she would not ask me if I love the
kitten more than her.
Of course I love her. But I love the kitten
too: and it has fur.*

The humor of this leads me to Margaret Fishback's new book, "I Take it Back." (Dutton. \$2.) She also has a poem about a cat, among a lot of sprightly others. Without wishing to indulge in comparisons between ladies, I must nevertheless aver that Phyllis McGinley seems to me to be somewhat cleverer than Margaret Fishback. But both ladies are so good in the New Yorker style of verse that you will find the Fishback one makes an appreciated present to any of your cleverer women friends.

Although I don't believe much in anthologies of the best poems of the year, as good a one as any is Thomas Moults "The Best Poems of 1935" (Harcourt, Brace. \$2). G. H. Vallins has an excellent poem in it on Malchus. I have never seen anything before by this poet, but his poem first appeared in John O'London's Weekly. It is for such choices, where poems are apt to be lost in magazine files, that such anthologies are most valuable.

For the more intellectual I can recommend two books that contain poetry not new, but, in the one case, carefully selected, and in the other freshly translated. The first consists of selected passages from Charles Doughty's great work, "The Dawn in Britain," which, with his "Travels in Arabia Deserta," constitute his considerable contribution to English literature. The passages are arranged with an introduction by Barker Fairley, and the Eric Kennington portrait of Doughty is used as the frontispiece (Oxford University Press. \$1.50). The cultivated reader of today should possess this book, at least, even if he never is able to read the remarkable long poem in six volumes, from which this is excerpted. From the same distinguished house we also have "The Elegies of Propertius," done into English verse by E. H. W. Meyerstein. This is a three dollar book. There are a brief preface and an equally brief life of Propertius introducing the volume. You can always trust the Oxford translations.

A most choice little volume as a gift would be A. E. Coppard's "Cherry Ripe," which comes boxed, is specially decorated by Valenti Angelo and a typographical delight, and has an interesting bibliographical note by George Brandon Saul appended. The book is published by Hawthorn House, Windham, Connecticut. Something new and different is Toyohiko Kagawa's "Songs from the Slums"—meaning the Shinkawa slums in Japan. The interpretations of the poems have been made by Lois J. Erickson, who has been for thirty years a missionary of the Southern Presbyterian Church in Japan. The delicate and excellent illustrations to the book are by Julian Brazelton, and the Cokesbury Press of Nashville, Tennessee, publish the little volume at a dollar. There is a biographical sketch of Kagawa appended. This seems to me a genuine book.

The Compleat Collector

RARE BOOKS: CONDUCTED BY JOHN T. WINTERICH

*In alternate weeks this Department is devoted to Fine Printing
and is conducted by Carl Purington Rollins*

Sculptured Books—Finale No. 2

ALL unwittingly, this department imitated Frankenstein when it requested its readers to assist in the compilation of a census of statues equipped with books. It began to look for a time as if statues without books must be the exception. To a circulation that, one hopes, is panting to be on with something else, the Compleat Collector announces that this is positively the last allusion that will be made, here and by him, to the problem of biblieffigy.

It will be recalled that the book-and-statue discussion was opened some weeks ago with an account of the St. Gaudens Puritan, otherwise Deacon Samuel Chapin, in Springfield, Massachusetts. The Compleat Collector, with unwonted brashness, declared that the book which Deacon Chapin was carrying was a King James Bible. Reduced to type, this assertion began to look a little too assertive. Why should a dissenter who was willing to risk his life by crossing uncharted seas to an uncharted continent in order to escape a hateful mode of worship and all its appurtenances turn his back on himself, as it were, as soon as he got here and take to his heart the very constitution of established church? Arrived at this pass, the Compleat Collector was heartened to receive this letter from Mrs. George Pierce Baker of New Haven:

Your discussion of the Chapin statue recalls to my mind a talk with Professor Charles M. Andrews of Yale a few days ago. The question had been brought to him "What Bible was used by the Puritans?" and he had been unable to answer. Of course, he has started to find out. I think his statement of the problem would interest you. He *thinks* it was the Geneva Bible, antedating the King James version, which latter, being church and aristocratic, would not please them. No Bible dates back, so far as he knows, in any collection, to the Pilgrims. I suggested that the sermons might contain quotations which would determine the translation, but he said, sadly, that congregations were so conversant with the Bible that the texts only were cited—as I Kings 2, 27—instead of the words!

Edith L. Little, head of the Circulation Department in the Springfield (Massachusetts) City Library, enters the effigy of P. T. Barnum in Bridgeport which exhibits him book in hand. "But it has no title," adds Miss Little, "and I can't even guess what it can be." The Compleat Collector suggests that it ought to be that sterling piece of Yankeeana, "Life of P. T. Barnum Written by Himself" (1855).

And in Tower Grove Park in St. Louis, writes Edwin Hutchings, Secretary of the Board of Commissioners of Tower Grove Park (who should know whereof he speaks), is a Shakespeare who is resting his left calf against three folios. (Query: Why not four?) The Tower Grove Shakespeare is a pleasantly international enter-

prise, the handiwork of a Munich sculptor, Ferdinand von Miller, and the gift of Henry Shaw, who was born in England.

Three correspondents submitted specimens in multiple. David McKibbin of Boston cites the following:

The "reading Dante," obviously of Pietro Lombardi, in the Ravenna tomb, where Dante is both reading from a lectern and resting his hand upon an open book on a table.

Jule Verne's monument in the parc at Amiens, showing an unbound French novel.



M. VERNE SURVEYS IMMORTALITY

Francesco Carrara, in Lucca, with books under his chair. The same treatment is to be seen in the bronze statue of

William Lloyd Garrison in Boston, where he sits in front of the Vendôme on Commonwealth Avenue—the work of Olin Levi Warner.

Mr. McKibbin also notes that the device of the printing house of Case, Lockwood and Brainard of Hartford is "At the Sign of the Stone Book," and the book itself is proudly emblazoned along with the text.

From Paris—4 Rue Arsène Houssaye—Eugene Rosen writes:

On the chance that your sphere of activity embraces not only the United States, I am sending you eight photographic proofs of statues in Paris in which books are included. I am forming a collection of my own photographs of statues of authors in Paris chiefly for my own pleasure, though I hope to make up a few sets for others.

The photographs which Mr. Rosen encloses are of statues of Dumas père, Shakespeare, Palissy, Franklin, Goldoni (a bust resting on two satisfyingly bookish-looking books—an ingenious and ef-

fective composition), Montaigne (whose right index finger is keeping his place while he muses over something he has just read), Rousseau (who is keeping his place with his left index finger), and Maupassant (the Parc Monceau bust, mentioned by two earlier correspondents).

But first prize (if such there were) for indefatigability and application should go to Ora Ioneene Smith, Readers' Adviser in the Birmingham Public Library. If Miss Smith dispenses advice with that degree of assiduity that marks her efforts on behalf of the Compleat Collector, then Birmingham is a highly literate and well-informed municipality. She calls particular attention to "a life-size statue of Miss Mary A. Cahalan, a former principal of one of the Birmingham elementary schools, in Woodrow Wilson Park, facing the entrance to the Children's Department of the Public Library. After Miss Cahalan's death in 1906, the people of the city, aided by the school children, raised a fund for a memorial in her honor. It is the work of Giuseppe Moretti, an Italian sculptor then living in Alabama who died in Italy last January. The statue is notable as being one of the few portrait statues to women in the United States."

But Miss Smith goes much further afield than the park over the way. Here is her full list of book-bearing statues, codified by sculptors:

Bryant Baker, whose work seems to run to books. Besides the Pioneer Woman (previously cited) the following may be mentioned: Millard Fillmore, Buffalo; Reuben Eaton Fenton, governor of New York and United States senator, Jamestown, New York; Former Chief Justice Edward D. White, New Orleans.

Augustus Lukeman: Equestrian statue of Bishop Francis Asbury (previously cited); Confederate Grandmother (in central group of monument to women of the Confederacy), Raleigh, North Carolina.

Sidney N. Bedore: Spirit of the Northwest, Green Bay, Wisconsin.

Lee Lowrie: Drafting the Constitution (one of series of historical panels for Nebraska State Capitol), Lincoln, Nebraska.

John Quincy Adams Ward: William Earl Dodge, Herald Square, New York.

Sir John Steell: Sir Walter Scott, Central Park, New York (previously cited).

Ettore Ximenes: Dante, Broadway and 63d Street, New York.

Miss Smith reports the following impressive list of eligibles as recorded in Edward Gleichen's "London's Open-Air Statuary" (1928)—name of sculptor and location are here omitted, but all are in urban London: Isaac Watts, William Tynedale, Robert Raikes, Cardinal Newman, Prince Albert, Samuel Johnson, Quintin Hogg, W. E. Forster, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Oliver Cromwell, Charles George (Chinese) Gordon, John Colet.

Well, the front yard is now much too full, and the Compleat Collector must regretfully cry quits. Including a weather-vane in the similitude of an open Bible atop a church steeple in Cranston, Rhode Island, as reported by Ray Feole of Providence, the books-in-stone-and-bronze collection now totals, in this definitive accounting, some fifty-six pieces.