

The PHOENIX NEST

BY WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

THE John Newbery Medal, awarded annually "for the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children" was established in 1921. If you have wondered who *John Newbery* was, he was a friend of *Oliver Goldsmith* and of *Dr. Johnson*. He first published books specifically for children, and his famous store in St. Paul's churchyard was frequented by the children of London. *Frederic G. Melcher*, editor of *The Publishers' Weekly*, donates the prize every year. *Hendrik Van Loon* has won it in the past, *Hugh Lofting*, *Charles Boardman Hawes*, *Will James*, and *Cornelia Meigs*. This year it has gone to *Monica Shannon*, a Californian, for her novel "Dobry," a story of peasant life in Bulgaria published by the Viking Press. The selection was announced at the annual convention of the American Library Association in Denver, Colorado. The book was chosen by a committee of fifteen librarians. Miss Shannon had already written several volumes of fairy tales and folk lore, and was guest speaker at the third session of the convention. A noted Bulgarian sculptor, *Atanas Katchamakoff*, illustrated her book. . . . The eternal argument goes on as to whether, to authors, writing is really fun. *Fannie Hurst* has covered a lot of ground in saying, "I am not happy when I am writing, but I am more unhappy when I am not." Now *Mary Agnes Hamilton*, whose latest book is a Houghton Mifflin one, "Sentenced to Life," has made a much more cheerful statement. She avers:

If the true novelist were to be told that he had but three months to live, he would know what to do with them. He would simply glue himself to his desk and sit writing until he had finished his novel. Writing is fun. It is the greatest fun there is. Such fun that, while one is at it, nothing can spoil its delight.

Then, too, there is the point of view of *E. Arnot Robertson*, known for her "Four Frightened People." *The Saturday Review* has in its files a manuscript of hers, entitled, "One Frightened Writer." Watch for it soon! Certainly there is plenty to frighten writers: publishers, critics, themselves, and so on! . . . *Coward-McCann* are bringing out the first guide book for dude ranchers, "Dude Ranches and Ponies," by *Lawrence B. Smith*.

Joseph Brewer, President of Olivet College at Olivet, Michigan (and formerly my boss in the publishing business!) announces the Olivet Writers' Conference from July 12th to August third. Aside from President Brewer, the staff and lecturers will consist of *Arthur Pound*, *Carl Sandburg*, *Allen Tate*, *Caroline Gordon* (his wife), *Jean Starr Untermeyer*, *Dorothea Brande*, *Eleanor Blake*, and *Nannine Joseph*. A charge of \$150 covers board and room in Dole Residence Hall for the three weeks of the Conference, and tuition. All correspondence, including letters of application, should be addressed to the Reg-

istrar, Olivet College, Olivet, Michigan. . . . An ancient publisher and bookseller who, it seems, has never got his rights, was *William Jaggard*, without whose good offices one-third of Shakespeare's plays might have been lost to the world. Jaggard not only printed Shakespeare, but also *Bacon*, *Sir Walter Raleigh*, the works of *Heywood*, and the first complete translation of *Boccaccio's "Decameron."* Yet there is no mention of him in the English "Dictionary of National Biography," and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* ignores him! To corroborate what I say, read Professor *E. E. Willoughby's* book, to be published July tenth by *E. P. Dutton*. It's called, "A Printer of Shakespeare." There's a lot in it about the Elizabethan period that you didn't know. . . . The well-known poet, *Katherine Garrison Chapin*, has sent me the following sonnets for the *Phoenix Nest*:

FROM A TROPICAL SHORE

(For Elinor Wylie)

The pale green wave breaks on the curving shore
Burned white beneath the hot high sun of spring.
The soft sound is a fairy ocean's roar,

An awkward bird floats on a lazy wing.
Beneath my feet I crush the little shells
Pink, delicate and perfect, carved in light,
And watch the silver fish that leap the swells

Dripping with jeweled water in their flight.

You never saw this bright fantastic land,
This unreal ocean and imagined sky,
Or sifted with long fingers this pale sand,
Or breathless, watched the soaring heron fly

Against the low hung stars. Yet everywhere

I find your footprint on this shining air.

Walk with the western wind over this sea,
Companioned by that Spirit whom you knew

Too well to brook the infidelity
Which time and space were asking as their due.

Now touching light tipped fingers to the clouds,

And happy feet above a cresting wave
Fling to the sunset glow your thin worn shrouds,—

You two shall know no dry nor watery grave.

But where the polished nacre glows within

A shell, where violet clouds bring down the rain,

Or where the bubble moon is blown too thin,

And stars are drowned, you yet shall live again,—

Live in the lyric pulse, remembering
Singing, to soar, and soaring still to sing!

● "YOU CAN FEEL THE SALT-SPRAY IN YOUR FACE AS YOU READ THIS BOOK"—*Lewis Gannett, Herald Tribune* ● "FRESH AND WITTY AND INTIMATE; RICH AND UNUSUAL—WHOLE-HEARTEDLY RECOMMENDED"—*Robert Van Gelder, N. Y. Times* ● "IT IS THE REAL STUFF, AND AS FULL OF THE IRISH AROMA AS THE SMELL OF SEAWEED ON THE ATLANTIC BEACHES—UNFORGETTABLE!"

—*Saturday Review.*

With
16 full-page
illustrations



The thrilling and unusual autobiography of Pat Mullen, fighting Irishman.

MAN OF ARAN
By PAT MULLEN DUTTON \$3

The Clearing House

CONDUCTED BY AMY LOVEMAN

Inquiries, accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope, should be directed to Miss Loveman, in care of The Saturday Review.

A BALANCED RATION FOR A WEEK'S READING

LADY INTO FOX. By David Garnett. Knopf.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF LINCOLN STEFFENS. Harcourt, Brace.

THE TRAGIC ERA. By Claude Bowers. Houghton Mifflin.

Mary of Scotland

R. E. C., of Adaza, Iowa, some time ago saw Maxwell Anderson's "Mary of Scotland" and has been moved by the performance to read some recent biography of that unhappy Queen. He inquires as to whether there has been any interesting and discerning study made of late and also whether Anderson's play can be procured in book form.

SINCE Mary belongs to that group of women whose charm remains potent to enlist sentiment from age to age there is constantly a new volume upon her. In fact at the moment there is a biography which is yet in the future so far as an American edition is concerned but which has already made its appearance in the German tongue. (Incidentally, it wouldn't be a bad idea to offset Nazism and all the horrors of the Hitler régime, for anyone who is interested in Maxwell Anderson's play to refresh his memory of Schiller's "Maria Stuart.") This German work is Stefan Zweig's MARIA STUART, to be published in this country in August. A German correspondent writes that Zweig has made a psychological discovery with this book as he did with his MARIE ANTOINETTE.

But unless R. E. C. reads German this biography still lies in the future and he undoubtedly wants something now. One of the most recent works on Mary of Scotland to command interest was Herbert S. Gorman's THE SCOTTISH QUEEN (Farrar & Rinehart), a most readable if not a scholarly study. The excellent series of brief biographies which the Appleton-Century Company is getting out contains one by Eric Linklater on MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS, which develops its chronicle on the thesis that Mary was so politically ambitious that her kingdom engaged all her time. Andrew Herbert Dakers's THE TRAGIC QUEEN (Houghton Mifflin) attempts to gather together and sift the evidence in regard to Mary who has so persistently been the subject of emotion and so infrequently viewed with detachment. There is, of course, a long list of works on her which R. E. C. can further consult, but these I have mentioned are of recent date. As to Maxwell Anderson's play, he can procure that in book form without difficulty. It is published by Doubleday, Doran & Company.

Benjamin Franklin

L. T. C., of Farmington, Conn., has it in mind to write a play with Benjamin Franklin for hero and wants to know where to find the intimate incident and detail he needs for the purpose.

If he can get entrance to the library of the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia (and I imagine that is an easy matter) he will find a wealth of material that should yield grist for his mill. Bernard Fay, whose FRANKLIN, THE APOSTLE OF MODERN TIMES (Little, Brown) is one of the best biographies of its subject to be found, and whose later THE TWO FRANKLINS (Little, Brown) contains much little-known detail about the statesman-diplomat-philosopher and his grandson, told me some years ago when he was working on the former book that in the mass of letters given him for inspection at the Society's library—a most indiscriminate and indiscriminately piled together collection—he opened some from which fell tresses of ladies' hair and others from the pages of which started messages of tender import, all sorts of odds and ends of intimate observations,—just the sort of stuff out of which one could build the personality of a dramatic hero. Mr. Fay's volumes and the article in the DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN BIOGRAPHY, written, I judge from the initials appended to it, by Carl L. Becker, represent the most recent results of research. The AUTOBIOGRAPHY, of course, I mention only in passing, since L. T. C. undoubtedly has long been familiar with that. Perhaps, however, he does not know that that work, which ends at the beginning of Franklin's diplomatic career, was continued from correspondence and other writings to his death in a volume now out of print, edited by John Bigelow and entitled LIFE OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN (Lippincott). The book ought to be obtainable without difficulty at libraries. Another biography which it would be well to consult is James Parton's two-volume LIFE AND TIMES OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN (Houghton Mifflin), not a particularly critical study but one which is rich in the anecdotal material of which L. T. C. is in search.

Expert Advice

I am not resorting to the devices of the lazy columnist when I continue to publish in rapid succession communications from readers, but I feel that far better than anything else I can do for my correspondents is to give them the expert advice that comes in from time to time. The great difficulty in this regard is that on occasions the inquiries to which responses are made go astray or are buried in such a mass of accumulated material to which I have already replied that patient search fails to reveal the name of the person for whom some special information is intended. Thus long ago I wrote to Pro-

fessor Tucker Brooke of Yale enclosing a letter regarding material on the "four humours" for which I felt my ignorance was too great to provide a proper answer. With his usual generosity he replied to it, but I think failed to enclose the letter I had sent him. At any rate I can't find it, so I print his own addressed perforce merely "to whom it may concern." Professor Brooke writes:

The most convenient place for your correspondent to find material about the four humours and their reflection in Shakespearean drama is perhaps the section on "The Portraiture of Humours," pp. xxxvi-lxiv of Percy Simpson's edition of Jonson's EVERY MAN IN HIS HUMOUR (Oxford University Press, 1919). I refer to the separate edition of that play, not the big (and still far from complete) Herford-Simpson Jonson.

Miss L. B. Campbell's book on SHAKESPEARE'S TRAGIC HEROES (Cambridge University Press, 1930) contains a vast amount of learning on Elizabethan psychological and medical theory and some interesting pictures, but is not very easy to understand.

In re allusions to deafness, here are some random references from L. Wardlaw Mills. He writes:

Chaucer's WIFE OF BATH and Shakespeare's JULIUS CÆSAR; Swift, ON HIS OWN DEAFNESS, and Pope's graceful ON A CERTAIN LADY AT COURT; Goldsmith's reference to Reynolds in RETALIATION; Old Mrs. Wardle in PICKWICK, and Miss Pross in the TALE OF TWO CITIES. The old woman rescued by Mr. Polly (Wells), and MR. PIM PASSES BY (Milne). The only trumpet I can recall—besides Sir Joshua's—belonged to an old lady in Burdau's HAPPY THOUGHTS.

The numerous correspondents who at various times have inquired what to read in preparation for a trip to Mexico will be interested in the following letter from Mr. Vernon Munroe:

The two best books I know, and I think I have read most everything on Mexico, are LIFE IN MEXICO, by Madame Calderon de la Barca, and VIVA MEXICO, by Charles M. Flandreau. LIFE IN MEXICO consists of letters written by the wife of the first Minister to Mexico accredited by Spain after the revolution in 1820. They were written about 1839-40, and I think it is generally admitted that they give as good a picture of Mexico today and the real Mexican problem as any modern book. Also, not being written for publication they are entirely free from any suggestion of propaganda.

VIVA MEXICO is a short little story of life on a coffee plantation and for the real feel of the Mexican peon it is quite in a class by itself. It is full of humor and highly entertaining.

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 66)

RALPH WALDO EMERSON—
"FATE"

So far as man thinks, he is free. . . . Though nothing is more disgusting than . . . the flippant mistaking for freedom of some paper preamble like a "Declaration of Independence" . . . by those who have never dared to think or to act.