

# The BOWLING GREEN by Christopher Morley

## The Folder

Shakespeare's "Images"

**D**R. CAROLINE SPURGEON'S *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us* is an exciting book; it emanates what is rare indeed in Shakespearean research, a sense of being close upon Will's actual vestiges. You will read with bated breath Miss Spurgeon's account of her adventure in Captain Jaggard's bookshop in Sheep Street, Stratford. (Captain Jaggard is descended from the printer of the First Folio.) Miss Spurgeon had been interested in the great number of Shakespeare's allusions to rivers, particularly streams in flood, and the behavior of their currents. She told Jaggard that she was anxious to stand on the old Clopton Bridge when the Avon was in flood, to watch the movement of the water. "Yes," he said, "and you should stand on the eighteenth arch of the bridge, the one nearest the London side, for when the river is in flood the force of the current produces the most curious effect."

Captain Jaggard went on to describe a queer eddy and returning current at that spot; as he spoke he was at the back of the shop, searching among piles of books and prints, "and his voice," says Miss Spurgeon, "coming thus somewhat muffled from the distance, gave me the most curious thrill and start, as if it were a voice from the dead. For here was a present-day Stratfordian describing to me in minute detail exactly what a Stratford man had set down in verse nearly three hundred and fifty years ago."

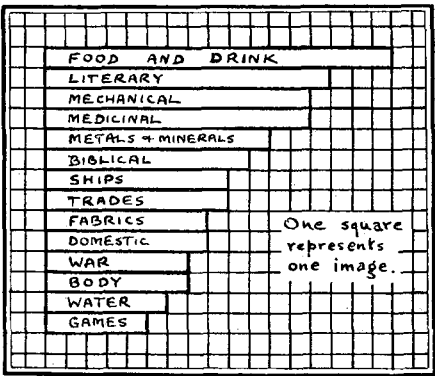
She alludes to the stanza (lines 1667-73) in *The Rape of Lucrece*. And the reader follows her down to the river bank and the eighteenth arch of the old bridge (built about 1490) where even in smooth water she recognized the eddy that Shake-

speare must have watched. She made a sketch of the place which is an X-marks-the-spot frontis for her book.

I hope, by the way, that Miss Spurgeon knows the lovely drawing by Reginald Birch in *Master Skylark* showing the youngsters of Stratford on that same bridge.

Miss Spurgeon begins her thought-quickenning study with a quotation from Virginia Woolf: "Every secret of a writer's soul, every experience of his life, every quality of his mind, is written large in his works, yet we require critics to explain the one and biographers to expound the other." She believes that a writer, and particularly a poet, unconsciously reveals his character in the "imagery" he chooses to express his thoughts (what Walt meant, I suppose, by his "eidolons"). She has made an exhaustive study of Shakespeare's metaphors, tropes, similes and figures of speech. Her results are tabulated in some fascinating graphic charts, showing not only the proportion in which Shakespeare's "images" fall into various groups, but also the contrasts between his instinctive similes and those of other contemporaries. For instance in Marlowe images drawn from books, especially the classics, outnumber all others; the next group is similes from nature, especially the celestial bodies. But in Shakespeare, nature (especially weather, plants, and gardens) is greatly in the lead. Animals, birds, insects, and the homely images of daily life, come next in frequency; similitudes based on learning, books and the classics are relatively few. The contrast between Shakespeare and Bacon in the matter of their image-making faculties is equally noticeable.

Miss Spurgeon offers some remarkably interesting suggestions in this absorbing book which many scholars will find vividly provocative; on the basis of her



ANALYSIS OF BOWLING GREEN  
Compiled by F. R. Mansbridge, on the Spurgeon plan of "imagery."

ten years' intensive study of Shakespeare's figures of speech she even ventures some ingenious speculations about his private tastes and qualities, going so far as to suggest his complexion, personal fastidiousness, and that he was "a handy man about the house." I do not think Miss Spurgeon would want us to take these suggestions too seriously, but they are highly agreeable to consider. And it pleases this Green to be reminded that "of all games bowls would seem to be the one he knew most intimately and played with keenest zest."

In her first chapter, which explains her aim and method, Miss Spurgeon says something which has been thought about by every poet and which can never be repeated too often. "I incline to believe," she writes, "that analogy—likeness between dissimilar things—which is the fact underlying the possibility of metaphor, holds within itself the very secret of the universe." This brief applause is no attempt to summarize or even comment on a brilliant work of *durchgearbeitung*. Her discussion of the dominating images in various of the plays will be of keen interest to Shakespearean students; and the colored charts make the book as lively as a game. It is one more illustration of our favorite thesis that scholarship is the greatest fun in the world.

When Mr. F. R. Mansbridge of Macmillan Company showed me an advance copy of *Shakespeare's Imagery* I was so much interested that he went home and amused himself by making a chart of the Bowling Green on the Spurgeon system. After a study of the files he produced the accompanying mindscape—which is based, you will remember, on the "images" employed, not on mere quantitative space allotted to the topics mentioned. It is about what I would have expected, except that I am puzzled that Medicinal images rank so high.

Making mind-maps of various authors



VERMONT WINTER, BY JOHN LILLIE (see page 14)

might well be an excellent winter pastime. Certainly Dr. Spurgeon's book goes on our growing Christmas List.

### Paintings of Vermont

I haven't had a chance yet to see the paintings of Vermont by John Lillie, on show at Walter Grant's gallery (9 East 57 Street) until December 1st, but as a lover of that State I am eager to. The story of John Lillie's beginning as a painter was best told by another Vermonter, Zephine Humphrey, that finely sensitive writer of whose work I have seen too little in late years. From her article written some time ago for *The Outlook* I learn the facts.

John Lillie, builder, carpenter, plumber and general handy man in Dorset, Vermont, gave board and lodging at his home

one summer to some young landscape painters. They filled his barn with sketches and canvases; they found their host thoughtful and particularly helpful in suggesting good views and lights for mountain studies. He had never seen an oil painting before, but one day when all the artists were off on the hillsides he got out some house paints and brushes (including an old shaving brush) and set to work on a strip of smooth board. Without saying anything about it he hung his picture beside the others in the barn.

That was John Lillie's first painting. The friendly artists immediately recognized a native talent that was greater than their own, and without attempting in any way to influence his vision helped him in the rudiments of technique. "They were very cautious about offering him

counsel," says Zephine Humphrey, "and he was more than cautious about receiving it."

His painting "The Old Factory" was bought by the Metropolitan Museum in 1933.

And now these Vermont paintings are on view at the New York gallery of Walter Grant (of East Northfield, Vt.) and the catalogue begins with a poem by Walter Hard (of Manchester, Vt.) and is printed by Vrest Orton (of Weston, Vt.). I think anyone who feels himself a bit Vermontish in spirit (as I sometimes do) will want to see them.

### A Five-Inch Shelf

(Continued from page 4)

only this about him. Once, during his undergraduate days, he invented a cocktail and named it the I-Know-That-My-Redeemer-Liveth." If no further biographical data was vouchsafed that day, it may have been because New York finds it hard to keep track of an intermittent writer who perversely clings either to his ancestral acre in Minnesota or to the fond hideaway he has discovered on the Seine not far from Les Andelys. But from the very mood and flavor of "Viva Mexico!" you could guess it had been written by one who would always lurk in shadows and that, as for booksy teas where authors do get a chance to meet and dislike one another, he would avoid them as though they were pestilential. Of all American writers, it is hardest to imagine that one autographing his works in Macy's window.

If you have read thus far, you will have already detected in my rolling eye the gleam of the proselytizer. It is quite true that, once in a blue moon, a book comes along which begets in me an impulse to fill a wheelbarrow with copies and trundle it from house to house until everyone in our street has one. Surely such an impulse is common enough to need no dissection. There comes to my mind a time some years ago when one of the great men of our country was giving me lodging for the night. During dinner a chance phrase revealed the fact that I had never read a certain novel by Henry James. This discovery brought to the face of my host a look of distress. Later, when I had said good-night and gone upstairs, I found that the book—it was "The Princess Casamassima"—had stealthily preceded me and was eyeing me with suspended judgment from beneath the lamp on my bedside table. If I did not let this pretty attention turn my head, it was because it was so clear that it was not I but the book our host was fond of. Here, I think, was no pity for, or even interest in, my poverty. He just couldn't bear having the book feel forgotten.

True, Thackeray said of "A Christmas Carol" that it came to every man and woman who read it as a personal kind-

(Continued on page 16)

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## A Five-Inch Shelf

(Continued from page 14)

ness. But you can pass it on without the discomfiting fear of seeming to be a dear, kind soul. Probably you are acting from the purely selfish desire to keep those who make up your immediate world like-minded with yourself. One of the most exhilarating spectacles vouchsafed in the A.E.F. was the occasional meeting on a muddy road in France of two homesick doughboys from the same home town, and something of the satisfaction which was theirs is repeated whenever two people discover that they have both grown up happily in the same book. Certainly the rest of the world is forgotten when two indurated Dickensians strike hands in an English pub, and I think it is true of most of the works collected in "The Woolcott Reader" that they have it in them to create a fraternity out of those who enjoy them. I would grudgingly admit that a man might dismiss even "A Doctor of the Old School" as indifferent stuff without thereby implanting in me an unshakable conviction that he was also a secret practitioner of lycanthropy and given, in the dark of the moon, to draining the hearts of babes for the chalice of the Black Mass. But I could say this of him. He is one I would avoid on shipboard, and I would look for new quarters in another street if ever he took the house next to mine. Occasions might arise when I would want to strangle him. At least we would not have enough in common to make good neighbors.

Now that my collection is ready to go forth, I find that the happy zeal with which I started to assemble it is tinged with a belated uneasiness. Once I was rebuked by the president of one of our universities because, through some published endorsement of mine, he had bought at Christmas time for his presumably cloistered niece one of the more ruffianly yarns of Master Dashiell Hammett. Did I really wish it believed, asked the outraged uncle, that so coarse a work represented my taste in literature? I was happy to be able to reply that it did, indeed. And, adding that so did "Alice in Wonderland," "Emma," and "The Early Life of Charles James Fox," I left him to deplore me as incorrigibly miscellaneous. . . . Indeed, when faced with certain of the monumental works of the world's literature, I am affected as was a *cuisinière* of my acquaintance by the State of California, to which brightly pigmented commonwealth she repaired late in life to make her home. To her former mistress in the darkling and rain-drenched East, she reported her arrival by sending a florid postcard on which she had scribbled this message: "It's very beautiful here I don't like it." . . .

However, here is a five-inch shelf put into your hands by one who, having read less than some and more than most, has usually found his keenest enjoyment when striking off from the great highways. After all, there are bypaths in the realms of gold.

Alexander Woolcott is the author of several books, the best known of which is "While Rome Burns." His new anthology, "The Woolcott Reader," will be published by the Viking Press early in December.

## Poems for Children

By WITTER BYNNER

### Turkey-Cock

HE was like father, yes, he was,  
His face was red as fire,  
He puffed the same way father  
does

And tried to stand up higher.

He tried to say important things

That father tried to say.

You know how father thumps his wings  
At mother every day?

### Pelican

Old Aunt Matilda was there in the Zoo.  
Though they called her a pelican, every-  
one knew

That there couldn't be two of her, one in  
a cage

And the other at home with a newspaper  
page.

I used to run back, as fast as I could,  
But somehow she got there ahead and she  
stood

With her nose looking down and her foot  
in a shoe,

Just as life-like at home as she was in  
the Zoo.

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# The PHOENIX NEST

CONTEMPORARY POETRY: BY WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

TWO of the major figures of our time in literature are recently gone. In Edwin Arlington Robinson America has, of course, lost one of her leading two male poets, and now his last poem—a long narrative—appears bearing an introduction by the only peer of his time, Robert Frost. It is called "King Jasper." It is published, of course, by Macmillan.

As the last work of one who had dedicated a long life to poetry and had worked more assiduously at his craft than most artists, failing now and again—never in the wielding of a style that is one of the most saliently individual of our time in literature; but sometimes in the significance of what he had to say—as the last work of such a man, this narrative seems to me of extraordinary directness and vitality. Its characters are really symbols, but they are symbols significant of our era. It seems to me that Robinson left this world in closer touch with the time spirit than he had been for some years. Zoë, the spirit of life, flees upward through the darkness. But

*Now she could rest, and she could see  
Two fires at once that were a kingdom  
burning.*

*In one of them there was the king himself,  
The prince, and their destroyer. In the  
other,  
With chimneys falling on him while he  
burned,  
There was a dragon dying. . . .*

He left his world of the imagination saying that; even as Elinor Wylie left her own world of the imagination saying

*"O grain of God in power,  
Endure another hour!  
It is but for an hour," said the Spirit.*

It seems to me that these are different testimonies to the same thing, that "somehow good shall be the final goal of ill." However that may be, they both strike me as oracular; as, at least, having something of pre-vision. I believe that today there is a dragon dying in the world and that the latest convulsions of the social order will be seen in the light of future history to mark his passing. Robinson's story is the story of the individual of great wealth and hence of great power, and of how he inevitably compassed his own destruction. There is much more to it than that. But that is part of it. And the spirit of life, ever a renewal of itself, is with him to the end with the greater wisdom. A renewal and a change, which persists and goes on—beyond Man's petty ambitions and spoils, even beyond his vengeance and violence.

To some the parable that is in this story, also intensely a story of human beings, may either confuse or annoy, but they cannot miss the wisdom in many passages of the blank verse which is handled not only with all of Robinson's subtle skill, but also with dramatic fire. You should get the book also for Frost's "Introduc-

tion," which is not about this particular poem but about the Robinson he knew, and has also many shrewd and pungent things said in it concerning the development of poetry. It was what Frost calls "that grazing closeness to the spiritual realities" that gave Robinson's poetry far greater depth and substance than that of most poets of our time. His style had the defects of its virtues, and for a while it grew upon him to develop too circuitous a manner of saying a simple thing. But it also enabled him to express certain genuine findings concerning human nature inimitably well.

I spoke in the beginning of "two major figures of our time in literature." By the other I meant the late "A. E." of Ireland. Not major as a poet, I think, but major as a man and an influence. Here are his "Selected Poems" also from Macmillan. "If I should be remembered," he said, "I would like it to be for the verses in this book." The volume was planned shortly before his death last July. One has only to read his poem "Resurrection" to find his kinship with Blake. But his poetry was more vaporous; though I think some few of his poems may be read for years to come—the beautiful "Memory of Earth," for instance, beginning,

*In the wet dusk silver sweet,  
Down the violet scented ways,  
As I moved with quiet feet  
I was met by mighty days.*

A mystical music was his, and a love of Earth, and a love of mankind. And Ireland knows how much her poets owe to him.

The best book on poetry recently published is "This Modern Poetry," by Babette Deutsch, with an excellent bibliography and a good index. I recommend this book to all those who wish to know just what influences are contemporary and just how the modern attitude of poets toward poetry differs from the old. Miss Deutsch takes us back as well as forward, discusses tradition and the Imagists, and brings us down inevitably to Spender and Auden and Day Lewis. Her judgments are for the most part sound. Her book is published by W. W. Norton; and you ought to get with it Elizabeth Drew's "Discovering Poetry."

### SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 85)

OGDEN NASH—"TLL HUSH IF  
YOU'LL HUSH"

Do you sometimes wonder which is worse,  
Verge for voice, or voice for  
verse? . . .

Why what about the radio?  
The affected, oily tongues that drip  
With spurious good-fellowship,  
That flood your parlor with a spasm  
Of cultured sales enthusiasm?