

The PHOENIX NEST

CONTEMPORARY POETRY: BY WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

BEFORE discussing books of poetry I wish to thank the following additional contributors to the fund being raised for the notable woman poet still in hospital: *Joseph Gannon*, Belmont, Mass.; *Jane D. Wise*, Santa Monica, California; *Elizabeth S. Kirkwood*, Johns Hopkins; *Stanley S. Swarthy*, Meadville, Pa.; *Agnes MacCarthy Hickey*, Mount Vernon, N. Y.; and *F. C. N.*

To call the roll of young writers and artists from Iowa is to name *MacKinlay Kantor*, *Paul Engle*, *Phil Stong*, *Ruth Suckow*, and *Grant Wood*. True, they are not the youngest. But it was only six years ago that *Thomas W. Duncan* graduated from Harvard where a group of his poems won the *Lloyd McKim Garrison* prize. Two years earlier than that *Edwin Arlington Robinson* had praised a pamphlet of his poems. The author has lived in Des Moines since, has been a reporter and book critic and has been writing novels. The *Prairie Press* of Muscatine, Iowa, that is fostering native talent so well, has now brought out his volume of poems "Elephants at War," many of which are most vivid. This poet uses no new idiom, and he is always entirely clear and understandable. He is also chiefly an objective poet and his native ballads are good. He is on the way to mastering precise epithet. As it is, his descriptions are at times impressive. Sometimes he is trivial. But in his craftsmanship he shows promise. There is color, and to spare, in his verse.

I am always glad to comment on any evidences of poetry I find in current theatrical productions, and I found a little in the ill-fated play "How Beautiful with Shoes," adapted from *Wilbur Daniel Steele's* story, Steele himself being one of the adapters. Perhaps I was also beguiled by the sensitive performance given by a new young actress, *Marie Brown*. Certainly I found the play as a whole pretty noisy and disjointed, but there was at least one scene into which poetry crept. The poetry that moved the "loony" of the play was the Song of Songs that is Solomon's, though it is no new thing for writers to wish to quote from such magnificence. Indeed my theatre partner murmured to me, quite aptly, "How beautiful with Shulamites!" It seemed a pity that the only poet on the stage must appear as a victim of hallucinations, when not violently insane. But the mountain morons among whom his unlucky lot was cast may easily have been responsible for it!

I can recommend "Patterns in Jade of Wu Ming Fu," by *Stanwood Cobb*, a sequel to "The Wisdom of Wu Ming Fu," published four years ago. This little book (The Avalon Press, Washington, D. C. \$1.50) secretes some of the wisdom of the Chinese. Or you can turn to that large and scholarly work, "The Prose Poetry of Su Tung-P'o," with introductory essays, notes and commentaries by *Cyril Le Gros Clark* (Kelly &

Walsh, Ltd. P. O. Box 613, Shanghai, China. \$10). So much for the Orient.

Henry Harrison, at 430 Sixth Avenue, New York, has been bringing out local anthologies for the different states. We now have "Illinois Poets," with a foreword by *Glenn Ward Dresbach*, "Kansas Poets," with a foreword by *May Williams Ward*, and "Iowa Poets," with a foreword by *Jay G. Sigmund*. Such compilations are not likely to reveal much distinguished poetry, at least such has been my experience. At the same time I am glad to have the books for reference.

One of the best of our Negro poets is *James Weldon Johnson*, and the Viking Press have got out his selected poems, under the title "Saint Peter Relates an Incident," in a sumptuous looking book priced at two dollars. There is rich variety in it, and fire, and the original turn of expression that was one of the great merits of the same poet's "God's Trombones."

Father Leonard Feeney's phrasing is strikingly good sometimes. His new "Boundaries" (Macmillan. \$1.25) is not quite up to his former "Riddle and Reverie." But if you want to read one who combines religion with a most animated fancy, there is nothing pompous here, but the revelation of a charming personality.

The poems by *Mary Cummings Eudy* in "Quarried Crystals and Other Poems" (G. P. Putnam's Sons. \$2) are worth your consideration. The author's lyric "Oxen" has been set to music and has proved very popular. *Joseph Auslander*, *Zona Gale*, and *John Erskine* have all said nice things about her work. These brevities are not in the first flight of poetry, but the book is nevertheless interesting. Another Jesuit father who writes poetry is *Michael Earls*, and "The Hosting of the King" is his latest book. It comes from the St. Anthony Guild Press at the Franciscan Monastery of Paterson, New Jersey, and is priced at one dollar. *Father Earls* has contributed to various magazines, and while his verse has not the occasional prime originality of *Father Feeney's*, it is often most graceful. On the other hand, *Z. Weinper* is one of the foremost living Yiddish poets, and the selections in "At the Rich Man's Gate" cover a period of about twenty years. The translation of the book is by *Morton Deutsch*, its Introduction by *Isidor Schneider*. It is published by Coward-McCann at one dollar twenty-five.

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 92) ARNOLD BENNETT— "LITERARY TASTE."

Progress is the general result of the unending battle between human reason and human instinct, in which the former slowly but surely wins. The most powerful engine in this battle is literature.



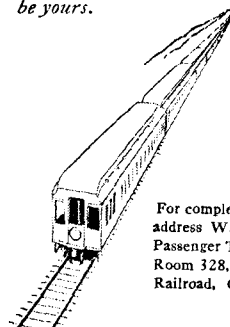
Hawaii

across the BLUE PACIFIC

You'll love Hawaii. Everyone does. No place in all the world can quite compare with it for rest or recreation. The waters along its beaches sparkle in the sunlight. Palm trees seem to say, "Rest in our shadow—dream the golden hours away." And over all there lingers the magic of South Sea romance.

In this pleasure-loving land the climate is ideal the year 'round. The average temperature for January is 70.9 degrees—for June 76 degrees. So go when you can and experience a new and fascinating chapter in your life

... and for the first leg of your journey board a fleet Union Pacific air-conditioned train for California and your port. Every travel luxury will be yours.



For complete information address W. S. Basinger, Passenger Traf. Manager, Room 328, Union Pacific Railroad, Omaha, Nebr.

UNION PACIFIC

Thomas Wolfe's THE STORY OF A NOVEL

There are a few copies still available of *The Saturday Review* for December 14th, 21st, and 28th containing the three parts of Thomas Wolfe's interesting autobiographical narrative, *The Story of a Novel*. While they last, these three issues may be purchased from this office at ten cents a copy.

The Saturday Review

25 West 45th St., New York City

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

SOME PEOPLE. By Harold Nicolson. *Houghton Mifflin.*

THE NATURE OF THE JUDICIAL PROCESS. By Benjamin Cardozo. *Yale University Press.*

DEATH COMES FOR THE ARCHBISHOP. By Willa Cather. *Knopf.*

Racial Groups and America

E. J. W. of Fort Morgan, Colo., wants a list of novels, biographies, etc., which deal with our various social groups—Negroes, Indians, Jews, European and Asiatic immigrants—in their native and adopted environment. "Of course," she says, "our aim is fuller appreciation of the contribution of these groups to our civilization as well as the problems of adjustment which they face here and our prejudices and discriminations against them. Also," she goes on, "could you recommend some books dealing with the leading religions of the world?"

ADEQUATELY to answer E. J. W.'s request would mean to write enough to fill much more space than I have at my command. To bring my reply within bounds I shall confine it to such books as present the various racial strains of America as they emerge in this country and not before they have reached these shores.

One of the most recent of the novels, and to my mind one of the most interesting of them, to depict the transplanting of the Jew from Europe to the United States is Joseph Gollomb's *UNQUIET* (Dodd, Mead) which as prelude to its picture of a foreign-born family adjusting itself to the New York scene presents charming descriptions of life as lived by a cultured Jewish family in Russia. Mr. Gollomb has portrayed the European background with nostalgic appreciation of its dignity and resignation and the American struggle for emergence from poverty and strangeness with proportion and understanding. Another book in the same tradition is Irving Fineman's *HEAR, YE SONS* (Longmans, Green).

There are a score of novels of the sort which have appeared in recent years but prudence bids me hasten on with mention of these two alone. A good many years ago now, back in the days before the war, or at least America's entrance into it (I'm writing at the distance of Alabama from all my reference books) Mary Antin's *THE PROMISED LAND* (Houghton Mifflin), a vivid and intensely personal account of a young girl's acclimatization to the American environment, was one of the best-selling volumes of its day. Ludwig Lewisohn's *UPSTREAM* (Harpers), in which were written down the reactions of a Jew of unusual brilliance to the people and institutions among which he

came to make his home, made much stir upon its appearance and still remains one of the most interesting of the autobiographical records of the Jewish immigrant to these shores.

But I must hasten and pass hurriedly through my list which I already see can be no more than a mere suggestion here and there if it is to be confined within the limits which space demands. I'm afraid, indeed, that it can be little more than a succession of titles to be supplemented in a later Clearing House.

To pass on to the Negro, on whom and by whom the literature of late has been voluminous. Only this winter there appeared a first novel which movingly and forcefully depicted the relation of the black man to his environment in Robert Rylee's *DEEP, DARK RIVER* (Farrar & Rinehart). Jessie Fauset's *COMEDY, AMERICAN STYLE* (Stokes) depicts the color problem in modern, middle-class Negro society. Though they are shown less in their contacts with the whites than with their own race in such works as Du Bose Heyward's *PORGY* (Doubleday, Doran) and Julia Peterkin's *SCARLET SISTER MARY* (Bobbs-Merrill) E. J. W. ought not to neglect these books and others of their kind, nor ought she, indeed, to fail to read *STEVEDORE* (Covici-Friede), by P. Peters and G. Sklar, a play portraying race relations in the South, and John Wexley's *THEY SHALL NOT DIE* (Knopf), a drama built about the notorious Scottsboro case. For a temperate and illuminating exposition of the relation of the Negro to white society E. J. W. should read James Weldon Johnson's *NEGRO AMERICANS—WHAT NOW?* (Viking).

Next for the Scandinavians, Bohemians, and other sturdy settlers in the prairie states who have had increasingly frequent depiction in recent years. Of them Elmer T. Peterson has written in *TRUMPETS WEST* (Dodd, Mead), the tale of three generations of Swedish immigrants who settled in Kansas and ran the gamut from farming to banking and oil; Martha Ostenso in *WILD GESE* (Dodd, Mead), Willa Cather in two of her best novels, *MY ANTONIA* (Houghton Mifflin) and *O PIONEERS!* (Knopf), and O. E. Rölvaag in *GIANTS OF THE EARTH* (Harpers), a depiction of valiant struggle against nature.

But I dare not linger—in fact, must squeeze into a few lines the titles of Oliver La Farge's *LAUGHING BOY* (Houghton-Mifflin), the best recent portrayal of Indian life in fiction to be found, David C. De Jong's *BELLY FULLA STRAW* (Knopf), the story of a Dutch immigrant family, and Elizabeth Eastman's *SUN ON THEIR SHOULDERS* (Morrow) in which a Finnish family is shown in the cranberry bog section of Cape Cod. And before I end this mere hint of racial-American literature I should like to commend to E. J. W.'s attention some of the recent proletarian novels in which the foreign laborer is shown at conflict with or at work in the

land of his adoption, such books as Catherine Brody's *NOBODY STARVES* (Longmans, Green), Fielding Burke's *CALL HOME THE HEART* (Longmans, Green), and Albert Halper's *UNION SQUARE* (Viking).

Now to take up her request for books dealing with the leading religions of the world. If she wants a brief, well-written textbook she will find it in George A. Barton's *RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD* (University of Chicago Press); if a very scholarly work, in Hopkins's *HISTORY OF RELIGIONS* (Macmillan), if a popular presentation, in Lewis Browne's *THIS BELIEVING WORLD* (Macmillan).

Highlights in the Scholarly Journals

By DELANCEY FERGUSON

THE 18th century also had its fakes, and it had its methods of exposing them. Here—its spelling slightly modernized—is part of Bishop Percy's analysis of the "Rowley" MSS. which Chatterton had forged:

"... The characters uniformly resemble the writing of no era whatever, nor are in any degree uniform and consistent with themselves: but are evidently written by a modern pen, which has endeavored to render the letters as uncouth and obscure as possible, and yet is frequently betrayed into escapes which are in the most modern characters. ... We remarked some of the letters to have been written in four or five different manners; so that the writer evidently went upon no principles, had previously formed to himself no alphabet; had a very imperfect random guess at the old alphabets and was incapable of imitating any of them truly. Even the poetical specimen ... is merely rendered obscure by a fanciful uncouth alphabet of the writer's own invention, reducible to no principle of genuine ancient writing.

"With regard to the parchment itself, it is evidently stained yellow on the back with ochre, to look like old parchment; but the fraud is so unskillfully performed, that you may see stains and besmearings on the other side; and if you rub the back with a wet white handkerchief it will be stained with the ochre. He hath also contrived an ink (than which nothing is more easy) that should be very faint and yellow. ...

"The contents contain no less proofs of the forgery, for they assert gross and ridiculous falsehoods, such as there having been ancient moneys current in England with the arms of Bristol on the reverse. ... I must again repeat, that so far as depends on the evidence of these specimens, the writings attributed to Mr. Thos. Rowlie may finally be pronounced to be forged and spurious."

So wrote the shrewd Bishop in September, 1773, after his friend Lord Dacre had submitted some of the fakes for his investigation. The letter is one of several, hitherto unpublished, by Percy and others, which A. Watkin-Jones of Exeter College, Oxford, prints in the fall number of *PMLA*. The Bishop lacked Messrs. Carter and Pollard's scientific apparatus for the analysis of ink and paper, but he knew his stuff.