

The BOWLING GREEN by Christopher Morley

The Knothole, July 9

I HAVE no idea how hot it is in the city, but today's amusement here has been watching the thermometer. It went to 116° when placed on the sundial at full meridian, has been 96° all afternoon under the trees in the garden. Even the dogs realize it's warm and have been mercifully mute.

The ideal reading for hot weather is Max Beerbohm. If I were the French Line I'd get out a little reprint of his *On Speaking French* and sell it to the passengers in the *Normandie*. You'll find it in the volume "And Even Now." In the same book is his essay on Laughter.—The three Bon Voyage readings we have always hankered to put in steamer baskets are Beerbohm's *And Even Now*, Santayana's *Soliloquies in England*, and Nevinson's *Farewell to America*.

But, for reasons of my own, I found myself on this hot day rereading here and there in Shakespeare. As usual, I came upon all sorts of appropriate excitement. I wondered again, as I have before, why no radio company has ever used as a motto the lines of Glendower:—

"Those musicians that shall play to you
Hang in the air a thousand leagues
from hence."

(1st Henry IV, III, 1, 226)

That reminded me of Walt Whitman's line in the 1855 Preface, which I always hanker to see at the head of a newspaper radio timetable:—

"The broadcast doings of the day and night."

Of course we can go much further back and find (in the *Aeneid*, Book VI, 847) the great passage I hoped might be used as a motto for Radio City:—

*Orabunt causas melius, caelique meatus
Describent radio, et surgentia sidera
dicent.*

If you allow yourself to ramble at large in Shakespeare there's no knowing what you'll come upon. Thinking about the sun-dial made me think of marigolds, because there used to be some clumps of that flower near it. And hunting up Shakespeare on the subject of marigolds, I note that he says they are the flowers to give to middle-aged men (because they blossom in middle summer.) This, unexpectedly, in the *Winter's Tale*. Of course sun dials send one to Hazlitt, who wrote so pleasant an essay; he says the thing to plant near them is sun-flowers; which I never thought of. (My own sundial, because I pointed the gnomon to magnetic North instead of True North, is just an hour wrong: but it marks perfect Daylight Saving Time.)

Shakespeare comes into that again. This sun-dial is my only remaining relic of the Hoboken production of *After Dark*; it stood in the garden of what was supposed to be "The Lilacs, Montclair," and the hero rested his tall hat on it in a romantic scene. Well, *After Dark* had a subtitle, "Neither Maid, Wife, Nor Widow," which I tagged onto it and thought I had invented it myself. Years afterward, rummaging in *Measure for Measure* (V. 1, 173) I found that Shake-



"DOCTOR PENGUIN"

Photo by Peter A. Juley

speare had used the phrase *Neither maid, widow, nor wife*. Skelton also, in the enormously amusing *Philip Sparrow*.

Thinking about warm weather, there is that remark of Falstaff's hoping it won't be a hot day when the armies come together; because, he says, he's only taking two shirts with him.—And the immortal line in the greatest of all tavern scenes: Doll Tearsheet, when she wipes his face and says: "Poor ape, how thou sweatest."

In *The Taming of the Shrew* I observed that the name of Petruchio's spaniel was Troilus (in Act IV, Scene 1, the scene where I once found a pun very useful in an emergency) and this sent me to the play *Troilus and Cressida* where I noticed a jape I had never spotted before. It can't be just an accident. Ulysses makes his speech (Act IV, Scene 5) about Cressida the wanton. Everyone knows the passage, beginning

"Fie, fie upon her!

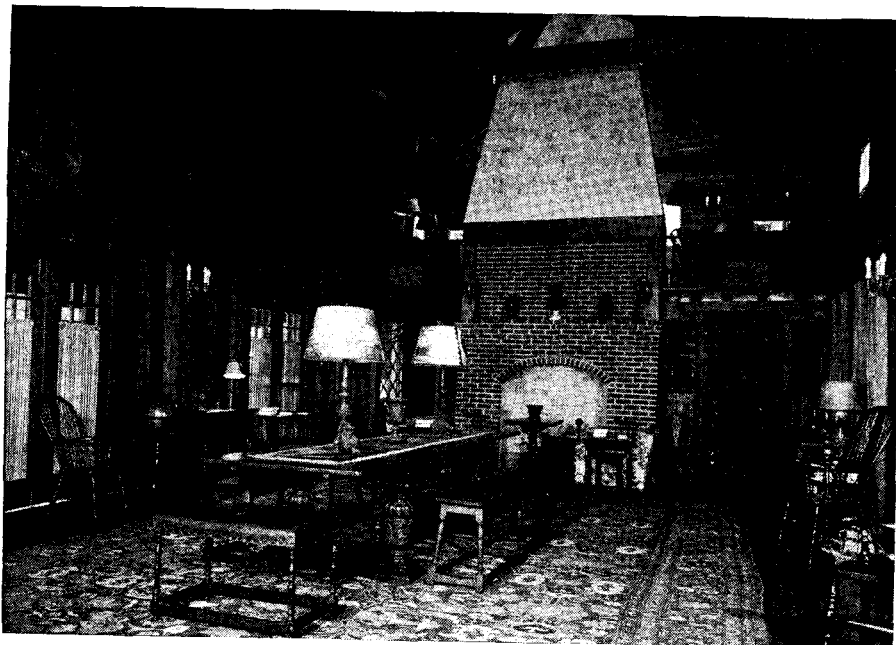
There's language in her eye, her cheek,
her lip,

Nay, her foot speaks; her wanton spirits
look out

At every joint and motive of her
body." . . .

And so on; concluding with his description of the Trojan heroine as one of the "daughters of the game." He's interrupted by a trumpet call within, and all the Greek warriors cry out "The Trojans' trumpet!" Surely, surely, this was meant to be also heard by the audience as "The Trojan trumpet!" and a sure-fire laugh.

Another of my happinesses was to discover that Jack Cade (2nd Henry VI, Act IV, Scene 2) said exactly the same thing that Mr. Hoover did when he alluded to grass growing in the streets of De-



DR. ROSENBACH'S "FISHING BOX" (See p. 14)

troit. Jack Çade said "In Cheapside shall my palfrey go to grass."

I like Macbeth's phrase for a ghost or murder story—"a dismal treatise." (Act V, Scene 5.)

For years I have besought various taversners to carve above their bars the line (Antony & Cleopatra, IV, 7, 9)

"I have yet room for six scotches more" but no one will believe me that it is actually there. I have the same trouble with my dentist when I quote to him Ecclesiastes XII, 13:—

"The grinders cease because they are few"—but I have yet to find a dentist who reads the Bible.

(Speaking of quotations, it was odd to find the N. Y. *World Telegram* last night in an editorial attributing to Robert Louis Stevenson the famous apology of Charles II for dying so slowly.)

This random and happy ploitering in Shakespeare led me to one extraordinarily interesting thing. Like most of the discoveries that startle me, probably everyone else knew it already. I turned to a book I'd been saving for a year, Dr. E. E. Willoughby's *A Printer of Shakespeare* (Dutton, 1935.) This is a biography of William Jaggard, the Elizabethan printer; to whom and his son, together with the actors Heminge and Condell, we owe the First Folio. I had never known that Jaggard went blind (about 1612)—one might almost think that his blindness might account for some of the extraordinary printing in that book. But at the time of his affliction his son Isaac, then a boy of 18, entered the business, and it was Isaac's name that appeared on the title page in 1623. Dr. Willoughby tells us that the older man did not live to see the completion of the book which has made him immortal.

Tom Jaggard, another son of William, was a fellow-student of John Harvard at Emmanuel College, Cambridge. But what pleased me most was to learn that the mother of William Jaggard, after his father's death, married a man called Morley. I wish he could have been her first husband.

Thinking about Shakespeare one thinks of the man who has handled more of the quartos and folios than any other—Dr. A. S. W. Rosenbach, the famous bookseller. Rosy will be sixty next week, and will probably celebrate it not with a folio but a fish. (His boat, by the way, is called *First Folio*.) Miss Avery Strakosch, who has collaborated with the Doctor in his books of reminiscence, writes me a delightful snapshot of him in his life as fisherman rather than bibliophag:—

Doctor Penguin

It was late Autumn. The man in the long overcoat plowed leisurely through the sand toward my cottage; he stopped now and then to sniff the stiff breeze.

My eyes followed him and I was reminded of a certain young penguin at the Aquarium. There was about him that same seemingly unstudied indifference to everything except, perhaps, the salt air.

In outline he resembled a penguin, too. The shabby black coat curved in to the ankles, and an old sweater puffed him out through the pectorals. Shielding him from the autumn sun was a once white felt, turned briny yellow from seasons of exposure to the elements. As I watched him I smiled, wondering what his tailor on Savile Row would have thought if he had met him just then.

"Can't you women ever be on time?" he shouted, spying me through the French door. I came outside. "There won't be a fish biting if you don't hurry!"

We reached his museum-like boat-house on Corson's Inlet, a little fishing village on the Jersey coast, and immediately all need of hurry died down. The fish in the sea would wait. It was more important to uncrate a single one beautifully mounted, that had just arrived. He exhibited it with perhaps greater pride than one of the trophies in his book vaults in New York and Philadelphia. Amused, I recalled the day, a season or two before, when he had received a cable from England saying that a certain belted earl had finally decided to accept Doctor R's offer for his library, one of the finest private collections in England. The same day Doctor had been officially notified by the magazine *Field and Stream* that he had won their prize, some new fishing tackle. It seems he had caught one of the largest channel bass that year, a fifty-nine pounder. He made much more fuss over the fishing prize than over the earl's decision.

EVERY STRAKOSCH

Good News

SIR:—Do you suppose that the general poetry public knows that we have reason to expect a posthumous volume of poems by A. E. Housman?

When I was in college, several years ago, there was a wave of acute interest in the *Shropshire Lad* lyrics. As a representative of that cult, I wrote to Mr. Housman, expressing our delight in the poems and asking point-blank whether *Last Poems* would be the last. On October 15, 1932, he sent me the following characteristically terse post-card:

"Not necessarily the last, but the last volume which will appear in my lifetime. (signed) A. E. H."

I judge that the omission of salutation and the signature in initials were a gentle reprimand for my audacity.

So far as I know, there has never been any other statement that there were more poems to come, and I'm sure that you and your readers will share my delighted anticipation.

VIRGINIA RICE.

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Medford, Massachusetts.

Cheerful Cajuns

MADAME TOUSSAINT'S WEDDING DAY. By Thad St. Martin. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1936. \$2.

Reviewed by JONATHAN DANIELS

"THEY were all Gauls." And this racial fact makes a marvellous and delightful difference in this novel of another Southern group living in close grips with life, stirring to the immediate needs of sex and hunger. Such a tale as this about Protestant, anemic Anglo-Saxons would have been clouded by guffawing sin or grim shame, but a tale of Catholic Cajuns, less marked by their squalor than by their sea, it is both lively and in the best sense sophisticated.

That difference is essential. In this Catholic community, lost from priests, a spirit somehow survives through Catholicism from a continuity of warm, persisting paganism, while in similarly lost Protestant communities the spirit of man only goes back to a stiff righteousness, incapable of bending but easily broken into a free obscenity or a hiding shame. But this difference is not all. Undoubtedly a solemn sociologist or a reforming realist would have found in Mr. St. Martin's community of shrimp seiners the sickness, the superstition, the lecherous evil, the idleness, and the greed which Mr. St. Martin notes without squirming. But with a deeper wisdom Mr. St. Martin has found a people capable in poverty of joyous living and in Madame Toussaint, a woman strong, simple and wise, good and joyous, worthy of her lusty brood, of her defunct Toussaint in Heaven, and of the younger and sturdy Jean with whom from her capable widowhood she will jump over a broomstick into bed beyond this crowded day.

Mr. St. Martin has told no story. Instead and delightfully he merely has written in the brimming wedding day of Madame Toussaint the tumultuous description of a people. He has packed it full to overflowing with the drama of love and murder and death, with the smell of shrimp drying and shrimp rotting, of a buxom bride's octagon soap bath, and with the hilarity of easy girls of all shades of color scratching in competition for the bed of a bad, old, sick man who uses everything from quarters and pink ribbons to fully equipped shrimp boats to aid his career in seduction.

This is not a great book, but surely it is a grand one. Full of what some might call shocking material, it is nowhere shocking. There is no room for the pornographic in Mr. St. Martin's shrewd wit and fresh humor. *Gusto* is the name for the way in which he has put his words down, and *gusto* will be the name for the way in which a great many readers will pick them up.