

The BOWLING GREEN by Christopher Morley

It's Thawing

IT'S thawing!
I think I heard crows cawing
And in the back-yard slush
Everything's awash.

The eaves go drip-drip-dripping,
I feel like skipping!
After six weeks of icebound roads,
Fuel-oil in costly loads,
Lining windows of abodes
With weatherstrip and felting,
Streets like skating rinks,
Clattering fenders, monkey-links,
Snow drifting and sleet pelting,
Glycerine on windshield panes,
Gales and gelid rains,
I've taken off the chains—
It's melting!

Farewell golosh
And frozen plumbing,
By gosh
Spring's coming!

It feels slick!
The thermometer's forty-five:
I'm out on the drive with a pick
Where the ice is thick.
I'm actually sweating, and getting
Down to the gravel
So cars can climb the hill
Without a spill
And the cook can travel.
(When she fell and crocked her knee
It had to be paid by me
At a dollar a stitch. . . .)

Once more
I'll be able to open the cellar door;
Now the nights are shorter
I won't hear such frequent roar
Of the burner on the basement floor
And oil at 7¼.

The eaves have shed
Their fringe of icicles:
Shall I put away sled
And bring out bicycles?
First to unfreeze
Are rims and edges:
Round trunks of trees
And under hedges.
The shingles steam—
Is winter dead
Or is it a dream?

It'll be difficult, in the blaze
Of approaching summer days
To realize that chip and scar
That now my steps and pathway mar,
All those scratches on the brick,
Were made with bang and slog and slice
By pick and shovel, gouging ice.
Unlikely then as any novel
To think of the midwinter shovel.
O sun how sweet! Soft air how nice!
I don't even want to stay in

Long enough to write these verses.
Did I once praise winter? Nix!
Let the winter of Thirty-Six
Pass with reminiscent curses.
As soon as you like, let spring begin.
Let the word be aprication
When I can walk to Roslyn Station,
Make sure that there's no hocus-pocus
About the crocus
And very likely cry on
The neck of the first dandelion.

I began to fear that frost was chronic,
But now all creatures feel spring tonic.
Electric bills and snowdrifts lessen,
The goat sign's up in delicatessen,
Again the groundhog leaves his dark hole,
The dogs are dragging bits of charcoal
From the fireplace onto the rug;
And the final cure, you may be sure,
Is to smell manure
When beds are dug.
Hopeful anew, the housewife reads
The annual catalogue of seeds
And puts away odd pairs of mittens.
Even the cat forsakes her kittens
And takes an airing on the roof.

Can it all be just a spoof?
For I'm still wary:
It's only the end of February,
Too soon to compliment
Spring for sincere intent.
This welcoming allure
Is premature;
She's full of guile,
Knows her tricks from A to Izzard,
So wear your woollens yet a while:
In a sudden mood to vex
She may still conceal a blizzard.
On her lip see mischief pucker:
Very like some freak has struck her—
In the humor of her sex
(Like the late lamented Tex)
Calling to us, *Hello sucker!*

So, equinox,
On the 21st *prox*
Be clear and prompt;
Not swamped
With flood and fog and mud and bog
And mercury seesawing.
O March, not too much hemming and
hawing—
Anyhow, it's thawing!

Miss Mitford

It's good to learn that I was quite wrong
in supposing (Feb. 15) I might be the
only person reading Mary Russell Mitford. Mrs. W. F. Harris in Toledo, Mrs. F. G. Hall in Durham, N. C., have both written with much interesting detail. Mrs. Harris confesses herself a special enthusiast and distributor of Miss M., having once bought several copies of *Our Village* (with the Hugh Thomson illus-



DRAWING BY GEORGE MORROW
From "Country Stories" by Miss Mitford.

trations) at a remainder sale for 10 cents each. She quotes the gratitude of friends to whom she sent copies. And Mrs. Hall notes that just before our paragraph appeared the ladies' literary club of Durham, N. C., enjoyed a report on that book by one of the members.

It almost tempts one to ask whether anyone is reading Galt's *Annals of the Parish*, the publication of which preceded the *Our Village* sketches by just a few years.

A Design for College Presidents

Johns Hopkins University is fortunate in its new president, the noted geographer Isaiah Bowman; and it is sad to think that by praising his new book (which we do, most heartily) we probably add to his burdens; such burdens as high competence brings on a worker in any field. For there can be no question that if his *A Design for Scholarship* (Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore; \$1.75) reaches the public it deserves President Bowman will be even more beset with invitations to speak at other colleges and universities. This little volume, a collection of addresses made at various gatherings of learning (Johns Hopkins itself, Bryn Mawr, the University of Pennsylvania, Dartmouth, M. I. T., the Association for the Advancement of Science, etc.) is a model of its kind. Each one of Dr. Bowman's talks is wholesome with charm and vigor, with both gaiety and high purpose, and salted with a rich and miscellaneous learning. A great reader, a far traveller, a sagacious and humane observer, Bowman has the rare touch for
(Continued on page 16)

WHY KEEP THEM ALIVE?

by PAUL de KRUIF
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DOROTHY L. SAYERS

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The Situation

GOOD WRITING is being done these days in America, as well as some that is not so good. An enormous amount of both is published in book form. When the first novel of a genuine and original talent appears, it travels a long and circuitous route from the publisher's warehouse, through the chaos of good and bad writing, into the hands of those persons who ultimately discover that they want it and enjoy it. One sees an exciting review of a new book, decides to read it and mentally ties a string on one's finger. Then one struggles against mnemonic lapses and is forced to muster considerable initiative before one actually remembers to buy it.

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A Word about the Publishers

THOUGH it is true that the books sent to *The Discoverers* will be selected from the output of one house, it is the same publisher who found and presented such discoveries as *February*

Hill by Victoria Lincoln, *Anthony Adverse* by Hervey Allen, *Deep Dark River* by Robert Rylee, *Stars Fell on Alabama* by Carl Carmer, *The Sea Witch* by Alexander Laing, *The Incredible Marquis* by Herbert Gorman, *The Cautious Amorist* by Norman Lindsay, *The Answering Glory* by R. C. Hutchinson, *The Green Pastures* by Marc Connelly, *Land of Plenty* by Robert Cantwell, *Arctic Adventure* by Peter Freuchen, *The Folks* by Ruth Suckow, and *Finnley Wren* by Philip Wylie. As you undoubtedly know, many of these did not remain secrets; were selected by Book Clubs and were widely appreciated.

Under this plan, the books selected will be the most interesting and original manuscripts that we have been able to find. They will either be the first work of an author, the first book of an author to be published in America, or a completely new departure for a writer of established reputation. Some of *The Discoverers'* books will be non-fiction, and at rare intervals, where the temptation is forgivably strong, we may issue a long narrative poem, like *Conquistador* or *John Brown's Body*. But most important—they will be books that cause an unmistakable sense of excitement to sweep our editorial offices.

Had this plan been in operation during the past few months, you would have received autographed, first-edition, numbered copies of such distinguished books as *INNOCENT SUMMER* by Frances Frost, which *The N. Y. Times* called: "An original, sensitive and moving book"; *OLD MAN GREENLAW* by Kenneth Payson Kempton, about which *The Boston Herald* said: "Its primitive and salty humor is that of life itself. Distinctly a novel of today, with a flavor all its own"; and *FISH ON THE STEEPLE* by Ed Bell, about which Sterling North of *The Chicago News* said: "A discovery, Ladies and Gentlemen! A New, Exciting Novel. Nothing Less! We vote this book the most delightfully fresh and stimulating first novel of the year. It sings, swears, capers and dances through 312 sparkling pages!"

The First Selection

MANY of you no doubt have read these books. Many of you in the future, whether or not you subscribe, will very likely want to read books selected for *The Discoverers*.

For instance, our first book—*LOCOS: An author at the mercy of his characters*, by Felipe Alfau.

Here is a book that will excite a contagion of laughter, aston-

FARRAR & RINEHART, INC. 232

The Discoverers

The first book for

The Discoverers

LOCOS: *An author at
the mercy of his characters*

BY FELIPE ALFAU

"It's as original as a kangaroo"

—STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT

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When THE BARONESS was first offered to us it had not yet become the most successful novel of the year in Germany, where almost 100,000 copies have since been sold; but it seemed to us a very unusual book, unusually done—this story of the Baroness who rides alone, ruling over her estates, and of the soldier who returns after twenty years of wandering to become her game-keeper.

The story has suspense and there are intensely dramatic situations as aristocrat and peasant face their world; but it is not this alone which so won our admiration. It is the way the story is told, with such delicacy of apprehension, so nice a feeling for words and atmosphere, with so sharp an observing eye, with such insight into people and things and so profound an understanding of the countryside. It seemed to us that here was a book which might well be called a work of art. We believe that there are many people who will remember the Baroness as long and as vividly as any fiction character of our time. \$2.50



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ernst Wiechert was born a for-ester's son in East Germany. He has written short stories, novels and plays, winning the Wilhelm Raabe Folk-Prize and the Schumann Prize. *Die Majorin*, already translated into 7 languages and here published in English as THE BARONESS, achieved for him the position he now occupies as one of the most widely read and distinguished of European novelists.

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A Family through a Century

THE YANKEE BODLEYS. By Naomi Lane Babson. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock. 1936. \$2.50.

Reviewed by THEODORE MORRISON

THIS admirable novel, as nearly as any good book can, should appeal to the innate appetite of most readers for universality. "The Yankee Bodleys" finds the universal where it should be found, in a very particular family living in a very particular place, Cape Ann, in Massachusetts; a family that talks Yankee idiom, thinks Yankee thoughts, marries, dies, labors, quarrels, and suffers according to the ways of a tribe and the changes and moral climate of a small region during the better part of a century. But universal the book certainly is. Loves, jealousies, pleasures, and losses; the one way of being born into life, varying only as it is piously sanctioned or piously gossiped about; the many ways of getting out, which all end in one common finality; the lively and eager sense of the future, the solitary and heartrending sense of the past; this is the stuff of which "The Yankee Bodleys" is made.

This is Mrs. Babson's first novel, and as such it is surprisingly mature. I can see only one source of misgiving about Mrs. Babson's future, and one complaint with the book, one point at which the hand of the amateur may be detected. A century of time and four or five generations of people make a good deal of material for a single volume of ordinary size. One of the Bodleys complains, at some point in the story, that the family seems to be running out. The descendants of Adelia and Horatio are not recruiting the numbers of the clan. This is too bad for the Bodleys, but good luck for the reader. I found it hard enough to keep four generations of them distinct, especially when family names, Gamaliel, Serena, Deborah, and the rest, began to reappear in successive litters of cousins. The book, after a time, threatens to become the story of generations rather than of people, of change rather than of characters.

Will Mrs. Babson have any material left to write about after this book? That is the misgiving one feels at the end of "The Yankee Bodleys." If she has, and God forbid that she shouldn't, I hope that she will again take toward her material an attitude as wise, as understanding, shall we say as reconciled, as in this book. We have nowadays writers of fiction who take every attitude toward their material except that of sympathy. They use their material to browbeat the reader into a state of indignation with society, or to work off on him some other mood of the times. Mrs. Babson has few indignations; or if she has, she conceals them. She likes her people without condoning them.



NAOMI LANE BABSON

When they act from spite, hypocrisy, or cowardice, she does not disguise their delinquency; neither does she apologize for it. Much of their lives is passed under the influence of sexual appetite or timidity or jealousy. Mrs. Babson understands them, and represents their outward behaviour and their inward impulses with honesty and with knowledge, but without display, without false glamor, without turning aside for condemnation or defense.

The sense of change in the book is, properly, a sense of loss and of tragedy, of the ultimate sorrow of things. Mrs. Babson has a gift of pathos which is quite without sentimentality; two or three scenes in "The Yankee Bodleys" will not easily give up their hold on the mind.

Theodore Morrison is an instructor in English at Harvard University, and is the author of several volumes of verse; his latest book is "Notes of Death and Life."

The Bowling Green

(Continued from page 12)

this kind of essay. We adjure the various academies to restrain their natural eagerness to solicit him for speech; universities are perennially loquacious; let them buy and contemplate his book instead and give him his chance to get on with his big exciting job in Baltimore.

Part of our own job, though ill accomplished, is to keep an occasional eye upon the outputtings of the university presses. If a father wants a stimulating book for a son at college, or an alumnus cares to make a small gift to his college library, or a college president would like a fire-side companion for the scant and late hours that are his own, try *A Design for Scholarship*.