



(From the illustration by Aaron Bohrod)

Anecdotal History of A River

THE ILLINOIS. By James Gray. Illustrated by Aaron Bohrod. (*Rivers of America Series.*) New York: Farrar & Rinehart. 1940. 355 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS

THE Illinois is less famous than it ought to be. Winding down from a point just below Chicago to another point just above St. Louis, it has been (and still is) an important artery of commerce. For its size, it is one of the best fish rivers in America. Though the State it bisects is of low elevation and comparatively level surface, the Illinois has natural beauty. Picturesque bluffs rise along much of its lower course; at Peoria it broadens into a handsome lake; above that city Starved Rock, with its steep limestone cliffs, furnishes a view along the fertile valley and across limitless prairies that stirs the heart. The stream has a life all its own—fishermen running their trot-lines, pearlers dredging up mussel-shells by the ton, farmers of the bottom-lands flocking to a show-boat, trappers whose lineage goes straight back to the American Fur Company setting their snares, the genial, indolent riff-raff that pick up a living nobody knows how, give it an atmosphere quite unlike that of the busy, efficient country about. And the Illinois has history.

Mr. Gray's pleasant, impressionistic volume, written with genuine gusto, emphasizes the history. He does not include some matters that oldtime lovers of the Illinois may think belong in the book; for example, an account of the yearly Beardstown fish-fry and its unlimited hospitality. He does not

describe the joys of angling for bass above the dam at Meredosia; he does not render the atmosphere of an old river town like Havana, where Masters's Spoon River brings down its yellow flood from the country just below John Finley's Galesburg. But he does trace the history of the stream and the 25,000 miles it drains with a skilful hand; a history sometimes noble, now and then poetic, but more often simple, homely, and appealing. The most heroic chapters in the record were contributed by Marquette and Joliet, La Salle and Tonty; the most tragic by Pontiac and the martyred Elijah Lovejoy; the most memorable by Lincoln and Douglas. These men are all here, evoked from the past with

well-selected anecdote and speech, and related to the river by many a striking incident. So are George Rogers Clark, Pierre Manard the Canadian-born trader, Daniel Cook (his name perpetuated in a crowded county).

Nearly all these names are familiar. Mr. Gray includes other men who are little known—Joe Gillespie, for example, an "artist in spite of himself"; Ward Hill Lamon, Lincoln's friend and biographer; Edward Beecher, scion of a great family, who nursed the infant Illinois College into vigor. He brings out well the picturesque qualities of Judge David Davis of Bloomington. The book would have been better had more attention been paid to semi-neglected figures like these, especially when representative of large social elements, and less to men like Grant (who as a Galena man belongs to the Mississippi rather than the Illinois, anyway.) We miss the sterling Jonathan B. Turner, father of the Morrill Land-Grant Act and hence of numerous State Universities; Altgeld of the Springfield years, Adlai E. Stevenson, Dick Oglesby; W. H. Powell, the Bloomington teacher, first through the Grand Canyon; and Edmund J. James, the Jacksonville boy who became Illinois' greatest educator. A little more material on the social composition of the Illinois valley would have been valuable. Nowhere in the country did Southern blood, coming via the Ohio and Mississippi, and Northern blood, coming via the Great Lakes, mingle more interestingly than in this area. We would also have liked more data on natural history, and on the river traffic. But Mr. Gray's primary aim has been to write an anecdotal history of the river, and in that he has succeeded.

Your Literary I. Q.

By Howard Collins

FAVORITE GAMES OF LITERARY CHARACTERS

Do you remember the favorite sports of the literary figures mentioned below? Score 5 points if you can name the game, and another 5 if you can recall the work in which the character appears and its author. A total of 60 is par, 70 is good, 80 or better is excellent. Answers are on page 42.

1. At what game was Philo Vance an unerring expert?
2. What game did Cleopatra play with Charmian?
3. What was Jim Smiley betting on when he was outsmarted by a stranger?
4. Playing at what game sometimes kept John Oakhurst a week without sleep?
5. Of what game was Phileas Fogg extremely fond?
6. What open-air pastime did Sherlock Holmes pursue indoors?
7. At what game was Ah Sin caught cheating?
8. What game did Sarah Battle consider "her life business, her duty, the thing that she came into the world to do"?
9. In what quarry did General Zaharoff, the big-game hunter, find renewed zest after all others had ended in boredom?
10. What game was Dangerous Dan McGrew playing at the time he was shot?

A Message for Today*

GEORGE GORDON LORD BYRON

I

ALAS! how bitter is his country's curse
To him who *for* that country would expire,
But did not merit to expire *by* her,
And loves her, loves her even in her ire!
The day may come when she will cease to err,
The day may come she would be proud to have
The dust she dooms to scatter, and transfer
Of him, whom she denied a home, the grave.
But this shall not be granted; let my dust
Lie where it falls; nor shall the soil which gave
Me breath, but in her sudden fury thrust
Me forth to breathe elsewhere, so reassume
My indignant bones, because her angry gust
Forsooth is over, and repeal'd her doom;
No,—she denied me what was mine—my roof,
And shall not have what is not hers—my tomb.
Too long her armed wrath hath kept aloof
The breast which would have bled for her, the heart
That beat, the mind that was temptation-proof,
The man who fought, toil'd, travell'd, and each part
Of a true citizen fulfill'd, and saw
For his reward, the Guelph's ascendant art
Pass his destruction even into a law.

II

Alas! with what a weight upon my brow
The sense of earth and earthly things come back,
Corrosive passions, feelings dull and low,
The heart's quick throb upon the mental rack,
Long day, and dreary night; the retrospect
Of half a century bloody and black,
And the frail few years I may yet expect
Hoary and hopeless, but less hard to bear,
For I have been too long and deeply wreck'd
On the lone rock of desolate Despair,
To lift my eyes more to the passing sail
Which shuns that reef so horrible and bare;
Nor raise my voice—for who would heed my wail?
I am not of this people, nor this age,
And yet my harpings will unfold a tale
Which shall preserve these times when not a page
Of their perturbed annals could attract
An eye to gaze upon their civil rage,
Did not my verse embalm full many an act
Worthless as they who wrought it: 'tis the doom
Of spirits of my order to be rack'd
In life, to wear their hearts out, and consume
Their days in endless strife, and die alone;
And pilgrims come from climes where they have known
The name of him—who now is but a name.
And wasting homage o'er the sullen stone,
Spread his—by him unheard, unheeded—fame;
And mine at least hath cost me dear: to die
Is nothing; but to wither thus—to tame
My mind down from its own infinity—
To live in narrow ways with little men,
A common sight to every common eye,
A wanderer, while even wolves can find a den,

*This poem originally appeared in 1821 as part of Lord Byron's "The Prophecy of Dante."

Ripp'd from all kindred, from all home, all things
That make communion sweet, and soften pain—
To feel me in the solitude of kings
Without the power that makes them bear a crown—
To envy every dove his nest and wings
Which waft him where the Apennine looks down
On Arno, till he perches, it may be,
Within my all inexorable town,
Where yet my boys are, and that fatal she,
Their mother, the cold partner who hath brought
Destruction for a dowry—this to see
And feel, and know without repair, hath thought
A bitter lesson; but it leaves me free:
I have not vilely found, nor basely sought,
They made an Exile—not a slave of me.

III

The Spirit of the fervent days of Old,
When words were things that came to pass, and thought
Flash'd o'er the future, bidding men behold
Their children's children's doom already brought
Forth from the abyss of time which is to be,
The chaos of events, where lie half-wrought
Shapes that must undergo mortality;
What the great Seers of Israel wore within,
That spirit was on them, and is on me;
And if, Cassandra-like, amidst the din
Of conflict none will hear, or hearing heed
This voice from out the Wilderness, the sin
Be theirs, and my own feelings be my meed,
The only guerdon I have ever known.
Hast thou not bled? and hast thou still to bleed,
Italia? Ah! to me such things foreshown
With dim sepulchral light, bid me forget
In thine irreparable wrongs my own;
We can have but one country, and even yet
Thou'rt mine—my bones shall be within thy breast,
My soul within thy language, which once set
With our old Roman sway in the wide West;
But I will make another tongue arise
As lofty and more sweet, in which express'd
The hero's ardor, or the lover's sighs,
Shall find alike such sounds for every theme,
That every word, as brilliant as thy skies,
Shall realize a poet's proudest dream.
And make thee Europe's nightingale of song;
So that all present speech to thine shall seem
The note of meaner birds, and every tongue
Confess its barbarism when compared with thine.
This shalt thou owe to him thou didst so wrong,
Thy Tuscan bard, the banish'd Ghibelline.
Woe! woe! the veil of coming centuries
Is rent,—a thousand years which yet supine
Lie like the ocean waves ere winds arise,
Heaving in dark and sullen undulation,
Float from eternity into these eyes;
The storms yet sleep, the clouds still keep their station,
The unborn earthquake yet is in the womb,
The bloody chaos yet expects creation,
But all things are disposing for thy doom;
The elements await but for the word,
"Let there be darkness!" and thou grow'st a tomb!