



## WAR

THE *Saturday Review* goes to press at the moment when the United States has taken up the war challenge of Japan. A magazine devoted to the encouragement and interpretation of American literature has its duties and responsibilities, too, in the months or years to come of the struggle against the forces that are trying to extinguish the meaning of America from the world. We will fight against every symptom and manifestation of fascist thought, and try, as best we can, to do the job of chronicling and evaluating the development of an intrinsically American culture, with emphasis upon our literature—the literature born not only out of the events and issues of the day, but out of the lasting purposes and goals of a free people.

## PAID PUBLISHING

THE recent indictment of Carlo M. Flumiani, president of the book-publishing house, Fortuny Publishers, Inc., brings up once more the dilemma of an author, willing to pay to have his work published, who falls into the hands of a publisher who misleads him as to the value of his book, overcharges for printing it, and makes promises to promote and distribute it that can never be fulfilled. The courts have decided in the past that this is a dishonest practice, and publishers have been fined or have gone to jail for it. It has come to be known as "vanity publishing."

Nevertheless, there is no reason why a writer, who has completed a manuscript that has merit, but who is unable to find a publisher willing to risk his capital in bringing it out, should not suggest to any reputable publishing house that he himself will subsidize his book and guarantee the publisher against losses. In this case the book is then listed in the publisher's regular catalogue and is sold, distributed to the press, and to the best of the publisher's ability, promoted by advertising. A typical agreement of this sort

between publisher and author may provide that the author's investment in his own book is to be repaid, if the venture is successful, by a high royalty on copies sold until the author has his money back, when it is reduced to the normal royalty. Provided that the book is not beneath the standard of the publisher's ordinary production, this is a legitimate business arrangement, and a writer should not hesitate to make it if he is confident of the value of his manuscript and of the probity of his publisher. But this type of publishing should be confined to non-fiction and to volumes of verse, for poetry is today extraordinarily difficult to publish with any hope of profit. It should be obvious that any novel that has been refused by a dozen or more representative publishers had better be buried in the author's trunk.

There is, as a matter of fact, a great

amount of highly valuable subsidized publishing at all times that cannot be catalogued under the heading of "vanity publishing." The university and college presses, for example, are subsidized, and while many of their books are successful and profitable, it is expected that they should produce useful and scholarly books whether profitable or not. Then there are the scientific and technical books in all fields, on which the return in income is too small or too slow to interest the commercial publisher, and other books on which the initial investment is too high to contemplate. The Guggenheim Foundation subsidizes writers; the Sage, the Rockefeller, the Carnegie Foundations are responsible for subsidized books. Without these subsidies of one kind or another our intellectual, scientific, and scholarly life would be half-starved.

H. S.

## Lineage

By William Rose Benét

MY ancestor who asked for his dismissal when a strict Presbytery spent its time debating rather than ordaining him who had in Pittsburgh preached, remained no less a gospel minister without a church and soon espoused the law, later became a Cornet of the Pittsburgh Light Dragoons, knew Spanish dollars well from picayunes, and where lay fortune—and, boarding a keel-boat, sailed down the Ohio and, eighteen hundred miles in all, down Mississippi (meeting Creeks, Choctaws and Chickasaws and Cherokees) into the Territory newly erected and the city of Natchez. There he practised law and died of yellow fever, trying to win, for wife and infants he had left behind, another start in life; but sadly wrote ". . . that my Executor communicate sentiments of the highest respect now due my wife from me who have unfortunately been the cause of her misfortune . . ."

Both of them had come of wealthy stock and large estates but ended poorly, and both he and she died nearly ten years younger than the age at which I write; and yet a son they left sired a well-loved grandmother of mine who bore her share of life's vicissitudes and was my Mother's mother . . .

So sometimes out of that distant eighteenth century ending when in regret upon his pallet lying in early Natchez, with the darkness growing, my ancestor rehearsed a life's defeats, all seems dissolved not even to faint reproach from his wife Anne and children dearly loved, and one accords a faint affectionate smile to his recorded sentiments, and I to my far forebear in the wilderness—borne on the great flood of the Father of Waters from solemn jowls and rather nasal prayers—breathe "Peace!" and wonder if the time may come for me when, in their turn, my own mistakes may seem as quaint?

'Tis said her charities were widely praised. I only know she bore one son renowned for wit and eloquence and one whose daughter handed down to me delights of childhood that now illumine age!

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## The P.E.N. Club

SIR:—With reference to your editorial of November 15th, 1941 on the P.E.N. Club, may I say that the members of the American P.E.N. Club will probably agree that there has been too much controversy over "inconsequential" in the internal affairs of the International P.E.N. Club. However, it should be noted that the American P.E.N. Club and Mr. Robert Nathan, the president, have acted as intermediary in this matter; their whole purpose being to clear up internal difficulties for which they were not responsible and to make it possible for the International P.E.N. Club, now of far greater importance and significance than ever before, to throw its whole energies into a consideration of vital literary, cultural, and international problems.

HENRY S. CANBY.

New York, N. Y.

## In Re "Rebecca"

SIR:—In your excellent discussion of literary coincidence (in re Miss Du Maurier and Señorita Nabuco) you might have mentioned a novel which has always seemed to me the most brilliant and savage treatment of the psychic problem of the Second Wife. A philologist would call it, I dare say, vinctulated matrimony. I refer to "Vera," by Elizabeth, Countess Russell, published in 1921. When a theme is so obvious and universal, "plagiarism" is practically impossible.

It was ingeniously said by Doubleday, Page & Co., when they published "Vera," that it was so "devastating" no man should be allowed to read it. Try it anyhow and see how wonderfully brimstone mixes with ink.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

New York City.

## Dr. Watson and Mr. Doyle

SIR:—Mary Stewart must not blame Dr. Watson for the contradictory statements about Mrs. Watson's mother in the American texts of "The Sign of the Four" and "The Five Orange Pips." The fault lies at the door of one Mr. Doyle, who had something to do, for better or for worse, with the editing of the good doctor's writings.

"The Five Orange Pips," as originally published in *The Strand Magazine*, did actually contain a reference to the orphaned Mrs. Watson's being on a visit to her "mother's." Dr. Watson, of course, called Mr. Doyle's attention to this slip of editing, and the passage was corrected, when the "Adventures" were published in book form in England, to read "on a visit to her aunt's." The John Murray (English) omnibus volume also follows this text. But Mr. Doyle forgot to inform the American publishers of the change,



"Good Lord, I've killed him!"

and both the collected "Adventures" and the Doubleday omnibus perpetuate the error down to this day—as they do many others of a like nature.

EDGAR W. SMITH.

Buttons, B. S. I.

## Emersonian Thief

We have received a number of letters answering the query of Mr. W. F. Ottarson (*SRL*, November 1st) as to where in Shakespeare he could find the line "the thief steals most from himself." Four of our readers—M. Gertrude Neal, H. Palmer, Grace Brecht, and Mrs. Henry D. Holmes—have pointed out that

The robb'd that smiles steals something from the thief;

He robs himself that spends a bootless grief.

from Shakespeare's "Othello" Act I, Scene 3, lines 208-209, may have been in Mr. Ottarson's mind. Elizabeth M. Bradley found the same quotation through "Bartlett."

We admit that Mr. Ottarson's line has a Shakespearian ring to it, yet Arthur E. Bestor, Jr., Assistant Professor of History at Teacher's College, Columbia University, here in New York, seems quite positive in his identification. He writes "The sentence 'The thief steals from himself' occurs in Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay on 'Compensation' in his 'Essays, First Series.'"

THE EDITORS.

## Elmer Davis on Huxley

SIR:—On October 26th you printed

Aldous Huxley's review of F. M. Alexander's latest book. The discovery which this book describes—if it is a fact and if it is practicable—will revolutionize education and medicine. Yet the only correspondence you have printed which was drawn forth by that review is a letter from Elmer Davis containing nothing but two or three moderately successful wise cracks. I would like to make an appeal for an opinion from some one of your readers who, in addition to being as profound a thinker as Elmer Davis, has also read the book Huxley was reviewing.

R. M. GUMMERE, JR.

Boston, Mass.

## Whose Storm Is It?

SIR:—Can any of your readers help me to identify the following passage, which I think is from one of Dickens's works, but am not certain. It is a description of a severe storm, and the author vividly describes the "fall of houses in the town." In one part he writes "if such a mind could rise, it was rising," and in another, "It's a dark night," said the Cricket, 'and the rotten leaves are lying by the way.'"

ELSIE BRIGGS.

Boston, Mass.

## From Brother to Brother

SIR:—It has been a happy privilege in these days of bitterness to read "My Brother Steve" by William Rose Benét—a generous tribute from brother to brother. Thank you.

MARION F. OVERTON.

Flushing, New York.