

Easy Come, Easy Go

ANGLE OF EARTH AND SKY. By David Morton. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1941. 88 pp. \$1.75.

POEMS AND PORTRAITS. By Christopher La Farge. New York: Coward-McCann, Inc. 1941. 63 pp. \$1.25.

THE GLASS-BLOWER AND OTHER POEMS. By Jan Struther. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company. 1941. 67 pp. \$1.50.

Reviewed by LOUIS UNTERMAYER

THESE three volumes are among the best of their kind, but their kind is not of the best. It is the kind of poetry which is easy to read and easy to forget; sometimes it seems even easier to write than to read. It commits few blunders of taste and creates no problems in technique; it has the approved combination of fancy and fluency, explicitness and grace, lightness and gravity. It has almost everything except the power of poetry.

David Morton's new collection is a good example, an anthology of the best intentions and the not-quite-achieved. All the best properties are here: the simplicities of nature pitted against the complexities of man; the virtues of New England maples and Saint Francis of Assisi; the uncertainty of love and the dependability of daffodils, the impetus of summer and song. Unfortunately, the reader has heard it all before—heard it in the very same accents. Everything is so anticipated, so well routinized, that the mind, no longer hoping for surprise, relaxes and is lulled to sleep by the soothing syllables. There is something to be said for poetry as an anodyne, but a poet should be the last one to say it. In the first few pages of "Angle of Earth and Sky" there is a parade of tried and true (or tried and found wanting) clichés; for example, "delicate flower," "passing bird," "soft disguise," "waiting silence," "golden air," "waving grasses." As teacher, no less than as poet, Mr. Morton knows better. He knows that when a poem is too easily come by it is scarcely worth holding. It is sometimes better to let it go with as little effort as it came.

Mr. La Farge has a little more respect for his material, but not much. He goes to some pains to particularize his settings, pointing up the scene, whereas Mr. Morton's landscape is one vast vague "loveliness." But he, too, cannot lift his lines above the traditional images, the worn effects, the rhetoric that promises sonority but ends flatly. The portraits and personal tributes are accomplished in a small way; the Washington Birthday speech is a thumping hortatory catalogue that just misses being ironic; the sonnets

just miss being impressive. "There is depth," say Mr. La Farge's publishers, "which seems to be lacking in most of the young moderns." After which this ancient reviewer (as well as the young moderns) might well ask "Where?"

Mrs. Struther's program is less ambitious than either Mr. Morton's or Mr. La Farge's, but her performance is far more successful. Twisting the neck of sentiment, she avoids sentimentality; without straining for originality she attains distinction. This is due to a way of dealing with familiar things as though they were being observed for the first (or, at most, the third) time; of not taking flowers, or a street, or the reader, or Beauty too much for granted. The blend of wit and fancy, of feminine discernment and unassuming distinction which characterized "Mrs. Miniver," is in these poems. It is distilled in the meditative "Intimations of Immortality in Early Middle Age," in the picturesque "Stallions in the Strand," the curt "R. I. P.," which out-Parkers Dorothy, the slight but savage "At a Dull Party," and the nimbly metaphysical "The Coach." The "idea" of each of these poems is any-

thing but cosmic; the subject matter is easily found and easy enough to expand. But Mrs. Struther has overcome the temptation to inflate or falsify just as she has overcome the too ready response to rhyme and unreason, to small animals and spring. Even when she summons the perennial passions she manages to escape stereotyping them; she speaks of "the long campaign of love."

Verse as modest as Mrs. Struther's often becomes more than it attempts to be. In its quiet, seldom lifted tone of voice it has authority and, what is more surprising, it has surprise.

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 364)

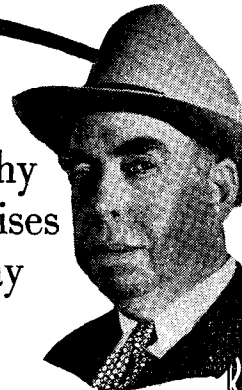
WALT WHITMAN
LEAVES OF GRASS*

Yet we walk, unheld, free
journeying up and down, till we
make our ineffaceable mark
upon time and diverse eras,
Till we saturate time and eras, that
the men and women of races,
ages to come, may prove
brethren and lovers, as we
are.

*(To Him That Was Crucified: pub. 1860)

ROBERT BENCHLEY
SAYS

"The kind of autobiography
every newspaperman promises
himself he'll write one day
—but can't"



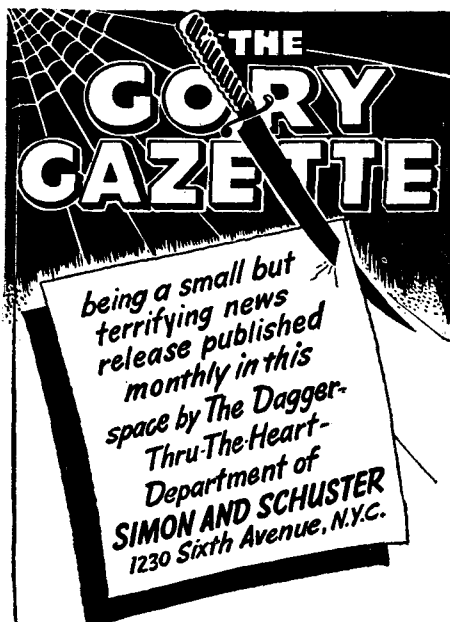
Irvin S. Cobb

"For years one of the most popular American writers . . . one of the greatest after-dinner speakers . . . one of the ablest newspaper reporters . . . an extraordinarily friendly man. In this fat and amusing book Irvin S. Cobb tells the story of his life—one of the most informal of autobiographies. He has a lot of zip. The Cobb gusto cannot be restrained. EXIT LAUGHING is as mellow and friendly as his native Bourbon—genuine Cobb."—STANLEY WALKER on the front page of N. Y. Herald Tribune "Books." \$3.50

JUST PUBLISHED

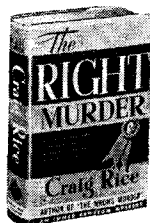
Exit LAUGHING

BOBBS-MERRILL



☛ We cornered the senior Gossip Columnist (No. 21W, a small, nervous man who covers the 52nd Street route) and barked: "Why don't you dig up some hot news? You're getting away with murder."

☛ "Sure I am," he admitted shamelessly, "if you mean *The Right Murder* by Craig Rice. I didn't know anyone saw me pinch that advance copy, and now that I've read it I don't care. It's terrific."



☛ "It is interesting to discover that you can read," we said bitterly, "but that hardly comes under the head of exciting gossip. Give us something we can print in *The Gory Gazette* for the Paying Customers."

☛ "All right," said 21W. "Here are a few items I picked up from Craig Rice. See which of them looks hot."

- 1. The recent middle-aisling of Jake Justus and Helene Brand has gone ph-t-t. Bermuda honeymoon ends in separate planes!
- 2. Is John J. Malone, Chicago's notorious mouthpiece, slipping? Private sources reveal that the playboy lawyer is being held incommunicado in connection with the recent knifing in Joe the Angel's Bar.
- 3. What's keeping the hottest story of the year off Chicago's front pages? Can it be that socialite Mona McClane buys off all the boys? And is that why nobody's heard about the mysterious gent found in Mona's bedroom with a knife in his back?

"Great stuff," we said. "Get Craig Rice in here to give us the whole story."



No. 21W snickered. "You've already got it. Maybe you ought to practice up on your reading. Go get yourself a copy of

THE RIGHT MURDER
by Craig Rice (\$2)

THE NEW BOOKS

Art

THE STRUCTURE OF ART. By Carl Thurston. University of Chicago Press. 1941. 190 pp. \$2.50.

Mr. Thurston has wisely confined the analytical part of his small but meaty book to the spatial arts—architecture, sculpture, painting, and the allied graphic arts. His analysis proceeds in that order—with the logical advantage of passing from the use of multiple and very complicated space to space that is merely suggested and inferential. This procedure makes a well-knit and exceptionally clear book.

Ultimately, as Mr. Thurston clearly perceives, the existence and the organization and structure of any work of art are only the potentiality of an esthetic experience. Such a potentiality may be quite variously realized in experience, may be misrealized, may remain unrealized.

When he approaches the constructive and psychological task of studying the esthetic experience itself, Mr. Thurston insists that time, sometimes much, sometimes little, is always in-

volved. All the arts are temporal arts—"art needs to be studied in terms of relationships and fluid processes." The distinguishing mark of esthetic as differentiated from kindred experiences, may be a sort of intensification and condensation which squeezes the time element out and results in an illusion of unity and timeliness, which may constitute a kind of knowledge.

On the issue of content and meaning, Mr. Thurston takes a sound humanistic position against the many estheticians who hold the experience of beauty is possible only in some radiant vacuum. He writes: "The greatest art can be produced only by men who are both complex and intense, and it is almost inevitable that the experiences which they offer us should contain at least as much life as art."

Space does not permit any further analysis of a work that is as important as it is concise and stimulating. While it is addressed rather to mature art lovers than to students, it would be hard to imagine a more useful text book for college classes.

F. J. M., Jr.

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, and Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
OUR SECOND MURDER Torrey Chanslor (Stokes: \$2.)	Viperish society girl choked with diamond necklace at posh party guarded by trio of elderly female detectives. They solve it handily.	Aged but agile three-some may almost overcome certain objections to this type of sleuth. Gets twitters at times, but finishes well.	Pretty fair
BERMUDA BURIAL C. Daly King (Funk: \$2.)	Ruthlessly pertinacious kidnapers follow rich child, under Mike Lord's protection, to Bermuda, where they get her—and he gets them.	Starts swiftly, but is-land languor pervades action and sleuthing until crisp final section when Lord really gets down to business.	Average
THE RIGHT MURDER Craig Rice (Simon & Schuster: \$2.)	Gent skewered near Chicago dive yelps for lawyer Malone who obliges, with Jake Justus and wf., and effectively trails triple slayer.	High alcoholic content, plus marital fracas of Justuses, Malone's really clever sleuthing, and hilariously exciting situations make this one hum.	A-No. 1
SPILL THE JACKPOT! A. A. Fair (Morrow: \$2.)	Donald Lam learns about love and slot-machines in search for vanished fiancée of rich Californian and killer of ex-pugilist.	Diminutive but dauntless detective, whose "pitching" is full of curves, untangles, at racing pace, case that boils with action and fun.	Extra good
COUNTERPOINT MURDER G. D. H. and Margaret Cole (Macmillan: \$2.)	Scotland Yard shelves inexplicable braining of London executive until elderly spinster's envenoming, and hit-run death give Supt. Wilson surprising answer.	In true magician style authors "explain" story in opening chapter, but most readers won't guess solution 'til very end.	Excellent
DEATH FLIES WEST James Francis Bonnell (Scribner's: \$2.)	Counter-espionage on trans-Atlantic clipper leads Bill Parker, foreign correspondent, into sleuthing three altitude murders.	Flying-boat atmosphere good. Story repetitious; living characters bloodless.	No gimp