

# The Phoenix Nest

NOT only the Day after Christmas, when thought was paralyzed, did Mrs. Charles H. Carter of North Dartmouth, Massachusetts, come to our rescue with a note permitting us to use the following in the *Nest*, saying that perhaps, after all, money should not be paid for rhapsody—but also we are greatly elated to be able to present to you her

## FEBRUARY RHAPSODY ON AN UNPREDICTABLE SPRING

Whan that Aprille, with his shoures soote,  
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,  
Come, Rhodope and Boscobel, and you shall pass the gates;  
(Cornea, qua veris facilis datur exitus umbris)  
Shall pass the gates, and you shall see alone  
Extra-galactic nebulae, dynamic instability.  
Systems are whirling in the stone, (perfecto elephanto)  
A mystic sphere, a troubled cone, Impossible facility.  
Light waves transversely vibrate, vibrate.  
Beyond the Alps lies Italy.  
Dictators grow band- or spindle-shaped,  
Panting toward perpetuity.

Now Robin will restore amends;  
The mass of a moving particle depends  
On the speed of motion of that particle:  
Through Singapore, Penang, Capri, Mauch Chunk,  
Students may weigh in thought the fleeing article.  
Entropy is a measure of the commonness  
Of any given State: such as New York.  
O bells of Shandon that sound so grand on!  
O racemose wistaria nitrogenous!  
How many chromosomes are in thy cork?

Electrons circle round a nucleus;  
Villanelle, Yugo-Slavia, Torquay.  
And filterable viruses abound  
In aerodromes along the Zuyder Zee.

Whenever a body acquires momentum.  
Some other tiger, burning bright,  
Acquires an equal, contrary momentum.  
J'y suis et j'y reste; it happened in Europe.  
Tell me, Gamaliel, am I right?

The capital of Pennsylvania is Harrisburg, where you get licenses to operate motor vehicles, but very little gas thereto.  
Slow! Stop! Cogito, erga sum! Remember relativity, your relatives, and all that life holds dear.  
'Tis late; quick pattereth the flawn-blown sleet. Yes? No?  
The world turns with amazing speed while you are deciding which road to take.  
But perhaps you may turn away from the world, if you have not waited too long.  
It seems there is a centrifugal force. No? Yes?  
It shall not be too late.

Orlando comes. And Rosalind.  
The woods are turning green again with a little patience.  
The world has turned with exploring fortitude toward the light and away from the light for uncounted eons. Here we go!

My Scuppernong! Parabola!  
Molded in hydrochloric wax,  
I see your logarithmic sines  
Through spectroscopic parallax.  
Ducats, Doubloons. Somebody packs  
A thousand guilders into sacks.  
A thousand guilders? The Mayor looks blue.  
Blue are her eyes as the fairy flax.  
Where is my wandering boy tonight?  
He is figuring out his income tax.

What men or gods are these, Dodecahedron?  
What stern fixation of dull nitrogen?  
What ho? What work is here? Charmian, is this well done?  
It is well done, and worthy of a princess.  
But this is only the beginning. You will see there is much more to be done.  
Adieu, charmante pays de France, que je doit tant cherir.  
Adieu, adieu, I am alone.  
This is but my centrifugal telephone.  
The wire are dead now; but I heard them say  
The weary of heart are withered away.  
And courage forever rises out of shrouds.  
And countries will not always grope behind steel palisades,  
Aspiring, fearful, frustrate, and alone.  
The woods are turning green and gold and blue again.  
Spring shall blow linked songs out of festooned and menacing clouds;  
Shall mold leaves freshly out of mud;  
And carve colored flowers out of a stone.

JESSIE GIDLEY CARTER.

The above is to us one of the most engaging adventures in free association we have read for some time, and makes T. S. Eliot look to his laurels—

which are not all cut down by a dam-sight. Dr. Emanuel M. Greenberg's "Thoughts on Reading 'Boyd's Pathology'" (which comes to us from Welfare Island, the City Hospital) seems a pertinent pendant thereto:

There is no pathological astronomy,  
No cosmic gangrene;  
Euclid needs no phlebotomy  
And relativity no morphine;  
But this protoplasmic gel of ours,  
Of water, salts, and lime  
Is feverishly necrosing, and arteriosclerosing  
To disintegrate and atrophy on time.

Mortuary thought for the New Year!

## CURVACEOUS

Our dear Ole Pal, Ole Pal, Bennett Cerf, had someone ring us up on Christmas Eve, in the midst of a party we were giving for all the ramifications of our family, and had a chorus sing into the 'phone a Christmas Carol. It was then announced that charge for same would be attached to our monthly telephone bill, either thirty-eight cents or thirty-eight dollars—we were too full of New York State champagne to understand which! Bennett also sends us a note from Elizabeth Wells of Minneapolis, Minnesota, which assures him that the word "curvaceous" does exist, because somebody out in Hollywood wrote about the casting for the film of "The Ox-Bow Incident" that for the woman role "pretty and curvaceous Mary Beth Hughes was chosen." It is probably Bennett's long association with Hollywood that has made his use of English so exotic. But then, after all, he has given them all sets of the Modern Library, so he has really been a good influence. We hope some of the Grand Moguls are reading the M. L. They'll discover a lot of good books they never even heard of before! (Plug. How'm I doin', Bennett?)

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT.

## The Criminal Record

### The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, and Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
FALL GUY FOR MURDER <i>Lawrence Goldman</i> (Dutton: \$2.)	Johnny Saturday, in toils for slaying rascally friend, runs into more murders and odd characters before tangled plot unsnarls.	"Redemptionists," eclipse of sun, dope smuggling, and what-not all well stirred up by active and much-harassed hero.	Eventful
THE PRICKING THUMB <i>H. C. Bronson</i> (Simon & Schuster: \$2.)	Ostensible case of double murder and suicide in Eastern small town cleaned up by bearded detective John Bent.	Sleuth who "contempered celerity with cunction" provides sound, logical, and engrossing solution to exceptionally puzzling crime.	Rewarding
DEATH AT DAKAR <i>Kerry O'Neill</i> (Crime Club: \$2.)	What happened to a heterogeneous lot of wicked Nazi spies, heroic American scribes, etc., in Dakar during earlier days of war.	Assembly-line stuff, well supplied with all needed thrilling ingredients but a bit too machine made for comfort.	According to formula

## CAN WRITERS BELIEVE IN THE FUTURE?

(Continued from page 4)

good one, but it has been checked, even frustrated, so often that it is now blocked off from energetic action. People do not know what to think and they are looking in all directions, ready to grab onto any statement that has any semblance to the inchoate, amorphous pattern yet unborn within them, or which has risen into their minds, but looks hopeless of achievement.

Here, then, is a gigantic task for writers: to bring forth and propel into action what people really do feel and want; to close the gap between what is now actually possible in the world and what we still think of as impossible; and to free the old, important, and eternal words of their stifling accretions so that we no longer shrink from their past misuse but carry them before us as shining symbols of a better world which is nearer our grasp than it has ever been had we the honesty, wit, and courage to perceive it.

I AM sure that most writers worthy of the name feel their responsibility in this time of war. They want above all things to share in the common effort. Indeed, if this is a war for freedom, how can they in self-protection feel otherwise? Their way of working depends upon freedom. No one can tell them what or how to write, or for what purpose. Leaving aside their objection, the actual inner process of writing would make it impossible to obey. But freedom means more to them than this, and they are thinking a great deal about how and what they can best contribute to the establishment of a lasting peace. I think many a man writing today has re-examined the world about him with an open mind, overhauled those of his beliefs which have no longer much of a leg to stand on, and scrutinized his vocabulary to make sure he is saying exactly what he means. He may well have followed Darwin's practice of jotting down at once any fact which did not fit into his theories. Darwin knew how readily one forgets inconvenient ideas.

Such a writer has a reasonable comprehension of reality. He understands something of the major forces operating in and between human beings, knows the general scope of man's conquest over nature, and has a feeling for the continuity of history and the long evolution of the human spirit. These are the bare bones. Any specific knowledge or understanding is all to the good.

From my point of view, the writer whose work influences people has conviction. One who does not believe very much in anything cannot persuade

others to believe or to act. And conviction cannot be faked. No matter how skilfully a writer tries to omit himself, he, as well as his vision of the future, is always present in his work; his quality as a human being, his integrity, or passion, or tenor of thought, comes through and affects the reader more than anything else. Today, when, as I have said, Americans are sick of oratory and high-sounding phrases, sincerity, simplicity, and directness are more necessary than ever. And more than ever before do actions speak louder than words. Pearl Harbor—MacArthur—Bataan—the Tokyo bombing—Lidice—sugar rationing—no tires—three ships a day launched or sunk—the next door neighbor's boy killed in action or decorated for heroism—these say something. But for a guiding policy underlying such events there have to be words too. There has to be concrete expression of direction.

The writer who flows forward with the human current believes in the future. I cannot imagine how else he can contribute to it. This does not mean a distortion of fact into utopia. A good many hard-headed realists see civilization as a process, a continuous alteration. While some of them think the change is one of decay, others see it as growth, and all of them recognize the impossibility of recapturing the past, of setting it up in place of the future. But the pessimist, even if he thinks in terms of process, bitterly regrets the loss of the past, and since he thinks the future is relatively doomed he has not much to offer except perhaps stoicism. And stoicism alone never fired the world with hope. The hope which runs through the grass-roots of America seems to bewilder the European—and some indigenous—intellectuals. "The Making of Tomorrow," for example, after a brilliant analysis of some aspects of the present, comes to a dead stop before the future, apparently because de Roussy de Sales does

not believe it can be hopeful.

If the future is to be anything like my idea of it, the writer who helps to build it believes in democracy: "demos"—the people. It is upon the qualities inherent in the individual, and upon their development, that the success or failure of democracy ultimately rests. Imperfections mar its present practices and sometimes dim our eyesight; but its spiritual potentialities have long been deep within us, and its material potentialities have lately been brought within our reach through advanced scientific knowledge. The rest is up to us. If we can bridge the gap between the way things are and the way we think they are, we can bring the practice of democracy closer to the dream. The main plank in the bridge is an active belief in the value, the dignity, the responsibility of the individual—all individuals over the face of the earth. It is difficult to *feel*, not merely know intellectually, that someone else is as important as oneself; but once we reach that point in personal—and communal—civilization we will no longer tolerate practices politely called democratic which have hung on from a way of life based upon an innate, immutable human hierarchy.

Many Americans are thinking these things; but for the most part they are relatively inarticulate and isolated from others who feel likewise. The words which will illuminate their doubts and confusions and transform them into resolute action, all together for a common and transcendent purpose, clearly recognized and wholeheartedly accepted, have not yet been spoken. One of the biggest parts of the writer's job today is to bring all these people together; to show them that they do not stand alone; that diversity does not mean irreconcilable differences, nor does unity mean uniformity, but that diversity within unity can be an enrichment and a fulfillment to all mankind. Every ounce of the writer's passion and skill is needed to formulate and fuse today's ideas into tomorrow's life. The democratic future, the "people's century," lies in the hollow of our hands.

### THE SATURDAY REVIEW of LITERATURE

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# Chief of the Oglalas

*CRAZY HORSE, THE STRANGE MAN OF THE OGLALAS, A Biography.* By Mari Sandoz. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1942. 413 pp., with chronology and bibliography. \$3.50.

Reviewed by STANLEY VESTAL

**H**ERE we have the first full-length biography of the famous Sioux chief (1842?-1877) who led that band of Oglalas, which fought and hunted with the Sitting Bull Indians after the rest of their tribe had surrendered and settled upon reservations. The publication of such a book has long been devoutly wished for by all who care about our Western history, and a number of writers have busied themselves to bring it to pass. In particular, Miss Eleanor Hinman made long and careful research among the old-timers once intimate with Crazy Horse, and all historians in the field were well aware of her skill in obtaining the confidences of old warriors, and of the authentic nature of her materials. But now she has graciously relinquished her prior claim to the project, and has given her aid to Miss Sandoz. The result is a full-bodied and historically accurate book, which seems likely to remain the standard work on its subject. Competent research and skilled writing combine to make a most readable volume.

The author herself was reared in Sioux country, and knows Indians firsthand. She tells us the story of her hero from his first winters near Fort Laramie (where he may have seen Francis Parkman gathering matter for "The Oregon Trail"). She shows the light-complexioned, serious-minded, laconic youngster with his wavy hair (he was dubbed Curly by his pals) growing up against the background of the rising storm of white invasion. We read of his early adventures, his frustrated first love, his great vision, his qualification as a warrior, and of how he gained his famous name. As the wars grew and spread with the infiltration of white men, we see Crazy Horse truly shown as the leader of the Sioux at the so-called Fetterman Massacre, at the Wagon-Box Fight, and in other battles. We learn how he earned the high rank of one of the four Shirt-Wearers of his people, only to lose it in a brawl over the woman he loved, whom he had stolen from her first husband. And we hear how he struggled to weld the reckless, show-off individual fighters of his people into a disciplined team, fit to cope with the organized war machine of the U. S. Army.

The part of Crazy Horse in the Custer fight is well described, and it is

gratifying to find the old white men's lies about Sitting Bull scotched again. For Sitting Bull is shown as taking his part in the Custer battle on the Little Big Horn. Also, the whereabouts of Crazy Horse during the Reynolds fight are made clear. Many lesser controversial points are disposed of, often without comment. The book trails on through the troubled months that followed that great, disastrous victory over Custer, as Crazy Horse hastened through a cloud of jealousies and conspiracies to his betrayal and death.

Though, of course, not including an account of every skirmish in which the Chief is known to have taken part, the book is a very well-proportioned, comprehensive biography, with the emphasis where it belongs. Some will wish

to be assured that all the words put into the Chief's mouth were actually his own; others may wish that more proof of his alleged generalship had been provided; at times one regrets that more thumbnail portraits of his rivals and companions have not been crowded in. The author's Indians, too, seem to have lost the gayety which all early travellers noted in them, and it is hard to believe that Crazy Horse felt so little gusto in his fighting. But the book is crammed with fine things, and every scene where women appear is first-rate. We have the picture of a great-hearted, brave, doomed man going, in spite of a cloud of misgivings, to his all too early death.

The book has two omissions. There is no index, and the bibliography does not include the titles of published sources—even those on which the author obviously drew.

## Biography of a River, 1864-1937

*OLD MAN RIVER.* By Robert Hereford. New Orleans: Caxton Printers, Ltd. 1942. 301 pp. \$3.50.

Reviewed by ROARK BRADFORD

**T**HE Mississippi is a very special river in America and few are the outlanders who have been able to do more than feel dimly her witchery.

The United States engineers spent years of scientific study and followed with years of prodigious mattress building, cut-off dredging, and levee raising. Finally, General H. B. Ferguson, who supervised this enormous task of flood control, announced the river was safe from flood and that another overflow was impossible. Simultaneously, Dr. I. M. Cline, the great meteorologist, turned his attention from hurricanes to flood crests, and developed a system for scientific predictions of river levels.

This was in the spring of 1937. Remember?

That was the year the Mississippi provided Pare Lorentz with a "set" for

his picture that Hollywood could not even imagine:

Coast guard patrol needed at Paducah!

200 boats—wanted at Hickman!

Levee patrol: men to Blytheville!

It was predicted the river would get higher. It didn't. It simply got wider.

We who live on the river understand it and we like it. We understand each other, too. Outlanders come and write the river and the river people. We don't mind; we just laugh. But occasionally an outlander comes and writes about the river with understanding and we like that, too.

Comes now Robert Hereford with a book called "Old Man River." Since Mr. Hereford was born in the Philippine Islands but grew up in St. Louis this makes him a near miss of an outlander. I feel certain that Mr. Hereford was secretly pleased—just a little pleased—that the River always fools the big-shot engineers. And that Captain Louis Rosché was none too sorry the River couldn't be harnessed.

Mr. Hereford's book is sub-titled "The Memories of Captain Louis Rosché, Pioneer Steamboatman," which Mr. Hereford has taken the liberty to write in the first person. It covers the big fine robust era of Mississippi River life from 1864 to 1937: river gamblers and Yankee soldiers; roustabouts and romance; war and peace. Captain Rosché was enough of a riverman never to allow a few facts to spoil a good yarn and Mr. Hereford is gifted enough not to check too closely. There's no social significance here, no economic theories. It's simply what Lyle Saxon calls "a good readin' book," and mighty pleasant readin' it is.

