

"Gideon Planish" and A. R. St. J.

SIR:—I was greatly amused by reading Adela Rogers St. Johns's letter (*SRL*, May 8th) in which she tears both *SRL* and Howard Mumford Jones to pieces for the latter's review of "Gideon Planish." But what shocks me is Mrs. St. Johns's admission that to her the name of Howard Mumford Jones is unfamiliar! Incidentally it would be fun to see what Mr. Jones would say if he were to review some of Mrs. St. Johns's Hollywood stories . . . Please put me on the record as one of the staunch admirers of *Trade Winds*.

J. C. DIENISIO.

Stockton, California.

SIR:—Adela Rogers St. Johns states that she depends on *The Saturday Review* for absolute direction of her reading tastes. She states also that the name of Howard Mumford Jones, whom she attacks with vehemence, is unknown to her. I have no desire to partake in the debate regarding the literary merit of Sinclair Lewis's new book but I do wonder just how Miss St. Johns could have missed seeing the name of your reviewer if she reads your magazine with any thoroughness at all. Perchance she only notes the names of reviewers when she disagrees with what they have to say.

JEAN M. JACKSON.

San Francisco, California.

SIR:—For the information of Adela Rogers St. Johns, who I understand writes articles on Hollywood's Great for movie magazines, Howard Mumford Jones is one of Harvard University's most distinguished and capable professors of English.

Professor Jones, who has also taught brilliantly at Michigan, North Carolina, and other universities, is the author of the best work of its kind on French culture in early America. He is an authority on English and American literature, and his course at Harvard on American writing from 1870 to 1910 is a model of original research, fresh interpretation, scholarship, and wit. Offhand, I should say that Professor Jones is one of the most popular and famous teachers in the country.

Howard Mumford Jones's independent, forthright reviews are the best thing in the *SRL* next to Bennett Cerf's delightful column, I think. Can it be that Miss St. Johns resents Jones's failure to agree with her?

SERRELL HILLMAN.

New York, N. Y.

SIR:—I predict that Howard Mumford Jones is going to have a lot of fun with the letter from Adela Rogers St. Johns. But I hope he doesn't mind



"Our editorial writer believes there's nothing like legal advice while writing what he thinks."

my dealing with her first paragraph; after all, there are ten of 'em.

When I studied English grammar I learned that the comparative of an adjective was usually formed by prefixing the word "more." Now Miss St. Johns tells us right off that she is a "consistent reader"; if she is a consistent thinker she will admit that a thing has to be sound before it can be "sounder," and accurate before it can be "more accurate." Thus the review of Mr. Jones's becomes by her own admission sound and accurate. But, says she, "I have a right to a sounder and more accurate review."

Well, maybe she has. After all, she is a dreadfully eminent writer.

JAMES WHARTON.

Weems, Va.

SIR:—You sure are raising hell with literary criticism in this country . . . letting an unknown like Howard Mumford Jones review a book for Adela Rogers St. John.

MILTON H. ANDRUS.

Collbran, Colorado.

SIR:—I am writing to express my agreement with Adela Rogers St. Johns in her letter about Mr. Jones and his recent expression of opinion about Mr. Sinclair Lewis and in particular "Gideon Planish."

Many thanks to *SRL* for giving both sides.

JAMES OLIVER BROWN.

Alexandria, Virginia.

"The New Profession"

SIR: Because of the importance that the counsel on public relations has assumed in recent years, it seems to me necessary to point out a serious weakness in "The New Profession" by Averell Broughton.

The work purports to give the his-

tory, background, scope, and function of public relations as a profession. Yet, surprisingly enough, the author either intentionally or through ignorance of his subject, aside from the mere mention of the name, omits a consideration of the individual who has possibly done more to establish the profession than anyone else—Edward L. Bernays.

Twenty years ago, as a matter of fact, Horace Liveright published the first book on the subject, "Crystallizing Public Opinion," by Edward Bernays. At that early time Mr. Bernays plotted out the character and possibilities of the profession. The value of his accomplishments was speedily recognized in publications which Mr. Broughton has either overlooked or ignored. Stanley Walker, for instance, said in "City Editor":

It has been the custom to hold up Ivy Lee as the greatest example of what a newspaper man may do when he enters upon publicity work . . . but it is probable that Bernays is the more important as an American phenomenon. He is more of a psychologist than Lee.

Henry Pringle, in an article, "Mass Psychology," in *The American Mercury*, February 1930, refers to Bernays as "the famous public relations counsel," and devotes eight pages to evaluating his contributions to the American scene. John T. Flynn published an article in *The Atlantic Monthly*, May, 1932, in which he gives credit to Bernays for developing the field of public relations. Time has named Mr. Bernays U. S. Publicist No. 1.

These facts, I think, should be brought before the student of public relations so that he may have a fair chance to know the subject as a whole. Any work that omits the story of Mr. Bernays's achievements is, to my mind, largely valueless.

BERNARD SOBEL.

New York, N. Y.

A Contemporary American Composer

CHARLES T. GRIFFES. By Edward M. Maisel. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1943. 344 pp. with index. \$3.50.

Reviewed by DOUGLAS MOORE

THE American composer up to now has largely escaped the streamlined, hard-hitting art of the contemporary biographer which has served up such figures as Wagner, Brahms, and Beethoven with sauce hot enough to tempt the most jaded appetite. As a matter of fact, with the exception of MacDowell and Gershwin, few of our composers of serious achievement have been popular enough to warrant similar treatment.

Charles T. Griffes, however, besides composing a number of works which are widely performed and admired, is the hero of a legend, the unappreciated genius, starving in a garret (in this instance the Hackley School for Boys in Tarrytown, New York), and his story with certain romantic embellishments is better known even than his music. Mr. Edward M. Maisel in his spirited biography seeks not to demolish but to strip the legend of its exaggerations and to portray this talented and tragic figure against a harsh American background. In his preface he is severe with writers and commentators who have garbled the facts, and in the diligently prepared body of the text he presents the true story of the composer's unhappy life.

Unfortunately the somewhat intemperate tone of the preface is maintained throughout the work and results in a biography which although eulogistic is generally unsatisfactory to Griffes's friends and admirers and which falls short of convincing the unprejudiced reader as to the attractiveness of the subject. The shy and sensitive musician, doomed by environment and by his own temperament to a life of spiritual isolation, yet courageously espousing the new and the untried without artistic compromise to win at the end of his brief thirty-five years a widespread recognition, bespeaks a gallantry which is immensely appealing. But Mr. Maisel by overstatement both of the handicaps which Griffes encountered and the importance of his achievement weakens his case.

It is true that the American composer usually has a difficult time interesting publishers in his works if they are outside the conventional mold and usually encounters apathy and pessimism on the part of the critics, but a great deal of American music of good quality including most

of Griffes's has been published and to say that music critics are or were venal by and large is unfair and absurd. And why object to suggestions made by editors employed by publishers? Such suggestions are not necessarily ill-informed or less helpful than those apparently acceptable from other musicians. The characterization of the Sonata for Piano as "the first major utterance in American music" is sophomoric. Must every good American work be hailed as the true begin-

ning of our national art? There must be an end of the beginning some time.

The shortcomings of Mr. Maisel's biography do not prevent it from being absorbing reading. He has collected a substantial amount of material, much of it interesting and all of it vividly presented. One does not have to be an enthusiast about the type of post-impressionistic music which was Griffes's chief characteristic to find his story a fascinating picture of what can happen to a sensitive musical imagination in the hurly-burly of twentieth century American civilization.

Gold Was Mike's Business

KLONDIKE MIKE. By Merrill Denison. New York: William Morrow & Co. 1943. 393 pp. \$3.50.

Reviewed by RICHARD L. NEUBERGER

STORIES of the Klondike gold rush have a strange new pertinence today. In this land where Americans once endured incredible hardships in the race for gold, American soldiers are setting up supply lines to Alaska and the North Pacific theatre of war. Across the bleak summit of Chilkat Pass the United States Army Engineers are cutting the Haines Military Road. In the rocky valleys near Carcross and Atlin and Whitehorse, regiments of American troops are completing the 1,630-mile Alaskan Highway.

Mike Mahoney was one of the fabulous men who trekked into this fabulous region nearly half a century ago. He was looking for gold, along with thousands of other *cheechakoes*. Mike found gold principally because he was young enough and strong enough to cross the mountain passes ahead of the rest of the mob. He beat up the bouncers in Soapy Smith's crooked gambling parlors in Skagway and he lugged a piano over the Chilkoot's dreadful heights on his back. This courage and endurance made him a success in the gold fields.

He found a fortune and lost it, and made another fortune again. When he came down to Skagway with his sled loaded with gold dust, men crowded around seeking his advice and assistance and women offered him their bodies and their savings to take them back to the Klondike.

Merrill Denison, in his story of Klondike Mike Mahoney, has captured the spirit and atmosphere of an amazing period in the history of North America. Mahoney knew Jack London and Robert W. Service and Tex Rickard and others whose names epitomize the Yukon and the Klon-

dike. He blazed the mountain trail from Fairbanks to Valdez. He outdistanced wolves on the tundra and he could mush eighty miles from dawn to sunset. He was the toughest guy in the Arctic.

Today Mike Mahoney is still alive, a successful Canadian business man. But gold is no longer the main business of the Klondike. The dredges have virtually stopped. Men and equipment are needed for business more urgent — the business of war. The Klondike is now the route to our allies in Russia and China and to our enemies in Japan. The Alaskan Highway penetrates the Yukon now. Mike Mahoney's life has spanned the transition.

Mr. Denison's story of Klondike Mike is vivid and fast-moving but essentially superficial. There is little analysis of the background of the gold-seekers, of their eventual destiny, of what the hysteria of the gold rush did to Alaska and the Yukon. But for anyone who wants to know about the hardships and adventures of the old Yukon, this is the best book in many years. It is ideal background for reading about the construction of the Alaskan Highway.

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 478)

ROBERT FROST:
NEW HAMPSHIRE

Just specimens is all New Hampshire has,
One each of everything as in a showcase

.....
She had one President.....

.....
She had one Daniel Webster. He was all

The Daniel Webster ever was or shall be.

She had the Dartmouth needed to produce him.