

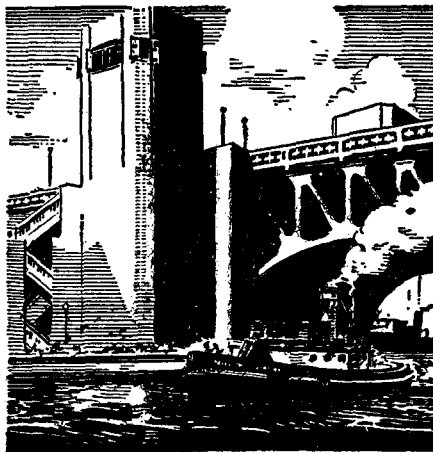
CHICAGO INTERLUDE

THE ALMOST-SIMULTANEOUS publication of five new books by young writers from Chicago and thereabouts suddenly jolted that city's critics into a realization that a new day indeed had dawned in Midwestern literary history; that the necessity of dwelling on garbled memories of antics of the Hechts, Floyd Dells, Covicis, and Harriet Monroes of a quarter of a century ago was gone, glory be, forever. One of the five new books—Clare Jaynes's "These Are the Times"—was a Random House publication, and I journeyed to Chicago to attend the launching ceremonies. When the folks out that way decide to honor a native son or daughter, there's nothing halfway about the effort. I won't recover for weeks.

Railroad travel between New York and Chicago, of course, is not what it used to be. Trains are overcrowded, late, and stripped of de-luxe equipment. The New York Central, however, seems to have made it a point of honor to maintain one train, its Twentieth Century Limited, on a pre-war scale of magnificence. It takes seventeen hours now instead of sixteen, but the added hour makes the ride only smoother and more comfortable. The beautiful new sleepers, diners, observation and club cars designed by Henry Dreyfuss are preserved intact; the service is pluperfect; they even have steak on the menus. Extra sections have been abandoned for the most part, and the Century is sold out therefore weeks in advance, but I'm sure it's good for the morale of the public—and the entire Central personnel—to keep this one famous train up to par. Sprawling happily in the observation car as we glided up the Hudson Valley, I thought of the Englishman who dined at the Savoy in London and demanded a three-inch-thick sirloin, smothered in mushrooms, bernaise sauce, and fried onions. The waiter listened patiently and commented, "Are you ordering, sir, or reminiscing?"

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE to be in Chicago for more than an hour without becoming involved in a violent discussion about McCormick's *Tribune* and Marshall Field's *Sun*. This was particularly true in my case, since I had ventured to compare their literary sections in Trade Winds a few months ago. Several booksellers had saved *Tribune* reviews to prove to me that

some of the Colonel's blind prejudices and distorted reporting *had* seeped over into *Tribune* book reviews. Undoubtedly, in the two years that elapsed since I was in Chicago last, the *Sun* has improved immeasurably in every department; the *Tribune* is more biased, unreliable, and subversive than ever. Its coverage of the Sedition Trial in Washington is angled in such a way that the Government seems to be the defendant, and deserves about thirty years at least. Its affection for the crackpots actually on trial is understandable enough; they sound as though they had been weaned on an exclusive diet of McCormick editorials. A Chicago wag suggested that the Colonel ought to rename the *Tribune* Tower "Hyde-from-Roosevelt Park." The Field forces didn't help his digestion any when they erected a sign directly opposite the *Tribune* entrance trumpeting "Read the TRUTH in *The Chicago Sun*." Latest official circulation figures (as of September, 1943) show the *Tribune* second in the entire country with a daily average of 940,751. Hearst's *Herald-American* is seventh with 471,866; the *Chicago News* is ninth with 412,148; the *Chicago Times* is tenth with 399,054; *The Sun*, though still in its swaddling clothes, has climbed to nineteenth place with 291,564. Everybody knows that if the *Tribune* is really to be knocked off its perch, *The Sun* will have to do it. The size of these circulation figures emphasizes the importance of the Chicago press in the national scheme; a rich, densely populated, and pivotal area of a thousand square miles is influenced by its policies; one Colonel McCormick can do more damage to



—Drawing by Timmons, from "The Chicago," by Harry Hansen.

future relations with our English and Russian allies than the whole lot of twopenny nonentities now on trial in Washington.

Whether or not the *Chicago Tribune* literary department agrees with the owner's politics I cannot say. By tacit consent, we stuck resolutely to literary topics while we were together. I can vouch for the fact that they are first-rate company and jolly dinner companions. That includes Fanny Butcher, Kenneth Horan, Vincent Starrett, Charles Collins, Claudia Cassidy, Felix Tomei, and, above all, Fred Babcock, who correlates their efforts and is doing an outstanding job. On the wall facing Fred's desk are a score of photographs. I presumed that they were authors until I saw their underpinnings. Then I recognized Betty Grable, Ginger Rogers, Lana Turner, Dietrich, Lamarr, and other literary greats. Fred says they help him contemplate novels, but I think he's making a typographical error.

I HAD HOPED to meet the fabulous McCormick in person, but he was off on a lecture tour. Besides, I might never have been able to run the gauntlet of guards who bar the way to his sanctum. A private elevator is reserved for his personal use alone. One day, they tell me, the Rhode Island legislature passed a bill that displeased him. Out into the *Tribune* lobby he strode, and snipped one star from the American flag that waved there. At a picnic for *Tribune* employes, a truck drove up and circled the field. A ramp was moved up to the rear door, and down it rode the Colonel on a black stallion. He spoke a few precious words to the awed assemblage without dismounting, and then rode back into the truck, which disappeared in a cloud of gold dust. Colonel McCormick wrote a memorable letter to a subscriber in 1942, in which he claimed credit for introducing the ROTC into schools, and persuading the Army to take up machine guns, automatic rifles, and general mechanization. He declared he was the first officer to advocate an alliance with Canada, fortification of Guam, and a two-ocean Navy. He also told the Administration "that airplanes could destroy battleships," "got the Marines out of Shanghai," but couldn't quite "get the Army out of the Philippines." What a man! Carl Sandburg read this extraordinary document and murmured, "And on the seventh day He rested."

THE SUN'S literary section has kept pace with the rest of the paper; it is now a permanent and essential fixture of the Midwestern literary scene. Its colorful editor, A. C. Sectorsky,

may be in the armed services by the time this article appears. . . . In the space of a single year, David Appel's book reviews in the *News* have come to mean as much in actual results to Chicago sales as those of his indefatigable predecessor, Sterling North. . . . Frank Knox's death should not affect the general editorial policy of the *News*; under the guidance of Paul Mowrer and Lloyd Lewis it has become one of the best evening papers in the country. Lewis is so busy that he has not had time even to think of another book of his own. "Sherman, Fighting Prophet" took years of research. His wife said bitterly at the time, "I lost my poor husband in the Civil War." When the book turned out to be one of the great biographies of our time, she forgave him.

THE CHICAGO BOOKTRADE is booming. The Krochs celebrated their thirty-fifth wedding anniversary while I was there. Mr. K. and Bill Goodpasture of Brentano's, after watching countless books lay an egg, extended their range to a sizable chicken farm, which they own jointly, and which is now in operation. Crowds in the Carson, Pirie, and Scott book department grew so big that Ralph Henry tossed out the whole circulating library to make room for new fixtures. Max Siegel and Paul Romaine have become important factors in the Chicago book scene. Their shops are attractive and flourishing. McClurg's have solved their labor shortage problem by employing over seventy native-born Japanese. Guy Kendall says the experiment has been one hundred per cent successful. Captain Eugene Reynal has been transferred to the Chicago district. John Frederick's literary broadcasts have built up a tremendous audience response in the Midwest. Chicago hotels have gone very, very English; their dining rooms bear such names as the Pump Room, the Buttery, and the Mayfair Room. All of them are jammed. The Pump Room features Russian specialties served on flaming swords. One inebriated newspaperman demanded an order of scrambled eggs; "And I want them served on a SABER!" he added.

AND AT THE MODEL book department of Marshall Field's—a section that always brings a thrill of joy to a visiting publisher—Rose Oller has trimmed down her weight to an unbelievable extent, and become the glamor girl of Michigan Boulevard. Three more pounds and she'll be added to the Babcock gallery! She reminded me of the time Fanny Hurst acquired a beautiful figure by means of a rigorous diet. The late Irvin Cobb followed her down Fifth Avenue for six

blocks without recognizing her. Finally she said to him, "Well, aren't you going to talk to me?" "Good Lord," said Cobb. "It's Fanny Hurst!" "The same Fanny Hurst," she agreed laughingly. "Not quite," said Cobb. "It may be the same Hurst—but it certainly isn't the same Fanny!"

BACK IN NEW YORK the news that Malcolm Johnson had resigned from Doubleday, Doran hit the publishing world like a bombshell. . . . The Doubleday firm, meanwhile, was being very coy about admitting it, but gossips were prepared to swear that it had acquired a famous medical publishing house not far from New York. . . . May brought other important changes, too. Nick Wreden, popular manager of the Scribner Book Store, foreswore the retail end of the business for a big executive post at Dutton's. Graeme Lorimer resigned from the *Satevepost* to become a literary agent. Constance Smith left *McCall's*. Howard Fast and *Scope Magazine* parted company before a single issue had gone to press. . . . When Mr. Willkie's "One World" hits the screen, some of the most important sequences probably will come from the drawing board of Walt Disney, à la "Victory Through Air Power." . . . Eric Johnston, author of "America Unlimited" is being groomed for a post more powerful even than the Hays office in the motion picture industry. . . . June Havoc, musical comedy star, and, incidentally, sister of Gypsy Rose Lee, was taken to a lit'ry party at the Columbia Faculty Club. She took one look at the venerable characters decorating the premises, and gasped, "I never saw so many extinguished gentlemen before in my life!"

BENNETT CERF.

ANSWERS TO LITERARY QUIZ

1. Sherlock Holmes, in "The Adventure of the Dying Detective," by Conan Doyle.
2. "Lorna Doone," by Richard Blackmore.
3. Paul Revere, in "Paul Revere's Ride," by Henry W. Longfellow.
4. Major Kingman, in "Friends in San Rosario," by O. Henry.
5. Basil Underwood, in "Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight," by Rose Hartwick Thorpe.
6. Roderick, in "The Lady of the Lake," by Sir Walter Scott.
7. Bess, in "The Highwayman," by Alfred Noyes.
8. Earl Williams, in "The Front Page," by Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur.
9. Denis Moore, in "Anthony Adverse," by Hervey Allen.
10. "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer," by Mark Twain.

THE MAY CRIME CLUB SELECTION



THE CASE OF THE Dowager's Etchings

by Rufus King

author of *A Variety of Weapons*

• Carrie Giles, otherwise known as "The Dowager" didn't think murder was in good taste, but when her immaculate lawn began to be cluttered up with it she entered the case with elegance. Opening her family mansion to overcrowded war workers meant closing it to serenity, with the advent of a dead man, but Mrs. Giles snooped so graciously that the killer never saw the iron hand for the velvet glove that encased it. Who among "The Dowager's" roomers was not too refined to kill?

* See back of any new Crime Club mystery for explanation of this and other identifying symbols.

At your bookseller's, \$2.00

THE CRIME CLUB

MAY 13, 1944

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The Flavor of Midwestern Life

OUT OF THE MIDWEST. By John T. Frederick. New York: Whittlesley House. 1944. 401 pp. \$3.50.

Reviewed by HARRY HANSEN

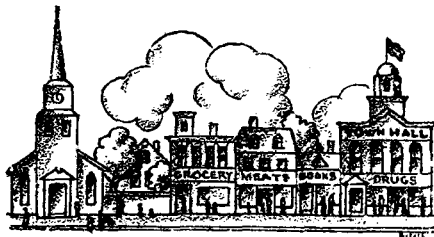
AN anthology of Midwestern prose and verse, chosen by John T. Frederick, suggests at once the rolling plains, the fields of wheat and corn, the overflowing rivers, the smoke-filled towns, and men and women busy at the plain tasks by which they make a living. It suggests also that the record of their activities and aspirations is made in an unpretentious, direct English and that the themes are at home on this land. All this is verified in the fifty-odd selections that convey the flavor of Midwestern life without even crowding the well-printed pages of this book.

Few anthologies have such unity and the reason may be found in Mr. Frederick's valuation of literature. Editors invariably assume that they must prove something or make converts; they have to show that they can recognize great prose or fortify their literary dogmas. Mr. Frederick seems interested solely in the life-giving spark of creative writing, and when he finds it he commends it. His hospitality is suggested by certain statements in his introduction. To him three of the greatest writers of the Midwest in the nineteenth century were Abraham Lincoln, William Dean Howells, and Mark Twain. He also praises, for various reasons, the work of Edward Eggleston, Hamlin Garland, and E. W. Howe. In the next sentence he mentions "the homely music of James Whitcomb Riley and Paul Laurence Dunbar," which will shock critics who think of them as minor romantics. Mr. Frederick, however, is not affected by currents of popularity and fashion but follows his own discernment.

In judging the work of Midwestern writers he refuses to make regionalism his measure. A writer's regionalism "is an incident and condition, not a purpose or motive." His work "has literary importance only in so far as it meets the standards of good writing at all times and in all places." If a writer reveals and interprets the people of his region to those outside, he serves a good purpose. Perhaps we should add that appreciation of regional merits is something else and may well be cultivated by the public rather than its writers, if it can be done without encouraging provincialism.

The people of the Midwest speak in their own accents all through Mr. Frederick's book, even though they are presented in the highly individualized expressions of Sherwood Anderson, Ruth Suckow, Ernest Hemingway, and even

Booth Tarkington. The mere accident of Midwestern origin does not make James T. Farrell's South-side Chicago Irish compatible with Mr. Tarkington's small-town Hoosiers, but what they have to tell does. The inclusion of a writer's story or essay in this book does not necessarily imply canonization of that author by Mr. Frederick; he is interested in the play of life in these passages, although in several instances, notably those of Sherwood Anderson



and Ruth Suckow, he expresses his high opinion of their work as literature of permanent value. He can find merits in many authors whose work is not monumental; he mentions exact characterization, warmth and tenderness, vitality and gusto, "warm reality," as qualities of writing and his sympathies lie with those who go direct to living men, rather than to books, for their material.

It is true that Mr. Frederick has tried to give representation to writers

from the four quarters of his Midwestern section and that this probably accounts for the sheaf of sayings by Abe Martin (Kin Hubbard) which, to me, are just conventional Midwestern wisecracks, written for a newspaper feature. E. W. Howe followed the same practice in his "Country Town Sayings" and every newspaper had similar bits. Sometimes one paragrapher would quote another and add his own gibe, a third would take up the banter and the first man would reprint the whole batch with new comment.

Mr. Frederick has a love for the vernacular, especially of farm life, and his reprinting of Willa Cather's "Neighbor Rosicky" leads in this category. He is also responsive to the moods of towns, bridges, and boats, and we have to thank him for reviving one of Ben Hecht's impressionistic sketches of Chicago, the story of a bridge on a winter's evening by Edward Harris Heth and a section of Walter Havighurst's "The Long Ships Passing." Carl Van Doren, Phil Stong, Thomas Hart Benton, John Selby, and William Allen White caught authentic notes of the Midwest in Mr. Frederick's opinion, and he has no blame for Edgar Lee Masters, whose epitaphs of Spoon River have "extraordinary merit" and whose "Spoon River Anthology" he describes as starting "one of the strongest impulses toward literary activity in the Middle West since 1900."

So Strange

By Sarah Sanborn

SO strange how some things tie up together;
From here and there one catches a word,
The name of one who flew from an unnamed spot,
And then the name and the spot mentioned somewhere else,
For a different reason.

A scrap of paper with a poem,
And the name torn off,
And then a quotation and the name told.
A dream, often repeated,
Of a hill
With winding streets and close-set houses,
And then by chance
A visit to the place
And the dream remembered.

And no one understands
How, when for so long
You have puzzled and wondered,
And suddenly find the little piece
That springs all your thoughts together;
No one understands the feeling of discovery.
At wonder,
That the answer should have come
So suddenly,
So simply,
After so long.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: The author of this poem is not yet sixteen years old.]