

HOW CAN HARASSED souls who toil in publishers' publicity departments hope to compete with high-powered publicists from Hollywood? From United Artists, for instance, comes this breath-taking globule of enlightenment: "Helen Walker, co-star of the uproarious Edward Small film comedy 'Brewster's Millions,' figures that it takes a woman an hour and forty minutes to prepare for bed properly. At least this is her conclusion after leafing through a number of women's magazines and consulting the 'ads' therein which specify what a woman should do each night before retiring to remain beautiful. The list, says Miss Walker, includes: stretching exercises, hip exercises, relaxing in a perfumed bath, hair brushing consisting of 100 brisk strokes, toe exercises, toe and fingernail brush-ups, elbow and arm massage, eye exercises and eye-pad routine, care of the teeth, face and neck massage." . . .

READERS WHO have kept up with recent books on medical lore know about the Eye Bank from which people with defective corneas may have their vision restored. David Stern writes from Philadelphia to suggest that they call it the Cornea Exchange Bank. . . . John Evans offers 100 to 1 that you can't name the author, living or dead, who has the greatest number of titles represented on active reprint lists. The answer: Grace Livingston Hill, an eighty-year-old grandmother now living and writing in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. Seventy-three of her books are now available in reprint, putting her far ahead of the field. Her publishers add that she is just catching her second wind, and insist that "A Girl to Come Home To," scheduled for September, is the best thing she has done. . . .

MARK VAN DOREN once played host to a party of convivial literary folk who were having a wide and handsome time until a monumental bore—uninvited, incidentally—lumbered in and cast a pall over the entire assemblage. After the bore had departed, he was discussed at some length. "Wouldn't you think," suggested someone, "that it would break the heart of a person like that to see how the face of everybody he addressed simply froze into an expression of acute distaste and vacuity?" "You forget," said Van Doren, "that a person like that has never known any other kind of expression since he was a child of four!" . . . Up Newport way, they tell a story of

how the late Admiral Sims first attracted the attention of President Theodore Roosevelt. Sims, then a lieutenant j. g., sent a letter direct to the President in which he stated bluntly, "The trouble with our Navy is that it simply does not know how to shoot." The startled President sent for Sims forthwith. The lieutenant did not retract. Instead, he proposed that a floating target be built, and that the entire Eastern flotilla steam by and fire at it. "Did the President order the target built?" asked the man to whom Admiral Sims was telling the story years later. "He did," said the Admiral. "And did the Navy know how to shoot?" persisted the questioner. "Hell," said Sims, "they haven't hit that target yet!" . . .

TRADE WINDS, always a pushover for the humor of George S. Kaufman, has a few new mots of the Old Master to pass on to you. In his "Hollywood Pinafore" he has given a line to Victor Moore that seems to me to catch, in one short phrase, all the pomposity and pretentiousness of a business "big shot" with seven or eight telephones and an inter-office buzzer system on his desk. Just before Moore, who portrays the head of a colossal motion-picture studio, goes into a story conference he picks up one of his phones and directs the operator, "Don't ring me unless there is somebody on the phone." . . . In a parlor quiz game re-

cently, Kaufman was called upon to give the name of the longest river in South America. He brooded over this for a few moments and then demanded, rather plaintively, "Are you sure it's in South America?" . . . Finally, Bob Sherwood visited the Kaufman estate in Bucks County recently and noted some new wrought-iron garden furniture set out under the trees. "Aren't those pieces new?" asked Sherwood. "Yes, indeed," Kaufman assured him. "Beatrice picked them up from the Torquemada Estate." . . .

DONALD FRIEDE has taken unto himself a new bride—the personable authoress, M. K. Fisher. Observed an old partner of Friede's: "There's a girl who always knew how to cook a wolf. Now she's got one to cook!" . . . The cynical Ed Sullivan, apprised of Britain's new plan for India, predicted, "India will be given back to the Indians about the same time the U. S. is!" . . . Mary Roberts Rinehart is finishing her first new full-length mystery in some years. . . . Joe Frisco, the stuttering comedian, had had no really profitable engagement for three years. One morning a big picture executive called and said, "Joe, I've good news for you. There is a spot for you in one of our new pictures. It's yours for two hundred a week." "My salary," said Joe firmly, "is two thousand a week." "Don't be arbitrary about this, Joe," advised the executive. "I suggest that you at least come down to my studio and talk the thing over with me." "What!" cried Joe. "And get l-l-locked out of my hotel room?" . . .

CORNELIA OTIS SKINNER'S new book will be called "This Time Removed."



THROUGH HISTORY WITH J. WESLEY SMITH

"Mark my words . . . under this new Constitution we New Yorkers will be practically slaves to Massachusetts."



"I'm so glad you've come, doctor . . . do you happen to be a coroner, too?"

The central characters are her famous father, her mother, and herself. . . . Madam Chiang is also working on an autobiography. An inspired soul has suggested the title "A Soong to Remember." . . . Jennifer Jones will star in the screen versions of three best-selling novels within the next six months: "Love Letters," "Cluny Brown," and "Duel in the Sun." . . . Alan Jackson reports that aboard a Washington train, Trade Winds' neighbor, John Brown, was wearing his inactive service button in his lapel. "Kiwanian?" asked a sailor. "No," said Mr. Brown. "I'm a Mason." . . . The Literary Guild's August selection will be James Hilton's new novel, "So Well Remembered," in the same vein as "Random Harvest." Little, Brown is the publisher. . . . In Dayton's book department, Minneapolis, Norton Breiseth discovered Ben Hecht's "Guide for the Bedeviled" on a rack marked "Humor." "This book isn't a bit funny, nor is it supposed to be," pointed out Breiseth. "We know," said the clerk, "but Hecht sells better under 'Humor' than any other place. . . . Jim Thurber is taking all the hullabaloo over his "Carnival" in stride. His comment: "I seem to be the victim of a delayed fuss." . . .

DID YOU EVER wonder about the origin of the expression "by hook or crook"? Louise Seymour Jones explains it: When Stronghow invaded Ireland in 1169, he sailed into Dublin Harbor, fortified on either side by great bastions named Castle Hook and Castle

Crook. Strongbow shouted to his men, "By Hook or Crook, we will conquer!" . . . Joseph Henry Jackson has cleared his desk of all trivia to concentrate on "The Story of California," which will be published by Harcourt. An added feature will be 48 full-page photographs by Anselm Adams. . . . Joe pooh-poohed Fred Allen's charge that "In Hollywood, Calif., the girls have false hair, teeth, and calves on their legs. The men have their shoulders built up and wear toupees. So when two stars make love on the screen, it's not two people making love, it's a lot of commodities getting together. California is all right if you're an orange." "Fred Allen," said Joe, "must know only stars from the East. He ought to get a load of some of the girls on the *San Francisco Chronicle*!" . . . For my birthday, a person named Robert Haas presented me with a copy of "The Male Hormone," containing the following inscription:

To one in the sunset of luif,
Who, blessed with a pretty young wuif,
No longer can land 'em
Outside—or at Random,
I offer this book by de Kruif. . . .

Colonel Breckenridge Beauregard, of "Burnitover," Shermans Furnace, Ga., suggests that Rumer Godden's next book be called "A Full House." Why? Well, suh, the Colonel says, suh, that a full house will always "Take Three Tenses."

Colonel Beauregard comes from the Southern branch of the Louis Untermyer family.

BENNETT CERF.

"From where I sit"



He played
Tomasino in
A Bell for Adano

"**THE EARTH** in East Galacia is black and juicy and always looks half asleep" the book begins. I had never heard of ALEXANDER GRANACH until very recently, yet he was reasonably well known as an actor here, and particularly in Europe. But having read

his autobiography, **There Goes an Actor**, I feel a humbleness that is beyond the excited state in which I throw adjectives around. It isn't just intriguing chapter titles like: How I was exorcised of a little toothless govlin; or: Everyone fights with the weapons he has; or: A man is not a tree. It's the double-jointed writing the man does, his uncanny way of making the crude and vulgar seem touching, of making the personal universal by the injection of literary plasma into the reader. It's the tender way he speaks about his childhood, fitting the outlook to the age—the child's dreams to his actions—one of the most remarkable pictures of childhood I ever read. But the story doesn't stop there.

This is no mere retelling of what was lived; for both author and reader it is a reliving.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

WHAT WILL our military future be? Read **Generals in the White House**.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

ENTHUSIASM alone is not enough, but H. C. F. BELL can write with ease. Added to his enthusiasm, his thorough knowledge of the life and times of Woodrow Wilson, his liberal presentation of situation after situation, and of those revealing details that make all the difference, his easy style makes **Woodrow Wilson and the People** a book of which Wilson might have been proud. The book presents to the people of today the man who was "always so intensely anxious that he should be understood by the people, not merely by any class or section of them."

paul

DOUBLEDAY, DORAN

Seeing Things

"MINOR PARSIFALS"

SOMEHOW I doubt if Franchot Tone and Clifford Odets, or Cheryl Crawford and Lee Strasberg, and other members of the Group Theatre, will read "The Fervent Years"* with undiluted joy. With interest, yes. With an even warmer interest than it is certain to command from all people who care for the stage as more than what *Variety* calls "show biz."

But with pleasure? With the pleasure of those of us who, from the sidelines, watched the Group Theatre from its emergence in 1931 to its dissolution a decade later? I doubt it. That is, unless theatrical people possess in reality the hearts of lions and the hides of rhinoceroses which Komisarjevsky once counted among their needs.

Mr. Clurman, you see, is writing the autobiography of an ideal. He is taking stock, inventorying the virtues and shortcomings of a brave theatrical concept in which he believed with unquestionable fervor. If he seems to be performing an autopsy on the living (including himself), it is because his sole concern is to discover why an experiment should have died when it had known its fruitful moments of life.

In "The Fervent Years" people do not appear to matter to Mr. Clurman as persons. Admirably as he may analyze them, vividly as he may sketch them, pitilessly as he may reveal them, his first interest in them is as forces contributing to, or subtracting from, the Group's chances of success. The clinical dispassion of his approach to his subject is the measure of his dedication to it. The gossip he sets down is not included for its keyhole candor. It is written by an idealist. You feel Mr. Clurman would not have dealt with individuals unless the realization of his dream had depended upon them.

Perhaps the least embarrassing, most productive way of reading "The Fervent Years" would be to approach it pretending it is a novel about the stage; a novel written by a critic, uncommon in his perceptions and his knowledge, who just happens to possess a talent for characterization no less than for narrative.

Certainly the world into which Mr. Clurman leads his readers is incredible enough to belong to fiction. Imagine, in post-Moscow Art Theatre terms, the

theoretical chapters of "Wilhelm Meister" crossed with the eccentricities of the Crummles family in "Nicholas Nickleby"; costume the result in the clothes of Mr. Lewis's "Bethel Merri-day" and Mr. Davis's "Quicksilver," and you may have some notion of how strange this world is.

"Made up" it may seem to be, at least because it has the fascination of a novel. Yet it is to Mr. Clurman's credit that he does not indulge in the fantasy which is the one piece of fiction at which every novelist is certain to excel. He is no coward. He spurns that mumbo-jumbo of disavowal by which most contemporary novels are introduced as regularly as the roar of Leo heralds every Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer movie. I mean that Caspar Milquetoast line which reads, "Any likeness to characters living or dead appearing in these pages is purely coincidental."

Odd though Mr. Clurman's "characters" may be, they are real. They wander in and out of his pages as undraped as if, spiritually at least, they were at a nudist colony. Any likeness they may bear to imaginary people is in this case purely coincidental. This is a proof of the volume's exceptional honesty. A vital blood donor also to its chances both of being read and of being misread.

All "now-it-can-be-told" books are bound to contain their juicy paragraphs. Unquestionably it makes for sprightly reading to learn, for example, that Franchot Tone (always one of the Group's most generous backers and beyond doubt one of its most attractive actors) behaved "more peculiarly" one summer than he had the last. Although "remarkably fine" at rehearsals of "Success Story" Mr. Clurman notes Mr. Tone was "anti-social in other ways." "He drank stiff-

ly . . . he grew a beard, walked about in a loin cloth, and went shooting fairly close to the rehearsal grounds. He shied away from most of us, alternating between a distant courtesy that implied insult, and the manners of a cagey maniac."

It is no less diverting, again from the outsider's point of view, to be told that a bit player, named Clifford Odets, had to sit through ten preliminary meetings addressed by Mr. Clurman, before he began to understand what Mr. Clurman was talking about. Or that later this same Mr. Odets, when famous and in Hollywood, was no longer satisfied to remain a "Left playwright"—"he wanted to be at the very centre of standard playwrights of quality." And that once, in a moment of anger, he referred to the Group as a band of "minor Parsifals."

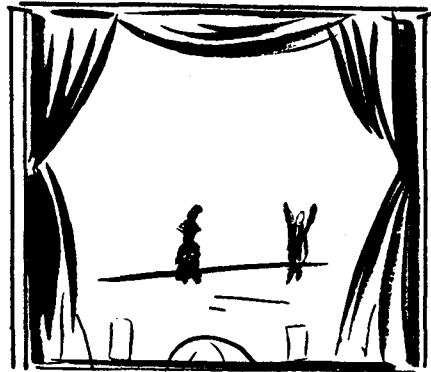
Human nature being what it is, and alas beyond legislation, it is likewise not unamusing to discover (to choose at random from the record of many such spirited skirmishes) that Mr. Clurman found his co-director, Lee Strasberg, "extremely touchy" and "reluctant to admit his artistic shortcomings and difficulties." And that Mr. Strasberg was no less disturbed at one point by what he called Mr. Clurman's spells of "somnambulism."

Although such tidbits may be the spice of Mr. Clurman's pages, they are not their point or purpose. Mr. Clurman is not chewing the cud of the past for the bitter-sweet taste of malice. He is making a report. Another, and far longer report, than those "papers" he apparently kept producing at every crucial moment in the Group's turbulent history. Even so a report in which, almost to his sorrow, personalities take their place among his vital statistics.

The Group Theatre, which is his subject, deserves a detailed history. Its approach to our stage was as dedicated as it was different. It sought to establish a permanent unit. Its vocabulary was not simple. Its banners flew in the clouds. It was founded by youngsters healthy at least in their discontent with our theatre as they had found it.

It was devoted to the "Stanislavsky system"; to the discovery of "that elusive ingredient of the stage, true emotion." It sought to establish an organization which, in every sense of the word, would be a group. Neither the individual actor nor the playwright would be starred. Even the directors would serve as "slaves" rather than "bosses."

For these ideals the members of the Group labored, starved, sacrificed, raged, communed, and seminared. They turned down tempting offers. They put up a united front in cheap



*THE FERVENT YEARS. By Harold Clurman. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945. 298 pp. \$3.50.