

the Phoenix Nest

SOMETIMES I feel like putting on my letter paper, instead of my address, simply "A Quandary," because that is what I live in. The quandary is: how to do right by all the people who write to me and send in things and at the same time earn the modest stipend I receive for filling this Nest with eggs, good or bad. Any columnist eventually becomes a vehicle for his contributors and it does not involve exactly arduous labor to put together a bunch of contributions, and so make a column. Yet I have a briefcase full of letters, poems, things people wish me to print or wish me to talk about. If but few of them get printed you will just have to refer it to The Quandary. If too many get printed, and I seem to do too little work of my own—same reference. Last week I was privileged to print what was really a long article, with some unpublished letters, the result of some correspondence with the sister of the late Vachel Lindsay. That article still seems to me to have well-warranted allowing it the whole column and even extended space; for it seems to me that Vachel was a prophet who never lived to see a number of things he fought for coming true, in the strange and partially unexpected way that things do come true in this world. I think the Atomic Bomb would utterly have outraged his soul. But I think he guessed that some such dire device was in the heart of man; for all evil is latent there as well as every good.

Some months ago I received a postcard from Henry Miller, the writer, who now lives at Big Sur, California, telling me that *Circle* is a live and kicking magazine and its editor, George Leite, a man of integrity and a human dynamo. I note in the correspondence columns of *The New Republic* Fall Book Number a letter from Bern Porter referring to the fact that he and George Leite organized *Circle* for the purpose of publishing great and unknown talent. Porter's address is 2303 Durant Avenue, Berkeley, California. Miller says that he knows of no editor who deserves more support than Leite, or who will give more support to young and unknown writers. "*Circle* knows no limits of any kind: it is capable of infinite expansion from an ever shifting center." I pass on Miller's comment for the information of young writers. I have never seen a copy of *Circle*, so I cannot comment upon it myself. But Miller adds, "There

is no cult or art colony at Big Sur. There is no circle except *Circle*."

I am glad Bennett Cerf, my distinguished confrère, published the comment he did upon Beatrice Kaufman. After reading the incredibly cheap and callous notice of her death in *Time: The Weekly News Magazine*, and trying to fathom the minds that could have produced it, Bennett's comment seemed doubly clear and clean. I never knew Mrs. Kaufman well, but I know that what Bennett says is true, about her love of life, her many friends, her sympathy for and help of others. A while ago I received from a distinguished American poet this tribute to another vivid and vital woman. I only met her a few times but nobody who ever met Mary Lawton could forget her.

MARY LAWTON

Laughter is gone again,
Winds are contrary:
The gusto of many men
Crowded in Mary.

How she would know their ways,
How she could see!
Those were the happy days.
She laughed at me,

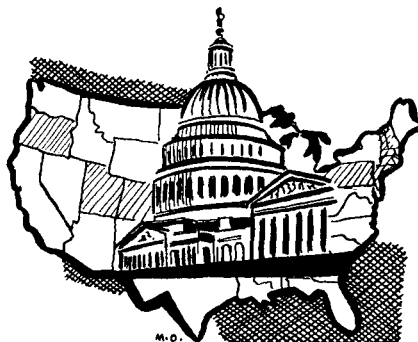
I laughed at her as well,
We laughed together.
Heaven and earth and hell
Were a good weather.

WITTER BYNNER.

Anne B. G. Hart of Northampton, Mass., sends me the following tribute in an English weekly, to a great man:

ON A DEAD PRESIDENT

Here in the Field of the Dead that
looks to the sea,
The blue and smouldering Western
seas in Spring,
The hedgerows white as for a bridal
day
With blackthorn, stitchwort and wild
strawberry,
I remember the great man who has
gone from the earth.
Here in this remote far tongue of land
Whence our forefathers sailed for
America
Grief comes to us out of the new world
they found,



Made one with us in common suffering.
We mourn a warrior who has earned
his rest,
Who tonight sleeps for ever the sleep
of the just.
The familiar voice, resonant and
strong,
That made him a friend at every
fireside
Here in this little land, thousands of
miles
Away from where he lived and worked
and died,
The voice that brought courage out of
despair,
Out of defeat gave assurance of vic-
tory,
Is stilled at last. He is gathered to
his own,
A prince of his people, his place is
with the great
Ones of the past: the cool and lofty
spirit
Of the First President, founder of the
State;
The warm and infinitely human soul
Of Lincoln, the depths of those pro-
phetic eyes,
Those pools that mirrored all man's
tragedy.
Tonight he lies with the Kings of
thought and action,
Removed from all clamorous asper-
sion,
All questionings done and his account
shut up.
His was the spirit to whom millions
owe
Not only liberty, but life itself.
The heart that pulsed with human
sympathy
For the defenseless and the weak, that
chiefly heard
The cry of the most numerous and
the most poor,
Is stopped for ever. Yet in this hour
of grief
We celebrate with pride all that man's
life
Can achieve, the spirit's victory over
the body,
The crippled limbs, the indomitable
will,
The gift of gaiety surmounting pain,
The lonely dedication to the end.
A star has fallen from the Western
sky
That lit our lives and lent us hope to
be:
Now all is still, save for the birds that
cry
And in the night the sighing of the
sea.

A. L. ROWSE.

Time and Tide: 28 April, 1945.

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT.

ANSWERS TO LITERARY QUIZ

1. Edmond Dantes, in "The Count of Monte Cristo," by Alexandre Dumas. 2. Samuel Pickwick, in "Pickwick Papers," by Charles Dickens. 3. "Peter Ibbetson," by George DuMaurier. 4. Ernest Pontifex, in "The Way of All Flesh," by Samuel Butler. 5. Dr. Manette, in "A Tale of Two Cities," by Charles Dickens. 6. Amber St. Clare, in "Forever Amber," by Kathleen Winsor. 7. "Moll Flanders," by Daniel Defoe. 8. Ortho Penhale, in "West Wind," by Crosbie Garsten. 9. Adolphe Culpepper Ferguson, in "Behold the Deeds," by H. C. Bunner. 10. James Dyke, in "The Valiant," by Holworthy Hall and Robert Middlemass.

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Tales of the South

THE FOREST OF THE SOUTH. By Caroline Gordon. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1945. 245 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by JONATHAN DANIELS

THERE is a flowing vividness about grand folk and plain ones in these stories of Caroline Gordon which, even when they are trivial as stories and become mere anecdotes, lifts them into high quality by contrast with most American short stories now being written. I doubt, however, that Miss Gordon is at her best in the short story. She is undoubtedly in this book most effective in the short novel "The Captive." It is the strength of all her stories that they create people about whom we want to read more and their weakness that their exits are often not quite satisfying. The important thing is that here, as in her novels, she writes with clarity and beauty.

I have not read any short piece of writing in a long time which I enjoyed as much as the story from which the book takes its name. It is not a great short story. But it seemed to me almost perfect as a piece of writing about the dark beauty of the mood of grandeur and grace which disappeared long ago in the American South. I am not even sure this lacerated time ever existed. Beautiful as the old Natchez places were, Miss Gordon gives them a depth in grandness which seems not of this world or our past. But she has coupled a sort of mad majesty with such meticulous realism in describing the talk and action of Federal troops that the whole thing seems more tragically true than any past could have been.

There is great variety in the stories. There are other tales of the old South including a macabre anecdote which is vividly wrought though it is little more than a Southern jibe at Yankee slickness even with the dead. She is particularly skilful, I think, in the characters of women and boys.

Only the stories about Alex Maury, Miss Gordon's elderly modern Southern gentleman and sportsman, bored me. There I felt a thinness of character, not of story. Indeed, Mr. Maury, while mildly amusing, sometimes seemed to me to be an almost too familiar character on the printed pages about courtly but shrewd elderly men down in Dixie.



PERSONALS

ADVERTISEMENTS will be accepted in this column for things wanted or unwanted; personal services to let or required; literary or publishing offers not easily classified elsewhere; miscellaneous items appealing to a special and intelligent clientele; jobs wanted, houses or camps for rent, tutoring, traveling companions, ideas for sale; communications of a decorous nature, expressions of opinion (limited to fifty lines). All advertisements must be consonant with the purpose and character of *The Saturday Review*. Ads of a strictly personal nature are limited to an exchange of correspondence, thus also enabling an exchange of reference. Rates: 15 cents per word. Count two additional words for Box and Number. Rates for several insertions follow—26 insertions, 10c a word; 13 insertions, 12c a word; 6 insertions, 14c a word. Payment in full must be received ten days in advance of publication. We forward all mail received in answer to box numbers. Address: Personals Department, *The Saturday Review*, 25 West 45th Street, New York 19, N. Y.

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The Saturday Review