

## A PUBLISHER'S NOTE BOOK

**RINEHART'S TWO BIG GUNS** — Fred Wakeman and Charles Jackson—will be blazing away again for the fall list. Wakeman's new novel, "The Saxon Charm," is a story of show business, its central character reputedly patterned on the life of the talented but baffling producer Jed Harris. The same gent was the inspiration for a Ben Hecht novel some years ago. Jackson's latest, tentatively labeled simply "A Murder Story," is a complete departure for him. In Hollywood for a few days to discuss plans for making "The Fall of Valor" acceptable to the Hays office, Jackson casually outlined the plot of his new book at a small dinner, sold it the following morning to MGM for something like \$200,000. . . . Speaking of Hollywood, Enterprise has persuaded Nancy Mitford, author of "Pursuit of Love," to come over from Paris to portray one of her own character creations in the forthcoming film production. And Irwin Shaw, sturdily rejecting one fabulous picture assignment after another, is working to finish his first novel. Present length of manuscript: 1,100 pages. Title: "The Killing Mart." . . . Harcourt, Brace performed a miracle of its own to get copies of Valentine Davies's "Miracle on 34th Street" into New York shops in time to coincide with the opening of the picture at the Roxy. It's a honey of a story. Country-wide publication will come late in July. . . .

**TRADE WINDS'S** favorite running mate, John Mason Brown, is the hero of a dexterous and heartwarming profile by Allen Churchill in the June *Cosmopolitan*. Hailing him without qualification as "the most popular women's club lecturer in the United States," Churchill reveals that when an aunt heard how much John earned each year on the podium, she exclaimed in wonderment, "You don't mean to say that a Brown is being paid for talking!" . . . "When Brown presided at the *SRL* dinner in honor of Bernard Shaw," relates Churchill, "one of the speakers was Howard Lewis, president of Dodd, Mead, Shaw's American publishers. 'Mr. Lewis,' cracked Brown, 'is here by the grace of Dodd.' Lewis cited the dates and current prices of numerous Shaw first editions. As he finished, Brown rose slowly and said, 'Now that we have heard the commercial. . . .'" If John ever writes his autobiography,

he threatens to call it "John Brown's Body." . . . Meanwhile, he thinks the title of "The Blue Hen's Chickens" should be changed to "Sumner Is Icumen In." . . . When Mr. Sumner moved against the McHugh volume, incidentally, it had achieved the staggering national sale of 882 copies. In the following three weeks it sold only 498 more. Mr. Sumner's advertising value isn't what it used to be. . . .

**LIPPINCOTT, WINNER** by a mile of this year's Ad Club award for the campaign on "The Egg and I," now refers to its phenomenal best seller as "the pullet-surprise winner." . . . Film rights to the actual Pulitzer novel winner, "All the King's Men," were sold to Columbia by Maxwell Geffen of *Omnibook*, who shrewdly sewed them up while everybody in Hollywood was looking the other way. According to Sid Skolsky, Orson Welles was asked who he thought could play the leading role. Welles replied, "Well, my second choice would be James Cagney." . . .

**JEAN FAIR MITCHELL** is co-author of a four-volume set, "Curso Moderno de Ingles," for the teaching of English to Spanish-speaking peoples, which Macmillan will publish in the

late summer. She is also the new headmistress of the famous Brearley School for Girls in New York. Her predecessor at Brearley, Mrs. Millicent McIntosh, becomes dean of Barnard upon the retirement of Virginia Gildersleeve.

Dean Gildersleeve once precipitated a crisis in my own life. Years ago, when I was an editor of the *Columbia Spectator*, Dean Gildersleeve posted a stern edict to the effect that no Columbia vulgarian was to be admitted to an annual hokus-pokus called "The Greek Games," wherein comely and thinly-clad Barnard freshmen and sophomores cavorted as charioteers, gladiators, Arabian steeds, and goddesses, and in general made fools of themselves, for the edification of mystified parents and instructresses. Through the friendly offices of a lovely maid named Marie, I was smuggled into one of these frolics, watched appreciatively while she pranced about in a flimsy and revealing wisp of purple gauze (she was playing the part of the ancient watchman of the sacred temple), and rushed back to the *Spectator* office to bang out a blow-by-blow description of the goings-on for the next morning's edition.

I thought my piece was reasonably funny. Dean Gildersleeve, unfortunately, did not. She came charging over to the *Spectator* office and delivered an address that shook the residence of Prexy Nicholas Murray Butler several blocks away. For a brief spell, my college career trembled in the balance. I was saved by



# "From where I sit"



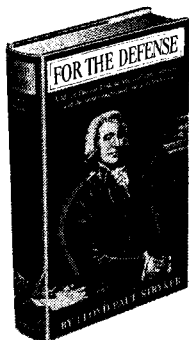
THERE should be many good reviews (and there have already been two as I write this) of **For The Defense**, LLOYD PAUL STRYKER's sparkling and scholarly biography of Thomas Erskine.

This fine book looks like the kind of stuff that appeared on bookshelves before the war, a fine fat tome, documented, illustrated, indexed, the kind of book that makes you think you look intelligent when you hold it in your lap.

Here is set forth the dazzling career of the great liberal of his times, the times of Garrick, Sheridan, Beau Brummel, Pitt The Younger. It is set forth by MR. STRYKER with a pen only a fellow lawyer could move so solidly and with such understanding for his man, his subject, and the ramifications of thought which link them.

I hope you will read the reviews of this book, for they can set forth in much greater detail than this meagre space allows, the brilliant cavalcade of cases that made legal and English history. Erskine rose from poverty to become the foremost figure of the English bar, the powerful pleader for Paine, the dreaded adversary of Pitt, prominent in the trial of Queen Caroline, and the savior of Admiral Keppel in a case curiously reminiscent of Pearl Harbor.

STRYKER writes with a simplicity of style and clearness of expression whose every word is put there for the specific purpose of intelligible communication. And the result is a relief from the usual dilution of the multiple adjective. His sheerness of speech recalls his own dramatic intensity in the courtroom, an intensity brought to this book as only a great lawyer can bring it. To put it simply, this book is a natural.



paul



the late Dean Hawkes, who persuaded Miss Gildersleeve that nobody read *Spectator* anyhow.

My next meeting with Dean Gildersleeve was purely accidental. I was ushered to a seat in a theatre, and found myself directly beside her. I must have trembled slightly and turned green, because she suddenly declared, "Relax! I'm not going to eat you! As a matter of fact, I sent a copy of your ridiculous piece to a friend in Chicago."

The following Monday, *Spectator* began a thrilling series entitled "Great Women of Barnard." The first piece was about Dean Virginia Gildersleeve. . . .

**VIKING'S BIG BOOK** for the fall will be Lion Feuchtwanger's new novel, "Proud Destiny," the Literary Guild selection for October. . . . Putnam's expect big things of Robert Wilder's "Bright Feather," an historical romance about the Seminole Indians in his native state of Florida. . . . Natalie Scott's "The Story of Mrs. Murphy" shapes up as Dutton's biggest hit in years. . . . Harper's is readying a new collection of Robert Benchley's pieces under the title of "Benchley—Or Else," and a book about our foreign policy—or lack of it—by James F. Byrnes, to be called "Speaking Frankly." . . . Wolcott Gibbs supplied the title for the new Charles Addams cartoon album: "Addams and Evil." . . . Clip Boutell is now the editor of the Fiction Book Club. . . . All three prize winners in the *New York Herald Tribune's* Children's Spring Book Festival bore the Viking imprint—one more feather in the cap of juvenile editor May Massee (as though she needed it!) . . . And speaking of clean sweeps, S. and S. have been riding high, wide, and handsome with the number-one bestsellers in fiction ("Gentleman's Agreement"), non-fiction ("Peace of Mind") and juvenilia ("The Golden Egg Book"). . . . It was Professor Irwin Edman who first sang the praises of another S. and S. best-seller, "Aurora Dawn." "In fact," said

Max Schuster, "he was the catalytic agent." "Exactly what is a catalytic agent?" asked an editor of the Columbia University Press. Schuster pondered a moment and explained, "A catalytic agent is one who doesn't receive ten per cent." . . .

**S. ERIC BERGH**, the Swedish publisher, likes America so much he plans to stay here. He has formed a new literary agency with George J. Winner (at 545 Fifth Ave.), will establish branches in London and on the West Coast. Special consultants will be Carl Carmer and Martin Flavin. . . . At a party at the Ambassador, in honor of Bergh and Winner, a portly authoress boasted that her husband always took care of her at literary jamborees. "How do you keep him glued to your side?" she was asked. "Witches' brew and mysterious potions," she explained coyly. It was at this point somebody noticed that her husband had disappeared completely. Three days later the authoress was still looking for him. . . .

**HARRY SALPETER**, writer and critic, has opened an art gallery at 128 East 56th Street, New York. "I am going to show and sell paintings by living American artists," he declares. "I do not aspire to wear the mantle of Stieglitz, but I shall try to achieve his general purpose in my own way, so that the name of this gallery will deserve to be linked with Stieglitz's '291,' which was a true seed-bed of art. I hope to give hospitality on my walls to new and promising American talent." . . . Another art-lover, Louis Kronenberger, of *Time* and *PM*, visited the home of a brand-new, black-market millionaire. The furnishings were ornate and expensive; the only thing missing was pictures on the walls. "I suppose," hazarded Kronenberger, "that you're going to acquire some old masters." "I should say not," said the hostess. "If we've got to spend all that money for pictures, we're going to get ourselves painted."

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—Lewis Gannett

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## THE CHEQUER BOARD

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**RETURN  
TO NIGHT**  
By Mary Renault



## SWASKILTOWOT



WHEN the Selective Service Board greeted us with that barefaced lie about our friends and neighbors, they neglected to tell us how to keep our sanity while in the service. "The discipline will be good for you," they said—not realizing what they meant nor how wisely they spoke.

Although everyone told us the Navy was the better deal, we entered the Army because all the carrot juice in our home county would never have brought our left eye up to Naval standards. We even put in our pocket the rational way of thinking that had taken us some thirty-odd years to acquire, and adjusted ourselves to a logic of unreason in which what happens is as little a matter of thought as a pair of dice give to the way they fall.

The Army, never above recognizing a bargain in brains, made us an enlisted cog in a super-duper branch of its intelligence service. Because of our discipline in unreason, we made such sense as could be made out of the following items of sample intelligence:

-----A major in charge of opening subversive cases opened one on an envelope bearing the letters SWASKILTOWOT. "Subversive code, very subversive," he mumbled to himself, as he classified it Top Secret. Any enlisted man in the Restricted category could have told him that it meant: "Sealed With A Sweet Kiss; I Love The One Who Opens This."

-----A lieutenant colonel (having been promoted, of course) opened another case on a tin badge such as a child might wear, found in the street and bearing the initials RLOLOA. The badge went through official channels to Washington and the answer came back: "It has been determined that RLOLOA stands for 'Radio Listeners Of Little Orphan Annie.'"

-----Much later, while we were in OCS (housed in pyramidal tents under a row of lovely pine trees) our then-lord-and-master said: "The major he sez he don't wanna see no pine needles on the ground."

-----After the war, 320 expensive and much-traveled mules (having flown the Hump twice), listed at \$250 each, were sold through error for 78¢ apiece. (Full colonel, this time. Basic deficiency: the three R's.)

When Lew Conarroe's OFF MY SEA CHEST came our way, it was straight down our GI scupper. We couldn't decide which of the twenty chapters was our favorite because

our preference changed from day to day. One day it might be *Cumshaw* or *Tattoos and Gold Lace*; the next day it was just as apt to be *You Are Cordially Invited* or *R.H.I.P.* (Rank Has Its Privileges).

The chapter entitled *A Lesson in Bookkeeping*, USN is our favorite today because we have just had a little lesson in postwar indebtedness—who owes what to whom—being in receipt of a dun for \$21.50 from the Retained Accounts Division, Army Finance Center, Office of the Chief of Finance, Building 204, St. Louis 20, Missouri. We have already sent the check. We could have argued with them and cleared up the point, but following orders is less complicated—even in peace. A check for \$21.50, which we can ill afford, works less of a hardship on us than the burden (for paper and postage alone) that would be inflicted on generations of taxpayers yet unborn. There was the added consideration that they might have stuffed the whole business back into that computer of theirs and what would have come out the second time might just as likely have been \$5210—or a long string of digits beginning with 9.

Many months—and a whole series of irrationalities—after we had become disciplined to the logic of unreason, a review in the pony edition of *Time* brought to us, on the other side of the earth, a few lines from Robert Frost's *A Masque of Reason* (Henry Holt and Company, 1945) that said it so expertly, so rationally, they stuck in our memory:

the discipline man needed most  
Was to learn his submission to unreason,  
And that for man's sake as well as mine,  
So he won't find it hard to take his orders  
From his inferiors in intelligence  
In peace and war—especially in war

We would suggest that, come Atom War I, the Selective Service Boards give each inductee a card bearing the Frost quotation—and cut out that guff about our friends and neighbors. We would suggest further that the inductee be forced to memorize the quotation along with his General Orders.

Meanwhile, in our present civilian job, whenever we feel in danger of losing our sense of wonder or of humor or of pity, we think of SWASKILTOWOT or RLOLOA. (Bless their little hearts.) Sometimes we just think about the mules or the pine needles. If these fail to turn the trick, we read another chapter of that brave and wonderful and lovely book by Lew Conarroe — and we end up laughing about the gallons and gallons of carrot juice we were too disenchanted to drink, even before the Army got hold of us.

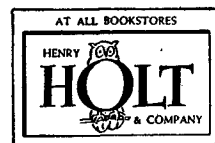
Formerly, we wasted breath relating objectively to some of our more benighted civilian friends what went on in the name of fighting the war. They would stare at us with disbelief as though we were liars or had lost our reason. From now on we shall merely hand them a copy of the book that is bound to become a favorite of unbenighted civilians everywhere — not to mention 12,000,000 servicemen.

Did we remember to say it is funny?

### OFF MY SEA CHEST

by LEWIS H. CONARROE

\$2.75



*The Saturday Review  
of Literature*

# *The Perfect Trifler*

LOUIS KRONENBERGER

WE SHALL shortly celebrate a notable occasion: Sir Max Beerbohm's seventy-fifth birthday. But a not unnotable one is already at hand: Sir Max's first book in nearly twenty years. And if one would survey the career of a distinguished writer, a book, I think, provides a sounder starting point than a birthday. To find oneself criticized in the very act of being congratulated must be a pretty dampening experience—much as though a writer should discover, on opening a beautifully wrapped birthday present, that someone had sent him a grammar.

The new book,\* furthermore, though it unfortunately does not crown Sir Max's career, considerably illuminates it. It reveals, quite as much as anything he has ever written, the kind of writer he is, and the kind of man. Indeed, it pretty sharply reveals that he is seventy-five. This is not because it shows an old man's infirmities, but because it overflows with an old man's recollections, an old man's harking back to the loves and landmarks of his youth. Max,† God knows, has never not been a period writer. But always, in reading him before, one felt not so much a gulf between past and present as that Max had made time stand still—that Victoria, or at any rate Edward VII, had not ceased to reign, and world wars not been fought or waistcoats changed fashion. Max was still, somehow, a dandy of the Nineties, a worldling of the Nineteen-Hundreds; reading him, we saw him framed eternally against a background of fin-de-siècle Piccadilly, as Keats's youth is young forever on his Grecian urn. When, in an essay on Strachey a year or two back, Max protested—with as much

fervor as an urban Tory would permit himself—against the Century of the Common Man, what surprised you was not that he saw red at (and in) the phrase, but that he should ever have heard of it. He had seemed out of earshot of it by at least a generation.

But now we find that Max has not been living, placidly oblivious of the present, in a fin-de-siècle dream. He is too constantly jarred by the present not to be most uncomfortably aware of it. All the things Max loves—elegance, urbanity, a quill-pen leisureliness, the pleasure to be had of little things, the noiseless flick and delayed smart of irony—are not much valued in our day. All the things he hates—noise, speed, garishness, ugliness, Americanization—are ubiquitous and, as he might say, regnant. Again and again he can only shudder at what he sees, and sigh for what has vanished. But the sigh is really far more significant than the shudder. For one feels it is not so much that the present

is all wrong for Sir Max—though of course it is—as that the past is all-important. Each of his complaints is fundamentally a comparison. One suspects that Max was already retrospective in his cradle, and downright reminiscent in his crib. And now Max is really, however ironically, the elderly gentleman who sits in his Tory club-window shaking his head at everything he observes in the street. Very often he is soundly protesting against vulgarity; but surely sometimes he is protesting against life. Yet this is not just Max turned elderly—he has always been someone who preferred a way of life to life itself.

ON THE literary side, "Mainly on the Air" is pretty slight, even for its author; much of it having been composed, as the book's title indicates, for BBC broadcasts. Yet I have found a second reading of the book more satisfying than a first: one starts off keenly disappointed because so little comes even close to Max's best; then gratefully accepts these pieces for what they are—still rather bright, still unmistakably Beerbohm. Their very titles supply their text—"London Revisited," "Music Halls of My Youth," "The Top Hat," "Advertisements," "Speed." But the best thing in the book, the thing most in the old, happy, essayist vein is "Fenestralia," where Max considers the role that windows have played in literature and history. It is a true carved cherrystone, and not from a sour cherry. Possibly the next best thing in the book, the amusing "T. Fenning Dodsworth," is not quite a stranger; it was published, in this country at least, as part of "A Variety of Things." But we may look upon it, surely, as one more link with the past.

And the past is most of all the Nineties. The Nineties stamped Max and sent him forth as their most engaging ambassador. It does not matter in the end that what Max wrote in the Nineties is very far from his best work. It is simply that as the



—Bohun Lynch.

"One suspects that Max [Beerbohm] was already retrospective in his cradle and downright reminiscent in his crib."

\*MAINLY ON THE AIR. By Max Beerbohm. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1947. 142 pp. \$2.

† Alone among writers, he was universally referred to by his first name. Yet the "Max" never denoted familiarity or even, primarily, affection; it was a kind of badge of his uniqueness. One referred to him by his first name much as one does to a king—which may be why it now comes hard to demote him to a knight.