

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Epitome of Unseductive Woman

SIR: We enjoyed John Mason Brown's bus trip [SRL, Apr. 19] but we are sorry that he did not have Steinbeck's adventure. He evidently has a different angle of approach.

We have a different gripe however; it is difficult indeed to recruit librarians. In fact the staffs are only half filled due to economic causes. Along comes Mr. Brown with "librarians, I suspect, whose hours are devoted to the non-fiction shelves." All our efforts to recruit young librarians with propaganda about the social facets of the profession are destroyed. He has coined an expression which lines up with Dorothy Parker's "glasses girl."

To counterattack this epitome of the unseductive woman, we expect that the librarians will totter around on platform shoes making harrowing noises. No self-respecting librarian will even shelve or revise non-fiction and will of necessity deny the existence of Mr. Brown's books which are classified as non-fiction. Thus he will bring about his own well deserved destruction.

ANNA H. ROTHBART.

Jamaica, N. Y.

Gertrude Atherton's Record

SIR: It is not my habit to reply to adverse criticism, to which I have become inured these many years, for I recognize everyone's right to his own opinion, and when it is sincere and fair I am grateful for a hint by which I may improve myself—one is never too old to learn. But when it comes to a review of one's book in so distinguished a journal as *The Saturday Review*, that is another matter, for it involves the editor as well as the author of the book. Hence the author of "My San Francisco, A Wayward Biography," asks the editor of *The Saturday Review* to be kind enough to read this letter.

The young person who reviewed my latest book in your issue of February 15 is well meaning and good-natured, but shows a vast ignorance where I am concerned. She begins with this sentence: "After a long and spectacular career in light fiction stretching beyond the memory of most of us it must have been restful to taper off, etc."

Bien! Here is my record; you probably know it yourself, but a gentle reminder will do no harm. In 1902 I wrote "The Conqueror," which has sold steadily for forty-five years and must have reached a million copies by this time. For it I read two hundred historical works and visited the West India Islands, where Hamilton was born. For it I also invented a new form. My historical novels—which involved the same extensive research—are "The Immortal Marriage" (Pericles and Aspasia), "The Jealous Gods" (Alcibiades), "Dido" (Carthage), "Golden Peacock" (ancient Rome). Straight histories are "California; An Intimate History," and "Golden Gate Country," for the American Folkways Series. (I forgot to mention "Rezánov" among the historical novels; the one love story of



"Looks as though we're in for a little rain."

Spanish California that has come down to us. It also has had a long and steady sale.)

I have also written a volume of short stories of Old (Spanish) California, "The Splendid Idle Forties," and "The Foghorn" the title of a story which has appeared in a number of anthologies. Then, aside from the many novels whose scenes are laid in California, I have written fourteen others whose scenes are laid in Munich, England, Montana, other parts of Germany, Austria, Hungary, the Adirondacks, New Jersey, New York, Spain, Nevis, B.W.I.

As for your "critic's" review of my latest, it is evident that she gave it a very casual reading, for she omits all mention of its most important chapters—which have been dwelt upon at length by such authorities as critics of *The New York Times* and *New York Herald Tribune*, *The Chicago Tribune*, and the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

GERTRUDE ATHERTON.

San Francisco, Calif.

Any Crane or Hudson Data?

SIR: I am at present engaged in writing a thesis for a "Doctorat in Letters" for the University of Paris (Sorbonne) on "Stephen Crane and the Beginning of Realism in the American Novel." Would any person possessing documents hitherto unpublished on the subject, such as letters, manuscripts, memorabilia of S. Crane, kindly communicate with me as soon as possible?

I make the same appeal for material on W. H. Hudson, the Anglo-Ameri-

can naturalist and fiction writer, author of "Green Mansions," etc., on whom I am also doing research work for the same purpose.

GEORGE S. REMORDS.

500 Riverside Drive,
New York, N. Y.

"Necronomicon"

SIR: I have read with considerable interest Mr. L. Sprague De Camp's article "The Unwritten Classics" [SRL Mar. 29]. I was particularly enthralled with the last portion of the article in which a great deal of matter is devoted to Howard Phillips Lovecraft and his "Necronomicon."

It may interest Mr. De Camp and readers of this article that we offered a copy of the first edition of this non-existing "Necronomicon" in our catalogue #78.

PHILIP C. DUSCHNES.

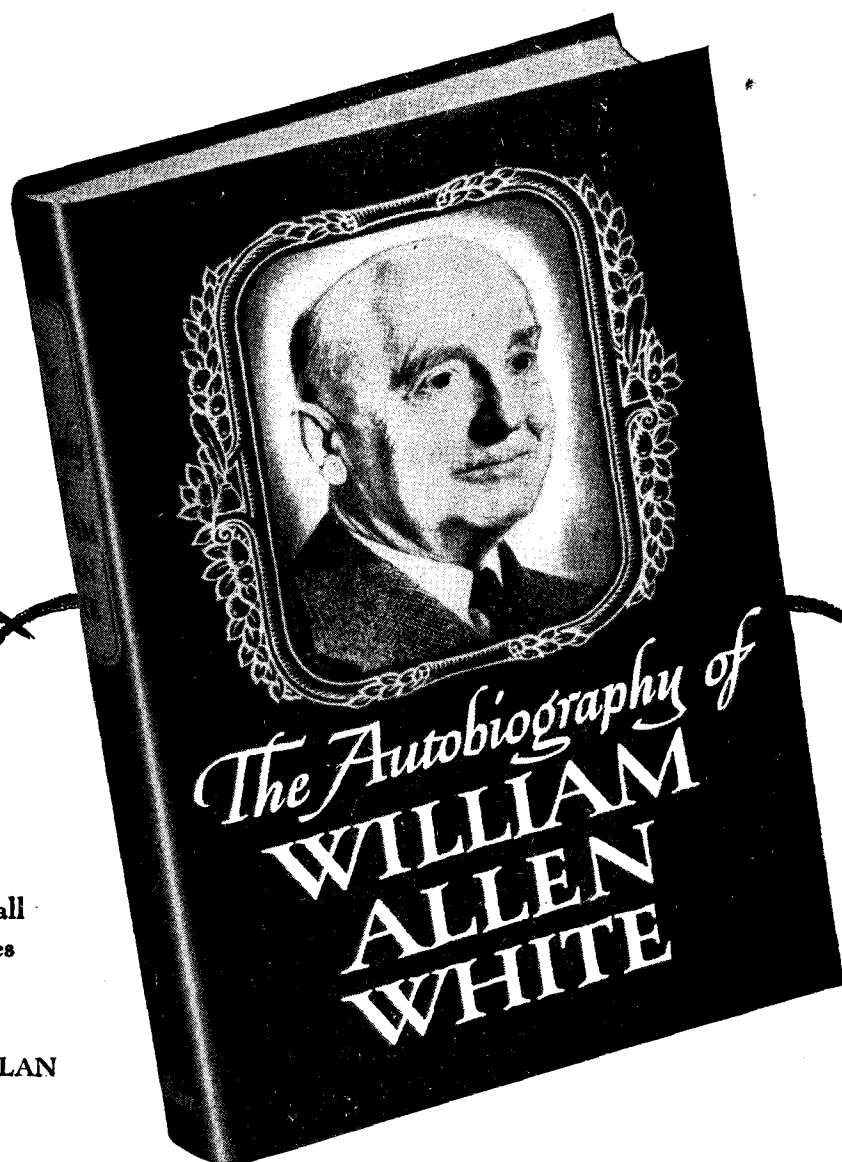
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More Walden

SIR: I wish to call the attention of all those interested in Thoreau to the publication of Roland Wells Robbins's "Discovery at Walden," in which he gives in detail the account of his archeological investigations which finally determined the site and found some of the remains of Thoreau's cabin at Walden Pond. The book is published by the author, is illustrated, and sells for \$2.50, and can be procured from him at Concord, Mass.

HENRY SEIDEL CANBY.

New York, N. Y.



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MACMILLAN

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for this year

MAY 17, 1947

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Seeing Things

ALL MIMSY WERE THE BOROGOVES

ON THE 4th of July, wrote Mrs. Trollope in a paragraph which I must admit I cherish, the hearts of the American people "seem to awaken from a three hundred and sixty-four days' sleep; they appear high-spirited, gay, animated, social, generous, or at least, liberal in expense; and would they but refrain from spitting on that hallowed day, I should say, that on the 4th of July, at least, they appeared to be an amiable people."

The authoress of "Domestic Manners of the Americans" (1832) was not content to stop there. Bless her! She could not resist adding (and this, for my money, is the heart of the watermelon), "it was indeed a glorious sight to behold a jubilee so heartfelt as this; and had they not the bad taste and bad feeling to utter an annual oration, with unvarying abuse of the mother country, to say nothing of the warlike manifesto called the Declaration of Independence, our gracious king himself might look upon the scene and say that it was good; nay, even rejoice, that twelve millions of bustling bodies, at four thousand miles' distance from his throne and his altars, should make their own laws, and drink their own tea, after the fashion that pleased them best."

Although I have no bunting reasons for making this unseasonal mention of our national holiday, this I do insist upon. However much the spirit of our Independence Day may have eluded Mrs. Trollope, we Americans—indeed, the young and old throughout the wide world—have every reason to celebrate what happened in England, of all places, on another Fourth of July. Near Oxford and in 1862, to be precise; one short year before this same Mrs. Trollope had a chance to observe firsthand such domestic manners as may be necessary in Heaven.

On this particular Fourth—a glorious one for us all, and quite safe if not quite sane—a party of five set out from Oxford in a rowboat. The party included two men and three little girls. Theirs was to be quite an expedition. They did not plan to get home until about eight-thirty. There were pillows in the bottom of the boat. And lunch baskets for the repast which was to be eaten in a haymow near Godstow.

The little girls were sisters, the

daughters of Dean Liddell. They were protected from the summer sun by wide shade hats. As the afternoon passed, on the river and ashore, all of them, including the young don in the bow, listened to the man in the stern as, slow in his speech and given to an odd stutter, he beguiled them with a curious tale and no less curious songs.

No doubt, it was the ten-year-old girl who hung upon this yarn-spinner's words with the greatest fascination. His heroine, you see, was named Alice after her. In honor of this outing, the teller of the story, who was only thirty, had put away his books on mathematics, removed his new clericals, and slipped into white flannels.

The young don at the bow was impressed by the narrative he heard. He wanted to know if its author were making it up as he went along. The truthful answer was "Yes."

In the evening, when they were once again at the deanery door, the ten-year-old Alice turned to her host whose stories had charmed her. She did not know him then, as we do now, by the pen name of Lewis Carroll. Accordingly, she said, "Oh, Mr. Dodgson, I wish you would write out Alice's adventures for me."

To that little girl's request we owe a lot; in fact, "Alice in Wonderland." As Florence Becker Lennon suggests in her life of Lewis Carroll, known as "Victoria Through the Looking-Glass," had Alice Liddell failed to be persuasive, Charles Lutwidge Dodgson might never have bothered to commit his improvised story to paper. But the real Alice, who at present has become as legendary as the imaginary Alice is real, triumphed. Mrs. Lennon tells us Dodgson sat up almost through the stretches of that night writing down in a little green book, which he illustrated as he went along, all he could recall of what he had said in the rowboat.

The completion of "Alice"—first known as "Alice's Adventures Underground"—required more than a night's feverish work. It was not until Christmas that the manuscript was delivered at the deanery. The Liddell girls were delighted with it. So was the Dean. So were their friends, youthful and adult.

"There ought to be sixty thousand volumes of it," was the shrewd edi-



—Vandamm.

In her production of "Alice" Eva LeGallienne plays the White Queen "with fond unction."

torial verdict pronounced by one six-year-old reader, Greville Macdonald, who chanced upon "Alice" in its original state when the manuscript copy was kept on the Liddell's living room table for the children's guests to enjoy.

PROBABLY no adding machine could compute how many hundreds of thousands of copies of "Alice" have been printed since it was first published in 1865. Or, for that matter, how many copies of "Through the Looking-Glass" which followed it six years later. Equally hard to guess at would be the number of times Alice has been set behind the footlights in tableaux, plays, and operettas dealing with either or both of her excursions into lands dizzily removed from facts. It does seem safe, however, to assume that no production made anywhere of the Reverend Mr. Dodgson's classics has excelled the American Repertory Theatre's "Alice in Wonderland."*

Although I am confident Mr. Dodgson would have approved of Eva LeGallienne's production esthetically, how he would have responded to it morally is another question. The creator of "Alice" needed two sets of names. His was a dual nature, if ever there was one. He could write like an angel, but he could not get over being a divine. His C. L. Dodgson side was as dully didactic as his Lewis Carroll side was brilliantly nonsensical. The man capable of creating Alice was

* ALICE IN WONDERLAND, by Lewis Carroll (combined with "Through the Looking-Glass"). Adapted for the stage by Eva LeGallienne and Florida Fricbus. Based on the Tenniel drawings. Music by Richard Addinsell. Scenery by Robert Rowe Paddock. Costumes by Noel Taylor. Masks and marionettes by Remo Bufano. Directed by Miss LeGallienne. Presented by Rita Hassan and the American Repertory Theatre. With a cast including Bambi Linn, Eva LeGallienne, Margaret Webster, Richard Waring, Philip Bourneuf, Raymond Greenleaf, Jack Manning, Eugene Stuckmann, etc. At the International Theatre.