

she sees the bright and shining light (kling). Corporal Joseph Harris is as nice a fellow as you'd want to meet anywhere, but (and there will be a little soft music here) he falls in love with Kitty, see. Think that's bad? Nonsense. He lost a leg in the war, and she restores his faith in himself. (I think those are the author's words; or maybe I've improved on the author's words). And then she dies; Kitty does, tragically, heroically, etc. (Stop that laughing in the back row there.)

I don't want to tell you how all

this comes out because I doubt very much if you care. I do want to warn you. Anybody expecting to get a picture of life in the nation's capital during the war years will be, putting it mildly, disappointed in "Everybody Slept Here." Mr. Arnold's book probably will have a large rental library appeal, especially among those who can't necessarily read but do recognize an alluring jacket when they see one. If they can stumble through a few one-syllable words, they'll probably be happy enough.

Marriage Idyl

MATHILDE. By Leonhard Frank. Translated by Willard R. Trask. New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc. 1948. 310 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by ROBERT PICK

MANY a reader laying aside another of the numerous novels about marital conflicts may have asked himself the question why marital happiness has so rarely been dealt with in modern fiction. The truth of the matter is that happiness is far less eloquent than misery, and that to make happy people as eloquent as they must be in a novel, without at the same time making them sound banal, is a task beyond the reach of most authors.

It would be too much to contend that Mr. Frank—known in this country chiefly for his fine novel "Carl and Anna"—has succeeded fully in discharging that difficult task. But for very long stretches, the sensitive, likable Swiss girl who is the protagonist of his present book will hold the reader's attention, and she will win his sympathy for good.

"Mathilde's entire biography," the author says in a summing-up passage, "is that she had made a wrong marriage and then had married the man to whom she belonged." That man, a no-longer-quite-so-young Britisher by the name of Weston, is about as faultless a suitor, husband, and provider as any girl can wish for—even if she hasn't been married first to as boring and penny-pinching a smalltown bully as has Mr. Frank's Mathilde. And to cap her happiness, Weston, while falling in love with her, has also fallen in love with her country, or, rather, with her beloved woods—the real *Märchenwald* of the German fairytale. The detailed account of the leisurely idyl of the newlyweds in that forest—which is populated, as it were, by the figures of the fairy world who have stayed on with the grown-up Mathilde—has great charm, and some occasional hints of coyness

do not mar that effect. Even so often told a story as that of a young woman's first childbed gains new, heart-warming accents in Mr. Frank's subtle and selective hands.

Being, basically, a latter-day Romanticist, he has, from the beginning, a hard time fitting his tale into contemporary settings. It starts some time in the early 1920's, and thus inevitably leads into World War II. Weston joins the RAF, leaving his wife and small daughter behind in the security of the Swiss *Wald*. While the scenes depicting Mathilde's agonies of waiting and hoping, together with her child's story, are very moving, the account of Weston's own war experiences and exploits falls regrettably flat. The most solid part of that chronicle is the report on his trek, in the company of some German refugees, through the collapsing France of spring 1940; and that story, I'm sorry to say, has been better written any number of times before. To my mind, Mr. Frank has done a great disservice to his novel by bringing in the war at all. The final reunion of Weston and Mathilde, who are doubly happy now in the clear awareness of their happiness, is beautifully done. But I don't think it saves the day for the book as a whole.

Its translator seems to have done a conscientious job, but he has apparently overlooked the fact that the emotional, slightly poetizing, and "subliming" overtones of romantic German writing do not as a rule fit well with the genius of English.



Universal Symbols

THE FIRST FISH AND OTHER STORIES. By Warren Beck. Yellow Springs, Ohio: The Antioch Press. 1947. 212 pp. \$2.50

Reviewed by HOLLIS ALPERT

WARREN BECK'S short stories have seldom appeared in our mass-circulation magazines, but his name is a familiar one to those who make a practice of keeping up with the more distinguished of our "little" magazines and literary quarterlies. A few of the stories have found their way into Martha Foley's annual selections of the "best short stories," but it is the Antioch Press which has put them on widest display. "The First Fish" is the second collection they have issued of Mr. Beck's shorter pieces.

Most of the thirteen stories in the present volume were written during the past half dozen years and reflect the author's concern for those moments in daily living which symbolize the universal. A boy, in "Fire and Branch," catches a brief glimpse of a kind of love that is far deeper than his adolescent infatuation of the moment. A father, teaching his small son to fish, feels himself suddenly caught up in something primitive and age-old, is touched by an apprehension that must have touched men of untold generations before him. Contrasted with the almost mystical feeling in stories like these are others which have a way of illuminating the tensions of the present and the immediate past. "Boundary Line" shows a Midwestern couple reacting suspiciously and self-righteously to the foreign but innocent activities of a next-door German family. The situation has changed, but the state of mind still exists. In "Out of Line" the confusing blind alleys of anti-Semitism are explored, more succinctly than in many booklength attempts.

There is a clear and wise perceptiveness which pervades most of these stories. Each one attempts to say something, to make a statement in dramatic terms and if on occasion there is an artistic lack, it is because the author has his moments when he forsakes character and the building of situation in order for the statement itself to emerge in the round.

But even when Mr. Beck fails—and it is unfair to expect perfection all of the time—his attempts are in themselves rewarding. For he sets himself tasks, sometimes out-and-out experimental ones; he is a sincere and earnest artist who always strives, often most successfully, to express the vital problems of very human people.

The Saturday Review

NOTES ON AN ISLAND

(Continued from page 9)

to myself cackling, are old Soup Stock. And they have had to learn, as no American ever did, the lesson of brevity.

The student of civilizations lives by self-denial. In the terrifying baritone of Bill Stern, unconscious energumen of football (feet are the chosen triumph and symbol of the Anglo-Saxon) he gets "out of the huddle very quickly now." His own habituated preferences mean nothing. He has to record, and relish (if England is his curiosity for the moment), sponge-bags and bread-sauce, nannies and nappies, bathtubs too deep and whiskies too shallow. But as the ancient immortal saying had it, when the customer complained there was a fly in his whisky; the barman replied, "That's all roight, sir; 'e won't drown; 'is feet are on the bottom." So are John Bull's, and J. B. Priestley's. I'd nominate Priestley as a thumping good Prime Minister—he has somewhat the same qualities as Churchill—except for his brave, blooming compulsion to grind his teeth in public. At the very moment when every well-meaning American was trying to help the slow-cossetted movement to kick in, Old Candid Jack informed us that all Americans are hysterical sheep; and New York the crass crab-meat of the world. A man from Yorkshire should look less suddenly on New York.

I AM trying to say, a visitor (any visitor, anywhere) has to look for the simplest and humblest emblems. In the English crossword puzzles the clues are quite different from our own. You won't find them by traveling in the *Queens*, and going direct to the Dorchester and the Savoy. You're more likely to twig them in London Transport, or what we in New York call (to British amazement) a Comprehensive Omnibus. It is not distance that separates people; it is being too close. The *Queen Mary-Dorchester* type of visitors is only a flying wedge of the U.S.A. bulling their way a few yards between guard and tackle. If I wanted a real social document I'd hire a man like Bill Stern to live in England, muzzled, for a year, and then report to the U.S. about British Sports. Or I'd hire a commuter from Surrey (under gag for conditioning) to compare the train service from Charing Cross or Victoria with that of the Long Island Railroad. I have seen Victoria on a night of hellish fog; at least they give

the season-ticket-holders an empty train to sleep in.

* * *

DIFFERENCES being so subtle, what would you regard as clues in the sunnily chequered crossword puzzle of American-English relatives? I had an amusing dream not long ago, in which by some accident of oblique view I saw a burlesk chorus capering above me; as they stripped and teased I could see their eyes from about course 145°. It was curious to see the actual jelly and bulge of the eye, glittered by the footlights and prominent sideways. My dream continued into sheer farce when a Hokinson matron (who was there as an umpire of public morale) was carried away with excitement and began tearing off her own clothes, to everyone's dismay, and curvetting in the aisle and a percentage of slip. I mention that only because if one doesn't record a dream one forgets to analyze it. What I'm getting at is the sidelong jelly of the eye; things seen in dream or chance. Those are partly clues, partly testament.

We are, as Matthew Arnold said, between two worlds: one dead, one powerless to be born. Arnold enjoyed ribbing the Americans, almost as much as Jack Priestley does; but he begat grandchildren who became highly useful and distinguished Americans. So, more than likely, will Mr. Priestley. From the jackstraws (spillikins) of tumbled memory let me hook out a few slivers.

The methodical good sense of the English. See the signs in country towns: *No Waiting on This Side on Odd Days*. Waiting means parking. The idea is, you park on alternate sides of the street on alternate days. Result, no shopkeeper is permanently hurt by constant car-parking in front of his shop.—And the noble simplicity of putting a large red sign on the bonnet of any apprentice driver. L for Learner. That means, give him the benefit of anxiety—a wide berth.

The stark simplicity of British statement. Almost every day I went past the Royal Artillery Memorial at Hyde Park Corner; at last—and in great peril, dodging the horrors of clover-leaf traffic—I decided to see what was carved on the base of that dead man. He lies in bronze, covered with coat and helmet. When I last saw him a light pall of snow whitened his rest. He symbolizes 49,076 dead of the Royal Artillery Regiment in 1914-18. And the statement: "Here was a Royal

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424



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Fellowship of Death." It is more than November snow that chills you as you hunt an opening to Knightsbridge among the teeming traffic.

Or would it be Oxford, seen again in snell windy weather—Oxford of the sweet dreaming gasometers—Oxford that, more lucky than any university except Yale, now finds itself only the Latin Quarter of a factory town; like a bishop in Birmingham. So it has something on which to grind its teeth. The traffic on Corn and High is worse than New York's Holland Tunnel. But there, bicycled in pedaled pause, are the flocks of youth—held in leash a moment by some yokel policeman's arm—waiting for signal. The arm descends and they flit off like a flight of starlings, like a wing of airplanes, on their way to lectures by C. S. Lewis or Father D'Arcy. The bells of Oxford have been almost drowned by the lorries. You have to get inside a college quadrangle before you can remember Roger Bacon or Duns Scotus or Matthew Arnold. I went into the front quad at BNC, to try remember how St. Mary's spire looked from there when they had bonfires (I was thinking of the surly and surrogatory Pater) but all I learned was that B.N.C. 3rd VIII had made a number of bumps; it was chalked on an entry. I wish there were space to tell you of New College: of dear old Rose, the housemaid at the Warden's

lodgings, to whom I gave a can of Canadian beef-cum-mushrooms and said, "This is my calling card." She fluttered her kindly tickle-eye and said, "It will be very welcome, sir." I saw it, next day, in that last of England's fourteenth-century kitchens, surmounting itself in the oven with a great arch of austerity pastry; what we would call a Warden Pye.

Oxford was always a carfax (carre-four) of traffic. She breathes, from her stricken towers, the latest enchantments of Lord Nuffield. We stayed, of course, in the last of England's frostbitten inns, the blessed old Golden Cross. That was where Shakespeare stayed, en route to and fro The Globe. His sheets, thanks to Mistress Davenant, were I hope warmer than mine. Postponing those gelations I sped down St. Aldate's to hear Great Tom (Magnus Thomas) toll his 101 strokes, at 9.5 p.m. I listened, waited, and no booming bronze. Imperious as any outworn scholar has right to be, I questioned the Porter (proper in his round hard hat). "Yes sir, quite right sir; but we're still on Summer Time. Christ Church goes on Greenwich Time. Thank you sir."

The ghost that Oxford has given up can still be found at Cambridge; the ghost of silence. Cambridge is still mute. In her Cavendish laboratories, or where the organ and choir winnow the cool autumn air alongside the

Your Literary I.Q.

By Howard Collins

CHARACTERS AND HOTELS

The characters in this week's quiz were noticeably associated with various hotels in fiction. From the brief descriptions given below, can you identify them? Allowing five points for each one you can name and another five for the story in which he appears, a score of sixty is par, seventy is very good, and eighty or better is excellent. Answers are on page 40.

1. Learning that he was about to die of heart trouble, this down-trodden bookkeeper took all his available resources and went to a super-duper hotel for a final fling.
2. When an elaborate, ten-foot-high birthday cake was ruined at a costly banquet, this maître d'hôtel was resourceful enough to have another identical one on hand.
3. Unable to get a serving of steak and ale at this super hotel because the waiter insisted that it was not on the menu, this multi-millionaire bought the place—and got his steak and ale.
4. Six other people besides this author had keys to the summer resort hotel to which he retired in mid-winter to write a novel.
5. By untiring work this ex-officer rose from the job of hotel porter to half ownership in a string of British hotels.
6. He was a hired hand at the Yellow Bud Tavern in Canastota, N. Y., before he left to join up with a circus.
7. This hotel man's "dream hotel" was ruined on its opening night when a Senator's son and his girl friend committed suicide in one of the rooms.
8. This shoe-string producer and his cast of actors, unable to pay their hotel bill, were locked in their rooms without a bite to eat until a Russian waiter came to the rescue in exchange for a role in the play.
9. This vaudevillian promoter was stranded with his troupe of chorus girls in the Hotel Monte Gabriele at the outbreak of a war.
10. Because his hotel was on the borderline between Nevada and California, this proprietor was able to use it for several legal shenanigans.