

We note, too, that he has some shrewd insights into particular poems and has some most interesting remarks on Dylan Thomas's "After the Funeral" and some other modern poems. He deserves praise, also, for putting that influential but silly man T. E. Hulme in his place as a critic. But having read the book we put it down with a distinct feeling of disappointment; much of it seems to have evaporated by the time we have finished it. We remember a few good points about individual poems, a questionable differentiation between the way images work in modern poetry and the way they worked in previous ages, and beyond that have only a vague recollection of remarks about organization and pleasure and universality and significance with which we are not disposed to quarrel but which we hardly need a poet to tell us.

From any ordinary critic, "The Poetic Image" would have been accepted as a commendable attempt to think through some basic facts about poetry: from Day Lewis it is not good enough.

As though to remind us that Mr. Lewis is himself a poet Transatlantic Arts have just brought out the first American edition of "Noah and the Waters," a latter-day morality play which appeared in England in 1936. The rather simple, rhetorical quality of left-wing allegory of the Popular-Front days sounds just a little pathetic after the Second World War, but the play does illustrate a use of imagery, both rhetorical and allegorical, which Mr. Lewis the poet has now left behind and which Mr. Lewis the critic does not discuss. There was much talk in the 1930's of the function of the poet. Mr. Lewis is now concerned only with the function of poetry. But surely they are both aspects of the same question.

A Single Idea—A Moralistic Pattern

I SING OF A MAIDEN (*The Mary Book of Verse*). Edited by Sister M. Thérèse. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1947. 459 pp. \$4.50.

THEREFORE CHOOSE LIFE. By Edith Lovejoy Pierce. New York: Harper & Bros. 1947. 76 pp. \$1.75.

Reviewed by A. M. SULLIVAN

THE FASCINATING discovery in this anthology is the appeal of the Virgin Mary to a wide frontier of poets of all religious complexions; to the agnostic, the apostate, the sophisticate, and the convert. Sister Thérèse has searched with reasonable diligence into the sources, and despite the danger that hangs over the anthology that is limited to a single idea, she has given us variety along with good poetry.

The plan of her book presents the Virgin in prophecy with selections from the Old Testament, the poetic evolution of the Virgin symbol in the early Christian Church, the delightful Mary-songs of the medieval period, the devotional and mystical poems of the Elizabethan recusants, the poems of the nineteenth-century Protestant romantics, and a generous array of the moderns who find spiritual pleasure in a symbol which represents the ennoblement of woman.

Sister M. Thérèse, being a poet, chose wisely among the poems and hymns, eschewing the pietistic. There is considerable rise and fall in the quality of the moderns but nearly all of the later poets have found an original facet on a many-faceted subject. It may seem strange to encounter a poem of Rainer Maria Rilke here, but Rilke was a devout Catholic in youth, despite his later days of devotion to the

"rebel angels." Both Eliot and Auden are here, both spiraling out of agnosticism toward a Christian belief. We meet Dorothy Parker in a reverent mood.

The most arresting poem by a modern is Henry Adams's "Prayer to the Virgin of Chartres." The poem contains the "Prayer to the Dynamo," written forty years ago which concludes:

Seize then, the atom. Rack his joints.
Tear out of him his secret spring.
Grind him to nothing,—though he points
To us, and his life blood anoints
Me,—the dead Atom-King.

Adams restates the quarrel of science and faith, which raged at the turn of the century, and then tells the Virgin Mary:

Waiting I feel the energy of faith
Not in the future science, but in you.

If I have ignored the native Catholic poet represented here, Sister Thérèse can share the blame, partly because we are excited by the sustained high quality of the non-Catholic bard and the fact that we expect a high level of performance by the Catholic poet, a promise that is not always kept, although there are memorable poems by the coterie of Catholic poets who are frequently encountered in *Spirit*, a Catholic magazine of verse. Cornelia Otis Skinner gives us an interesting clue to the non-Catholic interest in the Blessed Virgin in "To the Sistine Madonna":

Mary, most serenely fair
Hear an unbeliever's prayer.
Nurtured in an austere creed
Sweetest Lady, she has need
Of the solace of thy grace;
See the tears that stain her face
As she kneels to beg your love,
You whom no one told her of.

The poems of Edith Lovejoy Pierce reveal a disciplined poetic talent. Her themes are wholesome, and at times break through a moralistic pattern. She never writes badly, but there is almost always the philosophic link to a premise which must be demonstrated and proven. Occasionally she breaks away from the stricture of the theme, and gives her imagination and emotion free rein as in "The White Stallion" that

Plunges into the straight air
And, high above tree and roof,
Stamps on the night sky,
Striking stars from his hoof.

A typical descriptive poem in the book is "Water Lily," in which the idea is carefully depicted and sustained without damage to the poetry. When the poet abandons a calculation of theme she is at her best.

W. H. Auden

By Howard Griffin

A MAN with the wry face of a twisted saint enters the shabby doorway at a dash as if by his least gesture and his gait he said, *Use time*.—A smile half-clowned, a gaze perceptive as a dog's announce him sharply to the waiting class,—these and his battered army togs. —But when he speaks thoughts move with strange address and as one listens (in the chalky air), unserved, a book turns luminous, suspended in the ether, as it were . . . Garbled and magical the words that have the desperate charity of a whip. Habitually alone he seems to move through the deft fabric of a game,—observe in the eye the dark unspoken thought and in the thought the spirit's truthful flame.

Personal History. *In his own day Mark Twain was known as the roistering Western humorist of "The Celebrated Jumping Frog—," the crude journalist of "Innocents Abroad," the top-rank lecturer and white-maned literary idol of the country. Today we are beginning to understand another Mark Twain: the pessimistic, cynical author of "The Mysterious Stranger" and "What is Man?"; the grieving father who wrote of the death of his daughter: "In her loss I am almost bankrupt, and my life is a bitterness, but I am content: for she has been enriched with the most precious of all gifts—death." And he is the creator of Huck Finn, who still sails magically on his raft through the heart of a continent; of Tom Sawyer; of "Life on the Mississippi." Mark Twain grows in stature with every succeeding year.*

Clemens in the Ambrosial Isles

MARK TWAIN AND HAWAII. By Walter Francis Frear. Chicago: The Lakeside Press. 1948. 519 pp. \$10.

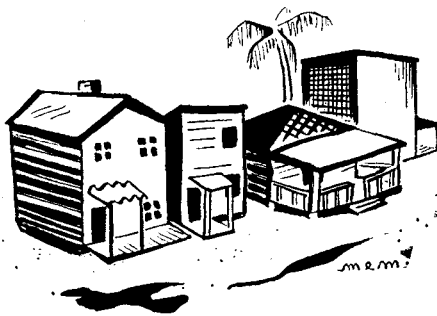
Reviewed by DIXON WECTER

THE biography of Mark Twain, which Albert Bigelow Paine attempted in four useful but sloppy volumes in 1912, is slowly being rewritten piecemeal with a carefulness and competence beyond the grasp of that billiard-playing Boswell. Minnie Brashear has dealt with the highly important Missouri boyhood, Fred Lorch with his brief interval in Iowa, and Ivan Benson with his Western years. (The last-named field received another going over in 1947, with small visible profit, by Effie Mona Mack in a mediocre book on Mark Twain and Nevada.) These studies, along with Samuel C. Webster's delightful and documentary "Mark Twain, Business Man," and Bernard DeVoto's brilliant analysis of Mark Twain's development as an artist, have already superseded large segments of the Clemens biography about which Paine fondly supposed he had said the last word.

A newcomer to the ranks of indispensable Mark Twain volumes is Judge Walter Frear's "Mark Twain and Hawaii," which incidentally is a beautiful example of book-making. The term "definitive"—stretched to cover such a multitude of books until its elasticity has been worn out—once in a while is well deserved. This is it. No comparable period of four months in Clemens's life has ever received this saturation treatment, nor probably will get it hereafter. Beyond a few random bits in the private papers and unpublished notebooks of Mark Twain which add nothing essential to the story, Judge Frear has here collected apparently everything preserved about Mark Twain's four-

month sojourn in Hawaii in 1866. Letters, newspaper files however obscure, mementoes, local memories and traditions, as well as close and repeated scrutiny of the terrain—all have been exhausted in the preparation of this book. It collects for the first time all twenty-five travel pieces which Twain wrote for the *Sacramento Union*, including three omitted in G. Ezra Dane's "Letters from the Sandwich Islands." It also salvages some interesting miscellaneous material written by Twain about Hawaii through the years, and presents a detailed record of his famous lecture, given again and again with frequent changes, latterly called "Our Fellow Savages of the Sandwich Islands." Since this was the first lecture Mark Twain ever gave and also one of the most durable in his repertory, unusual interest attaches to its history. The appendixes, which run to half the volume, offer a storehouse of little-known Twainiana, some of it fascinating.

Loyal Twainians will not question the scale upon which this book is built. Specialists will feel grateful that one salient of Mark Twain's career has been dealt with seemingly forever; the budding researcher can only grumble that Judge Frear has left him no reasonable pretext for a trip to those ambrosial islands in the track of his hero. Outsiders, however, may be forgiven for asking whether



the four-month visit made here by Sam Clemens in his thirty-first year is worth so elaborate a reconstruction—an interlude described by Paine in about two thousand words now being expanded into a volume of five hundred pages. Judge Frear, ex-Governor and distinguished jurist of the Islands and donor of the famous Morse collection of Twainiana to his alma mater, Yale University, obviously undertook this project as a labor of love, lavishing time, money, and tireless enterprise in pursuit of the twin hobbies associated in the title itself. Nevertheless he has prepared an answer to doubters about the relative importance of this subject.

In the beginning he cites statements from Howells, Kipling, Stephen Leacock, and William Lyon Phelps (whose authority few Yalensians of the Class of '85 would dare to question) that Mark Twain is the greatest and most interesting American author, and hence a figure about whom all details are precious. Furthermore, Judge Frear calls this visit to Hawaii "the most significant turning point of Mark Twain's life," falling between his thirty-year apprenticeship to life and his emergence as a finished literary artist. This reader doubts that the Hawaiian trip had quite so profound an effect upon Clemens as Judge Frear argues, or marked quite so sharp a transition from youthful crudity to mature refinement. This latter was a slow evolutionary process, broken by numerous lapses in judgment and self-criticism that persisted to the end of his days. And on the whole the most powerful reagents in bringing out his matured taste and style were those encountered afterwards—namely "Mother" Fairbanks, Livy Langdon whom he married, William Dean Howells, and other literary associates in Boston, Hartford, and New York. On the other hand, while Hawaii was a charming interval, the deepest stratum of his experience was and always remained the Hannibal of his boyhood, the Mississippi River of his green manhood. What Mark Twain did discover in writing his travel pieces for the *Sacramento* press was his talent for what the Victorians called "word-painting," a passion, sincere though highly conventionalized, for describing romantic scenery. Prior to his Hawaiian voyage he had made practically no use of this gift; henceforth it loomed large in his newspaper articles and travel books, as well as the lectures which he first began to deliver after returning to San Francisco. It never became the most powerful string to Mark Twain's bow, but at least this self-discovery was worth making.

Judge Frear's book has the few