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Minor League Lyrics

FIRST TIME IN AMERICA. Corrected by John Arlott. New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, Inc. 1948. 199 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by HUBERT CREEKMORE

BY the definition of his title, Mr. John Arlott, in this anthology of twentieth-century English poems, is restricted somewhat to the lesser writings of important poets while bringing to our attention a few unknown poets. Though we need not be smug enough to assume that all the best has been brought us from England, I am afraid that on the basis of this book we aren't missing a great deal. At the same time we must realize that with each writer averaging about two poems it is difficult to judge whether he has any stature or has merely written two interesting poems.

From the introduction, I gather that Mr. Arlott has compromised to some degree between his own taste and that imposed by his work with BBC in poetry broadcasts, and has ended with a criterion of the "feeling" of poetry. Fine as BBC's work in this field is, the results of such indoctrination have a secondhand flavor in print. In general, a lackadaisical pallor suggestive of the Georgians hangs over so much of the book that I cannot agree with the editor that it indicates a healthy growth.

Here are the well-known names of De la Mare, MacNeice, Day Lewis, Sitwell, Spender, Dylan Thomas, and the newer Betjeman, Roy Campbell, Durrell, and Ruthven Todd. But here also are lines that read: "Violence, vanity, lust / Flee from, he cried, / Thee only trust"; and "Softly spills / An opalescent film in golden tides . . ."

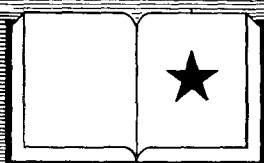
The principal interest is certainly in the unknowns, and among them there is some bright promise in careful poems. Let me cite their names—Christopher Hassall, Robert Hunter, Norman Nicholson, Mervyn Peake, William Plomer, Andrew Young—and leave comment for a fuller representation of their work at some possibly later time.

LITERARY I.Q. ANSWERS

1. "Love's Labor's Lost." 2. "Two Gentlemen of Verona." 3. "The Merchant of Venice." 4. "As You Like It." 5. "Twelfth Night." 6. "Measure for Measure." 7. "As You Like It." 8. "Cymbeline." 9. "The Tempest." 10. "Cymbeline." 11. "The Tempest." 12. "Much Ado About Nothing." 13. "Midsummer Night's Dream." 14. "The Winter's Tale." 15. "The Tempest." 16. "As You Like It." 17. "Midsummer Night's Dream." 18. "The Winter's Tale." 19. "Twelfth Night." 20. "Love's Labor's Lost."

The Saturday Review

NEW EDITIONS



AMONG the new editions I have read recently, there are four that group themselves in my memory, and which I can highly recommend: Thad W. Riker's "A History of Western Europe" (Knopf, \$6.75); Walter Bagehot's "Physics and Politics" (Knopf, \$1.75); "Karl Marx's Interpretation of History" (Harvard University Press, \$6), by M. M. Bober, and Edith Hamilton's "The Greek Way to Western Civilization" (Mentor Books, 35¢). These very different volumes collaborate in telling us quite a lot about ourselves.

Dr. Riker surveys the history of the European era which began with the Renaissance and the Reformation, with the emergence of the individual, the middle class, and the national state—an era which, in the opinion of some thinkers, has just about run its course. His view is broad, and, in the best sense of the world, philosophical. His management of the historical facts essential to his survey is masterly, but these facts are carefully selected, for, as he says, his concern is with the evolution of institutions rather than with wars and reigns and heroes. Our civilization is seen largely as a product of the interactions of the three emergent forces mentioned above; but, if Dr. Riker is not primarily concerned with war, it is still war which dominates his story to a degree which makes optimism, today, an act of faith rather than of reason. We cannot dodge the central truth that it is war, always war, which has established and consolidated, or shaken and destroyed, the work of the individual, the middle class, and the national state—makers of our Western world.

Walter Bagehot, in his pioneering, still exciting little book, written seventy-nine years ago, and now engagingly introduced by Jacques Barzun, underscores the truth that, "the progress of the military art is the most conspicuous, I was about to say the most *showy*, fact in human history." But he is most interesting when he is theorizing about the processes of nation-making and nation-changing, the springs of progress, conformance versus deviation, and the temporary benefits of "provisional institutions." Of the last, an outstanding example is slavery, the historical role of which was recognized by Engels, who declared, as quoted by Mr. Bober: "Without slavery, no Greek state, no Greek art and science; without slavery, no

Roman Empire . . . no modern Europe . . . no modern socialism." As Miss Hamilton says, the Greek way of life was firmly founded on this institution. Until Euripides, "There was never anywhere a dreamer so rash or so romantic as to imagine a life without slaves. . ."

Bagehot's mind, if not great, was certainly first-rate and remarkably free of "the cake of custom," a mind that can hardly fail to stimulate any other that rubs against it. Mr. Bober's book is stimulating, too, in the performance of a more precise service. It analyzes with scholarly patience and objectivity, and with keen intelligence, the Marx-Engels theory, of history, based upon modes of production and the class structure; and it justly evaluates both the serviceability and the shortcomings of the theory. For anyone who wishes to understand the Marxian system in its details, its contradictions, its insights, and its simplifications—instead of contenting himself with a cursory view and a cavalier judgment of the subject—this volume is sure to prove invaluable.

"The Greek Way" is also instructive. But it may be read chiefly for the pleasure afforded by Miss Hamilton's own pleasure in the literature and culture she knows so well; for an understanding of her understanding of a civilization which, locally and briefly, achieved a unique, creative integration of vital powers and social forces. It can be read, too, for a style which is controlled, beautiful, mature.

James F. Byrnes has made a contribution to history in "Speaking Frankly" (Grosset, \$1.49), an account of his dealings with Stalin & Co., from Yalta to the Paris Peace Conference, during which period the Russians squandered their "deposit of good will" in this country, for the reason, one assumes, that it was of no value in their long-range scheme . . . Add good Pocket Books: Hawthorne's "Scarlet Letter" and Merimée's "Carmen and Other Stories" (25¢ each).

—BEN RAY REDMAN.



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