

## Trumpeted Storyteller

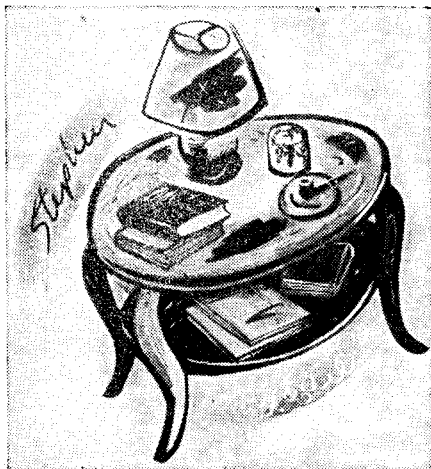
**STEPHEN CRANE: A BIBLIOGRAPHY.** By Ames W. Williams and Vincent Starrett. Glendale, California: John Valentine. 1948. xii + 164 pp. \$7.50.

Reviewed by JOHN T. WINTERICH

VINCENT STARRETT blew a lusty trumpet in the Crane-rennaissance parade of a quarter century ago, and he has been tooting and marching ever since. His call, indeed, has grown more clarion, his stride sturdier. His Crane bibliography of 1923 was an affair of forty-eight pages, but it was a mighty useful tool to the Crane student at the moment, and has been ever since.

Now, twenty-five years later, appears a new Crane bibliography, the work of a devoted and competent team: Mr. Starrett and Ames W. Williams. Neither title-page nor text gives the slightest clue to the share of the work borne by each collaborator. It doesn't seem to matter; both Mr. Williams and Mr. Starrett know their Crane; both know his books; both understand the niceties of description and collation.

An author-bibliography, if it is to be of any account, must be largely biography. It should give almost as good a picture of the man as the formal biography does, without, of course, trying to usurp the function of the latter. Biography, in general, would be better if more biographers



were, in addition, competent bibliographers.

Here the thing is done, which makes this an admirable monograph to study in order to see how it is done. Here is Crane, publishing his first book at his own expense, entrusting his second to an upstart firm of youngsters, and attaining instant fame with his third at the hands of an old-line house. Less than five years later, at twenty-eight, he was dead. After an interval corresponding nearly to the length of his own life, his collected works appeared in ten volumes. Mr. Starrett, in an introduction (the single attributed unit of the book), calls him "the first modern American storyteller." This bibliography is the story of his stories, well and graphically set forth.

DELMORE SCHWARTZ



**ROBERT PENN WARREN:** "I have read Delmore Schwartz's stories several times, and am more impressed with them at each reading. I do not see why this book should not place him quite securely among the very best writers of the story we now have in America."

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Literary Guild selection for October

MACMILLAN



# Seeing Things

OLIVIER'S "HAMLET"

IF and when they build houses for us, architects usually reflect our tastes, hence our personalities. Even if they fail to do so, one thing is certain. They determine the physical pattern of our living, once their blueprints, realized in terms of brick and mortar, have become our homes.

The new film version of "Hamlet" \* is, of course, billed as Laurence Olivier's. Since he directed it and plays the Prince, it is as the Laurence Olivier "Hamlet" that the picture will always be identified. Yet, while sitting before it, as filled with admiration as with misgivings, I could not help wondering if this cinematic "Hamlet," so fine in some respects, so unsatisfactory in others, should not more accurately be described as Roger Furse's.

It is Mr. Furse who served the production as its architect. It is he who designed the huge, drafty structure, part conch shell, part labyrinth, part courtyard, part lighthouse staircase, part Simmons bed window exhibit, part Cloisters, part ziggurat, part Danish pueblo, but mainly movie setting, which is the most recent Elsinore. By so doing Mr. Furse has conditioned the whole performance. He has provided its terrain, created its mood, charted its action, steered its actors, and, sometimes, smothered the play in the *cloche* which is his castle.

Mr. Furse's interest, understandably, is the camera. He would be in the wrong if it were not. Transferring the drama to a different medium, he is bound to have thought in terms of close-ups, long shots, fade-outs, and all those supposedly liberating technical devices which the screen enjoys and the stage does not. His problem, a sizable one, is external. It has been to find an outward form for an inward tragedy. Not such a form, mind you, as a stage designer would have evolved. No, a form three-dimensional, spacious, filmworthy. A form intended to dispense with the scene divisions of the theatre, to occupy the eye, and

add those free-ranging elements impossible behind the footlights.

Almost inevitably, Mr. Furse's problem becomes not only Olivier's but ours, too. The final "Hamlet," if indeed there be such a thing in the case of a text so endlessly self-extending, exists in the mind and achieves its most satisfying visualization in the mind's eye. What Shakespeare wanted to say, what he felt necessary to get said, with all its subtleties, tantalizing depths, and inter-relationships, is said by him in his uncut text. How exciting that text can be when its wonders are untampered with, the Maurice Evans production made clear in 1938. The play, in that instance, was indeed the thing; the thing it was plainly meant to be, and in many stirring moments is, in the film. Yet in the film much that is valuable is lost, and needlessly lost, because of the swollen dimensions of Mr. Furse's Elsinore. The paradox is that the screen text finds itself confined instead of freed by the very space now at its disposal.

To have "Hamlet" hacked at in order to compress it within the theatre's regulation playing time is the common experience. Even when so remembered, the results can be incomparable. Everyone knows this who has responded to the tattered texts acted

by Walter Hampden, John Barrymore, Basil Sydney, John Gielgud, or, for that matter, by Mr. Evans in his oddly truncated GI version. To sacrifice great language, however, for meaningless pantomime; to have complexity and innuendo dispensed with in favor of camera angles; and to lose key speeches, characters, or scenes merely because so much time is wasted getting the actors from one part of the castle to another is to encounter a "Hamlet" in many ways dislocated by being on location.

THE film runs two hours and thirty-three minutes. In other words, since the performance is continuous, its playing time is about the same as that required for the cut stage versions which, with one or two intermissions, usually take three hours. These cut versions in the theatre, incidentally, have always found room for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern; for so pivotal a speech as "O what a rogue and peasant slave am I"; for the second gravedigger (who is not greatly missed); sometimes, and rightly, for "How all occasions do inform against me"; usually for Fortinbras; and as a rule for many lines or speeches not to be found in this new "Hamlet."

The film's cuts are not in every instance wise or logical even in view of the camera's needs. The transposition of "To be or not to be" until after Hamlet's scene with Ophelia does not, I suppose, really matter. But, surely, the Fortinbras sub-plot and the scene of Hamlet's embarkation for England, in addition to contributing to our understanding of the Prince, are compounded of ideal stuffs for the movies.



Laurence Olivier and Eileen Herlie—"... a bounce, an urgency, a fascination."

\*HAMLET, a film version of William Shakespeare's tragedy. Directed by Laurence Olivier. Text editor, Alan Dent. Designed by Roger Furse. Music composed by William Walton and played by the Philharmonia Orchestra. With a cast including Laurence Olivier, Eileen Herlie, Basil Sydney, Jean Simmons, Felix Aylmer, Norman Wooland, Terence Morgan, Stanley Holloway, Peter Cushing, etc. A J. Arthur Rank Enterprise. Sponsored by the Theatre Guild. A Universal-International Release. At the Park Avenue Theatre.