

man, a former actor, an unsuccessful playwright, an admirer of Lope de Vega; but he has taken minor orders and has known the bishop as a seminary student. Did the Blessed Virgin name Friar Blasco specifically? No, Catalina admitted, but everyone knows the bishop is a saint—he has been Inquisitor at Valencia and has burned or garroted or broken on the rack or whipped to death or imprisoned for life thousands of heretics. He is just and merciful; he allowed an old Greek who had been his tutor to be strangled instead of burned, to save pain. He saved numberless souls from hell by extorting conversions under the lash and the thumb-screw. He lives rigorously, forcing the Dominican friars who serve him to whip him in his cell. Obviously the Blessed Virgin meant Friar Blasco. His brother Don Manuel is only a soldier; his other brother, Martin, is a disgrace to the family—a man of no distinction, a baker, a smiling, friendly, charitable nobody (the listeners smile; Friar Blasco is the mind, Don Manuel is the body, Martin the baker is the spirit).

Catalina's story is held in strictest secrecy; therefore, the whole city knows of it in a day. Doña Beatriz, daughter of the Duke of Castel Rodriguez, who governs the local Carmelite convent under a mitigated rule, hears of it. Only Doña Beatriz knows that she became a religious when Friar Blasco became a monk, having secretly and hopelessly loved him. Why not, she muses, induce the love of her youth to perform a miracle in her chapel, to the shame of her enemy, Teresa of Avila? It will then be a simple matter to take Catalina into the convent, convert her to the religious life, and eventually make of her a saint. In that way the mitigated rule will have been proved preferable in the eyes of God to Teresa's reform.

So pride tempts intellect. The bishop succumbs to Doña Beatriz, and before all of the people of Castel Rodriguez he attempts to heal Catalina. He places his hand on her head and says, "In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, I command thee, Catalina Perez, to rise to thy feet, cast away thy useless crutch, and walk."

Here the tale-teller is suddenly attracted by a casual event in the street. He stares past his listeners, forgetting them, until the clink of coins in the bowl reminds him of his task. He resumes, and the listeners relax. The testing of the mind proceeds, and after that the testing of the body, and then there is the question of whether the spirit is worthy to be tested. There is the apparent victory of pride and the sudden remembrance in the heart of Lucifer of the love that has been

lost. The tale-teller brings forth his symbols one by one, each properly costumed, each artfully disguised to reveal its identity without subtracting from the personality it possesses.

It is a complete yet an economical story. No thread of plot is left unwound, and each is used again and again, in stitch and loop, to make the pattern and keep it secure. The listeners expect this; they know from the beginning that there is meaning in Uncle Domingo's sins and indiscretions, in the affection he showers on Catalina, in the thwarted love of Doña Beatriz for Friar Blasco, in the garroting of the old Greek, in the fact that Martin bakes bread for the city and Don Manuel mistakes him for a pastry cook, in the absence of Catalina's father, and in the brief appearance of Catalina as Mary Magdalen. All these must of necessity move toward the illumination and final redemption of the mind. The listeners expect it and, along with it, certain decorations and pleasant bits of embroidery, such as the curious old knight Catalina meets on the road and the casual mention of another Greek,

a painter whose work Doña Beatriz dislikes.

When the story is finished, the listeners wander away, talking among themselves, telling each other that "Catalina" was the best of all, that its wit was superb, its cunning unmatched, its characters superbly realized, its rhythms delicate, its plot a masterpiece of improvising on the Theme. The apprentice storytellers gather in groups to discuss the satire, the atmosphere, the symbolism, the motivation, and to shake their heads over the consummate mastery of the old storyteller, whom they call Maugham.

The old fellow, dozing in the sun, smiles in his sleep, knowing that any time he awakens and finds the bowl empty he can yawn, stretch his legs, and do it all over again. "Catalina"? Just a tale he happened to think up about the Inquisition in Spain, an appearance of the Blessed Virgin, a monk who wanted to help God, and a woman who hated Teresa of Avila. Anyone could tell it; the only requirement is that he be W. Somerset Maugham.

Your Literary I.Q.

By Howard Collins

WIND AND WEATHER

Eleanor Shannon, of Lexington, Va., submits twenty quotations on wind and weather. How many of them can you identify? Allowing five points for each correct answer, a score of sixty is par, seventy is very good, and eighty or better is excellent. Answers are on page 26.

1. The wind's wet wings and fingers drip with rain.
2. All night long in the dark and wet
A man goes riding by.
3. A chill no coat, however stout,
Of homespun stuff could quite shut out.
4. The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast.
5. How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle,
In the icy air of night!
6. And the moon her red beacon has veiled with a cloud.
7. Dim with a dull imprisoned ray,
A sunbeam that had lost its way.
8. And the racing winds that wheel and flee
On the flying heels of June.
9. ah, bitter cold it was!
The owl for all his feathers was a-cold.
10. Scattered like dust and leaves, when the mighty blasts
Of October seize them.
11. Cauld blew the bitter-biting north
Upon thy early humble birth.
12. May is a full light wind of lilac
From Canada to Narragansett Bay.
13. I sift the snow on the mountains below
And their great pines groan aghast.
14. Dirty British coaster with a salt-caked smoke-stack,
Butting through the Channel in the mad March days.
15. Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May.
16. How the cold creeps as the fire dies at length,—
How drifts are piled.
17. Amid yon tuft of hazel trees
That twinkle in the gusty breeze.
18. Rift the hills, and roll the waters, flash the lightnings, weigh the sun.
19. The wind is in the palm-trees, an' the temple bells they say:
20. All the air a solemn stillness holds.

Nova Scotia Spume

STORM AT SABLE ISLAND. By Edmund Gilligan. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1948. 368 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by JOHN WILLIAM ROGERS

HERE is a story full of dashing waves, spume, menacing icebergs, and the cruel toll of the sea. It takes place just north of Gloucester, Mass., and in the waters south of Nova Scotia, where for generations sturdy Yankees, in spite of storm and shipwreck, have sailed out to fish for cod. Particularly is it laid on the treacherous beaches of Sable Island, long famed for its cruel destruction of vessels. It is a story laid in modern times as late as the introduction of wireless on ships, but its flavor is that of a hundred years earlier.

If there are many true facts about sailors and ships and much sea lore of the region woven into its pages, probably very few sailors will ever get very far in reading it, for the author, in a notably curious fashion, has mixed realism of the sea with a style that constantly falls away into purple patches and a mystic atmosphere that gives his characters something of the quality of figures moving in a dream. Indeed, often his characters seem hardly more clearly motivated than people in a dream.

The style—especially in the earlier pages, and for no particular reason that this reviewer could fathom—seems born of the cadence of Irish speech. At his happiest, Gilligan can have a sharply vivid turn of phrase. Witness these examples from a couple of random pages: "He laughed in the shape of his hope, and said gaily to take her into laughter with him . . ." "He loved her as if she had been twice his mother . . ." ". . . if ever the face of man had been new curved and shaped by sorrow and grief beyond grief . . ."

But far too often this desire to be stylistically impressive results in an effect that is merely tortuous. It shatters completely the simplicity that is the base on which this story stands, and it utterly impedes the clear sense of what the author is trying to tell the reader. Listen to this, when a sailor is drowning:

And at the last: "Oh, my mother!" and off he goes and down he goes, a sweet heart smothered by the vagrant, curdling sea. One more! One more to whirl in manly beauty a dead while in yonder clockwise tide, the melody of the turning bergs his requiem, and only the tramp seals to wonder over him until the salt feeds on him, takes all of him, and to the blazing sun and the everlasting streams at last returns him.



"It would be one thing if Theodor Plievier's book had preceded 'All Quiet'—it is another to come after it."

And the conversation of these sea folk, while it has moments of crude realism, is speech such as I am sure was never heard anywhere on land or sea.

As for the plot, to Folly Cove comes a man with a darling baby girl and a tale of the tragic death of his wife on Sable Island. The child grows up the playmate of two stalwart little boys who are bosom companions and who follow their fathers before them to the sea. They themselves have wild adventures off Sable Island. Finally, there is a love triangle between the three, and always there is the sea in the background, bitter and unrelenting, taking its full toll of men and ships.

Had Edmund Gilligan attempted to tell his long and episodic story with less manner and more directness, with less attention to an overtone of some vague exalted mystery and provided simple motivation for his characters; had he foregone the temptation constantly to mix fine writing with a lively sea story, one reader would have found "Storm at Sable Island" far more readable. As it was, this reviewer, with the most amiable will in the world, could not help putting down the book with the outraged feeling that the author had never faced the problem of what form in which to cast his story. The result is a hodgepodge—moments of real beauty, scenes of real power, and great stretches of involved verbiage, lush writing, and pretentious presentation that I fear hides an absence of content. And that makes for very difficult reading indeed.

Plievier's Inferno

STALINGRAD. By Theodor Plievier. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts Inc. 1948. 357 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by EDMUND FULLER

PLIEVIER'S INFERNO — as this book could be called—has a massive weight and power. It has its place on the shelf of modern anti-war literature. If, as is claimed, it has sold over a million copies in Central Europe (wherever that is) it is a remarkable and gratifying thing—especially for Germany. This is a type of reading matter unavailable in that nation for a long time.

The action of the book covers only the final weeks of the German collapse at Stalingrad, where "the German people had fallen to the lowest point, politically and morally, in their history." As the novel opens, the situation already is desperate and a smashing Russian offensive begins which, once for all, isolates the Stalingrad armies from any hope of relief. The ruthless German military pile driver that had swept everything before it to the Volga had far overreached the capacity to sustain and supply itself. Now it was an army virtually without food, without ammunition and equipment, without fuel, and without medicine.

Plievier gives as harrowing an account of the horrors of war as I have ever read. Nothing is spared. Detail is heaped upon ghastly detail with a kind of stolid objectivity until the cumulative picture is one of madness and chaos. It is a single, sustained note, unrelieved and undeviating.

Fundamentally this is a mass novel, peopled in a large part by the nameless, sweeping its camera eye over the army from private to field marshal. But those individuals who do recur through the many scenes are illuminatingly characterized. Plievier is not without a gift for people, impersonal as the book is.

The two before us most frequently are Sergeant Gnotke, first encountered in a penal battalion, and Colonel Vilshofen, a tank commander later promoted to general. These are the two, of all in the book, whose experience and observation most clearly become translated into comprehension of the crime they have enacted and of the penance that is required.

Gnotke is inarticulate. His perception takes the form of quiet, unrationalyzed acts of kindness unobtrusively, perhaps even unconsciously, performed toward his fellows. Vilshofen, one-time student of philosophy, brilliant adventurer, veteran of two

(Continued on page 27)