

Simon, the bitter love and grief of the writer. Katkov is good. He can probably do it again and again. (I have just read a short story of his, which proves it.)

But I want to ask if he ought not to turn now from doing what he has already done perfectly once and twice. Pa Goodman, in a small part of "Eagle at My Eyes," was a literary triumph; I am willing to repeat it. Lev Simon, in the whole of the second novel, adds nothing. In fact, the second half of "A Little Sleep, A Little Slumber" adds nothing to the first, and the fifth chapter nothing to the third. More of the same, pressing home the same sharp point, touching us again and again with the same love and pity. May not pathos be thrust by repetition over the bathetic edge? May not the pursuit of our honest tears become tear-jerking? I ask Mr. Katkov to consider these things, along with my heartfelt admiration for his work. ●

Ad Man with a Pain

THE MAGNIFICENT MACINNES.
By Shepherd Mead. New York:
Farrar, Straus & Co. 255 pp. \$2.50.

By JOHN BROOKS

ADVERTISING and allied commercial fields, as fictional subjects, seem to lead novelists to fantasy these days; either we have characters who toss off six or eight martinis before lunch without batting an eye (and there's fantasy for you), or else we have sprites. In Shepherd Mead's "The Magnificent MacInnes," a novel by an advertising man about commercial polls, we have a sprite in the form of a seedy old Scot from Jackson Heights who, Mr. Mead informs us, is so sensitive that at any given moment he can tell to the nearest percentage point what color toothpaste the American public prefers or, for that

matter, all about its likes and dislikes.

Well, it goes without saying that the old duffer throws the poll-taking business into a tizzy. He looks like a gold mine to the two bright young men who get hold of him, but the trouble is that no client will trust Mac's home-made poll results unless there's a "gimmick." Then the less conscience-stricken of the two young men comes home one day with a nine-foot-high fire control gadget from a battleship, which he has bought from the War Assets Administration for \$128.37. They set up this terrifying but worthless contraption in their apartment and sit Mac down in front of it, staring at it in spurious concentration while he makes up poll results out of his head. After that, clients who talk in sums that stretch as far as the eye can see keep the phone jangling. The gimmick, which is called the "Psychoelectric Correlator," is irresistible to all clients; they can doubt no more. Mac's results, of course, always check with the results obtained through tireless and expensive research by other poll-takers.

The author's gimmick is a good one, if you like gimmicks; his story is neatly constructed up to a point, and for all I know these poll-taking people may talk with the weird glibness that he assigns to them. If they do, their conversations were better not recorded. But once the basic joke has been stated and restated and played upon, the story settles down more and more to the old one about the ad man who hurts inside. One by one the familiar elements creep in: the gay, easy gags about poverty, the constant talk about big sums of money, the sudden dazzling success, the half-baked generalizations about that cynical New York "Idea Belt," the girl with pure lines and a pure heart, the sophomoric seduction scene, the gradual regeneration of the narrator under her influence. Along about page 200 of this book, with the story sagging pretty badly, the humor takes on a thigh-slapping note; in this extremity, the Kinsey report is invoked. It helps only briefly. As to the ending, in view of the fact that the author has been promising us a bang louder than the atomic bomb, it is pretty disappointing to find that what we get is only a splutter or two out of old Mac.

It may be that the basic saga of the ad man has become so grotesquely, wearily recognizable—so true in the shallowest sense—that authors who feel compelled to tell it resort to fantasy in frantic search for freshness. They are, in effect, apologizing for their story. The pity of it is that this author really has a fresh theme. In the public-opinion polls, he has his hands on nothing less than a dramatic

Your Literary I. Q.

By Howard Collins

IT'S ROSES, ROSES, ALL THE WAY!

Jeane Wain, of Los Angeles, offers twenty quotations involving roses, all taken from well-known poems. Allowing five points if you can name either poet or poem, a score of sixty is par, seventy is very good, and eighty or better is excellent. Answers on page 33.

1. I sometime think that never blows so red
The Rose as where some buried Caesar bled.
2. Out of his mouth a red, red rose!
Out of his heart a white!
3. Like a rose embowered
In its own green leaves.
4. No flower of her kindred,
No rosebud is nigh.
5. The Rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the Rose.
6. As killing as the canker to the rose,
Or taint-worm to the weanling herds that graze.
7. Go, lovely rose! Tell her that wastes her time and me.
8. I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys.
9. Roses, their sharp spines being gone,
Not royal in their smells alone.
10. I sing of times trans-shifting, and I write
How roses first came red and lilies white.
11. And I will make thee beds of roses
And a thousand fragrant posies.
12. Strew on her roses, roses,
And never a spray of yew!
13. A white rose of Mary's gift
For service meetly worn.
14. It was roses, roses, all the way,
With myrtle mixed in my path like mad.
15. All around my gala hat I wear a wreath of roses.
16. The squills and daffodils will give way to pillard roses.
17. The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine.
18. Love deep as the sea as a rose must wither
As the rose-red seaweed that mocks the rose.
19. Plant thou no roses at my head nor shady cypress-tree.
20. Queen rose of the rosebud garden of girls,
Come hither, the dances are done.

example of the standardization and mechanization of our thought that seems to go along with the same tendencies in the world around us. It's a formidable subject, and one that might have made an engaging book, even in the wise-cracking vein that he has chosen. But he never tackles it, for the simple reason that any original ideas his characters are capable of would do discredit to a clever high-school freshman. When one character suggests that Mac would tell the popularity of a radio program before its broadcast, another character is appalled, but he doesn't know quite why. "That idea's like an iceberg," the author remarks ex cathedra to the reader. "Most of it is under water. Kick it around for a minute yourself. Close the book and look at the ceiling."

Now wait a minute. I know thinking by authors isn't so fashionable since Hemingway, but no author should get off that easily.

John Brooks is author of "The Big Wheel," a satirical novel of New York life to be published this autumn.

FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT No. 321

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 321 will be found in the next issue. Answer No. 318, which was inadvertently omitted from the Aug. 6 issue, is given below.*

CDI BMCO HDJCRH XC
AXTS, MCR X XCQAJRS
MAA JGPMC MCR MAA
GJGMA HDJCRH, SNQSSR
XC XCISGSHI M ZCDQZ
MI IVS RDDG.

—QVMGASH AMBP.

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 320
Experience informs us that the first defence of weak minds is to recriminate.—S. T. COLERIDGE.

* Answer to Literary Crypt No. 318
Fame sometimes hath created something of nothing.

—T. FULLER.

Variations on the Soviet Theme

THE GREEN BOUNDARY. By Boris Ilyin. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 312 pp. \$3.

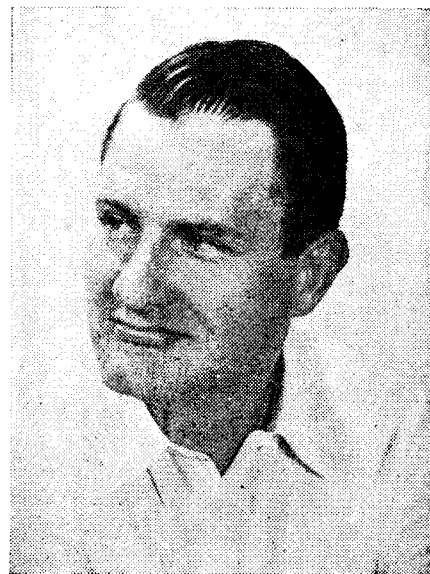
By BEN RAY REDMAN

WHEN MAJOR RADONOV set out from American Headquarters in Frankfurt to meet a Soviet delegation that was coming to Meinburg, in the U. S. Zone, for a conference regarding the allocation of radio wavelengths and relevant matters, he found himself beset by mixed emotions. He had never met any Soviet officers, and—as he had often had to explain to his comrades-in-arms, who wondered how he came to speak Russian—he was the son of White Russian refugees, who had brought him to the United States when he was only four. So he approached his first contact with the Soviets with curiosity, deep-rooted hostility, and considerable apprehension. His determination to behave well in a difficult situation was in itself a confession that he was unsure of what his emotional responses would be when he found himself sitting at the same table with his traditional enemies, stories of whom had filled his childhood and his youth.

Radonov's companion—young Lieutenant Thomas, the technical expert, for whom the Major would interpret—suffered from no such doubts. Eager, precise, and humorless, given to knitting "his brows when speaking of things technical or intellectual, or pertaining to great and serious subjects," he looked on this mission as a chance to learn something about how the great Soviet Experiment was working out. As he told his superior: "I always have liked to see things for myself."

But it is the fate of the Thomases of this world, whatever their desires, to see much less than the Radonovs. The Lieutenant passed through his Meinburg experience without the least notion of what was going on around him; with no awareness of the hidden forces which were at work, or of the paths of destiny which were crossing one another to form strange, dramatic patterns. He was sure that he was learning a lot about the Russians, and he found them very cooperative—whenever the Americans were willing to yield ground—but, if Captain Shepko was in Meinburg to talk radio, it was not perhaps the whole or even the principal business of Major Zubkin and Lieutenant Lubinova.

Radonov found himself quickly involved in that other business of theirs—first through the waiter who called



Boris Ilyin—"an economy that was once thought peculiarly characteristic of French fiction."

himself Orłowski and said he was Polish, and then through the Melnikovs—and this involvement took turns which it could hardly have taken if the Soviet junior officer, Darya Lubinova, had not been an attractive young woman. In any case, Radonov might have run afoul of the methods employed by the Russians to return certain displaced persons, against their will, to Soviet territory; or the Russians' short way with other DP's, whom they did not care to see at large in a western zone. He might, too, have found himself assuring Orłowski and the Melnikovs that they were safe in the friendly shadow of the American Military Government; and then found himself stultified by a change of policy towards DP's, which descended upon Frankfurt from a level even higher than Eisenhower's. But, if the young officer's name had been Lubinov instead of Lubinova, we should not have had the story of "The Green Boundary."

It is a good story, cleanly told with an economy that was once thought peculiarly characteristic of French fiction; an economy that does not rely on the staccato technique favored by some of our more laconic American novelists. There are no wasted words or motions, but the reader is never hurried on his way. It is obvious that Boris Ilyin has a thorough knowledge of the Russian character, of the famous Slav soul with its surprising variations and contradictions; and it is his communication of this knowledge—through Darya, Orłowski, and the Melnikovs—that gives "The Green

(Continued on page 31)