

the Phoenix Nest

DELAWARE COUNTY, 1949

UNDER gray water on the valley floor
Gray bass were waking and the wide lake stirred,
Spinning a pale gray filament of mist
For the white shuttle of the swallow's breast.

Where the long shoreline disappeared in fern,
Tin, quonset-shaped, the mailbox glinted, one
Shade paler than pond lilies in the sun
and the cold snake uncoiled upon its rock.

Old peeling rowboats chafed the rotted dock,
Rocking the sky in pools of last night's rain.
A haggard man bailed out, untied and drifted
Past stubborn slopes his hand had sown in vain.

In this harsh land there was no lawn, no park,
No gleam of orchard where the white mist lifted.
Only brave clover and a stray lobelia.
Yet on a backdrop, blue as bougainvillea

A wandering heron spread the double arc
Of her dark wings, then paused in southward travel
To sleep in reeds near an abandoned plough.

Yet here I heard your step upon the gravel
And the shrill magpie screaming from a bough.

—ROSALIND LEVINE

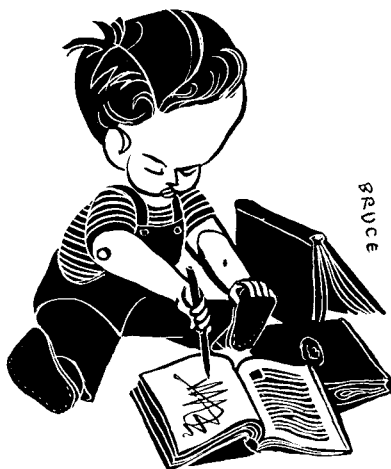
* * *

It is pleasing to know that two Bay Staters know The Bunny Stories (mentioned awhile ago by me as childhood favorites). First, on the impressive letterhead of the Governor's Office of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts I received a note from Orville S. Poland, saying:

I have been married for thirty-two years and my wife says that she has never seen "The Bunny Book," and so I am sure it was never handed down to our children. Still the memory is green. Wasn't Cuddledown lost overnight

and found through the heroism of Cousin Jack?

Many incidents are hazy, but I seem to recall Tuffy Bear and his brother. Wasn't Tuffy reformed by the fine example set by the Bunnies? Again I have hazy memories of a hazardous boat ride in the



rapids, being caught on a snag and finally rescued.

My little sister was Cuddledown and I was Bunny Boy—although, to tell the truth, I thought him something of a prig.

I probably last read "The Bunny Book" about 1895. It must have had something to have made such an impression.

You are right, the cover was blue. Didn't it carry a white medallion of a bunny in profile?

I am sure it did, and I now remember Tuffy Bear myself! And here is Mrs. Donald B. Logan of Restalrig, Friendship, Me., telling me about the Jewetts:

While reading the SRL of June 18 I was interested and delighted to come upon your recalling of The Bunny Stories by John H. Jewett, for those stories are stored in a special niche of my childhood memories.

At the time they were written Mr. Jewett was on the staff of the *Evening Gazette* of Worcester, Mass., and I am sure that no Worcester house was complete without the blue-covered book with the big white bunny on its cover.

Mr. Jewett's daughter Sheila, for whom the stories were written, attended the same dancing class that I did and I was one of the very fortunate children invited to her birthday parties. Of these parties I recall two special delights: one that the ice-cream was always topped with or surrounded by spun sugar which we called "old man's hair"; the other, that Mr. Jewett

always wrote a special bunny story for the occasion, and read it dramatically to his enchanted audience.

Soon after Sheila's early childhood, the Jewett family moved from Worcester, and I have not heard of them since, I regret to say, but they are still a very distinct and charming memory which I want to thank you for calling to mind.

* * *

breakfast with gertrude
(or a rhyme for orange)

an orange is an orange is an orange or
was the last I knew
and I prefer a well-filled porringer
the oranges are for you

—RACHEL VELMA PROUTY.

* * *

WORDS OUT OF ORDER
DO NOT A POEM MAKE

I and the Persians*
Scorn all inversions
Like "So a man he hired."

What could be worse
Than brisk modern verse
Archaically attired?

It violates my sense
Of poetic license
Which long ago expired.

—DOROTHY B. GRISWOLD.

Omar Khayyám's as rabid as I am.

* * *

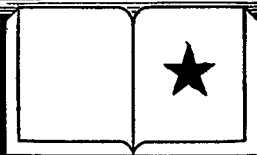
Henry Harrison started publishing poetry many years ago. He edited *The Greenwich Village Quill* (1926-1929) and *Poetry World* (1929-1944), as well as numerous anthologies. He will now act as poetry consultant for the new firm of Harrison House, established by his ex-wife, Gertrude Harrison, and will design and produce books for the company. Its offices are at 35 South William St., New York 4. Mr. Harrison's taste in the past in poetry seems to the NEST to have been catholic in the extreme. All sorts and conditions of verse were published by him. We know no more about the present venture than is stated above.

* * *

The second annual announcement of Poetry Awards, 1949-50, asks us to note "the new and larger book award for our second year." Rather than take the space here to explain to you about Poetry Awards, you are requested, if interested, to write for information to Poetry Awards, 1420 East Mountain St., Pasadena 7, Calif., for information, mentioning this department.

—WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT.

NEW EDITIONS

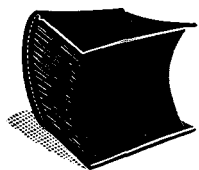


THE selection of Lionel Trilling as editor of "The Portable Matthew Arnold" (Viking Press, \$2) was an ideal choice, for Mr. Trilling's critical study of Arnold is—as recently noted here—one of the jewels of American criticism. He begins his capital introduction to the present volume with the assertion that "of the literary men of the great English nineteenth century there are few who have stayed quite so fresh, so immediate, and so relevant as Matthew Arnold," and this statement is fully justified by the six hundred and more pages of poetry and prose that follow. Arnold is fresh and immediate and relevant because his predicament is ours—he merely knew it a little earlier.

The sea of faith may be even further from flood-tide than it was when he looked out from Dover Beach, but exact measurements are unimportant. We wander between two worlds, as he did, for the one which was powerless to be born in his day is still so. Empedocles on Etna—in-capable of living by the philosophy which he pressed on Pausanias—is our contemporary as well as Arnold's. Social and political problems, which he knew in their early stages, are with us yet, and yet unsolved. He knew in seed much that we know in flower, and he foresaw much that we see. He is the father of many living literary critics, and the superior of almost all his children. A "great continuator and transmitter of the tradition of humanism," as Mr. Trilling says, he is also founder of the faith—which claims eminent adherents—that modern poetry should be "a complete magister vitae."

In the pages of "The Portable Milton" (Viking, \$2) a far greater voice than Arnold's speaks to us across a far greater distance; but it is still a voice for our times, because it is a voice for all times. Douglas Bush, whose qualifications as an editor of Milton match those of Mr. Trilling as an editor of Arnold, gives us the three major poems and as many of the minor poems as most persons will wish to have, along with selections from the prose, including "Areopagitica" complete. (His translations from the Latin of the "Second Defence," by the way, may make some readers, impatient with the poet's own prosaic

involvements, wish that he could have performed a similar operation on Milton's English papers.) Recognizing his duty to those who may come to Milton with eager interest but with no great store of learning, Mr. Bush sensibly spends a liberal portion of his fine introduction on explanations of "religious and philosophic assumptions which were once a general possession but have largely vanished from the modern consciousness."



Along the sources from which Arnold drew light and inspiration, Mr. Trilling names "The Bhagavadgita." Anyone who has ever tried to understand this immortal work without the aid of adequate explanatory notes will seize with joy and enlightenment upon the edition of it prepared by S. Radhakrishnan (Harper, \$3.50). In addition to a long and lucid introductory essay, this volume gives a translation of the Sanskrit original, followed, verse by verse, by a prose translation and glosses on important words and phrases. No method of interpretation and instruction could be more effective.

Hardly less valuable to a reader (save that it does not contain the Sanskrit) is the first volume of Swami Nikhilananda's new English version of "The Upanishads" (Harper, \$3.50), which presents and elucidates the Katha, Isa, Kena, and Mundaka Upanishads. I cannot recommend these books too strongly to those who would explore the profound wells of Hindu wisdom and belief.

When we come on the name of John Milton, senior, it is usually only as the father of his son; but in "The English Madrigal Composers" (Oxford Press, \$5), by E. H. Fellowes, he exists in his own right as a skilful musician who flourished in the golden age of English song. This volume is a scholarly and authoritative work, of interest to students in its special field, and to those who would revive a once popular art form. . . . J. A. Hobson's "Imperialism: A Study" (Macmillan, \$3) provides much valuable background information regarding the stages by which England, and some other Western nations, have arrived at their present unhappy plight. . . . Irwin Edman's intelligent, limpid "Arts and the Man" is a notable new Mentor Book (35¢).

—BEN RAY REDMAN.

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