

blurred and dull, affording little pleasure to the eye despite their inherent interest. There is more to commend in the text, which gives the musical histories of our large cities. Each article is written by a local authority, usually a practising music critic.

THE VIOLET: The History of a Song, by Paul Nettl. Storm Publishers. \$7.50. Mozart could hardly have believed when he set Goethe's "Das Veilchen" to music that someday his sixty-five-measure song would provide subject matter for a book. But

this, it has done, in one of the handsomest volumes to have come our way in some time. Professor Nettl relates the history of Goethe's little poem, describes how other composers set it, and then proceeds to a historical and musical analysis of Mozart's lied. Included are facsimiles of Mozart's manuscript and the first edition published (1789) by Artaria in Vienna. The typography, the paper, the binding—everything is sumptuous and of exquisite taste. If anything, the largess is a bit too bountiful for so minute a subject.

—ROLAND GELATT.

PERSONAL HISTORY

(Continued from page 19)

entitled to derive such comfort as they can from Dr. Plesch's conclusion that "much might be achieved if a doctor persuaded a patient to change his brand. In this way a counter-effect might be secured against the accumulation of poisons in any particular tobacco kind. Those people who boast (why I don't know) that they have always smoked the same brand of cigars for so and so many years without a change are in much greater danger than those less faithful souls who change the brand constantly." Any reader whose range of interests is broad enough to include Einstein's brain, Dietrich's legs, and the case for euthanasia will enjoy Dr. Plesch's reminiscences. The section called "A Doctor's Dialogues" (modestly ticketed "Appendix") is actually a 200-page book by itself—a great practitioner's sane and pungent views on dozens of medical subjects.

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT AT HYDE PARK, documented drawings and text by Olin Dows. American Artists Group. \$5. Since 1908, when he was four years old, Olin Dows has lived at Rhinebeck, New York, eight miles north of Hyde Park. He knew FDR as a family friend throughout childhood; Anna and James Roosevelt attended a dancing class that met at Olin Dows's home. Mr. Dows took up painting and studied under good teachers. This combination of propinquity, neighborliness, and craftsmanship comes to fine fruition in a cluster of some 174 drawings, supported by helpful text, which provides an admirable portrait of FDR in his habitat (if the French have no word for home, neither do we have a word for *pays*). This is a lovely book to handle, to look at, and to read.

FOUR FAVORITES, by D. B. Wyndham Lewis. Longmans, Green. \$3.50. Mr. Lewis's title requires a rubric—his "favorites" are not necessarily his own, but the confidants of kings (and queens), the powers behind four thrones. They are la Pompadour, Melbourne, Potemkin, and Godoy, a truly international gallery. The success-story formula, it appears, is applicable not only in democracies. Here is a quartet whose members hauled themselves up to eminence and power largely by their bootstraps. Mr. Lewis is not trying to prove anything, but he does offer the conclusion that charm is the common denominator of all four of his subjects. Their stories make engaging

How We Logged Katahdin Stream

By Dan G. Hoffman

COME all ye river-drivers, if a tale you wish to hear
The likes for strength and daring all the North Woods has no peer:
'Twas the summer of 1860 when we took a brave ox team
And a grand bully band of braggarts up to log Katahdin Stream.

Chorus: So, it's Hi derry, Ho derry, Hi derry, Down!
When our driving is over we'll come into town!
Make ready, ye maidens, for frolic and song!
When the woodsman has whiskey, then naught can go wrong!

Bold Gattigan was foreman, he's the pride of Bangor's Town,
And there was no other like Chauncey for to mow the great pines down;
Joe Murphraw was the swamper, with Canada Jacques Dupree.
We'd the best camp cook in the wilderness—I know, for it was me.

We left from Millinocket on such a misty day
We dulled our axes chopping the fog to clear ourselves a way,
Till at last we reached the bottom of Mount Katahdin's peaks supreme
And vowed that we within the week would clear Katahdin Stream.

O, Chauncey chopped and Murph he swamped and Canada Jacques did swear,
Bold Gattigan goaded the oxen on and shouted and tore his hair,
Till the wildwood rang with "Timber!" as the forest monarchs fell,
And the air was split with echoes of our ax-blows and our yell.

For six whole days and twenty-three hours we threshed the forest clean—,
The logs we skidded by hundreds, O, such a drive was never seen!
We worked clear round the mountain, and rejoiced to a jovial strain,
When what did we see but that forest of trees was a-growing in again!

Then all of a sudden the mountain heaved, and thunder spoke out of the earth!
"Who's walking around in my beard?" it cried, and it rumbled as though in mirth.

The next we knew, a hand appeared—no larger than Moosehead Lake—
And it plucked us daintily one by one, while we with fear did quake!

Paul Bunyan held us in one hand! With the other he rubbed his chin.
"Well I'll be swamped! You fellers have logged my beard right down to the skin!"

"We thought you was Mount Katahdin," Gattigan shouted into his ear,
"We're sorry, but 'twouldn't have happened if the weather had been clear."

Well, good old Paul didn't mind it at all. He paid us for the shave—
A hundred dollars apiece to the men, to the oxen fodder he gave.
And now, ye young river-drivers, fill your glasses—fill mine too—
And we'll drink to the health of Bold Gattigan, and his gallant lumbering crew!

reading. This is a searching and civilized book.

IRMA AND THE HERMIT: *My life in Korea*, by Irma Tennant Materi. Norton. \$2.95. Mrs. Materi is an Army wife who in the summer of 1946 took her baby aboard the transport *Fredrick Funston* at Seattle and sailed to join her husband, a major stationed in Seoul. They returned in the spring of 1948. This is an account of her experiences, which were probably typical. Whether they were typical or not, they were worth setting down for the record. Mrs. Materi's story is most enjoyable and most valuable when it is most personal; she has little to say about geography, history, politics, and the future, and that's fine.

HORSECARS AND COBBLESTONES, by Sophie Ruskay. Beechurst. \$2.75. This is a gentle and ingratiating book—the story of a New York Jewish family in the days when the century was young. It is the same period which Myra Kelly treated in “Little Aliens” and “Little Citizens.” But the characters are not identical—Mrs. Ruskay's folks were lace-curtain Jews; they had a piano and a Polish maid, and they summered at Long Branch and in the Catskills. It was a day of bicycles and big families (Mrs. Ruskay was the middle child of five, so hers was not *really* a big family), a day when ladies wore corsets under their bathing suits. There is no straining for laughs in “Horsecars and Cobblestones,” and no straining for tears either. Reminiscence, it seems, does not have to be boisterous and violent to be interesting, heart-warming, and worth while. This is a period piece, tender and true.

THE GREENER GRASS AND SOME PEOPLE WHO FOUND IT, by Burton Roueché. Harper. \$2.50. These eleven pieces first appeared in *The New Yorker*, and are here assembled to good purpose. They are reports of one-man expeditions which Mr. Roueché conducted, one as close to his home base as West 39th Street, one as far afield as Westerly, Rhode Island. They are concerned with a mink-rancher, a maple-sugar-farmer, a duck-raiser, a stock-breeder, two herb-farmers, a pony-raiser, a family of wine-growers, a potato-grower, a cigar-maker, an Episcopal monastery, and a Shaker community. All of these, with the exception of the herb-raisers, are in New York State. Mr. Roueché's theory of composition is to have something to say and to say it. His book is recommended to high-school and college English teachers and to people who enjoy reading good reporting about other people.

—JOHN T. WINTERICH.

JUNE 25, 1949

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The Tragic Innocents

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Translated by **EITHNE WILKINS**

“THE LOVE STORY of two young people as it takes place against the background of war-time occupied France. The author has approached his subject with an exceptionally lyrical simplicity, and the result is a book of haunting vividness and beauty . . . Reminds one of the best of foreign films which have been imported to America from Europe.”—N. Y. *Herald Tribune Books*

“A pastoral tragedy that is almost as fateful and touching as some of Thomas Hardy's.”—*The New Yorker*

“A love story in the grand manner is something rare in these days, and there should be room for one, especially when it conveys such deep feeling and is so well written . . . Both in France and in England it has justly received the plaudits of the critics and the chances are excellent that it will be equally well received here.”—N. Y. *Sun*

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BELLES-LETTRES

(Continued from page 11)

introduction which deals with the forerunners of Elizabethan drama, he takes each of the plays in order. Proceeding with systematic thoroughness, he summarizes Shakespeare's sources before discussing the transmutation of the base material into the stuff of genius. He is familiar, of course, with the vast amount of Shakespearean research and criticism, but he spares the reader chapter and verse; there are practically no footnotes. His point of view is eminently sensible; and like his style it is homely, judicious, and straightforward. If at times his patient progress through the canon of the plays makes the book sound like a Shakespeare course for upper-classmen, that is no disadvantage. The reader of any or no class gains a (re) view of the plays from one important perspective.

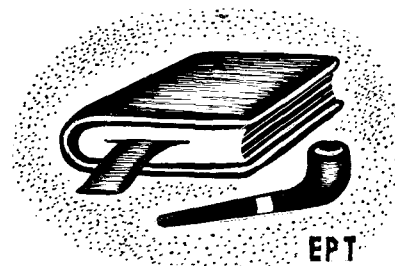
CHARACTER AND MOTIVE IN SHAKESPEARE, by J. I. M. Stewart. Longmans. \$2.25. In a half dozen essays subtitled "Some Recent Appraisals Examined," Mr. Stewart attacks the theories of the late Robert Bridges, Professor Schücking, and Professor E. E. Stoll. His main contention is that to understand Shakespeare's characters we must be guided not by realistic, theatrical, or literary conventions (as these scholars have been), but by the laws of psychology that govern poetic drama. Among the characters he scrutinizes are Lear, Macbeth, Caesar, Cleopatra, Othello, Iago, Falstaff, and Prince Hal; and he frequently utilizes the new critical insights of anthropology (myth and ritual) and of Freudian psychology, applying them with subtle and sensible moderation. He treats his own antagonists, Professor Stoll especially, with such asperity that sparks will no doubt fly in the scholarly journals. But these essays, aside from their contribution to the industry of Shakespearean criticism, can be recommended to the non-technical reader, for they are themselves fresh appraisals by a bright and witty mind. Under the name of Michael Innes, Mr. Stewart, an Oxford lecturer, writes detective stories too.

HENRY JAMES AND ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON: A Record of Friendship and Criticism, edited by Janet Adam Smith. Macmillan. \$3.50. This excellent little volume contains all the evidence of the friendship between the two writers. From the time they met (1885), only two years before Stevenson left England, until his death in 1894, they exchanged letters

which reflect most felicitously their warm affection and their serious concern with literature. Besides these letters (six of them published for the first time), the volume contains James's essay on the art of fiction and Stevenson's "Humble Remonstrance" to it, and two essays by James on his friend's writing. Miss Smith's lucid introduction discusses their friendship, and the similarities and differences of their attitude toward writing. Her purpose in collecting these materials, most of them already in print, is to deflect to Stevenson's work some of the regard which James enjoys today from a public which is perfectly willing to acknowledge that Stevenson is a fine writer—for the young. Yet in spite of a common devotion to the "art" of writing, of fiction in particular, they moved in different paths. Stevenson's romances, for all the style, atmosphere, and charm he gave them, appeal to the juvenile imagination. His reputation cannot be raised by James's bootstraps. But that does not at all detract from the worth of this fascinating record of a friendship. It is an editorial irony, though, that James's intellect and sensibility shine more brilliantly than his friend's.

THE AGE OF JOHNSON: Essays Presented to Chauncey Brewster Tinker. Yale University Press. \$5. Professor Tinker, who retired several years ago, is the American dean of eighteenth-century scholarship in English literature. From his seminar in the age of Johnson a generation of Yale graduate students has gone out to teach and to continue research. To make up a *Festschrift* some of them have now contributed these papers. They are arranged in four groups: "The Club" (referring to the group of intellectual leaders who enjoyed the friendship of the "clubbable" Dr. Johnson), "The Novelists," "The Poets," and "Other Aspects of the Age" (including philosophy, art, typography, music). The thirty-six essays cover the widest range of what may be accomplished through traditional approaches in literary research, and their style is notable for grace and urbanity. As one might expect, their excellence varies, in topic and in treatment, but their motive is uniformly admirable: to honor an outstanding scholar and teacher.

ENGLISH BLAKE, by Bernard Blackstone. Cambridge University Press. \$6.50. William Blake will always be a fertile subject for scholars. The mystic "visions" of his prophetic books, along with his crystalline lyrics and powerful drawings make up a body of doctrine which remains fascinating



if only because it can never be charted with definitiveness. "I must Create a System or be enslav'd by another Man's," he wrote. A few years ago Mark Schorer's book analyzed him as a social and political thinker, and before that Denis Saurat related him to modern philosophy and mysticism. Now Dr. Blackstone places him squarely within the context of English thought and society. The first third of "English Blake" is a meticulously documented examination of his life and works. The remainder, entitled "The Everlasting Gospel," is an analysis of the background (morality, education, ethics, religion, art) against which he so eloquently rebelled. Dr. Blackstone himself is in an evangelical mood, and thrusts Blake forward as a religious and ethical teacher whose ideas can provide the salvation for modern life with its spiritual disease. When he confines himself to the biography, the texts, and the background, he is an excellent guide; after that it is a matter of *de gustibus*.

THE ADVENTURES OF LINDAMIRA: A Lady of Quality, edited by Benjamin Boyce. University of Minnesota Press. \$3. The English novel arose from many literary sources. One of them was the French romance of the seventeenth century; with its preposterous love intrigues and emotional shadow-boxing. "Lindamira" is a sort of transition piece between these exalted heroics and the bourgeois punctiliousness of Richardson's "Pamela." Issued originally in 1702, it spins out its formless plot by means of Lindamira's letters to her otherwise undistinguished friend Indamora. (Most of the names are borrowed from French romances.) The adventures are monotonously varied, and their characters are stock figures from Restoration comedy and heroic tragedy. At the end, after a burst of intrigue, Lindamira finds happiness (and marriage) in the arms of her beloved Cleomidon. Similar tales of love and tears were related in the *Tatler* and *Spectator* about ten years later, with justifiable brevity and considerably more grace. Still, "Lindamira" makes a pleasant enough period piece. Professor Boyce modernizes the text and supplies a short informative introduction. He overestimates the charm, and probably the import-

ance, of the book, but that is an understandable excess in an editor. Especially noteworthy are the handsome format and makeup.

JOHN AUBREY AND HIS FRIENDS, by Anthony Powell. Scribner's. \$5. To the modern reader John Aubrey is known for his "Brief Lives." In it the seventeenth-century "little Boswell" (as the elder Disraeli called him) set down in pungent phrase and anecdote the lives of some of the worthies of his own and earlier times. He also compiled works on antiquities, archeology, education, astrology, science, heraldry, and folklore. As a member of the Royal Society his many intellectual interests were fanned by the winds of that period that Pepys has so superbly, though so differently, depicted. And finally, with antiquarian solicitude, he bequeathed all his manuscripts and letters to Oxford. Mr. Powell uses them diligently, his method being to let Aubrey speak for himself whenever possible. Hence the biography, embedded with chunks of quotation, moves very slowly; it begins with an implacably detailed account of Aubrey's ancestors and ends with brief lives of his friends. But what it loses in speed it gains in flavor and solidity; and Mr. Powell's own style has something of Aubrey's sly angularity. The bibliographical apparatus and pedigree charts are tucked away in the back, and the text is illustrated by some fine plates, including several of Aubrey's own sketches.

NEW WORLD LITERATURE: Tradition and Revolt in Latin America, by Arturo Torres-Rioseco. University of California Press. \$3.75. This is not a systematic literary history, but a collection of eleven essays which deal with some of the significant literary movements and figures of Latin America. Among the movements that Professor Torres sketches are the colonial, the romantic, and the period of French influence; and among the figures are Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, the phenomenal nun poet of Colonial Mexico; "Martín Fierro," the epic Argentine gaucho; Darío, the Nicaraguan poet, and Rodó, the Uruguayan critic and philosopher. The book contains generous quotations from the works discussed, and they are adequately translated in the notes. In spite of its fragmentary nature, this is a stimulating introduction to Latin-American writing because of its author's enthusiasm and catholicity of taste. And it should be an antidote to the provincialism that makes so many of us forget the rich literature that flourishes in the Americas to the south.

—ROBERT HALSBAND.



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Seeing Things

PLEASANT AGONY

AT A SEASON'S end, when the country is calling, it may be permissible to talk shop before shutting it up, however temporarily. For four and a half years now, mine has been the privilege, hence the pleasant agony, of filling these pages each week, or almost every week. I say pleasant agony because I know of no other words with which to describe what writing is to me.

I claim no singularity in this. There may be, there must be, writers to whom writing comes as effortlessly as breathing. There may even be (though I doubt it) writers whose happiness is complete while they are actually writing. But most of us who live by putting words together are not so fortunate. We are tortured while we write and would be tortured were we not allowed to do so. Although when we are done we feel "delivered," as Sainte-Beuve put it, this delirium of delivery is not accomplished without labor pains for which medicine has, as yet, provided no soothing drugs. If all attempts to coerce words into doing what we would have them do are at best painful pleasures, the pains and pleasures of summoning the right words to meet a weekly deadline are of a special kind.

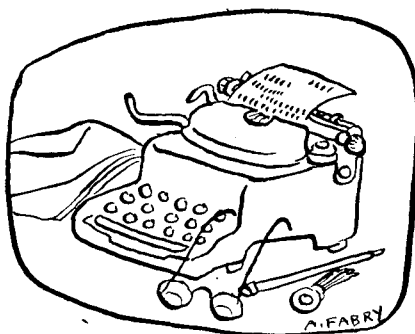
A cook faced with getting dinner when lunch is over knows something of the routine, if not all the anguishes, of a columnist. No mortals, however, have appetites as insatiable as a column's. A column is an omnivorous beast. Its hunger is never appeased. Feed it, and almost at once it demands to be fed again.

Though he used a different image to express this same idea, even Shaw, seemingly the most easeful of writers, knew this. When he abandoned the job of drama critic on London's *Saturday Review*, he protested against the weekly deadlines which had confronted him for nearly four years. He likened himself to a man fighting a windmill. "I have hardly time," wrote he, "to stagger to my feet from the knock-down blow of one sail, when the next strikes me down."

His successor in the same job on that same fortunate magazine shared an identical dislike of deadlines. For twelve years, Max Beerbohm admitted in his valedictory article, Thursdays had been for him the least

pleasant day of the week. Why Thursday? Because that was the day, the latest possible one, he set aside each week to get his writing done. On every Wednesday, therefore, he would be engulfed by "a certain sense of oppression, of misgiving, even of dread." It was only on Friday, when once the danger was passed, that the sun would shine again. Then he would move on dancing feet.

I quote my betters to console myself by the reminder that they, too,



knew the pangs of weekly columnizing. Yet the consolation I seek is denied me when I discover, for example, that it took Beerbohm one, and only one, short day of pain to turn out the delectable copy which he could write. Shaw, I am certain, was also a one-day man. I wish I were. I wish even more ardently that I could claim any of the merits which glorify their reviews for what it takes me two, three, or sometimes five days of ceaseless sweating to produce as fodder for these columns.

Beerbohm ascribed his disrelish for the act of writing to "the acute literary conscience" with which he had been cursed. It was this conscience, he maintained, which kept his pen from ever running away with him. I know what he means. Unblessed with any of his gifts, I am none the less cursed with something of his conscience. Beerbohm insisted that "to seem to write with ease and delight is one of the duties which a writer owes to his readers." If he worked hard at his sentences, it was because Beerbohm hoped they would read easily. In other words, he was in complete agreement with Sheridan's "easy writing's vile hard reading." One statement of Beerbohm's I could truthfully apply to my own efforts for the *SRL*. It runs, "I may often

have failed in my articles here, to disguise labor. But the effort to disguise it has always been loyally made."

There is a passage in "The Goncourt Journals" which has haunted me since I read it. Envy has kept it green for me, and wonder (or is it disbelief?) has kept it alive. I have in mind Gautier's boast that he never thought about what he was going to write. "I take up my pen," he explained, "and write. I am a man of letters and am presumed to know my job. . . . I throw my sentences into the air and I can be sure that they will come down on their feet, like cats. . . . Look here: here's my script: not a word blotted."

When I think of the one-legged kittens that land on my pages; when I remember the false starts, illegible scribbles, unfinished sentences, discarded drafts, changed constructions, and altered words which mark my beginnings, my continuings, and my endings, I blush with shame and, like the voyagers in Dante's realm, abandon all hope.

In these journalistic days the first word that pops into an author's mind is held to be the acceptable, if not the best, word. We are supposed to smile because Wordsworth, at a day's end, was wearied from his quest for the exact word. But where Wordsworth the man may win a smile, Wordsworth the writer, fatiguing himself by doing what is a writer's duty, is far from laughable. The *mot juste* is not just any word. Even if it eludes its pursuer, the search for it seems to me to remain among the obligations of authorship. Indeed, the true hope of anyone who loves the language and respects it is to stumble upon, not the correct word or phrase, but the word or phrase which is so right that it seems inevitable.

THE word and the phrase are not the only hurdles—and joys—of authorship. The sentence and the paragraph, by means of which points are made, thoughts communicated, emotions transferred, pictures painted, personalities caught, rhythms established, and cadences varied, offer other challenges and should supply their own sources of delight and pride. When so much hurried writing is done for hurried reading, I find it comforting to have Shaw, a veritable geyser with words and ideas, admit in his "Sixteen Self Sketches" how depleting he found his labors as a weekly feuilletonist for ten years. Why? Because, says he, of "taking all the pains I was capable of to get to the bottom of every sentence I wrote."

One of the modern world's luckier