

the last two decades Trappist foundations have made phenomenal growth in the United States. At the close of the recent war Americans in the armed forces did not wait to take off their uniforms before presenting themselves in numbers at the gates of Cistercian monasteries here.

The more one reads of the Cistercians, the more one realizes that the

contemplative life lived among the wild spaces of mountain and forest has made simplicity, serenity, and light basic to the esthetic of the Order. These three constitute the distinctive grace of Cistercian architecture and literature. Perhaps because he is Father Louis, O. C. S. O., Thomas Merton cannot help writing simply and luminously.

It's Not the Bottle But the Man

DRINKING'S NOT THE PROBLEM.
By Charles Clapp, Jr. New York:
Thomas Y. Crowell Co. 179 pp. \$2.50.

By JOSEPH HIRSH

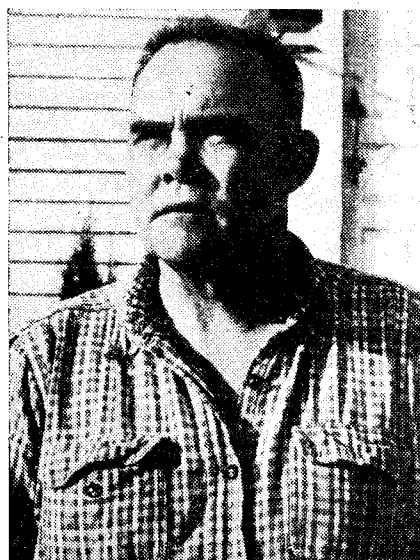
TWO PHYSICIANS—Benjamin Rush, Physician-General to the Continental Army and later professor of medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, and Thomas Trotter, nineteenth-century British Naval surgeon—in separate treatises gave impetus to the modern medical movement, a phenomenon actually only ten years old, which recognizes alcoholism as a sickness. Like many other movements this one has attracted its share of opportunists, crackpots, and self-seekers, but its strength is attested by the solid core of medical and social scientists, physicians, and educators who see alcoholism as a morass of misinformation, an untouched area of legitimate investigation, and the alcoholic a potentially productive, traditionally neglected social leper.

A measure of the success of this movement can be found in a number of facets of our national life—in, oddly enough, the medical profession, heretofore one of the groups most resistant to the idea that alcoholics were sick people, now accepting them for treatment as private patients and in hospitals and clinics; in the increasing number of city and state medical programs providing care for these patients; in the emergence and growth of that remarkable group Alcoholics Anonymous; in the rapidity with which “wet” and “dry” interests have submerged their dedicated differences (only on the issue of the care of the alcoholic) and jumped on the bandwagon; in the dragon’s-teeth birth of quick-cure clinics and “national” committees; and finally, in the unexcelled amount of space and time given to the written and spoken word on this subject.

To this spate Mr. Clapp, who has written previously on this subject, now adds his partially autobiographical “Drinking’s Not the Problem.” As he sees it, it is not the bottle but the man or that aspect of the man called

personality which is the core of the problem. While there is nothing new or novel to this thesis, its statement and restatement serve a useful function until more people act on it. Unfortunately, Mr. Clapp neither fully develops this thesis nor goes sufficiently beyond it to make the book as broadly appealing and generally useful to the public as it might have been. Nonetheless, we are given an adequate view of the symptomatic drinker, whose excessive drinking is a symptom, not a cause, of immature, defective, or traumatized personality.

Mr. Clapp, who refers to himself as a “potential” alcoholic, a term he uses to describe symptomatic drinkers in the candidate, actual, or recovered stage (from which point they can always become alcoholics again), oversimplifies the problem and its resolution. He neglects a large and relatively mysterious group in whom faulty body chemistry or physiological idiosyncrasy and, indeed, alcohol as a substance, may be the crux of their problem. His prescription, largely contraindicated in modern psychiatric practice, is the evaluation of personality and the development of personal insights through self-analysis. As a



—Herbert L. Stannard.

Charles Clapp, Jr.,—“personal insights through self-analysis.”

short cut he recommends the professional assistance of psychiatry, accredited clinics, Alcoholics Anonymous, and various other groups engaged in education on alcoholism and the care of the alcoholic. Taking a leaf from his own experience, he urges the alcoholic to simplify his life and to embark upon a program of substitutive treatment, of substituting new work, recreational, religious, and other experiences for previous patterns of living and drinking, a modality by itself of superficial and limited value since it rarely touches the deep problems of personality.

These limitations notwithstanding, Mr. Clapp has written a readable book on a serious subject that is gradually capturing the public mind and interest.

Joseph Hirsh, executive secretary of the Committee on Problems of Alcohol, National Research Council, Washington, D. C., is author of “The Problem Drinker” and numerous articles and studies on the problems of alcohol.

Fiery Little Brutes

PREHISTORIC MAN. By Charles R. Knight. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts. 331 pp. \$5.

By M. F. ASHLEY MONTAGU

THE SHORTEST review with which I am acquainted was written after the opening night of a play entitled “Terrible Girl” (or some such name). The review consisted of the one word “Quite.” I am tempted to use the same expression as a review of this book, and let it go at that, for Mr. Knight’s knowledge of prehistoric man is quite prehistoric. Except for references to recent discoveries, it might have been written in the nineteenth century, though I know of no one who could have committed so many errors or perpetrated so many libels against prehistoric man as Mr. Knight has done.

Mr. Knight takes a Hobbesian view of man. For him the life of prehistoric man was nasty, brutish, and short. Every man’s hand was set against every other man’s, and all the creatures of the earth seem to have lived in a perpetual state of warfare. “One never knew on retiring whether one would actually be there when morning broke.” “The facts show now that a bitter struggle for supremacy has been going on ever since our old world was created.” “Man had constructive ideas. He wanted things, and if his neighbors had a specially comfortable shelter in which to hide at night, envious thoughts arose and

at times he was able to drive them out of the coveted retreat and occupy it himself." "How easy it was to sneak up on an enemy in a neighboring clan in the dense jungle and tap him none too gently on his thick skull with a heavy club or a piece of sharp stone!" "We have no doubt that it often became a question of who was who in the jungle retreats, and that fierce battles were the result of any chance meetings between our unsavory antecedents when tribal or family differences were involved." And so on throughout this bloodthirsty book about the purely mythical "fiery little brutes" who have been conjured out of Mr. Knight's imagination. This is be-Knighted prehistory literally with a vengeance. What it is that Mr. Knight has against prehistoric man I do not know.

Myths are generally idealized forms of social conditions. Possibly Mr. Knight is projecting his feelings about contemporary man upon the innocent head of prehistoric man, who isn't here to defend himself. The myth of "bestial" prehistoric man is of the same nature as the myth of the "savage" or the myth of the "beast." Whenever Western man wishes to say that someone has behaved in a particularly human manner he says, "He behaved like a savage," or, "He behaved like a beast," although few "savages" and certainly no "beast" ever behaved in so damnably human a fashion. It may be news to Mr. Knight, but "savages" and "beasts" live cooperatively, not disoperatively as Western man does. Typical of Mr. Knight's attitude and knowledge is his description of the gorilla (obtained, no doubt, via the pages of *Life*, anent Gargantua of Barnum & Bailey notoriety). The gorilla is described as having "a very cantankerous and irascible disposition, which is part of his ferocious make-up." In point of fact, it is well known to authorities who have had personal experience of the gorilla in the "wild" (one of these Mr. Knight may have read in the excellent magazine of the museum with which he is connected) that this animal is gentle and peaceful and will never hurt a living creature unless it is frightened or attacked.

Mr. Knight's venturesomeness is vastly greater than the erudition necessary to write a book such as this. It is unmitigatedly bad. It is worse. It is dangerous. It perpetuates the myth of man's inborn naughtiness. It belongs to the luminous-numinous school of popular-science writing, the less of which we have the better.

M. F. Ashley Montagu is chairman of the Department of Anthropology at Rutgers.

Poetry. *Americans have long been aware that Russian verse ranked with the world's greatest, but it has been difficult for them to prove it to themselves, so poor have been most English translations. Avrahm Yarmolinsky's "A Treasury of Russian Verse" [SRL Aug. 20] should help remedy that. The situation may be helped further by Leonid I. Strakhovsky's "Craftsmen of the Word," a critical study with representative samples of the work of three modern poets—Gumilyov, Akhmatova, and Mandelstam (see page 23). . . . Robert Hillyer, who began this summer's bitter battle over obscurantist poetry through his SRL articles, is represented by a new volume of verse that should appeal to lovers of the classical tradition, "The Death of Captain Nemo" (see below). However, "Annie Allen," by the author of "A Street in Bronzeville," Gwendolyn Brooks, falls perilously close to being coterie stuff (page 23).*

Mysterious Islander in East Indies

THE DEATH OF CAPTAIN NEMO.
By Robert Hillyer. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 57 pp. \$2.75.

By SARA HENDERSON HAY

ROBERT HILLYER'S narrative poem in blank verse takes as its central character the well-known hero of Jules Verne's "The Mysterious Island." Readers of that romantic tale will remember the escapist par excellence and his submarine, the *Nautilus*, and how, laden with fabulous treasure, it came to anchor in the grotto of that volcanic isle, far from the world which its captain had renounced. Mr. Hillyer's indebtedness to Verne ends here; he uses this basic character merely as the starting point for his own imaginative and philosophical fantasy. Like the legendary Mother Carey, to whom all poets are kin, Hillyer makes new things out of old. His story begins in the autumn of 1945, with the arrival on the island of two war-weary American sailors, themselves poets and thinkers, navigating their sloop to the East Indies. They come just in time to witness the death of Nemo at the age of nearly 100 years. Beside him lies his journal. Through the fragmentary entries the two sailors trace the life and personality of Captain Nemo—his boyhood in the beautiful chateau country of Touraine, his dreams of the treasure lying fathoms deep in some Pacific lagoon charted only on the yellow parchment which his father had left him, handed down through 300 years; his young manhood and his wanderings through many countries; the three women who influenced his life: the Princess, the Goose-girl, and the Witch, symbolically the unattainable ideal, the attainable but unsatisfying flesh, and that indefinable malign enchantress,

neither spirit nor flesh, who continued to haunt him; his political contacts and convictions, and his increasing disillusion with the world and its prospects for peace, ending in his resolve to search for the treasure and, when he had found it, his retreat to his fabulous grotto, alone with his treasures, his books, and his memories.

The effect of the journal on the two sailors who read it is the counter-theme of the poem; Captain Nemo's search for truth and the answer to man's existence is identified with their own and all men's search. One entry in the journal reads:

We live in secret, Nemo and every man.
I am all men that live. I am your eyes
Who read these lines, yet am I Nobody.
Along the sliding stars from thought to thought
My being moves, yet when you see the starlight,
The star itself is aeons on its way.
We live in forethought and in afterthought;
The present is a gaping void between....

The action of the poem occupies three days only, during which time the sailors read the journal and in accordance with Nemo's last will and



The Saturday Review