

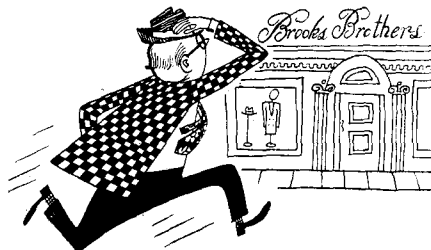
TRADE Winds

NOBODY EVER WILL KNOW exactly how big a part the title of a book, drama, or movie plays in determining its ultimate success or failure. A shibboleth of Hollywood is—"The name must look good on the marquee." Pollsters have tests to prove that the same story has found wider acceptance under one title than another. Publishers have sat around for the better part of a day trying to retitle properties at the last moment. And yet the fact remains that some of the darndest titles in the world have not prevented certain books from soaring to fame—and furthermore, the accolade of general acceptance often makes a title that sounded worst on the planning board seem not only acceptable but actually inspired in the long run.

Sometimes a single word can turn a title from an also-ran to a world-beater. The publisher of a well-known line of five-cent paper-backs, for instance, once found himself with a big stock of a slow-moving little number called "The King Amuses Himself" (a translation of the famous French "Le Roi S'Amuse"). In a moment of sudden inspiration he added the word "lustful" to the title. "The Lustful King Amuses Himself" became one of the fastest moving items on his list.

SOME OF THE BEST titles I ever heard have been devised, unfortunately, for books that probably never will be written. Super-agent Carl Brandt, for instance, is unlikely to take off enough time to pen his memoirs, but if he ever does, he has the perfect name for them: "I Did It for Ten Per Cent." Harry Kurnitz thinks somebody could make a good thing out of a thriller called "I Ate My Sister." Ira Gershwin believes that for this era of "scientific" mumbo-jumbo and the supernatural, Dickens's novel should be reissued as "Zombie and Son." An out-

of-town publisher is keen to bring out the life-story of a renowned but unscrupulous art-dealer under the title of "Rogue's Gallery" but fears the laws governing libel. And *The New Yorker's* Harold Ross is undoubtedly



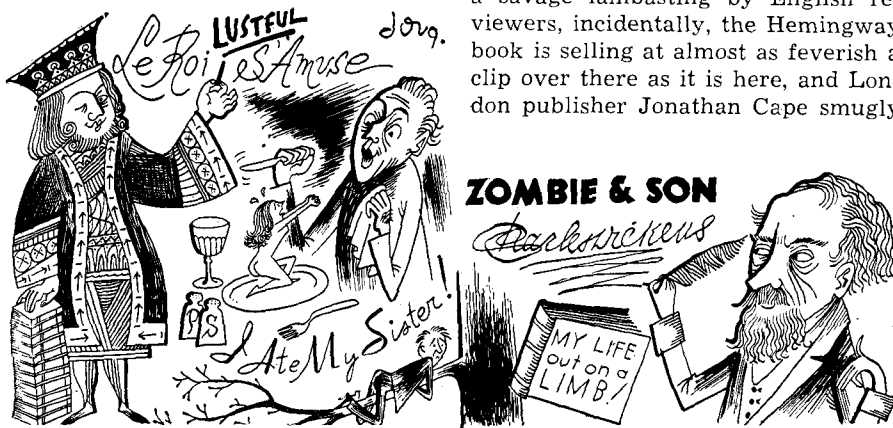
kept too busy checking upon caricatures of himself in Broadway plays and novels to get on with his autobiography, but its title—if ever he does finish it—has been set as "My Life Out on a Limb." Ross has wormed his way back into good standing at the Stork Club. It's made a new man of him. . . . Speaking of autobiographies, what a story Averell Harriman could tell if he had a mind to! He's been smack in the middle of the world's most momentous conferences and decisions for over twenty years. At a recent dinner in Harriman's honor that matchless master of ceremonies, George Jessel, observed, "Life's been good to Ave from the very beginning. He was born with the Union Pacific in his mouth!"

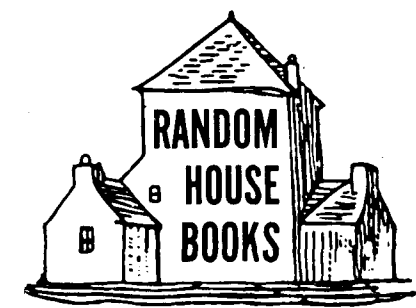
Some titles are deceptive. A Milwaukee bookseller is ready to testify under oath that a customer bought Hemingway's "Across the River and Into the Trees" under the illusion that it was a golf story. . . . The same gentleman, adds Russell Austin, probably thinks "The Cardinal" is a biography of Stan Musial, "Signal 32" a perfume to replace Chanel 5, and "Eleanor of Aquitaine" Mrs. Billy Rose's adventures at the World's Fair. . . . Despite a savage lambasting by English reviewers, incidentally, the Hemingway book is selling at almost as feverish a clip over there as it is here, and London publisher Jonathan Cape smugly

suggests retitling it "Across the Critics and into the Best-Seller Lists."

AS I RECALL THEM, Taylor Caldwell's "Dynasty of Death," Robert Sherwood's "Idiot's Delight," and Charles Wertenbaker's "The Barons" were peopled by munitions manufacturers and their women folk who were tough, domineering, and materialistic. When a slender volume of sensitive verse by Marcella Miller Du Pont turned up on my desk, therefore, I did what the movies call a double take. It appears furthermore that Mrs. Du Pont wrote most of the poems while living in company powder plants or in the equally explosive atmosphere of Washington. Some of them appeared anonymously in *SRL* and other magazines. Her book is called "Sonnets and Lyrics," contains a preface by the late Dixon Wecter, and is published immaculately by the Spiral Press. . . . Most New Yorkers know Westchester as a suburb they don't have to ride the Long Island Railroad to arrive in, or a region where taxes grow ever bigger and golf links harder to reach through bumper-to-bumper week-end traffic. Harry Hansen, however, has dug into the colorful history of Westchester for a fascinating study entitled "North of Manhattan" (Hastings House). In it you will visit the spots where Anne Hutchinson, the Puritan Jezebel, was massacred by the Siwanoy; where the Tory belle Mary Philipse is said to have spurned the suit of George Washington; where John Peter Zenger, pioneer of freedom of the press, began his valiant battle against censorship; where Jonas Bronck dwelt and gave his name (spelled with an X for some unknown reason) to a borough, a cocktail, and a rude noise. Samuel Chamberlain's photographs enhance what Chauncey Depew would have called Mr. Hansen's "Westchesterfieldian Suburbanity." Passing thought: why doesn't some New York newspaper pick up the rights to Harry Hansen's sprightly weekly column about books in the *Chicago Tribune*?

EXIT FARRAR, STRAUS; enter Farrar, Straus, and Young, Inc.—a graceful tribute to Managing Editor Stanley P. Young. The firm has rounded out its first five years in notable fashion. . . . "Bless You All," the rousing new Levin-Smith revue at the Hellinger Theatre, numbers among its most attractive coryphées Sage Fuller. In private life she is the daughter of Mrs. Cass Canfield. The show has so many other prime assets (particularly Valerie Bettis, Pearl Bailey, and a stunning all-around production) the management could well afford to eliminate a tasteless and spectacularly unfunny





The Disenchanted

By BUDD SCHULBERG, author of *WHAT MAKES SAMMY RUN?* The new #1 National Bestseller as reported in *The N. Y. Times Book Review*, *The N. Y. Herald Tribune Book Review*, *The Chicago News*, etc. \$3.50

THE Delicate Prey

AND OTHER STORIES

By PAUL BOWLES, author of *THE SHELTERING SKY*. Seventeen stories which have created a sensation among readers and critics. \$3.00

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William Faulkner

42 short stories by the distinguished author who has just been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. \$4.75

Moulin Rouge

By PIERRE LA MURE. A novel based on the life of the famous artist, Toulouse-Lautrec. "Terrific is the word for it."—*Boston Herald*. \$3.50

Case History of a Movie

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COMING!

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take-off on modern Southern authors. . . . Charles Poore is now duly accredited book critic for both *The New York Times* and *Harper's Magazine*. How distinguished can you get?

EVERYBODY at Random House is still blushing with pleasure over Dick Simon's warm words that appeared in this space last week. Personally, I love him for all the things he remembered and forgive him for all that he forgot. I was particularly intrigued with his describing us as hopeless conservatives. Frankly, that was a characterization that would never have occurred to me. I made a quick reappraisal of our offices and list of publications, gulped a couple of times, and rushed out to buy a black homburg hat and Brooks Brothers blue serge suit.

RISTO MURRAY, former manager of the Brentano chain, is now in charge of Crown's publicity and promotion. . . . John McClain, who frequently finds space in his column to give a boost to a deserving book, will double as drama critic for the *Journal American* while Bob Garland convalesces from a serious illness. . . . James D. Hart, author of "The Popular Book," notes that the old catch-all title "Lincoln's Doctor's Dog" is now out-of-date. The title that couldn't miss in the 1951 market would be "Roosevelt's Psychiatrist's Egg Ranch." . . . "The Old Northwest," just published by the Indiana Historical Society, contains a New Year's prophecy published in 1839 that still makes sense for 1951:

There will be more books published this year than will find purchasers, more rhymes written than will find readers, and more bills made out than will find payers. Politicians will make fools of themselves, pettifoggers will make fools of others, and women with pretty faces will make fools of both themselves and others. There will be a continuous cry but little wool, as at a shearing of pigs or a session of Congress.

Definitions from the *Detroit News*: A Communist is a fellow who borrows your pot to cook your goose in; a fool is a man who swallows flattery at one mouthful and drinks truth drop by drop. . . . When Monica McCall's poodle started chewing up a college dictionary the other evening she took the words right out of his mouth. . . . The ambition of the Knopf sales staff is to have a Trollope in every bookstore before spring. . . . Irving Hoffman saw the whole story of life in four successive road signs on a California highway: "Soft Shoulders," "Dangerous Curves," "Men at Work," and "Children Playing."

—BENNETT CERF.



Gertrude, mother of millions

Right above this sentence, you see before you the only existent mother of more than 300,000,000 offspring. She's a wallaby, — a kind of kangaroo — and her name is Gertrude. She is a busy wallaby, doing all around duty as mascot, symbol and colophon for Pocket Books. She appears on every copy and very occasionally can be found in silver, reposing proudly in the homes of authors whose books have sold more than 1,000,000 copies in the Pocket Book edition.



The Pocket Book edition of *MICROBE HUNTERS*, by Paul de Kruif, is now back on display wherever books and magazines are sold after having been out of print for too long. When this, its 24th printing has been sold out, it, too, will have passed the 1,000,000 copy mark and will earn for its author a silver Gertrude.

An informal checkup on the 55 Pocket Book titles which have passed the 1,000,000 copy level to date casts a pleasant glow on American reading tastes. Contrary to popular misconception, only a minority of the best sellers are mysteries — in fact, 19. One is an anthology of verse, 6 are anthologies of short stories, 1 is an anthology of plays, eight are distinguished modern fiction and one is a fiction classic. The four leading titles are all non-fiction, three of them reference works:

THE POCKET BOOK OF BABY AND CHILD CARE by Benjamin A. Spock, M.D.

THE MERRIAM-WEBSTER POCKET DICTIONARY

THE POCKET COOK BOOK

HOW TO WIN FRIENDS AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE by Dale Carnegie

Within the next six months, another fifteen titles will in all probability pass the million copy mark, including the first non-Perry Mason stories by Erle Stanley Gardner to reach such heights and that wonderful reference work—ROGET'S POCKET THESAURUS.

But there are literally hundreds of other fine books of all kinds which can be yours for only 25¢ each in Pocket Book editions. Our latest complete catalogue of all titles in print lists 557. If you'd like to drop us a note, we'll be glad to send you a free copy of the catalogue.

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The Literary Summing-Up

A Personal Winnowing of 1950's Books

W. T. SCOTT



W. T. Scott

THE PIOUS practice of sifting the past twelve months' new books for gold has whatever virtue popularity has. Everybody does it. December blossoms with lists of "best books" from three to three

hundred, and with articles such as this aimed somewhere in between.

The articles often sternly conclude that gold was scarce. But it always is. And, if literary history teaches anything, you can be quite sure that if a masterpiece has occurred almost nobody knows it—and that any "masterpieces" said to have occurred probably have not. Nevertheless it is permissible to arrive at a personal judgment—I would call attention to that phrase—on the variety, vitality, substantiality, promise, on the *interest* of a year's attempts at literature in our language. It is my impression on that basis that 1950 was a better than average year.

This was true in all fields, even in the spotty list of fiction. Not that there aren't some famous names to carp at. Tennessee Williams with "The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone" proffered a miasmic little tale of degeneracy which went up in steam between what it was supposedly doing and what it actually did: Mrs. Stone is vague amidst the vapors, but a part of Roman society with its beautiful young men is sharply, yet disproportionately and not quite honestly, revealed. John Steinbeck, pursuing his mixture of

novel and play, in "Burning Bright" carved out some very dead wood. His mixture led him into theatrical dialogue which is simply unreal, and the whole business gets more so in Steinbeck's attempt to generalize his point by shifting his characters' occupations. The failure is sad, for he had a good, affirmative thing to say about the "shining" in human life.

A revival of the hoary taunt that it's easier to find fault than to have written, and therefore somehow illegitimate to find fault—this especially from Ernest Hemingway's defenders—seems to me pointless; even when William Faulkner says it. To paraphrase Amy Lowell: Christ! What are critics for? Or reviewers? Anyway, as to "Across the River and Into the Trees," I must join the ranks of the defenders—well to the rear of the O'Hara front line, but opposed to those who would toss the book out as an embarrassing parody of Hemingway.

One has to admit this novel is second-rate Hemingway. It is thin. It is repetitious. It is laced with a military

and sports psychology or morality, at worst immature, at best sentimental. Uncertainty of touch and taste is everywhere. Yet look at it for what it is: emotionally and intellectually autobiographical it is a lyric—a lyric of middle-age and youth, of love and death. It can be understood only as an intensely personal cry. And as such it has descriptive and dramatic passages of power and poignancy. One can say they are intermittent and unsustained, but one cannot name another living novelist capable of their immediacy or purity of feeling and expression. And they combine to a final and moving tone.

ASIDE from the Hemingway at least three other American novels star the year. They are Robert Penn Warren's "World Enough and Time," John Hersey's "The Wall," and Budd Schulberg's "The Disenchanted."

Perhaps defensively, Warren labeled his book "a romantic novel." His narrative is ripe, and sometimes rotten-ripe, with lush complexities of lust, love, revenge—and Southern politics. Its shuttling between Brontëan passages and Twainian passages is disconcerting, though the brooding suspense of the first and the precise Americana of the second is each in its way impressive. You might say that sometimes beneath his talent Warren's deliberation is showing. All the same it is a big book possible only to exceptional talent. Its theme—What is justice?—with its development in individualistic equations perhaps has a more symbolic value foreshadowing the South's road to Civil War than reviewers have noted.

Hersey on the other hand was any-

