

in daily life depend upon the individual free man. Likewise, the awareness of progress is personal, not collective, and it is an awareness "of struggle, of barriers passed, of resistance overcome, and a way opened." Progress, he reiterates, is not an achievement of fixed ends; its presence is felt in improved and changing means. "The going," he says over and over, "is the goal." Having thus put forward Progress as a philosophy for "Thisworld," Dr. Kallen tackles the problem of death, when for the individual "Thisworld" is no more and "the going" is stopped. He disdains "poets, priests, and philosophers" who preach "dogmas of immortality" that are "compensations in idea for [death's] occurrence in fact"; to the genuinely free, "the living of life is enough."

The road to such a philosophy is alive with obstacles planted by philosophers of contrary faiths, and in the course of explaining his own Dr. Kallen hurls demolition bombs at a numerous and diverse opposition—with some palpable hits and several near-misses. Among others, he attacks all creeds promising Salvation in the next world, the Marxist dialectic, Gandhi's civil disobedience, Schopenhauer's pessimism, and the existentialism of Sartre and Heidegger. About the only faith to receive a clean bill of philosophic health is the pragmatism of William James, of whom the author is a high-ranking latter-day disciple.

—PETER R. LEVIN.

ANIMAL I Q, by Vance Packard. Dial Press. \$2.50. Did you know that bees can tell time, that possums don't "play possum" but faint, that mice can solve a maze better than subway-trained college students? "Animal I Q" gives all the answers in a fascinating book of experiments in animal psychology. Written with fine humor and wonderfully illustrated, the book will bring bitter disillusionment to many animal lovers. For man's best friends, the dog, the cat, and the horse, are shown to be excelled in intelligence by many animals of dubious intellectual reputation, e.g., elephant, ass, raccoon.

Cats and dogs rate high in instinct but low in reasoning power. The cat is indifferent, selfish, and a gold-digger. The dog tries pathetically hard to please but, except for certain breeds, is slow in learning and reasons practically not at all. A horse makes a miserable showing on intelligence tests that any self-respecting pig can pass with ease.

The chimpanzee, it turns out, is the most intelligent of all animals. In tests it frequently out-reasons typical five-year-old American youngsters.

—DONALD B. THORBURN.

Fiction. *The three novels reviewed this week might have come from different worlds. Anna Seghers's "The Dead Stay Young" reveals the evil forces that placed Germany in the hands of the Nazis after 1918 in a grim story of five men who kill a young Communist soldier. In "Shadow on the Hearth" Judith Merrill gives a new slant to the recurrent atomic-war nightmare of innumerable Americans. The story is told by an ordinary housewife and mother living in a suburb too near New York. Humor is represented by "Maiden Voyage," whose author claims the improbable name of Barnaby Dogbolt. It is about an innocent professor's not so innocent gambols in England. There are two volumes of stories: Martha Foley's annual collection, "The Best American Short Stories, 1950," illustrating the expert manner with which our younger writers accept despair and defeat, and A. A. Milne's latest light, humorous tales.*

Milne Characters, Incidents & Charm

A TABLE NEAR THE BAND. By A. A. Milne. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 249 pp. \$3.

By HOLLIS ALPERT

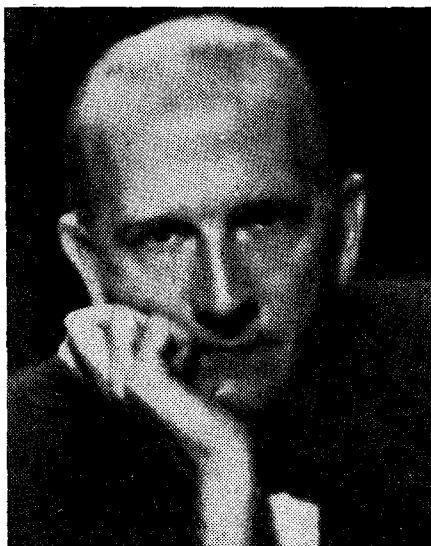
MR. MILNE'S new volume contains thirteen short stories. They are, most of them, quite pleasant examples of the way in which a mature, accomplished writer can take an incident or two, add a small cast of characters, work out a few complications, select a charming and deft method of telling, season with just the proper touch of irony, and then whip it all up into a nice froth that will go down with ease — and practically no aftereffects at all. A. A. Milne is most successful at it, and only two in the group succeeded in giving me any annoyance. These, to get them out of the way in a hurry, involved (on the one hand) a coy re-creation of Noah's

family just before the flood and (on the other) some post-death adventures of Albert Edward Wilberforce Pryke while awaiting an audience with Saint Peter.

It is the "light touch," the manner, which saves the others; polished little performances, all of them. The humor is perhaps a bit on the "British" side (with all that that implies), and the characters remind one a little too much of people one has met before in polite British comedies, but I found them quite relaxing during an afternoon I spent at the beach. First the dash into the cold waves, then the rub-down with a towel, and, after adjusting sun glasses, clearing away some empty beer bottles left by previous occupants of the sand space, the opening of the book. "I was giving Marcia lunch at the Turandot" — one of them began. And you learn what Marcia is like. Rather on the bitchy side, we might call her here, but Mr. Milne understands her, finds her charming (seems to hope we will, too), and implies gently that, after all, she might not be *exactly* the right girl for an eligible bachelor to marry. And, to be sure, and luckily, the benighted young men are saved in time.

Next, an exercise in sentiment, "The Prettiest Girl in the Room." A woman of fifty meets again the man who first called her that some thirty years before. What happens? A bit of nostalgia, some memories, and the realization that "all the turbulent uneasiness and pathetic silliness of youth was behind you." But the fillip remains yet to come. Charles, her husband, on the ride home from the cocktail party says to her . . . Yes, exactly.

Now we find a fifteen-year-old girl



—Harlip.

A. A. Milne—"very definitely a certain sort of person."

telling a story, about an elderly man who has moved to town. Everyone thinks him to be a famous Scotland Yard man, one who has brought many murderers to justice. In fact, it is the girl herself who has spread the news. But when he dies and when her father, the vicar, must deliver the eulogy what do we find? That Mr. Anderson, now greatly beloved, had strangled his wife and spent many of his years behind bars.

(I adjust my position on the sand, a small boy groping blindly behind a huge frozen custard cone steps on my toe, and I go on.) The next one is a treat indeed. It's called "The Rise and Fall of Mortimer Scrivens," and I think it's first-rate English "county" humor. A nice couple has borrowed some books from a snappish man in a neighboring village. There is an exchange of letters: one of the books now has a beer ring on its cover, and Brian Haverhill discovers something about the first-edition market as he advertises for a copy to replace the one with the beer ring. I began to chuckle, and my friend Gertrude (who had spread sun oil on her back and was absorbing rays nearby) asked, "What's the matter with you?"

"It's this story," I said. "It's funny."

"What's it about?"

"Well, it's about a book called 'Country Tith'. . ."

"Country what?"

"Tith. . ."

"Oh," Gertrude said, and spread more sun oil on her shoulder.

I guess it's all in the way they're written. And, now that I think about it, it seems to me that people have been saying that about Mr. Milne for a long time. In fact, I might very well sum up by quoting from Mr. John Mason Brown on the subject: "Very definitely a certain sort of person. He is sensitive. He can write charmingly. He can be witty in the fluffiest tradition of English Wit, and his prose is at once facile and precise."

Amen.

Defeatism & Hints of Profundity

THE BEST AMERICAN SHORT STORIES, 1950. Edited by Martha Foley. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 452 pp. \$3.75.

By EDWARD J. FITZGERALD

MISS FOLEY'S annual collection of "Best American Short Stories" is again with us. Reading it one is forced to conclude that the American short story is once again in a bad way. For the collection is a dull one, a charge frequently made in the past which must be made more sharply this time.

The criticism can be qualified because there is here also a high proportion of finished writing. This is surprising in that most of the writers are relatively new. The trouble is they don't sound new. They sound old, old both in technical experience and in the tired defeatism with which they view the world.

They also sound alike. It is not that the stories sound as if they were written by the same person. It is more as if all had learned from the same teacher. This being so, one might hope that these were not the best American short stories, but the best stories of a type which appeals to Miss Foley. I do not believe this is so. I feel Miss Foley has chosen wisely. Though one might quarrel with specific inclusions or individual selections from the works of particular authors, the collection as a whole stands as representative of the best being published today.

What are the characteristics of these stories? The first—noted in Miss Foley's introduction—is the extraordinary proportion about children. Of the twenty-eight stories eight deal principally with children. Almost all of these are effective and the best stories in the book are among them; yet to my mind only one is of consequence. In "The Glass Wall" Victoria

Lincoln again presents a searchingly perceptive tale of a girl on the edge of maturity. The story's distinction lies in the fact that the situation which confronts Miss Lincoln's heroine is one which she will have to meet again and again as she continues growing. The destructive effects of prejudice upon the mind and spirit of the prejudiced are a persistent problem for the sensitive individual in our society. We know how Miss Lincoln's Celia met the problem and how as a maturer person can and will meet it.

The other children's stories deal with the more usual childhood discoveries of misunderstanding, cruelty, and evil in the adult world. Deborah in Ralph Gustafson's "The Pigeon" is shocked into permanent alienation from her father by his insensitivity. Speed Lamkin's Pete in "Comes a Day" garners only bitterness from his discovery that parents, too, are guilty of sins of omission and commission. In Peggy Bennett's "Death Under the Hawthornes" Junior discovers loneliness and the cruelty of his fellows. And in Joan Strong's "The Hired Man" ten-year-old Sandra confronts the forces of destruction within herself.

All of these are expertly written and moving in their allusive implications of the scars these childhood situations will leave. Yet they remain curiously incomplete, like fragments of longer tales. The implication in all of them is that the spirit of the child has been permanently warped. But what happened after? And don't some scars heal? The formula—and it has become a formula—does not permit answers, certainly no positive ones.

The allusiveness of the writing in these children's stories, the hint of tragic developments not to be told, is the second and more important characteristic of almost all the stories in this book and contributes to the



—Harry J. Patton.

—Erich Hartmann.

Victoria Lincoln, Warren Beck, Edward Newhouse, Peggy Bennett—"allusiveness . . . elevated to a method of not writing."