

a prison cell in Brooklyn. The implication, of course, is that the prisoner was murdered, making it safe for Genovese to be returned. He was acquitted, of course.

"Mafia" may be a blend of fact, fancy, and speculation, but the author has turned up some interesting research. I believe he has gone overboard, but in fairness to him it must be said that the Federal Bureau of Narcotics and the Kefauver Crime Committee are among the agencies which set considerable store in the theory of the Mafia as a world power in crime.

U. S. A. Notes

THE PUNCH IS GONE: There is no doubt that the late President Roosevelt was The Champ. Anyone who has watched the ragged, earnest performance of General Eisenhower or the polished academic approach of Governor Stevenson will not for a moment put them in the same class with FDR. Roosevelt really loved to campaign. He could lift an audience or cast it down. He not only had a magnificent voice and knew how to use it, he was a first-rate actor and the most expert of public relations men. That he was far and away the top in his field four successful campaigns for President show. But what made him The Champ? Could he, who defeated Herbert Hoover so successfully in 1932, have done it in 1928, when he barely was elected Governor of the State of New York while Al Smith took a beating on the national ticket? Or was it because Roosevelt plus the Depression, the anxiety, the forthcoming war, Pearl Harbor, and then victory in the offing were combined?

Harold F. Gosnell, adjunct professor of political science at the American University, Washington, D. C., obviously, from his book entitled "**Champion Campaigner**" (Macmillan, \$3.50) is a devout admirer of the four-time winner. Though he has written nine books relating to politics and has held various jobs at Washington during the Roosevelt regime, he adds little to the knowledge of the reasons for the success of the Democratic leader. Yet, for those who have read little of Roosevelt and for those who would like an interesting, short, readable book with all his election victories in one place, Dr. Gosnell's book is recommended.

—L. L. L. GOLDEN.

COLONIAL TYCOONS: James P. Hedges in "**The Browns of Providence Plantations: Colonial Years**" (Harvard University Press, \$6) begins the first of a projected three-volume study of one

of the earliest important American mercantile and industrial enterprises. Like W. T. Baxter's "**The House of Hancock**," it is a valuable case study of an important family, but it also reveals a great deal about colonial economy in general—the Caribbean trade and evasion of imperial restrictions, traffic in slaves, the money shortage, manufacture of spermaceti candles, and the iron industry. From the rich detail of the family papers Mr. Hedges documents the fact of economic interdependence of the colonies, "a preliminary to intercolonial action in the political realm." The Revolution upset the Browns' well-integrated business system, and, in the interest of "the Publick Good & a Small Commission," they tried to procure and manufacture military supplies and at the same time to establish new lines of trade with France. The French trade was disillusioning, and when the war ended "they, and other American merchants, hastened to beat a path back to London." The attempt to restore the economic *status quo ante bellum* failed. By the end of 1784 Brown and Benson owed the English house of Champion and Dickason a balance of £26,144 sterling, a debt that was not liquidated until ten years later. Meantime, the

family turned to new fields of investment, trade, and manufacture, which the author intends to describe in his next volume. —J. MERTON ENGLAND.

VOTERS' VAGARIES: Who elects whom? Does the Presidential candidate help elect the Congressmen? Or does the party carry more weight with the voter than either, and in what proportion?

Malcolm Moos, professor of political science at Johns Hopkins University, has probed into the mysteries of voter behavior and presents his findings in "**Politics, Presidents, and Coattails**" (Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, \$4.50). Instead of a dull book, jammed only with tables and charts, and valuable only to the student of voter trends, Mr. Moos has given us an amusing story of what happens and how it happens, and traces lines of voter action.

His study of the 1948 election, when what was supposed to be in the bag for Governor Dewey turned out to be in the pocket of President Truman, and the system Congressman Javits in New York City operates are alone worth having the book for.

This analysis of Congressional election
(Continued on page 32)



Your Literary I.Q.

Conducted by John T. Winterich

NUTS TO YOU

Judith L. Dohm of Olympia, Washington, offers capsule descriptions of ten characters in various kinds of literary works whose symptoms, real or feigned, would qualify them nowadays for the psychoanalyst's couch. Allowing five points for identification of each character, and five more for naming the work of the author concerned, a score of sixty is indifferent good, seventy cause for self-satisfaction, and eighty cause for greater self-satisfaction. Answers on page 31.

1. Upon marrying an ex-baronet who had lost a family curse along with the title, this demented female turned into a model of prim respectability.
2. These unfortunate brothers were driven mad by the same mysterious fumes that killed their sister.
3. This eccentric tradesman entertained a fellow guest by trying to submerge him, with the help of his host, in one of the containers on the table.
4. When his entire way of life was shattered by war and desolation, this plantation-owner retreated into a shadowy dream-world of his own.
5. This sea-faring monomaniac devoted his life to the pursuit of his albino enemy.
6. Before she died this hapless maiden, with her reason undermined by the machinations of her lover's diabolical mentor, relived in fantasy the innocent happiness of her early courtship.
7. This crazed recluse, who believed himself an archangel, tried to murder the son of the man who, he said, had prevented him from becoming Pope.
8. This noble warrior, inflamed by unrequited love, ran amok and rushed naked through the countryside, annihilating everything in his way.
9. This stern Victorian was so warped by his embittered notions of morality that he turned his sons into weaklings and attempted to blight his daughters' chances of love and happiness.
10. The twisted reasoning of this vindictive fanatic led him to seal up his supposed enemy in an underground vault.

Fiction. Although he does not say so in so many words, Lon Tinkle in his review of the past year's literary output, "Year of the Long Autumn" (page 7), gives the distinct impression that 1952 will not long be remembered for the fiction to which it gave birth. In this respect the year resembles the four or five immediately preceding it. Indeed, many critics have seriously suggested that the novel may be about spent as a literary form. Yet there can be no doubt that the novel is more popular with the reading public than ever. During the past year Americans have bought well over a quarter-billion books in paper bindings at prices ranging from 25¢ to 50¢, by far the majority of them novels, the quality varying from trash to classics. In this connection, two books we review this week are of special interest, for they are the latest examples of a significant experiment in offering new fiction simultaneously in hard and paper covers. Stanley Baron's "All My Enemies" (page 16) is a well-written thriller in paper.

Gentle Mixtures in Gentle Seas

THE WITCH'S THORN. By Ruth Park. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 209 pp. Clothbound, \$1.50. New York: Ballantine Books. 209 pp. Paperbound, 35¢.

By CHARLES LEE

OFFHAND, one might reasonably suppose that a novel about the life of an illegitimate child in a small New Zealand town during the Twenties would not hold much appeal for American readers. But the localisms of Miss Park's extraordinary novel are of place and custom; its passions are of the world. The town of Te Kano is faraway and picturesque, but its emotions are as intimate and real as one's own heart-beat.

The story belongs centrally to little Bethell Jury, whose fun-loving mother Queenie burns herself out and into an early grave. For Bethell this is but the beginning of an odyssey of grief as she wanders, bewildered and often brutalized, from one temporary home to another.

Her "respectable" Aunt Amy, who proves more susceptible to hysterics than to charity, is the first stop. Afterwards Bethell moves in with her German uncle, Mr. Wedesweiler, Te Kano's Mayor, who offers her up as a sacrifice to his own selfishly perverted notions of love. She then finds refuge with her "bad" Aunt Gracie, who has raised eleven variously sired children in a home of robust allegiances; but just as she had made a place for herself in this vigorous (and reformed) household she is literally dragged from it by her tragically sadistic father Johnny Gow. How she is finally saved by her Maori friend, fat old Georgie Wi,

makes for a climax as satisfying as it is noble and ironic.

But though Bethell is the central interest of these melodramatic developments, there are many additional characters to touch the heart and tickle the ribs. Miss Park has a genius that is Dickensian for the crowded canvas, the eccentric detail, the adroit tethering of humor and tears. She makes you laugh almost as often as she lashes you to anger or overpowers you with pathos.

Aunt Amy's pimplly son Jellicoe is memorable; so is her grocer husband Mr. Minogue, not only in regard to his expertly reproduced brogue but also for his hilariously painful serenading of Mr. Kevin O'Reilly Cough, the has-been "Thrush of Erin" who has been reduced to playing the Pacific provinces. Georgie's ancient Uncle Pihopa, a sheet-wrapped cannibal who has the local distinction of once having fed upon a bishop, likes to show the tattooing on his left buttock to visitors debarking from the train at Te Kano's little station. Other memorable moments are provided by Johnny Gow at Queenie's funeral, by Hoot Gibson Wi in his battle with the great eel, and by the wise old priest of the community, Father Finn.

"The Witch's Thorn" deals with races but is addressed to man; it parades before him the consequences of a great variety of spites, cruelties, and despairs, and it offers to him the challenge of spirit and love. It ought further to be noted that Miss Park writes a prose remarkable for its live and lyric qualities; she makes the language sing.

In short, hers is one of the best novels of the year.

BEHIND THE BOOK:

Ruth Park's first two novels—"Harp in the South" and "12½ Plymouth Street"—though warmly received by the critics, did something less than wonderful as sellers. This led to recent reports around New York that Houghton Mifflin Company, her publishers, would not have given the green light to "The Witch's Thorn" if a new firm, Ballantine Books, had not come into the picture. Stories to that effect, however, were firmly denied the other day by Paul Brooks, editor-in-chief of the Boston house. "No truth to them," he said. "Absolutely." In any case, Houghton Mifflin and Ballantine, demonstrating their combined faith in Miss Park, have printed 6,300 copies of "The Witch's Thorn" in hard covers, and 175,000 in paperbacks. First reports on the reviews and sales of the book are very good, a reason for the atmosphere of confidence circulating these days in the cavernous offices of Ballantine Books, New York. From approximately 100,000 paperback outlets from coast to coast, reports of brisk sales on the first four Ballantines are filtering in to the firm's president, Ian Ballantine. What he does is offer publishers a service enabling them to publish original books simultaneously—a clothbound edition at regular prices and a paperbound one at 35 cents. (Thus far Houghton Mifflin and Farrar, Straus & Young are the only two which have signed up.) Of the initial entries, the runaway best seller is "Executive Suite." Its first paperback printing aggregated 175,000; another 100,000 was promptly added. Hardcover sales so far: 9,500 in two editions and a third just ordered. As for the sales impact of paperback editions on hardcover editions and vice versa, the consensus is: "It's too soon to tell." At the moment both Ballantine and Houghton Mifflin are pretty excited about Ruth Park. "The Witch's Thorn," Mr. Ballantine, a friendly, articulate fellow, said the other day, "belongs on anybody's list of the ten best artistic achievements of the year. You might say it's a crucial book for us, something of a challenge to the taste of bookbuyers." Ballantine jackets aren't of the standard, or plunging neckline, variety. Nonetheless, they are getting an even break on the racks. Only some trade booksellers—"relatively few"—have refused to stock Ballantine editions to begin with.

—BERNARD KALB.

