

Roselle, soprano, and Alfred Piccaver, tenor (Eterna 0-478, \$5.95), or sixteen songs from Hugo Wolf's "Italienisches Liederbuch," sung by Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau (Decca DL9632, \$5.45)? The answer is automatic: one can't.

No matter how well one knows the fluid, poignant art of the late Schlusnus, there are bound to be some surprises in this series of which I have, so far, heard only the first disc. Along with the memorable "Ständchen" and "Der Atlas" of Schubert is a superb "Forelle" not known to me before, while the Wolf group includes a lightly lyrical "Der Gärtner" to balance the expressive "Verborgeneheit." On the other hand, Schlusnus was not the relentless critic of his own art he might have been, for the Wolf "Heimweh" in this collection is rather throaty, the Schubert "Nachtstück" not as well controlled as it might be. But these are deviations only from his own exceptional standard. By any other, it is all lieder singing of the noblest kind. Excellent processing, save for some inequalities in volume level.

An oddity of the Roselle-Piccaver disc (alternate solos from "Turandot" on one side, excerpts from "Bohème," "Fanciulla del West," and "Butterfly" on the other) is the coincidence that both were foreign-born, both grew to

maturity in this country, and both had their important careers abroad. Those who only heard Roselle in the Thirties will be astonished by the power and certainty of her "Turandot" excerpts, while those who didn't happen to hear Piccaver at any time will find the warmth and richness of his voice ample explanation for his enormous favor in Vienna, where he spent most of his active life. The original 78's vary from fair to poor, with equivalent results in the processed 33's.

Few postwar baritones have amassed the reputation, in discriminating European circles, of Fischer-Dieskau, whose lengthy series of Wolf songs may be re-mentioned, for those who missed a previous review. Sixteen successive Wolf songs (including such great ones as "Benedeit die sel'ge Mutter," "Gesegnet sei," and "Ein Ständchen ench zu bringen") are an almost intolerable test for any singer's intelligence, and one which Fischer-Dieskau survives triumphantly. What is lacking, however, is a sense of vocal plenitude, of tonal reserve and unused power. At some crucial moments the words are spoken rather than sung and the vocal line lapses. Hertha Klust is the pianist. In this instance the reproduction is beyond reproach. —I. K.

## BILLY THE KID

(Continued from page 12)

heroic level. Marshall Ashmum Upson was born in Wolcott, Connecticut, in 1828, and like Ben Franklin and Mark Twain got most of his education in a print shop. James Gordon Bennett's *New York Herald* provided his first reporter's job. After that he drifted westward. In 1867 he established the *Albuquerque Press*, which he published for two years, and later the *Las Vegas Mail*. For a while he dabbled in politics, but unfavorable publicity arising from his part in state speculation drove him back to the printer's case. In 1881 he became a boarder in the house of Pat Garrett, who in the same year shot Billy the Kid. When a few months later Garrett decided to write a book about the Kid, both to exonerate himself from charges that he had shot Bonney unfairly and to cash in on the wide interest in the shooting, what was more natural than to turn to his literary friend and housemate Upson for aid?

ON March 12, 1882, the *Daily New Mexican* announced that the book was ready for sale, fifty cents a copy postpaid. Authoratively entitled "The Authentic Life of Billy the Kid, the Noted Desperado of the Southwest," this slim volume of 137 pages is the fountainhead of most later Billy the Kid literature. It set the standard pattern of the Kid's career, from which few have deviated. We cannot analyze it as if it were an historical monograph; it is more literary than historical. It does for New Mexico what Mark Twain's "Roughing It" did for Nevada: elevates it to a realm of the metaphor and well-turned phrase.

Some of the toughness of Billy got into the prose, and some of the plainness of Pat Garrett. The book is considerably less Victorian than anything else Upson ever wrote. Partiality to Billy is written on every page. "All who ever knew Billy will testify that his polite, cordial, and gentlemanly bearing invited confidence and promised protection—the first of which he never betrayed, and the latter he was never known to withhold." Enter the legend that Billy was a chivalric knight-errant, not a mere killer. "If purity of conversation were the test, hundreds of the prominent citizens of New Mexico would be taken for desperadoes sooner than young Bonney." Add a dash of Sir Galahad. "The aged, the poor, the sick, the unfortunate and helpless never appealed to Billy in vain for succor." Enter the Robin Hood motif. "Billy was, when circum-

## Your Literary I.Q.

By Howard Collins

### JAILBIRDS

The following authors have one thing in common. They turned out worthwhile literature while in prison. Blanche McKeown of Memphis, Tennessee asks you to identify the following men. Allowing five points for each, sixty is par, seventy is good and eighty is a score to be proud of. Answers on page 37.

1. This man, who died by drinking hemlock, was imprisoned on a charge of heresy against the state and corruption of youth.
2. A very consecrated man, imprisoned for his religious belief, wrote letters of encouragement to newly established churches while under house arrest in Rome.
3. He lived by his wits in fifteenth century France while he wrote poetry of beauty and bitterness.
4. When the secretary of an English nobleman married his employer's under age ward, he was put in Fleet Street Prison where he wrote poetry and letters.
5. He wrote while imprisoned in the Tower of London, but he is better known for spreading his cloak for Queen Elizabeth.
6. Although he wrote many beautiful poems, he is best remembered for the line, "Stone walls do not a prison make."
7. A poor tinker spent his prison sentence writing a long allegory on man's journey toward heaven.
8. An exotic of Victorian England wrote poems describing his impressions of prison life.
9. Short stories that set the pattern for a whole generation of writers were the work of a man serving a term for embezzlement.
10. When he was imprisoned for his religious beliefs and for his subversive activities, this man wrote words of encouragement to his countrymen urging them to gain their objectives by peace rather than violence.

stance permitted, scrupulously neat and elegant in dress." Add a dash of Beau Brummel. And so it goes, until a full-fledged hero emerges in the last chapters.

Upson was enormously pleased with his job with Billy the Kid. "I am now engaged in getting together data for a full history of the county," he wrote his sister enthusiastically in 1882, "The Indian Wars, the Harold War, several less important vignettes, and the great cattleman's war from 1876 to 1880. This will be published by subscription." It never was. Professor Maurice G. Fulton, Upson's biographer, tells of reports that Ash left a trunk full of papers and clippings, but he has been unable to locate it. Some idea of Upson's rapid decline in his later years can be gained from his obituary published in the *Roswell Register* for October 31, 1894. "He lived for forty years in violation of every law of health, and nothing but an incomparable vitality kept him alive for years. His many friends will regret to learn of his death, although it was not unexpected." He left as his contribution to the American scene the fascinating figure of a young American Faust galloping over the Southwestern plains to a blood-filled Walpurgis Night.

Like Walt Whitman, Charles Siringo preferred to find out about life first hand. He knew; he suffered; he was there. In all his writing Siringo played on the same three themes: his own experience as cowboy and detective, the role of tough men in the West, and the innate greatness of Billy the Kid. These things sustained him for years and carried him from Texas, where he was born in 1855, to Hollywood, where he was technical adviser on Western movies until his death in 1928. Numerous real cowhands have vouched for the authenticity of Siringo's stories and history. "A Texas Cowboy" became the cowboy's Bible. Written with a glow and a glee, it holds its own today in both cloth and paper-back editions. Had Siringo's book been the only one to deal with the Kid, Bonney would on its strength alone have gained a place of notoriety among Southwest outlaws. A high point of the book is Siringo's tale of meeting Billy on the LZ Range in the winter of 1878-79. He also knew Pat Garrett, who filled his mind with details of Billy's early career. The meeting with Billy kept magnifying in importance in Siringo's mind, until when he put out "A Lonestar Cowboy" in 1919 he added new details about giving the Kid his new ten-dollar meerschaum cigar holder, for which Billy gave him in return "a finely bound novel which he had finished reading." (To envisage Billy as a collector of fine bindings requires vision.) A year

later Siringo put out a book devoted entirely to hero-worship, called "History of Billy the Kid," in which he reveals his deep admiration for his killer-hero with details of his own campaign to place a lasting monument at the grave of the Kid.

NO one got the story of Billy over to so many people so well as Charlie Siringo. He is by far the most important disseminator of the legend, to the average American reader and, through his work in Hollywood, the average American movie-goer. Realizing how many Americans get into these two categories, one can call him the popularizer of Billy to mass audiences. His importance as a hero-maker far surpasses his importance as a writer or historian. As J. Frank Dobie (who knows more about Siringo than any one else) has pointed out, "He had almost nothing to say on life, he reported actions. He put down something valid on a class of livers, as remote now from the Atomic Age as Rameses II." Instead of hindering us their remoteness attracts us all the more. The fact that there can never be another Billy the Kid with a gray horse, blazing six shooters, and open range to cavort in gives him a distantness and mystery that enhances him beyond believing.

Raised on a mild, rolling corn-belt farm, Emerson Hough spent the best years of his life courting the wild and woolly West. He was born in Newton, Iowa, and graduated from the state university's law school in 1880. In 1883 he set up his law office in the little town of White Oaks, New Mexico, but was never too concerned with the law. Hough spent his time seeking out characters in the bloody Lincoln County war and collecting tales of the struggle in the back country. The local color of New Mexico fascinated him, and provided him with the basic material for a successful writer's career. Before his death in 1923 he had twenty-nine books to his credit, none so important to American letters as an eight-page article for a magazine. "The True Story of a Western Bad Man," published in the September 1901 *Everybody's Magazine*, is one of the shortest prose pieces to play a major role in the creating of an American hero.

In essence Hough put horns and tails on our juvenile killer, and saw the outlines of a pitchfork where others had only seen a fast-moving six-shooter. It was Faust gone Western that Hough envisioned. He sharpened up the image in his best-selling "The Story of the Outlaw: A Study of the Western Desperado" (1907). In a chapter called "The Man Hunt" he pictures brave Pat Garrett tracking



down this *fiendus Americanus* in barren New Mexico. We can practically smell the sulphur when Billy's riddled body sinks to the floor. Instead of hurting Billy's reputation, Hough's accounts made him seem more wicked and hence vastly more interesting. With his boy's love of the forests and the beckoning roads, Hough brought his own bumptious enthusiasm and energy to bear on his stories. He did such a good job of damning Billy the Kid that he helped damn him right into immortality.

The fourth hero-maker did not invent, but revived, the Kid's saga. Born in Lebanon, Kentucky, in 1872, Walter Noble Burns got printer's ink in his blood even before high-school days were behind him. In subsequent years his Westward urge carried him to newspaper jobs in St. Louis, Kansas City, Chicago, Denver, and San Francisco. Between jobs he decided to try the life on the rolling sea, and made a long whaling voyage aboard the brigantine *Alexander*. Experiences in the South Sea, Behring Sea, and Arctic Ocean were the basis of his first book, "A Year with a Whaler" (1913). He also tried his hand at soldiering, serving with the First Kentucky Infantry in the Spanish American War. He struck his best vein, however, when he left the sea and the West Indies and concentrated on the Western plains. "Tombstone," "The One Way Ride," and "The Robin Hood of El Dorado" were books all widely acclaimed before his death in 1932; but his "Saga of Billy the Kid" (1926) marked his real contribution to the mythology of the West.

This pivotal volume ended the lull that had set in with Bonney material after Siringo stopped writing about 1920. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that Burns restated the story in such a contemporary fashion that dozens of movie, comic, and pulp writers have drawn from him as a thirsty man draws water from a well. "The Saga of Billy the Kid" is required reading for the student of the heroic process in America. Burns sees that Bonney's story is folklore in the making, related to the Homeric succession. "A hundred years or so from now," he predicts, "Billy the Kid will appear in fireside tales." To such an-





—Culver Service.

Billy's mother—"he) is more of a god."

cient rogues as Robin Hood, Claude Duval, Dick Turpin, and Fra Diavolo he compares Billy, whose legend he believes is destined to "a mellow and genial immortality." Burns contributes sizably to that legend by his apt choice of words, tales, and comparisons. To him Billy is a genius "painting his name in flaming colors with a six-shooter across the sky of the Southwest." His is a unique and extraordinary personality, "frozen egotism plus recklessness and minus mercy." He is "not of the stuff of ordinary men," but has instead the "debonair courage of a cavalier" and "the afflatus that made him the finished master." He is "born to battle and vendetta, to hatred and murder, to tragic victory and tragic defeat." He is, in short, more of a god than a man.

AS much as any other writer Burns sensed the cosmic qualities involved in Billy's Faustian career. "Opposite him played Death, he states dramatically. "It was a drama of Death and the Boy. He laughed at Death. Death was a joke. He waved Death a jaunty goodbye and was off to new adventures." This is fine writing, much better than that of the earlier hero makers. Burns turned a mean metaphor, and carried a formidable arsenal of adjectives. Billy was an ideal subject for him, a man whose bizarre life and death challenged his powers as a writer. As his 1926 title indicated, he intended to write a saga; if he did not do that, he at least added much to the saga that was already thriving.

So much for book sources of the Kid's legend. As any student of American culture knows, this gives only a partial view, since much legendizing is on the oral level also. The troubadour's note is probably more telling in the long run than the printer's touch.

Legends passed down orally in America from one generation to another form a Homeric succession that is independent of the printing presses. Stories of Billy's charm, courage, Faustian abandon, and dramatic death are indispensable if he is to be a folk hero. "As each narrative adds a bit of drama here and a picturesque detail there," writes B. A. Botkin, "one wonders what form these legends will assume as time goes by, and in what heroic proportions Billy the Kid will appear in fireside fairy tales a hundred years or so from now."

In many ways William H. Bonney symbolized the whole pastoral epoch doomed by the railroad, tractor, and homesteader. He died grimly with both guns roaring defiance and death. If his particular crimes are dated, his appeal is not. Twentieth-century readers like their heroes raw, with a little blood on them. Having read the tough novels of Hemingway, Caldwell, and Faulkner, and seen such tough movie idols as Bogart, Cagney, and Raft, they are naturally attracted to this early killer. He got through all the scrapes the movies have later contrived, without a fall guy or double; even with mirrors the movie fictionists haven't been able to improve on his reality.

Like Faust, Billy the Kid sensed the drama in his own evil career, and even enjoyed his predicament. When, says the legend, the Las Vegas judge sentenced him to be hanged, he wanted to make sure his pronouncement of death sank in. "You are sentenced to be hanged by the neck until you are dead, dead, dead," intoned the judge. To which Billy quickly replied, "And you can go to hell, hell, hell!" Faust could not have improved on that line.

After Billy had been shot the townsmen dragged the body across the street to a carpenter's shop, where the young villain was stretched out on a bench. Candles were placed beside him, casting flickering shadows on the face of the hardened killer. The next day they buried him in a borrowed white shirt too large for the slim boy, placing him in a plain wooden coffin. Admirers scraped together \$208 for a simple gravestone, later splintered and carried away by relic hunters. He had been on this earth exactly twenty-one years, seven months, and twenty-one days—long enough to supply the basis for an American legend.

The Kid had a lurking devil in him, sometimes debonair and impish, sometimes bloodthirsty and fiendish, as circumstances prompted. History favored the worser angel, and the Kid fell. His damnable life ended with a deserved death. Since God condemned, Americans have been content to forgive. May God have mercy on his soul.

## FICTION

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event following on fifty years of happy understanding and work together is not forecast and doesn't satisfactorily clear up the apparent mystery of the act. Before she reaches that point, however, she has established some good scenes of frontier life. For a fault, there was a little too much antique shop emphasis on descriptions of furniture and foods. The space devoted to these might better have gone to the more solid character building that would have tied the story up more neatly.

—E. J. F.

**EXPOSURE OF A GOOD WOMAN:** The legend of Susanna and the elders gets a thorough and iconoclastic working over in Marnix Gijzen's witty "Joachim of Babylon" (Farrar, Straus & Young, \$2). Life with Susanna was a pretty dreary affair even before that highly publicized incident with the elders made her virtue a byword. After that it was just plain hell. That, at least, is the story that her husband tells us. Seems Susanna was a girl so wrapped up in her own beauty and concept of virtue that she early cooled the ardor of her husband and made such a virtue of her virtue that he never did have much fun. That's really about all there is to Mr. Gijzen's retelling of the tale, but it is done with such sly urbanity as to provide delightful reading. And Joachim, the narrator, emerges from the shadows to which Susanna's notoriety had relegated him as a charming cynic, heroically but hopelessly battling with that most powerful of legendary figures, the good woman.

—E. J. F.

**BE-BOP AND BLUES:** The demi-world of the hipster, the be-bop devotee, the marijuana smoker, the chronic drinker has been getting a deal of novelistic attention in recent months. More, I suspect, than it deserves, particularly since few of the writers have anything much to say about it. Clellon Holmes makes his stab at the subject with a first novel "Go" (Scribner, \$3.50) that leaves the subject pretty much where he found it. He rushes his characters around a recognizable New York, into and out of beer bars, after-hours joints, marijuana parties, and be-bop temples. He kills off one of them, has four others arrested for petty thievery, almost wrecks but finally saves the marriage of his principals and generally creates the impression of a lot of frenzied rushing around. All of this is supposed to make you feel very sad, and probably will, but not necessarily