

rick's Lear, Mrs. Siddons as Lady Macbeth, Kean as Othello, Macready's Macbeth, Irving's Shylock, and Edwin Booth's Iago. There is a marked division between actors who played a part and actors who were the part. Macready was one of the second group. He became Macbeth so violently that he left Fanny Kemble, who played opposite to him, black and blue from his pinches. It is a modern fashion to mock the Victorian critics for regarding Shakespeare's characters as real people; but Victorian actors shared this belief. It was, however, to Macready's credit that, unlike so many modern players, he knew the meaning of his words. In two of the final chapters Professor Sprague writes of William Poel and of notable modern performances which he has seen. This last chapter will stir many memories, and it raises the question whether the actors of today are as well served by their critics as those of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Phonograph records and films may, perhaps, survive for the historian of 2200 A.D., but vivid impressions of the modern actor at work are not so commonly recorded by dramatic critics, doubtless because they can so seldom wait for the final curtain.

**T**HE *Thespian Muse*" (Brown University Press, \$2.25) is also concerned with actors of the eighteenth century. Robert Gale Noyes has collected many interesting gleanings from the forgotten novels of contemporary life of the eighteenth century. The literary judgments are seldom original but as reflections of the tastes and prejudices of the common reader they have a value.

Two volumes of studies have lately been published which are, in Elizabethan language, "garlands of good will": "*Studies in Shakespeare*," edited by Arthur D. Matthews and Clark M. Emery (University of Miami Press, \$3), is published in honor of Professor William L. Halstead of the University of Miami; "*Shakespearean Studies*" (Farrar, Straus & Young, \$3) is a memorial collection of essays by an eminent physician, Dr. Max Huhner. There are disadvantages in such gatherings. The papers are usually too short to be of much value, while the occasionally important study is liable to be overlooked and neglected.

Finally (and I suppose inevitably) at the end of the list we have two works from the Anti-Stratfordians, one—"This Star of England," by Dorothy and Charlton Ogburn (Coward-

McCann, \$10)—supporting the claims of Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, the other—"Shakespeare's Identity," by A. W. Titherley (British Book Centre, \$6)—championing William Stanley, Sixth Earl of Derby. Doubtless all interested parties agree that the author of "Shakespeare's Works" was an exceptional person. On the surface, at least, the evidence is reasonably complete that he was in fact William Shakespeare, gentleman, of Stratford-on-Avon, player, and shareholder in the Lord Chamberlain's Company of players (afterwards the King's Men); indeed, had the plays been second-rate no one would ever have questioned the authorship. Those who reject Shakespeare usually take the line that the dramatist "must have been" a nobleman of vast erudition and social accomplishment. Actually very few great writers throughout the whole history of English literature have been nobly born; most of them came from the same level of society as the man of Stratford—the lower or middle strata of the middle class. A further difficulty which applies to Oxford is that by all the usual tests the plays of "Shakespeare" were written between 1590 and 1612; and the evidence that "Lear," "The Winter's Tale," and "The Tempest" were written between 1606 and 1612 is quite strong. But Oxford died in 1604. His supporters are thus forced to revise literary history and place most of the plays in the 1580's; this difficulty, however, does not disturb them. The general claims of Derby are stronger. He was born in 1560 and died in 1642. Moreover he is recorded by a contemporary as having written for the common players. In 1599 he financed the revival of the boy players of St. Paul's, an event which ultimately led to the unfortunate developments recorded by Professor Harbage. Dr. Titherley seems not to know of this fact.

Dr. Titherley's book is a gallimaufry of history, palaeography, and mathematics. Like Professor Feuillerat (but with far greater precision, as becomes the dean of the Faculty of Science at

the University of Liverpool), he relies partly on verse counts and such devices. Indeed he produces two formulae for deciding these matters—the R-formula ( $\log R = 2.4 - .05v$ ) and the S-formula ( $\log S = 2.2 - .04v$ ). The verification of such calculations may best be left to the Oxfordites, who are thus set on the defensive.

"This Star of England" is a vast work of eighty-six chapters, with additional matter, written with great enthusiasm, utter contempt of poor "Shaksper" (and of orthodox scholars), and a fine sense of the romantic which reaches a climax on pp. 817-18 with the declaration that "*the Third Earl of Southampton was the son of Oxford and Elizabeth. . .*" Unfortunately, the refutation of such theories takes at least ten times the length of the original statement, which in this book runs to 1,270 pages of text. Meanwhile, pending the settlement of the rival claims of Derby and Oxford—and the arbitrament is likely to be bloody—Stratfordian scholars can continue their orthodox labors.

## Another Bard's Book

"*Shakespeare: His World and His Work*," by M. M. Reese (St. Martin's Press, 589 pp. \$6.75) is a one-volume survey by a British historian, a specialist in the Tudor and Stuart periods. Here it is reviewed by Professor Edgar Johnson, chairman of the English department at the City College of New York.

By Edgar Johnson

**M.** M. REESE'S "Shakespeare: His World and His Work" is a survey of the entire range of Shakespearean scholarship and its problems.

It outlines the known facts of Shakespeare's life and interprets their significance; it discusses the development of English drama from the miracle and morality plays through the classical influences of the sixteenth century and the attainments of the university wits to the work of Shakespeare's leading fellow playwrights; it describes Elizabethan London and the climate of thought in which the dramatists labored; it explains the conditions of production, the physical techniques of the theatre, the methods of the actors, and the nature and influence of their audience.

All this involves considerable recapitulation of information well known to the student, but includes much that will prove fresh even to him. For the



—From "On Producing Shakespeare."

general reader, who knows Shakespeare's plays but has not read the critics and scholars, it is not only the most comprehensive brief introduction to the field that I recall, but a lucid, stimulating, and perceptive work fostering both understanding and delight. Paying generous tribute to his predecessors and fellow workers, Mr. Reese, nevertheless, is not afraid to take issue with them. Of Caroline Spurgeon's analysis of Shakespeare's recurrent imagery (in "Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us") linking to take one example, dogs, and sycophancy, "What It proves," he remarks drily, "is that Shakespeare was short of ideas with which to express his dislike of flattery; not, as Miss Spurgeon claimed, that he disliked dogs."

Mr. Reese's previous work in Tudor and Stuart history enables him to dispose brilliantly of the attempt to explain Shakespeare's golden comedies and his four dark tragedies as reflections of the moods of their age: the clichés about "Merrie England" under "Good Queen Bess," he points out, wither beneath the facts that the last decades of her reign were a time of anxiety and conflict and the earlier years of James I a time not of disillusion but of renewed and exuberant hope. Nor will Mr. Reese have any commerce with the snobbish notion that writing down to the "groundlings" of Shakespeare's audience blemished his achievement. "Great art," he says wisely, "is not made with the tongue in the cheek. If Shakespeare was a great artist, it was partly because of his audience—every man and woman of them, not just a section of them—corporately willed him to be great." Finally, the richness and penetration of his chapters on Shakespeare's mind and art could not easily be overpraised. With this book Mr. Reese adds to his achievement as a historian the laurels of brilliant accomplishment as a literary critic.

## LITERARY I.Q. ANSWERS

1. Injun Joe in "Tom Sawyer" (Mark Twain). 2. Scarlett O'Hara in "Gone With the Wind" (Margaret Mitchell). 3. Friday, in "Robinson Crusoe" (Daniel Defoe). 4. Boone Caudill in "The Big Sky" (A. B. Guthrie, Jr.). 5. Captain Nemo in "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea" (Jules Verne). 6. George, in "Of Mice and Men" (John Steinbeck). 7. Elzevir, in "Moonfleet" (J. Meade Falkner). 8. Long John Silver in "Treasure Island" (Robert Louis Stevenson). 9. Clyde Griffiths, in "An American Tragedy" (Theodore Dreiser). 10. Jean Valjean, in "Les Misérables" (Victor Hugo).

## BEHIND THE BOOKS

# Man of 8,500,000 Words



**I**N the knowledgeable, sprawling, A-to-Z world of encyclopedias Joseph Laffan Morse, editor-in-chief of the "New Funk & Wagnalls Encyclopedia," a set of thirty-six volumes covering everything in 8,500,000 words and 50,000 articles, has the reputation of being a first-class sales revolutionist. Morse—medium-sized, thin, nearly fifty-one—is, as the saying goes, the daddy of an idea by which anyone, anyone at all, is sent Vol. 1 of his encyclopedia free simply by writing in for it. Up to \$2,000,000 a year, he says, is spent on creating pen pals, the ads in newspapers and magazines written by himself. The other 35/36ths of the set are for sale at \$1.89 a volume, plus eleven cents to cover postage, at the rate of three a month.

It's an idea which came to Morse in the late Thirties, when things weren't exactly prosperous for lots of people, Morse included. Morse in those days was a practising attorney (NYU Law, '26), but there didn't seem to be enough clients to go around. One night he sat down and wrote a little piece of advertising copy for the then J. David Stern chain of newspapers. It had to do with giving away books, like complete sets of Twain and Dickens, in return for newspaper coupons. Newspaper sales boomed. Morse quit Stern and put Morse seriously to work for Morse. "I tried a few things," he recalled the other day, "and hit." Morse hit to the extent that (a) just a couple of months ago he happily wrote a check for \$307,500 to pay off the "largest" first-prize in contest history, designed to get widespread circulation for his encyclopedia and sponsored by his Unicorn Publishers; (b) these days he is trying to pick a winner for his \$375,000 first-prize contest, launched to promote a series of Unicorn annuals of news; and (c) he can unhesitatingly rattle off statements like: "There isn't a block in the country that hasn't a family that hasn't done business with us."

The other day Morse interrupted his schedule for an hour to pace around his enormous encyclopedia-lined office. (Unicorn's HQ is a five-story mansion in Manhattan's fashionable East Side, a layout that would do splendidly as a foreign embassy.) "Here's a book," he said as he dipped into the wall and came up with Vol. 22 of his encyclopedia. "It's stamped in gold! Two

colors! Marbled endpapers! If sold by ordinary methods by high-pressure, door-to-door salesmen it would cost at least five dollars. Encyclopedia sales cost alone is about 40 per cent! All right. Some years ago we endeavored to get around that cost by a sale directed at the public by advertisement. We finally came to a method that was successful." Vol. 22 flew back into the wall.

Morse first introduced his sales technique with "The Modern Concise Encyclopedia" in 1939. Hit No. 1. But he wanted a better encyclopedia, he said, so a couple of years later he switched to the "Funk & Wagnalls New Standard." Hit No. 2. In 1949 his own "New Funk & Wagnalls" appeared. Hit No. 3.

**T**HE Morse method has quite a few advantages, Morse noted. For one thing, Unicorn doesn't have to stock large inventories of complete sets. It manufactures to order. For another, Unicorn is on press all year-round, a schedule which Morse says allows him to update his thirty-six volumes continuously. "Rumania!" Morse declared suddenly. "Sometimes it's R-o-u. Then it's R-u. Then it's R-o. Now it's back to R-u, I believe. Well, we can get those changes. A new book of ours goes to press every few months. Others can't."

Before the hour was up Morse commented on the encyclopedia's 8,500,000 words—"Every single one funneled through me"; on the fact that his collection losses were negligible—"If you give people a square deal they pay"; on regular vs. mail-order advertising—"In a regular ad you get a girl, an automobile, and a package of Camels and try to make people remember Camels; in mail order, people have to sit down right after they read the ad and buy or you've lost them"; and on what he is fond of calling "the damndest thing"—"some people never heard of Unicorn."

"You walk along the street," he went on, "and you say to a man, 'Unicorn Press.' He doesn't know what you're talking about. Here, you've advertised a single book more than anyone else. Nobody in the history of the world ever spent so much on a single publication in a single year. Yet they don't know Unicorn. It's the damndest thing."

—BERNARD KALB.