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## Americana

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chapter with a general statement of the authorities on which it rests.

What to do about documenting a text is still very much a vexed question, a three-cornered warfare being carried on among writers, publishers, and readers. I don't know that it has ever been demonstrated that "the general reader" actually is repelled by a footnoted page, but the recent tendency in general publishing has been to relegate all notes to an appendix. This may be all very well, but if the notes have any value at all readers will soon be found browsing in them and then seeking to refer back to the text to which they apply. It would be cruel and inhuman punishment, but I would like to sentence Doubleday's book designer to forty-eight hours with the notes to Mr. Lavender's book. I think the effect would be salutary; at the very least, next time he would supply running heads to the main text, and he, like myself, might be able to think of still other improvements.

## Dangerous Dentist

**"Doc Holliday," by John Myers Myers** (Little, Brown, 287 pp. \$4.50), is the biography of a dentist-turned-gambler, one of the men who made the Old West wild.

By Seth Agnew

**B**ACK in the days when the West was wild, back in the Seventies and Eighties when such towns as Leadville and Denver and Cheyenne and Tombstone were young and lusty, one of the outstanding figures in that portion of the scene which comprised the saloons, gambling palaces, bordellos was a tubercular dentist named John H. Holliday—Doc Holliday, reputedly one of the best gamblers in the West, a cool and deadly hand with a gun, sometime killer and crook, sometime staunch ally of the law in its war against crooks and killers.

The ascertainable facts of the dentist-turned-gambler's life are told by John Myers Myers in "Doc Holliday." Holliday was born in 1852 near Valdosta, Georgia, to a prominent local family. The Civil War and Reconstruction strengthened his unruly tendencies, and when the medical pronouncement of tuberculosis ended his Georgia dental practice in 1872 he was ready to move West.

Dallas was the first stop. Here for

a while he practised dentistry, but more important to his later career he practised the handling of cards and of the knife and gun. Here, too, in a gambling argument he killed his first man—and left town in a hurry. In 1887 he died of tuberculosis in Glenwood Springs.

Following the gambling circuit, dealing faro and monte and poker, Doc saw all the big towns of the West and was run out of most of them. He knew such prominent figures of the times as Ed and Pat Masterson, Luke Short, Bill Tilghman, the actor Eddie Foy; others on both sides of the law rejoiced in such names as Mysterious Dave Mather, Turkey Creek Jack Johnson, Curly Bill Brocius. At the Flat near Fort Griffin, Texas, he formed his alliance with Big Nose Kate, a free-lance prostitute of uncertain surname. Kate saved Doc's life when the citizenry of the Flat would have hanged him for the killing of one Ed Bailey: she set a diversionary fire at one end of town and then held up the jailer and freed her friend. Kate and Doc fled to Dodge City, and Kate was a plague to his life thereafter.

To be sure, much of Mr. Myers's story rests on supposition and educated guessing, for the annals of the West are scant and contradictory. The tales of self-styled eye-witnesses and of men who "knew the Doctor well" suffer from the notorious ability of the old-time Westerner to tell a thrilling story without letting the facts get too much in the way. Newspaper accounts which have survived tend to be cheerfully partisan. But though Doc Holliday's life must be pieced together a little loosely, which Mr. Myers is the first to admit, all credit to Mr. Myers for making it logical and credible.

Credit, too, to Mr. Myers for reinforcing his story with a mine of information about the sporting side of the Western boom towns, the operation of the gambling circuit, and the colorful characters who rode it. It makes a fascinating, if not particularly moral, narrative; and Mr. Myers tells it with gusto.

## LITERARY I.Q. ANSWERS

1. "Casablanca" (Felicia Hemans).
2. "Incident of the French Camp" (Robert Browning).
3. "The Bridge" (Longfellow).
4. "Horatius at the Bridge" (Macaulay).
5. "Concord Hymn" (Emerson).
6. "Recessional" (Kipling).
7. "The Raven" (Poe).
8. "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" (Byron).
9. Sonnet: "On His Blindness" (Milton).
10. "The Bucket" (Woodworth).
11. Sonnet: "The world is too much with us" (Wordsworth).
12. "Little Boy Blue" (Eugene Field).

## Fiction

Continued from page 16

announced in the title, of death. Of what use is life to men condemned to die? In the eyes of the immortal Fosca all their efforts are in vain, their errors and accomplishments too ephemeral to matter. In his presence they know with humiliation and despair that they are but blades of grass. Why do they struggle even when they realize that all is for naught? Several of the characters articulate responses that will stir even readers who couldn't care less about the ethical implications of Existentialism.

French critics did not praise Mme. Beauvoir's work without reservations. A work conceived artificially to illustrate a thesis, it never comes to life. Too many repetitious episodes, too much harping, and too, too long. But fussing about such literary matters is like complaining that a woman professor's lipstick is not on straight. It is much more interesting just to watch the brains work, the brains of an extraordinary woman who looks at life without flinching and, in spite of dismaying evidence, succeeds in establishing a standard of values in a universe without heaven or hell and wherein all men are mortal.

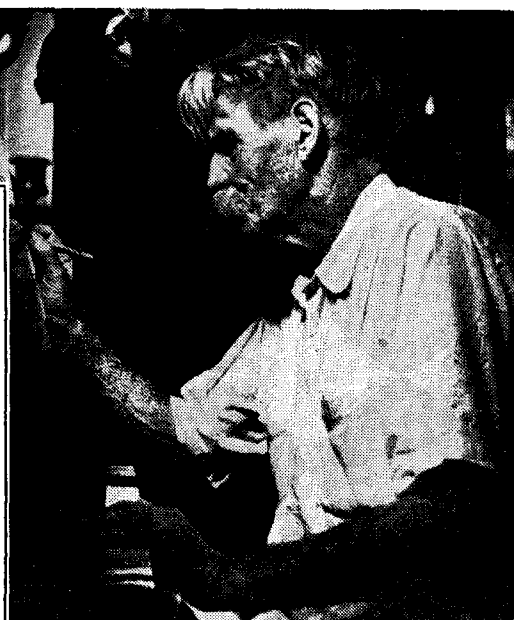
## Murder à la Movies

**INFLAMMABLE FLATFOOT:** An insurance claims investigator with a low amatory threshold keeps things moving in Jay Dratler's "The Judas Kiss" (Holt, \$3)—a Hollywood style whodunnit blending sex, alcohol, murder, and sunshine. The insurance man is an inflammable chap named Perry Farmer, dedicated to his nasty job and his cozy family, but also prone to disturbing guilt feelings. Perry's eaky personality almost becomes unstuck when he gets mixed up in a case of suspected homicide involving a Norse temptress. Hela her name is, and the mere sight of her sets our hero's blood on fire. She is "curved... lush... maybe voluptuous," he burbles.

With this trend of thought, and his wife and kid away at Lake Arrowhead, Perry is obviously the wrong man to pursue an investigation involving Hela. But pursue it he does, and far, far beyond the call of duty. When Mr. Dratler's insurance Hawkshaw is following clues "The Judas Kiss" is moderately entertaining. When he indulges in cliché tough-talk and do-it-yourself psychiatry the reader's attention wanders.

—MARTIN LEVIN.

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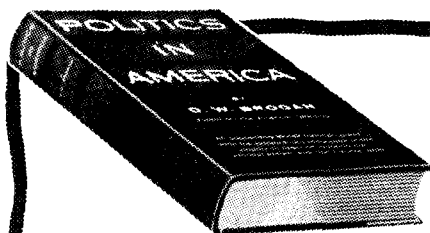
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