

whose real function was to furnish French aid to the rebellious Americans on behalf of the French government; the four malignant Lee brothers of Virginia, whose towering ambition blighted the career of their conscientious colleague Silas Deane.

Nor does Miss Augur neglect Franklin's ingenious efforts to break up the British colonial monopoly and build up the American merchant marine through clandestine operations at the Caribbean island of St. Eustasia and in the ports in northwestern France.

THE outlines, if not the details, of Miss Augur's story have all been well known to historians for years, and she is frugal in dispensing broad interpretation and novel insight. But it is not fair to cavil about that. Miss Augur is writing for the general reader, and merely trying to give him a bright and accurate account of little-known, exciting episodes of the past, and in this she has succeeded quite well. She would have succeeded even better, it seems to me, if she had not on occasion lost sight of Franklin himself and had placed her fascinating but nevertheless relatively minor episodes more definitely against the broad background of the Revolution.

The smallest of the three boxes I have before me is a book called "**Ben Franklin's Privateers**" (Louisiana State Univ. Press, \$3.75), the work of William Bell Clark, a North Carolinian whose hobby is writing monographs on naval history. Mr. Clark has taken the part of Franklin's diplomatic work, a subject to which Miss Augur devotes many absorbing pages—the securing of American sailors captured on high seas from English prisons—and has written a rather interesting footnote to it.

Mr. Clark believes that Franklin's willingness to grant American commissions for privateering to three French-owned cutters manned by French smugglers demonstrates the diplomat's "humanitarianism." Franklin hoped that the *Black Prince*, the *Black Princess*, and the *Fearnot* would capture enough English seamen while circling around the British Isles to seem the Americans incarcerated in Mill and Forton prisons. That may well be, but it was also an example of the pragmatic Philadelphian's comprehension that all is fair in war as well as love. Actually the three vessels produced only a handful of exchangeable prisoners, but their piratical raids struck terror in the hearts of the British "Lords of the Ocean" for twelve months until Franklin ended them at British insistence, and that is a chapter of our maritime history that contemporary Americans read with fascination if not with a great deal of pride.

FICTION

Light for a Somber World



Mauriac—"master of ellipsis."

"The Lamb," by François Mauriac (translated by Gerard Hopkins. Farrar, Straus & Cudahy. 156 pp. \$3), explores, through a drama enacted in the French countryside, that most sublime of Christian concepts, martyrdom for the redemption of mankind.

By Laurent LeSage

FRANÇOIS MAURIAC, often described as the outstanding novelist of the Catholic Renaissance and who, among living French writers, is surely the greatest artist in fiction, undertakes in his new novel "The Lamb" to demonstrate the most sublime of Christian concepts—that of martyrdom for the redemption of mankind.

The solemn mystery is acted out against the vineyards and pine-forests of the Landes country, where old families moulder in ancestral dwellings. We have met this family before in Mauriac's pages. Here is Brigitte Pian, the "Woman of the Pharisees," now seventy-eight, a colossus of malevolence, who, with her young secretary Dominique, has come to stay with her stepdaughter Michèle. Here is Jean de Mirbell, now Michèle's husband, of whom Mauriac says, "All that seems strange, perhaps even monstrous, in this man of thirty, will seem less strange to those who remember the years of his youth." The childless couple have with them Rolland, a snout-nosed urchin taken on trial from a foundling home.

Into this musty household smelling of vermin and soul corruption walks Xavier Dartigelongue, turned, like a

somnambulist, from the seminary he was about to enter, to follow a vocation foreordained. Secretly he has always understood what will be his lot. "Millions of Christs with tender, brooding eyes" lead him along the path that Jesus himself first trod. He too will know doubt and grow fearful. Harassed by the diabolic mockery of Jean and the cynical common-sense arguments of the curé, Xavier's faith is sorely tried. "If only," he cries out, "I had saved one single person!" Might it be for nothing more than a myth that he will end upon a cross? He will know revilement—his family's scorn, lewd insinuations about his attachment for Jean and for Rolland, the old woman's suspicion. "Like a young pine tree in the night" he stands before Brigitte Pian while she accuses him of impure intention towards Dominique. Chaste though his love be, through it he will know temptation: "Here was salvation within reach of his hand . . . True, simple, life was there for him to take and hold, . . . the lot of wedded men and women." The night little Rolland is locked supperless in the library, Xavier follows the *via crucis* as, bent under a heavy ladder, he walks barefoot through the pine needles and leaves a blood-stained trail. In his final hour he will know despair. But there is a despair that leaves hope intact and Xavier probably did not kill himself. "He was pushed," pushed by everyone, the sinners who, by his blood sacrifice, now know peace.

"The Lamb" may represent the pinnacle of Mauriac's career. After more than forty years of painting in gloomy novels a corrupt and abject humanity, he finally undertook to portray a saint. Impatient readers, not satisfied with his other sacrificial victims, his sinners ultimately touched by grace, and his abortive holy men, have reproached Mauriac for omitting real saints and heroes from his Christian universe. They may now contemplate virtue incarnate. Xavier's compassionate love has flooded Mauriac's somber world with radiant light. As a narrative vehicle too, "The Lamb" may represent the summit of Mauriac's attainment. Increasingly a master of ellipsis and richly significant statement, he would seem to have reached in this novel, so powerfully and yet so elegantly articulated, a point of unsurpassable mastery.

The Silk's Dangers

"Brothers in Law," by Henry Cecil (Harper. 275 pp. \$3.50), depicts in lighthearted fashion the debut of young Roger Thursby at the British bar. Here it is reviewed by Eleazar Lipsky, member of the New York bar and author of a number of novels about crime.

By Eleazar Lipsky

WHETHER Roger Thursby, apple-cheeked barrister, wet behind the ears, pupil in chambers to formidable Mr. Kendall Grimes, Q.C., at No. 1 Temple Court, fumbling his way through the pages of Henry Cecil's new novel "Brothers in Law," is a creature of farce or comedy, is a matter of choice. In any case, he is a deliciously amusing young man straight out of Gilbert and Sullivan.

As served up by Mr. Cecil (pseudonym for the witty author of suspense novels "No Bail for the Judge" and "According to the Evidence"), he is a latter-day Strephon cum future Lord Chancellor. He has an appetite fresh and hearty and he is, as most young barristers are, an impecunious party. He is tempted by a wealthy solicitor's (not daughter but) niece and a guaranteed steady flow of briefs, ambition to rise in the profession, a dread of his own ignorance at twenty-one, and a triumphant sense of decency.

Young Thursby is taken by the author through his year of pupillage under Mr. Grimes from his Bar Final Examination to the day he opens his own chambers, and he is with the reader initiated into the pageantry of the English bar. It is all done in the

spirit of English satire, the best in the world, with much deflating of pretentious nonsense. If the story line runs thin and if the romantic interest gets sketchy, the cases and legal events remain good fun.

Our hero's most terrifying moment comes on his first day in court with nothing coming from his mouth but the words, "Your Honor!" Scarcely enlightening, but terse and enough for the bench to do justice untrammelled by dewy ignorance. This will amuse the multitude. Personally I found it too painfully reminiscent of a certain similar day long ago in New York County before a jury and the formidable Mr. Justice Peter J. Schmuck.

Why is Queen's Counsel called a "silk"? Is a busy junior well advised to take silk? What are the dangers? How is a flow of briefs from solicitor to barrister arranged? Who sets the fees? How is the honor of a red bag earned? Who pays the bill? How messed up can a divorce case get? In this novel, which has well been compared with Richard Gordon's skirmish with the medical profession, "Doctor in the House," these and other mysteries are dispelled.

We country cousins in America are perhaps too deeply impressed by the apparent polish and style of our English brethren, and nothing is so instructive as a close look. A year ago I had a chance to inspect the Inns of Court with Michael Gilbert, the well-known mystery novelist and barrister, and also the Old Bailey at which two trials were in progress. In one of these trials the scratching of wigs, snatching at straws, stammering of counsel, wasting of time and general air of befuddlement made me feel at home.

Verdict for the book, with costs.

Curse of the Clan

"The Hearth and the Strangeness," by N. Martin Kramer (Macmillan. 402 pp. \$4.50), traces the misfortunes of Sumner Rohne, his wife Lisette, and their offspring through four decades.

By Harrison Smith

THE FIRST sentence of N. Martin Kramer's novel "The Hearth and the Strangeness"—"He was a man uneasy on the earth"—is a terse statement of its complex and painful theme, an American family cursed with hereditary insanity. Mr. Kramer begins with the marriage in 1908 of Sumner Grange, who had a touch of crackpot genius for mechanics, with Lisette Rohne, a stern and God-fearing woman. As they rode together in the train toward their wedding night "his heart sank at the insolence of interrupting her chastity," while Lisette, who had expected to be an old maid the rest of her life, was certain that sexual relations must be disagreeable for any woman. Nevertheless, she knew that it was God's will. The story ends four hundred pages and forty years later after this mismatched couple have produced three children, a boy and two girls, all whom reach violent ends.

There can be little doubt that Mr. Kramer is talented and that he has used effectively nearly all of the weapons in the armament of our contemporary novelists, mismatched marriages, twisted minds, abortive sexual contacts, psychoanalysis, incest, and the stark fear of inherited madness. But he has chosen a strange and difficult way to tell his story. His characters move forward and backward in time, and the reader, almost inevitably, finds himself turning page backward and forward to find a missing link.

Not one of Mr. Kramer's elaborately designed characters is allowed more than a brief time of ecstasy, satisfaction, or mild pleasure. They live in a world full of menace, fear of insanity, fear of homosexuality, fear of loneliness. Oddly enough, the only character to emerge into some kind of balance is the dying old mother and the broken father.

Mr. Kramer spent years writing and rewriting this book. He says that he has two hobbies: inventing people and seeing if he can get them down on paper; and watching, unobtrusively in crowds, his piecemeal of composing "The Hearth and the Strangeness" may be the result of this fascinating habit.

Your Literary I. Q.

Conducted by John T. Winterich

FOR DOCTORS ONLY

Many physicians and related scientific authorities have achieved a sort of immortality by having their surnames affixed to a disease, a microbe, a part of the human body, or a process. Ten such couplings are listed below. Members of the medical profession are asked to give the first names of these ten and to list their nationalities. (Landlubbers embark on this craft at their own risk.) If, of the twenty pieces of information sought, no more than twelve are forthcoming, call a physician immediately; if from thirteen through sixteen, diplomas may be left framed (lopsided) on the wall; if seventeen or better, many happy tax returns. Prescriptions filled on page 47.

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| 1. Addison's disease | 6. Klebs-Loeffler bacillus |
| 2. Bright's disease | 7. McBurney's incision |
| 3. Antrum of Highmore | 8. Mendel's law |
| 4. Hodgkin's disease | 9. Parkinsonian mask |
| 5. Kenny treatment | 10. Roentgen rays |