

when telling of political opinion in England, which often seemed to see the Mau Mau as heroes ridding themselves of a savage tyranny. They constituted, in fact, a disgusting corner of the human zoo, and as such had to be dealt with by methods indefensible in a court of law, and scarcely excusable even against a background of violence, blood-lust, and treachery.

Mr. Baldwin is interesting when he describes the steady deterioration of black-and-white relationships in the Colony; he makes a fair case for the white settlers who have built the country by their own sweat and faith, and a fair case also against the half-baked political gangsters who nearly brought Kenya to ruin. He is less than fair to a distinguished governor, Sir Evelyn Baring, who, faced with a situation which was none of his making, had to satisfy an impossible variety of public opinion, and still strike a balance between the rule of law and the need for exemplary punishment.

But what sticks in the throat, when you read this book, is the author's pride in his own ruthlessness as a killer. The constant shooting of prisoners in cold blood grows sickening by repetition. God knows that you cannot fight terror and treachery with paper weapons; but equally you cannot degrade yourself to the same level, which only extends the area of hooliganism, and further shames the day. This book is valuable if only to show how such a monstrous infection can spread to both sides.

—NICHOLAS MONSARRAT.

**DULY NOTED:** "Road to Ophir," by Rex Tremlett (Roy Publishers, \$5) crams a lot of adventure into a short book. Starting at eighteen as manager of a tobacco plantation in Nyasaland, the author went on to farming in the Transvaal, gold mining in Rhodesia, and prospecting in Tanganyika and Uganda. Finally he discovered a buried road which, he thinks, led directly to that never located region of gold mentioned in the Bible. Other stirring incidents lose somewhat in the hurried telling.—BENNETT EPSTEIN.

#### LITERARY I.Q. ANSWERS

1. Man. 2. Men, Monuments. 3. Mice, Men. 4. Men, atch, y, ountains. 5. iracle, Mountains. 6. Master. 7. Médecin, Malgré. 8. Monkey. 9. Mind. 10. Marry, Money. 11. Mystery. 12. Murder. 13. Music. 14. Melody. 15. Moon. 16. Moonstone. 17. Mississippi. 18. Main. 19. Much, Me. 20. Mathematics, Million. Column Two should read: 19, 10, 11, 8, 16, 13, 6, 2, 1, 20, 5, 18, 9, 15, 7, 14, 12, 3, 4, 17.

#### HUMOR

## Marvel of Acuity

**"The World of John McNulty"** (Doubleday. 357 pp. \$4.50), is a collection of some of the best writing of the late, great John McNulty. Sam Boal, who reviews it, knew him well.

By Sam Boal

**M**CNULTY. I can't recall anyone except his wife who in talking about McNulty ever called him anything but McNulty. In talking to him you would say "John," but in referring to him in conversation it was always McNulty and I suspect this is a kind of tribute. One never describes a Percheron as a Percheron horse or a Picasso as a Pablo Picasso or a Soave as a wine. There was, as it happened, only one John McNulty and his name was McNulty.

In telling a story—orally, that is—McNulty used to scrape his feet anticipatorily, and those who knew him were aware that something which escaped us that day had not escaped him and that he was going to tell us about it. He would then tell his story and the stories were always brilliantly edited and brilliantly brief. I never heard McNulty tell a joke, a Bob Hope joke; I doubt if he knew one. He would tell you about something he saw a while back or maybe about something he saw just on his way to the bar or maybe he would acquaint you with some general conclusion ("All watch repairmen are named Schneider") he had come to through a lifetime of observation. Some people would say "oblique" or "off-beat" or "wry" observation but this is wrong, because McNulty was never oblique. His directness was so direct that by comparison to the windbagery of other people he just seemed oblique. His comments on people or horses or el tracks or how to slice a clove of garlic were almost miraculously acute.

And this is what this new book "The World of John McNulty" is about, and it is a book that it seems to me everybody, everybody, could read with pleasure and—to get materialistic—with profit. There is something in it for everybody, in the same sense that there is something in a big, good museum for everybody.

McNulty understood a lot of things and he understood them completely.



McNulty—"understood a lot of things."

He understood kids, for instance, and the formation of an English sentence and he understood TV actresses and he understood booze—the men who drank it and the men who sold it—and these understandings in the same person are a rare thing.

All of McNulty's magazine stories are here. There are the by now semi-classic Tim Costello-Third Avenue stories and there is the old lady who was left out of the census and the man who wanted to take a girl he had never met out for a Christmas dinner if only Aladdin would leap out of the bottle of Scotch on the bar and there is McNulty's visit to Ireland. But it is always people. McNulty goes to Dublin and Trinity College to see the Book of Kells, surely the most wondrous book in the world, but the reader will remember the museum guard stationed at the Book more than the Book itself because McNulty saw something that day which we didn't. We looked at the Book; McNulty looked a little farther, and saw the guard.

I think one of the reasons McNulty always looked a little farther was his old-fashioned newspaper training. In those days, some of us who were learning the newspaper business learned to tell what happened. McNulty could tell, superbly, what happened. He was a highly capable newspaperman, one of the best I ever saw. It is, I suppose, hard for youngsters these days to understand that there

was a time when newspaper writers were good writers. Nowadays, because of the economics involved, newspapermen are obliged to work on Madison Avenue or on magazines or for TV, areas which can afford to pay more for writing skill.

McNulty could write any kind of newspaper story. He could write the one about the judge in New Jersey who sentenced the naughty dog to three days in Coventry for snarling at the mailman or he could write about a complex stock transfer somewhere on Pine Street or write the one about the eccentric hermit found dead with \$16,879.23 in bank deposits on him or he could do the Françoise Sagan interview or he could—if he wanted—write the letter to the editor from the horse which won the Kentucky Derby. I recall one New Year's Day when all of us limped into the office of the *New York Mirror* and one of us had to do the New Year's Eve story and McNulty got it. It was as hard to be fresh on this story as it would be to be fresh on a story about the Parthenon, but McNulty, weighty with revelry, began his story: "A good chunk of New York woke up this morning with the best hangovers money could buy."

**T**O A writer, as this book proves, McNulty's writing is wizardry. McNulty wrote about people in very dangerous areas. He wrote about cab drivers and according to the cornball rules cab drivers are oozy sentimentalists full of grace wisdom when anyone over twelve knows that in general they are talky know-nothings; McNulty knew. Lower court magistrates are supposed to be everybody's kindly but stern uncle when in reality they are minor, and publicity-crazed, politicians. McNulty knew that the myth is that beneath all cops' uniforms thumps a heart of gold but McNulty also knew that cops steal bananas from bewildered people named Gonzales.

I think the impression is abroad that McNulty was a kind of gushing philosopher, who found good in everyone, but this is not true. McNulty, like anyone with any sense, was an amused cynic. When he has the cab driver in his story "Some Nights When Nothing Happens Are the Best Nights in This Place" say about a saloon: "Nobody goes there any more. It's too crowded," he is making fun of the cab driver, and of us and also of McNulty. This, it seems to me, is the mark of the grownup and I think that McNulty, as this book glowingly shows, was one of the most grownup grownups I ever knew—or read—and this is why "The World of John McNulty" is a book everyone can read with pleasure—and profit.

## Executive Reading

**"Parkinson's Law," by Professor G. Northcote Parkinson** (Houghton Mifflin. 112 pp. \$3), a product of the Stephenpotter school of social thinking, deals with man operating at the highest level—government and big business. H. Allen Smith, one of the leading American humorists, reviews it.

By H. Allen Smith

**T**HERE are 286 different types of humor and one of them is the English, sometimes known as the downroarious (or lowlarious). This type can be extremely baffling to an American, although there are occasions when it can please him more than his native product.

Professor Parkinson's book "Parkinson's Law" is downroarious, it is lowlarious, it is English . . . and it is just plain superb. I have no information about the author, save that he is "Raffles Professor of History at the University of Malaya." And I read his book in galley proof form, without benefit of the jacket blurb to give me the real inside story of what it was all about.

It stems from the school of Stephenpottermanship, both as to length and as to method. I am among the strongest advocates of Potter and it saddens me a little to have to admit that Professor Parkinson has out-played the Master. The reason may lie in the choice of subject matter.

Parkinson deals with man operating at his highest level—or what man *thinks* is his highest level—i.e., government and big business. His book consists of ten astringent essays, and you cannot read those essays and watch television at the same time. This is a book requiring attentiveness because it is written in the language of the social scientist or engineer, and scattered through its pages are tables and charts and mathematical formulae. If I may undertake a weird statement: it is pedantic without being pedantic.

The tone, in fact, might be quite misleading to a reader who wasn't devoting his whole attention to it. Held off at arm's length and regarded with a casual eye (as in a bookstore) the prose would appear to be stodgy and deadening. But fetched in closer and examined with more care, it turns out to have not only sparkle but warmth.

Parkinson's law (or the Rising Pyramid) is not dealt with until Chapter 4. Basically it says that work expands so as to fill the time available

## halfway up the sky

JANE MERCHANT

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## FACE TO FACE

By VED MEHTA

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