

thing between herself and Gaston.

The moral subtlety intended by Mr. Green escapes me. I find the book's greatest rewards in its manner of execution and in its background figures. The commonplaces of the Vasseur household are wrought with a Flaubertian touch. "The Transgressor" is a book of great polish whose whole seems to be mysteriously less than the sum of its parts. —EDMUND FULLER.

**IN DESTINY'S BONDS:** Given the postulate of François Mauriac's Jansenistic universe, liberty only in a very special sense could be possible, and no one should be surprised that Thérèse Desqueyroux and other famous heroes and heroines of his novels are damned souls even though they will no evil. But the case of Elisabeth Gornac in "Lines of Life" (translated by Gerard Hopkins; Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, \$3.50), is different. Her tragic and grotesque passion is neither of her doing nor of the devil's. She seems deliberately framed by the other characters and by the author himself.

To all appearances, there is nothing but maternal solicitude in her attitude towards young Bob Lagave, who has been sent to his grandmother's in the country to convalesce after a pleurisy attack. If she spoils him a bit, it is in all innocence. At most she is guilty of excessive indulgence when she agrees to let Paula de la Sesque stay at her house so that the two young people can have a day together. But when Elisabeth's priggish son Pierre arrives and, in his self-righteous indignation, blurts out to Paula just what sort of a Ganymede her darling Bob is to Paris society, the tragic course is begun. Elisabeth, taunted by those she befriended, will at last become what the author intended she should be—a stout middle-aged woman in love with a depraved young man.

It would have been easy for a writer who relates inner thoughts as well as behavior to suggest as much from the first, and thereby avoid the impression of *deus ex machina* manipulation. Why does Mauriac, on the contrary, present her as a sound and sensible woman? Does he mislead us expressly, do violence to the character to heighten the dramatic effect at the end? Or can others really know, better than Elisabeth, the true nature of feelings buried so deep that even her spontaneous reactions do not betray them? Can other lives, crossing our own, really alter the destiny for which our nature seemed first intended? We read: "The marks left by one individual on another are eternal, and not with impunity can some other's destiny cross our own."

Published in 1928 as "Destins," this brief novel has been overshadowed by the major works that preceded and followed it. It deserves a place of greater prominence. All Mauriac is here: the great word-painter and moralist who knows, better than any other French writer living today, how to convey a disturbing soul-drama by a few brief strokes. —L. LES.

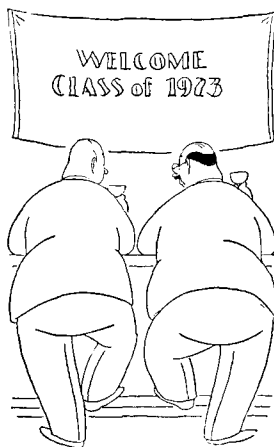
**QUEEN OF HEARTS:** In his new novel, "The Poisoned Crown" (translated by Humphrey Hare; Scribner's, \$3.50), Maurice Druon carries us one step further in his story of the disintegration of the medieval French monarchy. The reader watches the mighty edifice, built upon Carolingian ruins by Hugh Capet, and lifted to real greatness by the ruthless, able Philip the Fair, crumble into its own ruin, and thus prepare the way for the disasters of the Hundred Years War.

Like the first two volumes of his "The Accursed Kings" series, this is an outstanding work, but, also like them, it has more merit as history than as fiction. Lacking is the deep and subtle penetration into the human heart. But present is a keen sense of the importance of the small bricks that make up the topless towers of what happened. Maurice Druon shows that Charles IV, a man, if not a very complete one, wants his queen Clemence to love him and that this has more to do with the course of events than any theory of state.

Neither this novel nor its immediate predecessor, "The Strangled Queen," is quite as good as "The Iron King"; and, it seems also that sometimes the translation falters. But even with these reservations, Maurice Druon must be ranked among the better modern historical novelists.

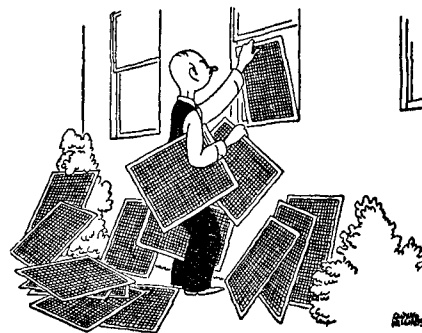
—THOMAS C. CHUBB.

## Mr. Williams's World



**FOR TWO SCORE YEARS** a gentle native of San Francisco and adopted son of Massachusetts has been using his sharp pen and black ink to depict the foibles of the human race (particularly the middle-class American species thereof) in a fashion that draws not blood but chuckles from its victims. Often these have been accomplished through panel cartoons in newspapers and in the old *Life* and the new *New Yorker*. Just as often it has been done between covers, to illustrate the work of such clever practitioners of humor as Corey Ford, Edward Streeter, Robert Benchley, et al. Now that Mr. Williams is sixty-

nine, the brothers Harper of New York have gathered more than a hundred of his sketches into a beguiling book called "The Glayas Williams Treasury" (\$4.95), supporting them with the text amid which they originally appeared. The following samples are fairly representative: The two members of the Class of 1923 were drawn to give point to Corey Ford's observations on the anguish of growing older. "People are changing too," writes Mr. Ford. "For one thing, they're younger than I used to be when I was their age. I went back recently to an alumni reunion. I was shocked to see the tots they're admitting as students these days. Several undergraduates called me 'Sir' and one of them asked if he could help me across the street." The sketch at the right illustrates Roy Kirchner's words: "Some day an architect is going to make a fortune by designing a house with at least two windows the same size."



## First Novelists to Watch

*Many confirmed readers of fiction find it a fascinating sport to spot the comers among writers making their debuts as novelists. The old-timer who can recall that he appreciated the talents of a Faulkner, a Hemingway, a Steinbeck, or even a lesser great in his first published effort can (and usually does) take everlasting pride in his critical acumen. Among the novelists who are making their American debut this week there are six—three Americans, two Britons, one New Zealander—who SR's reviewers tell us deserve watching.*



—A. Bardo. —Jack Richards.  
Frank Tuohy, Josephine Carson, and Ian Cross.

**LITTLE BOY LOST:** In *"The God Boy"* (Harcourt, Brace, \$3.50), a first novel by New Zealander Ian Cross, God is the ambivalent projection of Jimmy Sullivan's desperate need to belong. Told in the first person, the story deals with the familiar subject of a child who not only observes, but unwittingly helps precipitate a domestic tragedy that is beyond his comprehension. What Mr. Cross has added to this theme is a sense of the boy's struggle to understand what is happening.

When Jimmy couldn't understand why his mother and father didn't get along better, he supposed that God meant it that way. Jimmy's old man was an unsuccessful clerk with a crippled arm, a mean temper, and a craving for drink; his mother was at her wit's end most of the time. His sister Molly had been sent away to convent school and so Jimmy was left alone with a doomed marriage—and God. "Now being a God boy, that means you are a boy that God has his eye on, that's all. Like the captain of a football team who sees somebody that might fit into the team pretty well."

Jimmy Sullivan is a sympathetic character, drawn subjectively rather than clinically. The book has the virtues of clean writing and soundly motivated incidents, although the boy's acquiescence in the eventual tragedy

will puzzle many readers, just as Jimmy's mild variant of anti-social behavior will strike Americans—attuned to such shockers as *"The Bad Seed"*—as somewhat too muted to be completely effective. —DAVID DEMPSEY.

**POOL OF LIFE:** Six gifted, sensitive, unformed young people at Cambridge University are the leading characters of June Hooper's first novel *"The Apprentices"* (Beacon, \$2.50). They are glad of the chance to look before they are forced to choose stances and philosophies they may have to maintain throughout their lives. Mark, the only American, wants definite answers; so does intense and English Isabel. Marion, passively intelligent, is content only to see as is her fiancé, Stephen, though his seeing is less passive and ultimately he changes as she does not. Hyacinth abashedly accepts the actual world of gush and garble; Eloise, until she is startled into awareness, thinks she knows both what is and what one should do about it. The novel's controlling image is that life is a pool one may look into or plunge into, into which the very few may alternately plunge and emerge to look. Miss Hooper presents with subtle ambiguity youth's search for the good, the true, and the beautiful.

Like Henry James, Miss Hooper avoids the too specific in order to emphasize fundamentals. Sometimes

this leads her into vacuously vague writing that merely perplexes and annoys. *"The Apprentices"* is not totally satisfying, yet, in its enticing way, it compels the readers to wonder about the excellent novel Miss Hooper will write when she masters her master and becomes congruously specific and universal.

—HARVEY CURTIS WEBSTER.

**SUBURBAN LIVING:** In *"No Down Payment"* (Simon & Schuster, \$3.95), John McPartland focuses sharply and a bit grimly on four families occupying adjoining villas in a vast postwar suburb. Sunrise Hills, a sprawling compound of five thousand mortgage-laden havens happens to be in the vicinity of San Francisco, but the easy credit syndrome that it represents can be found in some degree throughout boomtime America. The Flaggs, the Martins, and the Kreitzers are "new model, moving-upward kind of people," surrounded by gadgets, nourished on prefabricated vicinals, divorced from their old gods, living the good life on the instalment plan. Their neighbors, the Noons, have somehow eluded this retooling process; the master of the house is a hairy-chested atavist who makes big trouble for his streamlined neighbors.

Mr. McPartland's feelings about the glut of material prosperity are mixed. On the one hand he smells in it the aroma of decadence, "a rottenness, a decay, and over the night-bright cities . . . the shadow of the manmade destruction of the world." But on the other hand he has a sneaking awe for the fiscal legerdemain which enables the American peasant to drive around in a \$4,000 car. Unfortunately, *"No Down Payment"* is more interesting as sociological comment than as a work of fiction. Mr. McPartland's observations on rootlessness, automation, and the fate of mankind are earnest and provocative. (Too earnest, perhaps, for he relies on indignation where irony would be more effective.) But he is inclined to be didactic rather than dramatic, and leads the action of the novel into a detour of cheap and senseless melodrama.

—MARTIN LEVIN.

**THE PANGS OF BEING TWELVE:** If Josephine Carson had had more demanding subject matter than she has found for her first novel *"Drives My Green Age"* (Harper, \$3.50), she might well have written an outstanding novel. Her handling of the atmospherics of a Midwest small town, the sharpness of her descriptive detail, the nice economy with which she sketches her subsidiary characters—all this indicates an excellent talent;