

ception, "The Schoolmaster for God." It has been arranged, as Father Connolly says, with an effort to respect Thompson's preference for "a chronological arrangement or some form of classification," and no one living would understand that better. Thus we are presented with a poetic sequence of four poems written to a girl the poet did not marry, a group of eighteen love verses, nine sonnets, a miscellany of twenty-eight poems, four light verses, ten pieces on the poet and poetry, and two short plays. A useful and often revealing set of notes describes each manuscript. That the editor says of many, "rough draft, pencil, unsigned," is an indication of the completeness of his sources. He provides us with names of people, likenesses to Thompson's published poems, and enriching cross references to Coventry Patmore and the Meynells, all the more meaningful because of the rich collections of those poets also at Boston College.

Most of the poems will mean more to the devoted than to the new reader, and be the more precious as final additions, but the "Go, book, thou shalt be happier" speaks with its own voice, a living cry, and the group of poems to Patmore are moving. One of these is an inscription with his own "New Poems" and is like the others written after Patmore's death, his deep gratitude, admiration, and loss still sounding on these late pages. Francis Thompson had a sense of humor, too, we learn with some pleasure from his light verse. Careful students of Thompson, and of poets at work, will value the selections in which he writes about writing.

FRASER YOUNG'S

LITERARY CRYPT NO. 785

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 785 will be found in the next issue.

WR WJ GHRRHE RX OWFH

RSCT RX IHTB, CTB WR

MXJRJ CGXVR RSH JCQH.

YSWIWY OWGGJ.

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 784

Good painting is like good cooking: it can be tasted, but not explained.

—MAURICE VLAMINCK.

Truth in Meter

"The Sinai Sort," by Norman MacCaig (Macmillan. 62 pp. \$2.25), is a collection of verse by a Scottish poet whose use of formal stanzas and rhyme mark him as "traditional." SR's reviewer is Winfield T. Scott, author of *"Mr. Whittier and Other Poems."*

By Winfield T. Scott

FOR an intellectualized poetry which, since it is poetry, contains a tremendous emotional vigor there is an excellent current example in Norman MacCaig's "The Sinai Sort." MacCaig is a Scottish poet hitherto introduced in our country with a collection called "Riding Lights."

He is "traditional" in that he employs rhyme and formal stanza. He is an unmistakable poet in that he curves—or bends—these to the imprint of an individual talent. Momentarily, here and there, his reader may think: That's a phrase as knotty as Donne, as rapid-fire as Byron, as emphatic as Browning, as headlong as Roy Campbell—yet MacCaig is not really like any of these poets. He uses his traditions with such personality that they echo only with himself. And it can be said that the collection as a whole does not altogether escape a sameness of tone which may vitiate some of the poems; there is more flow-together than variety.

This, though, is not to defend a reader dazed at one sitting. MacCaig's poems demand and deserve repeated attention. It has been said of them that "there is a kind of crystalline clarity." That is not so. He now and then writes, to be sure, the brief descriptive lyric. One of them, "November Night, Edinburgh," begins:

The night tinkles like ice in
glasses.
Leaves are glued to the pavement
with frost.
The brown air fumes at the shop
windows,
Tries the doors, and sidles
past. . . .

And he can do that sort of thing, combining accuracies of sensation or observation with an imaginative heightening. However, he is much more characteristic when he starts off:

Roses and thorns, the threadbare
image is.
But it's the rose that hurts, the
thorn that pleases.
The treacherous rose—I've no
belief in such

Loose wooing of the sun with an
opening kiss.
Only the rankling thorn can
show as much
Regard for truth as secrecy
releases. . . .

That is not "crystalline clarity" but, for poetry, a much better thing. The words march clearly along, as they do almost everywhere in MacCaig's verse: there is no stunting about in air. But they are so compacted (though I have chosen a mild exhibit) with a new thing being said in, after all, a new way that they do far more than call the reader: they recall him, and perhaps many times. And since, as the reader goes again and again back to MacCaig's poems he finds deeper yieldings of meaning, more wisdom, and more beauty—however first he may have felt it—than he originally understood, he may know then that this is the real thing. I at least know of no other, ultimate proof of poetry.

His is not, otherwise, a book easy to summarize. It is all very well to say that MacCaig writes often of love, sometimes of landscape, here and there of Moses and Eden and monkeys. He does. But in all cases these "subjects" have been refined to Idea and then bodied forth in a quiet-toned, intense verse, whole games of truth in terms of ambiguity, paradox, and metaphysics.

Central Violence

"Selected Poems," by Kenneth Patchen (New Directions. 145 pp. \$2), offers a medley from ten books by the recipient of the 1954 Shelley Memorial Award. Richard Eberhart, our critic, is the author, among other works, of "Underhill."

By Richard Eberhart

KENNETH PATCHEN's "Selected Poems," a new, enlarged edition, is a rich book full of fire. Its contents were selected by the publisher, not the author, from ten books of Patchen's poetry published between 1936 and 1957. To read it is to experience an impact of primary emotions and to know the large scope of Kenneth Patchen's loves and hates. It is also to swim in a strong current of American poetic sensibility.

It used to be that the main argument about Patchen concerned style. His style was untidy, sprawling, amorphous, repetitive, and unrestrained. I confess that I was searching for a formidable style which would contain all of a felt vision of life. I wanted

perfection of form in which was embedded a total vision. I did not find this in Patchen.

In those earlier years, while recognizing the freshness and impact of Patchen, I felt he was out in left field, or was playing some other kind of game. I could not stomach his sprawling lack of style, his inchoate properties, the ragged nature of his lines. I was less concerned with what he had to say than with how he said it.

Now I read him for his content, his meaning, and am able to absorb the amorphousness of style into the meaning; indeed, to see that his style is essential to what he has to say. He says that love is good, that life is inexplicable, that pathos hangs upon action, that it is man's purity to go against evil, to love the good, to be free.

This richness of selfhood is the residue after scores of poems written in violent confrontation of tragedy, loss, and destitution. He has extracted more beauty from cynicism than any poet alive. This is his triumph, not to be undone by stark realizations but to erect them, by integrity, into emanations of his spirit which can be read with pleasure. Patchen turns painful realizations into pleasurable poems. He does not run away from the darkness, the evil, the terror of man. But he is able to sing them into sense.

Here are two poems which show what he is like. The first is "For Losing Her Love All Would I Profane":

For losing her love all would I
profane
As a man who washes his heart
in filth.
She wakes so whitely at my side,
Her two breasts like bowls of
snow
Upon which I put my hands like
players
In a child's story of heaven.

For gaining her love all would
I protest
As a man who threatens God
with murder.
Her lips part sleep's jeweled rain
Like little red boats on a Sunday
lake.
I know nothing about men who
die

(Continued on page 32)

LITERARY I.Q. ANSWERS

1. Older Duke in "As You Like It."
2. Alcibiades in "Timon of Athens."
3. Duke of Suffolk in "Second Part of Henry VI."
4. "Coriolanus."
5. Cordelia in "King Lear."
6. Thomas Mowbray (Duke of Norfolk) in "Richard II."
7. Queen Margaret in "Richard III."
8. Lucius in "Titus Andronicus."
9. Valentine in "Two Gentlemen of Verona."
10. Posthumus Leonatus in "Cymbeline."

an unhurried view of EROTICA

book written by Ralph Ginzburg
introduction by Dr. Theodor Reik
preface by George Jean Nathan

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Dr. Theodor Reik, one of the world's renowned psychoanalysts, says of AN UNHURRIED VIEW OF EROTICA: "The material here presented will be of great interest to the psychologist and the psychiatrist, to the sociologist and historian of civilization, and last, but not least, to the connoisseur of literature. Also, the bibliophile will find many data unknown to all, about publications and collections of erotica. We welcome this courageous book that presents a valuable piece of conscientious research." George Jean Nathan, the eminent critic, wrote the Preface to this book just before his recent death.

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