

one of the few educated Masai, and he serves as interpreter at the trial of a fellow Masai for the murder of a white man who had taken a white cow. According to tribal belief, the cow was really the Masai's sister, and so he killed the man who had tried to take her away. But the "Europeans" could not understand this; to them it was simply wilful murder.

This business of the whites just not understanding what is so very clear to the Masai, plus the advice of the barrister who had been especially flown out from England to defend the murderer, sets Nterenke off on a short flashback in body and mind. This gives Mr. Llewellyn his opportunity to instruct us in the intricacies of Masai tribal culture, and a pretty fine job he does of it.

The author has obviously gone to great pains to capture both the facts and the flavor of the daily life of the Masai; he pays great attention to detail, and catches even the flow of their speech.

Like so many white settlers, though with greater subtlety than most, Mr. Llewellyn makes it clear that he has very little time for the Kikuyu; and somehow in the process of narration his hero, Nterenke, who is to be the Masai's prime minister when they make a bid for independence, assumes some of the whites' dislike and distrust and fear of the Kikuyu. The hint is there, shadowlike, that the Masai might have to fight the Kikuyu for their independence; and the author and all the whites will be on the side of the Noble Savages against the "tricky Kukes" who were responsible for the Mau Mau horrors. On the rare occasions when a Kikuyu or other non-Masai African appears in the story, it is in a light not half so glowing.

There are moments when the reader may find himself emotionally involved in the tale. One such moment occurs when Nterenke explains to the lawyer that the murderer was really protecting his sister, the white cow, from the white man he killed. There is another when the hero meets two very Westernized young Masai women who shed their Westernism like discarded dresses and become his tribal wives. But in the main this book is a solid dose of sociology, skilfully constructed in the shape of fiction but without its self-sustaining life.

DECLINE AND FALL: Winston Dangerfield, "great American author"; his mistress Lucha and his son David; critics, doctors, friends, and foes; a party; a sumptuous home, a swimming pool; a novel entitled "The Prelate,"
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PERSONAL HISTORY

Velvet Suits and Pistol Practice

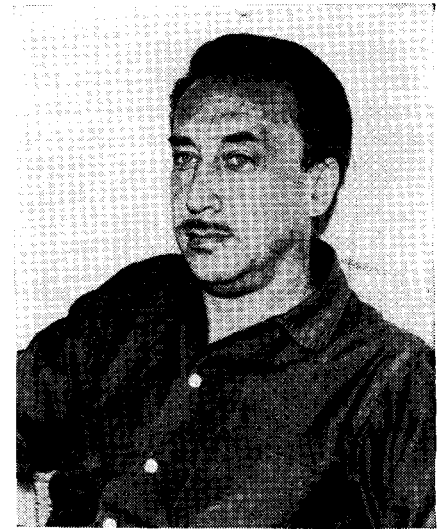
"Promise at Dawn," by Romain Gary, translated by John Markham Beach (Harper. 337 pp. \$5), pays tribute to the novelist-diplomat's extraordinary mother, who shaped his career without breaking his spirit. Thomas E. Cooney teaches English at Columbia University.

By Thomas E. Cooney

SUPPOSE a man were to tell a psychoanalyst this story: "I never knew my father. I was brought up entirely by my mother, who was a *couturière*, and I spent much of my boyhood in her shop, petted by her women customers and admired by her seamstresses. She dressed me in velvet suits and taught me to be her cavalier. So fiercely possessive was her love that even now, twenty years after she died, I tread the road she pointed out to me." One can easily imagine the analyst leaning back, making a five-pointed arch with his fingers, and saying, "Mm? So? There seems to be material for analysis here, does there not?"

The trouble with this picture is that the confrontation will never take place. Romain Gary, diplomat and author of "The Roots of Heaven," "A European Education," and other novels, whose considerably more complex life includes the above facts, has no intention of going to an analyst. In fact, he eloquently denounces "those wriggling little suckers of the human soul," and in the rest of his book shows that the gloomy poetry of psychoanalysis has nothing to say to him. Translated with lightness and grace by John Markham Beach, his narrative tells of his own fulfillment of the carefully and passionately pursued destiny his mother had mapped out for him, and does it with all the honesty of Rousseau, and with humor and whimsical self-mockery as well.

It took eight years for Mme. Kacew, sometime actress in Moscow, to migrate with her fatherless boy away from the Russian Revolution, through Vilna and Warsaw, and eventually to France. Having settled in Nice, she was determined to turn "Romouchka" into not just a Frenchman, but an ambassador of France and a modern Balzac (having due regard for that man's genius



Romain Gary—"the honesty of Rousseau."

both as a writer and a lover). And in this she proved herself to be a superb plastic artist, molding the mind and spirit of a human being into a rare and not inconsiderable work of art: a man. Velvet suits and mother-love notwithstanding, Mme. Kacew felt that a man should be able to ride, to shoot, to dance, to charm, and above all to fight for the honor of a lady or a nation. Systematically, therefore, she hired "professors" like Lieutenant Sverdlovski in Vilna to teach her son riding, fencing, and pistol-shooting, and made him defend her own honor by publicly berating and slapping the "bourgeois bedbugs" in Vilna and Nice who had insulted her. That Mme. Kacew undoubtedly provoked these insults by her own arrogance made the boy's training all the more severe; the principle of loyalty was at stake, not abstract justice.

As Romain grew up and went to war, the pattern of his mother's devotion expanded to guide him. Eventually he became a navigator and an officer in the Free French Air Force, to whose ranks he was drawn by de Gaulle's famous appeal from England in 1940, for which his mother had been preparing him all his life. Unfortunately, her last magnificent gesture cannot even be hinted at here without destroying the book's noble climax. Mme. Kacew was more than a remarkable woman. As Romain was no Oedipus, so she was no Jocasta. She was a force of nature.

A Lineage of Letters

"The Garnett Family: The History of a Literary Family," by Carolyn G. Heilbrun (Macmillan, 201 pp. \$5), chronicles four generations of bibliophiles and their wide-ranging contributions to the world of English letters. Aileen Pippett, biographer of Virginia Woolf, is a close observer of British writing.

By Aileen Pippett

ONE HAS to laugh. The first Garnett came to England with the Conqueror. David Garnett says so, no doubt with a grin. But the laughter comes not from an absurd claim to a meaningless distinction, but from sheer joy that after centuries of solid citizens with a flair for business and a love of learning, the persistence of the Garnetts in doing and saying what they pleased brought them at last out of commerce into culture.

The first purely literary Garnett was Richard, who became a clergyman, wrote on theology, linguistics, and natural history, and in 1838 was appointed Assistant Keeper of the Department of Printed Books in the British Museum. His son, another Richard, started as a "placer" of books there when he was sixteen and the Library had only a rudimentary system of filing its already vast collection. He rose to be Superintendent of the Reading Room and then Keeper of the Library, and edited its first printed list, which took twenty-five years to compile. He was the best known and most widely loved man of his or any other generation to all frequenters of the Museum. An omnivorous reader with a prodigious memory, he could find any book and any reference on any subject, and did so gladly and endearingly, for his devotion was boundless. Karl Marx gave him an inscribed photograph; Samuel Butler, that malicious tease, said that to see him reaching up to a high shelf for a book recalled Milton's "Linked sweetness long drawn out." This patron saint of scholars was also a prolific writer, mainly on literary topics. His book of stories, "Twilight of the Gods," a minor classic of gentle irony, is still a delight.

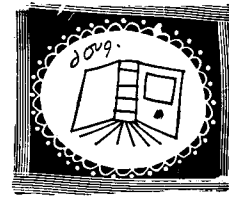
The career of his son, Edward, shows

some remarkable parallels. The youth was drifting aimlessly until he met and instantly loved Constance, who induced him to take a job of some sort. It was a menial position, like his father's early "placing." As a wrapper of parcels for a publisher he was hopeless, but in work for publishers he found his vocation. Richard was the ideal librarian; Edward was the ideal reader of manuscripts, the devoted friend and inspiring critic of innumerable young authors, from Conrad, W. H. Hudson, Galsworthy, Robert Frost, Edward Thomas, both D. H. and T. E. Lawrence, to the still active H. E. Bates. The list is as long as that of his father's friends. Many hitherto unpublished letters, from or to him, show his acumen and generosity as well as the affectionate gratitude he earned.

His gifts as a writer did not match his skill as a critic, and he was often a poor judge of what would sell, as in the case of his son David's immediately popular "Lady into Fox" and his wife's translations of Dostoevsky. The chapter about Constance contains material enough for a full-length biography of this brilliant, courageous, semi-invalid, indefatigable woman. The evidence for and against her translations from the great nineteenth-century Russians is fairly presented, including new testimony from Russia in her favor. Having no knowledge of the language myself, I can only admire her pioneering work and marvel

at the way she revealed to English readers ways of life, thought, and feeling so totally foreign to her experience and so important to our understanding of human nature.

David Garnett, whose fine Italian hand is discernible in many a sly comment or frank admission, is relegated to a factual epilogue, on the plausible ground that he has written two autobiographical volumes and will soon publish a third. This is good news, for he is the fairest flower yet to blossom on the strange genealogical tree the first Norman knight with a more or less Garnett name planted in the feudal forest of Saxon England.



Miss Heilbrun's skill, industry, and discernment make her book both enjoyable and useful. She has a demure wit and a nice turn of phrase. She gives concise information about her sources, so that one knows at once what is new or where to look for more on the same point. There is an index and appended lists of works of the four great Garnetts. Well-chosen photographs show a family likeness of penetrating eyes and quizzical mouth. A happy juxtaposition shows the Reading Room of the British Museum (whose dome Virginia Woolf saw covering the intellect of mankind) and the cottage deep in the Kentish woods which was the workshop of Edward and Constance and the early home of "Bunny" (David). The whole book is a treasure trove.

So Get Along Home, Cindy

By George Starbuck

BUT what's that under the catalpa blossom
that just went pop and rolled over with a sigh?
Lift up your crinoline, Cindy, hurry on by;
only a possum could play such stinking possum.

God's in his heaven up in the heavy gossamer.
Nothing but blessings tumble out of the sky.
Nothing but wonder well from the sullen bessemer.
Never you scrunch your shoulders, never you cry.

Bad man stammer and fumble when you address him.
Your little foot go swathed in a gauze of Yes'm.
Wolf back away a safe infinitessim,
lolling the laggard lip, the yellow eye.