

## Streets Broad and Narrow

**"Brendan Behan's Island: An Irish Sketch-book," by Brendan Behan** (Bernard Geis Associates. 192 pp. \$5.95), contains a variety of reminiscent material about the author's native land. Michael Campbell wrote of Irishmen in England in his novel, *"Oh, Mary, This London."*

By MICHAEL CAMPBELL

IF THIS book were by a writer of no repute, one would describe it briefly as a patchwork of funny stories, patriotic ballads, potted history, and guidebook information, very little of it being either new to students of Ireland or presented with literary art, and the whole of it being decked out with an enormous quantity of sketch-book drawings by Paul Hogarth. There are almost eighty, and no fewer than sixty of them take up a full page and are exhibited on special yellow paper. They do evoke Ireland, but any drawings of toothless faces in Irish pubs and of Irish shopfronts with "O'Brien" and "McGrath" on them will do this; and I can see no especial originality in these rather spidery sketches.

But, since this book is by Brendan Behan, a writer of international repute, it seems to demand a more thorough review, in spite of its modest subtitle.

It largely consists of Four Parts, concerning Dublin, the South, the West, and the North.

The funny stories are good ones, provided you are open to the charm of Irish hypocrisy, intoxication, and ignorance. I am, but only just.

The patriotic ballads are usually printed in full, and you have to be very much of a mind that is charmed by "O Ireland, mother Ireland, you love them still the best."

The history mainly concerns the Troubles, the murder of Michael Collins, the signing of the Treaty—surely terribly familiar stuff. ("It all resulted in the division of Ireland in 1920, under the leadership of a Dublin Unionist named Carson and a Northerner named Craig, later Lord Craigavon".)

The guidebook information one can hardly believe comes from the pen of Mr. Behan at all. This, for instance:



Brendan Behan—"a writer, not a talker."

Most of the Guinneses live around Castleknock which is just on the far side of the Phoenix Park. This is one of the largest national parks in Europe. If you could imagine all the parks in Central London—from Kensington Gardens up to Hampstead Heath—put together, you'd have some idea of its size. It is less than two miles from the centre of the city and is very popular both in winter and summer.

Interspersed among these Four Parts, which are really talking parts, are interval entertainments. These are taken chiefly from Mr. Behan's past writings, and they are superior, because Mr. Behan is a writer, not a talker. In speech, he is the man for the sharp rejoinder or the quick comment. He does recount some of his rejoinders, but he is modest and cannot go on telling you repeatedly how he did somebody else in the eye. As for the quick comment, it is exemplified by the typical and perfect caption to Mr. Hogarth's portrait of Mr. Behan as a Sad Thinker, which serves as frontispiece: "Brendan Behan after the lobster."

To return to the intervals: they consist of two short stories, which are childhood memories; an early play, "The Big House," which is not his best; two poems, and an Epilogue on the reactionary nature of the Church in Ireland.

The second story, "The Confirmation Suit," is a little work of art. It is presented as a true story, but Mr. Behan

is obviously writing here instead of talking. The suit is a terrible one made for Brendan by Miss McCann, the shroud-maker, with almost no lapels and buttons "the size of saucers," and the climax is a tell-tale move by Brendan's mother who reports to Miss McCann that Brendan is only pretending to wear this suit on weekends. She weeps. Later she dies, and young Brendan follows her coffin in the pouring rain, in the suit. "People said I would get my end, but I went on till we reached the graveside, and I stood in my Confirmation suit drenched to the skin. I thought this was the least I could do."

A final confession: many paragraphs in this book are devoted to attacking the "Anglo-Irish Horse-Protestants." I am one of these, if you take away the horse, and am therefore open to the accusation of exhibiting the prejudice and spite which have always been a feature of Irish literary life. But it does seem to me that "The Confirmation Suit" is art, and that the ballads, the Treaties, and the dimensions of the Phoenix Park and its all-the-year-round popularity are a waste of Mr. Behan's time and uncommon talent. And I don't care whether he calls it a "Sketch-book" or not. He also calls it *his* island—which is a bit hard on the horses.

### FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT NO. 1005

*A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 1005 will be found in the next issue.*

WO GCR'PQ LXHLGT XCF-

AWFA OCP VZQ ACCM

CXM MLGT, KRTV VPG

PQLMWFA VZQTQ WVQNT

DG LF CWX XLNY.

HWTSCFTWF FQHT.

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 1004

*Moderation is a fatal thing; nothing succeeds like excess.*

—OSCAR WILDE.

## Lady with a Hatchet

**"Cyclone Carry: The Story of Carry Nation," by Carleton Beals** (Chilton. 364 pp. \$6), probes the background and psychology of the hatchet-wielding enemy of saloons. Alma Lutz has written biographies of several famous American women, the latest being "Susan B. Anthony, Rebel, Crusader, Humanitarian."

By ALMA LUTZ

CARLETON BEALS has brought Carry Nation to life for us, and we follow her violent protest against the saloon with interest and often with astonishment. Although he has little sympathy with the hatchet crusade that prepared the way for the Prohibition Amendment, creating greater evils than those it was designed to cure, he respects Carry Nation, her good works, her kindness to the poor and unfortunate, her persistence in what she believed to be right, and her indomitable courage. Having spent his boyhood in Medicine Lodge, Kansas, where she started her crusade, he writes with first-hand knowledge of her times and environment. Only one other biography of Carry Nation has been published, that by Herbert Asbury in 1929, besides her own autobiography, "Use and Need of the Life of Carry Nation," which appeared in 1907.

Carry Nation was born on a plantation in Kentucky in 1846. Her mother, mentally unstable, imagined she was Queen Victoria, and took little interest in her daughter, insisting that she live with the slaves in their cabins. Carry loved her Negro playmates and their kind, affectionate mothers, and joined in their emotional religious devotions. But soon the family began moving from place to place, and Carry's schooling and friendships were disrupted and her health was poor. When she was ten she underwent a spectacular conversion at a revival meeting. At that time she was living in Missouri, near the Kansas border and John Brown's raids. John Brown fired her imagination, and later she often called herself the John Brown of Prohibition.

When the Civil War ended, her family was living in Belton, Missouri. Here she fell ardently in love with Dr. Charles Gloyd, who soon proved to be an alcoholic. Just before her child was born she was persuaded by her parents to leave him, and six months later he died. Carry never forgave herself. To make amends, she lived with his mother, supporting her and her own daughter by teaching school. Some years

later she married David Nation, nineteen years her senior, a widower with a four-year-old daughter, an ordained minister, a lawyer, and at that time an editor. During most of their married life the support of the family fell upon Carry while her husband moved from job to job, finally settling in Medicine Lodge in 1889. By this time Carry, after a period of religious doubt, had a second conversion that convinced her God had chosen her for his work and that everything she did had his direction and sanction.

Her first task was the eradication of illegal saloons in Medicine Lodge. Kansas had been a Prohibition State since 1880, but the law was not enforced and saloons flourished. Starting out mildly, Carry prayed in front of them. Other women joined her, and eventually they drove saloons out of the town. In 1892 she formed a chapter of the W.C.T.U., but the W.C.T.U. as an organization never endorsed her militant campaigns.

Moving on to Kiowa, Kansas, she smashed saloons with rocks, iron rods, and anything else at hand. Again a few other women joined her. In Wichita, Topeka, and other Kansas towns she continued her smashing and was arrested, but she was not convicted because officials were unwilling to acknowledge that they allowed illegal saloons to operate. In Topeka she formed the Hatchet Brigade, and was never again without her hatchet. The selling of souvenir hatchets financed the rent of halls and paid her fines.

Soon she was in demand from New York to California for lectures and appearances in theatres and amusement parks. She was called to Canada, toured England and Scotland in 1908, then retired to a farm in the Ozarks, where she died in 1911.

Her militant tactics focused attention on the evil influence of the saloon and the crime and corruption bred there. But, although confronted again and again with the non-enforcement of prohibition laws, she failed to realize that education rather than law would advance the cause of temperance.



### POLITICAL PLOT OR SAD NECESSITY?

"Why have you done this to me, Robert?" wailed Mary Lincoln as her oldest son put her on trial for insanity. Since the taciturn Robert Todd Lincoln never publicly disclosed his motives but instead did his best to suppress the official record of his mother's appearance before the Chicago court in 1875, there

has been a good deal of speculation about the proceedings that committed Abraham Lincoln's widow to a mental institution. In 1959, for example, a fictional account told of a plot to railroad Mrs. Lincoln to the asylum in order to forward her son's political aspirations.

In fact, of course, there need never have been any great mystery about the affair. Chicago newspapers carried accounts of the trial which were so detailed that Dr. William A. Evans in 1932 was able to construct from them a careful medical analysis of Mrs. Lincoln's case. The most recent researcher in this field, Homer Croy, has been able to add but little to our factual knowledge of the sanity hearings. But if "The Trial of Mrs. Abraham Lincoln" (Duell, Sloan & Pearce, \$3.95) contains no sensational surprises, it is a balanced and sympathetic account of the reasons why Robert felt reluctantly obliged to have his mother committed. Seriously troubled by Mary's obsessive fears and by her financial irresponsibility, Robert sought the advice of friends and physicians, many of whom had known his father. That he accepted their counsel to have Mary put under guardianship shows that he was not a perceptive man, nor a generous one; but, as Mr. Croy concludes, "Robert had acted for the best, as he saw it."


Though Mr. Croy's book is intelligent and generally accurate, its usefulness is considerably marred by his decision to fill in the inevitable lacunae in the story of Mary Lincoln's trial by inventing "dialogue for which there is no historical support." A great deal of his book is, therefore, fictional, and one's faith in its authenticity is not increased by his having Mrs. Lincoln on the witness stand come to a realization that "deep down in [her] subconscious" she "had a feeling of insecurity." For a historically reliable and equally perceptive account of this tragic affair, readers will continue to prefer Ruth Painter Randall's definitive "Mary Lincoln: Biography of a Marriage."

—DAVID DONALD.

Vatsyayana's

# Kama Sutra

The first English translation of the classic Hindu treatise on love and social conduct.



Translated by  
Sir Richard Burton  
3rd large printing  
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