

authors' rights and for an international copyright agreement. And there is the Charles who fought for the poor and for all children and who, while cutting upper-class complacency into shreds as he worked for child education and labor laws and better housing, was also a snob of snobs.

It is not easy to find the essential Charles. He was sweetly warm, generous, brilliant, shrewdly practical, and down to earth; he had a fine flair for publicity for himself and often for others; he was half child and all genius, capable of enchanting talk and crude encounters; he was naive and rude and gauche, and yet he won the friendship of kings and queens and great writers and artists and actors who felt Charles was beyond categories.

Of course, Victoria Lincoln, with her superb knowledge of women, could not resist a few bedroom scenes; and I must say they are funny. The Dickens' Victorian honeymoon, written about with good taste and twinkles, is memorable.

Lacking the power of self-criticism, shying away from analysis of his words and acts, Dickens nevertheless knew everything about himself; and out of the conflicting fragments of his own personality he created a thousand creatures. Perhaps the time has come for us to rediscover Dickens. Most of us read him when we were twelve or fourteen years old. We missed his brilliant humor (while enjoying his plots and ebullience) and felt only dimly his amazing knowledge of people. His demiurgic power to create living characters we, in our innocence, took for granted. His faith in the human race's ability to do whatever needed to be done seemed a natural thing in those distant days.

I recommend this book for a most pleasant way to meet a great author who still has much to say to our nail-chewing age.



Victoria Lincoln—"a special interest."

Music from Within

"Jeeney Ray," by Iris Dornfeld (Viking. 188 pp. \$3.50), a first novel, is the story of a handicapped girl and her terrifying encounters with a world that mistakes her for a mental defective. Aileen Pippett's appraisals of current fiction appear frequently in *Saturday Review*.

By AILEEN PIPPETT

EVERY memorable novel has its distinctive tone. This one sings. Yet the characters are mostly brutal, ignorant, or depraved, their language is coarse and their actions are in keeping. Nature pleaseth, in Northern California, but man is frequently vile. Against a murky background Jeeney Ray herself shines like a star.

The story opens with Jeeney as a child in a lonely farmhouse at the deathbed of her grandmother, the one person who insists she is not a half-wit. To everyone else she is a slobbering idiot, unable to walk, talk, or eat properly, given to mad rages, a creature who would better not have been born. Her brother, Zeke, shares this opinion but is fiercely protective. His gay, tempestuous wife, Zelda, discerns the love behind his outbursts of fury when she finds the child amusing and companionable.

Jeeney's first encounter with the outer world ends disastrously: one day at school blasts her hopes of acceptance as a full member of the human race. The next encounter, some years later, is even more horrifying but lasts longer. Working as a drudge in a disreputable hotel near the railroad yards, she meets a choice collection of drunks, prostitutes, and other outcasts. After a series of appalling incidents she is accused of attempted murder, and then, since this is obvious nonsense, has to face what she dreads most: classification as feeble-minded and confinement in a mental institution.

The irrepressible Zelda shrieks her protests. Zeke would rather kill his sister and himself than suffer this disgrace. But Jeeney's real savior is her secret friend, Jim the ditchwalker, who not only proves that she is not an idiot, and that she can read and memorize and connect birds with their songs and eggs, but also produces a San Francisco doctor who diagnoses her condi-

tion. As the reader may have guessed, she is a spastic and, moreover, one who has already made great progress and is capable of achieving much more. So grandmother was right all the time. Zeke need no longer be ashamed of her; instead he should be proud. She is not condemned to creep in darkness and despair; she can go boldly forward, learning with fellow-sufferers from this disease how to overcome as far as possible her physical handicaps.

Jeeney's courage and her emergence into the light of hope turn this novel from a dirge into a triumphant song. But this note is heard throughout, for Jeeney tells her own story, in the sonorous rhythms learned from the Bible, or in simple country phrases and echoes of the life of field and woodland. The sordid conditions she has to endure are never allowed to deafen the ear of the enthralled listener. The hideous grotesques bellow their obscenities in vain. Above their uproar sounds the note of love that sustains and encourages the afflicted child, whether it comes from Zeke's bassoon or Zelda's fiddle.

This passionate pair, in a perpetual duet of rage and reconciliation, are vividly characterized; the humble watcher over the water supply is less firmly outlined but solidly present whenever he appears; the doctor (himself a spastic) is seen through a distant haze; and the monsters at the hotel and the chilly representatives of the law are rapidly-sketched caricatures. In its combination of realism and fantasy, equally controlled and powerfully presented, "Jeeney Ray" is a triumph.

APACHE CAPTIVE: Once in a while a novelist makes of the Old West something larger than a formula Western. One such case is "A Time in the Sun," by Jane Barry (Doubleday, \$4.95), a historical novel of the Arizona Apache campaigns in 1870.

Though traditional, the story line is handled with vivacity and strength. Apaches capture a white girl, a cavalry colonel's daughter; a Romeo-Juliet affair ensues between her and a part Indian within the tribe; an embittered ex-Confederate scout, the hero, frees her and then altruistically returns her to her lover. Yet, hackneyed as such a synopsis may seem, Mrs. Barry's treatment excels in credible characterizations, smooth style, believable

motivations and refreshing plot twists. In all, this is perhaps the finest picture of life among Cochise's Apaches that has appeared in the last decade.

Though there are a few errors, in the main little-known events of Arizona history are described with accurate detail. Some of Mrs. Barry's minor characters are powerfully drawn, notably certain Indian chiefs and Obre, the killer-for-hire, who shows hardly a trace of his stereotyped fictional ancestors. In spots, the author's irony is as deft as a knife thrust between the ribs of the bigoted fools who made massive confusion of our nineteenth-century Indian affairs.

But together with these excellences there are such occasional faults as annoying dialect in the dialogue, literary or modern lingo on the lips of 1870 characters, bits of moralizing and heavy sentimentality, a few strained coincidences, and a hero who is at times embarrassingly existentialist. On the whole, however, the book is solid. The Southwest needs more work of this stature. —BRIAN WYNNE GARFIELD.

HEARTS IN THE HIGHLANDS: A guest home on the banks of Loch Ness (the monster is not a member of the cast) is the setting for Charity Blackstock's "A House Possessed" (Lippincott, \$3.50), a tender, emotional, exciting, humorous little novel that wins the heart. The proprietor of the establishment, Miss Murphy, engages the local priest to exorcise the spirits of a disowned daughter of the house and her soldier husband, who fell at Waterloo. The priest obliges, but the night-bumpings continue, and are eventually, of course, satisfactorily explained and forever silenced. The guests themselves are, inevitably, a mixed bag: a slightly wacky R.A.F. flight sergeant, a female do-gooder who gets off on the wrong foot before she gets back on the right, a young Englishwoman who rediscovers the boy friend she had lost in Athens ten years earlier, an American antique dealer operating out of London, a temperamental maid of all work, a male schoolteacher who is something of a stinker, and, most appealing of all, his nine-year-old son, without whom there would not be much of a story.

—JOHN T. WINTERICH.

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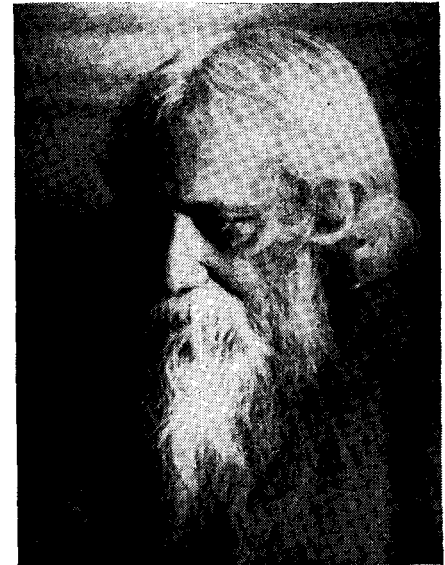
"*Tagore: A Biography of Rabin-dranath Tagore*," by **Krishna Kripalani** (Grove, 417 pp. \$8.75), and "*Social Thinking of Rabin-dranath Tagore*," by **Sasadhar Sinha** (Asia Publishing House-Taplinger, 192 pp. \$6.75), reveal the many-faceted greatness of India's Nobel Prize-winning poet. Edward C. Dimock, Jr., teaches in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Chicago.

By EDWARD C. DIMOCK, JR.

NINETEEN-SIXTY-ONE marked the centenary of the birth of the poet Rabin-dranath Tagore. People will recall the various ways in which the occasion was celebrated in this country: the books and articles, an off-Broadway production of "King of the Dark Chamber," Robert Frost's moving tribute, and the rest. I happened to be in India for a part of that year, giving and (mostly) listening to lectures on the poet and his work. Among other things, that trip was a lesson in the uses of the past.

Sasadhar Sinha, in one of the books under discussion, has written: "Idealization of the past has been the main weapon in the hands of social reaction in India and the chief hurdle in the path of her progress." Bankimchandra Chatterjee, the Bengali novelist, saw in the Muslim conquest the degradation of Hindi India and the destruction of her unity and strength. But Nehru, like Tagore, sees in that same conquest not degradation but an infusion of power. In just such a way people of diverse views seek to claim Tagore. And there is so much in his work, so much a poet was he, that almost everybody can.

Tagore has become a symbol. This is understandable. A poet of India who won a Nobel Prize and an international literary reputation was bound to become a symbol for a nation whose creativity had been turned in upon itself and whose self-respect had withered through generations of contempt. For little minds and talents, the presence of such a symbol is perhaps a "hurdle in the path of progress." Of the speeches I have heard and the books I have read on Tagore, only a



—Martin Vos.

Tagore—"a symbol for a nation."

few dare to assess him as a thinker and a writer, only a few resist the temptation to stand between the poet and his audience, to bask a little in his glory. Among the few, Krishna Kripalani and Sasadhar Sinha stand out.

In Bengali literature there is a phenomenon called *caritāmṛta*, "the nectar of the acts of . . .," a formula used in the biographies of saints, where the greatness of a man is considered timeless, free from the relationship of past to present. This form must have been a temptation for Mr. Kripalani, for writing about a symbol, an image, is a difficult thing to do, especially in India. One can incur the wrath of those who believe in the symbol, who worship the image, by pointing out that it is made of clay; or one can incur the wrath of the iconoclasts by pointing out that it has other meanings. Mr. Kripalani, who has reached his conclusions through thinking, is courageous enough to stand with the majority. He feels that Tagore is a very great poet. And, having been inspired by this book to reread some of Tagore, so do I.

Mr. Kripalani has written a fine biography. He was almost bound to do so: he was for many years connected with Tagore and with the school and university that Tagore founded; he has done excellent translations of two of Tagore's novels into English; he has married into the Tagore family, thus becoming more familiar with the tra-