

resting are the letters to personalities involved in the issues of those bellicose days: Einstein, Freud, Franklin Roosevelt, and Niebuhr, for example. Further intelligence on his literary relationships is afforded by letters to Karel Capek, the unhappy Stefan Zweig, Feuchtwanger, Jules Romains, and his fellow Nobel

Prize-winner Hermann Hesse. By the way, Princeton University, aware of the fecundity and quality of Mann's literary production as exile in Mercer County and in California, within the last fortnight ceremoniously unveiled a plaque to its distinguished wartime guest.

—ROBERT J. CLEMENTS.

A Believer in God and Literature

Dramatic Personages, by Denis de Rougemont, translated from the French by Richard Howard (Holt, Rinehart & Winston. 170 pp. \$4.50), seeks "the man in the works" of a disparate assortment of writers and philosophers. Thomas Bishop is a professor of contemporary French literature in the New York University Graduate School.

By THOMAS BISHOP

ONE OF the more imaginative critical thinkers of our time, Denis de Rougemont is very much a man of his era. This Swiss-born French writer confronts the world as a Christian and a European, a witness to his age, a firm believer in engaged literature. In his works he likes to come to grips with great issues and movements, with which he always deals in an intellectually probing manner. His *Love in the Western World* was an admirable study wherein he brilliantly linked love, for Western man, to the concept of death and to a search for an absolute. In *The Christian Opportunity* he applied his insight to a vast panorama of contemporary concepts, displaying what several critics have termed a Catholic perspective or imagination and a Protestant conscience.

In *Dramatic Personages* de Rougemont again offers the reader his wide erudition and broad frame of reference in a series of essays dealing with a strange assortment of writers and philosophers: Goethe, Kierkegaard, Kafka, Luther, Calvin, Gide, and T. E. Lawrence. But if these essays stimulate, they do not fully satisfy, for they are uneven both as a grouping and within their individual structures. De Rougemont seeks the man in his works by concentrating on his "creative tension." Not only would many question the validity of this pursuit, but, more important for *Dramatic Personages*, the author does not consistently adhere to his goal of

linking the two elements. Moreover, the Christian prism of his outlook becomes at times oppressive in its stress on imaginary or at best speculative values in certain writers to the detriment of their more obvious and more important non-Christian essence.

Thus, for instance, de Rougemont's chapter on Kafka underlines his "religious intentions and the quest, at least, for a theology," without clarifying the prophetic meaning of his novels for a generation of writers concerned with the absurd and for whom Kafka has had incalculable significance.

The essay on Kierkegaard points up de Rougemont's strength as well as his weakness. Given the fact that these particular pages were written in 1934, one stands in awe of his intuition when he writes: "No one today can measure the development promised to Kierkegaard's influence on our age, which rediscovers him after a century of obscurity"; and yet, in the ensuing (often confusing) discussion of the Dane's philosophy, de Rougemont fails to anticipate what facets of his thought were to help produce

the atheistic existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre.

The most convincing segment of *Dramatic Personages* is the brief one devoted to Calvin. In a few impassioned, lucid pages, de Rougemont situates Calvin as an engaged philosopher, the influence of whose writings surpassed that of all other committed literature. He is also insightful with respect to Lawrence, and here succeeds in relating meaningfully, if not too originally, the life and the work. Unfortunately, however, de Rougemont further attempts to link Lawrence and Saint-Exupéry. It is a fruitless analogy because, whereas Lawrence stands out essentially as a man of action who wrote about his experiences, Saint-Exupéry was a writer whose need for action is reflected in his books. Strangely, after stating his case de Rougemont admits in a footnote this basic difference between the two men and thus himself destroys the cogency of his argument.

De Rougemont's thought and language are always complex; they present constant challenges to the reader and must have made great demands on the excellent translator, Richard Howard. It would have been preferable had this complexity of thought been channeled in more clearly related essays and expressed in more straightforward language. There is no intrinsic merit in obscurity.

Dramatic Personages was published in France as *Les Personnes du drame* in 1947, but almost all the essays—the author calls them "spiritual exercises"—date from the 1930s. The present edition will give the American reader only limited new literary insights; it does, however, reveal another aspect of one of Europe's most probing Christian intellectuals.

(Book reviews continue on page 43)

Your Literary I.Q.

Conducted by John T. Winterich and Yetta Arenstein

HEADS AND TAILS

Fannie Gross of Asheville, North Carolina, presents a dozen three-letter words and invites you to make five letter words out of them by placing a letter before and after each one. Example: HIM becomes CHIME. Plurals are not acceptable. Answers on page 46.

- | | |
|--------|---------|
| 1. BUS | 7. RED |
| 2. HIT | 8. PAT |
| 3. LEG | 9. HOW |
| 4. NAP | 10. CAN |
| 5. ROB | 11. ROD |
| 6. NOW | 12. WAS |



Dallapiccola in Retrospect—Opera Bazaar

ONE OF the determinative factors of genius is the faculty of being born at the right time to flourish to the fullest, as, for example, Ludwig van Beethoven was, and, for another example, Dimitri Shostakovich wasn't. Luigi Dallapiccola should have the most productive years of his creative life still ahead of him, but to judge from the program of his works presented on two recent evenings in the valuable series of the Festival Orchestra, he and the times are not in the happiest of concord.

Had Dallapiccola been born into a time with a settled musical vocabulary he might well, by his present age of sixty, have added substantially to the abundant literature of his native Italy. He has the endowment, he has the impulse, and he certainly shows the application that produces finished craftsmanship. However, having been born into a time of experiment and tonal uncertainty, he has spent a good part of his productive life attempting to master a *métier* that will satisfy both the exigencies of the time and the nature of his own gifts—without, so far as present evi-

dence suggests, having quite achieved the fusion.

The program was something like a painter's retrospective show, taking in early efforts, such as the *Divertimento in quattro esercizi* of 1934 and the *Musica per tre pianoforti* of 1935, the middle ground of the *Saffo* excerpts, the *Anacreonte* lyrics, and a part of *Canti di prigionia* (all written between 1939 and 1945), and the *Parole di San Paolo*, which are so new that they were just introduced to the world at the Coolidge Festival in the Library of Congress. In the early instances, the composer might as well have been named DallaPoulenc, and in the middle, DallaSchönberg—which left one wondering just where the true Dallapiccola might be located.

If there was a consistent thread, it was to be found in the vocal line, which, even in the recent *Parole*, has a sinuous curve and a clinging relationship to the text (it is, evidently, the assumption of the concert-givers that the words of St. Paul are so well known that they did not need to be printed in the program). Aside from some awkward skips apparently

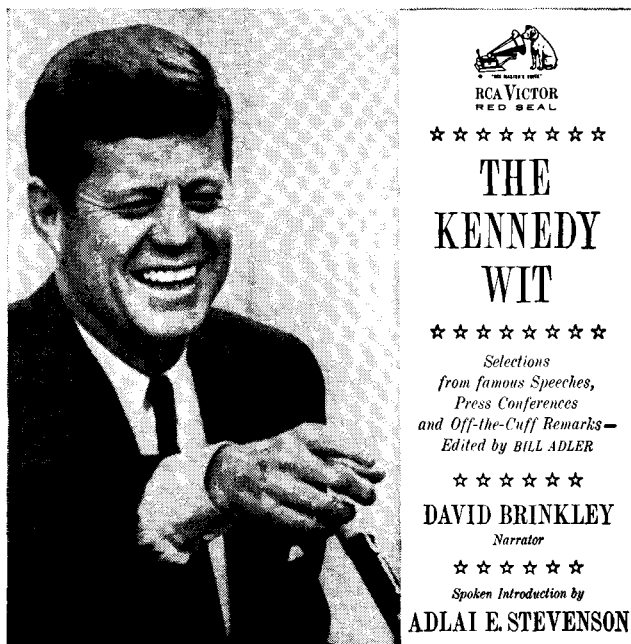
inseparable from even an Italianate application of the serial method, it is pre-vaillingly well written for the mezzo voice. On this occasion it was the insinuatingly beautiful one of Nancy Williams.

But while this was making one kind of aural appeal, the instrumental elements (piano-celesta, marimba, woodwinds, etc.) were going off on a direction of their own, with rasps and buzzings, interjections and exclamations that, on this first hearing, sounded like part of another mood altogether. Doubtless there is a cogent, if visual, relationship between the main elements of the vocal line and the chordal structure derived from it, but it did not penetrate to the ear. One could only imagine the order of results that might accrue had Dallapiccola not been responsive to the need to prove his "identity" with a going esthetic credo. In my hearing of the composite values of his works—which remain rather more than the demonstrated sum of any particular work—Dallapiccola's gifts are superior to any established credo, and we can only hope that he, too, comes to this conclusion while there is still time. The performances were all of the kind that suggested complete devotion to the composer's purpose; and, as he participated in the performance as well as the preparation of the program, it may be assumed they were faithful to his desires. Adele Addison, who serves the centuries as well as she serves any particular personality, made a contribution of her own to the four works in which she was the soprano.

An English Ochs, a French Scarpia, a Yugoslavian Otello and Desdemona were among the more bizarre—or is it bazaar?—attractions of a Metropolitan Opera week in works of Strauss, Puccini, and Verdi. Among them, the most suitable by far was Gabriel Bacquier's first Scarpia, which put another plus beside the name of this able artist who made his debut as the High Priest in *Samson*. He has, in the first instance, had the good judgment to look to Tito Gobbi for his model; or, at least, that was the aspect presented by his handsomely aristocratic, definitely sadistic facial mask. His bearing, as well, was compounded of the suavest of manners, in a Gallic refinement of Roman depravity. It was good to hear that Bacquier commands the volume required for Metropolitan acceptability and knows how to apply it to minimize its lack of luster or ringing sonority. In all, it will be a pleasure to become better acquainted with such an attractively repulsive villain. Leonie Rysanek had a somewhat better evening, vocally than she did at her first Tosca, but her production still shows more disadvantage than advantage for Puccini's vocal line.

Had some of the performers in the
(Continued on page 52)

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