

discursive method. Her novel is essentially dialogue. If one can accept the dialectic and psychiatric style, there are rewards, even though limited.

Triangle in Bengal: All that could be said about Rabindranath Tagore as a writer and as a man has been said, and yet the appearance here of an earlier but lesser known novel of his is a significant literary event. *Binodini* (East-West Center, \$5), which in the original Bengali is known as *Chokher Bali* ("Eye-sore"), was first published in 1902, when Tagore was forty-one years old. It is not his best novel. But, in the view of the distinguished translator and scholar Mr. Krishna Kripalani, it was "the first modern novel in Bengali—and one might say, in Indian literature.... It was Rabindranath Tagore who paved the way for the truly modern novel in India, whether realistic or psychological or concerned with social problems; and he began it with *Chokher Bali*."

Mr. Kripalani is eminently qualified to be Tagore's translator. He lived and worked at Tagore's famous school, Santiniketan (Abode of Peace), from 1933 to 1947 and has written extensively on Tagore both in Bengali and English.

A novel of domestic and personal relations, *Binodini* conveys unforgettably what life was like in a conventional, upper-middle-class Bengali home around the turn of the century. The story is simple and it is told in simple words. The poetic imagination, the range and power of Tagore's intellect are not apparent here, but his intuitive understanding of human beings is. There are only six characters: Rajlakshmi, a fond and forgiving mother; Mahendra, her

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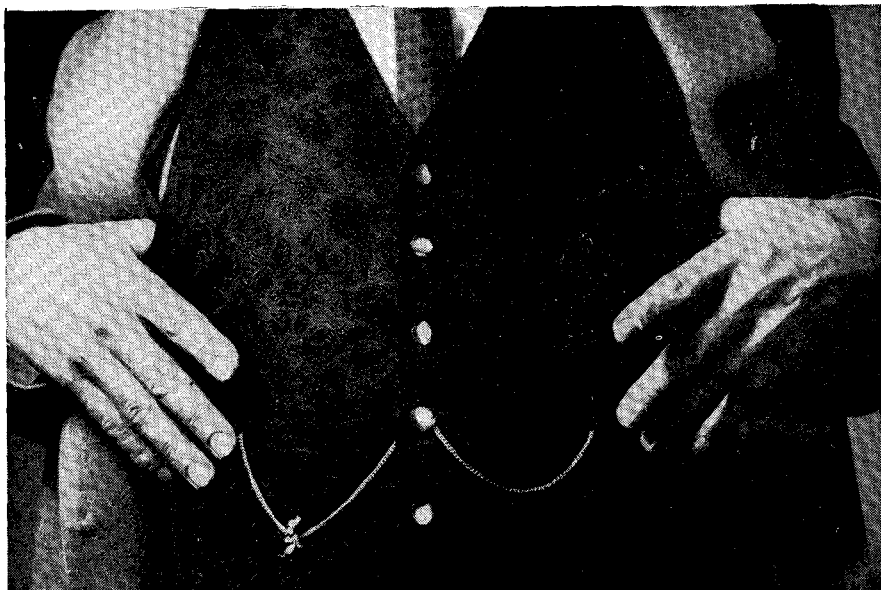


—R. J. Chinwalla (Pix).

Self-portrait, by Rabindranath Tagore—"indefatigable bridge-builder."

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BOOKED FOR TRAVEL

Some Final Flakes of Winter

Turncoat in an Overcoat: We were in and out of the West this winter, pausing long enough to admire the lack of overcoats and to read a report by Mr. Tom Duggan, an Angeleno who by now has doubtless been flayed, quartered, and gibbeted by the All Year Club of Southern California, the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, and those in favor of the perpetuation of Beverly Hills. Writing in a Los Angeles paper, Mr. Duggan wondered out loud why sun worshippers ever take their vacations in the West. If they had the brains of a lazy white dog, said this California turncoat, they would check the Western weather reports before leaving home and then head South. Or stay home.

Californians, Mr. Duggan said, endure more cold than Easterners because Easterners, at least, are smart enough to put on overcoats and long underwear. "Westerners dress like Tahitians to catch the noonday sun, and then are too cheap to change to something heavier in the evening and so just sort of shiver the night away," Mr. Duggan said. Even in summer he finds the Pacific Ocean "as cold as the client's waiting room at a mortuary." He suspects that the city fathers of the beach cities sneak down to the water's edge at sunrise and melt the ice with their wives' hair dryers; otherwise "ocean skating out to the three-mile limit would be the community sport."

California weather has caught the eye of iconoclasts for some time now, probably even before Lorenz Hart wrote the lyrics for "The Lady is a Tramp." "The Lady," who avoided all the common clichés of sophisticated womanhood, also hated California because it was cold and damp. Mr. Duggan recalled the remark of the redoubtable comedian Joe Frisco, who many years ago marveled how a Californian can go to bed under a rose bush in full bloom and freeze to death.

Unpardonably enough, from the Southern Californian point of view, Mr. Duggan made a rather sharp comparison with—you should pardon the mention—Florida. "I know it gets colder than Dutch love in Florida on occasion," said Mr. Duggan, "but when it's warm it's warm. You can put down the top on your convertible and act just like the people in an auto ad."

Mr. Duggan was, in fact, so stirred up by the weather that he stretched his comparison to two other subjects, girls and golf. He thinks Florida girls, next

to Kansas City girls, are the prettiest in the nation. California would have some pretty ones, too, but they stay so thin hoping they will photograph well that they look as if somebody forgot to take the hangers out of the dresses. Scrawny, said Duggan. As for golf courses in California, they are kind of scrawny, too. Most of them are built on mountains and without a golf cart they can be negotiated only by athletes. "At the first sign of precipitation the carts are ruled off the fairways to protect the twelve blades of grass left after the last blight." All of which rules out "the pot-bellied Easterner," said Mr. Duggan, who is against tourists anyway. They slow up traffic with all their gawking at everything and he wishes they would stay home and relax.

Mysterious West: There is nothing quite so perplexing to this alien in the West as trying to make a telephone call in the comfortable confines of the International Hotel at Los Angeles International Airport. You are, for instance, looking out the window at the airplanes and the hangars and trying to get National Airlines when the operator cuts in with, "That's a long-distance call. Please dial the long-distance operator."

Taxing the Traveler (Again): I never thought the day would come when I should share the same field of vision with William F. Buckley, Jr. But Mr. Buckley has come out against the proposed tourist tax and here we are, strange bedfellows. Mr. Buckley is careful to point out that the tax that President Johnson proposed is not intended to gain revenue but to act as a deterrent. It is intended to dissuade the traveler from going abroad in the first place and, should he persist in going anyway, to see that he has less money to spend while there. There are, quite obviously, at least two things wrong with the proposal. The first is that it is intended to deny the American people the "honor," as Mr. Buckley calls it, of being able to come and go as they please. The second is that it is a discriminatory idea in the first place, because it will hurt the less well-padded people among our travelers—teachers and students especially. The rich, who spend the most money abroad anyway, will merely pony up the extra hundred and shrug it off as a further federal nuisance. If the situation is so extreme as to warrant some sort of legislation to curtail travel abroad, then it