

Literary Horizons

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cause we believe that science and technology have a disproportionately large role in general education today and in the shaping of contemporary culture, and that we have to make some effort to reassert the importance of the humanities as a guide to the understanding of man. West said: "I do not think that, because we feel exposed by our ignorance of scientific methods, intentions, and achievements, we should deny virtue to the new culture. It is based on a profounder understanding of man and his nature, and his relationship to his environment, than we have ever possessed before, and I believe that the prospects of a culture based upon it are infinite in their promise."

I supposed that there would be an immediate counterattack, but this did not happen. Although Morris slapped hard at West on two occasions, only secondary issues were involved. In effect, however, Leon Edel's paper was a refu-

tation of West's position. Following a traditional line, with Tocqueville as his authority, Edel pointed to the familiar weakness of mass production, the decline in quality that accompanies increase in quantity. The mass audience, he said, "is not so much an audience as an inert mass, and I leave it for the moment to Professor McLuhan and the media experts who pretend to understand its subliminal life. I see it simply as too desensitized and manipulated to belong to my discussion this morning." To West, I suppose, this must have seemed pure snobbishness, but, as Edel went on to expound the virtues of the scholarly life and the possible role of criticism, it seemed to me that he was being both realistic and reasonably hopeful. And in the end his position did not seem far from Morris's: "The point of my observations is that the existence of so much talk about literature and the other arts, which might be adduced as evidence of an educated public, proves nothing of the kind in America today. It proves indeed so little as the *Mona Lisa* proved about our love of art when

long queues formed to gape at the painting." Edel's paper, incidentally, was called "Season of Counterfeit."

When the members of the fiction panel gathered to try to make a summary statement, there appeared to be few issues on which we were in accord, but gradually we found some at least partly common ground. With the exception of West and perhaps Stern, we agreed that the age offered to artists problems of a new and difficult kind. We agreed that many critics loved power more than they did truth and did great damage in consequence. We agreed that there was a tendency, and not merely in the colleges, to substitute reading about books for reading books. We agreed that much that passed as academic criticism, inspired by the compulsion to publish or perish, was strictly phony. Some of us agreed that, as Bellow and Morris had cautiously prophesied, some good might come out of the effect on youth of the concentration of creative activities in the universities.

Throughout the week William Arrowsmith, classicist and of late an influential student of education, had attended all public sessions and had visited the group colloquia in turn. His role was that of observer, and he didn't open his mouth until he was called on to make the remarks that closed the conference. He said that until the middle of the nineteenth century it had been almost universally believed that the purpose of art was educational. He himself was convinced that art was a means—to self-realization — and not an end. Firmly stating his disagreements with West, he urged us all to fight the domination of education by technology, which he blamed for the sickness of contemporary culture. He asked artists and critics alike to join in the struggle to save not only education but civilization itself. All this he said quietly and with good humor, but his words were not lightly spoken.

I ended the conference as I began it, with the feeling that this is in many ways a bad period for artists. It is true that affluence and leisure and more general education are creating a new interest in all the arts, but this interest is being exploited by the Madison Avenue mentality, whether it is employed by business or government. In time wonders might be accomplished, but if the bomb doesn't get us, the population explosion probably will, and in any case time for assimilation is what the rapidity of technological change never allows. One way or another, it seems possible that the human qualities which find expression in the arts may atrophy, and I cannot regard this as anything but a catastrophe. But, as Arrowsmith calmly insisted, we don't give up. We make what we can of the present, and hope for the future.

—GRANVILLE HICKS.

Your Literary I. Q.

Conducted by John T. Winterich and David M. Glixon

UNCOMMONERS

Our Constitution (Art. I, Sec. 9) declares: "No title of Nobility shall be granted by the United States." Had the same restriction been effective in Great Britain, you would probably recognize without hesitation the names in Column One. Carl E. Walker of St. Mary's City, Md., briefly identifies them in Column Two, though not in the correct order. If you don't know which is which, turn to Debrett's *Peerage* on page 105.

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| Thomas Bruce () | 1. Earl of Oxford, a favorite of Queen Elizabeth; poet, once considered author of Shakespeare's plays. |
| John Churchill () | 2. Viscount Melbourne, thrice Prime Minister, confidential adviser to the young Queen Victoria. |
| Robert Devereux () | 3. Earl of Rochester, a favorite of Charles II; best known as a satirist and poet. |
| John Sholto Douglas () | 4. Earl of Elgin; brought the Greek sculptures ("Elgin marbles") to England. |
| Henry Howard () | 5. Baron De La Warr, governor of colonial Virginia (another colony was named for him). |
| William Lamb () | 6. Duke of Wellington; defeated Napoleon at Waterloo. |
| Edward de Vere () | 7. Earl of Surrey, credited with introducing blank verse into English. |
| Arthur Wellesley () | 8. Marquess of Queensberry, instrumental in formulating rules of boxing. |
| Thomas West () | 9. Earl of Essex, Queen Elizabeth's prime favorite. |
| John Wilmot () | 10. Duke of Marlborough, his forces were victorious at Battle of Blenheim. |



WITH REFERENCE TO

By DAVID M. GLIXON, *an editor and translator addicted to the pursuit and perusal of reference books.*

IT'S THE information explosion. New reference books have been coming off the presses so rapidly that an annual roundup can't keep up with them. Hence this autumn report.

(1) The biggest news in unabridged dictionaries since the controversial *Webster's Third New International* (SR, Sept. 30, 1961) was the publication last month of *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*. For a comparison of those two giants, we refer readers to Granville Hicks's full-length review in the October 22 issue of SR. But let's take a look at one that is modestly entitled *The Reader's Digest Great Encyclopedic Dictionary* (\$14.95). Of its 2,100 pages, nearly 1,600 comprise the complete *Funk & Wagnalls Standard College Dictionary*, which we recommended (SR, March 21, 1964) as probably the best desk dictionary on the market, and which can be purchased separately for about \$7. But the new volume also contains, in characteristic *Reader's Digest* fashion, condensations of three reputable bilingual dictionaries (German, French, and Spanish, for a total of just 300 pages), an absurdly bowdlerized selection of twenty-five pages from the truly great *Dictionary of American Slang* (Crowell, 1960), dictionaries (twenty pages each) of space and medical terms, and a number of other little compendia that look substantial in a table of contents but are essentially mere hors d'oeuvres.

In *Dictionaries* (Philosophical Li-

brary, \$4.75) Kenneth Whittaker surveys the scene in a running discussion of all types of dictionaries, British and American. It is useful, if subjective. *English Language Dictionaries in Print* (Bowker, paperback, \$3) bases its analyses on a survey of librarians. Neither book, of course, is entirely up to date.

For beginners there's now a "Giant Golden Book," the *Storybook Dictionary* (Golden Press, \$3.95), a big, flat book in which Richard Scarry teaches the recognition and use of some 700 words. His light-hearted drawings of animals in bright colors and his appropriate sample sentences serve a serious purpose whether the child does the reading himself or is being read to. The number of alphabetical entries is extended by 1,600 variant word-forms and by the words used in the picture captions. The book is the next step after *A Is for Apple*, but it's a giant step.

Two quick-reference desk guides to spelling and syllabication are *Webster's*

TO LOCATE SPECIFIC CATEGORIES of reference books, follow this numerical plan (books for young people are included with adult titles): 1. English-language dictionaries, word lists, and handbooks. 2. General reference works. 3. Atlases and geographies. 4. Foreign-language dictionaries. 5. Books of quotations. 6. Guides to literature; opera. 7. History and biography. 8. Art. 9. Biblical and denominational reference works. 10. The animal kingdom. 11. Plants and flowers. 12. Et cetera (including medicine, science and sports).

New World Word Book (World, \$2.50) and *The Word Finder* (Prentice-Hall, \$2.50), both about 3½" x 5", the former listing 30,000 words and the latter 15,000. Each gives rules for punctuation and capitalization; the *Word Book* also shows how to find words when you're vague about their spelling, and the *Word Finder* tells when numbers should be spelled out.

The Dictionary of Slang & Its Analogues, compiled in England at the turn of the century by John S. Farmer and W. E. ("Invictus") Henley, is now being reissued by Unicorn Books, and two of its eight volumes have appeared. In *Volume I, A-B* (\$15) a hundred pages are devoted to two new introductions, one a general guide, the other dealing with sexual speech. The entries are labeled (colloquial, provincial, old, vulgar, common, etc.), defined, cross-referenced, and illustrated with dated examples drawn from writings of the past three centuries. The supplementary *Volume VIII, Vocabula Amatoria* (\$10), is a reprint of Farmer's translation and synthesis of several French erotic dictionaries.

A similar work on a small scale is Mitford M. Mathews's *Americanisms* (University of Chicago Press, hardbound, \$5.95; paperback, \$1.95), a 300-page selection from his 1951 *Dictionary of Americanisms on Historical Principles*. By *Americanisms* he means words added to the language by North Americans since 1620, or new meanings applied here to English words already in existence. Following the pronunciation and definitions are examples taken from sources as varied as Parson Weems and Thomas Jefferson, E. B. White and Bernard De Voto. Though marred by careless editing (missing references and irrelevant paragraphs), the abridgment is a fascinating volume in its own right and reveals many unrealized contributions made by Americans to what is now the standard language of Britain, Canada, and the U.S.

Word sources are the subject of four new works. Of these, by far the most