

tor: Carl A. Rickert. Staff: Pauline Bloom (short story), Marjorie Cheyney (poetry), Paul Murphy (articles), Doris Patterson (confession), Jean Richards (juvenile), C. Hall Thompson (novel), Doris Bell Paiss (TV script), Jean C. Soule (humor), Lewis P. Nachod (fiction), Paul C. Mims (short-short), Jack Lindeman (poetry), Richard S. Fuller (features), Hobart Berolzheimer (research). Speakers: Edgar Williams, Riley S. Brown, Lisa A. Richette, Pat Hurley. Manuscript contest open to conferees; cash awards and book prizes. \$18 scholarship open to writers' clubs. Tuition: \$35 entire conference. Last year's enrollment: 160. For brochure: Mary P. Kelso, registrar, P.O. Drawer "U," Springfield, Pa. 19064.

PINEY WOODS WRITERS CONFERENCE, under auspices of Stephen F. Austin State College, will meet June 25-26 at Nacogdoches, Tex. Founded 1960. Director: F. A. Rodewald. Staff: Members of English Dept. Visiting lecturers: Larry McMurtry, Nina Vance, Dr. Winston Weathers. Tuition: \$5 for attending members, \$10 for non-attending

members. Last year's attendance: 253. For brochure: F. A. Rodewald, director, S.F.A. Box 3007, Stephen F. Austin State College, Nacogdoches, Tex. 75961.

PACIFIC NORTHWEST WRITERS CONFERENCE will meet July 24-26 at Seattle University, Seattle. Founded 1955. Director: Nelson Bentley. Staff: To be announced. Visiting lecturers: M. S. Wyeth, Gloria Mosesson, Eileen Johnson, Herbert Montgomery, Louise Boggess, Luther Nichols, Jean Z. Owen, Gene Olson, Ruth Egge, Yvonne Stevenson. Workshops in novel, short story, articles, nonfiction books, drama, juvenile writing, poetry, photo-journalism; beginners' workshop, contest workshop. Playwriting prize. Junior literary award contest. Tuition: \$20; \$3 for full-time Seattle University students. Last year's attendance: 400. For brochure: Patricia Campbell, executive secretary, Pacific Northwest Writers Conference, 1330 Boren Ave., Seattle, Wash. 98101.

NINTH DEEP SOUTH WRITERS' AND ARTISTS' CONFERENCE, sponsored by Louisiana Branches of National League of American Pen Women, will meet June 5-7 at the University of Southwestern Louisiana, Lafayette. Founded 1961. Director: Betty Utley Walker. Nine prize contests. Registration: \$3. For program: Peggy Garnett, 1606 N. 2nd St., Monroe, La. 71201.

LEAGUE OF VERMONT WRITERS' SUMMER INSTITUTE, under auspices of League of Vermont Writers, will meet July 10-11 at Lamar Lounge, Waterman Bldg., University of Vermont, Burlington. Founded 1945. Director: Mrs. Harriet W. Riggs. Program to be announced. Visiting speakers include Jacqueline Jackson, Alden A. Watson, Mary Pearl, Marguerite Hurrey Wolf. Small registration fee. Last year's attendance: 100. For information: Mrs. Jadie Stoddard, secretary, League of Vermont Writers, Wolcott, Vt. 05680. Please enclose stamped self-addressed envelope.

For professional writers . . .
And for serious professionals-to-be . . .

INDIANA UNIVERSITY WRITERS' CONFERENCE

Announcing the leaders of our
1969 workshops, July 7-12:

Novel: ANTON MYRER
Short Story: STEPHEN BIRMINGHAM
Nonfiction: PHILIP HAMBURGER
Poetry: JOHN ASHBERY
Juveniles: MAIA WOJECIHOWSKA
Playwriting: SAM SMILEY
Feature Articles: HAL HIGDON
Fiction Skills: JOHN WESTON

Each workshop limited in size to
25 MS-submitting students.

Some of the other speakers, seminar
leaders, and consultants:

JOHN M. ALLEN
(Senior Editor, *Reader's Digest*)
HOWARD S. CADY
(Senior Editor, William Morrow & Co.)
SYD HOFF
(cartoonist, author and illustrator)
NAOME LEWIS
(Fiction Editor, *Good Housekeeping*)
KIRK POLKING and JEAN CHIMSKY
(*Writer's Digest*)
JOHN SCHAFFNER
(New York City literary agent)
GERTRUDE HECKER WINDERS
(writer, critic and consultant)

Conference members are chosen on the basis of
the quality of manuscripts submitted with appli-
cations. The Scholarship deadline: May 17.

Private interview with workshop leader on each
manuscript accepted. Additional consultations, MS-
reading sessions, and many other extra-workshop
attractions—all free to Conference members.

For brochure and application blank, write to

ROBERT W. MITCHNER, Director

INDIANA UNIVERSITY
WRITERS' CONFERENCE

448 Ballantine Hall, Bloomington, Ind. 47401

Fifth Annual

Temple Buell College
(Colorado Woman's College 1888-1967)

WRITERS'
WORKSHOP
IN
CHILDREN'S
LITERATURE



August 3—August 15, 1969

LOIS DUNCAN
WRITER-IN-RESIDENCE

Mary Calhoun, author
Elizabeth Griffen, author-editor
Dr. Alison White, critic
Dr. Joel Greenspoon, psychologist
Elton Norwood, puppeteer

A writers' workshop devoted solely to writing for
children with concentration on the reading of
student manuscripts by noted authors and editors.

For brochure, write:

Robert Lewis Weeks,
Director Writers' Workshop
TEMPLE BUELL COLLEGE
1800 Pontiac Street Denver, Colorado 80220

Since 1926 BREAD LOAF WRITERS' CONFERENCE

Forty-fourth Annual Session
Aug. 13 to Aug. 27



Bread Loaf, Vermont

DIRECTOR: John Ciardi

POETRY: John Nims, William Meredith,
Miller Williams, Andrew Glaze

FICTION: Seymour Epstein, William Sloane,
John Williams, Harry Crews

NONFICTION: Peter Schrag, Arno Karlen

JUVENILE LITERATURE: Eunice Blake

For information, bulletin, application, write to:

BREAD LOAF
WRITERS' CONFERENCE
MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE
Middlebury, Vermont 05753

BOSTON AREA WRITERS' CONFERENCE

A Workshop for Commuters
Suburban Campus, Burlington, Mass.

June 8-14, 1969

POETRY—Samuel L. Albert, George Starbuck
JUVENILE—Elizabeth Jamison Hodges, Elizabeth Yates

NONFICTION—Doris Luck Pullen, Caroline Bird

For brochure/application, write

Reid B. Morrison, Director, University College
Northeastern University
Boston, Mass. 02115

FRASER YOUNG LITERARY CRYPT No. 1342

A cryptogram is writing in cipher.
Every letter is part of a code that re-
mains constant throughout the puzzle.
Answer No. 1342 will be found in the
next issue.

WEFC: RC AEO, E UWAKXC
EBBKEA FW FCK TKRFN, XETK
LRGTRGZ VBWG FCK DWG-
UDRKGDK LN E BKGEAFN
SWQ BKQHVQN.

—EXLQWUK LRKQDK

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 1341

It is extraordinary to what an ex-
pense of time and money people will
go in order to get something for noth-
ing.

—ROBERT LYND.

Even a One-Eyed Husband Is a Husband

The Adventures of Menachem-Mendl, by Sholom Aleichem, translated from the Yiddish by Tamara Kahana (Putnam, 222 pp. \$5.95), narrates the grandiose plans and spectacular downfalls of an Eastern European Don Quixote, as recorded in his letters to his wife and her acerbic replies. Paul Kresh edits "The American Judaism Reader."

By PAUL KRESH

BACK IN 1909 the Yiddish-speaking world was chuckling over the first book of Menachem-Mendl's letters from the great wide world and the scolding replies from his wife, Sheineh-Sheindl. Even before that—as early as 1892—the letters were delighting subscribers to various Yiddish newspapers and magazines, where they continued to appear over a period of eighteen years. Up to now, though, non-Yiddish-speakers have had to be satisfied with stories and plays about Tevya the Dairyman and other popular figures in the Sholom Aleichem *dramatis personae*, most of whom were content to face life from behind the ghetto walls of Kasrilevka and Anatevka. The alternative was to make their acquaintance through literary travel guide Maurice Samuel's *The World of Sholom Aleichem*, where they greet us somewhat spruced up and in their Sabbath best for the tourist trade.

Now at last Tamara Kahana, the granddaughter of Sholom Aleichem, has completed her long-anticipated English translation, and we can all share in Menachem-Mendl's instructive but hilarious adventures. (We had to wait for Miss Kahana to finish translating *Mottel*

the Cantor's Son and her grandfather's autobiography, *The Great Fair*, but it's been worth it.)

Who is this Menachem-Mendl? An urban counterpart, you might say, of his spiritual cousin Tevya. But while Tevya stays home in Anatevka with his wife and five daughters, Menachem-Mendl, *luftmensch* extraordinary, a veritable Don Quixote of Eastern European commerce, sets out to conquer the big world beyond Kasrilevka, that "townlet of the tiny folk" where Russia kept its Jews. He becomes by turns a money speculator in Odessa, a *soi-disant* dealer on the stock exchange in Yehupetz (really the city of Kiev, Miss Kahana confides), a merchant, an unremunerated writer for a fly-by-night journal, a marriage broker, and an insurance agent. In all these endeavors he fails spectacularly and predictably, by virtue of his gullibility, innocence, and indomitable optimism. We learn of each risible fiasco to which our hero is foredoomed by reading over his shoulder, as it were, when he writes home to his irascible wife in Kasrilevka, and through her answers as she pleads with him to come home, quotes her mother's tartest aphorisms, and accurately calls the shots on the outcome of every venture her luckless husband outlines.

THE style of the Menachem-Mendl letters is even more of a marvel than the anecdotal delights that abound in them. Each begins with a formal salutation, which is in the original a mixture of Hebrew and Yiddish. The correspondent expresses his hopes for the health and well-being of his "dear, wise and modest helpmeet, Sheineh-Sheindl, long may she live." He then proceeds to relate, with incurable exuberance, the latest of his schemes to amass a quick fortune in a city where Jews are forbidden, and

where he has to resort to such subterfuges as eating ice cream all afternoon at a café until he develops a bellyache, in order to avoid being run out of town. And he is so pressed for time he will have to "cut this short" but "in my next letter, please God, I'll write you everything in detail."

Comes next the inevitable answer from Sheineh-Sheindl, whose pen spews undiluted acid in a manner calculated to cut masculine pride down to size. She opens with a formal assurance that "we are all, praise the Lord, perfectly well," and then chronicles the children's illnesses and mishaps, relays her mother's latest homely words of wisdom ("If a dig in the ribs doesn't work, try a brick . . ."), fills her husband in on the latest gossip, and winds up with a prediction that his newest enterprise will come to naught, like all the others. He had better hasten back to her irate side while he still has legs to carry him.

And yet after each *débat* this same woman is able to modulate her tone to wifely compassion and raise her disheartened spouse from despair. Warn him she will without let-up, but seldom does Sheineh-Sheindl say "I told you so." For, as her mother points out, "Even a one-eyed husband is a husband." It becomes evident that, in those days of matches arranged by marriage brokers and held together often by sheer social pressure, Sheineh-Sheindl really loved Menachem-Mendl.

All the letters except the last two—in which Menachem-Mendl does indeed "write everything in detail" and the anecdotes are shaped into full-fledged tales—are miracles of compression. The master storyteller manages to reveal in half a dozen paragraphs the salient points of plot and character and at the same time to hint subtly at the underlying sadness of what it meant to be a Jew at that time in Russia.

In preparing this collection the author discarded many letters he considered unworthy of preserving between hard covers. Even so, a few of those remaining are dangerously thin—the price, perhaps, of tailoring them to the tastes of the casual, impatient reader of the periodicals where they initially appeared. At the same time, and more important, they avoid the far worse sin of clutter, and they never prettify.

What happens to Menachem-Mendl finally? Does he come back to Kasrilevka? For that you'll have to read the book; and you won't be disappointed. Moreover, this English version is clear as crystal, straight-forward, idiomatic, but never slangy or tasteless or awkward to the ear. Sholom Aleichem's prose may lose, as they say, a little in translation, but, believe me, it is never debased in the process.

(Fiction reviews continued on page 58.)

