JANUARY • 1949

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Charles Abrams

FREE-LANCE WRITING IS RISKY
M. Scott Kenyon

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TOMORROW

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THE NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR INFANTILE PARALYSIS

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT, FOUNDER

The Triumph of Hope

THAT the heart of government belongs to the people, and not to the State, was clearly demonstrated when Mr. Truman's obstinate faith turned out to be the great individual factor of the election miracle. Not the least important aspect of this monumental event will be its effect on world events in the year that faces us, a new year in which, despite widespread unrest, there are very evident signs that a brighter world is emerging. Nowhere has this been more apparent than in Europe. Even though France and Italy in particular are not yet free from industrial strife, there are hopeful signs everywhere that the people themselves want to return to stabilized working conditions. Of course "disruptive activities" will continue, but that need not discourage us, for it must take time and patience to deal with these symptoms of economic unrest which must precede readjustment and so often characterize growth within the old world and the new.

To those who cannot foresee world concepts of economy based on new and untried forms of government within other countries, I can only say that several new concepts of government are working effectively now and have already taken their place in the great international picture. But it should be remembered that such fundamental changes in a nation's methods will not be brought about by the disciplinary whip of government control so much as by the unity and achievement of its people. Reformers and planners who force change irritate us with their methods—methods unwieldy, militant, and too often painful.

Anxieties there are aplenty in the present political scene, but there are today so many more men of good will who are not only busy with the usual routine of government, but are also deeply concerned with the underlying human intangibles which make up the modern state and its problems. To these men, the survival of the people and their happiness are more important than the old uninspired techniques of government alone.

THE war and its devastation, terrible though it has been, has revised social patterns on a vast international scale which a few years ago was undreamed of. Without the advantages of the Marshall Plan, which has been such a beneficial factor in this brighter picture, this state of recovery could not have taken effect, nor would this subtle pattern of a better way of life be so soon revealed. This plan has surely communicated itself to the spirit of the people and has reminded them that they are no longer without guardians. For there is in the world a mercy outside of defense and rulers, working from the bottom upward to create an element of strength with understanding between governments and workers. This was the promise, and it has come nearer and nearer actuality with the Marshall Plan. The children playing in the street, as well as their elders, now have hope for life and recovery, and with this new strength they may win the right to work and to trade freely again with their fellow men the world over.

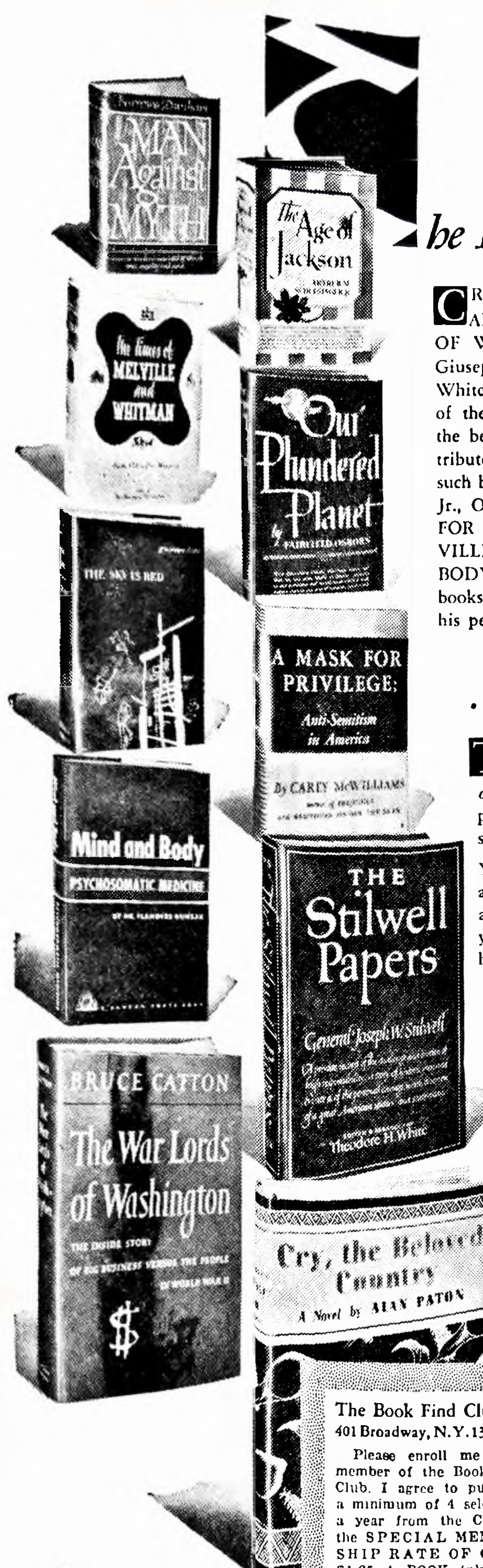
Whatever the economic hopes for the Marshall Plan may be, the act of giving makes for a defense that is stronger than any treaty. The plateau of tension between nations is being removed, because kindness is a positive alchemist and the threats of war, although they still fill the air with a fog of uncertainty, do not have their former significance.

This help, more than anything else, has given the people, who do not hope to understand the political pattern, a sense of their own dignity as individuals, which destroys the dangers that arise from fanatical nationalism. It helps restore the value of the individual and makes his importance one of belonging in a larger measure to a great international effort in which peace may be really effective. This alone must pay dividends, for the people's need resolves itself into a spiritual achievement, and at last one observes that bitter discomfiture, disillusionment, cynicism and doubt melt before the promise of better days.

WITH patience and hard thinking, men will become better and braver than when they indulged in the belief that they were being abandoned by the victors. Thus, in large areas of Europe, hope dissipates the aura of despair, and history will hail the Marshall Plan as "guardian" in the bravest sense of the word. To maintain watchdogs who, from want of discipline and from hunger, turn upon the flocks and destroy them is a monstrous nightmare, as are men of brass and iron who, in the name of protection, have always destroyed the people with the state. From these, this nation will continue, as always in the past, to protect less fortunate people.

The degree of reality which man creates around him begins in dreams and images, often of the most unsubstantial and transient nature, like the shadows and reflections on the quiet face of a lake. But from these come the figments from which the dream is conceived, formed, and born, until dreams take shape and form in a physical sense that man calls reality. Make no mistake, these imperfect shadows, which man labors to make perfect, have reached him from a state where order makes the ciphers of the mathematician seem awkward. However, it is from this multiplicity of order that reality springs to enlighten the nature of man and release him from the echo of yesterday's sad words and uglier deeds. One day, he will become wiser in the perception of goodness and will seek to escape from his narrow judgment to become the better guardian of moral knowledge and ideal government.

Eileen J. Garrett



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T O M O R R O W

VOL. VIII, NO. 5 JANUARY 1949

"...EACH AGE IS A DREAM THAT IS DYING OR ONE THAT IS COMING TO BIRTH."

Housing: The Ever-Recurring Crisis

CHARLES ABRAMS

AMERICA has faced seven housing emergencies in the last 25 years:

A shelter shortage in World War I upset the production timetable, menacing the war effort. A war housing program was initiated.

A postwar housing shortage in 1922-26 caused homelessness and overcrowding. Rents rose sharply. Rent controls were imposed, and tax subsidies given by some cities to speed home building.

Lack of home building was linked to the unemployment emergency of 1933-36. Home building was made the object of vast federal aids in an effort to revive construction and promote economic recovery. More than a dozen federal housing agencies were set up to tackle various phases of the program.

In 1937, "one third of a nation" was found to be living in slums. Emphasis in housing shifted toward recognition of a "social emergency" and adoption of a slum clearance program entailing 800 million dollars in loans and 28 million dollars in annual subsidies.

A defense housing emergency was declared in 1940 as we belatedly realized that there can be no efficient defense program without shelter for the defense workers. With workers living in boxcars, pews, and jails, a number of federal agencies were empowered to build housing with federal funds.

World War II brought us face to face with production problems caused by labor turnover due to housing shortages in war production areas. An extended war housing program was undertaken to keep the war effort from bogging down.

With the end of the war, returning veterans faced a postwar housing emergency more serious than that which followed World War I.

Whenever one of these emergencies arose, an emergency measure was authorized to meet it. But a new crisis followed soon after. It has become evident that without a national policy aimed at removing the causes of housing crises, the housing problem in America will continue to be one unending, ever recurring emergency.

While still in the throes of the postwar housing emergency, it is already possible to see another looming ahead. The aging of our housing plant, the increase in the number of our families, the drop in home building dur-

CHARLES ABRAMS, *an outstanding authority on housing problems, is the author of* The Future of Housing *which was published in 1947. This article will form a section of the forthcoming book,* Saving American Capitalism, *edited by Seymour Harris, to be published by Alfred A. Knopf Inc. early in 1949.*

ing the depression and war years, the failure of the building industry to meet accruing needs, and the large number of marriages after World War II have joined to bring on the most pressing need for housing in our history. The postwar shortage was only the first pang of that crisis.

Depending upon the period in which we undertake to meet the need, the number of dwellings required per annum will be as follows: under a ten-year program, 1,860,000; under a fifteen-year program, 1,420,000; under a twenty-year program, 1,200,000. Whether we build in ten, fifteen, or twenty years, two things are clear:

Housing equaling about half the existing supply of forty million dwelling units needs to be built. Not since the opening of the frontier has a greater opportunity confronted America. For this accumulated need makes home building today an opening wedge into the comprehensive replanning of our cities. We can either choose to build solvent new neighborhoods, or allow the pent-up demand for this housing to be released without guidance into the same haphazard patterns that have characterized American city development from the start.

We cannot meet these housing needs under the present private building formulas.

WE have the land, the labor, and the materials. We have the energy and the genius to utilize them. But blockading the production of our housing is the small-home builder upon whose capacity and willingness to tackle the job the whole operation depends. Home building functions or idles at his pleasure. Even effective demand cannot arouse him to rise above his physical limitations. He is unequipped to build more than half a dozen houses a year. Between the two world wars, the industry could average only 500,000 dwellings annually and none of them were for the lowest income families. At best, the home builder can do no more than a small part of the home-building job—providing houses for the well-to-do.

Around his limitations, as around an undersized sieve, has collected a residue of waste, ineptitude, irresponsibility, concentration of power, and unfair competition that is unparalleled in any other industry. All too often these evils are looked upon as causes of the builder's limitations when, in fact, they are effects. The housing need will be met neither quantitatively nor qualitatively so long as this little speculative industry continues to block up the flow and hold down the quality of homes for the American people. Greater efficiency would follow if the builder were set up as a large-scale producer on a parity with the automobile manufacturer.

This failure of American housing production is responsible for the slums that have undermined the health of our people. The poor quality and high price of new homes have made home ownership a hazard, while recurring housing shortages have become an ever imminent threat to our social and economic well-being.

Fifteen billion dollars of federal funds and commitments have been poured into housing undertakings since 1933 and billions of dollars of cash and credit will continue to be poured into the bottomless pit that housing is today. Despite these vast outlays, little has been accomplished. The housing problem will persist, stubbornly impervious to private effort or public aid, unless we acknowledge the failure of the private building industry

to meet the housing needs of the people and unless the government evolves a workable program to meet those needs.

The magnitude of the problem demands a new approach to the planning process in housing. It entails a shift from negative to positive city planning. The new approach would acknowledge that in providing housing and rebuilding our cities, restrictive legislation such as zoning, dwelling laws, and other controls are obsolete as primary weapons. The main instrumentality must be the eminent domain and spending powers. Putting it less legalistically: (1) extensive acquisition of land by the cities is essential to their proper replanning, (2) such land must be acquired in connection with master plans laid down in advance, (3) after acquiring the land, cities must be prepared to allot it for public and private redevelopment in line with the master plan, (4) cities must be prepared, with federal and state assistance, to build housing for *all groups* not served by the private builder.

To avoid socialization of our housing, the plan will recognize that the main prop under the private enterprise system is private ownership which must be preserved and encouraged. We should envision public ownership only in those enterprises in which public operation is essential, such as schools and post offices. Since public ownership is not an essential part of the public function in the building of homes, their ownership or control should be turned over to the tenants and other purchasers as soon as feasible. The encouragement and formulation of tenant co-operatives would be indispensable to such a program. In other words, after assuming the positive

approach in planning and housing, we must also shift the emphasis from public building and public ownership to public building as a means of assuring sound private ownership.

What holds us back from undertaking a ten- or fifteen-year program to rebuild America? Not the cost. A complete clearance of all our slums, the largest phase of the operation, would cost no more annually than three days' cost of World War II, or less than 10 per cent of the current military budget. New York City could clear its slums in about ten years without any federal aid by earmarking its current emergency sales tax for the task. If all three levels of government co-operated, the job could be done without great budgetary strain on any one of them.

The main impediment to a comprehensive program is a confusion over whether extensive operations by public agencies in the rebuilding of our cities would conflict with the philosophy underlying the private enterprise system. If this issue were resolved, we could proceed to rationalize the housing disorder, build dignified cities, have decent homes for ourselves and for the generations to succeed us.

Let us then submit the issue to four rigid tests—practicality, constitutionality, tradition, and conservative economics.

We are making huge commitments in our cities anyway, but doing it piecemeal and planlessly. The total cost of these haphazard and emergency efforts will be greater than would be a comprehensive undertaking boldly planned, envisioned in advance and systematically pursued to its completion. That slums are costly and that it is economy to clear them is well established too. Since we are being called upon to build homes equal to half our existing supply, is it wise to make the expenditure piece by piece, when the end product will be only the ossification of the obsolete patterns and the perpetuation of crisis? Or shall we use this great opportunity to build twentieth-century communities befitting our wealth, our energy, and our culture, and at the same time solve the housing problem for ourselves and our children? The answer is plain.

The constitutional issue is easily disposed of. The Supreme Court and the high courts of twenty-one states have upheld the legality of publicly sponsored housing. Rarely has a reform received more passionate sanction from the American bench. Public subsidies and eminent domain are authorized even to private companies for slum clearance. City planning, too, has long been recognized as a governmental function, and effective city planning is no less legal than our current ineffective city planning.

From the standpoint of our traditions, the purchase of land and its resale is in line even with the planning principles of the founding fathers. Washington, D. C., could never have been developed without actual control of much of the strategic land needed to carry out Major L'Enfant's plan. After the fulfillment of the general plan was assured, the land was turned back into private hands. The right of land acquisition for national uses has always been implicit in our American system. And often the land acquired has been resold when no longer needed. In the two world wars, for example, all the land needed for housing and other war uses was purchased, built upon, and then sold when the emergency was over. The logic that applies to a war emergency applies as forcefully to a postwar emergency.

The most effective, though not the most cogent argument against comprehensive planning is that it would compete with private enterprise and threaten the capitalist society. This argument is effective because it plays upon the prejudices of a public not fully informed in all the ramifications of economic theory.

The fact is that public and private activities in housing have become so interdependent today that there is no longer a detectable cleavage. Private housing enters the public field by accepting vast public aid and even assuming public powers—FHA, the Home Loan Bank System, and Stuyvesant Town are recent examples. Every private development enforces vast public improvements. Today's jerry-built house is tomorrow's slum, pressing for public intervention and expenditure. With almost 60 per cent of all home mortgages already underwritten by the federal government and the way paved for insuring most of the rest, separation of private and public effort into self-contained zones has become impossible. The government is now so deeply involved in housing, mortgage underwriting, and the security of home ownership that

it is bound to intervene with all its necessary resources should the mortgage or home ownership structure be again threatened.

Words like "socialism" and "communism" are being hurled about recklessly to the terror of the uninformed public, but above the din, the issue between the pressure groups contesting for government housing benefits gradually clarifies. One group, spearheaded by a lobby of builders and lenders, asserts that all housing appropriations should be channeled primarily through business groups without measuring the benefit accruing to the rank and file. Under a private enterprise system, it argues,

the dividends to the masses should be residual and subordinate to the benefit to business. Another group seeks to effect a "practical" compromise. It asserts that the appropriations should be dispensed for the benefit of the rank and file primarily, but to achieve its objective it is willing to compromise by allowing the lion's share of the benefits to business in the form of FHA and Home Loan Bank assistance, yield insurance, and other risk-lifting devices.

There is room for a third point of view not represented, one aiming to assure the maximum benefit to the rank and file while still giving the private enterprise mechanisms in housing a greater opportunity than they have ever experienced in their history.

This becomes clear when we understand how the private builder operates. He usually has only a transient interest in the job. He buys the land, builds and sells the home. His interest in the transaction lasts for about six months. Though looked upon as an entrepreneur he is in fact little more than a contractor, particularly in operations aided by the federal government. The predominant functions of private enterprise in home building are not his, but those of the materials companies, labor, the financiers, and the subcontractors.

If, in the building of our twenty-one to twenty-four million homes, our cities, through local housing authorities, assumed the primary responsibility for building all housing not built by the private builder, as well as for building the public works in connection with these developments, the private housing enterprise would not only not be harmed but would receive a tremendous impetus.

The advantages of a positive program of decentralized public building are that we could get housing built to meet our needs; the city could determine where the new developments should best take place to meet the requirements of the city plan instead of simply conforming its investment to small, insufficient mushroom private developments; the city could better secure the long-term soundness of the homes built, by building them in sound, durable communities that create their own environment; under a comprehensive program, mass orders could be given and unified specifications drawn, resulting in a greater uniformity of parts; labor could be more effectively utilized and the defunct building industry might at last head toward rationalization and efficiency; and, finally, as a result of standardization of specifications and mass production resulting from mass orders, home building for the higher income groups served by the private builder would benefit, too; costs would be brought down, and the field of government building would gradually be narrowed as rationalization is achieved.

Such a program not only conforms with capitalist tradition but complies even with eighteenth-century conceptions of government function. Adam Smith recognized the duty of the sovereign to be "that of erecting and maintaining those public institutions and those public works . . . of such a nature, that the profit could never repay the expense to any individual . . . and which it, therefore, cannot be expected that any individual, or small number of individuals, should erect or maintain."

In housing policy, American liberals are not daring enough to demand a complete program, while the conservatives are not conservative enough to insist that the public housing programs should assure private ownership. The ideological conflict in America on comprehensive planning and housing exists largely because of the confusion over the meaning of "free enterprise" and "private enterprise" in housing—a "free enterprise" which is being fashioned to become an enterprise free of risk and a "private enterprise" that in housing today is no longer either private or enterprise.

If we had a clear-cut policy under which cities assumed leadership for the rebuilding of America, not only would it not be a challenge to the private enterprise system, it can be the most effective bulwark for its preservation.

Such a program would mean an expansion of the role of the local housing authorities. They should be reconstituted to explore new techniques, relate private to public undertakings, solicit private builders to build near their projects, and assemble the land required for both. Where a shortage occurs and the private builder does not fulfill his function, the public authority should step in. Just as war housing was within its province, the provision of veterans housing should also be. The authority should originate proposals to anticipate and relieve housing shortages, give advice to the prospective home buyer and to the veteran against reckless dealers. In short, it should be responsible for all the housing problems and policies in the community rather than be merely the advocate of public housing.

Public housing should also strive to divest itself of public control and ultimately even of public ownership by lease or sale of the projects to the tenants. It is here that co-operative ownership can find its most important place. Public housing should, therefore, aim to educate its tenants and prepare them for assuming the responsibilities of operation and ownership.

European Music: Then and Now

H. W. HEINSHEIMER

IN the spring of 1948, I was thumbing through a box of old photographs which I had brought from Europe ten years before and had not looked at for a long time. Among the many faded images, I came across a picture that brought back with a pang one of the most exciting periods of my life. It was taken, in 1921, in the little German town of Donaueschingen, an idyllic village, surrounded by corn fields and patches of lively forest, and nestling in the foothills of the Schwarzwald, one of Europe's most beautiful mountain ranges. The town had always figured prominently in the geography books of the European classrooms, as it is here that the Danube, the *Donau*, begins its majestic flow. I even remember the miserable little pool in one of the parks of the town, supposedly the actual spring of the river, and the statue of a lady, covered with wet green moss, that was supposed to symbolize the fact that this mud puddle was the origin of one of the world's proudest and most important waterways. But those were only vague associations recalled to my memory as I looked at the photograph. What I actually saw on it were the steps leading to Donaueschingen's little concert hall, covered with a milling throng of earnest and incredibly young men and women among whom I discovered myself, slim, with a wild mane of hair and—let me see now—twenty-one years old.

Donaueschingen, in those days, was one of the many places where young people from all over Europe gathered to participate in festivals that had already begun to play an increasingly important part in the postwar spiritual reconstruction of the continent. On the old photograph, I could identify the faces of men who soon were to achieve fame and recognition and who, today, are among the leading names in music. The postwar period—I am talking about the first, not the second world war—brought a veritable flood of new composers, new performers, new ideas to the surface. Scarcely a month went by without a new composer being discovered and hailed as a great master by one of the cliques that usually clusters around young composers who have even a smattering of originality. The war, as I can see now from the safer distance of time and space, had been a sharp dividing line between the apparent security of the nineteenth century with its comfortable traditions and its absolute and reassuring yardsticks, and a world where these yardsticks had been smashed—a world that had lost all the basic beliefs and appeared to be sliding rapidly into a kind of spiritual chaos. Only a few men with extraordinary foresight had been able before the war to anticipate the shape of things to come. One of them was Arnold Schoenberg whose music had reflected, even in the sunset period of Wagner and Brahms, the new, terrifying forces which, for others, were still hidden behind the horizon of history. But now, a new era had begun. The walls had crumbled and we were all now living among the ruins of the established order.

The men who stepped forward, immediately after the war's close, were of a new generation. Their language was new, and so was their approach, and their thinking. They took nothing for granted and, with the ardor of youth, were inclined lightly to dismiss the past. Composers, writers, painters, architects, philosophers, all attempted to speak the language of their time. If there was no language to express what they saw and heard and felt, they created the language. If there was no form that would fit the shapes of a changing world, they created the form. If there was no expression to formulate their anxiety, their hopes, their creeds and their despair, they expressed themselves in words, tones, gestures that may have been difficult to grasp at first but were sincere and intensely moving.

In 1921, the first fragments of Alban Berg's opera, *Wozzek*, were played for the first time at still another music festival in Frankfurt. Here was music never heard before, the expression of a strange mind that revealed through the lives, the thoughts, the words of the characters on the stage, and by means of a fantastic combination of colors and tones a world behind the world visible on the stage. The music had a deep inner meaning that moved both audiences and performers alike. That

H. W. HEINSHEIMER, *a frequent contributor to* TOMORROW *as well as to many other national magazines, is the Director of Symphonic and Dramatic Repertory at G. Schirmer Co., the well-known music publishers. His most recent article, which appeared in the September 1948 issue, was about his native Vienna and formed part of* TOMORROW'S *"Hometown Revisited" series.*

was in 1921. Twenty-seven years later, the same fragments were still being played by American orchestras and the music seemed more alive than ever. It had preserved its strength.

About the same time another Viennese, Anton von Webern, was mystifying the public with the condensed microcosm of his music: tiny pieces of only two to three minutes duration, but filled with an overwhelming intensity that was comprehensible only to a few. Yet today, these amazing pieces are still alive. When the Pro Arte Quartet played one of von Webern's String Quartets on a tour through the United States, they had to repeat it almost everywhere as people were suddenly struck by the power and sincerity of this completely new music.

These are only two of the many that emerged in those unforgettable days. In France, there was also the *Groupe de Six,* headed by Honegger, and also Darius Milhaud who at twenty-nine was one of the older men among the new composers of Europe! There was Paul Hindemith, born in 1895, now a professor in Yale. There were Kurt Weill and Ernst Krenek, both born in 1900, as well as a host of lesser luminaries from Poland, Czechoslovakia, Italy, Holland. There were a few Americans—George Antheil, Aaron Copland, Virgil Thomson—but they had just arrived on the Continent and were getting their first glimpses of European life in the salons of Paris.

Perhaps I shouldn't have looked at the old photograph before I sailed for Europe. It brought back too many memories. But this was 1948—again three years after the end of a great war. Comparison would be inevitable and fascinating. Reports had come back to me from the old continent about brilliant performances of operas heard in Vienna, or of some great activity going on in Paris, but there had been little to substantiate these tales which were, in any case, deeply colored by the tellers, many of whom were former Europeans who had not taken root in the musical soil of America. When they came back from European trips, they were filled with all the wonderful things they had heard and seen and, of course, in which they had actively participated. Music, according to their stories, was flowering all over Europe. But there were others who told an entirely different story. There was one prominent conductor, for instance, who had recently conducted one of Europe's oldest and most eminent orchestras. Afterwards, he had gone backstage and advised the management to cancel a contemplated tour through America. "You are no longer prepared to meet the standards developed during the last decade by the top-ranking orchestras in the United States," he had to tell them. But one did not have to rely entirely upon the evidence of returned travelers. Even more conclusive to me was the evidence of the few European scores I had heard in this country. The only work of significance I could recall was a score by Arthur Honegger, the Swiss-French composer. But Honegger was one of the young men on my picture! He had been a torchbearer in 1921! He was now fifty-six years old. Was his, still, the voice of European music?

While I was trying, in vain, to reconcile the contradictory reports and to clarify my own impressions, the New York publishing house for which I work decided to send me to Europe to make a survey of the musical scene. Thus I could find out some of the answers for myself. I was to go, not as a tourist or a casual observer; this was a definite mission that would enable me to find out for myself whether anything worth while was being

done musically anywhere in Europe. I had plenty of time at my disposal and I knew how to get in touch with the right people. I remembered my own early days when I was struggling for a foothold in music publishing in Vienna; and through the grapevine would suddenly flash the momentous news from one coffeehouse to the next that an American publisher had arrived—a Schirmer, a Fischer or perhaps a Shubert. Those who knew and who had been admitted to the presence of the great man would rather be made into a schnitzel than divulge his whereabouts. But there were only three hotels in Vienna—the Bristol, the Grand and the Imperial—where a person of such eminence could possibly stay and those were all situated on one block, one next to the other. Having asked our way from one shoulder-shrugging *concierge* to the next, we would simply station ourselves on the street till one of our fellow-publishers or a composer would hurriedly emerge from a hotel. The entire pack of loiterers would at once spin through the revolving doors, and rush madly up the stairs. Usually there was a line in one of the corridors which we were not long in finding, a line of bedraggled composers, publishers, song writers and similar mendicants, waiting silently, staring at each other with a burning, consuming hatred. The newcomers would join them in the queue, and wait for hours till the door of the great man's room would open. When it was your turn to appear before the presence, a secretary would take your card and call out your name, and while you began stammering at the tired man in front of you, the staring eyes of seventeen men, still waiting outside, seemed to drill through the panels of the door, asking you to hurry and wishing you were dead.

And now, by a curious twist of fate, I myself was to sit behind the desk. It almost seemed as though we were

playing out the same script and that time had changed nothing but the actors. Time had effected some changes in the scenery. In Vienna, for example, half of the Hotel Bristol, where I had once waited for Lee Shubert, was nothing but an ugly gaping hole. The other half was guarded by an American M.P., while the Grand and the Imperial were roped off and patrolled by Russian soldiers with mounted bayonets. My expectations then of a return in splendor were disappointed. Times had changed. But even without a waiting line in front of a hotel room that wasn't there any more, I had many occasions to talk to composers and performers in Vienna, as well as all over Europe.

Everywhere the story was the same. I heard many voices, complaining, protesting, arguing, trying to convince, hoping, and sometimes despairing. What I failed to hear was a single new voice of consequence, anything resembling the tremendous cultural upsurge of which I myself had been a part some thirty years previously. Instead, I rediscovered my former friends, shaken by the war, but still writing newspaper reviews and formulating the musical destiny of the continent. There were some new faces too, of course, but their voices seemed tired and what they had to say I had heard many times before.

One of the most active among the younger musicians in Vienna seemed particularly happy to see me. I had known him when he was a pupil of Alban Berg and he seemed to be a leading figure in the timid group of *avant-garde* composers and performers. A man of around forty, his face reflected the suffering and malnutrition that is so prevalent in Europe today. I spoke to him frankly, expressing my bewilderment at the absence of new musical forces on a continent that had never in its

history lacked creative talent. "But you have only to look at me," he said. "As you have probably noticed, I am considered and accepted as a spiritual leader here. What I say and do means something. But you know me. You know I am not up to such a job. Think of the days when Schoenberg and Berg and von Webern and a few others were the musical leaders of Vienna! And now—men like me. I am not a great man," he shouted vehemently. "All I have is a little bit of talent and a lot of energy. I get things done that others wouldn't. But I am a little man." He repeated it as if glad to be able to confess: "I am just an ordinary guy, a little man where a big man is so desperately needed."

I remembered what he said, a few days later, when I spoke with the director of the radio station in Zurich who I had hoped would be a fertile source of information. But my attempt to talk about new music in Europe was soon sidetracked by his ardent desire to hear from me what America was doing. In spite of my desire to listen to him, I found myself, instead, talking about the important and exciting things that were going on at home, and my Swiss friend listened, spellbound and, it seemed to me, somewhat unhappily. I thought again of the "little man" from Vienna when, in Paris, I found a group of young composers exhausting their strength in sterile experiments, out of touch with the living forces of music and with life itself, their activities known to but a few of the initiated. Again I remembered his despair in Amsterdam, where I spent many days at a festival of contemporary music. There I listened for something new, but in vain, for all I heard were weak insignificant scores that echoed the past and attempted to say what had been said better and more convincingly a hundred times before.

There was no doubt in my mind that this was a scene vastly different from the one that followed the last war. What could be the reason? The war itself, devastating, terrible as it had been, offered no satisfactory explanation. The number of men killed between 1914 and 1918 was greater than the loss sustained in this one, but this time, there was far more destruction and dislocation of civilians. But, still, life went on even among the ruins; orchestras had been operating all the time, and opera houses and music schools were filled to capacity. The technical facilities had been maintained and were in full operation despite what had happened.

I did not realize how little all this meant until I met, toward the end of my stay in Europe, the Czech composer, Alois Haba. I had known him well in 1921. At a time of wild innovation, his music in quarter tones had been one of the boldest experiments. Employing his own system of musical notation, he had added quarter tones to the ordinary scale of twelve tones: for example, a C-sharp-plus between the C-sharp and the D, or an E-flat-minus between the E-flat and the D. He wrote first for string instruments which could most easily produce the in-between tones. But the music so fascinated a Czech piano-manufacturer that he constructed a quarter-tone piano for the composer. Haba, stubbornly loyal to his medium, even wrote songs and whole operas in the new tone system. He was a real musician despite his eccentricities, and an artist who knew no compromise. As such I remembered him, having been his publisher for many years when I worked in Vienna.

I recognized him at once at a performance in Amsterdam's *Concertgebouw*, in spite of the fact that an obviously steady diet of Pilsen beer and Bohemian *knedlicky* had

left its mark; but his face was still the same, broad and slavic, with the hair standing up like a wire brush from his square head. Pushing my way through the crowd, I called out his name. He turned around and recognized me at once. His response, however, seemed strangely detached and formal. We made a date to meet later that night at a restaurant for a glass of beer, and he left rather hurriedly. I felt deflated. I had not seen him in fifteen years and had been so glad to meet him again. What had happened?

He arrived late, just as I was ready to go.

"What is it you want to see me about?" he asked abruptly.

"Nothing in particular. I just wanted to see you, find out how you are, and how things are musically in Prague."

His reply was a general statement indicating that things were just wonderful. But when I asked about a few people I had known he did not answer. Our conversation seemed senseless. I wanted to say, "Don't you remember me? We used to be friends." But he was incredibly changed, and his attitude toward me was obviously unfriendly. When I told him that I had thought of going to Prague during the few remaining days of my trip to visit old friends and make new acquaintances, he became even more aloof.

"You won't find many of your old friends any more," he said coldly. "Times have changed. You publishers are not going to dictate terms to composers any more. We have seen to that."

I looked at him in silent embarrassment.

"Your old friends!" he shouted excitedly. He took out a piece of paper and scribbled a name and address on it. "Here," he said, handing me the paper, "this is the man you must see—nobody else." I looked at the name: it was an official of the Czech Ministry of Education. "He might introduce you to the head of the Czech composers' syndicate, but you have to see him first. Look me up when you come. I have to go now." Haba got up, hastily, as two other men entered the room and he joined them at a corner table.

The Alois Haba I had once known, the composer and the cultured European, was no more. The creative musician had become a petty bureaucrat, and a citizen of one country instead of a whole world of arts. To him, I was no longer a friend with whom one could discuss music, art or philosophy into the late hours of the night—I was an American from the other side of the curtain, an almost complete stranger to his new way of life; hence, an enemy.

Haba suddenly seemed to me a typical intellectual of present-day Europe. Liberation, it is true, had come to some of its countries, but the old air of freedom, even in the western countries, was absent. *How good is your music, your play, your painting?* were questions that had been replaced by the all-important one: *What form of government do you believe in?* Are you right or left, Gentile or Jew, do you write in a style the government likes, or are you an enemy of the people because the lines of your painting, the texture of your score, are disagreeable to an official in the ministry of education? The cultural life of an entire continent had been shattered during the war and the Nazi occupation, and now Europeans were too concerned with primitive considerations, such as food and shelter, to bother with picking up the pieces. Was it possible, I asked myself, for Europeans to establish contact once more with their great cultural traditions by a deliberate effort of will? Or is it true, as some historians maintain, that once the continuity of a culture is broken, it can never be restored and that something else must be born to take its place? The bombs and the physical terror were not wholly responsible. Perhaps it is significant that the only European country to produce a composer of of some stature—Benjamin Britten—is England, which, in spite of the bombs and physical destruction, was able to maintain its cultural life simply because it escaped being occupied by the Nazis. This had been a different war—and one that England had never really experienced in the sense that it had been a war against culture, beliefs, progress, and the living continuity of spiritual life. Could it be that Hitler had actually won it on the continent, after all?

During one of the modern concerts in Amsterdam, I heard a symphony by an American composer. It was by no means a great piece, but it captured the attention of everyone in the hall. The music was filled with a nervous intensity, and although not ready to speak in the language of genius, or even greatness, it was alive and new.

I remembered then an anecdote which I had heard some time ago. When Arnold Schoenberg, the Einstein of modern music, arrived in the United States several years back, a reporter asked him what he thought of American music. "It is interesting," Schoenberg replied, "very exciting and holds a great promise for the future." "And when do you think these promises will be fulfilled?" the reporter asked, poising his pencil eagerly. "I would say in about a hundred years or so," Schoenberg replied.

The beginnings, however, were already audible. Music wasn't dead, I suddenly felt. Only the center of gravity was shifting, slowly but surely, away from Europe and in a westerly direction.

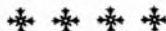
The last evening of my stay in Europe I spent in the company of a French musician. The conversation centered, of course, around the problems of music in Europe. He was very outspoken in his belief in the superiority of European culture. He was one of the many who still judged America by yardsticks already rotten with the mildew of prejudice in 1910. A few super-Hollywood pictures, some musical *faux-pas* made by an American guest conductor were sufficient for him to condemn what he called "the culture of jeeps and stockyards." Europe was his home, and he was proud of it. At first, I did not try to shake his beliefs by reporting my impressions of the past few months, but as the evening progressed, doubts began to creep into his words. He deplored more strongly than I would have dared the lack of a new spirit, the ap-

palling change that had occurred in Europe in the last thirty years. His belief in the continent struck me as containing more defiance than conviction. Soon he began to question me about America. I tried to give him an idea of what was happening in my adopted country. I told him about the Hollywood Bowl where 20,000 people listened to a performance by a symphony orchestra, of the Juilliard School of Music where new pieces by young American composers were constantly being tried out, and of the countless auditoriums throughout the country where the best of music of the past and the present were performed. I tried to picture for him the tremendous play of cultural forces at work in the relatively new country, and of the brilliant men who worked without government aid, supported only by the confidence in their own genius, to create a new way of life.

Later, as he walked me to a cab, he was silent and sad. It was only when I was already seated in the car, reaching out to shake his hand, that he spoke.

"Do you think you could help me to come over there?" he said suddenly, his voice full of urgency, as if this was not a matter of getting a job or having three square meals a day, but a matter of salvation, of a beginning and a new hope. There was no time to reply. The car began to move. I waved a friendly good-by at the lonely figure, standing motionless at the corner, till I lost sight of him.

I had no time to stop. The boat train was leaving in twenty minutes for Cherbourg and New York.



FRANCES FROST

LONE FARMER

He was the neighbor of two neighboring mountains.
His land stretched part on one, part on the other;
his old house stood in the hollow set between,
and he looked upon each tall dark-shouldered brother
with equal love and patience. If the sun
took this high crest and shadow that, he knew
that soon they would exchange, or both be one,
leaning together into light or cloud,
and both at last put shoulders to the storm
or rear against the stars, rock-fierce and proud.
Working the stubborn acres of his farm,
he lived with the companionship of skies.
He had no need for neighbors but his mountains
that kept a pact of beauty with his eyes.

Prefect of Discipline

JOSEPH W. CARROLL

FATHER COSTELLO looked discontentedly out of the window of his small room on the third floor of the five-story, gray-brick academy building. The room was his office as well as his living quarter, and sparsely furnished as became a priest with a vow of poverty. A scarred old desk with a corrugated roll top was all that made the narrow cubicle an office. For living purposes, it had an iron bed, a wardrobe, a built-in washstand, two chairs, bookshelves and a *prie-dieu.*

The priest's discontent was not serious enough to be a matter of conscience. Scrupulosity, that subtlest of sins which tempts only persons of extraordinary virtue, never bedeviled Father Costello. He was a goodhearted man, gentle in all his judgments, even of himself.

But the gentleness was beleaguered, both by the memory of recent events in this room and by the view from his window. "Surely," he said, looking down into the wide street, "the ugliest section in all this great, ugly city."

It was a business street of cluttered store fronts and tacky loft buildings. Father Costello did not much care for business, even when it had a comelier mien than the graceless, hand-to-mouth enterprise of the street on which the academy was built. He was grateful that the Order had members who liked conducting its practical affairs, leaving others free for sanctity and scholarship.

"Sanctity and scholarship, my foot!" said Father Costello, reminded suddenly of the occasion of his discontent by a figure in the street below. It was old Brother Morrissey, the church sacristan, in his best street attire: the skimpily cut pants showing unstylish ankles above the laborious polish of the old-fashioned shoes; the black clerical fedora set with severe avoidance of any frivolous tilt. The brother had come out of a side door of the church, which stood next the academy. He walked with stiff agility past the front steps of the church, past the brothers' dormitory building beyond it, and across the intersection at the corner into a shop on the other side of the street.

Father Costello turned away from the window. How unjust it was, he thought, that the sight of Brother Morrissey should have provoked his cynical and mildly profane exclamation about sanctity and scholarship. For the brother in his own person embodied the first quality—and at least he did no violence to the second.

Father Costello chided himself for yielding to this mood of dissatisfaction which had seized him as soon as his working day had ended a few minutes past. The mood held the risk of self-righteousness and uncharity toward others. "I am rebuked," he argued, "by the lively ghost of the saint and scholar for whom this school is named."

The academy was named for a sixteenth-century Spaniard of noble parentage, who had abandoned a promising career as a soldier and founded a religious order dedicated to the education of the young. In his name, both the parish and the academy had been built here years before. But it was old-sake's sake that kept them going nowadays. The neighborhood had become a slum. The old-timers had long since moved away. But they still sent their sons to the academy. And they themselves still came back on Sundays to hear High Mass in the splendid old church, with its twin spires towering to the burnished crosses. The church had been hallowed by the years to the dignity of a shrine. The academy, by the same hallowing, stood as a monument to the reverence for learning, which the old-timers and their priests brought with them in their flight from an island nation in the rainy Atlantic.

"But we take a great deal out in reverence," mused Father Costello. "God forgive me for a snob, is there a

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true scholar on the whole faculty—save possibly young Mr. Wagner?" He did not consciously press his own claims to scholarship. But there had been a book on the elegiac poets, written soon after his ordination years ago. It had been respectfully reviewed in the thick-paged periodicals interested in such things.

Discontent rose, livelier than ever, to the bait of this sudden memory, bobbing on a cord of ambition, invisible as fine silk and quite as strong. No doubt of it: he was poorly fitted for his present duties. Perhaps he should discuss it with his superior.

Yet it would be hard to say in words of suitable modesty why he disliked being Prefect of Discipline. Of all his qualities, he guessed, a wayward inclination to laughter at odd times made him an incompetent judge of the peculations of schoolboys. He hoped it was that, more than a priggish yearning for the aloof and self-sufficient rewards of scholarship.

Through the open transom over his door, Father Costello heard Mr. Wagner's voice, synchronized with his knock. "May I come in, Father?"

"Oh, do," said Father Costello cordially.

The scholastic entered and sat down on the kneeling bench of the *prie-dieu,* hitching his cassock around his knees. It was the kind of thing he did without self-consciousness or fear of criticism. Father Costello liked it in him.

IT was interesting that they liked each other, these two. The kinship could not be guessed from their surfaces. Mr. Wagner was an ample young man, who stayed on the pleasant side of corpulence by playing handball every day. He had wild yellow hair, parted in the middle. He smiled most of the time, not merely to show good temper, though he was good-tempered; and not fatuously. It was the smile of a dedicated, comic spirit.

Father Costello, many years older, was lean as a dandy's walking stick and as elegantly straight. The pallor of his face went well with the intelligence of his eyes and the refinement of his features. He was supposed to resemble Woodrow Wilson, a likeness he did not exploit. For, though he had no politics, he recalled from his early days in the Order that the priests who read the papers believed Wilson's followers with their New Freedom to be obdurately secularist in social philosophy. But Father Costello was not vain of his appearance and did not really care who he resembled, if anyone. His gray hair was wispy on top and often, as now, wanted cutting toward the neck. The rough black cloth of his cassock was worn at the elbows and seat to an iridescence, like meat when it is turning bad. A big wooden crucifix with a silvered Christus was sheathed in the cord around his middle. He habitually held his right hand on the top of it, as though he were a classic actor clutching a dagger.

"Any more boys due?" Mr. Wagner asked.

"No, indeed," said Father Costello gratefully. "The last two of them left a while since—in halos of utterly insincere repentance."

"Big day?" said Mr. Wagner.

"A full blotter," said Father Costello. "A term used in the police courts, I believe. Most apt, John, most apt for my duties. Not that I wish to complain."

"Oh, complain a little," said Mr. Wagner. "I've been correcting English themes. And I'd like to hear what other kinds of crimes the boys commit."

Father Costello lifted his biretta from the top of the *prie-dieu,* twirled it by its pompon as he sat on the window sill. The austere little room was shadowy, the gradual darkness of a spring evening falling outside.

"Any difficult cases?" Mr. Wagner asked.

"Nothing that would tax Suarez, John, or call for reference to the Summa Theologica. Our Order's reputation for subtlety would suffer, I think, if it were known what kind of disciplinary cases come up in this school."

"Tell me," said Mr. Wagner. He enjoyed Father Costello's stately habit of speech, even though it had no quick salve for curiosity.

"There were five of them this afternoon," the priest said. "Let us take them in the inverse order of interest and significance. The first was a first-year boy. He was overheard using an evil or at least dubious expression by Father Mulcahy—who sent him to me, enjoined to repeat the whole conversation in which it was used.

"The youngster's name is Higgins—a hulk with a bold eye. Quite respectful outwardly, don't you know, but a suspicion of the malapert. It is this, I think, which irritates Father Mulcahy, who does rather stand on his dignity. This is the fifth time Higgins has been sent to me by Father Mulcahy. The actual charge in each case was—I thought—trivial."

"What did Higgins say?" Mr. Wagner asked. But Father Costello was not to be hurried into a premature climax, least of all by an English teacher.

"It was after the 9:30 History period," said Father Costello in the manner of a conscientious witness dictating a deposition, "which Father Mulcahy teaches and in which Higgins is a less than diligent pupil. The boys were in the corridor outside the classroom, waiting for the bell to ring for the next period. Father Mulcahy, by the bye, misses little that goes on in the corridors, judging by the nature of the complaints he lodges here.

"The shabby little incident was this. A classmate of Higgins—I forget his name—was claiming to have made (isn't that the right verb?) ten baskets in a row from the center of the basketball floor in the gymnasium yesterday afternoon. This feat was accomplished while no one was present to witness it. Father Mulcahy heard Higgins use this objectionable word very loudly. He then ordered Higgins to report to me after classes."

Mr. Wagner listened in ecstatic expectation. This had possibilities for one with Father Costello's gift of indirection.

"The word," said Father Costello, "is a five-letter plural

be having a new vogue. Kerwin says some radio comedian who specializes in reviving old ballads . . . "

Mr. Wagner shouted. "O my bleeding paradigms!" he said. "My withering declensions!" And he sang in a gusty baritone:

There is a tavern in the town, in the town
And there my true love sits him down, sits him down
And drinks his wine as merry as can be
And never never thinks of me.
Fare thee well, for I must leave thee
Do not let this parting grieve thee . . .

Father Costello said: "Kerwin sings it better. It calls for a plaintive tenor. A rakish type, Kerwin. He wears one of those pullovers, you know, with outlandish colors in zig zag lines—and a pancake hat. Suits the song better, somehow, than a cassock."

Mr. Wagner was not offended, though he liked to sing and had a good carrying voice. After all, it was Kerwin's song. "So you dismissed the charge, Father?" said the scholastic.

"Yes," the priest said. "The boy wrote it for his own amusement. I think it's interesting that he should be amused even by bad Latin verse. And the rhyming is rather good." He hummed a little.

"What did you tell Kerwin?"

"That different people are amused by different things, and some people, God help them, are never amused at all. Kerwin said, 'Yes, Father,' the way they all do, winked and left. I overheard him telling Toomey that I said the

verses showed an exquisite sense of rhythm. A tarradiddle. I said nothing of the sort."

"What will you tell Father Scotus?" asked Mr. Wagner.

Father Costello sighed. "I wish I could think of something useful to tell him, John. If I suggest that he intensify his instruction in idiomatic Latin, he'll do it—and I shall have more cases from him than ever. I might tell him to be less ready to see malice where none is intended."

"I cannot find it," said Mr. Wagner. " 'Tis not in the bond."

HE next case," said Father Costello, robbing Mr. Wagner of the chance to repeat his whimsy, for he was a little tired of it, "is the only sad one of the day. The saddest of my many months in this wearisome post."

Mr. Wagner responded quickly to a seriousness, an actual sorrow in the priest's voice. He was very fond of Father Costello. "Oh?" said Mr. Wagner. "A bad one, eh?"

"Shabby," Father Costello said. "Painful and sickening. Two offenders for the same offense. First-year boys: cherubs to look at them. Still in knee-pants. Brother Morrissey sent them to me."

Mr. Wagner was surprised. "The church sacristan? I've never known him to turn a boy in before. He's been known to smack them one behind if he ran into any mischief. But it's all out of character for him to report anything."

Father Costello nodded. "This is the one sin, I should think, which Brother Morrissey regards as—ah—crying to academy authority for vengeance. He was very angry."

"Anger's out of character too," said Mr. Wagner.

"Not in this instance, I think you'll find. He's close to eighty, you know. They try to argue him into retirement to the brothers' home every year, but he puts them off. Quite right, too: he does his job better than anyone around here—and he'd hate frowsting all day over devotional works. Not a contemplative, Brother Morrissey."

Well Mr. Wagner knew. "He beat me at handball the other day," he said. "Cheats like anything in the scoring, but I expect he reckons it like a golf handicap, because of his age."

Father Costello continued: "He came in here this noon hour to tell me about the two lads, Fahey and Burke. I sent a note down to the classroom that they were to report to me after hours." He paused, remembering the tremulous indignation of the sacristan, an agile sliver of a man whose pink scalp showed clean as a baby's through the neat strands of white hair. He recalled the glimpse he had caught of the brother from the window, and his probable errand in the shop on the corner.

Father Costello said: "Brother Morrissey's room in the brothers' dormitory fronts on the cross street down the block. He was looking out of his window yesterday afternoon. He usually does at that time of day, he tells me, while he says a Rosary. He wanted to make it plain that he engages in no espionage on academy boys. It's pleasanter to say his prayers while looking out the window: that's such an active street, always something doing.

"Brother Morrissey's been here for years, you know. Goes all the way back to the old times. He knows everyone in the neighborhood even now. Not just parishioners, but everyone. There aren't many actual parishioners nowadays, anyway. The people who go to Mass and Confession at the church are mainly railroadmen from the yards yonder, and some of the business people on their way down town, and, of course, some of the old parishioners who come back.

"But Brother Morrissey knows them all, churchgoers or

not. Some very special friends of his live right opposite the brothers' building. They own a little candy and tobacco store . . . "

"The Rubins?" said Mr. Wagner. "I know them too. Mr. Rubin's a Spinozist. I buy my cigarettes there and we argue about it. Mrs. Rubin thinks I'm some sort of Protestant because I'm called Mister instead of Father."

"Brother Morrissey likes them very much," said Father Costello. "He says they give clothes and things to the St. Vincent de Paul Society. I doubt that he discusses philosophy with them—though he did give them a year's subscription to *The Messenger of the Sacred Heart* for Christmas."

"For Hanukkah, Mrs. Rubin told me," said Mr. Wagner. "She showed me a copy and said she thought the pictures were very pretty."

"Brother Morrissey," Father Costello said, "looked out his window yesterday and saw the two academy boys standing in front of the store. There's a streetcar stop there, so he thought little of it, though the boys were looking up and down the street in a secretive way. But after a while the street was empty. The boys began writing on the Rubin's store window. Some kind of soap they had.

"Brother Morrissey saw Mr. Rubin come out of the store and collar the boys. The brother went out and crossed the street. One boy had written an—ah—exhortation to passers-by not to patronize the store. The other had written one word: an ugly, dirty, insulting word."

Father Costello's face was sadder than Mr. Wagner had ever seen it. "Brother Morrissey took the boys' names," the priest said. "Mr. Rubin said to let it go: they were children only, and didn't know any better. But he thought they should clean the window. Brother Morrissey saw to it that they did."

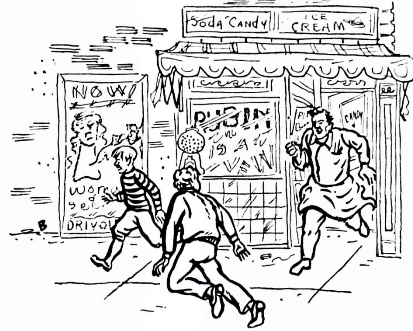
Father Costello turned to the window. The street lights had just come on, and the front window of the shop at the corner was a patch of yellow in the spring mist. "The brother was still angry when he told me about it today," said the priest. "He said he had never tattled on an academy boy before, but this was the limit. He said we were all shamed in the eyes of the kindest of neighbors. He said he would leave it to my judgment about what to do. But I don't think he really expects anything."

Mr. Wagner waited to hear the judgment..

"They are stupid boys," said Father Costello. "They were afraid of me, but not because of what they had done —only because they think it a terrifying thing to be sent to the Prefect of Discipline.

"I spoke to them about charity—the theological kind, not the almsgiving. I quoted the Second Commandment of the Lord. I asked them where they got such ideas as they wrote on the window. Fahey said his mother told him you could never trust 'those people.' Burke said he always understood 'those people' were against religion. They both spoke in substantives, apparently thinking I would be offended by the proper name of the proud people of an ancient faith."

His voice became scornful. "They said 'Yes, Father,'



and 'No, Father,' at what they took to be the right places. And I gave them a routine punishment."

The priest looked at Mr. Wagner with real embarrassment. "It was a failure, John, a grievous failure. They didn't understand a word I said. I had thought the academy might send Mr. Rubin an apology. But one insult is enough, more than enough. You see, the letter would be signed by Father Quinlan, since he is the principal."

"Why not?" said Mr. Wagner.

Father Costello said softly: "I heard Father Quinlan only last week use the same word that Burke wrote on Mr. Rubin's window."

Mr. Wagner rose from the kneeler of the *prie-dieu*. A bell was ringing in the corridor, which meant it was time to go to the refectory for the evening meal.

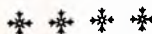
"What will you tell Brother Morrissey?" asked Mr. Wagner, moving toward the door.

Father Costello sat motionless on the window sill. "To pray for us, John, all of us. For the ignorant children and those who teach them. I shall ask him to pray for those among us who are second-rate and presumptuous and purblind. Brother Morrissey is an old man of wonderful innocence. But he will understand."

Mr. Wagner had the door opened, and asked from the threshold: "Are you coming to the refectory?"

Father Costello leaned his head against the window pane, his eyes searching the lights and shadows in the street. "John," he said, "this is a wearing post, and I doubt I'm the man for it. Do you think I should ask for a change?"

"I shouldn't," Mr. Wagner said, closing the door.



Free-Lance Writing Is Risky

M. SCOTT KENYON

DOCTOR JOHNSON once made a *mot* to the effect that nothing is worth writing unless it is written for money. Few writers, I am convinced, would take exception to this; but, the unfortunate fact is that it has become increasingly difficult these days to sell one's writing. Rates for material, it is true, have never been higher than they are today, but never has there been so much competition. "Professionals" (and I use the word with some hesitation) are not only competing with each other, but with hordes of newcomers. As one harassed editor remarked not long ago, "I often think I don't know a soul who isn't, or who doesn't want to be, a writer."

This is due, I think, to a concept which has grown almost to the stature of a national myth. Most people seem to regard writing as a profession which requires no particular skill or talent, and the writer as one who lives on a level somewhere between those of a maharajah and of a movie star. The gossip columns faithfully report the tremendous sums paid to writers by the movies and the book clubs; magazines of the *haute couture* show writers' wives, or lady writers, wearing mink coats and posing with their basenjis on the grounds of miniature Taj Mahals in Bucks County. The public is convinced that this is the way all writers live. Since I first became a member of the uneasy and anonymous throng of free-lance writers, I've never once gone back to my hometown but that some old friend has nudged me and leered, "Say, what a soft touch you got. Guess you picked up a pile on that last story, eh? How much did you get for it, anyhow?"

The ideas of the soft touch, and the big money, and the easy life of the writer seem more firmly implanted in the American mind than the Ten Commandments. People seldom ask a grocer or a doctor how much he earns, but they never hesitate to inquire into the thickness of the writer's wallet. Furthermore, they are convinced that writing is easy. "You know," a plumber will say, "I've often thought that I could get into the writing game—but I never seem to find time to sit down and write." (A friend of mine used to have a stock answer for this. "You know," he would say, "I often think that I could fill teeth, or pull them—but I never seem to get around to it." His joke usually didn't come off.)

The starving writer is no longer fashionable—he is as dated as Monopoly or miniature golf. He can be seen, from time to time, in the movies, where nothing is real—but nobody believes in him. All writers are rich: the writer's magazines say so, and so do the advertisements in the big family journals. MAKE BIG MONEY WRITING, they are headed, and below there is a squinty snapshot of a woman in Athens, Tennessee, who testifies: "Before I had finished the fifth lesson in Professor Strangle's writing course, I had sold seven stories and four factual articles to the slicks. Total: $9,000. Not bad for a beginner!"

Not bad, indeed, and not likely. The starving writer is still very much alive, as I—and at least six others I know—can verify: and his life, particularly in his formative years, is often dismally unhappy. Writers are seldom created overnight by correspondence courses or by classes at the New School for Social Research. Except in isolated cases of pure luck (as those of Margaret Mitchell, Taylor Caldwell, and Betty MacDonald, to mention only three), young writers usually have difficulties beyond belief.

My own case is an example, and I offer this not for sympathy but as proof. In December, 1946, I had a job that paid $125 per week. I liked it well enough, but it was a job that went home with me in the evenings and left too little time for writing. From 1943 on, I had been publishing with some regularity in magazines that paid well: I had received as much as $1,000 for a story. Every week or so a note from an editor would arrive, asking if I had written any new stories. The time had come, I

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thought, to quit my job and devote all my time to writing.

At that time, I had around $1200, and my wife and I thought we could get by comfortably on $300 per month. In the span of four months, I reasoned, I should be able to sell a story which would tide us over a month or so more, then another story, and so on.

It sounded like a good plan, but several factors kept it from working out. For one thing, I had never reckoned with the tremendous competition, which, incidentally, had increased since the war. For another, I never stopped to consider that editorial needs might fluctuate; that a story might be bought, simply because a magazine had need of that kind of story, not necessarily because of merit. Nor did I realize that the necessity of making one's writing pay can often have a deleterious effect upon the writing itself.

During the war, and immediately afterward, the stories I sold were "honest" stories; that is to say, they were written as well as I knew how to write them, on subjects which seemed to me interesting and important. I never had stooped to the slick-magazine boy-meets-girl formulas. But what I did not know, when I began free-lancing, was that during the war most magazines, even the big "slicks," had been willing to experiment, simply because many of their old stand-by writers were inactive, and because there was a great shortage of competently written material. With the coming of peace and the return of the old hands, most magazines reverted to their prewar demands. The formulas were reinstated.

I wrote three or four stories, all as good, I thought, as anything I had ever done. I sent them out. Within a very short time, they began coming back with notes like this: "We might have bought this a year ago, but we're looking for love stories now." Or, "A little too raw for our taste." Or, "We're heavily stocked with war stories, and the public doesn't want to read them. How about trying us again with this in a year or so?"

I borrowed money enough to go on writing for another couple of months. I had never "gone commercial," but now I resolved to try. The stories in the big magazines were so insipid that it seemed anybody with a certain sense of language, if he held his nose, might be able to write them. I turned out five or six bright, flip, boy-girl comedies. One by one they went to the magazines, and one by one they came back. I didn't know, at the time, that in order to write anything successfully, a man has to believe in it. (This is one of the fundamental truths. Hack writers may say they don't respect the work they do for a living; but I contend—and this is backed up by many other writers—that if they didn't believe in it, it wouldn't ring true and no one would buy it.)

It now seemed that there was no market for anything I wrote, and gradually I began to lose confidence in my own ability. I wondered if possibly the sales I had made previously might not have been flukes. Every time I sat down to write a story, something seemed to go wrong. The words didn't come out right: if it was supposed to be a comedy, it wasn't funny; if it was meant to be something more somber, gags kept creeping in. I lay awake wondering what was the matter with my work, I snapped at my wife and was rude to friends. I was going deeper into debt, and I soon reached a point where I was almost convinced that I was not cut out to be a writer (much less a *successful* writer).

I HAD earned almost nothing in the year since I quit my job and I began looking around desperately for odd writing chores. I knew the editor of a literary weekly, and went to see him. "We'll give you some books to do," he said, magnanimously, "but you'll have to be content with some 'dogs' first." Thus, for a time, I reviewed all the books on jazz and all the collections of supernatural stories.

Free-lance book reviewing is the worst-paying occupation on earth. The magazine I worked for paid off on publication, and often didn't print reviews for five or six months after I'd turned them in. When the check finally came, it was almost insulting: $12.50 for a 500-word piece.

That wasn't the all-time low, however. I once had a check from a metropolitan newspaper for a job that had taken me four days—three days to read the book and one full day to write the review. This check, in a plain brown envelope, was for $6.00.

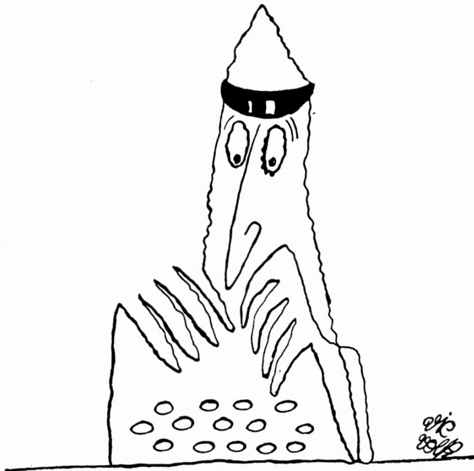
Since it seemed obvious that I couldn't make a living at reviewing, I thought next of ghost writing. My agent got me a job writing an article for a law journal which had been assigned to a businessman. I spent five days with the man and four days reading material, and ultimately produced a piece which, as an apologia for free private enterprise, would have done credit to a publicity man for the NAM. I was so ashamed that I felt guilty about taking the man's $100, and I resolved never to do anything of the kind again. I was somewhat cheered, however, a few weeks later, when I bumped into another writer on the street. I knew he had taken a ghosting job, and asked him what it was and how he liked it. "Oh, it's swell," he said, bitterly. "It's a kind of public-relations pamphlet for an insane asylum."

Ultimately it became clear that I would have to get a part-time job, so I applied for an instructorship at a local college. A few months later I was hired as a teacher of creative writing. The irony of this—the unsuccessful writer teaching others to write—didn't strike me fully at the time, and somehow it still doesn't seem funny. Today I am still free-lancing, and I am still in debt.

I have spent considerable space on my own case because it is the one I know best. But there are others, sadder stories, of which that of a writer I will call Gerald Nordlaw is perhaps the most enlightening. Nordlaw began writing in 1942, with considerable success. He published first in *Story,* then later in *Kenyon Review* and finally in the *Saturday Evening Post, Collier's, Good*

Housekeeping and others. He had a fine, unusual wit, warmth, and a strange, rather European style. He sold the first eighteen stories he wrote, one right after the other. Then, suddenly, nobody wanted his work any more.

The letters from the editors were uniform: "We like your writing, but this story doesn't quite work out for us." A full year went by without a sale, and in that time Nordlaw spent all the money he had in the bank. He became more and more worried and confused. He was



writing the same kind of stories he had always done, but now the notes from editors were saying, simply, "Not for us." He moved to the country, hoping it would help him concentrate. Nothing happened. He went on long binges, and two or three times wound up in jail.

He then took a series of odd jobs. He became first a process server, receiving $1.50 for every summons he was able to deliver. He worked as a pin boy in a bowling alley. Then, one day, an editor, who had come across one of his stories in an old anthology, wrote him a note asking if he had anything new. Nordlaw sent him a story which the editor had rejected the year before. The editor bought it, and asked for more.

Nordlaw then began to get hold of himself. He still had to take odd jobs to stay alive—for a week, his one suit of clothes being black, he worked as a professional pallbearer. Gradually, however, he was learning that there had been nothing at all the matter with the stories he had written the year before. It was simply that no one wanted them *then*. Not long ago, he told me that he has since sold everything he wrote during the "dry" period.

Almost the same thing happened to a lady writer I know. She wrote nine stories in her first year, and sold them all. The second year she wrote nine more, and sold none. She gave up writing, until someone suggested that she try sending the stories around again. This time—more than two years later—seven out of the nine were accepted.

Quite often a story will not be bought because it has failed to find a proper market. I had one that was turned down by seventeen magazines. As a last resort, without much confidence, I sent it to the *Atlantic*. It was purchased almost immediately.

There is often a long gap of this kind between the actual writing of a story and the time it is sold. I have heard of stories which took two or three years to find a market, simply because the thirteen or fourteen magazines to which they were submitted took so long to reject or to report. From the free-lance writer's point of view there seems to be no justification for any magazine holding a manuscript longer than a week—but there is nothing he can do about an editor who decides to keep one a month or even longer.

Another difficulty facing the free-lance writer is the matter of payment. Most of the big magazines pay on acceptance—although not too promptly (sometimes it takes weeks for a check to come through)—but a few hold off until they have actually printed the material. This sometimes means that months go by between acceptance and payment. I have one story that was accepted by a well-known literary quarterly three years ago; I still haven't been paid, because the editor, in his own words, "hasn't been able to work it in."

MANY writers spend an inordinate amount of time on projects which never bring any financial return whatever. My favorite example of this concerns two writers who were approached by a reputable agent, who had managed to get the radio rights to a famous story which he was planning to use in a series of weekly half-hour broadcasts. The writers agreed somewhat reluctantly to work on the script in the agent's office although there would be no payment until the program was sold to a network.

Everything went smoothly the first few weeks. Each morning at eleven o'clock, the agent would summon them to his private office and bring out a bottle of whisky. At one o'clock he would take them to an expensive restaurant for more drinks, vichyssoise and swordfish steak, or vichyssoise and eggs benedict. After lunch they all would retire to the agent's office for a reading of the script. The agent became more and more enthusiastic by the day. "It's a cinch," he would say. "It can't miss." Out would come the bottle of whisky, and everybody would have another drink.

By the time the script was finished, the agent was talking in terms of five hundred dollars a week each. But when the writers timidly asked for a small advance, the conversation took a rather different turn. "Of course," he said, "you can't tell about these things." Four months went by, and one network offered to buy the show on a sustaining basis. The agent would not sell, preferring to hold out for a sponsor. Eventually, all interest along Radio Row died, and by the time the agent decided to

sell the show as a sustainer, the network too had lost interest. The writers never realized a cent from their work; never realized anything, as one of them put it to me, but a hell of a lot of vichyssoise.

Few young writers, when they embark upon a "career" of free-lancing, ever stop to consider the mathematical odds against their making a decent living. If they did, they would hold fast to their part- or full-time jobs. Making a living is difficult, not only for the writer who wants to do original, thoughtful, "honest" stories, but also for the writer of slick stories.

An editor of a popular weekly magazine told me not long ago that he receives about six thousand story manuscripts in the mail each week. The magazine prints six pieces of fiction, including two serial-installments. Any comment on these figures would be superfluous, and so would a comment on the "quality" monthly, which receives five thousand manuscripts per month and can purchase only two.

The requirements of magazines are constantly shifting, as I have already mentioned. They are determined by the number of stories on hand, the kinds of stories that the readers seem to like, the tastes of the editors (staffs seldom remain static for long periods of time; editors are a peripatetic group and like to move from magazine to magazine).

The free-lance writer is utterly at the mercy of the editor. Not, mark you, the editor's policy, but the editor himself. A story may be rejected because an editor's stomach is unsettled, or because he had an argument with his wife before he came to work. A woman I know, who

used to sell a lot of material in the twenties and thirties, once told me that she never believed an editor's first negative decision: "I just keep sending the story back," she said, "and pretty soon the editor gets to thinking he wrote it himself."

In fairness to the editors, it must be said that they do show every consideration to the young, unpublished writer. Although most magazines use the printed rejection slip, now and then an editor will write a personal note of encouragement to a writer of promise, asking to see more stories; or he will suggest changes that might make the story saleable. There is a widespread belief among non-writers that most editors don't read material which comes in "unsolicited": that is, material not sent by an agent or by a former contributor. I don't know of a single magazine which does this as a matter of policy.

Editors are constantly on the lookout for new talent, and at least one mass-circulation monthly requires that the editor-in-chief read everything that comes in before any members of the staff see it. Nothing delights an editor more than to come across a genuine new talent in the "slush" pile, and to buy a story written by a newcomer. The first three or four stories I sold were sent "cold" to magazines, and the rates I was paid were as high as those I would have received if an agent had submitted the material.

Although all writers have trouble finding markets, the "serious" writer is in a particularly difficult spot. To begin with, there are only about fifteen magazines in existence which will print the story that does not conform to the formula. The list includes *Atlantic, Harper's, Mademoiselle, New Yorker, Promenade, Script, Story, Town and Country,* and a few others. Every once in a while, off-trail stories turn up in *Collier's, Cosmopolitan, Good Housekeeping, Saturday Evening Post,* and *Today's Woman,* but this is exceptional rather than common.

If a writer specializes in fiction and wants to earn at least $200 per month, the limitations of the markets require that he write twelve stories in a year and sell them all, for the average payment in most of the markets listed above is around $200. This means that the writer must write and sell twelve stories a year. This is a high figure; many writers produce no more than eight or nine, and some even less than that. Every writer is bound to do some work that will not find a market for one reason or another. Add to this the length of time it often takes for a story to find a home; add, too, the competition, not only from well-established writers, both here and abroad, but from hundreds of talented newcomers, and the odds against making a living mount higher.

ON many occasions, the limitations of the markets for the "serious" writer have done irreparable damage to young people of promise. One man I know, disgusted that his stories were not selling, took to writing for the pulp magazines. He soon found that he could turn out three stories every ten or twelve days, and that the pulps would buy them at prices which enabled him to live quite comfortably. Everything was going along well until he sat down one day and attempted to do a story he had been thinking about for some time, a "serious" story. He found, to his bewilderment, that he couldn't seem to write anything but the clichés and hackneyed expressions that he used in his cops-and-robbers pieces. More than three years have passed since he began his pulp activities, and he has not written anything worth while since then; he now regards himself as a hack and is resigned, if not

contented. There are few cases on record, however, of writers who have been able to write slick-magazine stuff consistently and yet go on producing first-rate fiction.

The working life of the writer is neither settled nor pleasant. Perhaps its only advantage is that the writer is, in a manner of speaking, his own employer. Yet it is not always possible for him to direct his own activities, for, as we have already seen, his sales depend largely on the requirements of his markets. In many cases, a good idea for a story or an article must be put aside simply because another, less attractive one has a better chance of winding up in print.

The writer's life is usually either unbearably lonely or nerve-rackingly full of people. If he is fortunate enough to have a working-place to himself, the chances are that his very isolation and lack of communication with other humans will begin to plague him. "There is nothing worse," a well-known humorist once said to me, "than to sit in a cold room early in the morning, facing the typewriter, and to realize that your life, and your family's,

depends on the words you are about to put down on paper."

If the writer has no separate, secret working-place, and has to pound his machine at home, he is interrupted by his wife, his children, the telephone, salesmen, people looking for apartments—anybody who happens to come along. But the greatest menace is the friend who drops in casually at any time, working on the premise that, since the writer is a writer, his time is his own and he doesn't really *do* anything for a living. Almost as bad are the misguided souls who ask him to read manuscripts on the theory that the writer always must possess some mysterious "in" with an editor: and if the writer will merely endorse a manuscript, its chances for sale will be enhanced. Nothing, of course, could be further from the truth; an editor will usually read a manuscript that a writer has recommended, but he will never buy it unless it stands upon its own merits.

There are other, more insidious and less tangible things with which all writers have to contend. One is the constant dread that he may "go dry": that some day he will awaken and find himself without a thought or an idea he can use as the basis of a saleable piece. The writer who has lost his touch, or has written himself out, so to speak, is so common as to be hardly deserving of comment. Only a few men and women—W. Somerset Maugham is an example—can go on year after year producing work which the public will want to read; and this includes the hacks as well as serious writers.

There is also the temporary dry spell; that period in which, for some mysterious reason, the writer's words simply will not go down on paper in a way that seems right. Nobody has ever been able to explain the dry spell, or to concoct a formula for its cure. Different writers handle it in different ways. I know one man who, when he feels an arid period coming on, goes on a bender; and another who simply tries not to think about writing, busying himself in his garden or working at some odd job around the house.

On the highest level there is also the sober fact that some writers must work for years before they are appreciated or read: before they "catch on." There is the classic example of Hawthorne, who did not publish a line for twelve years after he began writing steadily; and that of Henry James, who, despite his current popularity, was virtually unappreciated during his lifetime, to such an extent, in fact, that Mrs. Wharton once requested that part of the royalties from her novels be applied to James' account.

Actually, there is no peace, and no real solution, for the free-lance writer, except to become a best seller. Rockefeller and Guggenheim and Saxton grants provide only for a few lucky ones, and usually only for periods of no more than two years. It is almost impossible to make a living at the insecure, often insincere, business of book reviewing. Teaching jobs are scarce, and usually take too much time and effort in correcting themes and compositions. Hack-work and ghosting are distasteful, and may well be harmful to the writer's own projects. On top of all this, there are all the occupational worries and doubts to which he is subject.

This insecurity is bound to have a peculiar effect on the mind of the writer. I was struck by this not long ago when I overheard a conversation between two writers in a Greenwich Village bar. One of them had just returned from a six-month trip across the country. He was explaining to his friend how he had solved the housing problem. He had his clothes and books at one friend's house and his record collection at another's. He got his mail at a local bistro; and he worked on his novel in the mornings at an artist's studio when the artist was away. In the afternoons, he explained, he worked at the Public Library, or sometimes, if the weather was nice, he wrote on a park bench. And he slept on a couch at another friend's apartment.

His friend listened gravely to this account and nodded. "Well," he said innocently, "it's nice to know that you're settled."

Hello, Darlings

MORTON FINEMAN

THREE days after Paul and his wife met him at Angela's cocktail party, Daan descended from the Stamford local at the Rye station with two heavy suitcases to be their house guest. A moment later, sitting erectly in the coupé between his friends, Daan murmured, "You two are such darlings to domicile a wanderer like myself." His dark eyes were round as saucers and his mouth, even smiling, was a pale, small, wilted thing. An oversize Panama hat rested in his lap.

Paul smiled at Daan's elaborate English as he drove the coupé away from the station. A blond-haired, strongly built man in his early thirties, Paul had the solid shoulders of an athlete. A fair game of tennis and a respectable crawl, however, were the extent of his athletic prowess. He was not very tall, but he moved alertly and spoke in a deep, pleasantly emphatic voice, giving an illusion of competence that he rarely felt. "In Mira's hands," he said, "everyone's life becomes an effortless thing." Slowing down for a traffic light in the village, he continued, "Angela's parties bring people good luck. I saw Mira for the first time at her apartment."

Mira laughed, contradicting him fondly, "I saw *you,*" and then explained to Daan, "Angela told me a man was coming, who played the cello beautifully and who'd met Schoenberg and Stravinsky in Hollywood. But when I met Paul, all he talked about were the Yankees . . . that's a baseball team," she added, noticing the puzzled look on Daan's face.

"Ah, does a game make you happy?" Daan asked Paul. His voice was soft, politely incredulous.

"Only Mira makes me happy," Paul replied. "Talking about baseball was a joke." He was intensely aware of Daan; in the quiet, abrupt question, he apprehended a tacit effort at sympathy mingled with the undertones of reproach. Then, falling silent, as Mira chatted with Daan, Paul thought of what Angela had told them about their guest. Daan had recognized him immediately at Angela's party, although he had not seen Paul since they'd gone to school together in Amsterdam, and he had plunged into an embarrassingly tragic monologue about all the friends they had once shared.

Daan's father had been a Dutch importer who had married a slight, taciturn Portuguese woman during one of his trips to Java. Daan was her only child, and when she decided suddenly to abandon her husband and his country, which she never had liked, to return to Java, she took Daan with her. Daan was then seventeen, and for weeks the whole incident was a scandalous topic of conversation among all the middle-class boys at the school.

During the war, while Paul had been fighting in Europe, the Japanese had interned Daan in a camp near Bangkok, for reasons that Angela had not made clear, and for a long time after his release he had been very sick. News of this, coming fitfully and inaccurately to Shanghai, where Daan's wife lived, had in the end shattered her nerves completely and made it necessary for her to be placed in a sanitarium. Daan wanted to return to Shanghai as soon as he could reclaim part of his money that was still enmeshed in international red tape.

But what Paul remembered most clearly, easing the coupé now along the short driveway to the garage, was the certainty in Angela's voice that he, more than anyone she knew, would divine the extent of woe that shadowed Daan's history. It was Mira, however, who had responded with the proposal that they invite Daan to their home, since it was impossible for him to stay at Angela's apartment during the summer. Mira was eight years younger than Paul. The difference gave a passionate edge to his love and engendered his fond tolerance of her sweeping forays into the world, her magical sense of utility. Faced by Mira's enthusiasm and Angela's commiserative eyes, he had acquiesced.

The next day, Saturday, was the first of the really hot days of summer. Mira had to go into New York on a late morning train, and Paul, left with Daan, suggested they visit the beach, which was several blocks from the house.

Daan looked grave before assenting. "Of course, I do

MORTON FINEMAN *lives in Philadelphia where he works in an administrative capacity for the Marine Corps, and is a reviewer for the* Philadelphia Inquirer. *Stories by Mr. Fineman have appeared in* Harper's Bazaar, Story, Accent *and* Cross Section.

not swim, dear Paul. I am rather a dead fish in the water."

"When I was fourteen," Paul said, "my family went to southern France for a holiday, and one afternoon I nearly drowned in the Mediterranean. An Englishman fished me out. Water frightened me for years afterward."

"But no longer?" Daan asked.

Paul had been intending to finish with this childhood incident by some appropriate, offhand jest, but Daan's humorless, solemn question affected his mood, and he replied seriously. "We overcome many fears. Perhaps by survival alone, I sometimes think; by finding the reassurances of the commonplace."

Daan wore street clothes to the beach. Paul left him sitting on the blanket. The water of the Sound licked about Paul's ankles, sending tremors along his legs. He was glad suddenly to be alone in the water, and thought lazily how everything here was part of the summer ceremonial, open to view, inviting participation, and of the day, as a loose-jointed animal. Now the water rose almost to Paul's waist, and he began to swim toward the red painted float where he rested for several minutes before coming back to Daan.

"You swim most handsomely," Daan observed, as Paul dried his face and short blond hair with a towel and put on sunglasses. "Really most handsomely, indeed."

"I'm a stone compared to some of these young people. You should see Mira in the water; she was captain of the swimming team at college." He laughed and stretched out on the blanket, lit a cigarette, and closed his eyes. It was a trick that helped keep such a time flawless and let him think only of the sun, the water, and the infinite, sheltering sky. Dance music from portable radios brushed the shining air like an intimate hand. Bright voices filled out Paul's consciousness and, as always, he yielded to them. The echo of these American voices prefigured Mira, and now Paul desired her, loved her anew. Need for her worked upon him like the soft, feathering sunlight. He opened his eyes to see that Daan had not stirred from that original, cross-legged position on a corner of the blanket. Underneath the panama, which he insisted upon wearing, Daan's face was in shadow, and Paul had the feeling that he was unaware of the spaces of the beach and the long, luxurious folds of sunlight.

"Well," Paul asked, "how do you like our beach?"

Daan's narrow, thin shoulders moved beneath his white rayon shirt. "We are alone here, dear Paul." Then, as if he saw deeply into a real world beyond the broad, gregarious one in which he sat with Paul, Daan murmured, "How extraordinary to think that . . . is it not?"

"No," Paul said and sat up as if to meet Daan defiantly. "It is something I do not wish to think about." He had the presentiment of being impelled into the orbit of this exotic, wretched little man who prowled back and forth along the boundaries of happiness, alive with recollected suffering.

"But it is upon us, beating with fists all the time," Daan protested, locking his fingers together nervously. And then he said, more slowly. "But perhaps what I think is largely philosophical is largely melodramatic self-sorrow?" He grinned with wry condescension and pondered the many beach scenes, asking, "Do you feel in acceptance of all this?"

"Yes," Paul said, following his gaze.

"Ah, you do not speak the entire truth," Daan said with sad triumph.

"The entire truth destroys us," Paul replied angrily. "It is foolish for us to even try to consider it. Even when I was in the army and thought now, at last, I could look the entire truth in the face, all I could remember was that my family had been killed and that I was left with nothing. That was the entire truth and I could not change it. Sometimes I was brave and wanted revenge, and I was glad to be a soldier. But most of the time I was a coward and the entire truth you are talking about frightened me." Paul felt himself drawing close to Daan in that old solitude; being joined again with him to the wars, the camps, and the deaths. The garment of the victim that Paul sought to fling off was being offered again by his companion as the entire truth.

Daan's round eyes blinked and gleamed with sorrowing lights, and he finally murmured with timid persistence, "It is only because I was thinking of what Angela told me about your music, dear Paul. You would have been on the concert stage—only there was your tragedy."

"Listen, Daan." Paul said coldly, "Angela is a kind, generous person, but she is also a goddamned fool. I'll tell you about my music. My father wanted a musical genius for a son, so I had to take music lessons. When I came to this country, after the war, a friend offered me a job with an orchestra and I took it because I needed money. The orchestra was very bad, fortunately; otherwise, I would not have been able to keep my job. We had to travel all the time and I did not want that; I wanted to stay in one place and lead the kind of life my father had before the war." Paul rose to his feet, and squinted toward the water, glassy and brilliant in the sunlight. "That was two years ago; before I married Mira. For her sake I gave up bad orchestras." The angry tones faded from Paul's voice. "Just now I'm in the mood for lunch. A couple of sandwiches and some beer. The day is much too fine to talk about the entire truth, Daan."

THAT evening, when they were all sitting on the lawn, Mira announced that she wanted ice cream. Paul grinned, rose and kissed her quickly on the mouth, and then drove the coupé into the village.

After Paul had gone, Mira asked Daan, "Did you enjoy the beach today?" She refilled his glass with iced tea and fresh mint.

"I am so afraid that I offended Paul and spoiled his pleasure at the beach." Daan said, nodding appreciatively as Mira handed him the full glass.

Mira put down the pitcher and confronted Daan with

a smile of amused disbelief. "How could you possibly offend Paul?"

"I introduced a most unfortunate subject—Paul's music," Daan said. "Foolishly, I repeated what dear Angela had told me, and he denied everything in a very angry manner. Poor Angela—he called her a fool. But I was really the fool for talking, wasn't I, Mira darling?"

"Paul dislikes the truth about his music," Mira confessed. "Angela was telling you the truth. Paul had fine possibilities. But he lost everything during the war, and most of all—time. It was too hard for him to go back. Sometimes he makes me feel that he'll never be able to forget how everything might have been."

"Oh, it is all so tragical," Daan cried out, as if he would weep. "To have nothing left and to try so hard to be what you are not."

They stopped talking and, from the shadows of the darkened lawn, watched the moths that whipped around the porch light until Paul returned from the village. Mira served the ice cream and they ate it, listening to a record-

ing of *Don Giovanni* on the radio. Daan's voice came forth, at the end, from the depths of the low, canvas-strung beach chair in which he reclined: he adored Mozart. Paul opened his eyes and stared at Daan, but could not see his face clearly and missed the serene, fixed gaze of the round eyes that were full of a vision of complicity.

On weekday mornings, Paul and Mira left together for their respective jobs in New York, and Daan was alone in the bungalow. He tended Mira's small garden with much care and skill; most of the day he kept the radio on, filling the house with a musical background to his leisurely activities. He read omnivorously, sitting under the long eave of the porch out of the sunlight.

Twice a week, Daan spent hours writing a long letter in French to his wife on airmail tissues; his wife's letters were also written in French, and Daan made an event out of them when they came. They were, he said apologetically, all he had to share with his benefactors. Frequently, as he read aloud a letter from his wife, he paused to smile at Paul and Mira, his eyes pleading luminously for sympathetic consideration of these intimate disclosures. As Paul listened, he thought of Daan as being helplessly anomalous, forever looking backward, and he dared not analyze too closely the uneasiness he felt during those moments.

One morning toward the end of summer, Paul caught the usual train into New York, but Mira stayed at home to wait for the carpenter who was coming to look at the summer shed behind the kitchen that needed repairing. Daan was sleeping. After the carpenter left, Mira phoned for a taxi to take her to the station; Paul had used the coupé. Then she changed her clothes, and emerged from the bedroom to see that the mail had arrived and the taxi was just slowing down before the house. There was a letter from Daan's wife, which she placed on the coffee table for him, and went out.

WHEN Paul and Mira returned home that afternoon, they were confronted at the door by Daan's grief-stricken face. "My wife is considerably worse," he wailed in Dutch to Paul. He grasped Paul's hands fiercely and spoke in a shrill, anguished voice.

Mira, who did not understand Dutch, asked worriedly, "What is it, Paul?"

"Bad news about his wife in the letter he got today," Paul answered, and tried, as gently as possible, to loosen Daan's clutching fingers. Daan refused to let go.

"Let us read the letter, Daan," Mira asked.

"Yes," Paul said. "Where is the letter?"

"Somewhere," Daan cried, "I cannot say . . . Oh, my dear, dear wife."

"I can't find it," Mira exclaimed a few minutes later in a tense, frightened voice. She stared at Daan and began to cry. The sight of tears evoked a paroxysm of grief in Daan.

With an obvious attempt at calm reasonableness, Paul said, "Daan, we can't tell how bad your wife is unless we read the letter. Where is it?"

"Oh, please," Daan moaned. "Oh, please. I am troublesome and tragical for you."

"The damned little fool probably burned the letter, or did something equally ridiculous," Paul said.

"Paul!" Mira cried. "Now really, Paul!"

"All right," Paul said. "All right, I'll keep my big mouth shut."

Daan raised his head imploringly. "Forgive me, darling Paul?"

"I forgive you," Paul said shortly, pushing his fingers through his short blond hair as he watched Daan. "I'm going to get myself a bottle of beer before this insanity becomes general." A shocked, rebuking look filled Mira's eyes as Paul went into the kitchen and stayed there, drinking the beer from the bottle.

Daan did not eat dinner, and much later that night, when they were lying in bed, Paul and Mira could hear him weeping. It was a faint, dry, continuous sound, beating against the door of their room.

"Paul, what can we do?" Mira asked in a troubled voice.

Paul looked from the windows stained with late summer moonlight to his wife. Her dark hair was knotted into shoulder length braids. "There's nothing to be done," he replied.

"Why don't we call the sanitarium and find out?" Mira said.

"If you wish." Paul's voice was low and full of dry overtones. "Such a dramatic act is bound to appeal to Daan's histrionic nature."

Mira swung her tanned legs to the floor and stood up. "That's what I'll do," she announced decisively. "We should have thought of this before."

"Better close the door to the living room," Paul suggested. "If Daan hears you, we'll have him on our hands all night."

The quietness of Paul's voice made her pause and look at him hesitantly; then, suddenly, she knelt beside the bed, touching his face. "You really don't like our being involved this way, do you, Paul?"

Paul shook his head. "Being involved is something we can't help. It is a form of decency I wish to keep always. But it is the hysteria, the weaknesses I don't like. Daan," he continued, uttering the thoughts he had had ever since that first afternoon on the beach, "Daan belongs to me much more than to you. The kind of pity he wants can only come from me, and Daan knows it."

"The whole thing is ghastly," Mira said.

Paul smiled at her expression and wished that he could summarize everything with such an intense, innocent naïveté; it came, he knew, from the kind of strength neither he nor Daan would ever possess again. "Go ahead," he said. "Make the call, and then you'll feel better."

When Mira returned, she closed the bedroom door, as Paul gestured caution, and exclaimed, "Absolutely nothing is wrong with her." Mira stood close to the bed, looking down at Paul, and smiled uncertainly as if not quite able to organize her emotions and thoughts. "I honestly don't understand it."

"Who told you that?"

"Her doctor. If anything, he said, she's been improving the past few months."

Paul brought down his arm from behind his head and said tenderly, "Now you can stop worrying and go to sleep."

"Poor Daan, I don't know whether to be angry at him, or relieved," Mira sighed and lay down beside Paul.

LONG after Mira had fallen asleep, Paul lay awake, full of insomnious, harassing thoughts, wishing that they had never met Daan. He raised himself on one elbow and stared at Mira. She had left him with Daan in the night. He admired her capacity for sleep, for youthful confidence in her husband, smiling grimly at the sudden image of himself and Daan as curious duelists in the night. And now Paul had to confess silently how much Daan had discovered about him, offering the status of kinship with less and less guile. He wished to repudiate Daan; yet he knew with sinking clarity that one never really stood finally apart, for then the other, the ghostly prompter, cried out at the criminality of separateness, and the other lurked everywhere.

When at last Paul gave up trying to sleep and got out of bed, full of a restless, tense wakefulness, he thought how quiet the house had become, and then realized that Daan had stopped weeping. Distrustfully, he paused before Daan's room and listened, but no sound came from within. He pushed open the door carefully to see if Daan was asleep. The bed was empty.

Immediately Paul responded to a deep, frantic sense of alarm, and brought out his clothes as quietly as possible. He dressed in the living room and wrote a note for Mira, standing for a moment to gaze hard at the paper. It was cold, unavoidable proof that he intended to search for Daan; yet the words said only that he had been unable to sleep and was going out for a walk.

In the deserted streets, the image of himself and Daan as duelists filled his mind again, and Paul felt outwitted by a simpering, elusive antagonist whose weapons were a pair of piteous eyes, a full complement of piteous truths. He found himself thinking that Daan was searching for him, and when he stood on the sloping curve of sand that ended in dark, still water, he wished he could tell himself bluntly and finally that such a notion was absurd.

He walked across the beach toward the sand bar and the amusement area beyond where the Ferris wheel rose high in the air, resembling an enormous black plate turned on its edge. He fought with himself to be calm. Several times he cried Daan's name. The wild, stark thought that Daan had committed suicide matched the

answering silence, and now he loathed Daan. The other duelist inhabited the night.

The beam of a flashlight stabbed Paul's eyes.

"Was that you calling a minute ago? I thought I recognized your voice." The beach watchman walked toward Paul across the sand, his voice full of amiable curiosity. The flashlight went out.

"I didn't know you were still here, Harry."

"I come and go all night." The watchman laughed. "It's sure a pretty night for walking. Say . . . that little foreigner you've got living at your house—that was him you were calling, wasn't it? I saw him come along here about an

hour ago. Walked clear up to the sand bar, then turned around and left like he forgot something."

"Yes," Paul said. "He went out and we thought he'd got lost, Harry. But I guess he'll find his way back all right. If you want company, I'll go back with you."

Mira found Paul the next morning asleep on the couch. "That must have been some walk, darling," she said, waking him. Paul smiled tightly; she patted him on the face and went briskly into the kitchen. Paul sat rubbing his eyes; he felt stiff and exhausted. Last night, he had laid down on this couch, swearing violently to himself, determined to wait for Daan, and toward morning had fallen asleep, dreaming that Daan was pursuing him across an endless beach.

Paul rose to his feet and went to the kitchen. Mira was cutting oranges for breakfast juice. "I'm going to take a shower," he said. "Has Daan come back?"

"I didn't know he was out."

"I went out to look for him," Paul confessed. "I'll see if he's in his room."

Daan snored lightly and peacefully. The pillow made a white frame for his round, sallow face. Paul closed the door, muttering, "The little sonofabitch."

"Is he there?" Mira asked from the kitchen.

"Oh, yes," Paul said. "Fast asleep."

"What happened, Paul?"

"It's a long story," Paul declared wearily. "But everything will be fine. From now on, things will happen the way I want them to. I can't live with hysteria, Mira. It's difficult enough to believe in happiness when everything is peaceful." He went into the shower and left Mira staring after him silently.

Daan was still asleep as Paul and Mira sat down to breakfast. Paul was deliberately uncommunicative while he ate. Daan appeared when they were almost finished. He had put on a white linen suit; he looked immune to perspiration and fatigue. "Hello, darlings," he said. "I slept more than customary, I am very much afraid."

"Daan," Mira said, "we called the sanitarium last night, and the doctor said your wife was fine."

"Doctors lie," Daan said slowly. "I know how doctors lie."

Paul watched him openly, hostilely; and Mira, nervous and apprehensive, said, "Paul is angry with you, Daan," as if the words would soothe her husband.

"But, darling Paul, what offense have I given you?" Daan asked.

"Don't look at me with those imploring eyes," Paul said. "I think we can admit that we understand each other."

"I give you assurances I am in the utmost confusion," Daan protested. "Darling Mira, please inform me what Paul means?"

"I will tell you," Paul said. "I refuse to let you feed upon my pity any longer. You don't want help, Daan. You want pity. You want pity and your own destruction. I want you to leave here."

"Where will I go? What will happen to me?" Daan cried.

"Go back to Angela."

"Paul," Mira said, "you shouldn't do this."

"Oh, yes, yes, darling Mira," Daan said, turning with hope to her. "Tell Paul he should not do this most terrible

thing. Tell him we are all together in this dreadful life." Daan sat down next to Mira and grasped her wrists.

Paul rose quickly and jerked Daan to his feet. "That is finished now," he said.

"I am afraid to leave," Daan screamed.

"You are afraid to live," Paul said.

"*I am afraid!*"

"Nevertheless, you will leave here."

Suddenly Daan thrust his face forward until the cords in his throat bulged, and spit on Paul. His thin shoulders began to heave; he moaned and covered his face with his hands, pleading forgiveness.

With a low cry of revulsion, Paul struck Daan on the face. It was not a hard blow, for even as his arm fell, Paul understood how much this final gesture exposed, and he tried to hold back. Daan stumbled and fell to the floor. Mira cried out and started toward him, but Paul took her arm. "If you want to do something, pack his suitcases. I'll call a taxi to take him to the station."

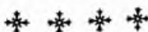
"Paul, you shouldn't have hit him, no matter what he did."

"I agree," Paul said. His voice trembled.

"This is all so cruel and ugly," Mira said.

"Believe me, this is the only thing left to do. You will see that I am right. Daan will leave when he learns there is no more pity for him here and go someplace else." Paul took his arm away from Mira's shoulder as she nodded mutely, and watched her go into the guest room to pack Daan's suitcases. Then Paul sat down to call the taxi service at the station.

Daan rose at last from the floor. His face was pallid, but the round, childlike eyes were filling with patience.



New Facts on FitzGerald and His Rubáiyát

PETER DE POLNAY

NOTWITHSTANDING his longevity, Edward FitzGerald as a poet had the quality of which thunderstorms are made. There is a contradiction because, though he worked slowly, in a leisurely manner, on *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám,* the effect of the quatrains still is that of the thunderclap. It must be admitted that he lives mostly by the *Rubáiyát,* and the *Letters* which are not read enough. Of his other works, *The Bird Parliament* is perhaps the best. He thought it was his best: but one is always exceedingly loyal to his second best. At a first glance, one would say that his was not an independent genius. If one looks at them rigidly, one can define his works as translations, with the exception of *Euphranor,* which would not qualify him as a genius. Even *Euphranor* is crowded with quotations from other thinkers and writers and most of the arguments are based on them. Yet he was no true translator. His translations are not accurate, nor in all sincerity did he wish them to be so. One could say that other people's writings and thoughts were his inspiration and, therefore, he should not be placed among the great, who wrote and thought independently. That is, I think, an unfair argument.

From April 1946 to September 1947, PETER DE POLNAY *lived with the spirit of Edward FitzGerald at Boulge, Suffolk, "next door to FitzGerald's grave." His on-the-spot research constitutes the most recent survey of the life and works of the translator of Omar Khayyám's* Rubáiyát. *This article will form a part of his book,* Into An Old Room, a Memoir of Edward FitzGerald, *which Creative Age Press will publish in the Spring. Born in Budapest, Mr. de Polnay has lived in England since childhood. He is the author of* The Umbrella Thorn, The Moot Point *and other novels.*

No creative artist is independent. Inspiration comes from outside for the creative machinery to receive it. The loss of his friend Hallam inspired Tennyson neither more nor less than Aeschylus inspired FitzGerald to render his *Agamemnon* into English. Once Arnold Bennett sat in a restaurant in Paris; an aging woman came in, and the sudden thought came to him that once that woman too must have been young. The thought enveloped the woman, and out of that episode Bennett brought forth his best novel: *Old Wives' Tale.* FitzGerald met Calderón in the shape of his works, and out of that meeting rose the six translations. He was as little independent as other creative artists, the one conspicuous difference being that with him it was not the person nor the landscape which inspired him; not even the misery of others: only their writings.

He was in his lazy fashion something of a scholar. His daydreams consisted not only of speculating on other people's vagaries and hidden lives but on the written word. His translations were not so much the desire to English foreign writers but to live with them, understand them and re-create them in English, the same way as Tennyson would desire to re-create and understand King Arthur.

Here, once again, one must dwell on FitzGerald's financial independence. If he had had to earn his living, which he surely would have wished to earn with writing, would he have branched out as a poet and writer who took inspiration not from books but from life itself? He said he was a translator in no need of money: yet, had he been in need of earning a literary income he might have translated more, he might have become a somewhat intolerant critic, but, on account of his money, neither a Tennyson nor a Thackeray was lost in him. It was the written word that made him rejoice, and so it would have been under whatever conditions he had lived.

It occurs to me that if someone should have asked FitzGerald why it was that Omar Khayyám, the lecherous old drunk, was congenial to him, he surely would have stared at him in amazement. For FitzGerald, with the exception of writing the *Rubáiyát,* never let up: not even to himself. According to my theory, the repressed FitzGerald found his sublimation in Omar Khayyám. What life did not give him, what he would not take from life, was handed to him through the centuries by a man, who, if he had met, would have filled him with disgust. FitzGerald took from the East that for which, unconsciously, his Western soul longed. He wore it under the gray Suffolk sky, unaware that the same garment had been worn in the dusty street of the bazaar, a camel just passing and over there the tavern with pretty young boys.

Theirs was a communion in which FitzGerald took all and Omar asked for nothing, and that is how FitzGerald saved us from a Persian in heavy tweeds and gave us FitzGerald in his true colorful glory. To Omar had belonged FitzGerald's real self, but only so far as the real self is allowed to exist. It comes forth at odd moments and if it did not retreat quick enough it would become a bore both for owner and beholder. Napoleon's true self came out as the sun of Austerlitz rose; but how long did it take the sun to rise? Not long; and neither was the meeting between Omar and FitzGerald of long duration. But, as the sun shone on Napoleon's victory over the two emperors, so Omar and FitzGerald had communed long enough for one of the masterpieces of the English language to be born. For a masterpiece it undoubtedly is. As a boy, I had not been allowed to read it; when, later on, I asked why, the answer was that it was too sexy for a boy. Yet, one cannot put a finger on that flow of sex with which the quatrains stream. It is Omar's, but longed for by FitzGerald. He went through life sexless, but full of *Schwärmerei.* His loves were of the heart, and Thackeray, Browne and Posh, though of the flesh, were but mates of his soul; the written word of Omar, however, intoxicated his senses, and so again, as with his other works, we find him with the word and not with flesh and blood.

The communion between the man of Suffolk and the Persian wizard was, naturally, not altogether smooth. There were many misunderstandings. What FitzGerald regarded as vice, despair and passion were, for Omar, the ordinary course of his Eastern existence. Omar was not as great a philosopher as FitzGerald believed him to be; nor such a fine poet. In Persia, Omar hardly ranks with the giants, and after talking to educated Persians, I have reached the conclusion that the eternity of the *Rubáiyát* will be assured more by FitzGerald than by Omar, notwithstanding FitzGerald's misunderstandings and misinterpretations, which, from the artist's point of view, little matter. You can be a fine painter without taking into consideration the exact amount of trees you see. The agnostic who took the *Rubáiyát* for his anthem was, one feels, as mistaken as the man who tried to find the elegiac qualities of *Alice in Wonderland* and, of course, he found them. The form and the intoxication of creating are paramount to the artist: it is left to the reader to find whatever he fancies; and, alas, one must trust the reader.

FitzGerald never saw the East, never wanted to see the East. He invented an East of his own into which fitted the quatrains. The streets in the bazaar would have shocked him because of their filth and noise. The streets FitzGerald created himself would have become too genteel. But the streets of the *Rubáiyát* were created by a new FitzGerald, one who would not have recognized himself in real life. When Edward Clodd says, "Omar Khayyám has been dead nigh eight hundred years, but his words have not passed away. Roses still scatter their petals by his resting place," one has only to remember that there were no roses on his grave. The entire idea of the Omar Khayyám cult would have surprised and probably pained FitzGerald. Nevertheless, it is important to examine Omar's life, even if cursorily, for he was the mainspring of the beauty in which, in his own fashion, with his own temperament and character, FitzGerald found his fulfillment.

EDWARD FITZGERALD

Omar was, so the *Nuzhatu'l Arwáh (Re-creation of Souls)* tells us, a follower of Avicenna the mathematician, and he was ill-tempered and inhospitable. He was a favorite of the Sultan Malikshâh and besides his astronomy, astrology and mathematics, the inventor of a clay scarecrow. An amusing legend is that a certain theologian, who used to denounce him from the pulpit as an atheist and freethinker, would come to him privately in the mornings to take lessons in philosophy. Legends encompass him, the best known being the tale of himself and his two friends, Nidhámu'l-Mulk and Hassan-iSabbáh, with whom he had been at school in Nishapur. Theirs was a devoted friendship, and when they parted they partook of each other's blood and swore a solemn oath that whichever of them should attain power would help the others. Nidhámu'l-Mulk became prime minister. Omar went to see him and very properly reminded him of the covenant of their youth. Said the prime minister: "I give thee the government of Nishapur and its dependencies."

Omar was no fool and preferred a pension which was paid to him annually, tax free.

FitzGerald knew the legend, and Omar's indolence, lack of wish for power, must have endeared the astronomer to him. Indolent though he was, like FitzGerald, Omar wrote a good deal. Ten works, including the quatrains, are attributed to him; he also helped Malikshâh with his reformed calendar. His philosophy concerns us in a sense, but only as far as the *Rubáiyát* goes. Even with the little knowledge I have on the subject, it seems often vague, confused; perhaps he himself was pretty uncertain about it. Now and then, as a pupil of Avicenna, he would turn to God and say: "Verily, I have striven

to know Thee according to the range of my powers, therefore forgive me, for indeed such knowledge of Thee as I possess is my means of approach to Thee." In fact, those are assumed to be his last words. At other times he was the cynic, the debauched and the blasphemer. Edward G. Browne, in his *Year Amongst The Persians*, quotes from Jami's *Baharistan*:

O God, although through fear I hardly dare
To hint it, all this trouble springs from Thee!

That often was Omar's mood, and the following lines of Jami suited his mood too:

Dead drunk, not like a common sot, one day
Nasir-i-Khusraw went to take the air.
Hard by a dung-heap he espied a grave
And straightway cried, "O ye who stand and stare,
Behold the world! Behold its luxuries!
Its dainties here—the fools who ate them there!

Omar was at times a believer in the doctrine of metempsychosis. One day, he was walking with a group of students outside the college and donkeys were bringing bricks. One of them, with true donkey stubbornness, refused to enter the college. Smiling broadly, Omar went up to the donkey and extemporized this quatrain:

O lost and now returned "yet more astray"
Thy name from men's remembrance passed away,
Thy nails have now combined to form hoofs,
Thy tail's a beard turned round the other way!

Not very forceful words, but the donkey entered the college; then Omar explained to the students that the ass, in a former life, had been a lecturer at the college and out of shyness would not go in.

The feeling that Omar's philosophy was based mainly on his indolence and love of the good things of life persists. The day was his and according to the day his thoughts varied. Fate was always present: it had not treated him badly and the luxury of thought and dream was, thanks to the stipend, quite undisturbed. Here one could manage an analogy between him and FitzGerald. They both had independent incomes; they were both indolent, and their philosophy and beliefs varied with the mood and the day, the intrinsic difference being that, though now and then in Doubting Castle, blasphemy was unknown to FitzGerald. But blasphemy to the Oriental means something quite different, and thus the flimsy bridge between Suffolk and Persia would collapse under the weight of the analogy.

Professor Edward Byles Cowell, who, so to speak, brought Omar to FitzGerald, and was an accomplished Persian scholar, a man of integrity and of standards which were the very symbols of his age, summed Omar up thus:

"His tetrastichs are filled with bitter satires of the sensuality and hypocrisy of the pretenders to sanctity, but he did not stop there. He could see with a clear eye the evil and folly of charlatans and empirics: but he was blind when he turned from these to deny the existence of the soul's disease, or at any rate of the possibility of a cure. Here, like Lucretius, he cut himself loose from facts: and, in both alike, we trace the unsatisfied instincts—the dim conviction that their wisdom is folly, which reflect themselves in darker colors in the misanthropy and despair which cloud their visions of life."

FitzGerald felt differently. Of the *Rubáiyát*, by which, after all, Omar is known to us, he said to Laurence the painter ". . . a sort of *triste plaisir* in it, as others besides myself have felt. It is a desperate sort of thing, unfortunately at the bottom of all thinking men's minds; but made music of."

The music was by FitzGerald, but was there true despair in Omar? Baudelaire loved the dregs of the cup; hence, he despaired of himself and the cup too. Omar loved the cup and, since everything was in the hands of Fate, he took the cup and himself as the mood dictated.

In the preface to the third edition of the *Rubáiyát*, FitzGerald denies that Omar was debauched: "Other readers," he says, "may be content to believe, with me, that, while the wine Omar celebrates is simply the juice of the grape, he bragg'd more than he drank of it, in very defiance, perhaps, of that spiritual wine which left its votaries sunk in hypocrisy or disgust."

The cup was the cup, and drunkenness was a good sensation. The book of verses, the jug of wine, the loaf of bread and the lover singing were the natural desires of a man of Omar's learning, thirst, hunger and passion. And, if one drinks and loves under a hot sun, then one does wish to be laid shrouded in the living leaf by some not unfrequented garden-side; and then, needless to say, the rising moon will look for one in vain. It is all very sad, since death is a sort of hangover, so one gets somewhat blasphemous, and, because one knows absolutely nothing of Christian ethics, one is quite polite to one's Maker. As one had emptied many glasses that had brimmed with wine, one's final picture of oneself, shrouded in self-pity, is an empty glass.

FITZGERALD'S road to Omar was slow and far from straight. Perhaps if he had not met Professor Cowell . . . but to speculate on that is as idle and foolish as to try to picture what would have happened if Columbus had not discovered America.

Cowell was a man of refinement, learning and a lovable disposition; a true friend of FitzGerald, who let FitzGerald go his way, which was far from his own, without reproach and always ready to help. He worshiped his much older wife and after her death he felt his life had ended too; but on he went gently, dignified. The posthumous life of the scholar is like a small candle which, apart from the few who are in need of it, nobody observes. Consequently, it is good to know that his name will always be associated with that of FitzGerald, thus assuring him an immortality which he well deserves.

As far back as 1846, FitzGerald told Cowell that it would be "a good work to give us some of the good things of Hafiz and the Persians: of bulbuls and ghouls we have had enough."

As with his letters, so with his studies, FitzGerald needed before him a kind friendly face. With Cowell he found it, and in his lazy fashion he persevered with Persian, the language that Cowell, as it were, had brought to his notice. He had turned to Persian because Cowell studied it, and it would be pleasant to be able to discuss a subject dear to his friend's heart. So the road to the *Rubáiyát* was also the road of his friendship.

When the Cowells left for Calcutta, FitzGerald was miserable. His friend far away on the shores of the Ganges was another reason to continue with the Persian. It was a votive offering. "As to India being 'your place' it may be; but as to your being lost in England, that could not be," wrote FitzGerald, and when he said England, he thought of himself; but he thought, too, of going out to India. He had to admit he had always been slow in getting under way and left it at that. To the end of his life they were close friends; Cowell invariably stood up for him though he knew best how unscholarly the *Rubáiyát* was. The much discussed fifty-eighth quatrain of the first edition FitzGerald had rendered as follows:

Ah, Thou who Man of baser Earth didst make,
And who with Eden didst devise the Snake;
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blackn'd, Man's Forgiveness give—and take!

The correct translation is this:

Oh, Thou who knowest the secrets of everyone's mind
Who graspeth everyone's hand in the hour of weakness
Oh God, give me repentance and accept my excuses
Oh, Thou who givest repentance and acceptest the excuses of every one.

"FitzGerald," said Cowell, "mistook the meaning of giving and accepting as used here, and so invented his last line out of his own mistake. I wrote to him about it when I was in Calcutta, but he never cared to alter it."

Probably FitzGerald thought that by misunderstanding Persian, he understood Omar better.

It is not FitzGerald's fault that the agnostic found in the *Rubáiyát* his own highest expression. The *Rubáiyát* has suited many tastes. I remember, in the twenties, (which were after all not bad years), a dear lady with jade earrings and Liberty gowns explaining to me that the *Rubáiyát* had urged her to adultery. It would have been very unfair had the husband, if and when he caught her, blamed FitzGerald. Agnosticism gathered speed at the turn of the century. FitzGerald had been dead nearly two decades; yet it was at the turn of the century that the *Rubáiyát* was acclaimed as the hymn of the unbeliever.

FitzGerald, at any rate, had not approached his task of rendering into English the Quatrains with the zeal of one who wants to give the world a new, daring doctrine. Cowell had come across, in the Bodleian Library, the Ouseley Collection and had made a copy for FitzGerald. The work of translating was not an easy task. "I am not always certain of getting the right sow by the ear," he would ruefully say. Though conscientious with the form, he was not painstaking with the exact meaning of words. In all four editions of the *Rubáiyát* he made changes, but they are more changes of thought and form than of meaning. In 1857 Cowell sent him a copy of the Calcutta manuscript.

Edward Heron-Allen, who had devoted unlimited time to the study of the *Rubáiyát,* stated that, of the quatrains, forty-nine were from the Ouseley manuscript, or the Calcutta manuscript, or both. Forty-four were traceable to more than one quatrain and were, therefore, composite quatrains. Two were found by FitzGerald only in J. B. Nicolas' text; two reflected the whole spirit of the original poem, two were traceable to the influence of the *Mantiq ut-Tair* of Farid ud-din Attar; and two quatrains primarily inspired by Omar were influenced by the odes of Hafiz.

In the spring of 1857, FitzGerald wrote to Garcin de Tassy, a Persian scholar in Paris. Later he sent him a copy of the *Rubáiyát* and Garcin de Tassy wrote a paper on it for the *Journal Asiatique,* to which FitzGerald's reaction was that England, instead of France, should have ingratiated herself first with Persia. That he meant as a joke, for the thought that he, the lazy inaccurate translator, could do anything for England or France in Persia must have made him laugh. FitzGerald's ambitions were deep down and, as his other feelings, afraid of light.

Lazy or not lazy, he fought hard with the *Rubáiyát.* ". . . anything," he wrote to Cowell, "like a literal translation would be, I think, unreadable; and what I have done for amusement is not only so unliteral, but I doubt

unoriental, in its form and expression, as would destroy the value of the original without replacing it with anything worth reading of my own. It has amused me, however, to reduce the mass into something of an artistic shape."

Another conscious daytime reaction made him tell Cowell that Omar's philosophy was one that never failed in the world. "Today is ours, etc." But the day at the time was not FitzGerald's; for he was living in lodgings in London with his wife Lucy. So only yesterday was his; but that too suited Omar's mood.

I like indeed A. C. Benson's simile about the *Rubáiyát.*

It has, he said, received from its admirers the sort of treatment, the poking and pushing, conceded to prize animals at shows; I should never dare to become one of the pokers and pushers.

Heron-Allen pushed and poked for nearly a life-time. He did excellent work, however, and I take at random two quatrains with the literal translation of Heron-Allen and FitzGerald's rendering of them.

FitzGerald's quatrain:

For some we loved, the loveliest and the best
That from his Vintage rolling Time hath prest,
Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before,
And one by one crept silently to rest.

Persian text as translated by Heron-Allen:

All my sympathetic friends have left me,
One by one they have sunk low at the foot of Death.
In the fellowship of souls they were cup-companions,
A turn or two before me they became drunk.

FitzGerald's quatrain:

Why, be this Juice the growth of God, who dare
Blaspheme the twisted tendril of a Snare?
A Blessing we should use it, should we not?
And if a Curse—Why, then, Who set it there?

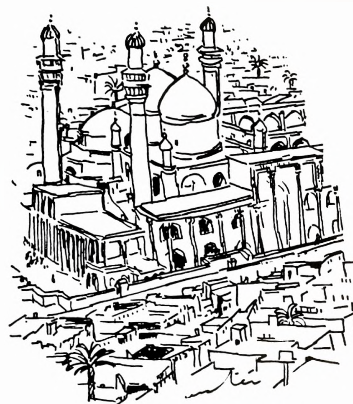
Persian text as translated by Heron-Allen:

I drink wine, and everyone drinks who, like me, is worthy of it;
My wine-drinking is but a small thing to Him;
God knew on the Day of Creation that I should drink wine;
If I do not drink wine God's knowledge would be ignorance.

These two examples should be enough food for endless thought, the thought after a time becoming a vicious circle. Besides, the beauty of an old room partly consists of getting out of it, now and then, in order to think pleasurably of it out in the light. The same can be said of the four editions of the *Rubáiyát*. FitzGerald polished, left out, put back, chopped and changed with every new edition. One could analyze each edition (it has often been done) and reach any conclusion one wished. In one's enthusiasm, one might quite forget that FitzGerald, with much time on his hands, with his keen sense of words and form, might simply have made the changes because he thought he could improve the whole, and the work would also make time fly while he waited for Posh, or was too bored to go down to the River Deben or take a walk.

In 1858, FitzGerald sent the manuscript of the *Rubáiyát* to *Frazer's Magazine*. A year went by and nothing happened. He took the manuscript back and published it himself—a small quarto in a brown paper wrapper (which I reverently handled in Trinity Library, (Cambridge). Two hundred and fifty copies were printed, a few he gave to his friends, the rest he sent to Bernard Quaritch's store where they languished for nearly two years when Quaritch dumped them into his bargain box, to be discovered by two friends of Rossetti, Messrs. Witley Stokes, and Ormsby. Each bought a copy for one penny. And here Swinburne comes in. Though personally unknown to each other, he and FitzGerald had a friend in common, Richard Monkton Milnes, first Lord Houghton, the quondam Cambridge Apostle, on whose shoulder not only Rogers' breakfast mantle had fallen but who was also the owner of a robust pornographic library in which Swinburne spent more time than was perhaps good for him.

"Having read it [the *Rubáiyát*]," said Swinburne, "Rossetti and I invested upwards of sixpence apiece, or possibly threepence—I would not wish to exaggerate our



extravagance—in copies at that not exorbitant price. Next day we thought we might get some more for presents among our friends, but the man at the stall asked twopence! Rossetti expostulated with him in terms of such humorously indignant remonstrance as none but he could ever have commanded. We took a few and left him. In a week or two, if I am not much mistaken, the remaining copies were sold at a guinea. . . ." But at all cost, FitzGerald had told Cowell, of the *Rubáiyát*, that a thing must *live*: and now it had begun.

Ruskin was among the early admirers.

"My dear, and very dear Sir," he wrote on the second of September, 1853,

"I do not know in the least who you are, but I do with all my soul pray you to find and translate some more of Omar Khayyám for us. I never did till this day read anything so glorious to my mind as this poem (10th, 11th, 12th pages if you were to choose), and this and this is all I can say about it. More—more—please more—and that I am ever

Gratefully and respectfully yours,
J. Ruskin"

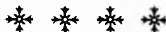
What FitzGerald thought of such a letter and of the enthusiasm of the few worshipers is difficult to tell, difficult chiefly because he had in some respect the shyness and simplicity of the countryman. His life had mostly been lived either deep in the country or in the provincial town of Woodbridge with the fields running, in his day, almost to Market Hill. In Thackeray's time he had

begun to turn his back on the metropolitan world; after a while it was not only renunciation but fear of it too. It is possible that his modesty about the *Rubáiyát* was inspired by that fear. The Londoners were coming into the country: surely they had hidden, cunning reason for it: one had better beware.

If one lives most of one's life among pollard oaks and church steeples, one becomes a little like them: and church steeples and oaks do not willingly give their shadows to strangers.

There is one more matter of interest concerning the mystical relationship between FitzGerald and Omar. It has often been asked why he had chosen Jami, Attar and Omar and not a giant like Firdausi. Up to a point, it is again Professor Cowell who supplies the answer. "He had always," wrote Cowell a month after FitzGerald's death, "felt a keen interest in Firdausi's sympathy with the pre-Mohammedan history and religion, though he never cared much for the *Shahnamah* itself as poetry. He never cared for that kind of ballad epic—I could never get him to read the poem of *Cid* in Spanish. FitzGerald sympathized with Firdausi's interest in the old fire worship, but he soon tired of the long episodes and endless wars in the old poem itself. He often said he never cared much about the *Iliad* or its heroes."

The subject of FitzGerald's relationship with Omar and the *Rubáiyát* is almost inexhaustible; but one wonders whether the *Rubáiyát* itself will not exhaust, in due course, its worshipers and public. It is, I believe, less read today than it was twenty years ago. Too many people have quoted it for their own purposes, and too many ribbons of too many colors have been attached to it. It might at some not too distant date find a temporary obscurity. The trend today is toward Christianity, the stand-by of troubled ages, and nowadays, having so proudly strayed from it, man finds himself in a pretty deep morass. The cross in a Scottish mist will become preferable to the sun on the Ganges. When that day comes, the *Rubáiyát*, not on account of FitzGerald but because of his enthusiasts, will be less read; and perhaps not read at all. It is a sad thought that the man who played the organ in churches and chapels, whose daily life exuded Christian charity, should have to enter temporary oblivion because of the interpretation others put on his work. But that obscurity could not become complete since there are his letters, which are some of the best in the language. They are delightful, beautifully written and full of an intangible yet penetrating joy. The letters should be read under a shady tree in summer, in the evening as a preparation for pleasant dreams, on top of busses in order to forget the noise of the street, in short, anywhere where one is in need of a good, gay companion.



GEOFFREY MOORE

THE TWO-FACED RAIN

LIKE hooves upon the roadway come the endless,
Endless urgencies, the "I's" and "Thou's," half-living dreams
To crowd each day and make the night a breathless
Hurrying enormity of great-masked schemes.

And then a farm-rich day, a moment caught
Of loam and pine in mounting solitude,
Consolidation of the best, not bought
With city-fears but full, beyond the mime or mood.

For such and such among sahara years
A yearning borne too long for constant pain
Breaks sharp within the bowels; then finely fleer
The fresh resolves, the plans, the two-faced rain.

The Prisoner

ELIZABETH BERRIDGE

It was a frosty morning when the German prisoners first came to dig drainage ditches in the fields that lay beyond Miss Everton's garden walls. She was out with her dog in the chill air, by the beech trees, when two large lorries roared up past her across the grass and she had a glimpse of alien faces, of packed cardboard figures, cold and raw looking. The rest of the valley was quiet, as if sheltered beneath a glass bell of cold and solitude. The hills stretched far beyond the fields and farms, the little trees on their sides standing straight and close, like stitches on an old tapestry.

The trees that outlined the remains of a carriage drive across the fields to the lane beyond still kept their leaves, however, and each morning Miss Everton came to look at them. They seemed to her an echo of the past long and temperate summer, but somehow odd, like fruits out of season. Here the trees were later shedding their leaves, but by November, the gales had usually stripped them bare; it was nearly November now. Only the tough marigolds in the garden still went on producing their frost-bitten suns; in the house, a patch of brightness across a room, through a closed window, gave back summer's ghost.

The sun was coming up now, a long way off in the clear blue of the sky. But it warmed Miss Everton's hands, cold and clenched on the sticks she had gathered, so that she could look away from the men as they jumped from the backs of the lorries. For some time they had been calling to each other in mirthless foreign voices, groaning with stiffness and cold, beating their hands together with a sound that carried in the petrified air.

A rustle disturbed her, made her straighten up. It was a sound she knew, furtive as fox or rabbit creeping through the starched grass: the leaves had begun to fall. They fell from elm and beech, from lime and sycamore, they fell straight down through the still air, but with no haste. It was as if each leaf—green or yellow, brown or spotted gray—paused before relinquishing its hold, and this pause gave Miss Everton the impression that the pale sun had been a signal, was, in fact, their puppet master. Fascinated, she watched their regulated ballet, their unregretful, unhurried surrender. The patter increased, the tempo seemed to quicken, the air was full of falling leaves.

"Excuse me, could we get any water from the cottage? Are you the owner?"

At the sound of a human voice, Miss Everton turned her head unwillingly. A young man stood by her side, also staring at the trees. He watched one or two leaves drop twirling from the sycamore, hesitating before they settled on the chastened grass. "It's all a matter of contraction and expansion, I suppose," he went on. She noticed he wore leather leggings and was obviously in charge of the working party.

"Yes, it's my cottage. There's a tap in the garden you can use." She purposely ignored his explanation, wanting him to go as quickly as possible. So few people called on her that when someone did, it was intolerable. All the same, she could not help adding that she used the garden tap to water her flowers. She was proud of her water supply, achieved after much fuss, piped from the hills right into her house.

"I'd be grateful if we could use it to water some less attractive objects," said the young man, jerking his head toward the prisoners, who now stood with picks and shovels in the middle of the field. "Still, they're better than Italians any day. All song and no work, those 'tallies. Now I wouldn't call the Jerries exactly cheerful, but . . ."

"I'll show you where the tap is," Miss Everton said, and led the way to the cottage. The young man shrugged, beating his legs with a switch. He was only trying to be friendly; on a job like this, a friendly woman, even if she was middle-aged, could make a lot of difference. But Miss Everton was not feeling friendly. She did not like the young man's voice, nor the things he said. It was useless to tell herself that he was young, and only the young could ally with their innocence a certain cynicism, a cer-

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tain brash cruelty that supported them, seeing, as they did, the world falling in pieces around them. Also, she told herself, he had probably seen the Germans under very different circumstances, and to have them (or a cross section of them) under his command, was an uncomfortable experience. The thrill for him had undoubtedly been in the chase, not in the capture. As he tested the tap, and talked on with that touch of a ringmaster's arrogance, Miss Everton began to fathom his feelings toward the prisoners: it was a sort of distorted pity, which made him despise both them and himself.

LATER that morning, when the day had settled down to its accustomed autumnal chill, alleviated by thin sunshine, she heard the water hum and sing through the pipes. Startled, for she had become absorbed in her housework, she peered out of an upstairs window and saw two of the prisoners drawing water. She did not go downstairs, but stayed watching them as they straightened up and went out of the gate, pulling it shut after them. She noticed that the taller of the two looked searchingly at the cottage before following his companion across the field. The thought occurred to her that even if they tried to escape, they could not get very far; the round yellow patches on their uniforms stood out as clearly as targets.

When they had disappeared, she prepared her lunch, but she was restless. How long were they going to be there? How many times a day would her gate click open and the pipes hum and sing as the prisoners drew water? It was more than disturbing, she told herself; they were too near altogether, only a field away. She knew that the thought of them working in the cold would hang like a shadow over her own work—doubtless she would hear whistles marking their rest periods; twice a day the lorries would roar past.

Never mind, Miss Everton told herself firmly, tomorrow I shall speak to them. All the afternoon she rehearsed a few German phrases, wanting to hand them out, like comforts, to the silent men. After all, they were not of her generation: she had known an older Germany; lustier, lusher, more prosperous, gayer. As a girl, she and her brother Humphrey had gone off on trips together: he had studied at Bonn, and she had picked up a good deal of slangy, everyday talk, although she had never been able to carry on much of a discussion in the language. But then she had never had much occasion to argue; the young men she met did not argue with women. They merely danced with them, walked with them, made sentimental love to them. How did these poor young fellows manage, she wondered suddenly. She found herself half turning to ask Humphrey about it, and his loss came once more as a bitter pain. She missed more than anything, now that she was nearing fifty, not having anyone to whom she could say "Do you remember?" For at this moment, she was remembering black coffee at Aachen at one o'clock in the morning, drunk from cardboard cups. Shutting her eyes, she recalled exactly the chill of the platform as the train halted for ten minutes or so before pulling over the border. How cold she had been! That, and the crumpled, sour feeling of traveling all night, had remained as one of her most vivid recollections of the holiday. She scarcely remembered now the rocky islands of the Rhine, rising out of a dawn that would have seemed more real on the stage of Covent Garden, with barbaric and hysterical music uniting the boxes to the gallery.

At four o'clock, settled down over her books and typewriter, Miss Everton heard the pipes once more. She did not move. Her lips rehearsed a greeting, but she could not bring herself to go to them: what if they looked at her dumbly, with dislike or amusement? Still, she sat on, knowing that soon they would be gone for the day and the opportunity of showing them that someone in this cold northern corner of England had known the dark green Harz mountains and the gentle Bavarian country, would be lost. Sure enough, half an hour later, she heard a thin whistle, and soon after the lorries churned past. She was grateful for the garden wall and the thick trees around the cottage—terrible if the men could gaze in the window and see her sitting there, lonely over her tea.

Leaving the teapot warming by the fire, Miss Everton suddenly rose up, called Tag and together they went across the tightening ground in the falling light. She stopped by the big tree in the middle of the field. The fire was still smoldering. On either side a sharpened stake stood erect, the top shaped like a catapult. Across this the men obviously laid another stick and their tins hung from it over the flames. Miss Everton smiled. That was clever, it really was! Somehow it made the whole thing seem like a game, played with the same absorption as boy scouts on a camping holiday. It reminded her of the gypsies of two summers ago; she had often watched the caravans, floating like lighted boats on the rising ground mist of early September.

The blackened tins hung from the tree above her and swung with a dry sound in the slight wind. A pile of neatly cut logs and twigs awaited the next day; picks and other tools were stacked round the tree. Across the fields stretched a line of stakes; they must have spent the day measuring out the lines of ditches to be dug. Miss Everton shivered. Calling Tag, she returned home.

The evenings had once been her dread. Together, as they had been for so many years, she and Humphrey had defeated the weariness and claustrophobia forced on them by the gray, lowering skies or close darkness of winter, by reading aloud to each other. They had chosen passages to fit the mood of the elements. On stormy nights, Humphrey would read about the old gossips at the bar of the Maypole, and of poor Barnaby Rudge, who had in him the sweetness of some of Shakespeare's Fools. Summer evenings called for something more serene, prose that pleased the mind, so they chose Conrad's *Typhoon* (for Humphrey longed for the sea and the tropics) or Lamb's lucid dissertations. This last choice was Miss Everton's; she longed

to reach back through the years and comfort Lamb, seeing in his devoted life something akin to her own and her brother's.

When Humphrey died—in the third year of the war, from pneumonia contracted by crawling through wet bracken on a useless Home Guard foray—she had not known what to do. Her sense of loneliness was so complete, so terrible, that all sense of the division between night and day went from her. Her mind and body knew only coldness: she was consumed by the fear of going mad. She was one of those people to whom the Bible was a habit and yet not a consolation, and she lacked the pure courage to follow philosophical thought; that way was too bare, too cold. If she had ever had a really full life, if she had ever been physically and mentally fulfilled, then the courage might have come to her. As it was, having given up the idea of marriage to be with Humphrey, and having only one or two glances and caresses to hold in her mind as evidence of that dangerous emotion, love, she watched them go shoddy with years of conjuring up, as letters become thin with too much handling.

She found her comfort in the village people. Living as they did with the churchyard in the center of the village,

with birth and death as inevitable as the spring and the fall of the year, they had a melancholy and yet unquestioning acceptance. This attitude at last seeped into Mary Everton's plunging mind and steadied her: she felt, after many months, a deeper sense of life itself. The next thing was to accustom herself to a new routine, for it was the small daily setting forth of one cup instead of two, of one bed to make, a smaller batch of week-end cakes, that troubled her.

But gradually she found another interest, one that was closely connected with Humphrey. She had always lent books to one or two of her friends, and had taken pleasure in suiting the book to the person. Now she went further; she started a small library in the village. With the co-operation of the Women's Institute, she enrolled subscribers and went round buying books cheaply and begging volumes from friends' libraries. Slyly she introduced the village women to authors they had not read since leaving school. She widened her own reading and passed on her preferences to the others. She was adviser and secretary as well as librarian and treasurer. The work filled her evenings and she began to feel content.

This was the rhythm the coming of the German prisoners interrupted. It threw her out of key, so that instead of checking the library lists after her light supper (she combined tea and supper, boiling or poaching an egg each evening), she sat down and thought about the men who had arrived that day. She sighed, and shifted in her little low chair—she was not a tall woman and liked to stretch out her legs before the fire—and wondered if their advent would upset her. She wished they would go away.

THE cold set in with the new moon. The air seemed to contract, and the Germans went about the fields with a hunched, defensive walk, as if their flesh prickled with cold under the thick, rough khaki. They blew into their hands and beat their arms, they drew breath cautiously, as if it pained them to gulp down the icy, knife-sharp air. They returned reluctantly to their digging after their brief rests by the fire. In the middle of this cold snap a small hut appeared. A lorry brought it one morning. It had two central wheels and the men propped it up on tree trunks to keep it steady.

Miss Everton, watching shamelessly through her bedroom window, saw that it had a chimney and a window and a decent door. She was pleased, thinking that the men could eat their dinner in the warm. She knew two of them by name, for a few days ago one of them had knocked softly on her kitchen window, asking for a cardboard box. She had been startled, disconcerted; it was a signal from the cold, a challenge from the outcast. They watched each other through the closed, frosted window in that moment's hesitation; a solidly built young man and a small, ordinary looking woman with a face like a startled mouse. She had given him an old shoe box and he went away; someone called him from the field. Erich.

Miss Everton went downstairs and busied herself with her cooking. She was mashing potatoes when she heard that soft knock again. This time she went to the door, and opened it. It was the same young man, his face red with cold. He held out a paper bag, full of something.

"You want tea?" he asked.

"Please come in," said Miss Everton, to gain time. He stepped inside gingerly, hauling his cap from his head. Once the door was shut, he stood awkwardly, like a horse led to a new stable, his great rubber boots thick with mud and ice. His eyes were fixed on the bright coal fire and the steaming saucepan of potatoes, his hands were tough and weathered as a ploughboy's.

"Tea," he said again, offering her the bag. She looked puzzled, and in explanation he went on, "The chaps want to ask if you will give coffee in exchange." His English

was careful, free of mistakes; he had obviously been going over the words in his head. It seemed odd to her that the prisoners should be referred to as chaps; it was too free and easy, too English.

"*Bitte setzen Sie hier,*" murmured Miss Everton, pushing a chair up to the fire. She poured a cup of tea, for she had just made herself one as was her mid-morning custom, and handed it to him. He looked up at her with slight pleasure, although he did not comment on her German. She went to the larder and took out a two-pound tin of coffee and laid it on the table. Surely it wasn't illegal? No, she told herself firmly, exchange was perfectly legal. Also, she was often short of tea; one person living alone suffered worst from the rationing system.

She began to ask him questions; about himself, about his family. He told her he came from Saxony, from a small farm; now he wanted to go back to look after his mother. He did not seem to fear the fact that he would be living in the Russian zone. For herself, the idea of Russians filled her with dread. She imagined them as half-human, adorned with stolen wristwatches.

"What do we Germans deserve, anyway?" said Erich, shrewdly seeing her reactions.

But Miss Everton could not believe in this kind of humility. It did not match her own experience. It was intensely embarrassing to hear such a thing said; unless, of course, it was meant as mordant humor, directed as much against her as against himself. This helpless air, this ghost of self-pity, annoyed her. She felt sure that no Englishman in the same situation would have allowed these sentiments to creep into his attitude. But then, she told herself quickly, the English would never allow themselves to be defeated.

Erich thoughtfully laid down his cup. "Yes," he said, "yes, you are kind. I find good people wherever I go. In Canada, in South Wales—all good people if you look for them . . ." He seemed puzzled at the thought of there being so many good people about, and yet the world itself being so unsatisfactory. "We drink tea plain at the barracks," he said suddenly, "but it is nice with sugar and milk."

Miss Everton could not imagine anyone drinking tea like that. She had to query it. "We save our sugar to cook with, and the milk is in tins," he explained. "We don't bring any to work in the fields."

"But you have a nice warm hut to eat your dinner in," said Miss Everton, trying to be cheerful, and feeling a prisoner ought not to complain.

"Hut? Oh . . ." He looked at her with his face closed up into what, on subtler features, would be wryness. "That is for the overseer, and for the papers and the tea. That is not for us."

There was a tap at the window and he swung round. "That is Kurt. I go at once, they are asking for me." He took up the coffee and ducked his head. "*Danke schön,* tomorrow we talk again." And he was gone.

After that, Erich called in often. Sometimes they had biscuits with their mid-morning cup of tea. She asked about his family, and learned that his father was dead, that he sent his mother parcels when he could; that on the whole he was disappointed with England, finding it dirty and unfriendly. Miss Everton grew attached to him, as one does to a tentative mongrel dog or a small child, and humored him, giving him sweet things to eat—as if her gifts could somehow assuage the times in which he had been born. Although she scarcely admitted it to herself, these small offerings—some coffee, or a tinned pudding or stew for his mother—helped to smother a niggling, inexplicable feeling of shame. She noticed that he never asked any questions about herself, and at first thought it was because of the barrier his imprisonment raised between them. Then she began to see, as the weeks passed and his mind became more familiar to her, that although he might discuss the outside world with her, to him other people's lives were like glimpses from a slow-moving train. One passed small gardens; in one a woman was putting her baby out in a pram, in another a man bent over his onion bed, children ran in and out of doorways like silverfish on a hearth. These were brief glimpses only, they offered no clue to the constant stream of life flowing away from the train, gave nothing but a temporary warmth. Erich dared not be too interested, possessing as he did the bewildered, blunted mind of the uprooted peasant.

There was one question Miss Everton wanted to ask him, however, and one day she did. How had he been captured? He told her quite simply that he had been in a submarine which had surrendered. Encouraged and forced on by something urgent in her own nature, Miss Everton asked in a voice that grew thin with embarrassment, as if she were committing a social *gaffe,* whether it was true that U-boat captains surfaced after destroying an enemy ship and shot all survivors.

He sat playing with her broken potato peeler, then said simply, "Men do terrible things in a war, I have thought a lot about it."

"Did you, did your captain shoot our men?" demanded Miss Everton again, her body growing cold.

Erich roared with laughter, watching her as he did so. "We never hit a ship," he replied, "I was only at sea for a year and we seemed to go sailing up and down the coast of South America."

"But why?"

"We were getting sunk, and U-boats don't like that. We were given a go-slow order." He laughed again, as if cajoling her, then stood up, slipping the peeler into his pocket. "See, I take this away and mend it for you."

AS the days drew nearer to Christmas the sun began to shine frostily. Miss Everton often felt the need for a walk. But the usual one she took across the fields out to the farm, there to have a chat and a cup of tea with Mrs. Jones, the farmer's wife, was now blocked by the line of extending and deepening ditches. Rolls of barbed wire

lay at various points, ready to put into position as soon as the stakes were up. Looking out from her bedroom window at the number of men digging, she felt her first active pang of resentment since the lorries had first roared up across the fields. She, in effect, was the prisoner; the sun glinted on the barbed wire, the heaps of earth glittered frostily. The fields were no longer free, she was watched wherever she went outside the walls of her garden. It was like being part of a concentration camp, she thought.

Erich had mended her potato peeler, and when he brought it back, he had handed her a present as well. He had made her a pair of bedroom slippers out of an unraveled, dyed and plaited sack. He had put leather soles on, and large bobbles on each toe. Miss Everton was as much touched by the ugliness of his gift as by the patient and ingenious work that had gone into the making of it. When he showed her some bracelets he had made out of some sort of plastic material, she offered to try and sell them to one or two of the women she knew in the village. It would bring him in a little extra money for Christmas.

When he came to the cottage next, it was with a request. He asked her if she had any maps of South Wales—his friends there had asked him to spend the holiday with them. They were small farmers and he had worked on their land for a while; he told her they had been like parents to him. If the distance was within the hundred mile limit, he would be allowed to go. Miss Everton, feeling his excitement as a personal thing, searched upstairs for a map and brought it down.

They spread it out on the table, looking for Pembrokeshire. It was worn and frayed at the folds, but still legible. With a ruler they measured out distances.

"Yes," said Miss Everton at last, touched by the sight of those large fingers going tenderly over the names of places where he had once been in camp and made friends. "It looks to me as if you might just be able to go."

"Ah," Erich straightened up, his eyes almost sparkling. "To go on a train alone, and live in a house with a fire for two whole days, sleep without twenty other men—that will be wonderful."

As he left her, he whistled a little folk tune down the path, his boots crunching in the light fall of frozen snow.

The next day he was back again.

"So," he said, stamping snow off his boots. "I cannot go. I ask at the railway station to make sure, and we go over it, the stationmaster and I. It is twenty miles too far. I must stay in camp." His eyes had a cold, disappointed look in them. Miss Everton was sure that he was determined not to complain, not to make a fool of himself and his hopes and disappointment. For the first time she fully approved of him; he was keeping any self-pity firmly in control. She asked him what they did in camp at Christmas time, and he told her in a cold formal voice that they saved up for a good dinner and might have a concert in the evening. At home there would be a little tree and the cradle with the Child in it—his little sister would make a rag doll—only this year there would be no sugar sweets for her to tie on the tree. He did not stay long with her. It seemed as if he identified her too with the Authority that spoilt his Christmas, and the drumming consciousness that he was a prisoner made any easy talk impossible. He left the cottage without his usual cup of tea.

That evening, when she was alone, instead of working on the accounts—she had neglected the library lately—Mary Everton sat and thought about him. She was grateful for the mended peeler and the gift of shoes, although she knew that he had given them to her to even them up a little, so that he did not seem to be leaning on her charity all the time. She felt that he deserved something else of her; she knew that from purely humanitarian motives she ought to ask him to spend Christmas with her. But what would the village people say, what would Mrs. Jones feel about it? Mrs. Jones had already asked her to spend Christmas Day with them, and she had accepted. She clung to this fact as she debated the reasons for and against. But wasn't it her duty to make at least one other person happy when the opportunity arose? There was little enough she could do about the callousness of the world; she ought then, surely, to try and improve her

small corner of it. But what when he had gone, swallowed up in the Russian zone? She would have to continue to live among the villagers, who never forgot anyone's departure from their accepted code. No, she couldn't do it.

The next day she caught the early bus into the nearest market town. The shops were decorated; in the largest one, a woman disguised as Father Christmas stood at the door and stamped her feet, occasionally lifting her cotton wool beard to carry on a conversation with a passing acquaintance. This shocked Miss Everton profoundly, thinking of the bitter disillusion such an action would have on any trusting child brought up to believe in Father Christmas. She carried on with her Christmas shopping, and spent, as always, much more than she had intended. She had lunch and went to the pictures in the afternoon. But even as she watched the screen, flickering into momentary life in black and white, she wondered what Erich would think if he had come to the window that morning and found her away. She clasped her parcels as if to excuse herself, for in one of them was an expensive warm scarf and a pair of gloves for him, a jumper for his mother, and for his sister a small box fitted with sewing materials. She was giving him gifts, so why did she feel

uncomfortable, unaccountably mean? Oh, she would be glad when they had all gone! The parked lorries, the overseer's hut, the barbed wire, the prisoners spread silently over the fields—all gone to some other part of the country. It wasn't fair, this intrusion.

The next day, the first person she saw was the young overseer. As usual, he was rinsing out his mug at the tap. Miss Everton would associate the tap with him long after he was gone, she thought suddenly.

"Well," he said, watching her as she shook out her kitchen mat, "we'll be off before Christmas, after all. Leave you in peace then. Some of this lot will be home in the Fatherland in the New Year. Things are speeding up. We leave here Christmas Eve." He added grudgingly, "They've done a good job."

Miss Everton's cold hands dropped the mat, mechanically she slapped Tag as he tried to worry the strings of her apron. "Christmas Eve," she repeated slowly. "Why, that's the day after tomorrow. So you've finished, then?"

He looked at her jauntily. "That's right," he said.

Miss Everton went indoors. She took stock of her larder, then started to mix a cake. It was ready for the oven when Erich came for water with another man. He smiled and waved, but did not come in. Perhaps he was keeping away because he could not bear her to talk to him in her usual friendly way and not ask him the one thing he wanted to hear. Tears came to her eyes as she put the cake in the oven.

The following morning she iced it, first putting a thick layer of almond paste on the top, made with soya flour and almond flavoring, which was the best she could do. She found she was talking aloud to herself. "After all," she said, smoothing the paste with a rolling pin, "when our men were prisoners, the farmers' wives gave them basins full of mashed turnips to eat, like animals. Humphrey would agree, I'm sure. I can't ask him, no, I can't do it—even for the sake of the holidays we had over there. When you're young you can be happy anywhere, it's stupid to feel so guilty, so heavy-hearted about it." At least, she told herself, he should have his cake with a miniature Father Christmas on the top. And a mince pie. Anyway, what would she do with a man in the house all day? He would disturb her routine, and what would they find to talk about? The hours would hang too heavily. Dismissing the idea with an impatient shake of her head, she put the decorated cake into the larder.

The next day he came to see her for the last time.

"Today is Christmas Eve," he said, and on his tongue the words were heavy with nostalgia, with an ancient tradition of goodwill and kindliness. "I want to thank you for all you have done, it has meant a lot to me. I have to say good-by now." He hesitated. "In a month or less I go back to Germany."

"Do you really want to go back?" she asked. So this was their last meeting, her last link with the cold outer world which suffered and went hungry. "Couldn't you . . ." She caught a look on his face as he glanced sharply at her. She finished lamely, "Couldn't you stay over here somehow?"

"How? My father dead, my mother growing old, with a farm to see to? She needs me with her." After a pause he went on, with a trace of disbelief. "Anyway, there may be some good Russians who will let me work on in peace. I am lucky with people. After all, we are all separate men and women, aren't we? We each think with our own heads, and feel with our own hearts, whatever salute our hands must give." He put his cup down, for his hands were trembling. "Miss Everton, do you believe in God?"

Miss Everton was taken by surprise, for he spoke under stress. The words that had come out in his halting but accurate English were only spurts of the ones that boiled in his mind. His whole being, as he sat there, was like a reined dynamo. She felt he wanted to stand up and smash something, cry out with anguish at the situation he was in. It was the kind of despair, she felt, that the English were saved from, the despair that had always wracked Europe and showed itself in the suicide pacts between the young men after the 1914 war, in the novels of the nineteenth-century Russian writers. It was there in Erich's motion-

less figure, sitting in her kitchen. What answer could she give, what comfort was there to offer him? She was not a philosopher, nor a politician, nor a saint; she was a woman only, and a limited one.

She went to the larder.

"Of course I believe in God," she said, in a severe voice, as if surprised at the question. "He works in an inscrutable way. He tests each of us up to the limit of our endurance. Now, here is a cake I have made for you, and a mince pie." Let these comfort him where I cannot, she thought, and displayed the cake for him to see before packing it into a box. Instantly his face lost the strained look, and she realized that, like herself, he was not accustomed to thinking largely, and, therefore, small things—a cake or a kindness—could dismiss certain of his fears.

She left him there and hurried from the kitchen. In her sitting room was an array of parcels, wrapped in colored paper and tied with tinsel string, each labeled. She picked up two of them, and went back to Erich. He was regarding the cake with serious, melancholy eyes.

"I hope—I—*Fröhliche Weihnachten!*" she said in a rush and tumbled the presents into his hands. It was obvious that he did not know what to say. He just clasped them to him and looked up at her. A tap at the window

saved them from the embarrassment of thanks and protestations, and hurriedly Miss Everton began parceling up the cake and the mince pie, telling him to share them with his friends if he wanted to, and to wish them all a happy Christmas from her.

At the door they said good-by, Miss Everton held out her hand, but he had difficulty in clasping it because he was so laden. On impulse she stood on tiptoe and kissed him gently on the cheek. "God bless you," she said, and closed the door.

She stood and looked at it for a long time, then went quietly to her room and took down her hair before the mirror. She brushed it continuously whilst tears flowed down her cheeks; she could not stop them. It became a desolate rhythm, the strokes of the brush against her long, soft hair and the tears chasing down her cheeks. Usually this ritual of hair-brushing soothed her when she felt her nerves tight and jangled, but it was a long time before it had that effect today. She could not push away the picture of Erich looking in at other peoples' Christmases through their lighted windows. At last, exhausted and cold, she lay on her bed, pulling the eiderdown over her, and stared out of the window. Tag was whining at the door, doubtless the fire would be low; she dropped into an unhappy day sleep.

She didn't know at first what had awakened her. Here was her room, the rumpled bedclothes that did not belong to the neutral light of a winter afternoon. Then she gradually realized what she was listening to—the harsh growing throb of engines preparing to move off. She knew this sound so well that she did not really need to stumble to the window to watch the lorries moving off for the last time. The little hut bowled along behind on its two wheels.

She felt a panicky desire to shout after them. Although she knew that within a month or two the men inside would be facing conditions that she, and everyone else in this country, would find intolerable, it seemed to her that they were free, and she, the imprisoned one.

She went downstairs, thinking to make herself a cup of tea, but the heavy silence and the sullen fire defeated her. She called Tag—reproachfully half-asleep on the mat, nose down to his paws—and together they left the cottage. A few minutes later, she was contemplating the blackened tins hanging from the large beech tree, the still warm ashes of the fire, and the deep raw ruts the wheels had torn in the frozen earth. Not one of them, she thought, with a slight, inexplicable pang, had had the heart to cut his initials into the tree. Maybe that sort of gesture sprang from happiness, she told herself, remembering linked hearts in the woods; from a desire to remember and be remembered. As it was, all marks of them would soon be gone; the ashes scattered, the ruts grown over with bright spring grass, the tins and few cut sticks seized by questing children. If she excepted the ditches, with the glinting barbed wire and the straight deep sides, along which water already tinkled, things would soon be just as if they had never come. And after all, ditches could be dug by anybody, anybody at all.

She went on telling herself this until she was indoors again, raking up the fire, putting on a kettle. It was not until she sat down, with her cup of tea beside her that she threw down her pen and put her head in her hands. For she knew that nothing, no, nothing at all, would ever be the same again.

A Sense of Relief

CHANDLER BROSSARD

It was in the subway station at Sixth Avenue and Forty-second Street, around five-thirty in the evening. The platforms were filling up with crowds at one minute, then at the next emptying as the crowds pushed onto the trains. I was waiting for an uncrowded local, feeling tired after the day's work, and wanting very much to get home to bathe away the tiredness and to start afresh on that part of the day which was indisputably mine. And I was watching the crowds and wearily wondering how, once at their respective homes, these people would start anew, at what moment they would suddenly reclaim themselves and begin to do those things, dreamed of furtively during the day, which they would call pleasurable. Then I saw this young man.

There was something personally familiar about him, something—I couldn't quite put my finger on it—that made me feel I knew him very well. Maybe part of it was in the manner in which he, too, was observing the crowds, delicately balanced, so it seemed to me, on the periphery of a scene of muddled action which he could not quite understand, but in which he was intensely and slightly angrily searching for something—a gesture, a look, a word—that would bring the whole thing into a kind of sane focus, which it did not now have. He could not have been more than twenty-six or twenty-seven. His face was sharp and bright-looking, if rather tightly drawn. He was dressed, well, like any of those many young men you see in New York who seem to have a modest income. He did not appear to be waiting for a train, as I was. His whole interest was in the crowds. He and his tense relationship to the crowds made me forget, for several minutes, about catching my train.

The crowds meshed closer and closer along the sides of the platforms. Though they did not seem to mind this warm, pressing intimacy—in fact, seemed rather at home in it—they each had a quality of poised viciousness, which in a second or two they would unleash to fight their way furiously into the jammed trains when the doors opened. You could detect this quality in the way they kept looking quickly at their neighbors, who would shortly become their deadly opponents in the fight to get in the trains. You could detect it in the way they restlessly turned their bodies a little to the right, a little to the left. Each one was sizing up the situation, weighing his chances, planning his own secret, brutal strategy. But the remarkable thing was that these people did not look unhappy or angry; you felt that this situation was a natural state of being to them. And the young man, standing a little to the side of the crowds, nearer the middle of the platform, was closely observing all this, and frowning slightly.

When the trains roared in to a stop, the crowds swiftly unleashed this poised viciousness, and the struggle began. They sprang at the open doors, which were already clogged with passengers, and grabbed and squirmed and blocked and pushed, their faces all the while set in an expression of tranquil grimness. Most of them—I never understand how they do it—managed to battle their way inside the train, where so tightly were they rammed together that each breath taken by one of them must have been felt by all the others around. The young man's face squinted at this scene, and then a look of actual pain and disgust came over it when he saw the uniformed starters stride along the platforms and, with their knees and feet and hands, shove the people farther into the trains so that the doors could close and the trains proceed. The people did not seem to mind this indignity either, and I could see that the young man was straining every fiber in his mind for the answer.

I stood there while four more trains pulled in and, with the young man as a companion-observer, watched this scene repeated. I almost laughed at one woman, a middle-aged, plump lady in a precariously tall hat. When the doors opened, she would hunch her shoulders, bow her head slightly, and plunge into the knotted mass of people like a demented football linesman. Somehow, despite her spirit and concentration, she would be pushed aside by her struggling opponents, or else there just wasn't a crevice left into which she could squeeze; and then, her clothes a bit disarranged, she would look wildly toward the next door, race to it before it closed, and suffer the same defeat. She missed two trains, but still she did not appear to be distressed. The young man,

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though, was visibly agitated by what the lady was going through—or subjecting herself to—and he seemed to teeter just a fraction, and I thought he was going over to her. Finally, as though dedicating her life to this last, final push, she managed to squirm and wedge herself safely inside the doors of a train, displacing a thin young lady who was carrying a large package.

The doors slammed on her, and as the train pulled out, I caught a look at her face. It was calmer now, it had none of the poised viciousness that had marked it before.

MY wrist watch warned me that I was late in getting along, and now my interest in the young man and the crowds we were both watching, as a kind of team, began to wane. But don't misunderstand me. I was not losing sympathy with the young man's plight. It was only that I felt that the thing we had been watching had happened many times during the day and would continue to happen many more days and nothing—assuming, of course, something should be done—could be done about it. The young man, however, was still as absorbed in watching as he had been all along.

I moved nearer the edge of the platform and looked down the tracks for a local train. Not seeing one, I turned around. What I saw made me stiffen slightly, for I sensed that because of it something unpleasant was going to happen.

I saw a little old man, gray-bearded and well-dressed, in a long brown overcoat and a soft green hat, walk up to the large trash container on the platform and begin to scrounge around in it. He pulled out discarded newspapers, glanced at them, put them back, and pulled out more. Surely, it is a common enough sight in New York, values here being the peculiar things they are, to see a person who is obviously not poor pick for discarded newspapers in the trash cans in subway stations instead of buying them. They do that here. But instantly, and I guess fearfully, I looked over at the young man, wanting, in a split, conflicting way, to intercede now in his angry puzzlement. It was too late. He had already begun walking toward the old man.

The young man's fists were clenched at his sides as he walked, and the muscles of his face were twitching nervously in and out of the puzzled look on his face. The old man had pulled out a paper he liked better than the others and was reading it, oblivious of the young man coming toward him. He turned around and started walking away with the salvaged paper just as the young man came up to him and grabbed him roughly by the arm.

"Christ, mister!" he shouted, jerking the old man around by the arm. "You don't have to do that!" The old man straightened up and looked at his assailant in sudden, bewildered terror. Several people had turned around and were watching them. The rational part of me felt compelled to intercede even more now, to rush over to the young man, lead him away, and explain that his action would solve nothing. But, I can't explain exactly why, I stayed where I was.

"You don't have to do that!" the young man repeated. "God Almighty! Can't you see what you're doing? Don't you know what human dignity is?"

The old man just stared at him, speechless and terrified, the paper he had picked out dangling foolishly from his hand.

"Papers are cheap, mister. I'll buy you a hundred of the damn things. You can't go in a trash can. I won't let you!" He screamed the last part, and then began to pull the old man toward the newsstand, several feet away. Now the old man recovered from his paralysis and began to protest.

"Let me alone!" he said. "You let me alone! Take your hands off me. Why . . . Why . . ." and he braced himself against the pull on his arm. The onlookers began moving slowly in now, and I felt decidedly afraid for the young man. But he, like the people who had rammed themselves into the doors, was intent on completing what he had started, and he continued to drag the protesting old man to the newsstand.

"I'll buy you all the papers you want," he shouted. "But you can't do that." They reached the newsstand. A man who had been closing in with the other spectators said, "Hey, let the old guy alone. You crazy or something?"

The young man ignored him. Still holding the old man by one arm, he reached into his pocket, pulled out some change, and dropped it all on the papers. "Here,"

he said loudly to the vendor, and grabbed several papers. He turned to the old man, who was twisting feebly in his grasp, and shoved the papers under his arm.

"Take these, mister. They're yours."

The old man was unable to do anything but automatically press the papers against his body with his free arm and gape at the infuriated young man before him.

Then he looked around at the crowd that now surrounded him, hoping that someone would dispel this nightmare. A boy in the crowd turned to his companion and said. "Bastard must be nuts," and, laughing, jerked his thumb back at the young man.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," the young man went on, his face twisted in helpless anger and sadness. "You ought to be."

"You . . . you let me alone!" the old man said, and now pulled his arm from the other's grip. Suddenly one of the starters walked up and said to the young man, "What's going on here? Huh? What you doing to this old man?"

The young man glared at the starter, his face still tight with hatred and puzzlement, and then he said, "None of your goddam business, that's what." He pushed *through the small gathering and walked rapidly toward the other end of the platform and up the steps.*

Perhaps I should have felt sorry for the old man, who after all must have had quite a shock, but I wasn't. I saw him relax; staring after the figure of the young man, he let the papers he had so obediently been pressing to his side slip to the platform.

The crowd looked after the irrational young man, some of them smiling, some muttering, others silent and expressionless, but none of them, I was sure, quite understanding what it all meant. I, too, looked after this young man, whom I thought I knew in some profound, inexplicable way. I felt a sense of relief, as though something had been done for me that for a long time, the desire half hidden, I had wanted to do myself, but for which I did not have the courage. And I smiled.

DAVID MORTON

PHEASANT

INDEED, how should the iron barrel not
Desire you—a long fever it must bear;
Lovely and swift and going, you are what
Nor man nor metal can resign to air;

The capsule, charged with longing, packed with pain,
Will know no rest till the expunging shot
Bleeds fevers out of iron, flesh and brain,
For peace again . . . The bleeding is your lot.

Your sister drew the long ships over sea,
Desiring her, through turrets brought to ground;
And there were others . . . where antiquity,
For all its stillness, cannot still the sound

That roars around them in that solitude,
And echoes, now, through our midwinter wood.

JOCELYN BROOKE

THE LEADER

I

"As you came from the Holy Land
In the dusk and the dim
Dayfall of dull November,
Did you meet the dark band
Of those hunters, or Him
Whom the men of the plains remember?"

II

"I come from the back of the hills—
The winter is long there:
Nothing was there to remember
But the seasonal ills;
The men are strong there,
Running on the hills in November."

III

"But riding down from the hills
By the woods and the sheep-paths,
Did you hear no sound or song there
By the ruined mills
Or the wrecked baths,
Of the men beleaguered so long there?"

IV

"We passed by a camp at nightfall,
The guard spoke us fair:
The men there, he told us, were training
For what might fall
In the spring of the year,
Or perhaps at the next moon's waning."

V

"There will be war then. Can
You tell nothing more?
Did you take no note of their number,
Nor of what man
Is their leader in war?
Is there nothing more you remember?"

VI

"A yokel we met in the woodlands
Spoke of a rider
Camped in the fields like a stranger,
Below in the good lands;
He thought him a leader,
And said that men feared his anger."

VII

"Did he say no more of this stranger?"
"Men thought him a soldier,
A leader trained to command:
A cool-headed ranger,
No man bolder.
They fear his strength in that land."

VIII

"Ride back, boy, through the woodlands,
To the wrecked mills,
And carry these words to the stranger
In the good lands
Below the high hills:
You need have no fear of his anger.

IX

"Tell him we wait for a leader:
Our young men are keen
For a fight, and our old men remember
The champion-rider,
The man who fought clean.
We are strong: we shall march in December."

NIGHTLIFE AND DAYLIGHT

HAROLD CLURMAN

THE NERVOUS PEOPLE

HISTORY was made during the past month by the American people at the polls—and by the movies! The theatre, I am sorry to say, was fairly uneventful. The promise of the fall announcements has not yet been fulfilled. Our Rialto is quiet.

An assistant to General Clay in Berlin recently returned to these shores determined to establish a new community theatre somewhere outside New York where the living stage is now either a memory or an echo. (More power to him!) What stirred this gentleman's ambition was his contact with the German theatre.

"Why shouldn't there be more theatre outside New York?" he asked rhetorically but passionately. "In Germany there is a theatre with a permanent resident company —supported by the municipality—in every town with a population over 25,000. These companies play 52 weeks a year. There are six hundred such legitimate theatres now in Germany. There are 250 opera houses, four hundred orchestras. Robert Ardrey's *Thunder Rock* (done originally in 1938 by the group theatre) has played in 480 theatres. Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* has been given in one hundred theatres; the same author's *Skin of Our Teeth* in 58. Isn't it a shame that in our rich America there is nothing comparable to this?" It is indeed.

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The most sensational picture of the new season is *The Snake Pit.* Here at any rate is a Hollywood picture one can talk about! It is another one of those hazardous undertakings in commercial film making that proves to be far more popular than many of the devastatingly dull affairs which are supposed to be "pure entertainment."

The reason for this picture's success interests me even more than the picture itself. As a film among films, *The Snake Pit* is not an extraordinary achievement. Its performances are competent and honest in the style of dramatic reportage—everybody performs credibly without any special quality or particularity of characterization. The direction and all the other elements that give a film its artistic stamp are of a similar nature—straightforward, craftsmanlike, convincing in the manner of a factual statement from a reliable source. The film's interest derives almost entirely from its material. *The Snake Pit* is at once a reasonably detailed case history of an unbalanced girl saved by psychotherapy and an account of the condition of our state hospitals.

A great many of our films today are devoted to the melodramatics of horror and brutality. Terror is one of the staples of our movie diet. Just as jazz music was once considered a playful reflection of and accommodation to the drive of our machine environment, so the emphasis on physical violence—beatings, shootings, life and death chases—is to a considerable degree a reflection of and compensation for the repression, anxieties and tensions of the moral as well as the physical harshness of our society with its restlessness, competition and struggle. The disease is relieved by making a game of it. The mental and spiritual exhaustion that attends our hysterical regimen requires that we be refreshed by strong sensations. Since the sensations that we absorb automatically leave us with little energy, what is needed to make us feel that we are having fun is even stronger sensations. Thus it goes on to the breaking point. . . .

That we have reached such a breaking point is not a literary conceit of decadent novelists or querulous critics. It is attested to by the recent statistics on the number of young men who are rejected on grounds of nervous disability by our draft boards. While our minds are not perverted by the unwholesome thoughts ascribed to the people of more ancient societies, our spirit is assaulted by subtle but constant shocks for which we customarily have no name and about which most of us have no knowledge.

Gradually, however, we are coming to recognize the

fact—if not always the causes—of our neuroses. This recognition is fairly general in our better novels and poetry. A few playwrights—beginning with O'Neill—have boldly proclaimed some of our ailments in the theatre, though to do so even at present is still considered impractical on Broadway, despite the fact that when it is well done—as in the case of Tennessee Williams' plays—the results are conspicuously successful from a box-office standpoint. But our best literature and our most respected drama still reach only a relatively small public. To deal with a subject like alcoholism—even when it is treated as an individual and special problem rather than as part of a social disaffection—is considered a novel and brave thing to do for a mass medium like the movies.

For this reason *The Snake Pit* is an important picture, though it makes no comment beyond the fact that a problem exists and that our state hospitals need improvement. A picture of this kind—possessed of very few genuine artistic attributes—marks a coming-of-age in social awareness in so far as it permits something to be said to millions of people who have been previously left to harbor their worry and fear in private. What may seem a very small step to a sophisticated mind becomes a major advance. It breaks down a taboo, it allows the whisperings of the night to become a declaration and a clear image. History—and not motion picture history alone—is made! Now America knows: there are insane people who need not be regarded either as spooky or as jokes, not even as something to be hidden as shameful. Their trouble is akin to that of their more fortunate brothers, and their cure may to a large extent lie within the province of science and reason. . . . Once the first step has been taken, it remains for others to make something more of it.

The Italians are doing more with their reality than we with ours, though they do not have our technical means. Such a picture as *Tragic Hunt* (recently retitled *Woman Hunt*) is a testimony to the maturity of Italian film making. It is not entirely a satisfactory picture. It ends with a certain narrative ineptitude, it shows traces of conventional melodrama on a rather naïve and uninventive level; its message of forgiveness for the repentant bandit, black marketeer and collaborationist may not be wholly without taint. Yet, there is a richness of humanity, even in some of the picture's most casual details, that gives us the sense of being a witness to the creative turbulence of reality. It is as if the honesty, which we are so rightly pleased to hail in films like *The Snake Pit*, comes naturally—almost unconsciously—to the better Italian film makers.

The French are more artful (and frequently artificial) in their picture making. But even in *César*—the last but not the best of Marcel Pagnol's "Marius" triptych—there are scenes here and there which are full of folk wisdom and wit that in themselves bespeak a certain underlying and deeply ingrained health in the culture from which it emanates. Such a culture has its destructive factors and its traumas as much as any other, but a certain traditional strength—the accumulation of centuries of experience—gives unspoken assurance that such a culture may be able to face and survive the great upheavals and catastrophes that will inevitably befall it.

With *The Red Shoes*—the British film about the Ballet—we are back in the realm of pretty picture making. The picture is easy to take if we are willing to lend ourselves to its romantic assumptions, which, soberly considered, are more or less nonsense.

The notion that it may be worth while to sacrifice one's whole life (a proper marriage, children, home and family) to Art is stated in *The Red Shoes* in a way that turns the argument into claptrap. In the first place, the life of the ballet dancer is depicted as a kind of Eden of gay living—far more attractive than anything the middle-class way of life has to offer—when everyone knows that it is, in fact, mostly a matter of badly paid, bone-breaking, hard work with very little stability, position or honor in our society. Most ballet dancers nowadays—particularly women—are eager for marriage, babies and a steady income!

There is no good reason for the suicide that serves as the unhappy ending of *The Red Shoes*. Why can't the composer-husband have his opera open in London without having his dancer-wife give up her engagement in Monte Carlo? His insistence that she leave the ballet on the very night of her reappearance there in her greatest role, and return as his sweet helpmate to London makes him an egocentric brute rather than a good husband or a sensible person of any kind. . . . If there is only one ballet company in the world worthy of a first-rate dancer, then the society which can produce or support no more than one such organization is a very sick one indeed—and so much the worse for the Ballet!

Perhaps it is foolish to suggest such considerations with so assiduously glamorous a picture meant only to bemuse a doggedly stay-at-home, emotionally timid and generally humdrum audience. (The severely law-abiding, basically reasonable British probably make the best ballet audiences in the Western world. They evidently need the ballet to redress the balance. No one will dream of blaming them for it!) *The Red Shoes* has some thoroughly agreeable ballet scenes—the best I have seen thus far in its combination of choreography with cinematics.

Before turning to the quiescent stage, let us take note of some pictures that do not move! The latest Chagalls (at the Pierre Matisse Gallery) and some of the later work of Marsden Hartley are worth special attention.

Perhaps I am only imagining it, but there seemed to me to be something not only disturbed but disturbing in the Chagall show. His color, famous for its gaiety—sometimes candied, sometimes jeweled, but nearly always rich and evocative—this time had something crude, raucous, almost cheap about it. It is as if the artist, once ebullient with the memory of his early days in the Russian ghetto

and then ecstatic with the energy of Parisian discovery but now cut off from most of his real creative sources, had become too aware of the figure he cuts in the world of painting, and of his own private appetites, pleasures and needs. What was once the dance of youth in love with the life he saw around him, and happy in his jubilant tribute to it, has now become somewhat unpleasantly narcissistic, self-indulgently autobiographical. Most of Chagall's work has a great tenderness and, despite the rough music of its village fair merry-making, a certain special repose. The latest Chagalls seem to blare like com-

mercial posters. They have the unquiet and anxiety of the desperate vendor selling in a hysterical market the goods he once offered with a certain humility.

Marsden Hartley—one of the few American painters with an authentically individual speech—is not easily defined. A summary of his meaning must wait on a new and extensive retrospective show. To speak of him as a latter-day Ryder, or, as one critic does, a Walt Whitman of paint, is to miss the fascinating *impurity* of his work.

When I speak of Hartley's "impurity," I do not refer to a cheapness of intention or an effort to sell his work through facile devices. On the contrary, Hartley is almost rigidly and sternly honest in the manner of some of his puritan forbears. His work often has the sharp edge, the cragginess and unrelenting mordancy of a proud man who refuses to give himself easily. But a strange infection inhabits this soul, a secret demon, a spirit torn by the hankering for a kind of continental luxuriousness and indulgence which must turn to lonely places to repress the possibility of its satisfaction. Some of these places—Maine for example—are seen through eyes bloodshot with the strain of the artist's inner duality.

Hartley's landscapes are often majestic and unnatural. His hills, lakes, woods, his fisherfolk and farmers are not entirely of this world. The piece of rope, the rough shoes and other common objects he paints in awe of the common man and his virile ways have something weird, threatening, almost eerie about them.

Hartley seems in love with gloomy power. He is an elegant afraid of the consequences of his elegance. He is a self-forbidding sensualist. Hungry for the graces that the fleshly world offers, he adopts a self-protecting attitude of aloofness before it. He feels he ought to stay within the confines of a simple New England church, but he cannot help turning his gaze in mournful concentration on circus clowns, court and military finery, flowers to which something has been added beyond their natural fragrance. Whatever is carnal and mundane in Hartley is stiffened by a Protestant disdain and a baleful suspicion, whatever is moral and austere is pigmented and softened as if by footlights or the glow of some nether region. Hartley's work is strangely troubled, twisted and uncertain in its beauty.

There is nothing troubled about Ray Bolger. You may find one or two of the tunes in Bolger's new vehicle *Where's Charley?* to your liking—for example, the one that begins, "My darling, my darling, my darling." You will probably enjoy seeing his young leading lady Allyn McLerie, a winsome pocket Venus who dances nicely. But above all you will appreciate the spare, eccentric gracefulness of Bolger's quality—which is unique.

Bolger is a fantastic figure out of old American funny papers, caricatures and vaudeville, domesticated but not really tamed by Broadway. In addition, he is charged with the electricity of a universally serviceable dance talent. If Bolger were a European—impossible thought!—poets would write surrealistic tributes to him, essayists would find profound symbols in the strange elasticity of his legs and the suppleness of his altogether linear body; his wiry sprightliness would be a perpetual source of inspiration to the draftsman's pencil. Let us make Bolger an American institution.

I would rather see this done with Bolger than with the jokes about the Day clan which are now sold under the title, *Life With Mother*. Mind you, I have nothing against this comic and sentimental chromo—not even its somewhat synthetic flavor. It is knowingly contrived, with several pleasantly managed episodes. I understand its success at a time when so high a premium is put on nostalgia as entertainment. The play is well turned out to look like an album of the "good old days," and, like all pleasant expertness, deserves applause. . . . But I do not entirely understand why *Mother* should become the Sacred Cow of the American theatre. Is it simply because she is not nervous like the rest of us? It is easy for her to remain pretty, birdlike and twinkling. She is only a print.

THE RECORD SHELF

JOHN BRIGGS

CHRISTMAS shopping ranks with football, lacrosse, ice hockey and Indian wrestling as one of the great American body-contact sports, and a great many people appear to derive from its line plunges, off-tackle slashes and broken-field running the vicarious sensation of being an all-American at Pasadena.

However, there are limits. "*Du muss siegen oder sinken, Hammer oder Amboss sein*," as Goethe observed. If you are the *Amboss* rather than the *Hammer* type (and, so far from being lured by a discount of 6 per cent for cash, would pay for the privilege of not having to go to Macy's), seek out rather the leisurely bypaths, where record collectors scrutinize the gold-leafed backs of albums and discuss heatedly the merits and shortcomings of the latest issue of the "Sonata Appassionata."

Broadly speaking, records are a handy way to convey season's greetings to at least two groups of one's friends, the Haves and the Have-nots. For the latter, it represents an acquisition of a pleasurable sort, since man does not live by bread alone; on the other hand, bread tops Brahms by several thousand calories in any budget, and your album is likely to be something of a windfall.

There is really no problem in regard to making a selection for this group. Under the pretext of returning that volume of Schumann's "Rhenish" Symphony which you borrowed last August, scrutinize your friend's library for possible omissions, and fill up the gaps.

As for the other category, nearly everybody numbers among his circle of acquaintances at least one example of that perplexing species, the Woman Who Has Everything. Fiscally, that is. Here again, the problem resolves itself. A woman who has everything is thereby certain to have a record player. Discreet investigation on your part will doubtless reveal the turn of her curiosity about recordings. A novelty or rarity unearthed by you at a secondhand dealer's, and acquired for the sum of $2.75, is likely to make a big hit, testifying as it does to solicitude and the personal touch; whereas the acquisition of an emerald brooch at Cartier's requires no originality; all you need is to have money in the bank.

Often a glance at the library of a collecting friend will tell you something of his collecting habits, and of his general turn of mind as well. There is, for example, the methodical collector. His shelves will display the standard symphonies of Beethoven, Brahms, Mozart, Schubert and Tchaikovsky, the violin concerti of Mendelssohn, Brahms, Beethoven and Tchaikovsky, the standard works of piano literature, plus overtures, symphonic poems and ballet suites—all neatly cross-indexed and comprising, or making a good start toward, the "fifty pieces" which Virgil Thomson has assured his New York *Herald Tribune* readers are all that are necessary to operate a modern symphony orchestra. There will be a half dozen operatic albums, and a representative sampling, as the poll-takers used to say, of chamber music. This type of collector is a man with an over-all plan, and in order not to upset his careful scheme of things, before making him a present it is well to check the composer's standing in Grove's Dictionary as carefully as you would check a banker's in Dun & Bradstreet.

At the opposite extreme is the man who collects for the hell of it. He is apt to go about assembling his collection in a rather haphazard fashion, acquiring anything that strikes him as being intriguing, amusing or outrageous enough for a collector's item. In such a library, an imported volume of Monteverde madrigals may rub elbows with boogie-woogie piano music. Its contents are apt to range widely, from Bach to Bax, and are almost certain to include the "Queen of Night" aria as sung by Florence Foster Jenkins.

The latter must be heard to be believed. In violation of the sporting code of *de mortuis nihil nisi bonum,* it can be said that the late Miss Jenkins was a lady in comfortable circumstances who adopted the profession of vocalism against expert advice, and in a way made a resounding success of it. That at any rate seems a precise description of a Carnegie Hall concert sold out at a ten-dollar top. Miss Jenkins' virtuoso piece was a number

called "Who'll Buy My Violets?" during which she tossed flowers playfully to her hearers. The number was almost invariably encored, as a result of which the accompanist was obliged to leave his work and re-assemble the violets for the repetition of the piece. Miss Jenkins was not a very good singer. The story goes that a music critic, who was not forewarned, went to one of her concerts, and at the first number laughed so hard that he fell out of his aisle seat and cracked two ribs. I was not present on that occasion, but after hearing the records I am prepared to believe it.

Collectors, as a rule, end by being specialists of one sort or another. If one of your friends has a penchant for chamber music, you will probably know about it already. The man who declared he would rather be inside the scratchiest string quartet in the world than outside the smoothest, forgot to consider those who are outside the scratchiest quartet.

I once knew a young lady who married an English professor with a taste for playing the violin. Inevitably, he had organized a quartet. At the first quartet-evening after their marriage, the young lady, as a dutiful wife should, set out music stands, arranged the string parts, put the beer on ice and with her knitting sat in a corner to listen. That lasted, if I am not mistaken, for two performances. Thereafter, the young lady, on quartet nights, prepared the refreshments, put cotton in her ears and went to bed with a murder mystery.

At all events, amateurs of chamber music, whatever the quality of their own performance, are the most exacting connoisseurs of the professional article. Recommended for their listening pleasure are the two "Brandenburg" Concerti, by Serge Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony Orchestra, recently released by RCA-Victor, as well as that company's recorded version of the "Debussy Quartet," as performed by the Paganini Quartet. Columbia also has included chamber music in its latest releases. The incomparable Budapest Quartet has made an excellent recording of Beethoven's "Quartet in B Flat," last of the six which the composer wrote as his early Opus 18. Three members of the Budapest Quartet also are heard in Columbia's recording of the Mozart "Piano Quartet No. 1, in G Minor," with George Szell, conductor of the Cleveland Orchestra, revealing his skill in the piano part. And, for good measure, there is an oddity in the form of an album of "spirituals," transcribed for chamber orchestra and played by Adolf Busch and the Busch Chamber Players. This last Columbia offering may strike some listeners as being comparable to the orchestration some seasons ago of Bach's textbook, *The Art of the Fugue,* in order, as far as anybody could make out, to give Fritz Stiedry and the New Friends of Music Orchestra the opportunity to claim the first performance of a work by Bach. In any case, the first performance of "spirituals" by a chamber orchestra is a milestone of some sort, and the playing of the Busch group is very fine.

Even more prevalent than the chamber-music amateur is the choral-singing amateur, who is almost certain to be interested in one of the large chorus-and-orchestra works which the record companies have issued this season at frequent intervals.

Among albums currently on the shelves, one has a choice of two performances of the Brahms "Requiem," one of them made for RCA-Victor under the direction of Robert Shaw, with Eleanor Steber and James Pease as soloists, the other recorded for Columbia in the hall in Vienna where Brahms conducted many of his own works. Herbert von Karajan conducts the Columbia version, with Elisabeth Schwartzkopf, soprano, and Hans Hotter, baritone, as soloists.

There is also Columbia's recording of the infrequently played Berlioz "Requiem," made by the Emil Passani Choir and Orchestra in the Parisian church where Berlioz conducted many of *his* works; RCA-Victor's performance of the Beethoven "Ninth Symphony" under Koussevitzky; and Debussy's "La Demoiselle Elue," done for Columbia by Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra,

with Bidu Sayao and Rosalind Nadell as soloists, and the women's chorus of the University of Pennsylvania.

If you find these weighty albums a trifle beyond the budget (the Berlioz comes to $15.50, the Brahms "Requiem" $20.00 on vinylite), it is easy to make a choice from one or another of the operatic selections which have been reaching the market in time for the Christmas trade. There is an abundance of tenors. Jan Peerce sings for RCA-Victor four popular arias from "Tosca," "Pagliacci," "La Gioconda" and "La Juive." Jussi Bjoerling's offerings include a fine performance of "Ah! fuyez," from "Manon," also for RCA-Victor. Ramon Vinay joins Florence Quartararo in the first-act duet from "Tosca," and the RCA-Victor list of tenors on new operatic singles also includes James Melton, Guiseppe di Stefano, the young Italian tenor who made his debut at the Metropolitan last February, and Set Svanholm, the Metropolitan's Wagnerian ace, who performs valiantly in the back-breaking "Rome Narrative" from "Tannhauser." Luigi Infantino, on a Columbia single, makes sure nothing is omitted by singing "Questa o Quella" and "La Donna e Mobile" from "Rigoletto."

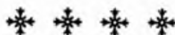
RCA-Victor also offers recordings by Licia Albanese,

Eleanor Steber and Florence Quartararo, sopranos, and Joel Berglund and Robert Merrill, baritones. Columbia has come up with a whole roster of less familiar European artists, including Paolo Silveri, baritone, Oscar Natzka, a sonorous bass now appearing at the City Center, Isobel Baillie, an English lyric soprano, Elizabeth Hoengen, and Aksel Schiotz, tenor. Mr. Schiotz' recent Town Hall debut was disappointing because of a paralysis (temporary, say the doctors) of his facial muscles. The Columbia record shows what he is capable of when in good form.

If one wishes to go hog-wild operatically, Columbia's new releases include a complete "Samson and Delilah," and a complete "La Boheme," the latter available on long-playing microgroove records. It might be well to check first to see if your collector has acquired or contemplates acquiring the special equipment necessary to play the microgroove discs.

In the field of orchestral music, there is available the usual amount of standard repertory items, plus many things that seldom find their way into the concert hall. And it would seem to make collecting sense to acquire some of the latter, possibly even at the expense of items which one can hear any time in concert or over the air. Glazunov, for example, survives mainly on account of his violin concerto and his "C Minor Symphony"; his suite "From the Middle Ages" is an interesting discovery. It is recorded for RCA-Victor by Fabien Sevitzky and the Indianapolis Symphony. There is also a recording for RCA-Victor by Jascha Heifetz of the Vieuxtemps "Concerto in A Minor," a work that became so shopworn in the nineteenth century that nobody dares to play it in the twentieth. And Columbia offers two intriguing "firsts" for anyone curious about our evolving musical language. David Diamond's new "Romeo and Juliet" music and Charles Ives' rather older "Concord Sonata."

For collectors who enjoy the excitement of discovering a gifted newcomer, RCA-Victor presents the debut recording of a young Pittsburgh-born pianist named Byron Janis, who is Vladimir Horowitz' only pupil. Janis made his debut at Carnegie Hall in November, and unless every music critic in Manhattan is a poor judge of pianistic talent, the young artist is going places.



MICHAEL HAMBURGER

THE CHEATED

THEY too were told the facts, they too were taught
an alphabet of bliss and all the rules.
But the same shop in which their wealth was bought
buys nothing back; the shopgirl ridicules
the candlesticks and pictures they have brought,
and all the glory learned by heart in schools
is worthless junk and bric-a-bric that ought
to have been burned or buried by the fools.
Cheated, they turn away; some search the street
for fag ends dropped by God and never found,
till rage accelerates their scraping feet,
patience peels off like summer skin; the ground,
hearts, houses, heaven reel deliriously
and knowledge licks them like the waiting sea.

BOOKS

"LITERATURE" AND THE ECONOMIC ORDER

HOWARD MUMFORD JONES

To speak of literature in relation to a liberal program of economic and social development seems at first glance to represent that kind of wishful thinking propagandists mistake for action. They believe that literature must be on "our side." But in the first place, literary men are notoriously poor economists either in the original Greek sense of the word or in its modern professional meaning. In the second place, there seems to be no real connection between economics and imaginative writing. In the third place, great literature has flourished in times and places quite opposite to the utopian ideal of a liberal social program. Most of the great periods of Asiatic literature, for example, are associated with the name of a despot, benevolent or otherwise; and the Augustan age of Rome, the cultural glories of Medici Florence, and the development of French neo-classicism under Louis XIV are three familiar European examples of splendid literature and undemocratic economy.

One of the elementary errors of literary criticism is to confound political and economic righteousness with literary merit. It is to the credit of William Hazlitt that, detesting the ideas of Edmund Burke, he admired the Irishman's prose style, just as it is to the discredit of Marxian critics, that any novel "on their side," no matter how ephemeral it might be, was given a favorable hearing, and literary work opposing their program was slighted or attacked, not merely as political iniquity, but also as bad art. Perhaps no one can surely draw the line where propaganda ends and literature begins, since superb propaganda sometimes rises into literature and mediocre literature often sinks into propaganda. Yet, for ordinary purposes, we can distinguish the two spheres well enough; and to connect the literary defense of a liberal program with the art of writing seems at the outset to confound this distinction and to violate the first caution of criticism.

But the age of Truman is not the age of Pericles. Of course, to use the word "literature" implies a lofty frame of reference, discussion soaring above such transient problems as royalties and movie rights into that serene abode where the classics are; but however high the pretensions of literature may be, if even the poet is to succeed, he must be heard, which means in modern times that a machine must turn him into print in sufficient quantities to be read by a sufficient number of pairs of eyes to bring back to an entrepreneur at least his original investment and preferably something more. Of course, if the poet has his private Maecenas, economic responsibility shifts.

What literary history principally ignores, however, is that manuscripts are objects of bargain and sale; that literary brains are bought in the strange market where hucksters and agents contend, and book clubs hope to find something that will sell astronomical numbers of copies. Literary historians imperfectly apprehend the truth that the basis of a writing career in 1948 has almost no economic relation to what it was in the fifth century B.C. or the sixteenth A.D., or, for that matter, 1847 when Macaulay, the publisher's delight, was settling down to finish the first volume of *The History of England from the Accession of James II.* At no previous period in literary history have economic and social pressures upon the writer been as tremendous as they are now; and the process of literary production, from the first thought in the author's mind to the final sale of the plates when his book falls out of fashion, constitutes the most elaborate economic behavior pattern the literary world has known. Even if he wanted to, one would think, the author cannot avoid the economic issue. That practicing writers do not avoid that issue is evidenced by the creation of those guilds and unions which protect, or try to protect, the novelist, the song writer, the dramatist, the radio man and the Hollywood gag man, not to speak of the newspaper reporter.

Although this is true, what is probably the most influential single force shaping "literature" in the Republic will not admit that there is any connection be-

tween merit and merchandising. I refer to the schools and colleges. The more we investigate literary careers, the more decisive we find the school years of a writer to be. Hence the supreme importance of what is taught as orthodoxy in the schools, or of the discerning teacher who discovers young talent in formative years. Instances will occur to everyone, from Milton's years at Cambridge to the decisive influence upon Frank Norris of Lewis E. Gates at Harvard. Indeed, the flourishing writers' conferences which make glad the summer from Middlebury to Puget Sound are but the latest tribute to the academic years. The influence of English departments upon literary values is, therefore, often decisive.

When we ask whether English departments prepare the writer in any way for economic responsibility, whether one means their private careers as income-earning citizens or their public responsibility as men of letters in a republic, the answer is not satisfactory. English departments recognize literature as an art; they have not yet awakened to the fact that writing and publishing are also an industry.

There should, of course, be places where the enduring values of art are maintained and defended without reference to bargain and sale. Certainly, the light thrown upon Shakespeare's plays by scholarly investigation into the conditions of Elizabethan printing is so dim and uncertain as scarcely to increase illumination. Imperial Rome had its publishing centers, but the art of Horace is not improved by our knowing this historic truth.

Nevertheless, we are not living under Augustus, nor under Good Queen Bess, and the tiny original audience for the *Aeneid*, or even for *Romeo and Juliet*, is to the public reached by *Strange Fruit* or *Forever Amber* as a rowboat to an ocean liner. Nothing, therefore, is gained by refusing to recognize the patent fact that book and magazine publishing is as much a branch of big business in the modern world as is the manufacture of airplanes or cosmetics. Indeed, not only is nothing gained, but damage is done the liberal state by this refusal—by, in sum, the advanced academic attitude toward "literature." In the first place, the divorce in the classroom of literary evaluation from any consideration that literature must be put into print and sold in a fiercely competitive market is but a symptom of a deeper critical malady. The ingenious essays with which advanced academic critics assail writers and each other turn upon intricate problems of interpretation so esoteric as to be comprehended only by an initiated few, and are, in fact, written in a sociological vacuum for what is, in terms of modern life, an essentially irresponsible audience. We inherit this condition from the Bohemia of the nineteenth century, which desired also to shock the *bourgeoisie*. That the tradition is still active is evident from a recent bit of advertising sent out by an *avant-garde* publisher who stated that the reading tastes of the multitude were of no concern to him—he and a few choice spirits would continue to cherish the fine art of literature in limited editions as Prometheus concealed the sacred flame in a hollow reed. And the criticism for which this publisher produces books is Alexandrian criticism—that of a generation of English professors who write a secret language for each other. The multitude, happily ignoring this cult, goes its way imbibing opiate from magazines whose circulations run into millions, whose fiction is slick, whose pictures bleed smartly to the margin, whose advertising is essentially corrupt, and whose owners are publishing tycoons. Never in American history has the gulf been deeper between the aesthetic few and the entertainment-seeking many.

THE academic few seem from time to time uneasily aware of their cultural and moral isolation, and offer a simple cure—join us. Taste consists not in what you like, but in what I like. Taste being by this admission anything the academic few write, the multitude is wrong if it does not like the esoteric. This is as if Shakespeare, in place of pleasing the groundlings with *Richard III*, should have desired them to read that sound academic pedant, Gabriel Harvey. Yet rich men, cultural foundations, university presses, and snob printers are expected to support poetry and prose too refined for the vulgar; and in the circle of the hierophants one acquires virtue by being popularly ignored. The result is that the fugitive and cloistered virtue of the English department, though it shapes poets, does not shape publishing, except remotely; and neither the poet nor the professor is willing to express interest in or accept responsibility for the economic system which furnishes royalties to the one and righteousness to the other. Like the unction of doctors committed to the sacred obligation of service in healing but unable to reconcile themselves to socialized medicine, this attitude would be merely annoying were it not that young writers are really forced into a refusal of direct civic responsibility. The irresponsibles brilliantly defined by Archibald MacLeish are, therefore, continually being recruited from the ranks of the aesthetic. Rationalization consists in the defense that it is proper to rise above transient politics and the ephemerae of the market place and to consider only tragic values (or philosophy or religious absolutism or the eternal form of the Platonic commonwealth). Would that readers could also thus be freed from the economic prison of individual lives!

But if the littérateur is a characteristic product of academic activity, he is not its sole offspring. The "creative" work of English departments, particularly in large service universities, together with correspondence courses and other forms of commercial instruction, may also produce writers trained, not to soar above the economic order, but to exploit and be exploited by it. The familiar advertisement: "How do you know you can't write?" is the simple symbol of this aspect of literary technology. Fiction is reduced to formulas, verse is taught by mail, directions are given for analyzing the wants of prospective customers—greeting-card makers, Hollywood magazines, detective fiction, religious weeklies, adventure stories, or periodicals dealing with science. The writer is conditioned, like a greyhound, to race after a mechanical goal, and if he succeeds, succeeds in terms of speed.

Writing is not art, but manufacture; and the writer is the economic man of the nineteenth century pitted against the corporation of the twentieth. The successful product is he who shops around among employers until his diligence is noted and his trade skill regimented to the proper machine. For such a "writer," it is clear, the economic order—any economic order—is absolute; his sole duty is cunningly to analyze the entrepreneur of manuscripts and to outsmart him if he can. The height of attainment in this metallic

world is to write on commission and by and by to employ an agent as a marketing device insuring continuous consumption of endless wordage. No question of responsibility for the ordering of the state has any meaning in a world purely given over to brute demand and supply.

The professional training of young writers seems to be faulty, then, in that it ignores the economics of the profession and thence, as it were, the economic and political responsibility of the art of literature. Fortunately, not all young writers confine themselves to a transcendental aesthetics; fortunately, an important section of mature writers accepts responsibility for *res publica*. Publication is a public act, which carries with it a notification of public responsibility. And though the work of novelist, dramatist, or poet is not necessarily improved by being tied up with a particular program of action (indeed, is often injured by too close an alliance with reform), it is, nevertheless, in the American tradition for the overwhelming number of writers in a given decade to be concerned for the health of the Republic. Few have been merely Tory. Most have enlisted, both as writers and as citizens, under Jeffersonian banners.

If we pass beyond the obvious cases of Tom Paine, Emerson, Thoreau, Henry George, and the like advocates of this or that reform. we note how intimate the interrelation of American poetry with public event has been and how close the connection (and responsibility) of American fiction with the general health of the Republic. The grave reflective poetry of Bryant not only presents the austere morality most people find in it, but springs also from a cyclical theory of history that leads directly to Bryant's work as a newspaper editor. The important poems of Lowell denounce an outrageous war and celebrate the heroes of the great American conflict, north and south. One of the best-known poems of Longfellow is a metaphor of the ship-of-state—a poem modern secretaries of state might meditate with profit.

The post-Civil War poets, forgotten nowadays, of whom Edmund C. Stedman, Bayard Taylor, and R. W. Gilder are representative, were deeply concerned about decay in civic morality and addressed themselves to the ideal republic. The best poems of William Vaughn Moody are civic odes denouncing imperialism. One can find plenty of interest in public event in the writings of E. A. Robinson, Carl Sandburg, Vachel Lindsay, and others of the so-called Poetic Renaissance. Benét's *John Brown's Body*, besides being an epic, is a plea for the liberal republic. It is only in our own time that sensitive poets, with some exceptions, seem embarrassed by large political issues and disinclined to regard themselves as servants of the civic muse.

An enormous library of fiction originates from the impact of economic and political issues upon the lives of private men. One of our earliest novels, Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry*, a satire on demagoguery, nevertheless measures failure in terms of civic responsibility. The interest of Cooper in problems of political, economic, and cultural life (sometimes confined to Whig solutions) is known to students, however the general reader may dismiss him as an adventure writer for boys; and in direct comment, like *Notions of the Americans*, or oblique references, as in the *Satanstoe* series, he illumines public issues—queerly anticipating in some books the strictures of Hamlin Garland. We are beginning to be aware of the amount of social criticism in Hawthorne, too long dismissed as lost in a dim Puritan past. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* came at once to mind when Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* swept the bookstores. Innumerable novels after the Civil War, some of them propaganda, some of them ephemeral, some of them utopian, but some of them rising to the dignity and power of Howells' *A Hazard of New Fortunes* and Norris' *The Octopus*, attacked monopoly and corruption, and prepared the public imagination for the Progressive Movement, the New Freedom, and the New Deal. As for twentieth-century fiction, its roll-call would include a list of notables from Dos Passos to Steinbeck, from Fitzgerald to Dreiser, from Ernest Poole to James T. Farrell.

In truth, the American writer, though he admire Henry James and study Gertrude Stein, can scarcely avoid commitment to the liberal cause. Since most men lead lives of quiet desperation, the writer is bound to inquire into the causes of the dis-ease the books reflect; and though these causes may be private and psychological, they are also economic and political. The honest craftsman cannot avoid the problem. He need not be a professional economist, he need not be an expert in government to be profoundly concerned for the incidence of big business on private lives, the dissatisfactions arising from finance capitalism. He need not commit himself to a particular party, a particular program. But he must register what he sees; and what he sees is that the contemporary equivalent of *panem et circenses*—the movies and professional football—does not long content the American soul. The hucksters are poor successors to the founding fathers, who, if they looked after their own interests, were, nevertheless, men capable of great programs and immense vision. What the novelist must record is the failure of nerve and the absence of vision in politics and economic life. He notes, because he cannot help noting, the uncertainties about employment, family life, health, old age, religious faith, and war and peace, which haunt our social system.

What is true of fiction is equally true in the theatre, where notable plays have been written out of a liberal philosophy of values.

We have had, of course, conservatives of the type of John Hay, John Jay Chapman and Henry Adams, who have despaired of the Republic or of labor or of education. But they at least came to grips with public questions, they were not guilty of the sin of indifferentism, of that fascination with one's private psyche which makes so much contemporary poetry merely solipsistic. The majority of American men of letters have not been of this persuasion. Most of them have contributed to the liberal faith by sympathetic observation and interpretation of American needs. It is not necessary to sit on committees or to speak from platforms (though some must do so) to be a good soldier in the war of liberation; and so long as writers both believe in the dignity of the individual and actively resent infringements upon that dignity, they will contribute imaginative power to the liberal cause.

This article will form a chapter in Saving American Capitalism, *a collection of essays on current problems edited by Seymour Harris, to be published by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. early in 1949.*

REMEMBRANCE ROCK
by Carl Sandburg
Reviewed by Edward Wagenknecht

THE first thing to say about *Remembrance Rock* is that there is too much of it. "Excuse the length of my letter," said Pascal; "I had no time to write a short one." A thousand pages is wearing enough when you have a continuous story to follow which surges to a dramatic climax, but when you have four unconnected stories—a Puritan story, a Revolutionary story, a Civil War story, and a World War II frame, each with its scores of characters to keep straight and set in relationship to each other—it becomes well-nigh intolerable. Yet the best of the book is surely worth the effort, for there are wonderful things in it. You may say, if you like, that when it ceases to be the work of a historian, it becomes the work, not of a novelist, but of a poet, and you can find evidence in much of the dialogue, as when Remember Spong tells her lover: "I know well those who marry with love and without money have sorry days, but their nights shine with scarlet moons and the music of white sea horses calling," and again, in the long passage, suggestive of O'Neill in some aspects, in which that strange gambler Omri, coming out of his "tear," talks pages of formal rhetoric, reads free verse, and winds up with a prayer. There are passages, too, which are strongly reminiscent, both stylistically and atmospherically, of Mary Johnston in her final phase:

"'I crossed a bridge and walked a dark valley before you,' Mim said.

"'You knew beforehand,' said Winshore, 'and a peace has come to you.'"

Yet there are hundreds of pages in this book that are absorbing as straight fiction. It is true that the characters are, for the most part, static, but they are not therefor less appealing. Perhaps it is because so many of these vivid encounters are episodic in character that one is tempted to wonder whether Sandburg's real talent as fictionist does not, perhaps, lie in the short story.

Though the book lacks continuity, it would be very unfair to suggest that it lacks pattern. Its pattern is the pattern of the American dream. "Always the path of American destiny has been into the Unknown . . . And never was it more true than now—the path of American destiny leads into the Unknown." It is clear that what Justice Windom, the putative author of the bulk of the book, says to his grandson is what Sandburg is saying to us:

"Live with these faces out of the past of America and you find lessons. America as a great world power must confront colossal and staggering problems. Reckoning on ever fresh visions, as in the past, she will come through, she cannot fail. If she forgets where she came from, if the people lose sight of what brought them along, if she listens to the deniers and mockers, then will begin the rot and dissolution."

What lessons he does not say. Sandburg's idealism, which faces facts and never glosses evil, is well. So is his charity, as in his handling of the doomed woman Bee, his recognition, again and again, that the truth may be with the moderates as well as with the crusaders. Yet, though in a sense the book renews faith in America, it has little to say about the road that we must travel. Faith in our destiny is good as far as it goes, but if our destiny is being betrayed, then faith is not enough. There are occasional characters in this book who are "looking forward with eager and impatient expectation to that destined moment when America is to give the law to the rest of the world." That moment may have come. But the reader who remembers the fate of other nations which have cast themselves in a similar role will not be exhilarated.

Harcourt, Brace, $5.00

DR. FAUSTUS
by Thomas Mann
Reviewed by Richard Plant

THIS is not only one of the great books of our time but an extremely complex one. Subtitled "The Life of the German Composer Adrian Leverkuehn as told by a Friend," it purports to be a biography of the creative musician Adrian Leverkuehn, written by his life-long friend and confidant, Dr. Serenus Zeitblom, professor of humanities and languages. Adrian was born in Kaisersaschern, one of those very German towns that still dwell in the middle ages and yet have odd touches of cosmopolitanism. After a few terms of theology, Adrian turns to the study of music under the guidance of his talented tutor Wendell Kretschmar. It is a sexual experience whose impact is never made quite explicit to the anxious Zeitblom (Thomas Mann, of course, knows better than to break his own rules and tell more than Zeitblom could possibly know), which results in Adrian's pact with the devil, to whom he sells his body and soul in return for twenty-four years of musical creativeness.

Covering the years 1885-1945, the novel reports the maturing of Leverkuehn's genius with astonishing detail and concreteness. We are shown Leverkuehn at work composing songs, string quartets, theatre music, orchestra suites (the one that is most successful is a typically impressionistic one that he later disavows) and finally, tormented by disease, the crowning pieces, the "Apocalypsis cum figuris," and "The Lamentations of Dr. Faustus."

Mann's descriptions of this music, which, after all, exist only in the author's imagination, are brilliant and convincing. Brilliant because, after reading six pages of Mann's analysis of the "Apocalypsis," even the layman can understand Leverkuehn's usage of the glissando, his orchestral use of the chorus, his most superb device of employing dissonances for the lofty, for "everything of the spirit, while consonances and firm tonality are reserved for the world of hell." It seems incredible that any novelist is able to evoke these "acoustic images" and create in words a twelve-tone system that is only a figment of his own fertile and disciplined art.

The pace of the story is leisurely. It describes the simple farm where Adrian was born and which, subconsciously, he tried to reproduce in Bavaria when he was a grown and sick man; his school and student years in Leipzig, Munich, Italy; his repeated attempts to bridge the gap that separated him, the genius, from the others, and his acceptance of the fact of the great loneliness of the creative artist. Very much like *The Magic Mountain*, there are endless discussions on a variety of subjects: politics, theology, superstitions and the black arts, musicology and literature.

Leverkuehn dies insane. And even as his friend Dr. Zeitblom is writing down his story, Allied bombers lay ruin to the cities, and Munich, Zeitblom's home, is plunged into chaos. Germany has become a vast ruin, and lamentations are the only fitting expressions for the Germans; so, Zeitblom concludes, as

art in our time can only be accomplished by a pact with the demonic forces which, in the end, will destroy the artist, so our civilization has made its pact with the devil and will have to pay its bloody price.

The pact with the devil seems perfectly plausible once you accept the symbolism of such an act. For, so it appears to Thomas Mann, our time has fallen back into the Demonic. The artist is, has always been, the first to come to terms with the irrational and demonic. "The artist is the brother of the criminal and the madman," says the devil in Chapter 25. "Do you ween that any important work was ever wrought except its maker learned to understand the way of the criminal and madman? Morbid and healthy! Without the morbid would life all its whole life never have survived. . . . Where nothing is, there the Devil too has lost his right and no pallid Venus produces anything worthwhile." A while later the devil has this to say to Adrian who has a tendency to strive for the coolly objective: ". . . to question as worthless the subjective, the pure experience: that is truly petty bourgeois, you ought to overcome it . . . and I mean too that creative, genius-giving disease, disease that rides on high horse over all hindrances, and springs with drunken daring from peak to peak, is a thousand times dearer to life than plodding healthiness. I have never heard anything stupider than that from disease only disease can come. . . Life takes the reckless product of disease, feeds on and digests it, and as soon as it takes it to itself it has health."

This philosophy of art, health and disease will strike many readers as familiar. Thomas Mann himself has hinted at it in previous works. It appears as early as *Tonio Kroeger* and *Buddenbrooks*, is elaborated in *Death in Venice* and *The Magic Mountain*, and has found explicit statement in his essays, particularly the one on Richard Wagner. It is also reminiscent of Nietzsche, and this leads us straight to the heart of the controversy that *Dr. Faustus* has aroused in many circles. In several aspects the tragic life of Adrian Leverkuehn resembles that of Nietzsche—Thomas Mann has made this quite clear. But Mann had other sources of inspiration. The American edition also carries an "Author's Note" which acknowledges that Adrian's twelve-tone system is the intellectual property of the contemporary composer and theoretician, Arnold Schoenberg, that in many passages the author is indebted to Schoenberg's "Harmonielehre." I also could not help thinking of another German composer whose life, too, ended in darkness: Hugo Wolf whose songs Leverkuehn greatly admires, and who shares certain traits with the composer of *Dr. Faustus.*

It is impossible within the scope of this review to do more than suggest the depth and richness of this novel. One can mention in passing the beauty and delicacy with which Mann has handled the ambiguous relationship between Adrian and the violinist Rudi Schwerdtfeger or the poignant episode, almost a lyrical intermezzo, dealing with little Nepomuk, the incomparable "wunderkind," who briefly enchants everyone and then is suddenly struck down by the dread disease, meningitis. In a sense, *Dr. Faustus* may be regarded as a work of synthesis in that it weaves together all the great themes that have concerned Mann as a novelist. Perhaps it is also a work of farewell—Mann's farewell to the epoch of bourgeois humanism, an epoch of which he has been, in the opinion of many, the supreme delineator.

Knopf, $3.50

INTRUDER IN THE DUST
By William Faulkner
Reviewed by Granville Hicks

WILLIAM FAULKNER'S new novel has not only reached a wider audience than any of its predecessors, with the possible exception of *Sanctuary;* it has interested and challenged the reviewers, calling forth an extensive and impressive body of critical analyses. I do not know how many critics would vote for Faulkner as the "best" or the "greatest" living American novelist, and I don't suppose that such a poll would mean much, but it is significant that there is no other contemporary writer about whom the critics can find so much to say.

As almost everyone must have gathered by now, *Intruder in the Dust* is among other things a beautiful example of Faulkner's narrative skill, readable, exciting, even melodramatic. In its fundamentals it has the lovely simplicity of a fable, the fable, say, of the lion and the mouse, with a stubborn old Negro in the role of the lion and a white boy figuring, very much to his credit, as the mouse. Needless to say, Faulkner is not content to deal with the situation in these simple terms, but he keeps the dramatic effectiveness of the fable, and righteousness triumphs in satisfying fashion.

It is also generally known that *Intruder in the Dust* is the most overtly political book that Faulkner has written. However, it is not true, as some reviewers seem to have assumed, that he has only recently become aware of the Negro problem. The ideas, as well as most of the characters and themes, of *Intruder in the Dust* are carried over from the short stories published in *Go Down, Moses* (1942), and essentially the same ideas will be found in *The Unvanquished* (1938). Faulkner has always had a passionate sympathy with the Negroes and a tragic sense of the problems involved in Negro-white relationships. He has always felt, furthermore, that southerners must solve these problems and that only southerners can.

What he has done in *Intruder in the Dust* is to create a highly articulate lawyer, the uncle of the boy who saves the old Negro, and let him set forth sundry arguments in defense of the position Faulkner has held for so long. That Faulkner bothers to put these arguments in the altogether suitable mouth of Gavin Stevens indicates, of course, that the issue now has for him a special urgency: the time has come when the south must act and the north must not. It is this sense of crisis that is new, and because of it Faulkner seems to have concocted some of his arguments rather hastily, but there is nothing new or hasty about the general position they are intended to defend. Nor does the novel stand or fall by the turgid dialectics of Uncle Gavin; even as a statement of faith, and certainly as a novel, it is validated by Faulkner's extraordinary insight into the complicated structure of human responsibility and human guilt.

Finally, something must be said, though much has already been written, about the style in which Faulkner has chosen to tell his story and communicate his insights. It is a difficult style, chiefly because of the long sentences, some of which run to six or eight pages. These sentences have their own clarity; they can, for instance, be read aloud with little or no trouble; but they do stagger the eye. The question anyone

has to ask is why Faulkner, who can write a prose as crisp as Ernest Hemingway's whenever he wants, has chosen thus to impose upon the reader's patience.

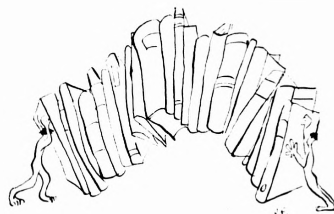
Although his handling of syntax has always been reckless, the six-page sentence, hurtling along without much punctuation except parentheses and double parentheses, has been a recent development, introduced in *Go Down, Moses* and perfected in *Intruder in the Dust*. Its purpose in the latter book can sometimes be discerned, notably in the wonderful description—a sentence of merely three and a half pages—of the lynchers' flight from Jefferson. Here, while Chick is kept poised on the brink of hysteria, his fantastic vision unfolds, until he is just caught back from the edge of wild laughter and tears. Here the device does work, making us feel that the vision is instantaneous and complete. And perhaps that is what Faulkner is always driving at, trying to circumvent the damage that grammar, or any other kind of logic, does to all vital processes, to thought and speech and life itself. At any rate he has to be given the benefit of the doubt; he has won that right by the seriousness of his devotion to his art and by the magnitude of his indisputable achievement. Whatever effort *Intruder in the Dust* demands of the reader, it fully repays.

Random House, $3.00

TIME WILL DARKEN IT
by William Maxwell
Reviewed by Richard B. Gehman

ONE of the distinguishing marks of the fine novelist is an ability to create the impression that he knows all his characters thoroughly, and to reveal this information gradually to his readers. This is actually nothing more than a sense of important detail, but it is a gift which is evidently bestowed rarely. William Maxwell has it however, and in his four novels he has been developing it so unpretentiously that his books have never received the acclaim which is due them. The daily-press reviews of his novel, in fact, make one suspect that the second-rate writing of the past few years has made many critics forget that good writing can still be done in this country. *Time Will Darken It* has been treated much as a Stradivarius might be if it came into the hands of a jug-band fiddler who knew he ought to appreciate it but didn't quite know why.

In some respects, the sense of detail is a thematic one. When Mr. Maxwell introduces a character, he immediately strikes its theme so that from our first meeting we can surmise how that character will behave. Austin King, the protagonist of this book, is a man whose nature guides him inexorably into situ-



ations from which it will not allow him to be extricated. The first line of the book tells us this much about him, "In order to pay off an old debt that someone else had contracted, Austin King had said yes when he knew that he ought to have said no, and now at five o'clock of a July afternoon he saw the grinning face of trouble everywhere he turned."

Because he knows so much about them, Mr. Maxwell can make his people operate as living characters for each other's benefit. He can put an impossible monologue in a person's mouth and, by means of it, make us see clearly the reactions to it of the others around him as well as the person himself. For example, when Mr. Potter, the visitor from Mississippi, first arrives in Austin King's law office, he speaks without stopping for a few hundred words. In real life, no man could carry on a casual harangue of this length without some response from his listeners. But Mr. Maxwell's sense of pace and of speech makes responses superfluous. The reader knows what the omitted remarks would be; he does not have to read them. It is unfortunate that the "naturalists" have never learned this trick, for it does away with a great deal of tedious reading.

Much has been made of the fact that this book is a "clear picture" of a small Indiana town in 1912, and that it is valuable for that reason. This is only part of the truth: it is like saying that Rembrandt painted good likenesses. Mr. Maxwell obviously knows what it was like in the town, what the houses were made of and how the people dressed, and there is much gentle affection in his descriptive passages. This does not make his novel valuable. What does is the fact that he can build, with a seeming disregard for conventional architecture, a framework in which real people come alive and can exist with and against each other. The Potters, from the South, arrive in the household of the Kings, who are northerners. As a result of this visit, the Kings' marriage is endangered, perhaps even destroyed. The reader's first impulse is to blame this on Nora Potter, the beautiful, ingenuous daughter; but as time darkens Mr. Maxwell's canvas, one realizes that the marriage was endangered (even though Austin and Martha were unaware of it) long before the Potters came. He has created a picture not of a time, not of a place, but of people, and this is perhaps as high as a novelist can aspire.

Harper, $3.00

THE WHITE GODDESS
by Robert Graves
Reviewed by Padraic Colum

THIS is a serious book. I start my review with this statement, because I think that readers who are asked to correlate Welsh occult poetry with Minoan mythology, the dispersal of the 'Sea Peoples' with reinterpretations of books in the Bible and with ancient Irish alphabets may be inclined to think of *The White Goddess* as something of a farrago. But Robert Graves is as serious as the Joyce of *Finnegans Wake* or the Eliot of *The Waste Land.* Like Joyce and Eliot and, one may add, Jung, he is out to show us that the age of rationalism has gone by and the age of myth is returning—not myths as they are studied in our colleges, "the quaint relics of the nursery age of mankind," as he says, but myths as a deep layer of mankind's experience.

As I read *The White Goddess*, I happened on an essay on Blake by Arland Usher in the *Dublin Magazine* in which this is said: "Philosophy has to go back to the Gods . . . and now we are making a remarkable discovery: that the patterns which psychology is revealing in

the depths of each one of us are closely similar to the patterns the 'underground' religious tradition has had knowledge of, under all sorts of disguises, from the most ancient times—and which are elaborated with superhuman complexity and subtility in the Prophetic Books of Blake." Before I pass from this to *The White Goddess,* I want to note that two other remarkable books published this year, *The Mirror of Magic* and *Emanuel Swedenborg,* deal, one more and the other less, with the "underground" religions that had so much influence in the eighteenth century and which were composed of the relics of ancient myth.

The thesis of *The White Goddess* is stated in the foreword. It is that the language of poetic myth anciently current in the Mediterranean and Northern Europe was a magical language bound up with popular religious ceremonies in honor of the Moon Goddess or Muse. That, one can say, is probable. "This remains the language of true poetry." But it might be said that that language is now beyond human ken. It was "tampered with in late Minoan times when invaders from Central Asia began to substitute patrilineal for matrilineal institutions and remodel and falsify the myths to suit social changes." And after the barbarian falsifications came the falsification of the sophisticates, "the early Greek philosophers who were strongly opposed to magical poetry as threatening their religion of logic, and under their influence a rational poetic language (now called the Classical) was elaborated in honor of their patron Apollo and imposed as the last word in spiritual illumination." One would think then that the magical language was as lost as the street songs of Atlantis. But there were groups that devoted themselves to its preservation: the cults of Eleusis, Corinth, Samothrace; when these were suppressed by the Christian Emperors, it was still taught in the poetic colleges of Ireland and Wales and in the witch covens of Western Europe. And so Robert Graves begins with a Welsh poem that, because it was deliberately garbled, he has to reconstruct in order to explain.

I have read *The White Goddess* twice, and each time with excitement, for I was always coming on curious lore and bits of startling information. Now and again I felt like noting that certain things said with positiveness were simply not so, but the whole argument was so interesting and enlightening that I waived my objections. The real trouble with *The White Goddess* is that Robert Graves sets himself up as a theological as well as a poetical reformer. He would liberate the repressed desire of Western races, "which is for some practical form of Goddess worship, with her love not limited to maternal benevolence and her afterworld not deprived of a Sea." But that is matter for another work. The significant part of *The White Goddess* is concerned with the goddess as Muse. The Muse cannot be stripped of her myth. And the poets are coming to know that without an accepted myth there cannot be high poetry, nor indeed any exalted art. And now? "The myths are wearing thin. When the English language was first formed, all educated people were thinking within the framework of the Christian myth cycle, which was Judea-Greek with numerous paganistic accretions disguised as lives of the saints. The Protestant revolution expelled all but a few saints, and the growth of rationalism since the Darwinian controversy has so weakened the Churches that Biblical myths no longer serve as a secure base of poetic reference." In these sentences something fundamental is said about poetry and the problem of the poet in our civilization.

Creative Age Press, $4.50

THE BLOOD OF OTHERS
by Simone de Beauvoir
Reviewed by Harold Clurman

IN presenting Simone de Beauvoir's novel to the American reader the publisher invites you to consider the "decisive, positive, regenerating aspects of the existentialist mood." What a pleasure it would be to do so! Unfortunately, when one has finished reading the blurb on the dust-jacket, what one has to consider is not the "existentialist mood" but Mlle. de Beauvoir's novel.

The plot concerns itself with Jean Blomart, a French middle-class intellectual. He has a sense of the immorality of living on his father's income, becomes a worker, leaves home, joins the communist party. After an episode in which a friend whom Jean has induced to join the party is killed in a political brawl, Jean leaves the party. Jean then works as a political union organizer. At this point Jean meets Hélène, an attractive girl who works in her parents' pastry shop. She appears to have no ideas and no aims. She falls in love with Jean, who likes her without much passion or genuine interest. When war comes and defeat with it, Jean joins the resistance. Hélène is so ignorant about politics that she almost becomes a collaborator. Her instinct as a Frenchwoman prevents her taking this step. When she witnesses the cruelty of the Nazis to her Jewish friends, she too joins the resistance. Hesitations and doubts are now overcome: Jean is ready to be responsible for the death of French hostages whom the Nazis execute in order to stop the sabotage being carried on under his orders; Hélène undertakes the most dangerous tasks and is finally wounded. She absolves Jean from the weight of guilt on this score: it was she who freely willed to risk her life. She feels secure in a sense of comradeship with her co-fighters. She is a mature person now, no longer the selfish female she was before the test of action. Now Jean can truly love her and accept the anguish of his part in her death: he is sustained by a sense of having achieved something for his fellow men. He has achieved freedom.

There is nothing wrong with this story: it is merely routine. What is tiresome about it is that it contains very few dramatized moments, very few scenes that are vividly presented even in terms of reportage or melodrama. Most of the action is "offstage." The Paris of the Popular Front days is taken for granted, the Munich crisis is skimmed over, and even the Paris of the occupation is depicted without color or passion.

Since the dramatic substance of Mlle. de Beauvoir's novel is so meager, one hopes for psychological insight. We get existentialist catchwords — "anguish," "guilt," "choice," "liberty"—instead. The characters' backgrounds are merely conventionalized indications. Their inner life is suggested in the following way: Hélène is watching her Jewish friends being brutally hauled off to a Polish concentration camp; she thinks, "As if I did not exist. And yet I exist. I exist. I exist in my locked room. I exist in space. I do not matter. Is it my fault?" Another example of Hélène's thought: "I am no longer alone; only a little stagnant puddle in

which is reflected the inconstant face of the world . . ." What manner of person is this? She is no person—only an existentialist stereotype.

It is almost unfair to drag in the subject of existentialism in connection with this novel. The only reason for doing so is that Mlle. de Beauvoir, who is a very intelligent woman, intends her novels to show how the existentialist state of mind actually comes into being. This is a laudable objective, because the most interesting aspect of existentialism is its immediate relation to a particular group of people at a particular moment in history. Because Mlle. de Beauvoir has so little talent as a novelist, her light seems to be only a reflection of some brighter star. As a result, when her novel comes to a close with a declaration of the need to accept responsibility, one is constrained to think: the existentialists took a long time to get to a point they should have arrived at long ago.

Knopf, $3.00

SO FAR SO GOOD

by Morris L. Ernst

Reviewed by Adolph E. Meyer

THIS is Morris Ernst's twelfth book. It is not as solid or as learned as some of its predecessors, as, for example, *America's Primer* and *The First Freedom.* Yet it is easily one of his more enjoyable works. Written in a disarming conversational style, touched here and there with pleasant mirth, but serious when it deals with fundamentals, it darts in and out from a welter of subjects that seem to have little or no connection. This aimlessness, however, is deliberate, the author having set out to do some "rantumscooting." This is a practice indulged in by his summer neighbors at Nantucket when they drive their cars over the moorlands "never knowing which turn you will take," but "sure you can always get home." Mr. Ernst's literary rantumscooting takes him into such topics as tolerance, civil liberties, censorship, divorce, sex, psychiatry, planned parenthood, labor and management relations, an escrow plan for industrial peace, and many others. Diffuse as these may seem, they are held together by Mr. Ernst's philosophy of liberalism which pervades almost every page.

As one might expect from a book of this nature, *So Far So Good* is essentially a personal story. We see the author at work and play, with his family and friends, and with some of the countless persons who have crossed his professional path. Though he holds that life is made up of "tremendous trifles," and he even endeavors to do some justice to this hypothesis, Mr. Ernst quickly by-passes them for some of the more substantial problems of American life. Thus, he hammers away at the idiocy and brutality of our divorce laws and the hypocrisy of our laws of bastardy. He comes to grips with strikes and the strategy of the American Communists. And he probes into the attitudes of those who oppose the spread of birth control information.

It is difficult to put one's finger on the precise reason for the charm of this book, but a good part of it, I suspect, springs from the beguiling way in which Mr. Ernst lifts the curtain from what have hitherto been off-the-record confidences between himself and some of the nation's illustrious great. Stray bits of conversation and correspondence between Mr. Ernst and Franklin D. Roosevelt, sprinkled with just the right mixture of anecdote and sharp observation, reveal not only an interesting relationship between the two men, but also serve to throw new light on the late president's manifold character, and especially on his liberalism and superb political *savoir-faire.*

Himself a liberal of the first magnitude, Ernst appears at his best when he deals with matters that have come out of his rich experience as a lawyer. Odd bits of observation about some of the judges he has faced and the causes and clients he has represented make for very lively reading. His interest in his legal work no doubt is enormous, but it is an interest which is prompted, not by the promise of the usual professional rewards, but rather by his sympathy for people and his great zeal for human rights. In this respect Mr. Ernst is a rare fellow among the ordinary flock of barristers, a lawyer and a liberal at one and the same time. He is strong in both roles, but it is as a fighting liberal that he warms us most. Lawyer though he is, Morris Ernst doesn't take much stock in the so-called majesty of the law; nor does he regard it as a social panacea. "Each state, city, town and village," he tells us, "should re-examine its own folkways of man versus man." This rather than legislation is the first step in the battle against bigotry. Though he is palpably an optimist, Mr. Ernst has not allowed his liberalism to soar into the stratosphere of impractical idealism. Like all liberals, for instance, he believes in protecting the rights of the minority; at the same time, he is not unmindful of the fact that "we must soon develop defensive tactics to safeguard a free and uncontrolled majority against secret, regimented minority activity"—as, for example, the labor unions.

All in all, Mr. Ernst has written an excellent book. His "rantumscooting" may dismay academic-minded professors of freshman rhetoric in that his book has neither a beginning nor a middle nor an end. It will certainly evoke the usual denunciations from obscurantists and self-appointed guardians of public morals. But for those who love truth, and who, with Mr. Ernst, believe "that the best test of truth is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market," *So Far So Good* should be stimulating.

Harper, $3.00

HAROLD BAUER: HIS BOOK

Reviewed by John Briggs

AT the age of seventy-five, Harold Bauer looks back good-humoredly on his life as a concert pianist.

It has been, one gathers, a full and interesting life, not without its paradoxical happenings. One was that Bauer, universally acclaimed as a masterful keyboard technician, never had a lesson in his life.

Bauer's early training was as a violinist. Like most violinists he also acquired fluency at the piano. (Fritz Kreisler, Jascha Heifetz, Efrem Zimbalist and other top-notch fiddlers are also excellent pianists; Bauer relates how he once astonished an audience in Seattle by playing the "Kreutzer Sonata" to Kreisler's accompaniment). In his early days he found it hard to get jobs as a violinist, and became accompanist to an American singer named Nicholson, who, for a tour of Russia, had changed her name to Nikita. When Bauer returned from the tour, he found nobody took him seriously as a violinist any longer.

Bauer summons up the musical world

of London and Paris at the turn of the century in vivid flashes. He recalls Liszt's last public appearance in London, and Paderewski's first; Klara Schumann's odd posture at the keyboard; and what happened when royalty entered the hall while Joachim was playing the difficult cadenza in the slow movement of Beethoven's F major "Razoumovsky Quartet."

He heard Anton Rubinstein play, with two grand pianos on the stage; one a spare, in case strings, hammers or keys gave way under the master's mighty blows. "I remember wondering how he could see with so much hair falling down over his face. I remember his impatient gesture as he dashed away a small flower thrown by an admirer, which lodged on the top of his head."

Of Sarasate: "There was an indescribable swagger about him. After bowing in acknowledgment of the welcoming plaudits of the crowd, he struck an attitude with his feet spread apart, and looking us over, so to speak, he allowed the violin to slip through his fingers until its progress toward the floor was arrested by the scroll. All this was accomplished with a self-confident nonchalance which was simply irresistible, and the British public came nearer, I believe, to getting a 'thrill' than ever before."

In Paris, Bauer knew Frederick Delius, Saint-Saëns, Ravel, who dedicated his "Ondine" to Bauer, Debussy, with whom Bauer was not on speaking terms for years because Debussy once spoke irreverently of a Beethoven quartet, and Moritz Moszkowski, who achieved undying fame as a wit because of his autograph in a lady's album. Hans von Bülow had just made the rather pompous observation: "Bach, Beethoven, Brahms! *Tous les autres sont des crétins.*" Underneath it, Moszkowski wrote: "Mendelssohn, Meyerbeer, Moszkowski! *Tous les autres sont des chrétiens.*"

With recollections of half a century's music-making, Bauer also has provocative things to say about music itself, the distillation of his experience as a public performer.

In our time, when uncritical admiration of the "Gallic virtues" in music is the rule, Bauer makes this point concerning "elegance, proportion, logic, fluency, wit (in the French sense of *esprit*) and, above all, order.

"The whole world will agree that these are all intrinsically valuable and desirable. . . . It would not be difficult to show that each of these characteristics may contain seeds of weakness. It is possible that clarity may sometimes be opposed to imagination, that elegance may be antagonistic to sincerity, that academic canons of proportion may be cited to defeat the advancement of learning. Fluency may easily become triviality, wit may prove destructive of emotional depth, and while we all admit the essential need for order, it is obvious that a desire to have everything in its place may easily degenerate into futile fussiness."

And in the same way, one might point out that Teutonic virtues generally admired in music and scholarship can display, as Bauer puts it, "*Les défauts de ses qualités.*" Massive erudition can become mere copiousness; meticulousness if carried too far becomes pedantry; and while it is admirable for a performer to be authoritative, it is easy for him to become dogmatic.

The fact is that absolute musical values are hard to establish, and every artist is, by his nature, in much the same predicament as Bauer, stumbling

in the dark, making mistakes and learning from them, and, at the last, emerging into maturity, which is another word for the accumulated knowledge and experience of a lifetime.

These days, we hear a great deal about conductors and performers who follow the composer's printed instructions to the letter. Bauer's conclusion is: "They deceive themselves strangely. They cannot possibly know the exact intentions of the composer, for the simple reason that musical notation permits only of relative, and not of absolute directions for performance. . . . How loud is *forte?* How soft is *piano?* How fast is *allegro*, and how slow is *adagio?*"

As an example, Bauer cites his experience with conflicting time signatures in various editions of the "Moonlight Sonata." The first movement was, and is, almost invariably played with four pulsations to a bar. Consulting original sources, Bauer found the time signature in the first printed edition to be *alla breve*, two beats to the bar, but the first page of the manuscript is missing. "The result is that all editors, ignoring evidence of the first engraved edition, have considered themselves justified, ever since, in making any time notation they chose. This is a great pity, for no musician who has once been released from traditional and unreasoning obedience to the printed page can possibly doubt that Beethoven knew exactly what he wanted when he indicated two beats to the bar in the first movement of the 'Moonlight Sonata.'"

One is reminded of Schumann's famous essay, *On Certain Probably Corrupted Passages in the Works of Bach, Mozart and Beethoven*, in which the composer's shrewd common sense enabled him to spot, as proofreaders' errors, passages which whole generations of scholars had explained away as particularly subtle touches on the part of those composers. And original manuscripts showed Schumann to be correct. When one gives slavish obedience to the printed page, one cannot be sure whether one is following Beethoven's inspiration or the whim of some obscure editor in the publishing firm which first brought out Beethoven's work.

As for the actual markings of the composer, Bauer's conclusion is that they do not "form an integral part of the work, and occasionally represent nothing more than subconscious mannerisms of the composer. One example of this is Beethoven's almost invariable practice of using slur marks in piano music as they would be used to indicate bowing for stringed instruments. The markings of other composers display personal peculiarities to an almost equal extent, and while they are occasionally helpful in revealing what we call the style of the writer, it seems to me that they are, as a general rule, not nearly

as important as many people hold them to be. Experience has taught me that the average composer's instructions are sometimes, but not always, right, whereas his verbal directions for performance (supplementing those already written) are almost invariably wrong."

Karl Philipp Emanuel Bach expressed the same thought two centuries ago. The younger Bach was extremely chary of putting expression marks in his manuscripts because, as he put it, if a man were a musician, he would sense how the music should go without being told, whereas if he were not a musician no amount of written instructions could make it clear to him. One may or may not share Bauer's irreverance toward the composer's verbal directions; but most musicians would probably confirm his point of view, that the artist is from first to last on his own, and must find his own artistic values in his own time and in his own way. It is admirably put in that favorite thesis for baccalaureate candidates at the Sorbonne: *La science, c'est nous; l'art, c'est moi.*

W. W. Norton, $3.75

THE DIARY OF PIERRE LAVAL

Reviewed by June L. Herman

IN Pierre Laval's last letter to his daughter he writes, "I ask you not to dream of avenging me but, since you need not blush on my account, you may defend my memory . . . with a return to a just order of things, I shall once more find my place in the hearts of good men." This is the type of conscience which Laval left as a legacy to Josée as he awaited sentence in 1945. While in prison he wrote to the President of France: "Do you really believe, Mr. President, that in peacetime, in the full light of day, in the watchful presence of Parliament and of a free press, I could have remained so long in office and returned so often if I had been unworthy of trust?" The President might well have answered, "Yes."

Laval, three times Prime Minister of France, was a man motivated by what Veblen might have termed the urge for "pecuniary emolument," an urge that impelled the limited but shrewd politician to sell his conscience as well as his country. He was also possessed by an almost pathetic determination to be on the side that would pay most. Thus, early in his political career he slyly maneuvered himself out of working-class politics into the right wing. In 1917, Mandel, then Clemenceau's Chief of Cabinet, summoned him and asked him to choose between his party and prison. Laval turned informer. He says in his diary, "I can prove I left this party [the Socialist Party] of my own free will."

Attempting to defend his actions on Ethiopia, Laval says, "What I sought to do was to preserve a working agreement with Italy and which would keep France on her side in the event of a grave crisis in Europe." Laval was able to foresee the "grave crisis," for he was helping to plan it. His international affairs were conducted as though they were personal business deals. He concluded the ignoble Ethiopian deal with Mussolini to whom in secret conversations before the invasion of Ethiopia he gave a free hand. While he explains in detail his relationship with Italian government officials such as Senator Purricelli and Count Arduini-Feretti, he fails to mention Hubert Lagardelle, who was publicly acknowledged by Mussolini as his teacher in social philosophy. Largardelle, the Secretary of State under Laval, was the undercover man in the Hoare–Laval deal on Ethiopia, and later kept France from forcing a showdown with Italy.

The former French premier states that he tried to effect a rapport between France and Germany; one that would prevent France from becoming entangled with German ideology. But his determination to develop a pro-axis France was evidenced in a military-economic alliance with Hitler, drawn up to look like a peace treaty. The records show that the industrial arrangement was to provide swift German access to all French output and to supply a steady stream of skilled labor. On the one hand, Laval says, "My attempts in 1931 to find a basis of agreement with Germany in a policy of reconciliation had gained for me, among our neighbors, the reputation of a man of good will. Both on the French and the German side we were convinced of the necessity of a reconciliation and of reaching an agreement, but public opinion is capricious." On the other hand, history notes that in 1931 Laval made a trip to Berlin with Briand. There he duped the French foreign minister and at the same time arranged to place French investments in German chemical industries.

In 1935, on his return from Moscow, Laval engineered a meeting with Goering at Cracow, with whom he had a long private conference. This discussion was the beginning of a policy which garroted the Franco-Soviet pact. It ended in June 1940 when Laval found himself in a position to dissuade the President of the Republic from leaving France to continue the fight from Africa.

When war broke out, Laval secretly plotted with anarchists, defeatists and German spies. Once during the war, on a false passport, he slipped into Switzerland and made contact with enemy agents. The upshot of this visit was the publication of defeatist papers advocating the ending of war at any cost.

Laval asks the reader to question why he should have wished to return to power in 1942. His collaboration with the Gestapo chief, Reinhard Heydrich, refutes his further claim that in 1942 "The German government did not wish to see me enter again the field of negotiation." The problems to be discussed between Laval and Heydrich were: (1) German demands for the return of the General Henri Honoré Giraud, (2) Laval's concern over reports that the Spanish were preparing to invade French territory from Morocco. But history records that this discussion was Laval's plan for future aid to the Axis plus protection of his own investments in German industries.

The October 1942 issue of *Newsweek* quotes Laval: "The Jews have done a tremendous amount of harm to my country; we must make sure they can never do it again." In his distorted diary, he tries desperately to gain Jewish support by saying, "There are tens of thousands of Jewish people in France who owe to me their liberty and their lives." Laval denies using political power to effect the persecution of the Jews, and claims that he was in no way responsible for the 22,000 arrests made in Paris in July 1942.

Nowhere in his diary is he able to justify his secret collaborations and his betrayal of France. His diary is general rather than specific and he evades the charges that have been proven against him. The book is as ignoble and dishonest as was his career.

Scribner's, $3.50

My Favorite Forgotten Book

WENZELL BROWN

ALTHOUGH the novel, *The Death of Society*, by Romer Wilson, won the Hawthornden Prize in 1921, it received scant recognition in this country. Perhaps it was on account of the title, which has a solemn portentous tone that fails to convey the tender almost lyrical quality of its matchless love story. I first came across it many years ago in a secondhand bookstore in Portland, Maine and purchased my original copy for fifteen cents. The book made a tremendous impression on my adolescent mind, an impression which has not faded with several rereadings. The story concerns the highly idealized love of a young man for a much older woman, and it is set against the primeval grandeur of Norway's Trondheim Fiord, a land where, "When the moon is full, there comes a murmur and a silvery shimmer over the vast darkness of the pine trees, and in spite of the bishop, pastors, wandering tutors, and good churchfolk, a million fairies in battle array skim across the forest to engage the giants, trolls, dwarfs, spooks and ghosts of the Dovre Fjeld in war." This setting is one of pure magic far beyond the reaches of that conventional society which Romer Wilson always regarded as her enemy. The men and women of her books, while vividly drawn as individuals, move in a magic world and there is reason to believe that Miss Wilson used the words "society" and "actuality" synonymously.

Romer Wilson was born in the Wuthering Heights country, and her love for the solemn, desolate, wind-swept moors is constantly reflected in the stark, spare descriptions of lonely places. In a letter, which I found in the files of her publisher, she wrote: "If you can imagine Pittsburgh surrounded by miles and miles of Scottish moors and with a small sketch of old Elizabethan England in between, you will know the kind of country in which I was brought up. Our house was the last house before the moors. There was nothing to break the wild gales which roared down from the heights. The whole district, including the house, had a mournful history and was thoroughly haunted. Even the names of the places and lanes were haunted—Rininglow, Hang 'em Lane, Dead Man's Lane, Mallyrag Lane, Cut Throat Bridge are some examples. When you realize that these places were on lonely commons or led through almost uninhabited valleys, you will see what a thrill attended our daily walks."

She could never work slowly, she once explained, and wrote one of her long novels in three weeks, while *The Death of Society* was completed in six. Actually, if Miss Wilson had spent more time in the careful pruning of her material, she might have eliminated the passages of exaggerated emotionalism which offended some critics. Hugh Walpole, in a glowing tribute to the book, describes it as "a lyrical expression of a moment's ecstasy," and adds: "such moments are rightly to be considered the principal gifts of life." But, Walpole continues, the business of revealing somebody else's ecstasy is filled with pitfalls. For the average person leaves his more intense emotional experiences unanalyzed and is usually bored with the narration of those of others. That, he explains, is why "our weak-kneed brethren prefer the safety of accurate realism."

Other critics of the day adjudged the book to be "plain silly" and, while disagreeing with them, it is easy to see their point. If one has not known transitory ecstasy, the sudden sense of being on the brink of some great discovery, the fleeting vision of a world made perfect through one's own compassion, sympathy and understanding, Miss Wilson's writing must indeed have little meaning. Even when one has

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caught their mood of self-revelation, her characters still speak on occasion like the habitués of Greenwich Village cocktail parties. The young man of the story deliberately chooses the illusion of beauty over permanent happiness. "Thank heaven," he explains, "that we are all rather blind. What extraordinary revelations we should have if our eyes cleared for a single moment." This blindness Miss Wilson regarded as essential to life. Certainly this is an impractical, immature and dangerous point of view. Yet the temporary slipping over "the border line of everyday into the place where everybody speaks about themselves, where the ugliest men and women become somebody's saint" is also necessary, if men are to have a vision of a society which frees rather than enslaves the individual.

Notwithstanding its limitations, *The Death of Society* has the profundity of the truly simple, and it is a pity that, along with all other of Romer Wilson's work, it has gone out of print. As Walpole says, for those to whom society, with its rules, inhibitions, magistrates and policemen, is of inevitable value, the book will mean nothing. But he who has felt a moment of grandeur will wonder if that moment could not be endlessly prolonged should society fall down the final abyss. "No one can tell but that longing for the Death of Society is in the heart of everyone who touches ecstasy."

The measure of Romer Wilson's contribution to English letters is difficult to estimate. For, somewhere amid the irrational shuffling of the literary cards, a writer whom serious critics have adjudged to be the peer of Charlotte and Emily Brontë, Emily Dickinson and George Eliot has dropped into almost complete obscurity. Now, ten years after her death, it seems time for a reappraisal of her writing. If her novels lack technical skill, they do not fail in artistry, and if there is not greatness within them, there is certainly beauty. Many would find joy and pleasure in reading the works of Romer Wilson should they again become available to the public.

REVIEWS IN BRIEF

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF BENJAMIN RUSH, edited by GEORGE W. CORNER (*Princeton University Press*, $6.00). Although this volume will be acclaimed mainly by scholars, its content will be of great interest to anyone with a liking for the early years of American history. Printed from the original manuscripts in possession of the American Philosophical Society and The Library Company of Philadelphia, it is the first complete and unexpurgated edition of this important work. Rush's autobiography includes his *Travels Through Life* and his *Commonplace Book*, the latter representing the diaries he kept during the last quarter century of his life. It deals with his education at West Nottingham Academy and Princeton, his term in Congress and his distinguished career as a physician. It also throws light on his disputes with George Washington over the alleged maladministration of the Army Medical Service and reveals the story of his controversy with fellow physicians in the yellow fever epidemic of the 1790's. In it, too, are Rush's personality sketches of some of his fellow signers of the Declaration of Independence. The book is illustrated and substantially documented.

THE WAR WE LOST, by CONSTANTIN FOTITCH (*Viking*, $3.50). This book, by the former Yugoslav minister and Ambassador to the United States (1935-44), is subtitled "Yugoslavia's Tragedy and the Failure of the West." The war that Mr. Fotitch refers to was "lost" at Teheran when the Western powers agreed to annex a part of Poland to Russia and decided to switch their support from Mihailovich to Tito. It is the author's contention that Teheran sealed the doom of Yugoslavia as a free country and laid the groundwork for the present political breach between the Balkans and the West. He bitterly denounces Tito as a ruthless dictator, and defends the motives of Mihailovich whom he credits with a "perfect underground organization." Mr. Fotitch has not had firsthand contact with Yugoslavia since 1935, but his book is based upon information he acquired as an ambassador, interviews with refugees and missionaries to the Balkans, and on several books and white papers. Although the writing is angry, the tone of the book is sincere and, frequently, convincing.

THE CHIPS ARE DOWN, by JEAN-PAUL SARTRE (*Lear*, $2.75). M. Sartre has set his latest novel in a limbo, highly overpopulated with the living of today and the dead of several centuries, and from which his lovers—a labor politician and a society woman—have temporary access to both worlds. They fail in an attempt to live their lives over again together because love is not strong enough to eliminate responsibilities of class and their previous existence, which are still too much with them. If M. Sartre has attempted the unlikely task of transcribing cinematic style into literature, he has succeeded at a sort of 1920–Keystone Cop level. His story doesn't flow; it moves by fits and starts —a rapid, but disrupted, series of still shots. The book seems not to have been written at all, but outlined. There is a cast of characters, snatches of dialogue and explicit stage directions (all ineptly translated), but little in the way of creative, narrative style. *The Chips Are Down* will undoubtedly make a better movie than it does a book.

BLOOD OF THE MARTYRS, by NAOMI MITCHISON (*Whittlesey House*, $3.50). Beric, son of a British king and foster son of a Roman senator, defies his pagan upbringing to become a Christian and suffers a martyr's death in the arena. With him are other members of the early Christian society: Manasses the Jew, Argas the Greek, both slaves; Lalage, a dancer at the Imperial court; and Acte-Claudia, former mistress of the Emperor, who, because of her position at the Imperial court, escapes a martyr's death. A series of flashbacks give the histories of these characters and many others, though, unfortunately, because of the author's preoccupation with their religious conversion, they never fully come to life. The religious message of the novel is brotherhood unhampered by caste, but it loses force in being stated rather than developed. Places and customs are described with historic authenticity, and are obviously the result of careful research.

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City and State..........

Age..........Date of Birth..........

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