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Fiction, Poetry, Drama

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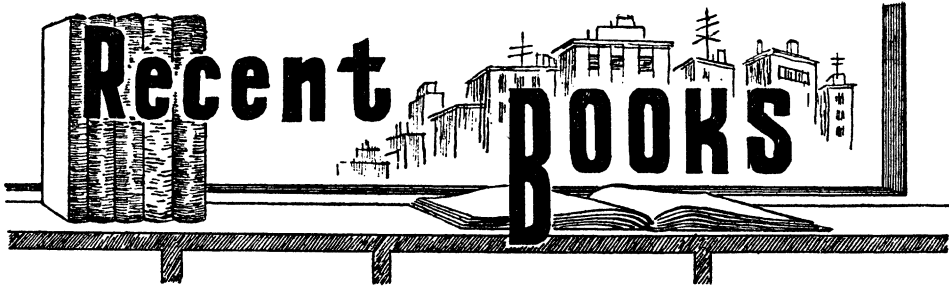
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Edited by GRIFFITH T. PUGH\*

### Fiction, Poetry, Drama

**BOON ISLAND.** By Kenneth Roberts. Doubleday. \$3.75.

Mr. Roberts' intimate knowledge of the Maine coast is revealed in this exciting novel of shipwreck and suffering. In pounding surf on a dark, bitterly cold night the *Nottingham Galley*, out of Greenwich, struck the rock on Boon Island; and the fourteen men of her crew were confronted with the problem of survival. How they faced hardships that would have made Robinson Crusoe's adventure seem like a picnic is told convincingly. The few faults—the tiresome villain, the straining humor, the sentimentality of the ending—are largely redeemed by the author's skill in narration.

**THE HEARTH AND THE STRANGENESS.** By N. Martin Kramer. Macmillan. \$4.50.

The harrowing story of an unhappy family with, incidentally, insanity in its background. The husband, erratic and almost brilliant inventor, hates his obsessively religious wife, who in turn despises him and idolizes her son to the exclusion of his two sisters. Of the three children only the elder daughter achieves a moderate compromise with what is considered "normal" happiness. About Aliciane and Gareth there is always a "strangeness," which ends ultimately in tragedy for both. Mr. Kramer strongly suggests, as the title indicates, that the "strangeness" results from their unhappy family relationships rather than from any hereditary taint.

—Elizabeth B. Hunt

\* Unsigned reviews are by the editor.

**THE SMILING REBEL.** By Harnett T. Kane. Doubleday. 1955. \$3.95.

More than a cloak and dagger account of the life (and love) of the famous Confederate woman spy, Belle Boyd, this novel, for all of its exciting episodes, presents a historically significant picture of North and South at war. The protagonist dominates the book from first to last, but she is by no means the sole object of interest. While the author is sympathetic to the Confederacy, he is not promoting a cause. Historical personages, reflections of prison conditions, blockade running, espionage, and of course military actions are all grist for Mr. Kane's mill.

**KEEP THE ASPIDISTRA FLYING.** By George Orwell. Harcourt. \$3.75.

A savage attack on middle class vulgarities, the novel (first published in England some years ago) portrays a fledgling poet who attempts to rid himself of the demands of monetary ambition but finds that in the grimy loneliness of poverty it is impossible to create or even, for the proud, to retain unalloyed friendships and love. Finally, when his sweetheart becomes pregnant, he is forced to return to the world of affairs via a job in an advertising agency. A lack of depth in the major character and a repetitiousness of scene and dialogue may keep this from being a great novel, but it is an important one.

—Max Halperen

**THE SCARLET CORD.** By Frank G. Slaughter. Doubleday. \$3.95.

This book tells the story of Joshua, leader

of the Israelites after the death of Moses, and Rahab, the woman of Jericho, who rescued and saved the spies of Israel as they were in danger of death from the people of Jericho. As usual in Dr. Slaughter's books, one of the leading characters is a young doctor, who has an opportunity to display his skill more than once. The character of Joshua, actually the leading person in the story, comes off not so well by comparison. The Biblical story of the crossing of the Jordan, the fall of Jericho, the failure at Ai and then the destruction of that city, the pageantry of full-scale war make this story a fast-moving narrative extremely readable.

—Hudson Rogers

**BIG WOODS.** By William Faulkner. Random House. 1955. \$3.95.

"The Bear" makes almost any book worth the price. Here, part four is missing. Other hunting stories are "The Old People," "A Bear Hunt," and one appearing for the first time in a book, "Race at Morning." Italicized passages that serve as preludes and as an epilogue are taken from different places in Faulkner's work; they appear here without designation or comment, their purpose being to set the mood for the stories and to sustain unity of tone for the volume. Superior drawings are used sparingly. No new writing is included, but the old still earns a welcome.

**THE TRUMPET UNBLOWN.** By William Hoffman. Doubleday. 1955. \$3.95.

This is another World War II account of a callow youth who enlists in the service to slay dragons. After two years of observing almost unrelieved wallowing in drunkenness, pugilism, and whoredom, in a forgotten medical outfit, the idealistic Virginian returns to Richmond, his family, and his girl friend—not with the trumpet blown but with gonorrhea and apathy—the shocking aftermath of disillusioning slaughter followed by inactivity, in which a now older "hero" has found his "finest hour." The wonder is that the young author could by his terse, dramatic style have kept the book from being more than mildly monotonous.

—Laura Jepsen

**H.M.S. ULYSSES.** By Alistair MacLean. Doubleday. \$3.95.

The story is of a ship patrolling Anglo-American convoys to Murmansk in World War II. The author, an English teacher in Glasgow, Scotland, uses his own Arctic experiences to write in graphic language of icy, heaving decks and flaming seas; of sleepless, numbed men for whom "death and destruction became the stuff of existence"; of minds strained into "stunned unknowingness"; of rebellion and selfless valor; of a ship splintered into the waters on the last voyage home. The novel is distinguished by vivid narrative and characterizations and by its powerful portrayal of what the dying Captain called the craziness and "futile insanity of war."

—Carmen Rogers

**THE JURY DISAGREE.** George Goodchild and Bechhofer Roberts. Macmillan. 1955. \$2.75.

The evidence is all in, in the case of John Tanner, seemingly devoted husband and solid citizen, but alleged to have viciously murdered his wife. He is the only suspect. Each chapter deals rather tiringly with the theories and prejudices of the various jurors. But the reader is likely to take more interest in the jury than in the accused and to feel finally, with the jurors, that he has been detained an overlong time. The story is based on an actual murder case. The verdict is still debated among authorities.

—Mildred F. Henry

**A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE.** By Arthur Miller. Viking. 1955. \$3.00.

A provocative, discerning essay, "On Social Plays," and two one-act plays, one entitled "A Memory of Two Mondays," and the second, "A View from the Bridge," form the contents of this book. In the essay Mr. Miller is concerned with the role of drama and the lot of the individual in a society which values a man almost solely on how well he is able "to fit the patterns of efficiency." The two plays are different in tone and structure. Pathos in the first and stark tragedy in the second impress the memory of the reader. Arthur Miller's plays, while undoubtedly good theater, have those qualities that make for absorbing reading.

THE MISANTHROPE. By Molière. Translated by Richard Wilbur. Harcourt. 1955. \$5.00.

The poet Richard Wilbur has put into fresh and delightful heroic couplets the great comic play of Molière, *The Misanthrope*, a masterpiece of seventeenth century neoclassic drama. The theme, presenting a conflict between hypocrisy and self-righteousness, is perennially challenging. But the appeal of the play in the present version is due in significant part to the subtle, graceful, and eminently clear verse of the translation. The format of this signed and limited edition (1500 copies) is a credit to bookmaking.

### Poetry

Four slender volumes testify that the quest of poets for an audience continues.

P. D. Cummins' *Some Phases of Love* (Macmillan, \$2.00) is a rewarding collection, showing an artistry of form and an insight into spiritual values that place this book beside Mr. Cummins' earlier work. Robert Conquest's *Poems* (Macmillan, \$2.00) is a first volume, containing poems that have won acclaim in the literary journals—poems that are strikingly individual and of high musical quality. A second volume of poems by Ernest Kroll, *The Pauses of the Eye* (Dutton, \$3.00), fulfills the promise of the first by exhibiting poems of mature craftsmanship on a wide variety of subjects. Witter Bynner's *Book of Lyrics* (Knopf, \$3.50), his first since 1947, contains one-hundred poems, some from earlier collections, others appearing for the first time in a book, but all well-wrought, sensitive, appealing—in fact, worthy of their distinguished author.

### Nonfiction

THE EXURBANITES. By A. C. Spector-sky. Lippincott. 1955. \$3.95.

The exurbanites are members of the New York communications trades who have moved beyond even the suburbs, believing, quite deludedly, that the move would allow a lessening of the tensions and insecurities that accrue from a tightly competitive industry. The book examines the lives of exurbanites as commuters, workers, and family members. Unfortunately, it seems to have been written for the same people it is about. One is reminded of a young girl who is supposed to have said of a book on penguins, that the book told more about penguins than she cared to know.

—Vivian Payne Halperen

BISMARCK. By A. J. P. Taylor. Alfred Knopf. 1955. \$4.75.

In this new biography by the distinguished British historian, A. J. P. Taylor, Bismarck, the Iron Chancellor, is presented as Bismarck the strange, fascinating, dynamic, and complex man. Unlike earlier biographers, Professor Taylor has dealt with Bismarck as a representative of his own era. An authority on German history, the author is admirably able to examine and describe Bismarck's entire background and to avoid measuring the man by contempo-

rary standards. There is brilliance and wit in the political-psychological portrait, even though the casual reader may not be interested in the argument as to whether Bismarck's policy was the best for Germany.

—Elizabeth Blanding

THE LIFE OF RUDYARD KIPLING. By C. E. Carrington. Doubleday. 1955. \$5.50.

Aided by the family papers now made available through Rudyard Kipling's surviving daughter, C. E. Carrington has compiled a definitive biography of that vastly popular Victorian whose verse, short stories, and novels have remained among the best sellers for sixty years, even though critical opinion has fluctuated. This account is richly factual, drawing continually upon Kipling's own writings and the records of his relatives and famous friends. Historic background is substantially present to set his attitudes in perspective. Unflinchingly interesting, this book also carries the full weight of authority.

—K. W. Hunt

ROBERT BENCHLEY. By Nathaniel Benchley. McGraw-Hill. 1955. \$3.95.

Countless devotees of the late Robert Benchley will find in this perceptive and