

More Prose And Poems

By Betty Simpson

Unbelievably enough, for a busy commercial community whose American members are far from their accustomed haunts, Manila can boast numerous excellent private libraries. This month, these have furnished the reading fare on which notes are made here. Warning is now given that some readers of this page may begin the hunt for

Life with Father, by Clarence Day
Wolf Solent, by John Cowper Powys
Covering The Far East, by Miles Vaughn
Last Poems, B. A. E. Housman

Fathers of families are subject to much good-natured badinage these days. The younger generation have been reading Clarence Day's *Life With Father*. Day's naively ironic style suits his material perfectly, and this material is mostly the smack of pater familias.

No good book should be called salutary. Rhubarb has been spoiled as a dessert because it is always served with the reminder that it contains needed vitamins. Enough that fathers and sons can chuckle together over the yarns in this.

Father decided that the lads should be musicians. He pictured with gusto the instrumental trio that would play for him, evening after evening. A more trifle like talent for music, father hardly gave thought to. Clarence, the eldest, must study violin. A mild, old symphony player was engaged as teacher, and a violin purchased. The lessons began . . . in the basement, by request of the neighbors.

Who suffered the most, Clarence or his teacher, is a matter for debate. Both were in awe of father's determination that Clarence would become a violinist. For some weeks, Clarence struggled manfully even though he really couldn't see the notes on the sheet music. Then he

confided in the instructor that he was short-sighted. Fearful that father would consider this fact a rationalization of Clarence's notable lack of progress, the two entered into a conspiracy that resulted in Clarence's wearing the teacher's eye-glasses. Even so, the art of the violin would not succumb to Clarence's onslaught. It was mother who finally cut the Gordian knot. The violin was transferred to younger David, and the writer leaves him in the basement with wishes for better luck.

Day's narrative-essay books redeem his given name—Clarence—from the limbo of unforgivable cognomens.

A brilliant novel of this decade is John Cowper Powys' *Wolf Solent*. The gifted English family pronounce their name as the Tagalog *yo* and the Saxon *weezee*; this hint is given because names of contemporary writers often puzzle as to pronunciation, and reference books fail to clear up the mystery. In this case, a friend of a friend heard this writer's lecture in an American city.

Small-town England is pictured not so much in color as interiorly. Wolf is a tormented talent. Having lost his teaching position due to a sudden explosion of his tamped ideas, he accepts the job of ghost-writing the scandals of Dorset county for the eccentric Mr. Urquhart. Wolf's parents had lived there. In the midst of his own entanglements, Wolf stumbles upon their contributions to the community's undercurrents.

The novel is wide enough to be reminiscent of Hardy, as critics have pointed out. It is psychologically focussed, too, and in this brings to mind Aldous Huxley. With A. P. Herbert's touch of hilarious incongruity, it would near perfection.

Of interest to his fellow-newsmen of the Orient, Miles Vaughn's *Covering the Far East* makes its appearance locally. Some of its better writing is seen in the early pages relating the Middle West attitude toward the Orient. Gifted with more curiosity than his kin, Vaughn was able to learn appreciation and thus left the Middle West forever. A slight personal narrative is interwoven with a running account of the big stories he was mixed up in during years at Tokyo and Bangsha. On the whole, he is the antithesis of Vincent Sheehan, and his book is limited in appeal, being for other newshawks and those whose hobby is contemporary history.

The last testament of A. E. Housman included an important legacy, his unpublished poems. Greater riches hath no man; the beloved Irish poet was so self-deprecatory that he directed his brother in this fashion: "to destroy all my prose manuscripts in whatever language, and I permit him but do not enjoy him to select from my verse manuscript. . . ." Well has the brother's choice been made, the book *Last Poems* printed.

Of *The Shropshire Lad*, the poet once explained that Terence "is an imaginary character, with something of my temper and view of life." There are more such poems in the new volume, "of a time of life which the author had long passed when he wrote them; but none the less they are characteristic of the lively sympathy which, in the words of the opening poem of this collection, he had for all ill-treated fellows, and more especially for the young. He would have liked 'the laws of God and man' to be kinder than they are; and a great deal of the anger and bitterness of his verse is due to the fact that they are so much the other way."

His smiling rue must not be left unmentioned, but since it brooks no dissertations, quotation serves best:

"Delight it is in youth and May

To see the morn arise,

And more delight to look all day

A lover in the eyes.

Oh, maiden, let your distaff be,

And pace the flowery meads with me,

And I will tell you lies."

Girl at Rome

The Journal would like to know from all its readers about their children in the United States and Europe: where they are in college, their progress, etc., and how they are commencing their careers after graduation. This curiosity comes of the feeling that the average rating of these young persons must be above normal, in many instances, outstanding or even notable. Mrs. John W. Hausermann, Jr. tells of Lura Street as a practicing newspaper woman—journalist, no less—at Rome, Italy, and already handling Italian as familiarly and correctly as if it were her native tongue.

Here is a Manila girl, the elder daughter of the late Associate Justice Thomas A. Street of the Philippine supreme court. Her father schooled her in Latin, as well as English literature—and of course, in Spanish. Miss Street repeated at Pomona College, California, her triumphs at Central High School, Manila, and probably went in for post graduate specializing. Two years ago she and Mrs. Hausermann slipped away from Manila for a cruise of Mongolia. In casual or more serious letters, Lura Street can have nothing but success.

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