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ADVENTURES IN READING, 26th Series

READING FOR PLEASURE

By

MARY CUTLER HOPKINS



CHAPEL HILL

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*Reading for Pleasure*

By

**MARY CUTLER HOPKINS**

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## PROGRAM I

### YOUNG MAN ABOUT LONDON

In August of 1941, when it was announced that the long-lost Private Papers of James Boswell had been bought by Yale University, their discovery was called by Joseph Wood Krutch "perhaps the greatest literary find ever made." The history of the Papers has all the suspense of a good detective story, and the *London Journal* the freshness and spontaneity of a good first novel.

One cold November morning almost two hundred years ago a young Scotsman, twenty-two year old James Boswell, got into a chaise and started off for England. He had studied law rather apathetically to please his father, Lord Auchinleck, and had sampled the provincial pleasures of Edinburgh. Now he was on his way to the capital, to try for a commission in the exclusive Guards regiment, and to make his entré into Society and the world of letters.

Boswell's journal of the trip, the first volume to be published from the original manuscripts, gives a vivid picture of eighteenth century London, with its taverns and playhouses, cock fights and public executions, brawling street women, and elegant ladies and gentlemen in silks and satins and elaborate powdered wigs. What is more remarkable, perhaps, is the intimate view that Boswell gives of himself and all "the glory, the pathos, and the farce of youth." To the present-day reader who shares the current interest in psychology, this completely uninhibited "history" of a mind offers what is probably the most entertaining as well as the most literary case history ever written. With disarming frankness the author describes his numerous amours, particularly his affair with the actress Louisa and its totally unexpected climax. In church, where he went with commendable regularity, his thoughts were apt to be on seduction rather than on the sermon ("What a curious and inconsistent thing is the mind of man"), and surely no man ever woke with a headache more often than young James Boswell. But with all his faults and his excesses he must have had a good deal of charm. He talked easily and listened well, dressed with great care, and went to all the fashionable places, where he soon made friends with some of the most interesting people of the day: David Garrick

and Thomas Sheridan, the actors; Oliver Goldsmith; the Countess of Northumberland; the formidable Doctor Johnson; and for contrast, a group of dissipated young rakes. All in all, this extraordinary journal is one of the most fascinating records of human complexities ever written.

### 1. Literary Detective Story

*Life Magazine*, December 4, 1950

*Boswell's London Journal, 1762-1763*: Preface and Introduction

Describe the discovery of the Papers in Boulogne, Malahide Castle and Fettercairn House.

Discuss the reluctance of the Boswell descendants to have the manuscripts made public.

Tell how the Boswell papers found permanent sanctuary at Yale.

### 2. Rake's Progress

*Boswell's London Journal, 1762-1763*

Discuss Boswell's family background and his youth in Edinburgh.

Describe London as seen by the traveller; social life, religion, the theatre, and any other aspect that interests you.

Discuss Dr. Johnson; his relationship with Boswell, and the literary importance of their friendship.

Describe some of the interesting people in the book.

Select a passage or passages for reading aloud.

#### *Additional Reading:*

*Life of Samuel Johnson*, by James Boswell

*Samuel Johnson*, by Joseph Wood Krutch

*A Degree of Prudery*, by Emily Hahn

## PROGRAM II

### TODAY'S WRITERS

Almost twenty years ago Malcolm Cowley, in his *Exile's Return*, made a study of the ideas that dominated the literary world of the 1920's, and were held by the "lost generation" that came to maturity after the first world war. Now John Aldridge, in *After the Lost Generation*, speaks for his contemporaries who are even more thoroughly "lost" than their predecessors. The first third of his book is devoted to three novelists whose concepts and techniques have greatly influenced the young men who wrote their first novels during or shortly after World War II. Disillusioned by the experiences of war and uneasy peace, Dos Passos, Hemingway and Fitzgerald concluded that life has no meaning, that ideals are illusions, and that the sensitive person is bound to be destroyed in a society in which values have disappeared. In writers of the present era, who grew up during a depression and came to maturity in another war, this total disillusionment is re-expressed in a negation that is a form of spiritual nothingness, in which all things are unimportant and without value. Lacking the originality and vigor of the earlier novelists, Norman Mailer, Merle Miller, Paul Bowles, Frederick Buechner and the other postwar writers whose work is discussed by Mr. Aldridge, are producing fiction whose technical excellence does not compensate for its essential emptiness. The writers of the "lost generation" were positive in their revolt and despair, while their successors express only the "absence of values."

*After the Lost Generation* is not, of course, a study of contemporary fiction in general. The author has deliberately limited his field to a group of young men who might almost be said to form a special school. To the reader who is interested in forming a more balanced impression of present-day writing, *The Best American Short Stories, 1951*, edited by Martha Foley, offers a skillfully selected, representative collection. The stories range from J. F. Powers' extremely funny *Death of a Favorite* to Jean Stafford's *The Nemesis*, a sombre study of abnormality; from Ilona Karmel's moving story of an old lady, *Fru Holm*, to Carol Goodman's *The Kingdom of Gordon*, about a little boy who confuses his minister father with God. The foreword, in which Miss Foley discusses her observations of the trend in modern fic-

tion, offers a startling contrast to Mr. Aldridge's views. And taken together the two books provide a stimulating commentary to the student of mid-century American literature.

### 1. *All the Sad Young Men*

*After the Lost Generation*, by John W. Aldridge

Comment briefly on Mr. Aldridge's career, and his own relationship in regard to age and experience with the writers whose work he discusses.

What is the main theme of the book, and how is it developed?

Do you agree with Mr. Aldridge when he says that, "The best literature in America will continue to be negative so long as the country's values are such that no writer of honesty or insight can possibly take them seriously"?

Speculate on the possibility that the recent decline in the popularity of fiction may be due to the public's reaction to "the literature of nihilism."

Do you feel that this book helps to clarify some of your opinions and impressions of modern writing?

*Additional Reading:*

*Exile's Return*, by Malcolm Cowley

### 2. *Selected Stories*

*The Best American Short Stories, 1951*, edited by Martha Foley

Discuss Miss Foley's views on the new fiction, as expressed in the foreword. Which of the two critics seems to you to offer the more balanced and convincing estimate?

How do Miss Foley and Mr. Aldridge agree in their opinions, and in what respect do they differ?

Discuss briefly the magazines from which these stories were taken, and the editor's standards for judging.

Read aloud part or all of William Faulkner's speech of acceptance when he received the Nobel Prize for Literature. How are Mr. Faulkner's ideas reflected in the stories chosen for this collection?

*Additional Reading:*

*O. Henry Memorial Award Prize Stories of 1951*, edited by Herschel Brickell

### PROGRAM III

#### "SIN TO LEFT AND DEATH TO RIGHT"

The years may pass, the tempo of Southern life may change, but much of the truly distinguished writing in America today continues to come from the pens of Southern novelists and playwrights. The list is a long and impressive one. Ellen Glasgow, Thomas Wolfe, William Faulkner, Caroline Gordon, Tennessee Williams, Carson McCullers, Robert Penn Warren and Eudora Welty are well established names, while serious young writers like William Styron and Max Steele give convincing evidence that the Southern renaissance has not lost its impetus. Perhaps the best novel published in 1951, certainly one of the most remarkable, is William Styron's *Lie Down in Darkness*, the story of the disintegration of a well-to-do family of Tidewater Virginia. Written in a richly poetic prose that is faintly reminiscent of Faulkner and Wolfe, the story rises to its horrifying climax, all the more horrifying because the drama is played out against a background of normal, familiar settings; a football weekend at Charlottesville, cocktail parties, a wedding, golf at the Country Club and, for contrast, the visitation of a Negro revivalist to Port Warwick. The people themselves, are almost appallingly alive; Milton, who cannot stop his drinking; Dolly, his plump, pretty, foolish mistress; Helen, his neurotic wife; and Peyton, his beautiful, doomed daughter.

Caroline Gordon has not been a prolific writer, but her novels of Kentucky and Tennessee life, present and past, are quiet masterpieces of English prose. Ford Maddox Ford, who greatly admired her work, spoke of its "great composure and tranquility . . . an achievement at once of erudition and of sombre and smouldering passion." In Miss Gordon's latest novel, *The Strange Children*, we see a group of talented, sophisticated, grownup children, through the eyes of a real child, nine-year-old Lucy. For years Stephen Lewis, Lucy's father, has been working on his history of the Civil War. His wife, Sarah, whose natural warmth and charm are almost submerged by the cares of her family and of the rosy-bricked, high-pillared old house, is further harassed by the unexpected arrival of guests in the midst of a July heat wave. And the guests, old friends of the Lewis' years in France, when all of them were young and filled with ambition and hope,

play out their tragi-comedy of illicit love before Lucy's fascinated, half-comprehending eyes.

### 1. "A Stranger and Afraid"

*Lie Down in Darkness*, by William Styron

Give a brief sketch of William Styron's life, and discuss the various critical estimates of his work and of his future as a writer.

Discuss the influence of other writers on Styron, not only on his style but in his theme of the doom of a Southern family.

Describe the structure of this novel; the way in which the story is told in a series of cut-backs, seemingly unrelated incidents that add up to a complete narrative.

Do you feel that the bleakness of the story is too unrelieved; that Peyton's death is inevitable? Do you think the author has piled too much horror upon horror?

What is the significance in the story of Daddy Faith and his followers? Contrast the deep religious fervor of the Negroes with the spiritual aridity of the white family. Do you agree with Howard Mumford Jones when he says, "Mr. Styron has had the courage to be a moralist. He has a thesis . . . his novel pictures a set of people living without God in the world."

*Additional Reading:*

*Romantic Comedians*, by Ellen Glasgow

*The Little Foxes*, by Lillian Hellman

### 2. "In a World I Never Made"

*The Strange Children*, by Carolina Gordon

Discuss briefly Miss Gordon's life and her earlier books.

Describe the setting of *Strange Children*; the old house, the neighborhood, the minor characters who add to the reality of the story.

Discuss the Lewises and their friends. Do you see any points of resemblance between them and the people of *Lie Down in Darkness*?

Discuss Lucy; her comprehension of the events going on around her; her romantic love for Uncle Tubby; the various facets of her complex character.

Describe the MacDonough family, and the revival in the brush arbor. Notice that in each of these two novels the strong, primitive faith of simple people is used to point up the despair of the principal characters who live without faith or hope in a world that has no meaning.

*Additional Reading:*

*What Maisie Knew*, by Henry James

*Alec Maury*, by Caroline Gordon

#### PROGRAM IV

### MEDITATIONS AND REMINISCENCES

Brooks Atkinson, the dramatic critic, is well known to readers of *The New York Times* for his articles on current plays and players. But Mr. Atkinson is not merely a pundit in evening dress who leaps from his seat when the curtain falls on opening night and dashes to his typewriter to pound out his verdict for tomorrow's column. In his book, *Once Around the Sun*, he reveals himself as a New Yorker who loves the city and, like O. Henry before him, is fascinated by the sights and sounds, and most of all, by the people of Bagdad-on-the-Hudson. These three hundred and sixty-five personal essays, one for each day in the year, are the meditations of a man who appreciates the major and the minor pleasures of life; who is interested in the ways of sea gulls in the harbor, snow storms, subways, municipal elections, God, eternity, and Joe Berman who runs the news stand on the corner of Eighty-sixth and Broadway. This is a happy book, written by a man who enjoys the present and is not afraid of the future.

Stark Young, who was one of the most distinguished dramatic critics of the 1920's, is better known to most present-day readers for his best-selling Civil War novel of some years ago, *So Red the Rose*. His latest book, *The Pavilion*, "Of People and Times Remembered, of Stories and Places," is the story of his childhood and youth in Como, Mississippi; of family and friends, Negro servants, village "characters," and the pleasant, easy-going life of a small town in the Deep South some sixty years ago. To older readers *The Pavilion* will bring back warm memories of a way of life that is gone; and younger readers, caught in a momentary enchantment, may feel a nostalgia for a world they have never known. Most of all, this is a book about people; of Aunt Julia who bought cloth by the bolt instead of by the yard, and slashed away recklessly with her scissors until she got the effect she wanted; of old Mr. Ben Claton who may have been, in his youth, one of Murrell's highwaymen; of Cousin Charles McGehee who looked like Byron; and all the intricate relationship of uncles, aunts, cousins and other kissin' kin that made up the old-fashioned, closely knit Southern family.

1. *One Year in New York*

*Once Around the Sun*, by Brooks Atkinson

Give a brief biographical sketch of Brooks Atkinson. Discuss his earlier books and his theatrical column.

Discuss the various facets of his character as they are brought out by his writing; his diverse interests, his knowledge of the theatre, of birds, stars, ships, people.

Comment on some of the aspects of New York life as they are brought out in *Once Around the Sun*.

Select a passage to read aloud—possibly the section on Christmas.

The philosophy of the author and the spirit of the book are perhaps summed up in the last four sentences. Comment on the statement that, "Tomorrow comes to us untarnished by human living. No human eyes have seen it and no one can tell what it is going to be. The Chinese word for tomorrow (ming-tien) means 'bright day.' There is the wisdom of sages and the rapture of poets in that cheerful image."

*Additional Reading:*

*Henry Thoreau, Cosmic Yankee*, by Brooks Atkinson

*Cream Hill*, by Lewis Gannett, or

*Two Came to Town*, by Simeon Strunsky

*Still Seeing Things*, by John Mason Brown

2. *Twenty Years in Como, Mississippi*

*The Pavilion*, by Stark Young

Discuss Mr. Young's life, his career as teacher and critic, and his earlier writings.

Describe Como; the town, the people, and their way of life.

Read aloud a passage or passages in the book that illustrate the author's ability to re-create long-vanished scenes and people.

Show how life in a small town taught Stark Young about life and people everywhere.

Comment on the fact that Stark Young and William Faulkner, who grew up almost in the same neighborhood, developed such widely differing points of view.

Do you see any points of resemblance between *Once Around the Sun* and *The Pavilion*?

*Additional Reading:*

*So Red the Rose*, by Stark Young

*The Southern Part of Heaven*, by William Meade Prince

## PROGRAM V

### REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

Of the five daughters of the Reverend Alpheus Griffin, growing up in a Massachusetts village in the 1840's, Lidian was the youngest and the plainest. But the willful, high-spirited girl whose story is told in Naomi Babson's *I Am Lidian*, came a long way from the quiet gentility of the New England parsonage. As an old lady of ninety, half drowsing in her chair while a reporter tries to get her story for the Grandview Montana Daily Herald, and the red roses sent by the Governor for her birthday blaze on the table beside her, Lidian remembers the past, crowded with sorrow, adventure and romance. About to be married at eighteen to a safe and suitable young man, Lidian had eloped instead with Alonzo Dorie, whose lavender britches and worldly charm were irresistible. Years of travelling had followed for the Dories, first as members of a theatrical troupe, and later in a wagon train bound for the West. And in Montana Lidian had stayed, to live out her long and variegated life, while the tension between North and South exploded into civil war, the frontier was tamed, and the lonely little settlement became the town of Grandview.

*The Golden Hammock*, by Laetitia Irwin, is another novel that re-creates the past, though the world of Nisba Douglas existed only yesterday. Nisba grows up in the years that "hang like a golden hammock, one end anchored in Manila Bay and the other invisible;" secure and peaceful years in a pleasant Southern town. Her mother, beautiful, spoiled, and determined that the family shall live in the "right part of town and know only the right people;" Father, wise and sensible and kind; Grandmother, who never stopped fighting the Civil War; and Nisba's younger brothers and sisters, her friends and her beaux, are all drawn with affectionate understanding. To readers who can remember what life was like before World War I this book will bring back a host of memories. And a good many women will identify themselves with the Ugly Duckling heroine who graduated from ferris waists and Peter Thompson dresses to clothes suitable to a young lady, but who suffered all through adolescence from being too tall, too awkward, and too candid to fit her mother's ideas of a young lady most likely to succeed in marrying well. This is not

an important book, but it gives a skillfully drawn picture of the manners and mores of a family, a class, and a period in American life.

### 1. *Ninety Crowded Years*

*I Am Lidian*, by Naomi Lane Babson

Describe the New England setting of Lidian's childhood, and discuss the members of the family who interest you most.

Discuss the travels of the theatrical troupe, and the panorama of American life of the period as Lidian sees it in boarding houses, theatres and trains.

Describe the journey to Montana; the members of the wagon train, and their experiences on the way.

Discuss the historical events that took place during the first thirty years of Lidian's life; the growing Abolitionist sentiment in New England, the Civil War, the westward movement.

Discuss the details that give the flavor of the era; the songs, the quotations, the clothes and the manners.

Discuss the author's style, and her method of presenting the story. Select a passage for reading aloud that will illustrate the charm of the book.

#### *Additional Reading:*

*The Yankee Bodleys*, by Naomi Lane Babson

*The Town*, by Conrad Richter

### 2. *Only Yesterday*

*The Golden Hammock*, by Laetitia Irwin

Describe the setting of the novel; the town (probably Louisville), and its people. Compare the setting with that of a novel of more recent times.

*Louisville Saturday*, by Margaret Long

Discuss the Douglas family and the members of their immediate circle; their way of life and their social standards. Show how these standards were slowly changing during Nisba's girlhood, and how she herself rebelled against her mother's pattern.

Describe some of the people in the book. Do you feel that they are alive, and that the author has succeeded in reconstructing the life of the period?

Can you point out flaws in the society of the early 1900's that may have helped to produce the "lost generation" only a few years later?

Do you feel that books like *I Am Lidian* and *The Golden Hammock* have any importance aside from their entertainment value? Do they tend to romanticize the past too much? Does reading them help you to understand the present?

#### *Additional Reading:*

*Louisville Saturday*, by Margaret Long

## PROGRAM VI

### EMINENT VICTORIANS

The legend of Florence Nightingale, "the Lady with a lamp," is familiar to every British and American school child. But the woman herself, brilliant, complex and wholly fascinating, has been fully presented for the first time in Cecil Woodham-Smith's *Florence Nightingale*, one of the finest biographies that has appeared since Strachey's *Queen Victoria*. Family letters and papers, never before available to the public, have disclosed the details of Miss Nightingale's private life; the years of conflict with her fashionable mother and sister before she was free to enter the "degraded" profession of nursing, the strange and tragic relationship with Sidney Herbert, and the unrelenting battle with the War Office and the India Office for reforms in nursing—a battle that continued for many years after the Crimean adventure was ended. We see Florence as a young girl; beautiful and charming, but consumed by the inner fire of genius, as a young woman at once ruthless and compassionate, and as an old lady, blind, feeble, and apparently unaware of the honors showered upon her by her grateful king and countrymen.

Thirty years ago the younger generation used "Victorian" as a synonym for everything stuffy and dull. But compared to the drab public figures of our own "era of the Common Man" the famous men and women of the nineteenth century have taken on a fresh lustre. Benjamin Disraeli, Prime Minister, novelist and wit, would have been fantastic in any age; as adviser and beloved friend of the widowed Victoria he is almost incredible. And Hesketh Pearson in his able biography, *Dizzy*, has written an absorbing study of the Jew who became one of England's most remarkable statesmen. The political side of Disraeli's life is adequately presented, but it is Disraeli the man and artist whom Pearson brings to life in a series of vivid sketches. We see him in his "scarlet waistcoat, long lace ruffles reaching the tips of his fingers, white gloves with jeweled rings outside them, his well-oiled black ringlets touching his shoulders." Disraeli's flamboyance shocked the conservative Englishman of his day, but the ladies adored him, from his fond, foolish wife Mary Anne to Queen Victoria, whom he made Empress of India. And today's readers will find the Earl of Beaconsfield as colorful and as

controversial a figure as did his contemporaries a hundred years ago.

### 1. "Lady With a Lamp"

*Florence Nightingale*, by Cecil Woodham-Smith

Discuss the sources of this biography and the author's use of her material. Discuss her literary style.

Describe Florence Nightingale's family and her girlhood.

Discuss the social life of the English upper classes in the early days of Victoria's reign.

Describe the status of nursing in this period, and show why her mother and sister were so violently opposed to nursing as a career for Florence.

Give a brief discussion of the Crimean War, and of Florence Nightingale's work at Scutari.

Discuss Miss Nightingale's character as it is brought out in this book. Contrast the Florence Nightingale of Longfellow's poem with Florence Nightingale as interpreted by Lytton Strachey in *Eminent Victorians* and by Cecil Woodham-Smith.

*Additional Reading:*

*Eminent Victorians*, by Lytton Strachey

*Santa Filomena*, by Henry W. Longfellow

*Victoria of England*, by Edith Sitewell

### 2. *The Earl of Beaconsfield*

*Dizzy*, by Hesketh Pearson

Give a brief sketch of the author and his previous work.

Discuss Disraeli's family background, his early years, and the development of his remarkable personality.

Discuss nineteenth century England; the spread of industrialism, the growth of empire, and their effect on political thought.

Discuss Disraeli's relations with his great rival, Gladstone, and with his "Faery" Queen Victoria.

Discuss Disraeli as a novelist.

Select a passage to read aloud from Strachey or from Pearson that seems to you to illustrate the character of Disraeli.

*Additional Reading:*

*Disraeli*, by André Maurois

*Sybil*, by Benjamin Disraeli

*Victorian Panorama*, by Peter Quennell

## PROGRAM VII

### HIGH COMEDY

Charles-Edouard de Valhubert of the Free French, on leave in London, detaches the beautiful Grace from her worthy but stolid fiancé and marries her in a registry office; (his intensely Catholic family never considers them married at all, but Grace doesn't know that). For the next seven years, while her husband is away at the wars, Grace, heroine of Nancy Mitford's *The Blessing*, lives quietly at home with her little son Sigismond, and her cantankerous, aggressively British Nanny. But when the fighting is over at last, Charles-Edouard returns and carries them all off to France, where the comedy of high life in Anglo-French circle really begins. There are the dowdy, intellectual old aunts, who expect Grace to speak with authority on British politics and literature; the lovely ladies who float through the salons, sparkling with jewels, their faces "gaily painted with no attempt at simulating nature," moving on "warm waves of scent." And, finally, there is Charles-Edouard himself, so handsome, so charming, and so light-heartedly faithless that poor Grace oscillates between despair and bliss. This brilliant, frivolous, witty novel is not meant to be taken seriously as a study of international marriages or of contrasting French and British mores. It is pure entertainment, as hard and sparkling as a diamond.

The English have always excelled in the writing of high comedy, and *The Limit*, by Ada Levenson, published in this country for the first time, is as fresh and amusing as it was when it was written forty years ago. This is a story of high and Edwardian society; of a confident, leisurely, snobbish little world that vanished forever with the coming of World War I. Romer Wyburn, whose "personality was so extraordinarily nil that it was quite oppressive," deeply loves his beautiful wife, Valentia. She, in turn, is in love with her cousin Harry de Freyne, who "had been educated for diplomacy, and learned eight languages, some of which he spoke fluently, and in all he could look with expression." The plot and the various sub-plots are not very important. They merely serve as pegs on which the author hangs her sparkling conversations, her deft character sketches, and her vignettes of Edwardian life and manners. This is a kinder book than *The Blessing*, its spirit reflected in the words of Sir

Osbert Sitwell, who said of the author, "Her general and natural expression was a smile, not caused by any wish to mock, but by some absurdity she had detected in the world at large."

### 1. *With a Gallic Flavor*

*The Blessing*, by Nancy Mitford

Give a brief discussion of the author; her upbringing and her career as a writer.

Discuss Grace's life in England, as seen through the eyes of her husband and his family.

Discuss the Valhuberts; their traditions, their culture, and their way of life. Contrast them with the equally distinguished Allinghams.

Describe Paris as seen through Grace's eyes. Do you find that the author's feeling for the arts enhances the value of the book?

Describe one or more of your favorite characters, and tell some of the incidents in which they play a part.

Discuss the author's style, and read aloud passages that will give the flavor of the book.

*Additional Reading:*

*Pursuit of Love*, by Nancy Mitford

*So You're Going to Paris*, by Clara E. Laughlin

### 2. *The Edwardians*

*The Limit*, by Ada Leverson

Discuss the author's life, the period in which she lived, the society of which she was a part, and her relationships with Oscar Wilde, Henry James, and other literary and theatrical figures of her day.

Discuss the art of writing high comedy. Why do you think the English excel in this field?

Discuss the characters in *The Limit* and read aloud quotations from the book that describe each one.

Discuss Van Buren and his qualities that seemed to the author typically American.

Discuss the lives of the Wyburns and their circle, and show how their world came to an end in 1914.

*Additional Reading:*

*Oscar Wilde*, by Hesketh Pearson

*Short Stories of Saki*, by H. H. Munro

## PROGRAM VIII

### SHAKESPEARE AND SHAW

At the close of the third act of Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman* there is a scene that was seldom performed until Charles Laughton and his companions of the First Drama Quartette brought *Don Juan in Hell* to cities and towns all over America. This dramatic interlude, written fifty years ago, is Shaw at his brilliant, provocative best. On a shallow stage furnished only with four high stools, four reading stands, and four microphones, the actors, in conventional evening dress, read their play whose action is cerebral rather than physical. In the course of *Don Juan* they discuss Hell, "the home of honour, duty, justice and the rest of the deadly virtues, in whose name all the wickedness on earth is done," and Heaven, which is paradise only for those who have become "the masters of reality." But above all, the play is concerned with Man; his folly, his grandeur, and the possibilities for his survival. In speeches as timely as the editorials in today's newspapers the Devil and his guests discuss earthly manners and morals, and their conclusions are as pertinent to the atomic age as they were in the horse and buggy era of the early nineteen hundreds. To quote Don Juan, "It is not death that matters but the fear of death. It is not killing and dying that degrade us, but base living, and accepting the wages and profits of degradation."

Another dramatic event that has made theatrical history is the production by Lawrence Olivier and Vivian Leigh of alternating performances of Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra* and Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. In the first play Cleopatra, a frightened girl of sixteen, is discovered by Caesar hiding from the conquering Romans between the paws of the Sphinx. The aging, worldly general teaches her to be a woman and a queen, and in the process gives full play to Shaw's wisdom and wit, and to his knowledge of ancient history and ancient politics. The second play ends with Cleopatra's death before the same Sphinx, bringing the drama to a full circle. The childish, ignorant girl has become a passionate woman. And the story of her love for Antony, with its tragic consequences, is all the more moving when Shakespeare's richly poetic lines are set against the philosophical comedy of Bernard Shaw.

1. *Inferno—Twentieth Century*

*Don Juan in Hell*, by George Bernard Shaw

Discuss the First Drama Quartette; the members of the troupe, their travels, and their triumphs.

Summarize as briefly as possible the complete play, *Man and Superman*, and show how the interlude fits in to the complete drama.

Give a brief outline of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, whose action provides the background for *Don Juan*.

Discuss the ideas presented in the play that seem to you most important or most interesting.

Read aloud a passage or passages that illustrate the author's philosophy. If possible, show pictures of the performance.

*Additional Reading:*

*Man and Superman*, by George Bernard Shaw

*Don Giovanni*, by Mozart (Rullman libretto)

2. *Age Cannot Withher Her*

*Caesar and Cleopatra*, by George Bernard Shaw and *Antony and Cleopatra*, by William Shakespeare

Discuss briefly the careers of Lawrence Olivier and Vivian Leigh, and their preparation for this production.

Discuss the production of the two plays; the staging, the adaptations that have given the works of two such different dramatists a certain uniformity; the interpretation of the principal parts.

Give a résumé of each play, and show pictures from the production.

Compare the language, the characters, and the themes. Read passages aloud to illustrate your points.

*Additional Reading:*

*The Life and Times of Cleopatra*, by E. P. B. Weigall

PROGRAM IX

WOMAN'S EYE VIEW

"I know a village full of bees  
And gardens lit by canna torches,  
Where all the streets are named for trees  
And people visit on their porches."

Phyllis McGinley has long been familiar to readers of light poetry for her cheerful rhymes about the everyday world as seen through the eyes of an unabashedly normal woman. In her newest book, *A Short Walk From the Station*, she writes with affection and gentle satire of life "in a middle class house on a middle class street in a middle class village full of middle class people." She leads us to the P.T.A. tea party, the beauty parlor, the Country Club on Sunday afternoon, and to the lending library, whence a subscriber can

"Lug home the current choices of the Guild  
(Commended by the press to flourish of trumpets),  
Or rent a costume piece adroitly filled  
With goings on of Restoration strumpets—  
And thus, well read, join in without arrears  
The literary prattle of her peers."

Commuting husbands, children of all ages, and nature in its suburban aspects, all have their place in Miss McGinley's amiable verses.

The literary form may differ, but Frances Gray Patton's *The Finer Things of Life* is a perfect companion piece to *A Short Walk From the Station*. Mrs. Patton, too, is a gentle satirist, whose short stories of professorial family life in a University town have, in the past few years, contributed Southern atmosphere to the pages of the *New Yorker* magazine. Wife of a Professor of English at Duke University, and mother of two girls and a boy, the author's tales of the "middle class" have an added flavor of the academic. Her people drive shabby elderly cars, wear comfortably dowdy clothes and, upon occasion, indulge in a "bottle of rare old grocery store sherry," but they have that quiet sense of enjoyment of the little things of life that comes from a childhood spent in a cosily ingrown Southern town, and a thorough grounding in the works of Jane Austen. Most of these

stories, written with the meticulousness demanded by the *New Yorker*, are extremely funny. And most of them have sober undertones. What mother will not understand Mrs. Potter's sensations when she visits her 5B daughter at school where, "The old smell of chalk and peanuts, the hollow reverberating sound of her own shoes . . . all managed to put reality smugly in its place. Life seemed inept and innocent and debonair. Even the split atom lost its terrors for the moment and became just something people talked about at P.T.A. meetings."

### 1. "Suburbia, Of Thee I Sing"

*A Short Walk From the Station*, by Phyllis McGinley

Discuss Phyllis McGinley's life and her earlier work.

Read aloud excerpts from the introductory essay and discuss the world of Spruce Manor.

Read some of the verses aloud and comment on them; their technical skill, and the picture they give of the author and her community.

Discuss selections that you consider real poetry.

*Additional Reading:*

*Parents Keep Out*, by Ogden Nash

*Nineteen Million Elephants*, by Helen Bevington

### 2. *Faculty Wife*

*The Finer Things of Life*, by Frances Gray Patton

Give a sketch of Mrs. Patton's life.

Describe the atmosphere in which she grew up, as revealed in the story, *The Representative Ham*.

Describe Durham as seen through Mrs. Patton's eyes.

Discuss the author's implied views on education, bringing up children, the race question, or any other subject that interests you.

Discuss characters and incidents that you found especially entertaining. Read some of the better passages aloud.

What qualities do Phyllis McGinley and Frances Gray Patton have in common?

*Additional Reading:*

*Junior Miss*, by Sally Benson

*Nuts in May*, by Cornelia Otis Skinner

PROGRAM X

“THE SHADOW OF NEANDERTHAL”

No one writing today can convey the terrifying, brutal power of the Communist idea as well as the former Communist, Arthur Koestler. In his novel, *The Age of Longing*, set in Paris in the middle nineteen-fifties, he describes the world of the immediate future, with Soviet armies massing on the frontier, and the people of Europe waiting in a paralysis of fear for the first thunder from the East. In the seven months between Bastille Day and the following February, a group of American expatriates, European refugees, and French intellectuals find themselves in a situation that Koestler has described elsewhere as “a picnic in no-man’s land.” While they wait for the end they drink, make love, and talk. And in these brilliant passages of conversation the author reveals and dramatizes his ideas about the state of the world and of mankind. All of these people, the American girl, the Frenchmen, the ex-Communists, are longing for a faith; a longing that is frustrated in the West by the spirit of materialism, and denied in the East. Only Nikitin the “Neanderthaler,” who has been sent to France by the Soviet government to help prepare for the coming invasion, is sure of himself and of the future. One faint ray of hope for mankind is found in the fictional sect of “the Fearless Sufferers,” whose members believe that fear can be overcome, “not by violence or intrigue, but by self-discipline and renunciation of what most men fear to lose, by willingness to undergo martyrdom.”

In *The Age of Longing* the author explores the moral chaos of the European scene, but the play, *Darkness at Noon*, adapted by Sidney Kingsley from Koestler’s earlier novel of the same name, is a drama of spiritual chaos within the Communist Party in Russia itself. Rubashov, one of the last of the Old Bolsheviki, has been arrested and thrown into prison. In his youth he must have been as confident in his faith as Nikitin, but now he is tired and disillusioned. And in his cell, between sessions of questioning, scenes from the past rise up to haunt him. There is Luba, the simple, warm-hearted girl who loved him and died because he dared not try to save her; Luigi, the little Italian dock worker, whom he had destroyed; Bogrov, hero of the Revolution, who had believed that the revolutionaries could go home and build

a peaceful new life. At the end, Rubashov realizes with horror and despair his own responsibility for the suffering and degradation around him; that "The means have become the end, and darkness has come over the land."

### 1. "Picnic in No-man's Land"

*The Age of Longing*, by Arthur Koestler

Discuss Koestler's life, his earlier writings, and his place in the literary world.

Describe the setting of the novel; the atmosphere of dread and despair that pervades Paris; the people who go about business as usual, with geiger counters in their pockets; the attitude of the Europeans toward America and Americans.

Discuss the leading figures in the novel; their points of view on life and politics; their characters.

Discuss the ex-Communists in the story. How are they affected by the fact that they are without a country and without a faith?

Frederic Morton, in his book review in the *New York Herald Tribune*, compares the novel with Aldous Huxley's work, and sees in the futuristic interlude between Parts I and II a strong affinity with *Brave New World*. Do you agree with this opinion?

Discuss the main theme of *The Age of Longing*. Have you noticed that the need for faith is expressed again and again in present-day fiction?

*Additional Reading:*

*Brave New World*, by Aldous Huxley

*1984*, by George Orwell

### 2. *In the Prison That is Russia*

*Darkness at Noon*, by Sidney Kingsley and Arthur Koestler

Describe the setting of the play; the lighting and stage effects that are used in creating the scenes in the prison and the dream sequences.

Trace the development of Rubashov's character as it is revealed through the play.

Contrast his two interrogators, Ivanoff and Gletkin.

Discuss Luba; her character and her beliefs. Do you think that there may be people like her in Russia today, who are helpless to struggle against the power of the State?

Do you find that *The Age of Longing* and *Darkness at Noon* have helped to clarify your ideas about Communism?

*Additional Reading:*

*Darkness at Noon*, by Arthur Koestler (the novel)

*The God That Failed*, edited by Richard H. S. Crossman

PROGRAM XI

FARAWAY PLACES

Some twelve years ago *Land Below the Wind* introduced American readers to Borneo; to Harry Keith, Civil Administrator for the British Crown; and to Agnes Newton Keith, who wrote so delightfully of life in their tropical paradise. *Three Came Back*, published in 1947, told the story of the Keiths and their small son George during three dreadful years as prisoners of the Japanese. And now, in *White Man Returns*, Mrs. Keith tells how they went back to North Borneo after a brief rest in Canada, to help with the reconstruction of that battered country, and to take up again the life that had been so violently interrupted by war. They built a house near the ruins of their old home, reclaimed their garden from the jungle, found old friends and made new ones. And the author, who writes with a great deal of humor and charm, and a warm sympathy for all living things, brings to life the sights and smells and sounds of the East; the Indians, Chinese, Malays and Europeans who were their neighbors; the members of her own family—Harry, whose sense of duty has never made him pompous and George, who must be one of the most adaptable little boys in this uncertain world.

The warmth of a sincere human interest in a people; their ways of living and their problems, is found also in Maud Oakes' *Beyond the Windy Place*, the story of eighteen months in a Guatemalan Indian village, so isolated that its people still cling to religious practices of their remote Mayan ancestors. In *The Two Crosses of Todos Santos*, published separately, the author presented an ethnological study of the villagers. But here she describes her daily life, as the only member of her own race in a community so primitive that her extremely blonde hair and her skill at simple doctoring won for her a dangerous reputation as a sorceress. In the little house that she bought and furnished with native materials Miss Oakes settled down to become as much as possible a part of the life around her. Because she liked and respected the Indians and won their affection and respect in return, the author was able to collect the information she sought, and to pass unharmed through several dangerous situations. The book is written simply, with a quiet unpretentious charm, and it

has something of the perennial fascination of the Robinson Crusoe story.

### 1. Back to Borneo

*White Man Returns*, by Agnes Newton Keith

Give a brief sketch of Mrs. Keith's life, and a résumé of her two earlier books.

What are the author's outstanding characteristics? Discuss her attitude toward people of other races; her relationship with her husband and her son; her humor, and her lack of bitterness toward her former enemies.

Tell a little about North Borneo; its people, and its history.

Discuss the rise of nationalist feeling in Asia as it is described by the author. Do her views agree with those of Santha Rama Rau in *East of Home*?

Discuss an incident or a character in the book that you consider particularly interesting.

Select a passage for reading aloud that will show the author's style and something of the quality of the book.

Show some of the illustrations and the cover, which is a reproduction of the material in one of the author's sarongs.

*Additional Reading:*

*Land Below the Wind*, by Agnes Newton Keith

*Three Came Back*, by Agnes Newton Keith

*East of Home*, by Santha Rama Rau

### 2. Inside Guatemala

*Beyond the Windy Place*, by Maud Oakes

Discuss the author's purpose in going to Guatemala, and tell a little about the Mayas and their religion.

Give a brief sketch of the history and geography of Guatemala. Describe the village of Todos Santos and the surrounding country.

Discuss Miss Oakes' life in the village; her house; her neighbors. Describe one or more of the people in the book who interested you most.

How does Miss Oakes' attitude toward people of other races and cultures compare with Mrs. Keith's?

Describe some of the author's adventures, and show how her friendliness and trust in the Indians made it possible for her to accomplish her mission.

Select for reading aloud a passage that you found particularly interesting.

*Additional Reading:*

*Two Crosses of Todos Santos*, by Maud Oakes

*Sparks Fly Upwards*, by Oliver La Farge

## PROGRAM XII

### “AGELESS AND ETERNAL SEA”

“The sea lies all about us. The commerce of all lands must cross it. The very winds that move over the lands have been cradled on its broad expanse and seek ever to return to it . . . . In its mysterious past it encompasses all the dim origins of life and receives in the end, after, it may be, many transmutations, the dead husks of that same life. For all at last return to the sea—to Oceanus, the ocean river, like the ever-flowing stream of time, the beginning and the end.”

So ends Rachel Carson's *The Sea Around Us*, a biography of ocean, written with erudition and charm, that opens up for the reader a fascinating new world of waves and tides, of islands and mountains, and of the creatures, great and small who live in the waters. Miss Carson describes the origin of the sea, and tells how all life on our planet came from its waters. She tells of the fierce struggle for existence that takes place on and beneath the surface; the strange things that live in the depths where neither light nor man have ever penetrated; of the birth of islands and the meaning of the sea to man.

In *Kon-Tiki*, by Thor Heyerdahl, we have an intimate picture of life on the very surface of the sea, as seen by six men who travelled from Peru to Tahiti on a primitive raft. In an attempt to prove that the ancient Peruvians may have crossed 4,000 miles of ocean to settle the Polynesian Islands the author, a Norwegian ethnologist, and his five companions built a raft of balsa logs such as men of the stone age might have constructed, and set off on one of the most dramatic voyages of modern times. From their little craft, riding low on the waters, they watched with never-ending fascination the teeming life of the Humboldt Current. Schools of porpoises and whales gamboled about them, dolphins pursued flying fish past and sometimes over the raft, and, for a time the voyagers even made friends with a shark, who swam along beside them with “an unspeakably foolish patient expression,” waiting for scraps of food to be dropped into his gaping jaws. This narrative of waves and fish, sun and stars, written with great gusto, is escape reading of the most delightful kind.

## 1. "World of Waters Dark and Deep"

*The Sea Around Us*, by Rachel L. Carson

Discuss the author and her qualifications for writing on the sea.

Discuss the *National Book Award* presented to Miss Carson in 1952.

Give a résumé of the book, going into detail on the sections that interested you most.

Discuss the author's style; her use of literary quotations.

Select a passage or passages to read aloud.

*Additional Reading:*

*This Great and Wide Sea*, by Robert E. Coker

## 2. "The Face of the Deep"

*Kon-Tiki*, by Thor Heyerdahl

Discuss the author's style and the quality of the translation.

Discuss Heyerdahl's reasons for wanting to make the voyage, and the preparations for the expedition.

Discuss the members of the party and their qualifications for making such a trip.

Describe the voyage from Peru to Tahiti; the daily life of the six men, and some of the dangers they survived.

Describe some of the animal life observed from the raft. Tell or read aloud some of the more unusual incidents in the book.

Describe the crash-landing of the raft, and the traveller's reception by the islanders.

*Additional Reading:*

*Moby Dick*, by Herman Melville

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