

HORIZONS UNLIMITED

Adventures in Reading, 29th Series

By

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PROGRAM I

THE ANCIENT WORLD ALIVE

"My dear Marc," begins the fictional memoir of Emperor Hadrian, addressed by the dying emperor to his chosen successor, seventeen-year-old Marcus Aurelius. Marguerite Yourcenar tells in *Hadrian's Memoirs* the story of the exploits, political and personal, of the enlightened humanist who took over the vast Roman Empire of Trajan. After Hadrian's early anguish and suspense concerning Trajan's plans for a successor, the ease, not without rumored skulduggery, with which he did in 117 A.D. become head of the Roman Empire and god of his people enabled him to reorganize the senate and the army and to promote Rome's peaceful prestige in the arts, introducing "the autumnal splendors of Rome's silver age." A wonderfully human and understanding man of his day, he may seem to us in some ways a barbarian; but this account of his life, his times and his achievements comes across to us warmly real and convincing. Hadrian's pagan concept of the cult of Antinous and the story of the beloved boy are handled with delicacy. The memoir discloses how Hadrian served Rome but how he loved Athens. Here is a true philosopher king whose love of beauty, in Syrian night sky or sensuous verse or glowing young males, was equalled by his sense of statecraft and his large understanding of political and religious concepts. This book tells the story, as *Time Magazine* says, "of the man who first called Rome eternal and did his best to make her so."

Advancing from classical times to the Age of Chivalry, readers of *The Cornerstone* by Zoé Oldenbourg are drawn into a long and fascinating story of thirteenth century France. Carrying on the chronicle, started in *The World Is Not Enough*, of the Lady Alis, her crusader husband and their descendants, this book presents a vast panorama of the Middle Ages, with a wealth of detail concerning the splendors of jousts, feasts and sports, as well as the incredible hardships, domestic and religious, of the times, and revealing a contrast between the intricacies of the code of chivalry and the simplicity of the spiritual outlook of both knight and laborer. The principals in this novel as well as the numerous minor characters are very real people, living out the drama and conflicts of a life based on an exalted Christian faith which was the cornerstone of their existence. Very appealing is Hansiau, aging now and blinded, determined to set off on a final quest in

the Holy Land for the son he has wronged. His touching faith is contrasted with the bestialities of his heir, "Le Gros," who drives one daughter insane and sets his legitimate sons and his bastards against each other. Third generation Haguenier, jousting for his lady, being knighted and marrying, adventures into romantic escapades and family intrigues. As a social history, this novel is presented in a compelling manner, not only romantic but also terrifyingly realistic.

I. Late Roman

Hadrian's Memoirs, by Marguerite Yourcenar

Sketch briefly the background and training of Mlle. Yourcenar.

Outline briefly the history of the Roman Empire from Julius Caesar to 117 A.D.

Quote from Hadrian's poetic passages on the hunt, the mysteries of life and death; and note his sense of beauty, his tastes in food and wines and his exhilaration in battle.

Comment on the current belief in, and the manipulation of, oracles and soothsayers; and note Hadrian's efforts at religious tolerance, particularly toward Jews whom he really could not abide and whose fanatical irreconcilability bored him.

Does this memoir refresh your own thinking on history, religion and the humanities by its fascinating recreation of a most human god? Or does it seem merely a scholarly tour de force?

Are you unduly conscious that the book is a translation from the French; and are you sympathetic to its winning of the Prix Femina and its projected translations into half a dozen other languages?

By quotations, try to project the complex personality of Hadrian, its discipline and debauchery, its rationalism and its mysticism.

2. The Age of Chivalry

The Cornerstone, by Zoé Oldenbourg

Give a brief biography of the author.

Dwell at some length on details of the code of chivalry and some of the customs of the times, as described in this novel.

Show how this is a novel of action as well as of religious thought, contrasting the themes of spiritual devotion and material aims.

Do you feel that the author has succeeded in drawing from her characters and their setting the essence she terms "What is great and eternal in man"?

Contrast the spiritual simplicities inherent in this novel with the sophisticated tone of the lofty Hadrian's memoirs.

Additional Reading:

I, Claudius, by Robert Graves

The Talisman, by Sir Walter Scott

PROGRAM II
THE ROMANCE OF ENGLISH HISTORY

Plantagenet princes, glittering in the light of a hundred candles, caroused at the high table in the great hall of Windsor Castle when Katherine de Roet made her first humble entrance into England's fourteenth century court life. In *Katherine Anya Seton* has skillfully woven a vivid and richly dramatic romance around the obscure young beauty who was sister-in-law of Geoffrey Chaucer and who was married to woolly headed Sir Hugh Swynford. Mistress of John of Gaunt, the great Duke of Lancaster, she became, at the very end of the eventful story, his third wife and thus, after the legitimatizing of their issue, ancestress of an assortment of Kings of England, both Tudor and Stuart lines including several Edwards, Henrys and Richards. The young Chaucer immediately sensed her fateful force as well as the tempestuous beauty that made her the model for his Cressida. The historical incidents of the waning of the Middle Ages include the Black Death and the Peasants' Revolt under Wat Tyler, with its burnings and pillage, its knightly glories and its treacherous court intrigues. The fortunes not only of the Plantagenets but also of dedicated anchoresses, freedmen and serfs, of the gentry like Chaucer and his practical Philippa, and of such incidental characters as Wyclif and Hugh's witch-like mother, are calculated to hold the reader's interest.

Hardly less lovely and even more durable than Katherine is Merravay, the heroine of Nora Loft's delightful novel *Bless This House*. Merravay, the stately Tudor mansion built in Suffolk in the reign of the first Elizabeth, weathers the course of English history and presides over the fortunes of eight generations of Rowhedges, Whymarks, Rawleys or Fulgers. The tawny brick house, standing squarely upon its green lawn with a great hedge of trees beyond, has seen love and beauty, jealousy and murder. The seed of treachery and violence is sown by the ambitious Elizabethan apprentice whose sense of beauty left its touch on balustrade and door screen. A thread of mystery runs through the chronicle which is told in eight episodes with brief explanatory interludes. The author says this is the story of Merravay and "the story of those who built it, those who loved it, those who hated it, those who bought it with money, those who paid for it in other coin."

1. "This Realm, This England"

Katherine, by Anya Seton

Trace Anya Seton's literary heritage and her legitimate interest in English history.

Show how the author has transmuted separate historical events and characters into a sustained and solid narrative by magnetizing them around one fascinating personality.

Do you detect an overemphasis on sex; or do you feel that post-feudal times knew the necessity of marriage and breeding, to perpetuate family lines against court intrigues and the waning power of the nobility in the face of unrest and open rebellion of the awakening lower classes?

Contrast the rich details of the velvets, furs and pearls of the noblesse with the peasants' filth and poverty, the anchoress' cold comforts.

Follow the story of Geoffrey Chaucer in this intricate chronicle and his part in binding the threads together.

Read aloud John of Gaunt's famous speech in Shakespeare's *King Richard II*, Act 2, scene 1.

2. Haunted by History

Bless This House, by Nora Lofts

Comment on the technical structure of this novel.

Do you find effective the first person narratives, each told in the style of the period?

Describe some of the details of Merravay and its gardens which particularly appeal to you.

Sketch briefly or quote from your favorite episode. But do not miss page 182.

Note how each interlude sets forth the moods and manners of its period.

Do you feel that the spell of Merravay is strong enough to warrant the rosy romanticism of the story and its happy ending?

Additional Reading:

Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings, by Amy Ruth Kelly

Geoffrey Chaucer of England, by Marchette Chute

Take Three Tenses, by Rumer Godden

PROGRAM III

FABULOUS FAMILIES AND FORTUNES

That aristocratic enigma, that fascinating figure of an early Victorian statesman, Lord Melbourne, has found a most congenial biographer in Lord David Cecil. *Melbourne* is a glowing portrait of the great Whig gentleman whose background is so well understood by Lord Cecil, another equally wise and witty peer. As one reviewer says, "Cecil's style, like Melbourne's temperament, is 'all salt and sunshine.'" The young Melbourne is introduced in the glittering setting of Regency society as William Lamb, a brilliant London dandy in love with and married most unhappily to the notorious Lady Caroline Ponsonby. After her death, he is drawn deeper into politics where again the conflict of head and heart complicates his behaviour both public and private. Supremely sure of himself socially, his "style" as a politician was never to behave like one. He was Prime Minister from 1834 to 1841. And it was under his light political rein that the Reform Bill began the modern era of British politics and the Industrial Revolution, though Melbourne certainly was no reformer. In his private life, even under the vigorous influence of his mother, women played a most important part. Perhaps the strangest and most interesting relationship was that which involved him deeply and loyally with the spirited young girl who succeeded to the throne as Queen Victoria. It is suggested that, as counsellor and friend, as elder statesman and constant companion to the Queen, Melbourne found more serenity than his strange and complex life had ever offered.

Swimming into the same stream of British aristocracy, one generation later, flashes Jennie Jerome, first American Duchess of Marlborough and daughter of Leonard Jerome, the subject of an entertaining memoir, *The Remarkable Mr. Jerome*, by Anita Leslie. The author, an Irish niece of Jennie Jerome, engages the reader's interest immediately in her glamorous family when she begins her book with the opening of trunks in the ancestral attics. Old letters and memories evoke a lively picture of the times, those fabulous days of great families, money, position, titles, romantic episodes, delicious scandals. Leonard Jerome, his wife and his brilliant daughters were at the center of New York's society in the sporting days of brilliant entertaining, hunts, yacht races and other gay pursuits, and the family belonged to the international set. When Mr. Jerome's fortunes as financier and

sportsman were at their height the daughters began marrying and the story of Jennie Jerome's capture of the Duke of Marlborough and her eventual acceptance into that solid family is full of sunny intimacies and entertaining episodes. The fact that she became the mother of the man who now is Sir Winston Churchill explains the sub-title of this book, "The life and times of Leonard Jerome, Sir Winston Churchill's American grandfather."

1. Aristocratic Enigma

Melbourne, by Lord David Cecil

Sketch the life and works of Lord David Cecil, noting the training, both social and academic, which has fitted him to evaluate and describe the life of Lord Melbourne.

Read aloud as much as possible of the brilliant prologue which sets the scene with incomparable style.

Noting how the author glances over the grim violences beneath the serene social scene of the second half of the book, are you reminded of the Gilbert and Sullivan "House of Peers who did nothing in particular and did it very well"?

Describe William Lamb's mother and her influence on him and his career.

Does this memoir show that such men as Melbourne were so completely at home in politics, living it in their clubs and their great country houses, that they could be quite off-hand about it and could also have practically no conventional prejudices?

Quote some of Victoria's jottings in her reportorial diaries of Lord Melbourne's witticisms and wisdom.

2. Churchill's American Grandfather

The Remarkable Mr. Jerome, by Anita Leslie

Sketch Anita Leslie's life, literary work and her kinship to the Jerome family.

Show how Mr. Jerome's move to a diplomatic post at Trieste set the pattern for an international family, despite his own predilection for New York, U. S. A.

Describe one of the fabulous balls given by Leonard Jerome at the height of his career as one of the "Four Hundred" of New York.

Describe some of his ups and downs as financier and sportsman, as founder of the Jockey Club and the international yacht races, and the originator of Jerome Park, still a New York landmark.

Trace the marriages of all three "Jerome Girls."

Do you feel that Anita Leslie's racy and informal account of that world is more sustaining than a mere family gossip, indeed a really authentic bit of social history, though hardly an ambitious work like Cecil's *Melbourne*?

Additional Reading:

Queen Victoria, by Lytton Strachey

Disraeli, by André Maurois

The Glitter and the Gold, by Consuelo Vanderbilt Balsan

PROGRAM IV

VEIN OF IRON

In *Flint Anchor* Sylvia Townsend Warner chronicles the lives of a well-to-do English family living in a coastal town in the early years of the nineteenth century. The flint anchor embedded in the masonry over their door symbolizes the unyielding rectitude which takes a cold, firm hold on the developing lives of John Barnard and his family. "His wife drank herself to death; his eldest son Joseph ran away to the West Indies; his eldest daughter Euphemia became the family drudge and martyr and, her chance for happiness despoiled, eventually deserted Anchor House for the refuge of a Moravian colony; the cold, selfish Mary made a poor childish wife to her first husband (who was sent away because of a perversion scandal) and had an excluding relationship with her second." John Barnard's tyranny is a devastating force which backlashes upon the old man who dies of sheer loneliness; but not before the story of his family is spun through many dramatic episodes, threaded with some scarlet. This is a novel of great style. The grim tale is spiced with such epigrams as "Julia's husband had many failings and conscience had petrified most of them into faults"; or, of Euphemia's mild hostesses, "Their kindness and hospitality enveloped her in a dullness like a downy cocoon"; or the epitomizing of the old soldier incessantly boasting of imaginary exploits as "a military Munchausen."

If *Flint Anchor* depicts a doomed family of introverts, just the opposite is the picture of David Caithries, and his Indian adventures, told in Margaret Cooper Gay's *Hatchet in the Sky*. This is a boldly good humored book. David, a brash Scots youth with vivid Jacobean sympathies, seeks his fortune in the New World and tells in his own beguiling Scots accent of his picaresque experiences. The dangerous business of fur trading in dug-out canoes from New Orleans up the rivers into Canada involves him in blood-brother exploits with the Indians, including the Pontiac Conspiracy. David's lyric love affair with the Indian maiden Catherine is woven into the story of the great character Pontiac, his life and his death. Stirring adventures with an assortment of the real historical characters of those turbulent times finally bring David home, Puss on his shoulder, to his other love, Tranquility, and a fine white house in the new town of Detroit. Maybe Davy never did grow up—his dashing Highland bonnet

stays on till the very end of the book—but his invitation to laugh with him and to share his exciting life is quite irresistible.

1. *Decline and Fall of a Domestic Tyrant*

The Flint Anchor, by Sylvia Townsend Warner

Sketch Miss Warner's life and previous work.

Do you find in the adroit technique and the "fusion of warmth and wit" of this novel a kinship to the art of Jane Austen?

Real aloud some scenes such as that on pages 28 to 29, or Euphemia's decision to leave her father's home, pages 249 to 251, or murdering the Scots accent, pages 260 to 264.

Do you find that the smoothness of the prose makes it easy to overlook the brutal natural force beneath the polished surface, and the drama of the secret lives of these outwardly ordinary people?

Do you think that perhaps the main theme of the novel is that failure to understand other human beings is the most desolating sin?

2. *Indian Adventure*

Hatchet in the Sky, by Margaret Cooper Gay

Sketch the life of Kentucky-born Mrs. Gay and her ancestry.

Contrast this tale of Derring-do with the cerebral novel *Flint Anchor*, suggesting that possibly the latter is a critic's novel while Davy Caithries' story is a reader's novel.

Do you think the symbolism of Pontiac's hatchet in the sky comes through?

Does this book evince real understanding and tolerance of the Indians and their tragic fate, showing that "Red man's enemy is Red man"?

Do you enjoy, rather more than its historical episodes and its symbolism, the candor and charm of this unpretentious novel?

Additional Reading:

Complete Novels of Jane Austen

Summer Will Show, by Sylvia Townsend Warner

The Francis Parkman Reader, by Francis Parkman.

Leatherstocking Saga, by James Fenimore Cooper

PROGRAM V

THE BLUE AND THE GRAY

Irving Stone's *Love Is Eternal* is a biographical novel of the marriage of Mary Todd and Abraham Lincoln, but in Mr. Stone's hands it becomes a sustained love story. Its title, taken from the inscription on the plain gold wedding ring given by Abraham to Mary, is the key to this particular version of the great historical narrative which a reviewer dubs, "Mr. Stone's long argument with history." In vigorous, dramatic prose that makes the old story move, very freely larded with Lincoln's homespun stories as well as his great speeches, the author chronicles the life together of the Bluegrass belle and her unlikely husband, the light and shade of their triumphs and sorrows. Closely woven into the political and social history of the times is the recurring thread of Mary Todd Lincoln's ordeal, the theme of her ambition and love for her husband and her faith that, through her sufferings, "Love is eternal." Her own Southern kin play an interesting part in the drama, as of course does the intimate circle of husband and children. The sense of family and later its tragic divisions are poignantly developed. Indeed the Civil War does in this book seem to have been "fought across her breast."

Compared to the ambitious *Love Is Eternal*, Ishbel Ross' *Rebel Rose* may seem slight; but it is an absorbing story of the life and times of a dramatic and dangerous woman. Rose O'Neal, the Rebel spy, was a most devastating beauty whose ambition and masculine political sense drove her to great power in Washington just before the defeat of Buchanan and the triumph of Mary Todd and Abraham Lincoln. Never too scrupulous, she used her family ties, her "politicking" background, her marriage and her compelling personality to advance her own career and the Confederate cause. She was a celebrated and very influential hostess in the satin days of a Southern Washington, and many important if not great men of her day were her admirers, often her dupes and her slaves. Her life was scandalous; but she was clever and marvelously vigorous, at the heart of espionage under Col. Thomas Jordan. Tried and imprisoned for a long year in grim Old Capitol Prison, she wrote a book, really a diary, naming names; and she continued wheedling information and despatching it, even under surveillance. She grew gaunt in prison and indeed she was no longer young; but so resilient was Rose that she was soon swishing about in society and back at the old game again. She charmed

many Englishmen of political importance and she and her book had a personal and financial success in England. Her violent death by drowning on a last blockade-running revealed political papers from England and a private bag of gold on her person. Her grave in Wilmington, N. C. is honored by Confederates to this day. Intrigue and seduction were the breath of life to Rose O'Neal Greenhow, who used all her talents for a beloved cause.

1. *The President's Wife*

Love Is Eternal, by Irving Stone

Sketch the author's life and works, with particular emphasis on *Immortal Wife*, comparing its story of Jessie Fremont with that of her contemporary Mary Todd Lincoln.

If you feel that this is a just character study, show the heroine's gradual development and a change for the worse when Mary Todd became Mrs. President Lincoln.

Show by details how extravagant yet how practical were many of Mary's impulses.

Is it proved that she put iron into her husband's soul and that "When (he) put one toe in the water, (she) pushed him right into the ocean"?

Since this is a quotable book, why not read aloud some passages, such as pages 197 to 198 on her father's death or the important scene on pages 231 to 234, also the last paragraph on page 260 or the last one on page 314?

2. *Confederate Spy*

Rebel Rose, by Ishbel Ross

Give a brief sketch of Ishbel Ross and her work, with special mention of *Proud Kate*.

Describe Rose's early life at Mrs. Hill's fashionable boarding house and its lessons in practical politics.

Pick out one or two especially dramatic incidents in the career of this witty and colorful woman's career, reading aloud from the scenes of her trial, pages 212 to 217.

Contrast the Victorian emotionalism of some of her rhapsodic writings with the cold cleverness of her actions.

Explain her English triumph in a historical rather than a personal light.

She was wrapped in a Confederate flag, buried with full military honors. Do you believe she was a martyr to the glorious but lost cause?

Additional Reading:

Immortal Wife, by Irving Stone

Proud Kate, by Ishbel Ross

Spies for the Blue and Gray, by Harnett Kane

PROGRAM VI DISSECTING DIXIE

"You can go home again," is the siren song of Pompey's Head, the seductive Southern town that calls Anson Page, rising young New York lawyer, back to the home of his youth, in *The View from Pompey's Head* by Hamilton Basso. Dispatched by his legal firm as a diplomatic detective to clear a publisher client of threatened financial scandal, Sonny Page is immediately involved in a suspenseful and emotional situation that makes a fine old-fashioned story. He falls in love with the town and is quickly drawn back to two of his old girls. Midge Higgins, who lived in the wrong part of town, and Dinah Blackford, whose proud family saw her marry Midge's rich brother, are just as attractive as ever, and quite as dangerous to Page's peace of mind and his New York wife and children. But he is there to investigate the mystery behind Lucy Wales' claim that her husband's royalties have been embezzled by his editor. He penetrates to the remote hideaway of the once famous author on Tamburlaine Island, where degradation and many ugly passions are uncovered. He rediscovers the subtle intricacies of the old town's family pride and tensions, recalling in flashbacks dramatic old stories and fascinating characters. Bound up in the enchantment of old brick and iron work, fog and fishing in the Channel, Mulberry Plantation restored to glory, young Page finds the view from Pompey's Head richly romantic, exciting and dangerously alluring.

Social distinctions also provide the background, and battle-ground, for the nice little love story told by Bowen Ingram in *Light as the Morning*. Nashville, Tennessee, is the locale and red-headed Kitty Loner and her outsider TVA engineer lover provide the romance. The realignments in family fortunes and prestige, the fusing of tradition and progress, form the main theme of the novel. And thirteen year old Les McCoin tells the story, in his own funny words. Cornelius McCoin the sixth ("Les, because it's less confusing") had spent most of his young life in his grandmother's house where his education in family pride and the subtle nuances of who's who in Nashville society was breathed in as he listened at the top of the stairs to gossiping bridge games below. Tennis at the exclusive French Lick Club, fast driving with his snobbish friend Fogg and an adolescent dazzling over rich and gay Kitty Loner had circumscribed his

world. But his father, returned from War, was bent on showing the boy some new values and preparing him for real life. So Les was dragged away for a day's McCoin family reunion at the old home place in the wrong part of the County, where the new lake was about to flood the farms of the upcountry families. The genuine worth and warmth of his father's people, his own exciting part in Kitty's elopement with her "foreigner," his new understanding of his father's position, all made it one big day of living and learning for Les.

1. You Can Go Home Again

The View from Pompey's Head, by Hamilton Basso

Sketch the author's life and work, comparing his faultless technique and reportorial eye with those of J. P. Marquand whose understanding of Boston Brahminism is here matched by Basso's study of Southern Shintoism.

Do you feel that Basso has succeeded in drawing the worlds of Madison Avenue publishing and of Pompey's Head together by means of the absorbing mystery of Garvin Wales?

Contrast scenes from Page's New York firm with that of his return visit to the old office in Pompey's Head.

Show some examples of how "Nothing was ever entirely your own affair in Old Pompey" and how it is "Dangerous to get mixed up with a Channel girl."

Read from the dramatic interview with Wales on page 389.

Describe in Basso's words the charms of Old Pompey: the town, page 167; Mulberry, pages 315 and 317; the countryside, page 361.

2. Lovely People

Light as the Morning, by Bowen Ingram

Sketch Mrs. Ingram's background and literary education.

Catch, in a few examples, the color of Les' wonderful thirteen-year-old language.

Trace the not too malicious probings of Nashville's lovely people's snobbisms.

Contrast the show place Hayesfield with the upcountry McCoin home place.

Do you find this slight novel rather touching, perhaps because often so heartbreakingly funny, as a sketch of the growing-up process of a boy who gains authority "because he knew both sides"?

Additional Reading:

The Late George Apley, J. P. Marquand

The Widows of Thornton, by Peter Taylor

The Glass Menagerie, by Tennessee Williams

PROGRAM VII
NOBEL PRIZE WINNERS

The Nobel Prize in Literature is the richest and probably the most coveted award in the literary world. It is an international honor given yearly by the Swedish Academy, an august body of scholars and critics, under the will of the humanitarian scientist and discoverer of dynamite, Alfred Nobel. Only five Americans have so far achieved the distinction of this award. The two most recent recipients are literary giants of contrasting character and achievement.

William Faulkner received the Nobel Prize in 1949 for "His whole work and its contribution to the new American novel." His latest book, *A Fable*, though a departure from the typical Deep South scene of his Yoknapatawpha County, evinces nevertheless the same symbolic thought and difficult style so characteristic of this great Southern writer. The long and complicated novel is based structurally on the week of a false armistice in the 1918 War in France and parallels closely the details of the Passion of Christ and the events of Holy Week. A French corporal, dedicated to redeem the world from evil, leads a movement on both sides to cease fighting, in the spirit of brotherhood and peace. Surrounded by twelve disciples, betrayed by a Judas, the Christ figure is arrested, tempted on a high place and executed between two thieves. The mutineers are wiped out and on the seventh day fighting is resumed. Occasionally the symbolism may seem confused, especially with regard to the character of the Allied Supreme Commander. Does he represent Father, God or Devil? But the tragic breath of greatness sweeps the novel on; and many distinct episodes and scenes are deeply moving, due to Faulkner's imaginative power.

Ernest Hemingway is the 1954 Nobel Prize winner, cited for "His powerful, style-forming mastery of the art of modern narrative, as most recently evinced in *The Old Man and the Sea*." This novel, in contrast to Faulkner's quarter-million words, tells in only one hundred and forty pages the homeric story of a simple old fisherman of the Caribbean waters whose survival depends on one last lucky catch and his mastery over the great fish. Alone, poignantly missing the tender friendship of the young boy who usually was his companion, the old man is towed by a monstrous fish out of sight of land. An heroic struggle

involves first the Old Man against the powerful creature and then the Old Man desperately trying to save his noble kill from sharks. Suspense mounts unbearably through changing hours of day and night on the sea. But the Old Man's skill and experience, his endurance and courage, inevitably submit to the elemental strength of the Sea.

1. *Symbolism Explicit*

A Fable, by William Faulkner

Give a brief history of the Nobel Prizes and their founding.

Quote salient sentences from Faulkner's acceptance speech.

Sketch the life of William Faulkner and give a summary of his work to date.

From the complexities of *A Fable*, follow through in outline the obvious and explicit symbolism of the story of the Passion.

Note, with examples, Faulkner's use of interpolation, such as the Mississippi horse story on pages 151 to 204.

Do you think that the author's thinking comes through clearly to the reader?

2. *Symbolism Implicit*

The Old Man and the Sea, by Ernest Hemingway

Quote from Hemingway's remarks on winning the Nobel Prize.

Sketch his life and writing history.

Discover the subtle symbolism implicit in the plain tale of *The Old Man and the Sea*.

Contrast the economy of Hemingway's style with Faulkner's.

Quote a favorite passage or two from the novel, as that on page 67.

What particular qualities of each man's writing (both Faulkner and Hemingway) do you believe entitle him to the honor of the Nobel Prize?

Additional Reading:

New Testament: Acts of the Apostles

The Faulkner Reader

Short Stories, by Ernest Hemingway

PROGRAM VIII

A FRENCH IMMORTELLE

Margaret Crosland's *Colette: a provincial in Paris* is the only biography of France's immortal woman writer written in English. With more than British tact, she has quoted freely from Colette's own writings which are understood to be often autobiographical. Miss Crosland hopes her book will provide a background for the English speaking reader of Colette's works. She has made a very good try at capturing the elusive essence of the inimitable Colette. From her book we learn that Sidonie-Gabrielle Colette was born in 1873 in the very Burgundian village of Saint-Sauveur en Puisaye. Her father was an obscure but gallant ex-soldier. Her mother, the beloved Sido, daughter of a Belgian quadroon, made a warm and happy provincial home for the family. Schooldays in Burgundy were followed by an unhappy marriage to the famous, or infamous, Willy, under whom she began writing, though Willy's name was signed to the Claudine stories. Then came six years of bohemian life on the stage, as mime and entertainer. She divorced Willy when she was thirty-three and after her marriage to Henri de Jouvenel in 1912 she started off on a short-lived domestic existence in the Paris suburb of Passy. Journalism as well as fiction attracted her now and she began amassing fame and money from her writing. At sixty-three she married for the third time. High literary honors, including the Legion of Honor and the Prix Goncourt, came her way late. Arthritis almost immobilized her, but her writing continued unaged. Since Miss Crosland's biography was published, the "fanal bleu" has been extinguished in the apartment on the Palais-Royale garden; and France has given a state funeral to the immortal Colette, the only woman writer to receive such honors and homage.

The Vagabond should serve admirably not only to entertain the reader but also to present some of the life of Colette, the real thing, in her own quintessential words. This novel concerns Renée Néré, a music hall dancer, no longer young, and frightened of love since the miserable marriage she has just run away from. Torn between desire for natural romance and the hard, lonely work of the artist, she resolves her dilemma in a series of letters and talks to the face in the mirror.

The Short Novels of Colette includes six of her most representative and famous stories. Any reading of these marvelously intimate and often scandalous narratives would be profoundly

enriched by a close study of the introduction to the collection, written by Glenway Wescott. Love and lovers supply the theme and the characters of all the stories; though the variety is dazzling. Colette's characters follow their instincts with a sort of fatalistic resignation. They include an aging courtesan, a too beautiful boy, a lonely young wife, a jealous mistress and a girl whose rival is a cat. Colette's subtle psychological insight lays bare the intimate secrets of heart and head. No spiritual interests seem to support these individuals, but a deep lyrical response to the world of the senses often sustains them. Style is the important key to enjoyment of Colette's writings. Her wit and dancing elliptical phrases, the sheer originality of her conceits, have a compelling power of suggestion. No episode is merely seen; it is smelled and felt and heard. Perhaps these very French character studies lose delicacy in translation; but the winged airiness of Colette's style is seldom mired.

1. Colette the Woman

Colette: a Provincial in Paris, by Margaret Crosland

Note particularly appealing examples of this picture of Colette's country girlhood in Burgundy.

Describe her mother, the beloved "Sido," and their family life.

Discover the ironic strokes of Miss Crosland's devastating portrait of M. Henry Gauthier-Villars, better known as "Willy."

Do you find the account of Colette's life as a Parisian less interpretative and more factual than either the early or the later sections of this biography?

Pick out some of the characteristic details of this delightful portrait of Colette the celebrity.

2. Colette the Writer

The Vagabond, by Colette
Short Novels of Colette

Note particularly in *The Vagabond* the pungent characters of stage and backstage, also Renée Nérée's cats and dogs.

Contrast the great sadness of *The Vagabond* with its comic interludes.

In *The Short Novels of Colette* note that the women are usually stronger and clearer-headed than the desirous males.

Do not miss the comedy of the aging courtesans in *The Last of Chéri*.

Quote, with discretion, some passages where Colette's sensuousness is most delicately displayed, noting its redeeming fresh naturalness.

Do not miss on page 482 the especially perceptive little picture of Alain and his cat at night.

Discuss the qualities, found either in the biography or in the novel and the stories, that have made Colette a legend in France.

As an envoi, you might read from the Genêt *Letter from Paris* in the *New Yorker* of August 21, 1954 "Funérailles de Colette."

Additional Reading:

Lélia, by André Maurois

A Short History of French Literature, by Geoffrey Brereton

Reading with a Purpose: French Literature, by Irving Babbitt, o.p.

PROGRAM IX

ENGLISH HUMOR

Thirkellites will rejoice at the latest chronicle of modern Barsetshire, *What Did It Mean?* This novel ripples along over the activities of the coronation summer in the town of Northbridge. While Lord and Lady Pomfret and others were preparing for their part in their young Queen Elizabeth's coronation the rest of Northbridge was swept into a tempestuous confusion centering around the local pageant and day-after-coronation doings. More than a mere succession of diverting episodes, this novel lightly shines up the fine British tradition of common cause and patriotic enthusiasm and allows the author to amuse us with yards of sparkling dialogue and tinklingly laughable scenes. Northbridge was "boiling over with women who had never enjoyed themselves so much since the war." Before the not unexpectedly happy ending to all the crises of the local celebrations, the reader has been entertained by a nice little plot involving the talented but very shy young Ludo, Lord Mellings, heir to Pomfret Towers, with an engaging pair of London actors with county background. It is all engineered, in a disparagingly off-hand way, by tactful young Lady Noel Merton. If you don't know all these people, from the eccentric gentry, the vicar and the schoolmistress and the gently lampooned tradespeople, right down to the lesser orders of parlormaids and poachers, Mrs. Thirkell implies that you should. And a delight it will be to dip into any of a dozen or so of her Barsetshire tales.

If Thirkell is thistledown, Elizabeth Cadell's light romance *Money to Burn* might be said to resemble morning dewdrops. This novel has much of the same astringent and sparkling British humor, but undercurrents of real feeling run through its imaginative course. And a delicious mystery adds zest to the charming story. As happens in Miss Cadell's novels, an Anglo-American theme is developed. Rich young Leigh Andersen, a Canadian, looks up for his mother's sake the Trysting family in the remote village of Crammertree near the New Forest in Hampshire. He finds that the ineffectual twelfth baron Falcon of Trystings has recently died, the hall has burned down, and that the insurance money and the family silver have disappeared. Moody and secretly desperate young Lord Raymond is in a pretty distressful state, being in love, very poor and very proud. He is responsible

for a twin-like sister, dreamy and adorable, who just cannot keep out of engagements or in love. His life is complicated further by an extraordinary trio of aunts. Their diverting entanglements and the family secret are of course resolved by the breezy intervention of sister Auriol's reluctant but bewitched Canadian cousin.

1. *Tea and Crumpets*

What Did It Mean?, by Angela Thirkell

Sketch Angela Thirkell's life and her particular literary corner of county England.

Exemplifying the satirical fun of her characterizations as well as her dialogue, chapter 7 affords typically good reading aloud.

Note, with examples, the Thirkell mastery of the non-sequitur.

Does the gentle nudging by the author, in parentheses, recall the old fashioned pleasure of reading Dickens—or Anthony Trollope?

Read from such scenes as the dinner party on page 102 or the Pomfret Towers tour, from page 236 on.

Keep an eye on Aubrey Clover's accompanist, a minor miracle.

2. *Crumpets and Tea*

Money to Burn, by Elizabeth Cadell

Sketch Miss Cadell's life and other novels.

Outline the simple but ingenious plot of this novel.

Describe the outrageous but lovable Aunts Elvira, Rosande and Dolly.

Discover the gentle satire on English traditions.

Do you find that, when the froth is off, Miss Cadell's story reveals warm and genuine feeling?

Additional Reading:

The Brandons, by Angela Thirkell

Barchester Towers and The Warden, by Anthony Trollope

I Capture the Castle, by Dodie Smith

PROGRAM X
ANOTHER WORLD

J. B. Priestley is a most assiduous writer, being still busy at reeling off novels, plays, short stories, articles and essays both humorous and serious. His latest book catches up a handful of typical short stories written around one of his favorite crotchets. He likes to play half-seriously with tricks of time and place. He comes tinglingly close to experiences or sensations which any reader may have felt. The first story in this collection, *The Other Place*, provides a good introduction to this feast of fantasy. At least three others are notable. *The Guest of Honour* brings to an after-dinner speaker the awful realization that his audience are dead men. *Night Sequence* is hauntingly romantic. *Look after the Strange Girl* somehow underlines the gentle desolation of the scene with its superficial cheerfulness. Priestley's style is informal; his humor never sardonic; his ideas provocative. It is easy and pleasant to follow him down a corridor, through a mysterious door, and right into another world.

Knights of old may have stirred romantic impulses in those who read of Arthur, Lancelot or Galahad. But in *Sir Henry*, Robert Nathan's hero is just "an ordinary working knight" whose appealing adventures make an amusing novel, a beguiling moral tale and a gentle satire. Reluctant though he and his horse and his hound may be, they must spend their lives in encounters either grim or brave. He kills a dragon who can talk and who tells Sir Henry he knows all about his mother. "She enchanted my father and the enchantment was strong enough to bring me into the world." The knight goes off in approved style with the dragon's ward, Alisande, who always finds it possible to have a comforting bit of tea or cake about. Their adventures take them in leisurely fashion through zephyrous woods and meadows and sweet-smelling orchards to numerous entertaining encounters, including tea with a magician and the fairs and dancing of pleasurable city life. Then he must fight another knight, whose Lady Meghan of course falls to the surprised victor, Sir Henry. The two ladies complement each other quite agreeably for Sir Henry, though their opposing characters place him in some piquant predicaments. Their conversations, often joined by horse or dog, fish or bird, touch lightly on philosophical matters and are slightly spiced with innuendo. The good knight's last encounter

is against himself and the tale ends on a muted note in a minor key.

1. *Tricks with Time*

The Other Place, by J. B. Priestley

Sketch Mr. Priestley's life and work and some of his theories.
Dwell on the technical felicities of his narratives.

Quote some of the amusing dialogue you find in these pieces.
Do you detect a tenderness for youth and a terrifying horror of the life of bad dreams?

Do you feel that the eerie quality of these stories does somehow leave the reader with an unexpectedly happy aftertaste?

2. *Spiced Whimsey*

Sir Henry, by Robert Nathan

Describe very briefly some of the other popular novels of Robert Nathan, discussing his "constant doleful charm."

Describe the great battle with the boar or some other hilarious episode in *Sir Henry*.

Let Ponderer and Manfred converse a bit.

Do not miss the "grace notes in this little sonata."

Discover, if you wish, the moral disguised under the mixture of laughter and melancholy in this fantasy.

Additional Reading:

Short Stories, by Saki

The Good Companions, by J. B. Priestley

A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, by Mark Twain

Portrait of Jennie, by Robert Nathan

PROGRAM XI

GREAT WOMEN

As one reviewer says, "In *My Several Worlds* Pearl Buck, with attractive humility and grace of spirit, gives us a step-by-step account of her pilgrim's progress, in China and the United States, from little girlhood into mature and effective womanhood." She lived her formative years in China, growing up in friendly familiarity with Chinese neighbors who accepted as one of themselves the white-skinned little girl with golden hair. The violences of the Boxer Rebellion first drove her away. But after some time both in the Orient and in America, including college years at Randolph-Macon, she returned to do much useful work with her other people. Married for seventeen years to an agricultural expert, she lived in China the experiences which laid the background for her first great novel *The Good Earth*. Only the Japanese war drove her for good, without bitterness but only "with sorrowful regret" from the Chinese soil she knows and understands so well. But "Roots must be put down, if one is to live," she says. So, with a sweep of courage and steadfast purpose, she bought back in 1934 an ancestral place in Pennsylvania and settled with new husband and family to give her children and her elders the haven of a simple and unpretentious homelife. At the same time she is occupied with her prolific writing and the good works of an honored world citizen. In this book she expresses herself on many subjects, including religion, divorce, family life and adoptive agencies; but the main theme of this great woman who has moved in several worlds is that of white injustice and its inevitably sad shadow over world history. An ample sincerity shines through her pages, leavened by unsubtle humor and a love of the beautiful, be it in landscape or in character. An organ greatness rolls from the sweeping prose of this outspoken autobiography.

Perhaps it is not organ music but rather a virtuoso violin's spinning of beauty on a few sensitive strings which sings from the life story of Ellen Glasgow. The theme is tragic, but grace notes abound. This autobiography, *The Woman Within*, opens the doors upon the private life of that gifted mystery lady of the old gray house at No. 1 West Main Street in Richmond, Virginia. Ellen Glasgow here discloses the early sorrows of family deaths, her first precocious understanding that she was to be a writer,

and then the anguished intimations of deafness and its perpetual shadow. She frankly reveals three of her love affairs. But the gossamer touch of tragi-comedy throws a rainbow shadow over these incidents. She describes in lovely detail her wide travels all over the polite world and her many New York sojourns. She touches on her informal educative apprenticeship for the creation of a sort of fictional social history of the South. But the "woman within" takes us to the spare room, any simple room where the door may be locked upon the worker, and we see her writing. We learn something of her method and much of her inspiration and development. Experience, particularly the most painful, brought to this writer "a deeper source of creation." To quote, "Beneath dead and dying illusions, *Barren Ground* was taking form and substance in my imagination." But the iridescent small lady whose wit and gaiety were worn deliberately as a mask for the sombre and sensitive soul within, shines through these pages with no less charm and even more depth than in her unforgettable novels.

1. Her Several Worlds

My Several Worlds, by Pearl Buck.

Comment on the author's method of presenting this autobiography, noting the interplay of the two worlds, weaving in and out of the woof of her present setting the chronological facts of her Oriental life.

Describe Pearl Buck's happy childhood in China.

Describe her later thoughtful years in the Orient.

Carry her back home to America and through college.

Discuss her literary output, which made her a Nobel prize winner.

Dwell on her life as a world citizen.

2. A World Within

The Woman Within, by Ellen Glasgow

Describe at length Ellen Glasgow's family background and its tragic influence on her entire life.

Note some examples of the extreme sensitivity of this imaginative child who was "born without a skin."

Describe her method of thinking out and writing her novels, listing her works.

Sketch or quote from scenes of special poignancy, such as her first day at school or the Swiss scene when she learns of her beloved's passing.

Do you feel that a certain morbidity, perhaps inherited, overshadows this manuscript; or rather that Ellen Glasgow's courage lifts the life from tragedy?

Additional Reading:

The Good Earth, by Pearl Buck

This I Remember, by Eleanor Roosevelt

Vein of Iron, by Ellen Glasgow

Let Me Lie, by James Branch Cabell

PROGRAM XII

GROWING UP

The Go-Between by L. P. Hartley is a plum of a book for the “New Criticism.” Though it oozes symbolism of assorted varieties, it is nonetheless a delightful and moving account of the growing up of a public school boy in the England of 1900. Young Leo soon slips out of the school atmosphere for a long holiday visit to the county house of a schoolmate’s family in Norfolk. He moves right into a tense and comi-tragic situation. Exhilarated by an odd triumph, among superstitious classmates, based on his secret half-belief in the power of the signs of the Zodiac, Leo is eagerly, rather pitifully, ready to take a part in the new adult life of Brandham Hall. With a thirteen-year-old’s intensity, he falls straight in love with elder sister Marian, willful and lovely. Her slave, he willingly becomes the go-between in her illicit romance with a person of low degree. And then a sequence of dramatic events sweeps Leo into the disillusionment which becomes inevitable during the course of an exciting story. The tale is told by the contemporary Leo of 1952, as he remembers each searing detail of that hot summer’s initiation into the adult world. An epilogue leaves the reader a choice of deciding, as a final irony, whether or not Leo’s one last attempt to recapture the wholeness of an individual can be a success.

To offset the bitter tea of *The Go-between*, readers will find Frances Gray Patton’s *Good Morning, Miss Dove* a literary egg-nog. This blend of wholesome country—or rather small town—eggs and cream is just lightly laced with spirits. A beguiling book, it is the story of “the terrible Miss Dove,” geography teacher to the first six grades of generations of children in the ordinary little town of Liberty Hill. People set their watches by the regular comings and goings of Miss Dove, but one day her routine is broken. Stricken at school by a mysterious ailment, she is taken to the hospital and all the town is shaken, fearful from moment to moment, from day to day, as to the outcome of her illness. In the strange and wonderful dreams of anaesthesia she travels lightheadedly toward the resolution of a suspenseful sojourn between memory, fantasy and reality. This framework enables the author to weave back and forth among the lives not only of Amelia Dove, showing how she became what she was and what she meant to the community, but also of a lovable

handful of her students, present and past. Their stories and the clever way in which Miss Dove's influence is indicated and vindicated keep one reading along from page to page, till there you are at the last one, smiling through tears and wanting only some more.

1. *In a Minor Key*

The Go-between, by L. P. Hartley

Sketch briefly Mr. Hartley's very British life and letters.

Bring to light as much of the symbolism in this novel as appeals to you.

Describe the cleverly indicated school atmosphere.

Note the turn of the century manners and the details of British country house life.

Show examples of the violences beneath the surface of polite society.

Comment on the style of L. P. Hartley.

2. *In a Major Key*

Good Morning, Miss Dove, by Frances Gray Patton

Sketch Mrs. Patton's life and background.

Show how the disciplines of writing for *The New Yorker* have polished into a sustained narrative a string of episodes.

Do you feel that this book is redeemed from trite familiarity by the authentic qualities of real characters in real life?

Choose for reading aloud from the story of bright haired Jincey or that of nurse Billie Jean and her dear dull policeman or the comic strain put upon the austere Miss Dove's respectful ex-students who must prepare her for the indelicacies of an operation.

Do you feel that Mrs. Patton has the graceful gift of being both clever and kind? Note the engaging sketches by Garrett Price.

Additional Reading:

A World of Love, by Elizabeth Bowen

A Handful of Dust, by Evelyn Waugh

The Finer Things of Life, by Frances Gray Patton

Good-bye, Mr. Chips, by James Hilton

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