

Literary Cavalcade

By John O'Connor

Catholic Press Year of Opportunity

If the Catholic press of the United States knows an opening when it sees one, it will strike itself as never before in the ensuing twenty-four months.

It must act without fear or favor. It must clear away dead wood, and the red tape to bits, improve communications, features, and news facilities, and offer attractive careers to capable and experienced newspapermen and women. This may be the last opportunity for some time — perhaps the only opportunity to become a cultural and constructive force in this nation.

Across the nation we have a series of diocesan weeklies. Many, unfortunately, suffer from chain control. Others operate at a deficit, but they are in areas where Catholics are sparsely settled. A few others, perpetually on the alert, are keeping abreast of the best in weekly journalism for they have occasional supplements, monthly book pages — and one even takes wire service rather than depend on the morning mail.

Happily these improvements have come from the individual papers themselves. They exhibit, therefore, initiative, independence, and a desire on the part of younger editors to make use of the technically superior methods of the secular press. There should be no disagreement with the means at hand in this case, for the American free press has achieved its greatest parity due to its efficiency.

And it is in reference to the latter that the Catholic press stands on the threshold of rendering real community service in many sections of the country; of being the cultural and constructive force it might be if it will but realize its chance. The secular press is losing that leadership and the choice lies in accepting left wing material or sparking a renaissance in American local journalism. The need — and the current danger — can be realized from the following excerpt of a recent letter to The New York Times by Morris Ernst, a prominent lawyer and liberal:

There are only 117 cities left in the United States with competing daily newspapers. There are ten states without a single city with competing dailies. There are 22 states without a single competing Sunday newspaper.

Mr. Ernst continues, citing the absence of ownership of papers, and the operations of chains. He underlines the fact that in more than one hundred areas the only newspaper owns the only radio station!

Here, I maintain, is an excellent chance for many diocesan papers to take advantage of the decline in local newspapers. Well written, stories, sound features, intelligently planned supplements and a fearless coverage of economic and political matters — these will gradually gain support of Catholic and non-Catholic alike and let the local weekly become the local daily.

In the field of books, the gains are even greater. Book reviews are popular. They save many readers time; they are the deciding choice for as many more. Book sections might be increased in scope and frequency.

Children's Books Picked for February

New York — (NC) — February selections of the Catholic Children's Book Club has been announced here. They are: For boys and girls six to eight years of age: "The Little Fisherman" by Margaret Wise Brown; and "The Golden Goose" by L. Leale Brooke. For children nine to eleven, Sigrid Undset's new collection of Norse fairy tales, "True and Untrue, and Other Norse Tales." For boys twelve to sixteen, "Army Mule" by Fairfax Downey. For girls twelve to sixteen, "Island" by Gladys Mal-

Catholic Information

Forty Hours

Suppose you had the faith of Catholics, and believed heart and soul in a "Blessed Sacrament" bread which has become the body and blood of Jesus Christ. And suppose you believed Jesus is God. We're assuming now, that you have strong faith, a faith more certain than ordinary knowledge.

Well then, God is up on the center of the altar in your church — literally, as though He has His throne there — for that is where Catholics keep particles of this consecrated bread — the Blessed Sacrament — for their sick.

Wouldn't you have special meetings and rallies and little celebrations in honor of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament? — You wouldn't be able to do enough for Him. You would never pass the Church without dropping in to say Hello to your God.

If you can fix that idea in your mind, how we Catholics believe we have Jesus, really and physically with us, present under the appearance of bread consecrated at Mass, how our priests pick up the Lord and move Him here or there, forward or backward; once you have those notions of us and our beliefs tucked tightly behind your ears, then you are well on your way toward an understanding of the Catholic viewpoint.

Forty Hours, and you must have heard Catholics speak of it — and brought to the attention of the community in general. Whether we know it or not, an awful lot of people are very curious about the Catholic Church — or haven't you looked

now and then, is the biggest parish demonstration of the year in honor of the Blessed Sacrament. During forty hours, the Blessed Sacrament is exposed to the adoration of parishioners. The altar is heaped with flowers, banked with glowing candles, and in the center of this radiant setting, stands the golden tabernacle in which Jesus is placed to hold court. For three days He presides, surrounded by friends, receiving their homage, listening to their needs, consoling them in their sorrows.

For three days, He is never alone. A procession of school-children file in and out during the day. Office workers and laborers come in after hours. There are special evening services, and the Mass on the second morning is sung for Peace. At the close of Forty Hours, as at the opening, there is a long procession around the church. Children and adults form in line, with the choir and the altar boys. At the end of the procession comes Jesus Christ, in the hands of a priest, blessing those who have come to do Him honor.

Why not come with a Catholic friend the next time we have Forty Hours? You'll understand better what belief in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ on our Altars means to us, your Catholic neighbors. — (Catholic Information Society of New York.)

ability will be permitted to atrophy while ivory-tower men or Broadway and Hollywood and Washington trained seals continue to take up most of the space that might well be used by new talent.

In the field of ideas (not news, for we appear only weekly) it may well be our chance. We cannot move as yet, for our forces must be regrouped. But we might fill the vacuum or critical weekly writing if given half the chance and if the schools in our care are all we say they are.

A weakening secular press has left an opening for sound thought and expression in the various sections of America. Ignoring some of the cranks, the nationalists, and the rabble-rousers, we may well, through sound journalism, claim more of America for Christ.

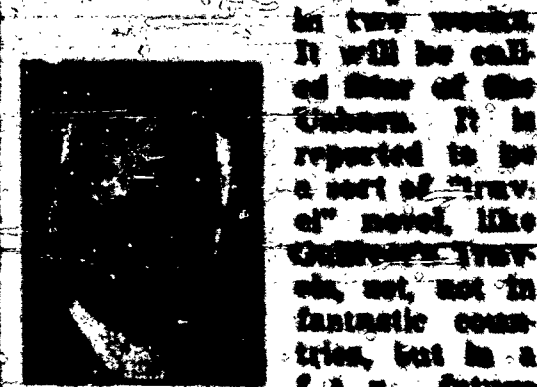
Library Signal

Book News and Cues

By Rev. Benedict Shuman

"Bridgeshead Revisited" is perhaps the spirit of wry, inimitable humor in which this civilized woman took her forced plunge into barbarous servitude. Her detailed accounts of appalling hidden villainies of pregnant women working in cabins of forced trade-union elections should be revealing to those who think of the Soviet Union as a land of advanced social conditions and economic democracy. She does not lose perspective in justified bitterness; she is quick to note the Kazakh who is kind to the exiles, the Russian girl who helps her, the Ukrainian woman, herself an exile who takes in the homeless Poles after they have been released. For she joins the Polish Army and thereby gets out of the Soviet Union.

The novel which Frank Worrel finished just five days before he died will be published in two weeks. It will be called Star of the Unknown. It is reported to be a sort of "travel" novel, like Gulliver's Travels, set, not in fantastic countries, but in a far future epoch of human development.



The author of The Sovereign Letters makes another bow to the reading public with a similar book about the other world. He calls it The Grand Deceit because it is meant to convey in terms of fiction the irreparable cleavage between the damned and the saved after death. The plot is a fantasy about an "excursion" which the condemned may take periodically to the suburbs of Heaven. Mr. C. S. Lewis turns to good, entertaining account his immense scholarship in the poetry of Milton, whose Paradise Lost portrays so magnificently the world of "the invisibles."

The same tireless author has ready a long sequel to his Paradise. It will be published soon and will be entitled This Eldorado Strength. Although its scene is confined throughout to this earth, it shows further manifestations of those "dominions" which were as terrifying in the earlier novel.

In his column Where the News Ends, published weekly in The New Leader, the author of "The Invisible" has some very good words to write of Adlai Halpern's Condemned Four (Shed & Ward, \$2). With acknowledgments to him and to The New Leader, I pass them on to you.

Miss Halpern is a mathematician from Lvov who was arrested with her father, mother and sister, without any charge being preferred. During the first Soviet occupation of Eastern Poland, deported to prison, Kazan, she and other citizens of Lvov were held in a camp and were made to dig graves for the victims of the "Great Purge." The only book of hers that I have read is "The Invisible."

What Say You? is especially valuable and interesting. It covers much the same ground, and in the same form, as earlier works like Fr. Bertrand Conway's Question Box or Fr. Rumble and Cary's Radio Forum. But a currency gives conviction and that this currency gives conviction. The book is inspired by a spirit of inquiry and a search for answers and that conviction is the only thing that can give a book the power to change lives.

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