

Balancing the Books

The Poet in Private

By Father John S. Kennedy

The second volume of Lawrence Thompson's massive biography, "Robert Frost" (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, \$15), is dubbed "The Years of Triumph, 1915-1938." That period was indeed one of outward triumph for Frost, for in them he won ever expanding recognition as a poet and considerable material rewards. But in his personal life, he was far from triumphant.

Frost had passed his 40th year when, in 1915, he brought his family back from England. It was in England that he first achieved some notice for his poetry, and he set about getting like attention in his native U.S.A.

It came. But by no means did it come altogether spontaneously. Frost worked assiduously, often trickily, to bring it about. He cultivated people who were in a position to publicize and promote it.

This practice he continued throughout the years covered by the present portion of his life story. The spectacle is not a pretty one. The public image of Frost is that of a ruggedly honest, uncaringly independent country man, of homely strengths and excellences. But, in fact, as his biographer demonstrates, he was a crafty and sometimes unscrupulous self-promoter.

He could brook no rivals. He thought of himself (as did Hemingway in another medium) as the heavyweight champion, and remarked, more grimly than good-naturedly, that there could only be one such. Contenders were to be knocked out.

Edward Arlington Robinson was a celebrated New England poet. Frost sniped at him unmercifully. His meanness toward Robinson was never repaid in kind. Robinson showed himself considerate and generous toward Frost. Even when

Robinson was dead, and Frost was asked to write an introduction to a posthumous publication of Robinson's, the essay he produced all but ignored Robinson.

In this, of course, Frost was not unique. The egotism of the writer is notorious. And the viciousness of literary warfare is in a class by itself. What makes Frost's case shocking is the contrast between the public pose and the undercover actuality.

For Frost, friendship meant favor: i.e., friends were always to serve his advantage. In family life, he showed himself equally selfish. The story of his relationship with wife and children is dark and distasteful.

"It was obvious to him that there must always be a conflict between a man's devotion to his art and his devotion to wife and children." Granted — but it is not of its nature an insoluble conflict, and the solution need not be at the family's expense. In any case Frost's callousness and too frequent cruelty toward those closest to him could not be explained or justified by reference to his artistic integrity.

Frost was a genuine poet, and an important one, although not of the first rank. His verse, as sampled in these pages, has enduring value. It is sinewy, unhackneyed in imagery, shrewd in perception, economical and acute in utterance.

It might be better if we rested content with what he wrote, and did not seek to acquaint ourselves as extensively with him as Mr. Thompson enables us to do. To observe Frost at close quarters is to understand what underlay and produced the verse, and that is helpful. But to view him in all his ruthless calculation and unfeeling treatment of others is not only to think less of the man but to be at least somewhat disillusioned with the poetry.



'Boss of Year'

Dr. T. Franklin Williams, medical director of the Monroe Community Hospital, will be honored tonight (Nov. 4) as "Boss of the Year" by local members of the National Secretaries Association. Dr. Williams is chairman of the county medical society's committee on the aging and chronic illness. The annual "Boss Night" dinner, to which the secretaries bring their employers, will be held at the Flagship. Ruth Paul is chairman, Eddie Meath will be toastmaster, and Father Charles E. Connell, pastor of St. Philip Neri Church, will give the invocation.

OPEN HOUSE SET AT GENESEE NURSING

The Genesee Hospital School of Nursing, 224 Alexander Street, Rochester, will have open house Wednesday, Nov. 11, from 1 until 4 p.m., for high school students and their parents.

SIDEWALKS

• OLD REPAIRED  
• NEW LAID  
• CEMENT PATIOS  
• REASONABLE PRICES  
A. J. ARIENO 235-4371

FOR PERFECT  
DIAPER SERVICE

Stork

BABY WASH  
328-0770



DISTINGUISHED CATERING  
WEEKDAYS AVAILABLE FOR

• SALES MEETINGS • BUSINESS SEMINARS

2329  
BROWNCROFT  
BLVD.

Just off Expressway

288-7655

8 MIN. FROM DOWNTOWN

YOUR PREMISES OR OURS



LEWIS  
NEARY

It's a gamble you needn't take when there's an expert who can pack your household goods, move them to your new home or store them in the finest fireproof warehouse in your community . . . often at less cost than it would take to replace damaged goods. Free estimates on request.

BLANCHARD'S  
MOVING & STORAGE

ROCHESTER'S LEADING MOVERS

Representing ALLIED



VAN  
LINES  
Inc.

No. 1 on U.S. Highways—No. 1 in Service—No. 1 in your community

834 EMERSON ST.

254-7710

attention  
thankful people

In gratitude for my many blessings, I wish to share this month of Thanksgiving with the world's poor and the missionaries serving them. Enclosed is my special sacrifice for the missions.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_



SALVATION & SERVICE



11-4-70

THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF THE FAITH  
SEND YOUR GIFT TO

Reverend Monsignor Edward T. O'Meara  
National Director  
366 Fifth Avenue  
New York, New York 10001

OR

Rev. Joseph F. Reinhart  
Diocesan Director  
50 Chestnut Street  
Rochester, New York 14604

NAME

ADDRESS

ZIP

Wednesday, November 4, 1970

Page 8-B

(Con  
the kind  
ation nec  
mortal sit

They b  
the teach  
garding  
needed fo  
grave ma  
ledge and

To fulf  
formal i  
demanded  
quires th  
ability to  
deal in v  
cannot be  
instance  
tice? (2)  
with an e  
derstand  
the abili  
critical i  
which w  
way for l  
he can b  
God (the  
tal optio

Here is  
Haring h

"The  
might sa  
of age t  
pable of  
a child  
years car  
They mu  
sin is —  
just God  
rible sen  
It is not  
child or  
destiny;  
whole of

An ob  
not und  
He appr

Yes. I  
centers  
Christ. I  
crete —  
notion o  
but aga  
tial to t  
time of  
have be  
his life.  
intricac  
a tran  
choices  
stance o

It is  
that at  
First I  
First Co  
rememb  
ion at  
until the  
teen so  
was the  
commun  
the psy  
in the c

Howev  
that chi  
ceive H  
early ag  
Pontiff,  
cence o  
pacity  
Christ  
that th  
should  
earliest

Ecum  
A M

There  
dinner  
the we  
Wednes  
church

The p  
ers at  
Church  
salad a  
of the  
Road. A  
the pa  
pher's  
sert an  
Gates P  
was la  
Heart S

BA  
Aubu  
mas B  
Mercy  
be held  
day anc  
12.

Knitt  
Chri  
among  
sandwic  
at noon  
COURIER