

## Reigning Duet

COLONEL JULIAN AND OTHER STORIES. By H. E. Bates. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 240 pp. \$3.

By DUNHAM CURTIS

UNFORTUNATELY, and not surprisingly, H. E. Bates's popular reputation in this country and, to a somewhat lesser extent, in his native England, is based upon his mediocre later novels in which sex, violence, and exotic background are exploited palatably and unprofoundly. This is regrettable because Mr. Bates is, in such early novels as "Catherine Foster" and in most of the thirteen volumes of short stories he has published since 1926, both a skilled craftsman and a man who presents important experience significantly.

Most of his most recent collection, "Colonel Julian and Other Stories," concerns inarticulate and thwarted men and women who find life more perplexing than pleasurable. The illiterate Tom Richards, who trusts even those who take advantage of him; Joe Johnson, who is unable to understand why his love is unreturned and blames the "caterpillarists"; the girl called Peter, who is treated like a man by her father and the men she would like to be loved by—these are typical Bates characters. Nothing overdramatic happens: Joe Johnson follows a girl around and is cast aside, Peter almost acts like a woman with a man she meets casually. Yet the little that happens suggests whole lifetimes.

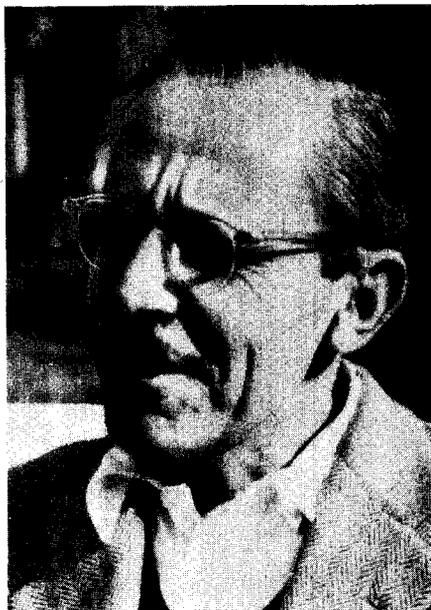
Not all the stories are tragic. Those who remember the earlier "My Uncle Silas" will be delighted to meet him again in "The Bedfordshire Clanger," as good a tall tale as Mr. Bates has ever produced. "Mrs. Vincent" is a short and mordant satire of a complacent Anglo-Indian while "The Lighthouse" and "No More the Nightingales" are at least partially happy stories of liberation from sexual repression that recall some of the best work of D. H. Lawrence.

But the best stories bring only the sad cheer that comes from understanding better the unhappy. "A Christmas Song" poignantly evokes the life of a sensitive girl forced to live among the vulgar. "The Major of Hussars," about an old army officer with three sets of teeth and a young bitch of a wife, admirably represents the pathos of a situation that appears to be becoming increasingly usual.

Probably the most penetrating of all the stories is "Colonel Julian." It consists largely of a conversation between the eighty-three-year-old colonel and



H. E. Bates—"sex and violence."



James Ramsey Ullman—"a tropical storm."

a young aviator he tries to understand. Without the interposition of the author or any forcing of the situation, its thirteen pages reveal a great deal about the nature of war, soldiers of the oldest and latest generation, and the disease wartime flying can become. Like all excellent short stories, it is a novel suggested, an epiphany.

Although there are two inferior stories, "Sugar for the Horse" and "Time Expired," this is an excellent collection, far more worth reading than most of Mr. Bates's own or of most other writers' novels. By a style that is spare and vivid, through plots that are usually both inevitable and arresting, Mr. Bates deepens our understanding of people we should know more about.

## Savage Unrest

WINDOM'S WAY. By James Ramsey Ullman. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co. 286 pp. \$3.

By CHARLES LEE

MR. ULLMAN'S eloquent new novel, June selection of the Literary Guild, asks the reader whether he looks at the world geopolitically or humanly, whether he assesses it in terms of heartlands or heart. It is a thesis novel, written out of yesterday's and tomorrow's headlines. But it is a tribute to the author's fine narrative skill that his ideological passion comes alive in terms of action and people. It is a book of emotions, not of oratory.

The scene is the village of Papan, located in a remote jungle valley in Southeast Asia. There, Alec Windom, a middle-aged American doctor who is a fugitive from cafe society and a frivolous wife, works with a quiet and satisfying purpose in a teak and stucco hospital converted from an old, one-story Catholic mission. Once a Park Avenue specialist, Windom is now a country doctor, happy in his service, busy as a teased monkey, and delighted with a gentle and exotic community where the sun rises "like a yellow eye burning level across the world."

Then, with the suddenness of a tropical storm, the peace of Papan is broken. The men of the village, under the leadership of Jan Vidal, demand of the authorities that run the rubber plantation as well as the local government, the right to grow rice on company land. The request is denied. Rubber is more important than rice, says the manager, global strategy takes precedence over local hunger, the white man's securities are more urgent than the empty food bowls of "gooks."

Windom's energetic attempts to solve the conflict in terms of people rather than policy and politics is complicated by unexpected personal problems: first, by the appearance of his beautiful and repentant wife, and second, by the realization that his appealing Eurasian nurse, Jan's sister, is in love with him.

Tension mounts in the little village of bamboo and thatch huts, and finally, despite Windom's strenuous efforts, violence erupts. How his wife figures in the ironic climax, how the Communists prosper in the midst of terror and turmoil, and how Windom's "way" is at once condemned and confirmed in a bitter yet not hopeless conclusion

(Continued on page 43)

# The Saturday Review



Editor, NORMAN COUSINS

Chairman, Editorial Board, HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

Chairman, Board of Directors, E. DEGOLYER

Associate Editors, AMY LOVEMAN, HARRISON SMITH, IRVING KOLODIN

Assistant Editor, ELOISE PERRY HAZARD      Feature Editor, ROLAND GELATT  
Book Review Editor, RAYMOND WALTERS, JR.

Contributing Editors, JOHN MASON BROWN, BENNETT CERF, MARY GOULD DAVIS,  
JAMES THRALL SOBY, HORACE SUTTON, JOHN T. WINTERICH

Publisher, J. R. COMINSKY      Associate Publisher, W. D. PATTERSON

Contents Copyrighted, 1952, by The Saturday Review Associates, Inc.

## A Case for the Copy Editor's Pencil

NOT long since in the columns of this magazine Jacques Barzun very forcefully and feelingly admonished the future on the subject of the prose writing which by the year 4000 will constitute a great part of the literary remains of our epoch. The texts of these works, he says, "are nearly all corrupt. They are deliberately garbled." He goes on to elaborate this statement by describing in detail the editorial mauling to which a manuscript is subjected in the course of its preparation for the press. What the author has painfully and carefully written is, he asserts, warped from its original state by the narrow-minded adherence of a presumptuous and often ill-equipped copy editor (young women fresh out of college are the principal target of his attack) to rules of spelling, punctuation, and styling and to the dictates of her own taste. Such mayhem is committed without the writer's knowledge or consent.

Now, undoubtedly it is true that the writer knows better than anyone else what he wishes to say, so that if only his ability to express what he has to impart equalled his certainty of what he desires to convey, all would be well. But the best of thinkers and most ingenious of scholars are often maladroit writers and unable to see or correct the shortcomings of their own style. There is such a thing as bettering a writer's composition without destroying the intactness of his text; sometimes punctuation will do it, sometimes the insertion of a preposition, sometimes the transposition of a clause or phrase. It would be a pity if a valuable book or article were to lose its fullest impact because it is regarded as unpermissible violence

to make the slightest change in its manner. And, Mr. Barzun to the contrary, one does not have to be able to tell a passage from Burton from one by Sir Thomas Browne, or be familiar with Herbert Read or Ernest Weekley (not Ernest Weekly, as Mr. Barzun writes), to be able to recognize good style.

Mr. Barzun, as it happens, is a writer of unusual competence; he has an easy and felicitous manner which lends charm to whatever he writes, whether it be biography or history, a discussion of education or merely a book review. He is a meticulous scholar and a careful stylist whose

## A Bronze Statuette of Kwan-Yin

(The Chinese Goddess of Mercy)

By Charles Wharton Stork

LOOK at her, calm and benign,  
Her little hand raised to bless!  
She seems not so much divine  
As a model of courtliness,

With her smooth hair built in a pile,  
Plump cheeks and birdwing brows,  
Full lips hinting a smile,  
But no more than good taste allows.

The silken grace of her gown,  
Casual and yet discreet,  
Looping so amply down,  
Enfolds her from breast to feet.

Lady, whatever our creed,  
We trust you with heart and mind.  
How, to our anguished need,  
Can you ever be less than kind?

breaches of the canons of rhetoric, if and when they occur, are deliberately planned. He needs no editing and quite understandably resents it in his own case. But unfortunately not all writers are of Mr. Barzun's calibre and even the most distinguished of scholars or journalists or novelists can be inept or obscure in phraseology.

SOMEONE in an editorial office—not the incompetent young copy editor Mr. Barzun pictures but someone with skill and knowledge—ought to supply what the author lacks so long as his emendations go no further than obvious grammatical mistakes and glaring awkwardness or obscurity. Mr. Barzun, we know, is specifically contending against changes made without the author's consent, but the implications of his article go far beyond that—against belief that the editor's revision may be better than the author's version. Writing so well himself, he fails to realize how infrequent is such grace as his own and how often authors belie their own capacities in their inability to give them proper expression. It is a truism of every editorial office, for instance, that scientists and economists, with many distinguished exceptions, are inept writers, and that slight changes in their manuscripts which involve style, not meaning, can be made greatly to their advantage. Should these not be made by the editor if the author is incompetent to make them himself?

No one, as a general rule, is as ill-fitted to see the shortcomings of his work as the author himself. He has lived with it so long, is so imbued with his mental projection of it, has written and rewritten and polished it so often that he has lost perspective upon it. A fresh eye will see what he cannot see. Here is where the skill of the superior editor comes into play, in the ability which Mr. Barzun himself applauds "to shepherd work in progress." More of it would improve the general run of our literature. Book after book comes from the press which cries aloud for blue pencilling, from which great chunks ought to have been cut, which would have profited by minor shifts of incident or emphasis (and undoubtedly again and again editors have striven for such correction in vain). To this, in all probability Mr. Barzun would have no objection, for it would be worked out in closest conjunction between author and editor. But a case can be made for a little more leniency than he shows toward minor corrections, even by minor editors, in the vast mass of writing which has not as high quality as his own. —A. L.