



—George Doull.

Angela Thirkell—"a life of their own."

last he and Lady Lufton admire his gardens. Lady Cora Waring, handsome chatelaine of the hideous castle, still manages Lord Waring as easily as though he were a commoner, and of course there is the long-time and forever glamorous widow, now married to a gentleman who adores her.

Of such tenuous stuff is once more the Thirkell plot. The people, of exquisite manners and fine traditions, have been through two wars and are peeled down to size by privation. But there is cause for rejoicing—the happy return of the Honorable Winston Churchill to office.

Old customs fade away almost unnoticed in the rest of the world but not in Bassetshire. Here people live a life of their own. To break through causes readjustments, and it is with the ridiculous side of these readjustments that the Thirkell stories are concerned.

In less skilful hands Bassetshire lords and ladies, domestics and farmers, vicars and vicars' wives, would be tiresome. The author knows this and inserts her editorial comments, a trick borrowed from her eighteenth-century forebears. Alas, her telling is mannered, her method sometimes obsolete, but she has her usual skill, so in this latest Thirkell chronicle we gladly meet once more the friends we loved and admired and laughed at in twenty-two preceding volumes. They are a little older, a little more set in their ways, a little more familiar. And all the young couples have had babies, so their stories may go on and on.

Like the radio's continued dramas, the inhabitants of Bassetshire hold time in their grasp, and move slowly and gracefully and lovingly into eternity.

Storming Into Manhood

YOUNG MAN ON A DOLPHIN. By Anthony Thorne. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co. 254 pp. \$3.

By AL HINE

THE theory that all that is needed to transform a timid swain into an irresistible lover is an infusion of self-confidence has probably been responsible for more black eyes than the preliminaries at St. Nick's. Nonetheless, it is a tempting theory and in literature it may be both diverting and non-lethal. It supplies a comfortable framework for Anthony Thorne's pleasant and perplexed hero, William Burnett.

Mr. Burnett, a personable young poet, arrives in Venice for the annual congress of LAMP, an international literary and artistic fellowship. He is a charming young fellow, and a veritable monument of indecision. This latter characteristic, clearly stated though not explained by the author, betrays Burnett when he finds himself suddenly in love with Marilyn van Shreven, a young American pianist. Marilyn spurns his suit and he himself is ready to give up in despair when a fishing trip in the unexpected company of a middle-aged Frenchwoman changes the whole picture, and his life.

For their fishing boat falls afoul of the *tramontà*, a savage storm of Italian coastal waters, and comes to rest, battered beyond repair, on Pescano, a tiny island inhabited at the moment exclusively by women. These hospitable matrons—they are the wives of fishermen kept from their hearths and beds by this self-same *tramontà*—put Mr. Burnett on an almost military schedule of romance. He leaves Pescano two months later a new man, more than able to cope fully with Miss van Shreven and by

Origin

By Hannah Kahn

BEYOND the known identity of leaf, of grass, of branch, of tree—

there is the core with heart of fire that sparks the impulse of desire.

The flowing sap, the swollen seed, the full-blown blossom and the weed

bear witness to this flame that burns—that smolders when the season turns.

Beyond the known, the living core that needs no name nor signature.



—Woodcut by Jacopo de' Barberi (1511-14).

Venice—"éducation sentimentale."

inference with the world. The ministrations of the nymphs of the island, the interpretations of this *éducation sentimentale* by his companion, Madame Fauquet, even the understandable hostility offered him by the returning fishermen, have changed him from an ornamental if literate jellyfish, complete with an oversupply of British reserve, to a man whose very manner makes it impossible for a woman, well, for Miss van Shreven anyway, to resist him.

The stay on the island, more than half the bulk of the book, is fine, tried comedy, and throughout it Billy Burnett comes alive, as does his corporal's guard of charming temptresses. The island idyl, unfortunately, is long in coming and is prefaced by a rather dreary section, of more interest to active members of PEN than to the general public, in which the hero's pallid aimlessness nearly alienates the reader for good and all. The progression of off-stage names—Benjamin Britten, W. H. Auden, Cyril Connolly, Tennessee Williams, Jean Cocteau, Christopher Fry, and so on—fails to heighten either reality or interest and exists only as a blurred frieze of background figures, as lively, say, as the list of state delegates to a political convention.

This slow start is a pity, for Billy's adventure with the sirens more than makes up for it. As a whole this book could win cheerful endorsement as excellent hammock reading. I don't know what the winter equivalent is—perhaps from the first tinting of the leaves we are all supposed to be buried in Kierkegaard—but "Young Man on a Dolphin" should serve to while away a not-too-serious hour or so in an overstuffed chair.

Alien Hoosiers

REUNION ON THE WABASH. By Sterling North. New York: Doubleday & Co. 313 pp. \$3.50.

By WILLIAM E. WILSON

SOME of the characters and situations in Sterling North's "Reunion on the Wabash" may be too patently a novelist's invention, but the Wabash River, as he describes it at Neal's Bend several miles above New Harmony, is indisputably real. Mr. North knows what Midwestern river country looks and feels and smells like and can make his readers breathe its air.

When Mr. North's story opens, Senator Ed Bigelow has been dead for several months, but his ghost is still alive—not only in the family home on the Wabash, where Aunt Sophy believes everyone will return in the Life Hereafter, but also in the mind of his middle-aged son and heir, Jim. A successful novelist who has returned to Indiana from New York in the hope of breaking a writing block, Jim Bigelow knows that his difficulty derives from a fixation regarding his father. One night when Jim was only ten, he discovered his father and aunt Hester keeping a lovers' tryst in a grove near the old house, and the memory has haunted him all his life.

This is the problem of the interior of Jim's life. Externally he is even more plagued, for there are eleven other people lodged in the Sycamores, Jim's ancestral home, each of whom is a major problem to Jim. Besides Aunt Sophy, who will not let him change anything in the Sycamores, and Aunt Hester, a mute now, who is a constant reminder of his father's infidelity, there are Aunt Hester's dim-witted paranoid son, "Clarence, the Wild Boy"; Jim's secretary, who is in love with Uncle Fred; Uncle Fred himself, a student of New Harmony's history; his wife, a suicidal dipsomaniac; their son, who, though still in his twenties, is writing his autobiography and has sold part of it to the *Kenyon Review*; Jim's daughter, April, whose fiance at Swarthmore



—By Fred Banbery, for jacket of "Reunion on the Wabash."

is neglecting her; a hymn-singing cook; an actress, in love with Jim, and Jim's agent, in love with the actress.

With these characters Mr. North sets up a complex plot, which he renders even more complex by the addition of several actors who are not residing on the Bigelow acres. Among these outsiders is Teresa Sheridan, the girl Jim really loves, and a river-rat named Garth Magnus, who has hated Jim since their boyhood days together on the river. Toward the close of the book, the entire cast is brought on stage at a family reunion; and several hours later, with the aid of Garth Magnus's villainy, Jim's heroism, and the rising river's violence, the author solves the dilemma of each.

Inside Indiana, Sterling North's readers may have difficulty believing in an Old Guard Republican Senator from Posey County, one spot in the state where Republicans do not flourish; and those who have been reading recent novels about Indiana may resent Mr. North's contribution of still another instance to the vogue for Hoosier rustics enamored of pigs. At the risk of laboring a minor point and being charged with a finicky provincialism, I might remind all novelists contemplating the Indiana setting that the noble theme of simpleton-loves-pig was a fugitive from Faulkner and should not be regarded as indigent to our sycamore shores.

Outside Indiana, where the foregoing objections will not arise, "Reunion on the Wabash" can be read with no pain—in fact, with pleasure. However, if Sterling North must borrow heavily from authorities, he might at least get their names straight in his acknowledgments. My name is Wilson, not Mason.

Fiction Notes

GIRLISH DAYDREAMS: It may disappoint Kathleen Winsor's fans to discover that the novelette and two short stories that make up her latest book, "The Lovers" (Appleton-Century-Croft, \$3.50), are fantasies. In fact, the scene of the novelette, "On Roaring Mountain," is Hell, a strange Gehenna of volcanic craters, boiling geysers, and streams of lava which resembles an alcoholic's dream of Yellowstone Park. Jacinta is a Victorian adultress who has been shot by her husband. In the enormous and dark lodge the author has provided for the damned she finds her mother as young and as beautiful as she is. Both of them become the victims of the Devil's irresistible power over women and his inextinguishable virility. They are doomed to jealousy of each other for the rest of time, but in the end make a pact to be happy together while they wait their turn with their satanic lover. Miss Winsor's women can even outwit the Devil.

The heroine of "The Silent Land," one of the shorter pieces, is incredibly lovely and yet childish. Dissatisfied with her devoted husband after her honeymoon she has an affair with a completely satisfying man, an explorer, handsome, imaginative, and virile, the kind of a lover that might be created in the dreams of an adolescent girl. Amoret is also a witch who is capable of disappearing from sight and memory, a convenient way of escaping from the consequences of her guilt. By this odd device Miss Winsor again affirms her belief in the victory of amorous women over all circumstances.

In the final story, a twenty-nine-year-old doctor who has never known love is enamored of a strange and, of course, beautiful girl he meets in a Central American country. Curiously innocent and childish, she fascinates him to the point of insanity. She is able to make him imagine that he is being shaken by earthquakes and storms. But her greatest gift is her ability to appear as a kitten, as an enormous cat, and at last as a blood-thirsty panther. He strangles the creature and then, "quite lovingly stroked its head," only to find that it was the golden head of Dulcie, who lay dead in his arms. After the sexual tournaments in the novelette, it is possible that Miss Winsor had decided that she would be wise to end her book on some other note than physical love.

—HARRISON SMITH.

NAZI GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG: During the fall of Berlin the history of our century went perhaps on its most flamboyant

Compass Song

By David McCord

NORTH, south, east, and west,
Summer, spring, winter, fall:
Each of you I love the best,
All of you—all.

Summernorth, wintersouth,
Eastfall and westspring:
Clapper in the big bell mouth,
Ring the bell—ring!