



—Alfredo Valente.

## My Current Reading

**Virginia Kirkus**, owner-director of the Virginia Kirkus Bookshop Service, is a professional reader. With her small staff she supplies critical surveys of the forthcoming books for bookstores all over the country. Since we caught Miss Kirkus on vacation, her list below represents a mixture of reading for pleasure, of "must" reading among the books about to be published (Bromfield, Laski, Arnold), and of books she took along "for the sheer joy of reading something I wanted to read—and didn't have to read."

RED PLUSH, by Guy McCrone (Farrar, Straus)

THE GALLERY, by John Horne Burns (Harper)

SKI WITH SVERRE, by M. M. Atwater (New Directions)

ON ACTIVE SERVICE IN PEACE AND WAR, by Henry Stimson and McGeorge Bundy (Harper)

PUT YOURSELF IN MARSHALL'S PLACE, by James P. Warburg (Simon & Schuster)

### Forthcoming Books

MALABAR FARM, by Louis Bromfield (Harper)

EVERYBODY SLEPT HERE, by Elliott Arnold (Duell, Sloan & Pearce)

AMERICAN DEMOCRACY, by Harold J. Laski (Viking)

JUST AROUND THE CORNER, by Stuart Brock (Mill)

NO POCKETS IN SHROUDS, by Louisa Revell (Macmillan)

how the children came to live on the opposite bank. It was said that "the little rats" lived by the jungle law, stealing and killing and snarling over spoils brought back from their forays into the city. As the children grew more hungry, they grew more daring until the city recognized the danger of the children's existence. Then one of the children discovered the secret

hoard of food; that was the beginning of trouble.

Mai Mai Sze tells her heartbreaking story so dispassionately that we sometimes wonder what it is that prevents us from crying aloud at all the pain and suffering in these pages. There can be few books today which have such emotional impact on the reader and yet are written with such a cool detachment. Certainly Mai Mai Sze's method of understatement puts terrific demands on the reader's sensibilities. Still, there are flashes of color and sunlight in her book, for Mai Mai Sze never allows us to forget that she is writing about children. They are instinctive creatures, living from day to day, as the "wise ancients" have always counseled us to do. Even in the midst of their plight, searching for food, she does not overlook the elements of the fantastic, the nonsensical, and the humorous in their special world. Their dreams are more wonderful than anything they have ever experienced. None of the children, including the older ones, can see the past altogether clearly. But all of them stand out in their separate loneliness with a breathtaking reality. There is Solen, age fifteen, the statesman of the group; Mulla, the girl who showers all her maternal love on an abandoned baby whose lifeless form she carries about with her despite the protests of the others; Rull, the aggressor, who enjoys danger and meets with violence when he raids the city's food hoard; Lal, who makes herself dizzy recapturing memories of wondrous meals in the days when she lived in a big house; Vara, who protects the little deaf-mute girl, and who is capable of powerful feelings and great fortitude; and Jolo, who saw the leaders die and assumes leadership without recognizing it.

These children have the "kernel of life" inside of them—that unconscious force that drives them forward without knowing what the future holds—observes Lo, the Chinese doctor, who comes as a stranger among them. "What was this will to live, how did it apply to these children," he asks himself. Could it be that they possessed more stamina than the adults because they had not lived long enough to identify their experiences with pain and misery?

It does not occur to Jolo "to ask why some like him were fated to be homeless and hungry while others remained safe and healthy. . . . Within him, he cried out at the elements of chance and circumstance as earlier he had questioned the coming of death, and the presence of pain." But when death visits their camp as it often does among the weak and the sick, Jolo questions it, remembering that

once he had believed that only very old people died:

Perhaps we are, he told himself, and do not know that we have grown old. Some old people look like children and some children look like old people. Perhaps being tired is to be old; and we are tired. Are we going to die? What is it to die? How does it feel? Does one know when death is coming?

But then fear is supplanted in the child's mind by revelation. "In the presence of death it was the living who became the helpless ones and the dead seemed almost to assume a supercilious air."

Perhaps the urgency of the ideas expressed in this allegorical novel may dwarf the story which Mai Mai Sze unfolds for us, but even on this level she shows extreme feeling for dramatic incident and a firm grasp of the art of keeping a narrative moving with suspense, color, and pace. This is not so much a grim history of our moral negligence, or a biting indictment of the modern world's responsibility for the war's dispossessed children, as it is a poignant commentary on the instinct to live, the tough instinct of survival in humanity that burns on despite demarcation lines on maps, and quarreling nations.

## Tchaikowsky Fable

*PATHETIC SYMPHONY.* By Klaus Mann. New York: Allen, Towne & Heath, Inc. 1948. 346 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by GRETCHEN FINLETTER

A NOVEL may be any story that the imagination of an author can create, successful to the extent he can convince his readers of the reality of his characters and the truth of his situations. When a writer uses people who have lived and were well known and describes actual events in their lives, but superimposes situations and conversations of his own invention, he treads on thin ice.

Mr. Mann calls his book a novel about Tchaikowsky. In his novel the emphasis is laid on the abnormality of Tchaikowsky in his relationships with other men, and the struggle of a genius misunderstood by the normal. The title refers to the great sixth symphony, the "Pathétique," the "program" or meaning of which Tchaikowsky would never disclose and which he finished shortly before his death. Mr. Mann gives the meaning of this symphony as the declaration of Tchaikowsky's unrequited love for his nephew, and his yearning for

# A Report on "The KINSEY REPORT"

Because of the unusual success of "Sexual Behavior in the Human Male" (frequently referred to as the Kinsey Report), and because of the widespread publicity it is receiving, we feel that a Publishers' Report would be most timely and of special interest to the literary world.

Believing—and with complete conviction—this book to be an important forward stride toward realization of a healthier and more objective sex education program, we have considered it one of the responsibilities of the publisher to tell interested groups—in factual, unemotional words—what the book is, what it aims to accomplish, and why it constitutes reading that may be of importance to them. This we have done through our advertising program, and will continue to do.

This statement, then, aims to recount some of the highlights in the conception, preparation and publishing of the book and to set down answers to certain questions that have arisen.

As most people know, the book is based on surveys made by Members of the Staff of Indiana University and supported by the National Research Council's Committee for Research on Problems of Sex by means of funds contributed by the Medical Division of the Rockefeller Foundation.

**HOW THIS RESEARCH STARTED AND WHY** — This research began nearly 10 years ago when Dr. Alfred C. Kinsey, Professor of Zoology at Indiana University, recognized how really little scientific knowledge existed about human sexual behavior, and decided to do something about it.

Dr. Kinsey determined that his study would be completely factual—absolutely objective—and free of moral bias or taboos. His aim was

to uncover what human sex behavior is, without regard for what it should or should not be. The book follows this premise in every way.

In brief, what Dr. Kinsey has done is to produce, and for the first time, a far-reaching and intensive analysis of the differences in patterns of male sexual behavior according to social, economic and age levels. The book is, in itself, an outstanding example of the application of statistical analyses by means of stratified sampling to a problem in human behavior.

**AUTHENTICITY**—It is especially significant that Dr. Kinsey's methods have been searchingly examined by authorities for the Division of Medical Sciences of the National Research Council and approved with the statement that "the statistical methods follow sound current practice and are fully adequate within the limits stated by Dr. Kinsey in his book" . . . that "the use of the so-called 'stratified' sampling method . . . accords with the usual practice in similar problems in public health statistics and population studies" . . . and that "the results of the Kinsey study are as reliable mathematically as those of other current publications in biology and medical science."

*Why was a medical publisher selected*, has been a question asked many times. The answer is obvious. This is a scientific book written by scientists. It is a book in which sex phenomena of human beings have been studied as a biologist would examine biological phenomena, and the evidence secured has been offered from the scientist's viewpoint. The findings presented are of primary concern to workers in the fields of medicine, biology, psychology, sociology, anthropology and allied sciences, and to teachers, social workers, personnel officers, law enforcement groups and others concerned with the direction of human

behavior. The study is a sincere, objective, and determined exploration of a subject manifestly important to education, medicine, government and the integrity of human conduct generally.

Obviously, we repeat, only a scientific publisher could have been chosen to put this book into print, and this we have done in accord with the usual practices of the medical publishing industry.

That this book should evoke so much interest among laymen is natural and to be expected. Certainly, no present-day aspect of human biology stands in more need of knowledge than that of sex. Progress has never been achieved by turning one's back on truth and, just as the layman is at liberty to inform himself on atomic energy, the antibiotics or the structure and function of his own body, so, in this free land of ours, is he entitled to know—*should* know—the truth on *any* aspect of human behavior — most particularly when these findings may well have direct bearings on personal, family or community problems.

**APPROVAL** — A recent Gallup public-opinion poll showed overwhelming approval of the Kinsey Report. The importance of the work in the minds of the public spirited can be no more conclusively stated than to call attention to the countless articles and reviews that have thus far appeared. The need for repeated printings (up to this date, totalling 200,000 copies) seems further evidence that both professional and lay groups alike appreciate the profound significance of what Dr. Kinsey and his Staff have done.

There can be no doubt that *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Vol. I of a series to be published over the next 20 years) has initiated a more realistic, more factual approach to one of the human race's most difficult social problems. With the belief that a better adjusted world will be a happier, more effective world, we offer *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* as a vital contribution toward this goal.

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Salt marshes . . .

waves of bleached

dunes . . . herring

gulls riding the air

currents . . . the

prints of sandpipers

on the wet sand . . .



fishermen

mending their nets

. . . a trawler being

launched



sheltered coves . . .

drowsy villages



and old wharves . . .

—you'll find the look,  
sound, smell, taste,  
feel of them all in—

## Sea Flavor

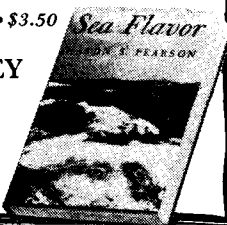
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the tenderness which was withheld. Tchaikowsky's death by cholera is made a deliberate death by suicide because of a broken heart.

The novel opens with Peter Ilych's flight to Moscow in a condition of near breakdown due to his unfortunate marriage to Antonia. In fevered dreams Peter Ilych recalls his childhood and Mr. Mann presents some charming scenes of the Tchaikowsky family, and a detailed and painful account of the student Apuketin, who first betrayed Peter Ilych and, becoming his dark angel, taught him in turn to betray. Mr. Mann then takes Tchaikowsky through his tours, his triumphs, his failures, his disappointments, his friendships, his creations, his loves. A host of musicians walk through the pages—Brahms, Grieg, Siloti, Anton Rubinstein, Joachim, von Buelow—the great age of great artists.

Mr. Mann highlights the episodes that lend credence to his thesis about Tchaikowsky and minimizes the relationships that would seem to illustrate other facets in his character. Thus the influence of Mme. von Meck, the "beloved friend" with whom Tchaikowsky corresponded for so many years, is given no great importance, while situations actual and fictional illustrating the abnormality of Tchaikowsky have top priority.

Now were this book truly a fiction, this would be legitimate as the analysis of a character which Mr. Mann had himself created. And if this book were a true biography it would also be legitimate for Mr. Mann to prove whatever point he wanted as his explanation of the strange unhappy character of Tchaikowsky, and illustrate it from the mass of biographical

material available. But when he superimposes his, Klaus Mann's thoughts and conversations as belonging to Tchaikowsky, he achieves a book which has neither the reality of a creation of character nor the reality of an honest biography.

Mr. Mann is more interested in the fact that his genius was strange than in the fact that his genius was a genius and one of the greatest composers. Thus he conscientiously gives a list of certain compositions—in one short paragraph is included the overture-fantasy "Romeo and Juliet," the second and third symphonies, and the piano concerto in B-flat minor, but one finds no significant speculations on these works by Klaus Mann-Tchaikowsky.

Mme. von Meck cared for Tchaikowsky the musician; this was the essential importance of the man, and the other aspects of his character were dwarfed to her by the genius of this Russian composer as an artist. Mr. Mann is more absorbed in the heterodox.

### *Erudite Bird*

*CLOVIS.* By Michael Fessier. New York: Dial Press, Inc. 1948. 189 pp. \$2.

Reviewed by MAX WILK

**I**NTO a literary world already animated with talking dogs, dancing caterpillars, horses which speak only to small boys, cats which inherit baseball teams, and countless other high IQ'd creatures, Michael Fessier has introduced Clovis, a parrot who not only talks but has the gift of thinking, as well. The results are completely satisfying; Clovis is easily

## *High-School Class in Spring*

By Louis Ginsberg

**T**ETHERED to seats, the schoolboys sigh,  
Truant from all the teacher's arts.  
A paragraph away, the sky  
Is leaking gold into their hearts.

No rules can pare away their joy;  
No proverbs pundits can repeat  
Can whittle smaller any boy  
And wedge him safe into his seat.

Outside, the bulletin of a bird  
Or semaphoring of a cloud  
Is better news than boys have heard  
Droned by a tyrant, beetle-browed.

Impaled upon his subhead, *Second*,  
The teacher hangs, as bells now ring.  
Something—besides the bells—has beckoned  
To boys, stampeding into spring!