

The Lady Moyra Forester

The only daughter of the Marquis of Ormonde, the Lady Moyra Forester has the distinctive beauty of dark hair with lovely lights, hazel eyes with long lashes, small straight nose, finely shaped mouth and an enchanting complexion. Like famous beauties all over the world, she is a Pond's Beauty! "I believe in the Pond's way to a lovely skin," she says. "Pond's Cold Cream takes such good care of my skin—keeps it beautifully clean and smooth. And I've found Pond's Vanishing Cream better than anything else for my powder base."



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BOOKS

Thurber Recollected in Tranquillity

THE THURBER CARNIVAL. Written and illustrated by James Thurber. Hamish Hamilton, Melbourne.

IN a Wordsworthian rather than a Pickwickian sense, James Thurber has defined humour as "a kind of emotional chaos told about calmly and quietly in retrospect," and so far as it is applied to James Thurber's humour this definition is both succinct and adequate. There is a lunatic poetic quality about his essays and short pieces for which it is difficult to find a parallel in the work of other writers. But this does not explain what it is in Thurber that makes us laugh, or what it is that sets him apart from his contemporaries and his predecessors.

The essence of Thurber is a mixture of the timeless and the timely. It is difficult to imagine him living—far less reaching full flower—other than in the complex environment of New York. He writes a lot about Columbus (Ohio), but his thoughts are the thoughts of the Manhattan commuter, the dilemmas in which he is continually trapped are those of a push-button existence; he is most horribly involved in civilisation. His characters do not possess cars, or radios, or automatic lighters, or any of the myriad other gadgets of 20th Century civilisation. They are possessed by them.

This modern comedy of frustration was summed up adequately enough by Thurber himself when he wrote the preface to *My Life and Hard Times*. It was difficult, he said, for the short-piece writer to paint a picture of his time.

Your short-piece writer's time is not Walter Lippmann's time, or Stuart Chase's time, or Professor Einstein's time. It is his own personal time, circumscribed by the short boundaries of his pain and his embarrassment, in which what happens to his digestion, the rear axle of his car, and the confused flow of his relationships with six or eight persons and two or three buildings is of greater importance than what goes on in the nation or in the universe. He knows vaguely that the nation is not much good any more; he has read that the crust of the earth is shrinking alarmingly and that the universe is growing steadily colder, but he does not believe that any of the three is in half as bad shape as he is.

But if Thurber and his characters are the peculiar products of our own time, the secret of his appeal is as old as comedy itself. He delights us because we feel we are never likely to be in half as bad shape as he is and to that extent he fortifies us in our own self-esteem. But we love him because we know, even if we do not admit it, that we are caught in the same net. We are (most of us) short-piece writers, and as Thurber points out, "the claw of the sea-puss gets us all in the end."

The Thurber Carnival is a comprehensive selection of his best work. There are six new stories and an autobiographical preface which his admirers will read and re-read with delight. For the balance of the 350-odd pages, Thurber has contrived to be paid at least twice before, which is more than a lot of long-piece writers can say for themselves, or their work. Almost all of the book is good. The conspicuous moralising of the

Fables for Our Time tends to elbow-out their humour and some readers may find the illustrated poems (*Excelsior*, *Barbara Frietchie*, etc.), a bit laboured, but these suffer only by comparison with the rest.

The book is extensively illustrated by the author and about 50 pages at the end are given over to the quaint drawings—"they seem to have reached completion by some other route than the common one of intent"—which he has contributed to *The New Yorker* for some years past.

In spite of the austerity of the paper and printing (which almost amounts to sabotage), *The Thurber Carnival* is a worthwhile purchase for anyone interested in preserving some sense of proportion in a turbulent world.

—J.M.

LORDS AND MASTERS

PARLIAMENT IN NEW ZEALAND. By F. A. Simpson. A. H. & A. W. Reed.

RICHARD JOHN SEDDON was said to have maintained his ascendancy over the House of Representatives to a great extent through his intimate knowledge of parliamentary procedure and the standing rules of the House: in this book at least the rudiments of the processes by which policy becomes law are stated for the benefit of present and future Seddons. Here in fact is the machinery of democracy in action. But political machinery represents political philosophy; Mr. Simpson's glances at these larger issues are brief and cursory and the historical sketch is so compressed as to have been better omitted.

One of the stated objects of this short study is to acquaint ordinary listeners with enough information about Parliament to understand more clearly the debates heard over the air. It should succeed in this. As well as summarising a great deal of useful information it casts interesting sidelights on many points which will delight the curious and the lover of paradox. It is pleasant to imagine a United States Senate "filibuster" in our Legislative Council, where speeches are not limited for length, although the Speaker may close a speech for "continued irrelevance and tedious repetition." Unless the term "contractor to the Public Service" is very narrowly defined, an increasing number of citizens may find themselves ineligible to stand for Parliament. And is the ineligibility of undischarged bankrupts consonant with the principle on which payment of members is based? However, it is one of the privileges of Parliament that "the most favourable construction may be put on all our proceedings." The taxpayer should remember that maxim.

This short book does show clearly the quality of parliamentary life, the unique combination of dignity, informality, and despatch in our parliamentary procedure. It shows too the necessity for strict rules of procedure which are designed, not to preserve ancient traditions for the sake of a finicking antiquarianism, but to carry on public business with as much celerity as is

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