

Monday, September 21st, 1953-----FM Radio Station WFLN, Philadelphia, Pa.

"A LOOK INTO THE BOOK NOOK" ---Review Number 25.

Good evening, this is David Hayeman, opening the Dior on the latest Fall Fashions, seeing as how autumn ought to be here in less than 48 hours. After you have tired of shopping with Schaparelli and placed your weary feet on a hassock and your heavy-laden arms on the sides of a comfortable chair, 'tis then that you might want to take a look at the latest Fall Fashions in good reading.

First, and appropriately enough, there's a novel published last spring by The Macmillan Company, called WAIT, SON, OCTOBER IS NEAR, by John Bell Clayton. One year ago, the author penned a violent and disturbing first novel entitled: SIX ANGELS AT MY BACK. This second one is remarkably different, yet also holds great promise of finer things to come. The chief character of WAIT, SON, OCTOBER IS NEAR, is Tucker English, a lad of not yet 11 years of age, in the valley country in Virginia in the early 1920's. Tucker is impatiently waiting for his 11th birthday to arrive in October as the story opens in July.

"All at once--" writes the author, "possibly because the cool day held the vaguest trace of fall--he had a poignant longing for the month of October. He had heard it said that people were like the month in which they were born. He believed that. He felt that he was like October. The word itself had a pleasant sound; he liked to say it aloud, letting the syllables roll off his tongue.

"In October, when it was clear and cool, yet mellow, when it was neither summer nor winter but a special season all its own, his whole being underwent a subtle change. He would feel himself searching for a secret he just barely missed comprehending; it was somewhere over the hill or around the corner of the barn. It was a little like the thing that caused the men of the valley to stand in their yards at night, their heads tilted in a curious way, as if they were straining to hear the soft notes of a far-away music."

Into this world and the world of the 10-year-old Tucker English there intrude the occurrences of a grown-up world, a world he never made and one he wasn't fully conscious or thoroughly aware of, but one in which he desperately wanted to be accepted and make his home. There was the nasty teasing of his 18-year-old brother and of the men on his father's farm that stirred him till he had to fight back or lose his urgings towards masculinity. There were the old Civil War Veterans who ceaselessly re-fought that war ended over a half century ago; whose every account was more vivid and more elaborate than the one before. There was the civil war in his own household: a grandmother and mother arrayed against the giant portrait he had etched in his heart of the master of the manor, his father. There was the tragedy of his father's being shot by a crazed brother of the village belle, of the father's hospitalization, the attendant gossip, and the mother's decision to uproot the household, of separation, of taking the young Tucker to grandmother's house in St. Louis.

The thought of being wrenched from his place of birth, from his feared, but loved, father, from his companions and neighbors, precipitates young Tucker into positive, but unwise actions, making for a smashing, dramatic conclusion.

The amazing feature is that the entire narrative is related through the emotional tones of the 10-year-old boy, so that the actions, no matter how adolescent in appearance, seem to the reader to be entirely plausible and rational. Here is a good book for you, with the aura of autumn in its air and the scent of September in its sequences.

For our next Fall Fashions we swing with the birds in a wide arc and land in the land of South Africa, and with Alan Paton, author of CRY, THE BELOVED COUNTRY, sensational first novel of a number of years back, we see and say: TOO LATE THE PHALAROPE, the name of his latest opus, published just 4 weeks ago today by Charles Scribner's Sons. It was an August selection of the Book-of-the Month Club, and immediately after publication flew high to an upper branch on the Best Seller Tree.

Well it should be a high ranking novel, because it combines a rare sensitivity with a deep-throated cry for the just treatment of human beings by other human beings. The author is one of the many real patriots of South Africa today who feel outraged at the present inhumane governmental racial exclusionist policies. Here, he doesn't attack the problem head on, but instead takes a side swipe at it. This he does by telling the tragic story of Police Lt. Pieter van Vlaanderen through the pen of Pieter's unmarried aunt.

The narrator truly loved her nephew, and again and again berates herself for failing to halt the tragedy before it spilled over and engulfed the entire van Vlaanderen family., which it inevitably did. The story of Pieter is woven very finely, like the strands of a bird's nest high in a tree-top. It takes Pieter, a veritable eagle, a champion soccer player, a returned war hero in the service of Great Britain, a stalwart member of the city's police force, a beloved father of two children, from his nesting place while his wife and children are away, into the bushes and into the arms of another woman. Hence, the tragedy.

The tragedy is more than an upright man's fall from grace, which is bad enough. It is more than Pieter's own guilt-ridden mind in which its torments commences to destroy the bravery and manliness of the upright man. It is more than the act of Pieter's father in shutting the household and disclaiming any connection with his son; this father, whose rigidity is one of the striking points in the novel, whose only book is The Bible, who sees life as black and white: no grey, who loves his native South Africa intensely but hates the English so thoroughly that his judgment is warped, a father who cannot bring himself or allow himself to be close to his son or family, who showed a meager vestige of humanity by accepting a book about birds, about South African birds, from his son---a book apart from his Bible. It is a wider tragedy that is indicated: the tragedy of separation, of humanity breaking apart from itself, like an amoeba splitting itself in two; never to regain its other half.

For the crime that Pieter van Vlaanderen was guilty of was not that he had touched another woman, but that he had touched a colored woman, and had thus violated a racial statute punishable by the highest penalties, a criminal act of immense proportions in South Africa. A strong man's weakness and his attendant acts become pivotal areas around which a brilliant writer voices his protests and his hopes for a different tomorrow. The phalarope is a South African bird resembling the sandpiper, and I predict that TOO LATE THE PHALAROPE will be a high flier in book sales for the next few months, at least, although it will not become the classic that Alan Paton's first novel, CRY, THE BELOVED COUNTRY is becoming.

From South Africa we wing our way to the home of the home of the art of the couturier, Paris, where we catch a glimpse of diplomat Charles Anderson awaiting his 17 year old son's arrival on the scene one evening in the almost-immediate present, a son who had been separated from him for many of those 17 years because of the war, Gerald's schooling and Charles' profession of the diplomatic life. Charles has promised himself that on his son's 17th birthday he would take him to a fashionable restaurant and talk with him about life with a capital "L". When the occasion arises, the father, at about the age 52, begins to reminisce about his own boyhood and youth.

Does history, and especially personal history, repeat itself? Do things happen TIME AND TIME AGAIN? For that is the title of this sparkling novel by James Hilton, published about a month ago by Little, Brown & Company of Boston, and which is the September selection of the Literary Guild. Mr. Hilton, the author of the ever-famous GOODBYE, MR. CHIPS and other successes, was born and raised in England, but is now an American citizen residing in California. This book is as cosmopolitan as its author, its action taking place mostly in London, Paris, South America and a short turn at Parson's Corner, Connecticut, U.S.A.

So skillfully does author James Hilton tell his two stories that the reader finds himself in at least two worlds at one time, and enjoying his little venture into schizophrenia. This way it's a pleasure to split your personality in twain, one half going back over the years of Charles Anderson's youth in his mind, seeing him as the younger of a landowner's two sons; even the less talented one, and when the older one gets killed in the first World War, part of the widower dies with him. Charles then is directed into diplomatic corps through his father's urgings, since his father thought he was useless for anything else of a productive or intellectual nature. So the flash-backs give us intimations, also, of Charles at Cambridge University, of his turdy undergraduate days there. Then Charles had met Lily, an office girl of the so-called lower classes--this about the time his own father had become the knighted Sir Havelock Anderson. Charles had the sensation that for the first time in his young life--he was in his very early 20's, and Lily had said she was 18, although she actually was only 16 when they first had met, for the first time he felt himself to be in love. In fact, he wanted to marry the girl.

Well, Sir Havelock found about the intensity of the budding affair between the boy destined for a high diplomatic post and the ordinary office girl, and using one of the world's most persuasive agents, a bank-roll, he attempted to and did buy off the girl and her family. Thus was Charles' first love lost. Later on, through the medium of further flash-backs handled with much deftness, we catch glimpses of his marriage to Jane and the fastidious manner in which she aided his diplomat's sorties, and of the tragic end to their idyllic marriage in a German bombing raid in World War II.

When the story catches up with the present, however, we learn that young 17 year-old Gerald has caught himself in the trappings of his first amour. His love is a charming American visitor to the continent, almost twice his age, whom he had courted between sets on a tennis court in Switzerland. What will happen, now that Gerald has left the rendezvous with his father for a midnight rendezvous with his new-found attraction? And what will happen when father, dear father, trails son's taxi to the later rendezvous? Will this pattern of a father ensuring his son's "safety", making sure his son is not ensnared in the clutches of a female not meant for him, be repeated TIME AND TIME AGAIN? And will the lives and actions of the diplomats in action reiterate themselves TIME AND TIME AGAIN? Is life nothing more than a period piece re-played on the stage of life TIME AND TIME AGAIN, with just changes of scenery to alter the piece a little? Read TIME AND TIME AGAIN, by James Hilton for almost engrossing answer from one of the world's great story-tellers.

And now for our last Fall fashions in late novels this evening we turn to a book which was published by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. this morning. And before the month is over you will be hearing plenty about THE STORY OF ESTHER COSTELLO, by Nicholas Monsarrat, author of one of the great World War 2 novels, THE CRUEL SEA. For THE STORY OF ESTHER COSTELLO is one of the cleverest, most absorbing yarns you will come across in many a year. Its ending, however, is even more crafty than the plot, for it leaves the reader with a cute question mark, somewhat the way MY COUSIN RACHEL a year and a half ago had the reading public puzzled as to the real nature of the title character. In this ending, we will find ourselves wondering: was it murder, was it suicide, was it planned, ----- was it accidental, was it the

the result of love, of hate, or plain resignation? Mark my words well: THE STORY OF ESTHER COSTELLO will be one of the rising stars of the fall, a book you will not be able to put down until its very last page.

What or who was Esther Costello? She is probably the product of our author's very fertile imagination, but in this book she emerges about a decade ago as a 10 year old girl in a little nondescript town in northern Ireland, a little girl who accidentally stumbles onto a keg of powder left there many years previously by some fugitive Irish revolutionists. The powder ignites, explodes, and she is the only remaining child of 4 victims alive after the explosion. But, something drastic happened to her entire nervous system, and as a result Esther Costello becomes a family charge, deaf, mute and blind.

Belle Bannister, a fairly wealthy American in her forties, on a trip to this poverty-encrusted village after the 2nd World War, to revisit the scenes of her early childhood, finds Esther in a most horrible, piteous condition. Her natural sympathies, plus her own inner feelings demanding assuagement of earlier unpaid debts, precipitate a decision. She will take Esther Costello to the fabulous land across the seas, where the finest of physicians and the most hospitable of hospitals will surely correct and cure the effects of Esther's traumatic experience. They do not, however, and Belle Bannister thus takes it upon herself to remain with her charge, to learn the rudiments of the language of touch, to act in her behalf as did Ann Macy Sullivan with Helen Keller, to help Esther, lovely Esther, to regain some touch with the world outside.

Follow now the career of this young girl as Mrs. Bannister starts to receive public acclaim for her acts of selfless devotion. Follow her as she appears on podium after podium speaking through Mrs. Bannister, telling the world of her remarkable contact with some aspects of reality again. Follow her as the unscrupulous husband of Mrs. Bannister returns again and perverts this ideal and idealistic venture into one of the most gigantic rackets and one of the most evil-smelling rackets ever conceived in fact or fiction. Follow her in this story which has as many twists and turns as a roller coaster. Follow THE STORY OF ESTHER COSTELLO, by Nicholas Monsarrat for grand reading entertainment and the top question mark in your literary Fall Fashions.

This is Review #25 of "A Look Into The Book Nook", a regular weekly feature of Radio Station WFLN, Philadelphia 28, Pa.

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Suggested and recommended books for additional reading on this subject:

THE CHIEFTAIN by Robert Payne; Prentice Hall, N.Y. 1953

7½ Cents by Richard Bissell; Little, Brown and Company, Boston. 1953

A WOMAN AS GREAT AS THE WORLD AND OTHER FABLES by Jacquetta Hawkes; Random House, New York, 1953.

A HOUSE OF HER OWN by Robert F. Mirvish; William Sloane Associates, N.Y. 1953.