

KYK-OVER-AL

Volume 3

Issue 11

October 1950

KYK-OVER-AL, VOLUME 3, ISSUE 11
October 1950.

First published 1950
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Cover design by Cristiano Coppola
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Published by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports,
Guyana at the Caribbean Press.

ISBN 978-1-907493-61-4



THE GUYANA CLASSICS LIBRARY

**Series Preface by the President of Guyana,
H. E. Bharrat Jagdeo**

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SERIES PREFACE

Modern Guyana came into being, in the Western imagination, through the travelogue of Sir Walter Raleigh, *The Discoverie of Guiana* (1595). Raleigh was as beguiled by Guiana's landscape ("I never saw a more beautiful country...") as he was by the prospect of plunder ("every stone we stooped to take up promised either gold or silver by his complexion"). Raleigh's contemporaries, too, were doubly inspired, writing, as Thoreau says, of Guiana's "majestic forests", but also of its earth, "resplendent with gold." By the eighteenth century, when the trade in Africans was in full swing, writers cared less for Guiana's beauty than for its mineral wealth. Sugar was the poet's muse, hence the epic work by James Grainger *The Sugar Cane* (1764), a poem which deals with subjects such as how best to manure the sugar cane plant, the most effective diet for the African slaves, worming techniques, etc. As John Singleton confessed (in his *General Description of the West Indies*, 1776), there was no contradiction between the manufacture of odes and that of sugar: "...a fine exuberant plant, which clothes the fields with the richest verdure. There is, I believe, scarcely any cultivation which yields so lucrative a return per acre as under favourable circumstances, than that of the sugar cane. So bountiful a gift of Providence seems not only calculated to call forth the activity and enterprise of the agriculturalist and merchant, but to awaken also feelings of a higher and more refined enthusiasm." The refinement of art and that of sugar were one and the same process.

The nineteenth century saw the introduction of Indian indentureship, but as the sugar industry expanded, literary works contracted. Edward Jenkins' novel *Lutchmee and Dilloo* (1877) was the only substantial fiction on Guiana, and whilst it was broadly sympathetic to the plight of Indian labourers, it was certain of Britain's imperial destiny, and rights over mineral resources. It was not until the period leading up to

Guiana's Independence from Britain (1966) and the subsequent years, that our own writers of Amerindian, African, Asian and European ancestry (A. J. Seymour, Wilson Harris, Jan Carew, Edgar Mittelholzer, Martin Carter, Rajkumari Singh et al.) attempted to purify literature of its commercial taint, restoring to readers a vision of the complexity of the Guyanese character and the beauty of the Guyanese landscape.

The Guyana Classics Library will republish out-of-print poetry, novels and travelogues so as to remind us of our literary heritage, and it will also remind us of our reputation for scholarship in the fields of history, anthropology, sociology and politics, through the reprinting of seminal works in these subjects. The Series builds upon previous Guyanese endeavours, like the institution of CARIFESTA and the Guyana Prize. I am delighted that my government has originated the project and has pledged that every library in the land will be furnished with titles from the Series, so that all Guyanese can appreciate our monumental achievement in moving from Exploitation to Expression. If the Series becomes the foundation and inspiration for future literary and scholarly works, then my government will have moved towards fulfilling one of its primary tasks, which is the educational development of our people.

President Bharrat Jagdeo

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KYK-OVER-AL
Volume 3
Issue 11

October 1950



The Caribbean Press

DEDICATION

This Volume is dedicated to the memory of A.J. Seymour, poet; editor; scholar and pioneer of Caribbean cultural production. He gave a lifetime of service to the literary arts of the region.

INTRODUCTION

First published in Guyana in December 1945, *Kyk-Over-Al* was to become one of the most significant and long-running literary magazines in the Caribbean. Over the course of some 50 issues it has featured work by many of the leading writers from Guyana and the wider Caribbean, publishing the early poetry and fiction of such groundbreaking authors as Wilson Harris and Martin Carter, as well as important critical essays, histories, and reviews. Between 1945 and 1961, the journal was edited by the poet A. J. Seymour, a “committed literary figure and cultural architect” whose editorial notes and frequent essays for *Kyk-Over-Al* represent landmark contributions to the forging of a Guyanese literary culture.¹ Following Seymour’s departure from Guyana in 1962, the journal went into abeyance until a revival in 1984 under the editorship of Seymour and the poet and novelist Ian McDonald. With the death of Seymour in 1989, McDonald became sole editor. The magazine has continued to appear intermittently into the 2000s, with activist and writer Vanda Radzik joining McDonald on editorial duties.

Kyk-Over-Al was founded by the British Guiana Writers’ Association and the British Guiana Union of Cultural Clubs, of which Seymour was Honorary Secretary. Costing a shilling and with a cover design by Cecil E. Barker, the first edition of the journal declared its intention to “...cultivate among British Guiana’s writers the art of setting out a point of view persuasively even when wholly uncompromising; always giving short shrift to the brow-beating and the intolerant; that it will assist our readers with the enquiring and challenging mind; and that, in pointing the way to a clear appreciation of British Guiana’s problems, it will contribute towards the efforts of all our people to achieve full responsibility in personal and community decisions.”² The name *Kyk-Over-Al* (“see over all”), taken from the ruined Dutch fort at the confluence of the Essequibo, Mazaruni, and Cuyuni rivers, was meant to signify the need “for quick and wide vigilance and the expression of an alert people.”³ As Seymour

made clear in his editorial notes, the magazine was to be actively engaged in the project of building the Guyanese nation and of shaping a unique culture. *Kyk-Over-Al*, he wrote, will be “an instrument to help forge a Guianese people, to make them conscious of their intellectual and spiritual possibilities.”⁴

Seymour’s ambitions for the magazine chime with the upsurge in nationalist sentiment and the increasing agitation for political sovereignty that spread like wildfire across the Caribbean in the middle decades of the twentieth century. Against this backdrop, as Nelini Persram has observed, what “raged in the debates and expositions of *Kyk-Over-Al* assisted in the conscious articulation and awareness of an emerging Guyanese culture, something unprecedented in the country’s history. For Seymour the central interest was how, with the historical influence and domination of the language of English, the Guyanese could take the old colonial world and remake it into their own nation.”⁵ Indeed, Seymour stressed the need for Guyanese, and Caribbean peoples more generally, to “make an act of possession somehow of our environment and the faster the better.”⁶ Many of the stories and poems that appeared in the early issues of the magazine can be read as a direct response to Seymour’s enjoiner. The first issue, for instance, carries a fascinating piece of short fiction by Wilson Harris, ‘**Tomorrow**’, which provides an early glimpse of some of the themes (if not yet the unique prose style) that he would explore over the course his long career. Intriguingly, the story gestures to what would become a central concern in Harris’s work – the necessity of developing an original aesthetic appropriate to the remarkable landscapes of Guyana:

“There was only one picture in the room. A picture of the Kaieteur Fall. When he saw me looking at it, the old man said –

‘I like that.’ He seemed to be seeking words to express his thoughts. ‘It has power. Beauty. Mystery. It is a symbol for this land. The symbol of power waiting to be harnessed. Of beauty that goes hand in hand with terror and majesty. Of the mystery that lies in men’s hearts, waiting to be explored, given form and direction and purpose.’”⁷

In a later piece of short fiction, '**Fences Upon the Earth**' (published in issue four of *Kyk-Over-Al*), Harris can be seen still struggling to find a form of narrative expression adequate to the environmental experience of Guyana. At the end of the story, the narrator declares: "*Yes. I know what you will say. The words I have used are inadequate. Forgive me. I know it was inevitable that it should be so. The whole thing had been secret and wordless.*"⁸ As Reinhard Sander has observed, this "'secret and wordless' thing is an encounter with the Amerindian presence in the Guyanese interior, an encounter that provides some insight into the profound and disturbing impression that the Guyanese landscape and its ancestral inhabitants were to leave on the mind of the future novelist."⁹ Indeed, the description of this encounter seems to move us a step closer to a prose more familiarly 'Harrisian' in style and tone:

"For the first time that I could remember I looked upon a human being standing upon the earth, not falsely, by force or subterfuge, or bravado, or by any sort of empty pretension, but very simply, as though to own the earth were to carry the most natural and easeful burden in the world . . . His limbs were powerful. They had the perfection of the young trees that stand rooted in the forests, breathing forth an ageless symmetry in their being".¹⁰

That Harris, one of the Caribbean's most acclaimed and original authors, should first publish in *Kyk-Over-Al* is testament to the journal's significance. There is a real frisson to be had in browsing through the yellowing pages of early issues and seeing formative works by poets and novelists who would go on to play a defining role in the development of Caribbean letters. Fifteen years after '**Tomorrow**', for example, Harris would publish his first novel, *Palace of the Peacock* (1960), a visionary re-telling of the quest for El Dorado that sought not only to reanimate eclipsed historical perspectives, but also to imaginatively redeem a past that had never existed. In this novel, as he would do in the twenty-two that followed (the last being *The Ghost of Memory* in 2006, over 60 years since his first appearance in *Kyk-Over-Al*), Harris sifts through the ruins of history, searching for signs of its Utopian negation in the form of the unborn potential of cross-cultural

community. Harris's longstanding emphasis on the redemptive force of cross-cultural community can be seen in embryo in a number of the poems he published in *Kyk-Over-Al*. Many of these were later included in his collection *Eternity to Season* (1954), which seeks to weave together Homeric myth with the landscapes of Guyana and the lives of its people in a manner that foreshadows Derek Walcott's epic reworking of Greek legend in a Caribbean context in *Omeros* (1990).

Alongside Harris, Martin Carter was another consistent contributor to *Kyk-Over-Al*. Indeed, his first published piece of work – a 'fragment' from '**An Ode to Midnight**' – appeared in issue six of the journal. This poem, with its "*deliberate archaism*" which "*does little to distinguish it from the many pastiches in Kyk-Over-Al that cast back to classical and romantic structures of poetic expression*", represents, as Gemma Robinson puts it, something of a "*deceptive entrance*" by Carter into Guyanese literature.¹¹ It would not be long, however, before Carter's more familiar poetic voice – passionate, committed, protesting the squalor of colonialism in a language of lyrical beauty – would resound in the pages of the periodical. Here he is in '**Death of a Slave**', for example, excoriating the brutality of plantation labour in stanzas at once both savagely forthright and dense with the gravity of history:

"cane field is green dark green
green with life of its own
heart of slave is red deep red
red with life of its own.

day passes like long whip
over the back of slave
day is burning whip
biting the neck of slave".¹²

It is worth comparing this poem as it appeared in *Kyk-Over-Al* in 1952 with the version published two years later as part of the collection *Poems of Resistance from British Guiana*. In the latter, the same stanzas are rendered as follows:

“The cane field is green dark green
green with a life of its own
The heart of a slave is red deep red
red with a life of its own.

Day passes like a long whip
over the back of a slave
Day is a burning whip
Biting the neck of a slave”.¹³

The addition of a series of definite and indefinite articles (“The cane field”, “a slave”) to the 1954 version subtly alters the rhythm of the poem: the *Kyk-Over-Al* piece has a punchy ferocity, a clipped cadence that is softened in the later rendering. While the tone and metre of the latter is perhaps more successful at engaging the reader in the subject of the poem (Carter’s aim in his lyrics, observes Robinson, was always to “pursue the goal of collective feeling” and to challenge his readers to join him in making sense of the world¹⁴), there is something about the brute simplicity of the earlier construction – especially its undifferentiated evocation of the slave as simply “slave” (“neck of slave” / “back of slave”) – that speaks to the terrifying, dehumanizing violence of slavery.

Comparisons such as this highlight how immensely interesting are the contributions to *Kyk-Over-Al* for those looking to track not only the contours of Guyanese literary history, but also the fascinating genealogies of individual poems and prose pieces. The republication of the journal in the *Guyana Classics* series will make easier the task of throwing light on the literary development of Guyana’s most significant authors. In addition to Harris and Carter, *Kyk-Over-Al* included work by a range of other significant writers in the early stages of their careers. Edgar Mittelholzer, for instance, contributed a number of intriguing poems to the journal (see issues three and nineteen). The “first of his generation to emigrate to the UK to make a serious career of writing novels”, Mittelholzer was a pioneer, penning such important works as *Corentyne Thunder* (1941), *Shadows Move Among Them* (1951),

and the *Kaywana* trilogy of historical novels (1952-58), which cover over 300 years of Guyanese history.¹⁵ The work of Jan Carew, whose novels *The Wild Coast* (1958) and *Black Midas* (1958) are compelling re-workings of the *Bildungsroman* in a Guyanese context, also features in the journal, as does that of Roy Heath, who contributed some rare early poetry to issues seventeen (1953) and nineteen (1954), some twenty years before his first novel, *A Man Come Home* (1974), was published.

Of equal interest when reading through early issues of *Kyk-Over-Al* is the vast array of literary pieces by contributors whose career did not subsequently flourish, or whose work has never received the same kind of attention as that of writers like Harris or Mittelholzer. The journal enables us to reconstruct an often overlooked portion of the literary field in which those more celebrated authors were working. The dynamics of literary consecration and canonization tend to produce relatively attenuated literary histories, marginalizing certain writers and obscuring the diverse range of work with which more well-known texts may well have been in dialogue; *Kyk-Over-Al* allows us to recover some of that rich tradition and to develop a more fine-grained understanding of the evolution of Guyanese literature.

This is especially so since in addition to fostering new literary talents, *Kyk-Over-Al* sought to preserve and bring to attention the work of earlier Guyanese writers, thereby not only “moulding a Guianese consciousness”, but also “recording its tradition”, as Seymour put it.¹⁶ In illustration of Seymour’s point, the second issue selected the poet Walter MacArthur Lawrence (1896-1942) for “honour and commemoration”, republishing a selection of stanzas from his poem ‘**Ode to Kaieteur**’ and featuring a number of essays on his work.¹⁷ This issue of the journal was notable, too, for what, as Petamber Persaud has observed, may be “the first recorded call for a local literary prize”, with James W. Smith, the Honorary Secretary of the British Guiana Writers’ Association, arguing for the establishment of a literary award in the form of the Leo Medal for poetry, The Webber Medal for fiction and The Clementi Medal for non-fiction and drama.¹⁸

In preserving the Guyanese literary heritage while also supporting and even launching the careers of some of Guyana's most well-known and critically lauded writers, *Kyk-Over-Al* not only helped to shape the contours of Guyanese literary culture, but also contributed more generally to the 'boom' in Caribbean writing in the 1950s. Indeed, the journal was one of a number of literary magazines that flourished across the region in the middle decades of the twentieth century. These included such periodicals as *The Beacon* in Trinidad (first published in 1931), *Tropiques* in Martinique (1941), *Bim* in Barbados (1942), *Focus* in Jamaica (1943), *Origenes* in Cuba (1944), *Asomante* in Puerto Rico (1945), and *Caribbean Quarterly*, which was launched by the University of the West Indies' Department of Extra Mural Studies in 1949. Alongside such outlets as the BBC's *Caribbean Voices* radio programme (which ran from 1943 to 1958 and featured readings of work by writers such as George Lamming, Una Marson, V. S. Naipaul, and Sam Selvon), these magazines provided a new forum for the circulation and discussion of Caribbean literature, encouraging into print a whole host of emerging literary talents.

In comparison with many of these other journals, *Kyk-Over-Al* was, as Laurence Breiner has observed, "*remarkable for the high quality of its poetry from the very beginning.*"¹⁹ This was down in large part to the frequent contributions made by Harris, Carter, and Seymour himself (Harris contributed some 37 poems between 1945 and 1961, Carter some 24, and Seymour over 40). The journal also "*made pioneering efforts in literary criticism, and opened its pages to writers of the whole region, even publishing translations of works from the French Antilles.*"²⁰ Indeed, Breiner suggests that *Kyk-Over-Al*'s outlook was "*closely tied to the dream of the West Indian Federation.*"²¹ In a similar vein, L. E. Braithwaite has argued that the magazine moved from a purely Guyanese to a West Indian position with the establishment of the University College of the West Indies in 1948.²²

The pause in the journal's publication in 1961, occasioned by Seymour's departure from Guyana, occurred just as the country was entering into a period of intense ethno-political hostilities that rent the fabric of society. That *Kyk-Over-Al*

should fall silent at this time seems poignantly apt given its stated aim to help build the nation and its commitment to fostering a collective Guyanese consciousness. Against the backdrop of race riots that pitched communities against one another, the journal's *raison d'être* perhaps appeared hopelessly Utopian. And yet such Utopianism was, and remains, fundamental to thinking beyond the apparent impasses and entrenched divisions that mark the present; and to imagining the possibility of a radically different future. As Martin Carter put it in 'Looking at Your Hands', published in *Kyk-Over-Al* in 1952, "I do not sleep to dream, but dream to change the world".²³ The last word, however, should perhaps belong to Seymour, who expressed similar sentiments to Carter in a poem published in the third issue, and which in many ways encapsulates the ideals behind the founding of the journal:

"To-day they hope
But to-morrow belongs to the people.
To-morrow they will put power behind their brow
And get the skill in their hands.

To-morrow
They will make a hammer to smash the slums
And build the schools.

Like a River, the people hold history in their hands
And To-morrow belongs to them".²⁴

Michael Niblett
University of Warwick

Notes:

¹ Nalini Persam, 'The Importance of Being Cultural: Nationalist Thought and Jagan's Colonial World', in *Small Axe*, 15 (March 2004): 86.

² H. R. Harewood, 'A Message', in *Kyk-Over-Al*, 1.1 (1945): 26.

³ A. J. Seymour, 'Editorial Notes', in *Kyk-Over-Al*, 1.1 (1945): 7

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Persam, 'The Importance of Being Cultural', 86-87.

⁶ A. J. Seymour, 'Editor's Note', in *Kyk-Over-Al*, 2.7 (1948): 2.

⁷ Wilson Harris, 'Tomorrow', in *Kyk-Over-Al*, 1.1 (1945): 30.

- ⁸ Wilson Harris, 'Fences Upon the Earth', in *Kyk-Over-Al*, 1.4 (1947): 21.
- ⁹ Reinhard W. Sander, 'The Quest for Form: Wilson Harris' Contributions to *Kyk-Over-Al*', in *World Literature Written in English*, 22.1 (1983): 20.
- ¹⁰ Harris, 'Fences Upon the Earth', 21.
- ¹¹ Gemma Robinson, 'Introduction', in *University of Hunger: Collected Poems and Selected Prose*, by Martin Carter and ed. Gemma Robinson (Tarsset, Northumberland: Bloodaxe Books, 2006), 17.
- ¹² Martin Carter, 'Death of a Slave', in *Kyk-Over-Al*, 4.14 (1952): 53.
- ¹³ Martin Carter, 'Death of a Slave', in *University of Hunger*, 88.
- ¹⁴ Robinson, 'Introduction', in *University of Hunger*, 31.
- ¹⁵ Michael Gilkes, 'Edgar Mittelholzer', in *West Indian Literature*, 2nd edition, ed. Bruce King (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1995), 127.
- ¹⁶ A. J. Seymour, 'Editorial Notes', in *Kyk-Over-Al*, 1.2 (1946): 3-4.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ Petamber Persaud, 'Preserving Our Literary Heritage: *Kyk-Over-Al*, Part 1 – 1945-1961', in *Guyana Chronicle* 30th July (2006). Web. 1 March. <http://www.landofsixpeoples.com/gytodaysixevenjs.htm>
- ¹⁹ Laurence A. Breiner, *An Introduction to West Indian Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). 78.
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² See A. J. Seymour, 'Kyk at 50', in *Kyk-Over-Al*, 46/47 (1995): 19.
- ²³ Martin Carter, 'Looking at Your Hands', in *Kyk-Over-Al*, 4.14 (1952): 52.
- ²⁴ A. J. Seymour, 'To-Morrow Belongs to the People', in *Kyk-Over-Al*, 1.3 (1946): 11.

ISSUE 11

Comment

We were unwilling to discard our historic arch gateway, now recognised throughout the British Caribbean as a quality trademark, but we wanted readers to be able easily to slip excellent reading matter into convenient pockets and handy satchels, so we tailored 'Kyk' into this present size and new-look style.

The Contents page will convince readers that we are beginning to fulfil our promises of a wider watch over all facets of Guianese community life. Comments on the quality of the recent presentations of drama and the cinema now aid communal discussions and we propose to add other features as we proceed.

A word now about the contributors to this issue. The bulk of the poetry printed here has come from overseas—Hilda McDonald, (incidentally the grandmother of the Trinidad tennis star Ian McDonald), lives in Antigua, Basil McFarlane of Jamaica, is the son of J. E. Clare McFarlane and a poet in his own right, Ellsworth Keane is in St. Vincent, and Harold Telemaque is principal of Fyzabad Intermediate School in Trinidad.

The review section is rather full because there are many books being published nowadays that are of interest to the readers of *Kyk-Over-Al*. The philosophical readers should like the symposium on Man, and the philological should like the discussion on W.I. dialect and creolese.

But this being good wine needs no bush.

—A.J.S.

TURN THE PAGE

by Harold Telemaque

Turn the page, turn the page:
The network lengthens
Mesh into mesh involved.
They move within uncasual filigree,
Casual and merely moving in the dark.
Here might have been the light,
Here might have been no trappers' paradise,
But a man riding in triumph
Into the City of earth.
Now, only from the muscles of the face
Comes the laughter,
Only like the dew the sun is after
Lives their mirth.

Turn the page, turn the page
Voices return, that now at dusk
Sing back an evening wailing
Out of dead years.
They walked this lane and that,
And there they saw the ships return
To fill their failing ranks
Where no good water was
Here, one fell off and was never buried.
There, was the whipping post by the river,
The river unattached, still moving,
Clearer now only a little.
And the man with the telescope
Watching from his castle;
The man with the telescope
Surrounded like an island
By his castle, directed by economy.

Turn the page, turn the page
Against the wind of acquisition.
The bible on the mantel piece
Contains the family history: —
When father was married, and when
Brahaman won the breeders' plate
And when the best falcon died
Down in his silver cote, in September
And was buried.

Turn the page, turn the page
Even from one ignobility to another.
Change breeds hope, and hope
Is the virtue of the unfortunate
Turn the page — not in the manner of desperation,
Not in fire and inventions of fire and earthquake,
But in the quiet of hope in misery,
Turn the page.

Extracts from a
WEST AFRICAN DIARY

by G.C.L. Gordon

January 1, 1950. Kano: My first contact with real African life and it is not likely that I'll ever forget it. We drove by the Amir's compound which is surrounded by a high mud wall, through dusty streets flanked on either side by mud huts closely packed together. Their occupants literally littered the streets and limited yard space. Dressed in long loose garments they sat about in the dirt or walked about or rode on bicycles or donkeys and their dirty red teeth, red from continually chewing the cola nut, could be seen yards away. It is certain that these people had never seen a toothbrush let alone using one.

The site of the society's meeting was a slaughter slab. Here cattle are slaughtered in the open on a concrete slab of about half a square chain in area. The blood is collected and boiled in large drums until it coagulates. Then it is dried on a sort of barbecue and then pulverised. It is excellent as fodder for cattle and pigs and even better as a fertilizer. The evil smell of the place (boiling blood, burning bones, and drying blood) was almost unbearable. Vultures mingled with black, shiny bodies like the pigeons in Trafalgar Square. I was glad to get away. At 8.30 a.m. on the 31st we set out on the 500 miles journey to Kaduna. We did it in five hours with two stops—one to change a tyre and the other at Zaria to buy potatoes. Zaria is much more modern than Kano and things were less strange. On the way we passed several little villages of native huts, some looking like large pots with thatched tops and women with babies tied to their backs going to market or to fetch water from stagnant pools. The shiny round heads of the babies glistened in the bright sunshine and everywhere the ugly red colour of the teeth. Surely we are fortunate in the West to have had the benefit of western habit.

Kaduna is a centre of the European community and grew up as a sort of "station" for whites. It is built on elevated country and commands a good position. It was the site first chosen as Nigeria's capital by the first governor of Nigeria.

January 6: Undertook my 400 odd mile train journey from Kaduna to Enugu between the 3rd and 5th inst. I had always prided myself as an admirer of the human form, but I am beginning to change my mind. I have never seen such a mass of oddity. It is true that people go about in just a loin cloth. I have seen it myself. We visited a Coop Maternity Centre. Quite a good effort. One patient had twins. They are not fond of twins here and they usually try to kill them in some way or other. People are extremely primitive. We have nothing like it in the West Indies. Of course the educated African is far different—such contrast

January 12: Met Mr. Stoby, Enugu. Had lunch and spent an enjoyable afternoon together. Motored 160 miles to Aba. A small town and quite pleasant at the Rest House which is situated in the white section. When you leave this section then you meet the rabble. Went to the local cinema. Must have been built at the same time as Noah's Ark. Certainly very backward here. Saw a witch doctor's "surgery." Better seen than described.

January 15: Am still exploring the strangeness that is Africa. Now on the Southern Coast, Eket. Conditions seem to get more and more civilised as one proceeds south from the north. There are far less naked people about there are lots of nicely built churches to be seen on the wayside—a few good houses also. They seem to pay a deal of attention to the dead down here as there are some really magnificent tombs all about.

Eket is just a Government Centre with a District Officer in charge. Of course it is just his headquarters. He has extensive territories under his jurisdiction and wields tremendous power. I can see now why officers coming to the West Indies from the African service are so disillusioned with our conditions. Here the D.O. as he is called is King. Whatever he says is law. He is similar to the District Commissioner in B.G. But Oh! Much more powerful! They treat the Africans as trash and have no respect for them.

January 17: From Eket I went to Ikot Ekpene—the Eastern Provinces. They do a lot of raffia work here. Was rather impressed with what I saw.

January 23: Motored 120 miles to Onitsha on the river Niger. Crossed the Niger by launch (about 3 miles) to Asaba (Western Provinces) "Motored" 80 miles to Benin. "Motored" is in parenthesis because of the car. A small Hillman which has seen better days. Can be heard a mile away. Doesn't have to use a horn. Uses a gallon of oil a day.

January 29: Life is getting more and more interesting, as the days go by in this land of our ancestors. From Benin travelled through Ilesha to Akure and then to Ibadan. Ibadan is the largest town in West Africa.

Am beginning to learn to like Africa. There is a charm about the place, the people that is simply amazing. The Africans are very kind — they possess qualities which are admirable. Here in Ibadan people are far more modern (it gets more and more so as you proceed from east to west). They are fond of wearing their native clothes which I find very attractive and beautiful. The men wear long, loose gowns made of beautifully coloured cloth; the women wear "clothes" draped around them with big head-ties. Visited the African club (there is a European club and an African club) and I met some of the more educated and intelligent people. They have excellent manners and conduct themselves remarkably well. Their club is open to the whites who make frequent use of it. You do find some pleasant whites here who have made some friendship with Africans. Educated Africans consider themselves superior to the whites and I believe there is general dislike of the European, many of whom realise they will have to get out sooner or later. Self-government is the main topic of the day and work has been going on for some months on the draft of a new constitution. The various Amirs and Paramount chiefs have been in conference here at Ibadan for several weeks with legislators and government officials over the constitution.

February 5: I think the period of my stay in Africa will be a complete blank as far as world affairs are concerned. One just doesn't hear anything of what is happening in the world and seems to care less. I heard a radio this morning for the first time in weeks.

From Ibadan I went to Lagos. Lagos has given me a pleasant surprise. It is quite a nice city and beautiful in parts. Devaluation has affected the whole of the sterling area and

even in these remote areas people feel its effect in an increased cost of living. The people in the towns feel it more as they have to buy everything. People in the villages concentrate on their native foods but even they have got to buy something sometimes.

February 8: I arrived in Accra after one and a half hours flight from Lagos. At 6,000 feet in broad daylight the country below could be clearly seen. I am pleasantly surprised with these two West African towns (Lagos and Accra). From the office I am looking out towards the sea. The houses in this section as well as Public Buildings etcetera are nicely built and laid out among trees. Streets perfect. Stores clean and lovely. Really a pleasant surprise.

Met quite a few prominent West Africans as a result of which I have gained a greater conception of my own worth as a Negro. These Africans have a great deal over us West Indians. They are sure of themselves, West Africans in the civil service live under much better conditions than we do. Nice houses are built for them by Government, and they have time to enjoy the better things of life—books, music and art. They are much farther advanced in culture than we are. Their sculpture and paintings are better than anything we have. I have certainly been enlightened by this African tour. Of course the West is way ahead of the East and North and many of the conditions described in my previous letters are non-existent in these parts.

MAN — AS SEEN BY THE STUDENT OF HISTORY

by J. Cameron Tudor

"I weep, for it reminds me so
Of that old man I used to know

.....
Who seemed distracted with his woe
Who rocked his body to and fro,
And muttered mumblingly and low,
As if his mouth were full of dough..."

It's all very well for the Psalmist to ask "*What is Man?*" when he himself need not supply the answer. That has been done for him by every vested interest from the Theologian to the Psychologist who—despite his efforts—is now being taken seriously. And between these two there is yet room enough for the Biologist, the Chemist, the Economist, the Philosopher—in short for Mr. Bernard Shaw—to have their say. But when all is said and done, when each specialist has pronounced his judgment, then a concerted scorn, barely hidden, is turned in the direction of History.

Pity the poor Historian. He has to provide the grist which feeds their mills. They all rely on him to supply all the evidence they need, and hint darkly that he need not be too scrupulous. Naturally he tries to please them all and sometimes succeeds. But let him urge an unpalatable conclusion upon them. At once the sun of faction beats down upon his defenceless head, and he is at once ordered back to his ashes which he is sternly admonished to guard and not to scatter. But, sometimes, when controversy is bartered for genuine enquiry, chairs, even professorial ones, are pushed back, and the Historian is asked to execute a tall order. He is asked to join in the general debate on "Man".

Now no man is hero to his valet, as they say. Yet if the aphorist had stayed for an answer, we might retort that the historian is not precisely a valet. But one would naturally hesitate to kick a platitude when it is down. For in his estimate of man the Historian is both an scientist and an

artist. As scientist he must don his overalls and dig in the quarries of human institutions for his specimens. But he must soon hurry to the studio where, exchanging overalls for a smock, he has to paint and evaluate. There—in the studio—he must make man presentable. Perhaps he is something of a valet after all!

To the Historian Man redeems the littleness of individual men. This achievement is in no way modified by the redefinition of man in the so called Darwinian Thesis. From the earliest appearance of civilised existence he has contemplated the *“starry heavens above, and the moral law within.”* His upright posture, his self controlling brain, his mastery of the primitive arts—all these enabled him to domesticate himself. He has rescued himself —on the biological level—with the prolongation of his mating season, and has lengthened the infancy of his children to the extent that the orderly associations of language take the place of *“random infantile vocalisations”*. He has achieved his freedom **within** the patterns of his culture. But this freedom does not reject his social heritage; it does not reject the human norm. Rather does it increase the heritage, and level up the norm.

This is the elemental nature of man as the Historian sees him. For this is what his history attests. But if the Historian saw no more than that, then the picture presented would be remarkable enough in its own way, but would show nothing even remotely connected with nobility and splendour. His growth is by no means completed by his biological maturity as mate or parent; nor is his development modified by death. For there is ample evidence to show that Man does possess a self-outstripping and even self transcending nature. His topmost fulfilments are always preludes and his fullest growth leaves him still a malcontent.

So the Historian must make a still more penetrating analysis of his subject. For although Man participates in the characteristic of most of the animal species, yet it is precisely the complexities of his requirements which gives him his peculiar orientation. He has to crystallise his environment (that is, he has to organise his social world on his own principles); he has to associate in groups; he must constantly

draw on his social heritage. But— and this is really significant—in doing all this he acquires a definite character and become a **Person**.

But it is just here that the Historian and the Theologian become fellow travellers. For they would both agree that the quality of self transcendence which they see in Man is but the obverse side of the coin. For added to it is a vast area where meaning and purpose come into their own. In addition to, indeed because of, Personality, Man works towards ends or, as the Theologian might put it, "*to the future which doth not yet appear.*" This thesis, held by the Historian, and Theologian, is in no way modified by the truth that Man is hardly conscious of his ends, that, even when conscious, he can scarcely interpret them. This seemingly awkward fact does, on the contrary, sustain the thesis. For it is his uncertainty and bewilderment which demonstrate that his purposes go rather beyond Nature. Moreover It is precisely his feeling of meaning and purpose which fosters his unique creations of Art, Culture and Political Institutions. These are an adequate pointer to his double Nature.

The Historian will be the very last to pretend that the going has been smooth. He will readily admit that Man has not had it all his own way. If the cowering wretches whom we meet at the beginning of History have progressively become the shapers of their own destiny, that it is only up to a point. Thus the Historian knows, what the scientist appears not to realise, that Man's trickiest exploits have often "*done him in*"; that Pride makes a hash of him; that he readily slips from civilisation to decadence via barbarism. In short the Historian sees in Man the dire struggle between "*creativity*" and "*creatureliness*". In the end, as Robert Frost used to say, Man must leave something to God. But that, as they say, is another story.

Now History is, apart from anything else, the granary of human achievement. Thus without continual re-invention and reinterpretation and indeed without unhindered access to the granary, the life of a civilisation would be but an acorn cast before a herd of swine. So it need not be charged against the Historian that he is continually pulling down his barn and building bigger ones. The truth of the matter is that Man does

not take along enough of his past with him. Were he to do this, his future would not probably be less difficult to foresee, but would certainly be more manageable.

Some Historians are, in their contemplation of Man, somewhat limited and thus give no clue at all that History also possesses an anticipatory side in that it is the domain of the possible. In his study of Man, the Historian is really required to conduct an intelligent and discriminate commerce with antiquity and purchase for our use and enjoyment all that is serviceable. Then, in the light of some system of values which every Historian must have, he must tell us how to anticipate our future by clothing our ideals with significance.

Nature is one of the theatres of human life. Therefore whatever the Historian has to say must render full justice to the reality of the drama. For the drama is a dynamic one, consisting of terror and pity, achievement and futility, crime and charity. Such is Man's nature that the Historian can deal with it accurately only when he is prepared to introduce the conception of value into his work. Mere chronicling will not wash; it will scarcely even white wash. But we can leave it to the Historian. He does not always speak as if his mouth were full of dough; but if he is the man we take him for, his woes will make him "*work his body to and fro*". After all he must pay the penalty of studying **Man**.

MAN — AS SEEN BY THE MEDICAL STUDENT

by L. G. Eddey

If there should be anything distinctive about the views of a member of the medical profession on the subject of the relationships of man it must surely stem from that early duty of medical studentship which requires that acquaintance be made with man as a species rather than as one's blood brother, friend or neighbour. The process, involving as it does five terms dissection of the human body as an anatomical specimen, certainly inculcates a profound respect for the complexity of the physique of man. As dissecting room experience gives place to human contacts in hospital ward and consulting room the medical student comes to learn that if every detail of man's physique is complex so also is every detail of his outlook and behaviour.

This keynote of complexity is hardly surprising. Of a certainty there is woven into the make-up of each one of us a pattern reflecting, however remotely, something of man's trials and tribulations throughout the ages. Something also of those varied characteristics, some good and some bad, which we have each of us inherited from our forbears. How natural that these things should make our approaches to one another and to the problems of our time infinitely varied. A circumstance which can be both fortunate and unfortunate for us according to whether or not we are resolved to exercise goodwill, understanding, and forbearance towards one another in all our relationships.

If there is one outstanding feature of our age it is surely that man is now able, probably for the first time in his long history, to exercise, if he will, full control over his destiny. Scientific advances have been attained the world over in the last half century which earlier generations could not have conceived possible. As a medical man by training I would remind you in particular of the revolution which medical science alone has accomplished in the past hundred years. Nowhere more so than in tropical countries similar to our own British Guiana where scourges such as malaria and yellow

fever are being effaced from vast expanses of territory with astonishing consequences from the standpoint of human happiness and preservation.

Modern engineering skill, with its production of new surgical tools and diagnostic apparatus, together with modern chemotherapy and its dramatic furnishing of wonder-working drug substances has gone far towards minimising the ravages of disease. Indeed it seems likely that certain diseases which have been recorded as inveterate enemies of mankind since the dawn of medical history will shortly be eradicated for all time.

But as scientific workers themselves will be among the first to recognise we cannot pin our hopes for the future on scientific advances alone. At best science provides us with factual knowledge and serves as a discipline — the sort of discipline that bids us seek out the essential truths in every situation by weighing carefully all the main facts therein. Of itself it cannot impinge on our mental and moral behaviour in such a way as to ensure that we live in harmony with one another and mutually attain thereby to a fuller and better civilisation. It is required of us in addition that we integrate with our scientific advances corresponding progress in the realms of art and philosophy. This done we need to weld all these advances into a compelling force for good by cultivating spiritual faiths in our own futures and, indeed, in the future of all mankind. Only thus does it seem that we shall be able to assist man's survival, let alone his progress towards new and better horizons.

As to how we should set about achieving the development just envisaged is a matter on which there could be many opinions. Certainly the process must begin with each of us as individuals for it seems indisputable that only as each of us seeks to put his own way of life in order can that impetus be generated which will be necessary to improve our social and political order as a whole. Nor can there be any readily applicable code of rules and regulations as to how this might be done for it is surely only within ourselves that we can discern what individual changes are most needed. But, for what they are worth, some broad principles might be indicated which history has taught should underlie the general pattern of our living.

To take moral standards first there surely is a great need for most of us to pay heed to the dictates of conscience more faithfully. Far too many of us seem constrained nowadays "*to do the right thing*" from fear of possible consequences rather than from any conscious desire to cultivate a high standard of behaviour. The same misplacing of values seems apparent too in so many of our petty strivings after minor forms of success, little regard being paid to whether these successes, when attained, will, of themselves, contribute anything of lasting value to either the seeker or to those for whose welfare he may be morally responsible.

In the matter of earning a livelihood, economic circumstances do not always permit a constant occupation still less a type of work entirely suited to each man's bent. But it needs to be reaffirmed that there can be both joy and dignity in every type of work provided there is a desire to do the work well for its own sake and to do it ever more efficiently. More especially so if the work offers scope, however limited, for initiative and the creative instincts, and if the worker himself is prepared to be his own critic in the absence of any healthy criticism from more competent people round and about him.

An important consideration is the maintenance of a healthy state both of mind and body. The former so that the reasoning and thinking powers may be kept so alert as to be ready to operate with clarity in all the unforeseen incidents which crowd our everyday activities. The latter so that there may be freedom from suffering and so that the body can be at all times equal to the demands of whatever physical effort is required whether for purposes of work or leisure and so that a satisfactory support may be developed as between mental and physical activities.

In the matter of spiritual values, whether or not we profess to hold any specific religious convictions there is clearly a need to recognise good and evil for what they are, wherever they may occur. There seems need too to overcome undesirable temptations in whatever form they are presented and to cultivate those simple virtues of tolerance, humility and generosity which are the very essence of good living in the best sense of that term.

By way of conclusion it may be said that attention to those occupational, physical, mental, moral and spiritual considerations already touched upon is required of all of us if our relationships one with another are to be put on a higher plane than ever before. That there is need for us to rise to a higher plane can scarcely be doubted, for now as never before there are perilous differences of outlook prevailing as between supporters of one ideology and another; even one nation and another. Indeed it seems not too much to say that at present our whole civilisation is threatened with catastrophic destruction unless men the world over can be persuaded to develop new national and international outlooks in which the qualities of goodwill, understanding and forbearance dominate all other considerations.

MAN — AS SEEN BY THE ARTIST

by John Harrison

The artist, being himself a man, is of course a member of the society in which he lives hence influencing and being influenced by it. Roughly speaking his attitude towards Man will be that of the society of which he is a part. Obviously the Greek sculptor or the Italian painter did not regard Man in at all the same way as the Byzantine mosaicist or the mason of the mediaeval cathedrals. In the one case Man was the centre of the universe, his delineation the end and object of art. In the other he was only a means towards another and more spiritual end.

We who are the inheritors of Greece through the humanism of the Italian Renaissance have tended to take the pre-eminence of man for granted — until quite recently. Now, on the edge of a new world of mass movements, rigid creeds, and rather impersonal social welfare, the artist logically takes man for the raw material of his experiments, the starting point of his abstractions. Man the individual is again in eclipse: we are in the age of the **common** man. An age of reason gives way to a new age of faith, and art accordingly becomes heiraticised.

And yet it is difficult for the artist himself to merge in the mass. The very virtue of his calling sets him apart, makes him aloof, suspiciously Olympian, not quite one of the gang. It is difficult for him not to observe, to judge, from a little distance: his sensibility, sharpened by training, leaps on impatiently, making of him a creature misunderstood and suspected — not without reason.

MAN — AS SEEN BY THE RELIGIOUS STUDENT OF PHILOSOPHY

by Lloyd Searwar

Although the nature of man was not the first problem which exercised the mind, when it became conscious of its power, it almost certainly will be the last; man remains his own most baffling problem.

The earliest thinkers, the Romans, considered man a part of the universe, composed of the same elements as everything else. But the Sophists notably Protagoras set man in the centre of things. Said he: "*Man is the measure of all things*". And old Socrates who in nearly everything else differed from the Sophists agreed that man and his strange nature was the supreme question. Plato, his disciple went even further and declared that man's soul was part of the Divine Reason. And Aristotle at a significant moment in the world's history gave reason as the distinguishing mark of man. From these and other insights the stoic lawyers of the Roman Empire drew the idea of the rights of man, rights based on mans **essential** dignity and sought to build it into law and institution.

It is worth nothing how the thought of the ancient Mediterranean world seemed to have been a preparation for the true definition of man's stature in the Christian message. A world, founded upon slavery and haunted by the idea of the grandeur of man's soul, heard of the God-made man, of human nature sanctified and of God's love for each man. They believed. Henceforth and for nearly sixteen centuries the truths of revealed religion were added to the old discussion.

Christianity so outwardly similar to many ancient cults made a clear break. Each man, said the Christian Fathers, is of supreme importance for each man is destined for an eternal honour. They based their thought upon the example of their Divine Master who had always dealt with individuals. Man, moreover, was a union of body and soul made in the image of God. The partial ecstasy and partial horror of life was resolved into a new idea of human worth, an idea which flowered in the abolition of slavery, the new honour paid to women, in

Christian marriage and the law and institutions dedicated to safeguarding the human person in elaboration of the Roman position .

Came the Renaissance and Reformation. From Mirandola and Luther the road runs down with scarcely a turn to our own troubled age, for scholarship and the appeal to conscience swing sharply away from belief and undermined objective values.

The tragic experience of the last four centuries and its deliverance in thought may be briefly summarised. The doctrine of Man taken as a soul alone, a soul held in bondage to an evil body leads to a despair of this world and the decay of social purpose, And a denial of spirit and its proper discipline over the body leads equally to the collapse of the human person in the nightmare world of Freud and the shelter of the totalitarian state.

A wise old priest once said to me: nearly any road pursued long enough leads back to God. And so subjectivism, perhaps the most typical form of the modern mentality, has begun to feel its way back to true beliefs. From the English Empiricists who despaired of the possibility of knowledge the way leads naturally to the modern philosophers of despair, the Existentialists who intent on cutting away the layers of self come face to face in the depths with the Lord of life. A philosophy based on these new insights confirms the ancient pattern of the Christian Fathers and opens the gates of heaven once more.

IN THE DARK

by A.J. Seymour

Darkness, to the high unclouded call of flutes
Paints thick pure velvet on the day and sows
Night's deep womb with a casual hand of stars.

Yet the coiled thought will slip a brooding Judas
Away from the lighted room and father a traitor.

But in each centre He has set His spark
His loved one—
Silent lovers when they lose identity
And lock in the sheath of the night, put on Godhead.

When the Eternal launched earth forth declaring,
"Let there be light" to the impregnate darkness,
From Everlasting Centre process seethed.
In that All-Eye the immense pupils swam
From idea into being island galaxies
In the bewildered unimaginable deeps
On a scale vaster than the wear of mountains
Or the huge deaths of suns that light their candles
Before His breath.

Darkness preludes the light
As Milton and Samson found
And both received their sight
Born of the anguished sound
When eyes imposed on the soul
The vision the body lost
And temporal things burnt whole
In a spiritual holocaust.
Their seeing soul swam out
Into light from the body's dark
As from hunting the hunter's shout
And out of the stone the spark...

Agony...agony.

Agony painting the night with pain,

Agony breaking the dark silences,

Agony shaking the silent darkness

As one shakes a spear,

Terrible agony.

Agony quickening and quivering in the darkness.

Hour after long-drawn-out hour...

And then the far-flung lovely light,

The morning singing in a host of nightingales...

Statues in living jet these women are

With skins so closely grained it holds the light

And looses it over the body in a glow

Dappling it with highlights.

Their glowed limbs

Are blooded and fleshed out in easy roundness

That Helen might have envied — the breasts strong,

Halves of the world pointing, the deep waist flowing out

Into great unabrupt curves of architecture

Around the hidden altars,

The generous laughing mouth, the deep-lunged nostrils

Rateably proportioned to the strength of the Sphinx

Towering over the desert...

Often at midnight

When the daughters of the moon are sleeping

I walk along your heart's cathedral archways

And touch the organ to a phantom music

And see the pillars of your heart tremble

With the waves of sound

Mary,

Novena's return

will show that the centre is here.

Wherever circumstances pitch
space spurn
or time reach
from the heart and the root
the centre is here.

O Mary,
how fallow thy soul
for eternity's fruit...

...in the dark sleeping
the vegetable prayer of the seed
bearing the toll exacted
before time matches desire.

...in the dark the seed
the secret movements of its fingers
feeding within earth's bosom
silent beneath the arrows of sun.

Hushed the fruit that will forth
the farmer has scattered his future of rice
the ratoons are rooted
the winds of the heaven their tears will weep
the Christ's in the womb
...in the dark sleeping...

tricky season . . .

LOVE CAME DOWN...

By Eugene Bartrum

Nostalgia was an emotion which had not yet invaded the precincts of Michael Stevens' mind. It was not that he was never away from home. Michael never had a home.

His mother died when he was five years old and Adolphus Stevens, his father, who thought the carefree life at his "pork-knocker's" logie at the Mazaruni less tiresome and more stimulating than a re-marriage, placed him at old Mrs. Frumps' boarding school.

Mrs. Adelaide Frumps prepared boys for the elementary schools. A limited number of them boarded and lodged with her, if their parents so desired. In extenuating circumstances, as in Michael's, they continued boarding and lodging with her while they attended primary schools.

After Michael left school, he got an appointment as a Pupil Teacher at Beterverwagting, a village about ten miles away from Georgetown. There he shared a room in bachelor's quarters and remained until his father had died and left him the pretty sum of two thousand dollars.

Never having shared his father's enthusiasm for the teaching profession, he resigned quickly, in the embryonic stage of that dreaded career and, preferring the smell of potatoes and onions, he acquired a grocery in Georgetown.

The house-hunting nuisance did not affect him as he simply removed his bachelor's furniture to the spare room at the back of his grocery. His friends wondered why he hired a dray cart when a donkey cart was so much more simple conveyance for a cot, an old canister and a Berbice chair.

Michael developed considerable business acumen and soon "Mike's Grocery" became the pass word of Leopold Street. His sole interest was his grocery. Still he spared some time to entertain some of his old school mates in his room after business hours.

After a while Michael realised that gradually the number of fellows who visited him was diminishing and he learnt that marriage was the cause. Young wives never savour the idea of

their spouses mixing with hard-boiled bachelors. Undaunted, Michael never gave marriage a thought and eventually only one other bachelor frequented his room.

Leap years have their peculiar way of wafting the wand of marriage and in 1944, Michael's last pal joined the order.

At a stag party, promoted by Michael, and held in his room the night before his friend's marriage, there was a reunion of the entire squad. The ladies may be ignorant of this, but it is amazing what excellent match makers men are, when an eligible bachelor has the misfortune of being fenced in by married men.

"Dick's going off tomorrow", said Rupert Stone quite casually and glancing at Michael, he continued, *"what about you, old boy? What about that little doll you took to pictures last week?"*

Charles Lewis joined in, *"Yeah Mike. It's about time you dropped anchor."*

Michael had not taken any *"little doll"* to the pictures and he felt himself securely enough anchored to his grocery.

"All in good time", was his impassive answer. He was never keen on being ragged about girls.

"Saf'ly saf'ly cachee monkey" drawled yet another intruder. That was Dave Walters, as he raised a glass to his lips.

Rupert Stone was persistent *"What's wrong Mike?..."* he emphasised, *"...find the ladies too hot to handle in doors?"*

Michael realised that his friends were getting difficult. His way of countering difficult people was by being difficult himself and there was hardly anything more disarming than Michael's laughter. *"Ho! Ho! Ha! Ha! Ho! Ho!"* was all that came from his lips, as prolonged and as loud as he could, for the rest of the evening.

After Dick's marriage, Michael found his room dull at times. This, he tried to offset by contributing regularly to the upkeep of the local cinemas. When that became boring he joined a club where he found out that there is a game called bridge which keeps even loving husbands away from their wives.

Although Michael became a bridge fiend, he still longed for the genuine association of his old friends. Now and again he met one or other of them and when he accused them of

giving him up, their promise, *"I'll drop in soon"* was seldom honoured.

Dick was the most thoughtful of Michael's friends and when Christmas came along, he insisted that Michael have Christmas dinner with his little family. Dick's wife was a charming hostess and among the niceties on the table was a delicious roasted pig. The sideboard contained an intriguing variety of blends of Demerara Rum and, in the drawing room, a string of fairy lights ran through overhanging holly and ended in a Christmas tree.

Into this setting Michael fitted as if he belonged. Dick was surprised to see his erstwhile girl-shunning friend accompany his young sister-in-law Stella on the piano while she sang '**Silent Night**' and other Carols.

His touch was artistic and Dick wondered where on earth Michael had learnt to play. He left Stella to go into the details of that enigma and discreetly withdrew into the kitchen to help his wife with the dishes.

Stella had often heard Dick speak of Michael and being as candid as she was charming she had long ago tabbed him as a bore. But somehow, this afternoon they began calling each other Mike and Stella, and in the evening they were sitting on a crib in Dick's flower garden enjoying the closeness of more life-like leaves than holly.

"Do you have a piano at your batchie? That's how you men call it, isn't it?" Stella asked with a touch of candour and naivete.

"No and yes" said Michael answering both of her questions *"And what do you know about my batchie?"*

Stella withheld her source of information and asked *"Where did you learn to play?"*

Michael's thoughts suddenly went back to Mrs. Frumps and the old piano of which that dear old lady was so proud. *"At school. As a boy"* he answered dreamily.

"You play nicely," Stella encouraged, *"Why not add a piano to the furnishings of your batchie?"*

Michael was certain now that Stella knew about the way he lived and, as he thought of the drab walls of his bare little room, for the first time in his life he found himself loathing it.

Stella thought that she had hurt him and drawing nearer to him she teased in a consoling voice. *"A penny for your*

thoughts big boy." Suddenly, Michael came down to earth again "Really want to know them" he asked?

"I'll make it a bob" she giggled.

Stella never expected this—at least not quite yet, nor was Michael responsible; Christmas is a tricky season. Suddenly Michael was holding her gently but firmly in his arms "*They may cost you your whole life*", he warned with meaning forcefulness "*Still want to know them?*"

Stella blushed, but half nodded and Michael pressed her closer to him.

When he kissed her he saw his room again. This time it was transformed into a cosy little cottage. In it were holly and a Christmas Tree and while his long fingers struck notes on a baby grand piano, Stella's clear soprano voice was singing '**Oh little Town of Bethlehem**'.

SOME MORE ASPECTS OF CREOLESE

by D. A. Westmaas

The Romance languages take their origin from the forms of Latin spoken in the various parts of the Roman Empire during the fifth century, and upon those bases the peoples of those countries have evolved whole languages and literatures of their own. It is, to say the least, unlikely that any such distinguished fate will be that of the form of English spoken by the common people of British Guiana. Much more probably its chief interest for the philologist of the future will be as an example of a minority tongue which after more than a century of virtual isolation from the rest of the Continent, found itself brought into sudden and intimate contact with alien languages and cultures; although the effect may indeed be mitigated by the spread of North American English among the Latin nations on our borders.

I think it is principally from this standpoint that anyone considering a serious study of creolese English should orient his investigations. This means recognising immediately that in default of mechanical recording, great attention must be paid to the way in which the debased forms of the English words are to be spelt. My own interest in the matter is not so scientific; I am interested purely from the standpoint of writing a light column in creolese. I found and still find myself forced to do a certain amount of experimenting in order to evolve an orthography that is as nearly representative as is consistent with remaining close enough to classic English spelling for the words to be easily recognisable. The task is not too difficult, because in the main, creolese keeps to the English. Where it departs from the orthodox is rather in the **absolute eclecticism** of its phraseology. Adverbs and adjectives are made to do duty for nouns; nouns for verbs; preposition for adverbial phrases; nominative and object cases are freely interchanged; so too are verb-endings; and words and phrases are invented by the individual speaker to suit the need of the moment. For example, you may easily have the following sentence thrown

at you: *“Dem is mo deadly dan he; an wid de deadly dey mo deadly, dey does baad-talk he aal ova Tung.”* (sc. *“They are more deadly than he, and with their deadlines so much greater, they habitually slander him all over Town”*). Here the sentence starts with an objective case used for a nominative, and goes on to take a singular verb. But later on, the same word in its proper nominative case is preferred: *“dey”*. Then the adjective *“deadly”* is made to do duty for the noun *“deadliness.”* Then the plural *“dey”* takes the singular verb *“does,”* before going on to call upon the adjective-and-noun *“baad-talk”* to act for the verb *“slander.”* And finally, nominative case *“he”* is used for *“him.”*

Or take another equally amazing usage: *“E hit she, an in e hit she, e run away,”* where the preposition *“in”* (on which the emphasis falls) is made to substitute for a whole adverbial phrase: *“as soon as”*. Sometimes the word *“since”* takes the place of *“in”*, with the same meaning! The words *“dem”* and *“me”*, by the way, are the only pronouns which City creolese uses in the objective case as a substitute for the nominative. You never hear *“Us are going somewhere,”* or *“Her is a nice gyul,”* either in Georgetown or the country; but whereas you may get *“Him go run away”* in the country, you never get it in Georgetown—unless the word *“um”* is taken to stand for *“him.”* Again, creolese prefers *“does”* to *“do”* for all Numbers and Persons, e.g. *“He does dance plenty-plenty,”* *“You does...”* *“Dey does...”* (never *“do”*). Curiously enough, in the only construction where it is correct to use the verb at all, creolese uses it in a wrong way. *“He go to school”* can be quite correct English when it is intended to emphasize that the person goes to school. But in creolese usage no such emphasis is intended; it is a mere statement that the person habitually goes to school. No one need complain of lack of variety or inventiveness in creolese!

I have not been able to figure out where the query-word *“nuh?”* at the end of a sentence comes from. Presumably it is equivalent to the Spanish *“no?”*; but there were never many Spanish settlers in this country. In Trinidad the French have left the word *“oui?”* (meaning *“yes?”*—precisely the opposite to our word), to perform the same function. Then there is the long-drawled-out *“maan”* with which friends sometimes appeal to each other—even women! *“Len me you’ bike, nuh*

maan?" which might be answered "No maan. A can't; I haven't the time." Another creolese practice is the frequent use of "let" for "to cause." "Tell she eef she en do urn A gun le' she get a good beatin'", does not necessarily mean "I'm going to allow her to be beaten;" it may mean "I am going to see to it that she gets a good beating."

I am unable to notice all the peculiarities of our vernacular as I would wish, because the volume of written creolese is so small. I can mention only those which come to my mind as I write, and any attempt to work out the grammatical rules,— if any — must wait until the deficiency is made good. This will probably be a long time awaiting, because there is still some prejudice among local writers and readers against the vernacular as being the language of the "common" people, the use of which betrays low origins, poor education, or a mind not "*lifted up to higher things.*"

Those who think thus ignore the fact that "*correct*" English itself was originally a dialect—the form of English spoken in the districts around London and Oxford. It gained its supremacy largely because the early English poets—Chaucer, Gower and the rest—chose to write in it and make a success of the job. So when, somewhere in the last half of the fourteenth century, the upper classes began to abandon Norman-French, they naturally turned to the tongue that the writers had made sound so pleasant. Even then it was not till a hundred years later that literary men ceased entirely to prefer Latin as a medium of expression.

Local writers who take their literary aspirations seriously should consider creolese with much greater attention, because if its appeal outside of British Guiana is never likely to be wide, creolese is at any rate the most peculiarly Guianese thing they possess, and poor as it may seem, it is their only chance of making a unique contribution to the world's culture. Otherwise they run the risk of becoming no more than imitators of English writers—clever ones no doubt, but still only imitators.

"Tact is the ability to describe others as they see themselves."
—(Abraham Lincoln).

How did it come about?
THE LANGUAGE WE SPEAK – II
by Richard Allsopp

In the issue of December 1949 (Vol. 2, No. 9) this subject was, as was pointed out then, no more than broached, and by way of introduction I attempted to establish an awareness of locutions most of which have an exclusive local existence or usage. The reader is referred to that article before proceeding with this one, though this one may, if so desired, be read independently.

That discussion (I) ended with a warning that among the many phases to be considered, first came origins of the terms in use, and already in (I) some sources were indicated in the terms chosen to classify the words: Africanisms, Localisms, Frenchisms, etc. In other words we agreed that there are several tributaries of varying sizes flowing into the main stream of our conglomerate vocabulary, this main stream being English. But if we were to attempt to go up each tributary separately so as to get at the origins of the whole, interesting (if laborious) journeys though these may be, we would be sure to miss much that their development has in common, as well as the important question of the influence these currents have on each other when they meet in the main stream. I find this explication necessary as it seems at first fair to expect that we keep the classifications outlined in (I) and continue to examine them separately. We shall not; but of course we shall need to refer to them if in the "water" we are examining we find elements obviously belonging to one or more of these tributaries.

One more proviso. This is a **search for origins**, not an examination of origins nor an examination of development; these two being technical and distinct from what we are doing here. We are still as in (I) looking, and when we find are content to **observe**.

One certainty I think is that all the tendencies I can so far discover are known linguistic tendencies with parallels in other dialects and languages of the world. If our speech is doing or has done anything new in the field of Language I have not noticed it yet.

Image Words

Among the first things that strike a listener to the speech of a person sitting on a shop-bridge describing to his friend a cricket match, a fight, an accident, an embarrassing episode, **or** any incident in which human emotions are involved is the number of sound-words and gestures that go to give life to the description. Many of these words are invented as the speaker proceeds but no one is at a loss for meaning. Such words and expressions are:—

Blapp, bidip, bupsen, baxen, brain, budum, etc. (falls, collisions explosions, blows of various kinds); ply, palow, etc. (bicycle tyre bursting); waxen, widding, wooie, etc. (ball hit through the air); "she hice (lift) he up hipbam;" "the car move off vuh-vuhm!!!

Some run into four and five syllables; the sounds are made to suit the nature of the description. We shall never have a complete list; and it will be many decades before they begin disappearing if they ever do. They are also most noticeable among people of African descent and perhaps reflect the uncodified nature of the original dialects of our ancestors who handed down the "spirit" of imagery in their adaptations of English. It is dangerous to carry the interpretation of a superficial observation too far, but in searching for an explanation of this habit (which is not common to English people) it seems to me admissible that if four or five of us hear the same sound, we all tend to hear it differently. But if we four or five speak together only one mature and codified language like English, Hindustani, Portuguese, etc., we would not "hear" differently, but simply use the accepted sound-word provided in that language like—"bang, boom, crash, wallop"—in the case of English; or we may not use a sound word at all. If however we all speak a primitive uncodified dialect we would indeed "hear" differently (and perhaps more accurately) and in relaying the sound later on would each describe differently the sound we "heard". Hence the multiple and unpredictable inventions.

Even if the sounds did disappear or dwindle to a small "accepted" number, we are unlikely to lose the gestures that go with any of these image-words. If it is true that some

languages (French for instance) cannot be spoken without gestures then it is certainly truer of the local, indeed every West Indian dialect. The word describing a hard fall would be accompanied by a vigorous downsweep of the hand with the "loose" index finger flailing the thumb to produce a sound; the word describing a ball sailing through the air would be accompanied by a swift outward stretching of the whole arm, fingers tightly together while the face carried an expression somewhat akin to horror; and so on—the lifting and the moving off, the bursting all would have accompanying gestures of eye, lip, arms, fingers and sometimes body, foot, and toe. The speaker needs a spacious platform for an "emotional dance" of descriptive language, that hails chiefly from Africa. What the other races have acquired of this art is chiefly from contact with the African.

Gesture is so essential a part of our dialect that it has to be given due recognition in any examination and I have taken it here because it expresses the feeling which is at the root of the huge mass of image words. Some gestures are so powerful that they are able to stand by themselves with full meaning. Examples are the kissing of the palm of one's hand, the casting of the hat on the ground and that unwritable half-gesture, half "expression" produced by "sucking the teeth" as we say. These are all three by appearance African. The first is a form of oath-taking that need not be accompanied by "for-true-to-God" which is its "meaning." It calls to mind the North African and Middle East custom of greeting a friend by touching the heart, lips and forehead (in that order) as a mark of sincerity. Through the second, we can with a little imagination see the African casting down his mask and head-dress, perhaps the most significant part of his costume, thereby not only laying his own head bare but also indicating that he would put it down or in some way lay his life at the mercy of the other speaker so sure was he of what he said. I have sometimes seen this done as a mark of assurance without another word from the actor. In standard English we would simply say, without gesture or intention. "*I'd lay my head on a block.*" As for "sucking the teeth", words exist in West and East African languages which contain a sound produced by sucking air in between the teeth. What connection this may

have with sulking or defiance however, as it does in our dialect, I do not know.

But the influence of gesture does not end there. The African's sense, it seems, of physical manifestation is so strong that he has introduced a class of expression which we might put next above the primitive image-word, and in which a physical, one might almost say personified aspect is added to an ordinary act; or if it is already there, it is emphasised. For example:—

the policeman **hang out behind** him (sped after)
jail **catch** him now
he **out hand** and hit him
a **push off** (an advance of payment to enable a workman to start work).
a **ground-eater** (a ball that streaks along, "eats up" the ground)
uppish (snooty without real reason, nose and chest in the air)

Finally, the popularity and number of image-words remind us that to the minds of people desperately grasping a knowledge of a language as the African emancipated slave did, or even painfully developing that knowledge as the Indian, Chinese and Portuguese labourers did the concrete rather than the abstract would appeal. A baby learning to speak and a boy learning French experience the same thing. Hence—

- (a) the image-word would find more favour than the word that offers no immediate picture;
- (b) the image being "present," the present tense would be the most practical to use, apart from being the first grasped and easiest to retain. Hence its use still today by most people from labourer to legislator in place of the past and other tenses.
- (c) The future too is expressed by the present of the verb "to go," —I goin' come, he goin' dead, you goin' see, etc.

- (d) The passive voice is almost completely replaced by the **active** and we hear, instead of *"a house is being built around the corner"* — *"They got a house buil'in' roun' the corner."*

"Make-do" Or "Key" Words

At the end of hours of thought I can still find no exactly appropriate term in English to describe the next class of words we shall look at. I put them next in order to the image words, because although they are in this case quite English words, they are used in a way that would make them incomprehensible if not unrecognisable to the ear accustomed to normal English.

Again it seems that the early Guianese learners of English (regardless of race, I think, this time) being, as labourers, anxious to convey an essential meaning and receive one in return—when a wage, a thrashing, perhaps a life may have been in the balance — seized hold of the most essential word in a sentence, the one that **held** the meaning and got that out forcibly and early enough in the sentence to catch the hearer's attention before some peremptory order should bring trouble. Naturally expressions forged under such heat and pressure were strong enough to remain and be used again and again both in similar and in less arduous circumstances until they became ordinary conversational vocabulary. In fact many have been proof against time and are with us still, so that—

1. **instead of** — They have been unfair to the fellow.
we hear — They **unfair** the boy.
2. **instead of** — If he were so mad as to leave that gate open he would be knocked off.
we hear — If he **mad leave** the gate open, is **knock-off** he get.
3. **instead of** — Be careful not to get dirt on the steps that I've just washed down.
we hear — Look, don't **dirty** the steps what I just wash down.
4. **instead of** — Put the fire out quickly.
we hear — **Out the fire!!**

5. **instead of** — School has just been dismissed.
we hear — School **just over**.

In the first three examples the vital adjectives become verbs and in one case an adjective becomes a nominative noun (knock-off). In 4 and 5 adverbs upon which the meanings depend have become verbs. The verb or action word being the most vital part of any sentence, these desperate learners filled the place of the verb with what was for them the most vital word, be it adjective it adverb.

The next thing to note is that after this vital word had been given prominence the structure of the remainder of the sentence did not matter very much. Small details like—

- (a) whether the word is a verb at all, or
- (b) the way a verb ought really to be used, or
- (c) the use of the correct preposition, or
- (d) the differentiation of words near in meaning, etc., were given no attention (unless they vitally affected the meaning of the sentence as described in the examples above).

This made for so much ease of expression that the habit has survived with sufficient root to appear in the harvest of newspaper errors even in 1950. The following examples, all with the exception of two, have been taken from the local newspapers:—

- (a) *“the efforts of the police **were negatived**”*
*“cricketers with reputations to **upkeep**”*
- (b) *“you ain’t see the bicycle **riding**” (= coming)*
*“no potatoes **ain’t putting** in this pot” (= will be put).*
- (c) *“he came **with** the ship” (= by).*
*“he **dreamt** his father” (= dreamt of)*
*“they had a quarrel **over** the last holidays” (= during).*

- (d) “*pig-dealer*”, “*pig-rearer*”, “*pig-keeper*”, “*pig-farmer*”
all being used to describe a man who reared and sold
pigs.

It may also be noted in the examples of (b) that transitive or “physical manifestation” verbs are again preferred to intransitive or passive forms.

Sound Changes

The first two sections of this discussion have dealt with primitive developments but from this one onward we are facing developments that belong to secondary and tertiary stages. In the languages of Europe as they were spoken in Medieval times the biggest changes taking place perhaps were sound changes, and in our local language there are still sound changes going on. Of course spelling and print are two stabilising forces that serve not only to check but “correct” a change, and so preserve the correct word for the next generation; but even this process of correction is slow and not always sufficient—it may even misfire as we shall see in the next section—and the girl who spelt college “colage” was spelling a change she had definitely acquired. Had we been living in the Middle Ages she might have started something!

Unfortunately this is one field in which we cannot get very far without the use of phonetic symbols, of which we do not have the advantage here, but I shall attempt as nearly as possible to spell the local sounds that have been evolved. All changes are primarily oral and it ought to be also pointed out that the word “changes” here really has two applications:—

- (a) Some sounds were changed immediately they were acquired from English by our ancestors.
- (b) Some sounds changed and are changing through the years in their and our mouths.

I have not differentiated in the examples below.

(i) The most widespread change is the occurrence of the absolutely open African pure vowel "a" in place of oh, ah, uh, eeh (these being my spellings of sounds). The nearest standard English approach to our "a" is the "a" of have, after, staff, but even then it is not an exact fit.

Thus—

ball, war **become** bahl, wahr
proper, water **become** prahpah, wahtah
dare **becomes** dahr
nation **becomes** natiahn
meagre **becomes** mahgre

(ii) The replacement of "th" by "d" or "t" is also frequent. Germans speaking English make a similar change with the "d" and the French with "t".

the, that **become** de, dat
father, mother **become** fader, mudder
thing, thief **become** ting, tiff

(iii) Hard "g" followed by -ir, -ar and hard "c" followed by "a" become gy-, ky- like the "g" and "c" of gallon, capture. Thus—

girl **becomes** gyirl
regard **becomes** regyard
can **becomes** kyan
cart **becomes** kyart
(These differences are not peculiar to B.G.)

(iv) Final "-own" becomes a nasal "-ung". Thus—

down **becomes** dung
town **becomes** tung
frown **becomes** frung
ground **becomes** grung

(v) A "v" in any position often becomes a "b". (This is a change familiar in the development of Spanish) Thus—

shove **becomes** shubb
vex **becomes** bex (this is dying out)
fowl-coup **becomes** ful-cuhb

(vi) Our “r’s” do not die before consonants. We pronounce the “r’s” of bird, heart, worth, warm, etc., Even final “r’s” are sounded and we say dore, pore, etc., for door, poor, etc.

Possibly the amount of North of England and Scottish influence in our first British years is a contributory factor here. (The prevalence of such names of places and persons as Lancaster, Leeds,, Manchester, Durham, Liverpool, McIntosh, McDonald, McAndrew, etc. is evidence of this influence.)

(vii) Many English words carry final consonants that call for a delicacy of pronunciation, and an effort of tongue and lips that I think the Guianese of a century ago neither had time nor need to appreciate. As in the case of the “key” words above, once the essential element of the word had been sounded, the end of the word did not matter. The meaning was conveyed and **that** was what mattered. Thus words like—

build, lift, don’t, give, etc.
become: buil, lif, don’, gie, etc.

Similarly all -ing endings become -in, and the “g” carrying the nasal element with it, goes. Of the final consonants lopped off this way, “d” and “t” seemed to be the most vulnerable. Sometimes they would even disappear in the middle of a word without destroying what we have called its essential element. Thus, “tantalise” is frequently pronounced “tanlise” with a nasal “an”.

(viii) Assimilation, or the effect of one sound upon a neighbouring sound so as to make it like itself, is a phenomenon well-known in the development of almost every language. Tongue twisters in every language are based on the fact that the human tongue is likely -

(a) to repeat a syllable or a phoneme instead of immediately making a new one, or

(b) to anticipate a syllable or a phoneme and pronounce it before its time in place of another.

Thus when we try to say "*She sells sea-shells on the sea-shore*" and we say instead something like

(a) **she shells** ... , or

(b) she sells **shea shells**...

our tongue has played us the tricks which students of language call by the more impressive name of assimilation.

Examples of (a) are -

mattress **becoming** matrass

Dominica (hen) **becoming** domonic

and of (b) are -

pimple **becoming** plimpler

communist **becoming** comminis'

kotow **becoming** kowtow

(N.B. kotow is a Chinese word meaning "curtsey").

(ix) There are many other sound changes each of which calls for a separate comment which we cannot manage here. We shall have to be satisfied with the mention of a few, each belonging to a different class. Thus -

challenge **becomes** challens

stupid **becomes** chupit

hag **becomes** hygue

cutlass **becomes** cutlish

hydrant **becomes** hydron

hang **becomes** heng

etc.

Popular Etymology

This is another student's term for a phenomenon in the life of words. It simply means a mistake solidified by usage. Not just any mistake however. It is the type of mistake in which one word or set of words is replaced by another or others that are alike in sound ; the speaker understands them to have the meanings of the originals, but if they are examined they are found to have no meaning or quite another meaning. This again happens in every language and is quite understandable: X hears Y use a word or expression that appeals to him (X) and he retains what he thinks he has heard. But when he uses the same word or expression later on he has missed an important detail or details in it which deface it noticeably. Thus the watchman who was told to abide by the orders he was given and later on complained - "*I got to avoid by what they say*", was establishing his own, or a "people's" etymology for the word "avoid" A walk through Lombard, Regent or Water Streets, or through the markets would produce a dozen examples like this, of incipient popular etymology, in a day ; but I shall only here mention three or four examples of errors of this type well-established among us

"a four-and a-half gallery" from "fore-and-aft-gallery"
"your sheep is in the pound" from "your sheep is impounded"
"what do you take me for" from "for whom do you mistake me"
"to buy a pig in the pork" from "to buy a pig in the poke"

Analogy

Here again is a universal characteristic of speech. Analogy is simply the "force" of suggestion by which, for instance, a young child learning to speak and hearing plurals all the time ending with a hissing or buzzing sound as "*books, hats, fruits, boys, chairs, mangoes*", goes on to form all plurals alike and so says, "*sheeps, mans, childs*", etc. until he is corrected.

But this force of suggestion runs riot in our community and press, public and puisne judge go merrily word-building in this way. So—

from the suggestion of — boatman, linesman, horseman, etc.	we get — shopman, cartman, iceman streetman, yardwoman, rubbish-cart-man, gutterman etc.
contentious cantankerous, vicious, etc.	touchous, bambacious, fictitious (= ridiculous- looking), etc.
beat up, eat up, mess up, etc.	stink up, rough up, love up, take up with (a new friend), etc.
betterment, amazement, etc.	upliftment, befuddlement, etc.
stewardess, clerkess, etc.	cateress
forenoon	foreday morning
half-sister	full sister

These inventions are in some cases, as in the first lot of examples above, clear and functional and deserve survival for their “basic” value even if they may be inelegant. But others of course really have fit enough equivalents in standard English as “touchous” has “touchy” and must, I think, remain in the class of errors. Whether you agree with this comment or not, however, there is nothing you or I could do about them — they will nearly all remain. Many of them have been gathered from newspapers and reports of court proceedings.

North American Neologisms

So strong is the United States currency of words that even the linguistically snooty French have loaned “*O.K.*, *le swing*, *le dancing*, *le jeep*” etc. into their spoken and journalistic language. Who then are we, much more exposed and not at all “choosy” in our speech, to resist the American invasion? In the fields of intonation and pronunciation we are fast going west, and given

another war we should, I think, be lost, and sounds like address (=address) and schedule (=schedule) will be universal.

But intonation and pronunciation are really a separate field and our purpose in this final stage of the discussion is to point to some examples of the useful elements only, of the American invasion. Expressions like -

he was warded at the Public Hospital
hospitalisation
socialite
turfite
Madam (=title of a hairdresser), etc.

are I think useful and comparatively recent new-words in our speech. Unlike all the other types discussed above they have reached us mainly through the medium of print — American magazines and our own newspapers. Hence the smell of “correctness” about them though they are not strictly English. They are all examples of analogy in American usage. Even the terms “homester, tourist” which are used in connection with cricketers and which have not yet reached the Oxford Dictionary, I suspect of being the result of an American influence in British journalism.

There then are some of the likely origins of the expressions we use — likely I say, because in our language the study of the present often depends on a conjectural past. Furthermore these are some of the origins but there are other currents in the mainstream which run deeper or disappear further back so that we miss or cannot reach them though we know they must be there.

P.S.: Elsewhere in this issue appears a useful contribution to the discussion by Mr. John Harrison, which I have read with interest. It is indeed an encouraging thought that in the study of dialects as in bottom-house out-for-play, good for one is good for all...

—R.A.

A NOTE ON WEST INDIAN DIALECT WORDS

by John Harrison

While laying no claim to be a philologist, the present writer feels obliged to question Mr. Richard Allsopp's assertion* that Guianese speak not English but Guianese. Even in England itself, the home of our common tongue, each county has its list of regional words, and the list becomes longer the further one moves from the centre of the land. But not even the most fervent Cornishman confuses the English he speaks today with the Cornish which his forbears spoke, however many traces of the latter there may still be in his version of the former; and the fact that different senses may be given to the same words in Northern and Southern — and for that matter in New England, does not mean that people living in those places do not all speak the same language.

We feel obliged further to question Mr. Allsopp on another point. Many of the words he claims as specifically Guianese are in fact also common to the islands. This would not be important did not Mr. Allsopp infer that the list could be enlarged "*a dozen times over for the West Indian islands*" simply by making new lists in each place. And even were this done it would prove nothing. English, a composite language, is always absorbing new words from new sources, words which are accepted in common speech long before they make the Oxford Concise Dictionary.

Beterouge is used in Trinidad and St. Lucia, and understood even in islands which don't suffer from this pest. **Cabane**, **fete**, and **flamboyant** are common to all the eastern islands, though it is interesting that Jamaicans call the last tree by its orthodox French name **ponciana**. **Masquerade** is used, in the same sense, at least in St. Kitts, Antigua, and British Honduras. **Patois** has virtually entered the English language. **The sick, the dead, all two**, and Gallic confusions of **at** and **to** (as in **at him** for **chez lui**, and **at Castries** for **to Castries**) are common to the islands where French patois is spoken.

*'The Language We Speak' — Richard Allsopp — (*Kyk-Over-Al*, December, 1949).

Another common confusion, arising from speaking in English but thinking in French, is to make possessive pronouns agree with their nouns according to their gender as in French and not with the subject as in English; thus always **her** house, always **his** book.

Americanisms are of course common to all the islands, and, in general, to England too for that matter. **Bookstore**, **drugstore**, **beautician**, **mortician** may offend the sensitive English ear, but we may as well get used to them. **OK.**, **guess**, **guy** and **reckon** are all used by young people in England, and may or may not finally be acknowledged by the dictionary. What we might, perhaps, still watch for is the infiltration of American syntax — **get off of something**, which merely complicates the English **get off**, is making headway on some of the islands, and there is a popular local comic strip in Trinidad which deliberately cultivates illiterate speech, making its characters use **he** for **him**, **she** for **her**, and so on.

Indianisms are found in Trinidad as well as in British Guiana — present, that is to say, in the two places where Indian immigration has been highest. But let us remember that other words of Indian origin come down to the West Indies by way of England — **verandah**, **chutney**, **thug** and so on. And might not **rhoti**, often spelt **roti**, be itself borrowed from the French **roti** meaning roast?

Africanisms are, of course, to be found all over the West Indies, surprisingly few in number, however. **Backra** or **Buckra** for master must be used on most of the islands, as is **Bé-qué**, meaning much the same thing, common to the islands with a French background. **Quashie** is equally well-known, though surely not necessarily meaning an idiot? **Jumbie** is common. **Big-big** is, as Mr. Allsopp rightly suggests, an example of a common West Indian tendency to repeat a word in order to give it more emphasis — the tendency itself so to do may be African. **Small-small** is as much used as **big-big**, and surely there was a calypso about Sir John Shaw being **tall-tall-tall**?

Clear-skinned and **bad-minded** are currently used at least as far north as the Dutch island of St. Martin. So, we suspect, is **cycle-shop**.

At least two of the words listed by Mr. Allsopp as Localisms are, in fact, also used in his sense in England — a

coolness meaning a misunderstanding, and to **womanise**, which with **womaniser** and **womanising** was in common use at least at Oxford some ten to fifteen years ago; not a pretty word, but, as Mr. Allsopp says of **mortician**, clear and functional.

In his travels about the Caribbean, the present writer has noted many local dialect words and phrases, not all of them, alas, suitable for publication. Here are some, many of them, no doubt, already known to Guianese:—

MAN—used as a vocative, and applied indifferently to man, woman and child. Common to all the islands.

MAUGER—thin. Jamaican only, as far as we know. From the obsolete English word itself derived from the French **maigre**, as is the variant **Meagre**.

To CARE—to look after. Leeward Islands.

To MAKE SPORT—to joke. Heard in British Guiana and Barbados.

To CARRY TO—to bring or take to. Common to the islands. Presumably either a Gallicism, or an obsolete English term.

EVERYSENSE—ever since. Very common in Barbados.

PRESENTLY—Now. Common to all the islands except Jamaica. Obsolete English.

HEAD-TIE—bandannah. Common to the islands which wear them. An interesting example of a word of foreign origin — bandannah — being more commonly used in English to describe an object for which a perfectly good English expression also exists.

FORTY-LEGS—centipede. Heard in the Leewards and Barbados, probably common to all the islands. A reverse example of the above.

RED—Not quite white-skinned, roughly speaking. Common to Leewards and Barbados, and probably to others as well.

MAUBY—a mildly fermented drink made from tree bark. Common to the islands which drink it (St. Kitts at least down to Barbados. (The pronunciation of the word changes from **MAARBY** in Antigua to **MAWBY** in Barbados.)

CALABASH—a gourd. Trinidad of course, but surely elsewhere as well.

GOOD HAIR—straight hair. Common to all the islands.

To REACH TO—Gallicism for TO REACH. Trinidad.

LEGGINS—A miscellaneous bunch of vegetables, sold in the market. Presumably from the French **légumes**. Jamaica.

To JUMP UP—To join in the Carnival dance. Trinidad.

To PLAY MASK—To dress up and participate in Carnival. Trinidad. Presumably a gallicism.

To ROLL BACK—To dance (behind the steel band etc.) St. Kitts.

TRICKSTER—Pretender, hence cheat hence smart fellow. Jamaica. Used also in British Guiana, but perhaps with not quite the same meaning. Possibly from French **tricheur**.

IT IS SUPPOSED TO BE—it is. A very common form of diffident affirmation in the Leeward Islands.

To HUMBUG—to annoy. Common to most of the islands.

SAGA-BOY—A rough but fascinating young blood. From Trinidad spreading fast North as far as St. Kitts, and doubtless South as well.

MOUSSE—Cabin boy on a schooner. St. Kitts. From the identical French word. Current no doubt in schooner parlance throughout the area.

EAST and WEST—Left and Right. Antigua where the terms Left and Right are virtually obsolete.

SNOWBALL—an iced drink — syrup poured over ice-shavings.

PICKANEGER—small, black child. St. Kitts.

RAMGOAT ROSE—periwinkle. Jamaica.

DONKEY'S WEE-WEE and SIX MONTHS RED SIX MONTHS GREEN) Unidentified flowering trees. Jamaica.

TITLE—Surname. Leeward Islands and elsewhere?

SECCOYAS or SUCCUYAS.—Witches. Dominica, Trinidad, Grenada.

LOU'GAOUS—Werewolves. Ditto. From French **Loup-garoux**.

JACKIE LANTERN—malevolent sprite. Ditto and Montserrat. From English Jack o'Lantern.

Steel Band Words

GROALER — PAN — PING-PONG — TO KNOCK THE PAN etc. — From Trinidad, spreading with the bands at least to St. Kitts.

Phrases and Inflections

In St. Vincent and Barbados they say, when giving you directions to get somewhere or do something, "*You go SO and then SO and after that SO and then SO,*" each SO being accompanied with graphic and kindly gestures of the hand indicating Left, Right, how far Left, how long Right, etc.

In Grenada, Dominica, and sometimes in Trinidad, they say, "*You like this, OUI?*", "*She coming to, OUI?*", "*We went along, OUI and then stopped.*"

And they say "I'll come tomorrow, PLEASE GOD," "We'll meet again, PLEASE GOD," And very often, in answer to a question (Grenada), "I may, as well as I may not."

A note on the Words OBEAH and WANGA

From a book, with that title, by Sir Hesketh Bell (Sampson Low, Marston, LONDON, 1893) :

*"...probably derived from the substantive **obi**, a word used on the East Coast of Africa to denote witchcraft, sorcery and fetichism in general. The etymology of **obi** has been traced back to a very ancient source far back into Egyptian mythology...**obiou** is still the Egyptian name for a serpent... the Witch of Endor is called **Oub** or **Ob**, which is translated as Pythonissa, and **Oubois** was the name of the basilisk or royal serpent, emblem of the sun, and an ancient oracular deity of Africa."*

Sir Hesketh equates **obeah** with **wanga**, common when he was a young colonial office official in Grenada in the Nineties. The word **wanga**, spelt in the French phonetic way **ouanga**, is common in Haiti: **Poupées ouangas** — Haitian voodoo cult objects, male or female symbols, made from little gourds, feathers, snake-bones, and beads.

In Trinidad the ritual of Shango is evidently derived from the same sources as Haitian voodoo. While there are no **poupées ouangas**, either in name or in fact, the word **wanga** is still used in Trinidad to mean a charm, and, in Port-of-Spain slang, extended to signify a smart fellow: it would be nice to think that **wanga** and **wangle** were allied...For the latter, the Oxford Dictionary has the following:—

"Slang 1888 or colloquial (origin obscure) — to accomplish in an irregular way by scheming or contrivance; to bring about or obtain by indirect or insidious means; to influence or induce (a person) to do something."

VILLANELLE

by Doris Harper

At sunset when the sunbeams die,
Ere daylight fails completely, all
The goddess nymphs go passing by.

Winds whisper low with winds the 'why'
Of Nature, wavelets rise and fall
At sunset when the sunbeams die.

The frog and bee agree to vie
Their voices through day's darkling hall
The goddess-nymphs go passing by.

The bold hibiscus, evening-shy
Wraps up herself within her shawl
At sunset when the sunbeams die.

A withered moon flung westward high
Hypnotic to the Bee's shrill call:
The goddess-nymphs go passing by.

At sunset, when the breezes sigh
For universal Eve's cool thrall
At sunset when the sunbeams die
The goddess-nymphs go passing by.

DAWN

by Hilda McDonald

Like giant brooms the palm heads sweep
The star-dust from the dreaming skies,
As through half-opened gates of sleep
Bird carols of the morning rise.

Where sea meets heaven in misty blue,
The dawn fires leap through rosy spray,
And armed outriders of the morn
Flash burnished spears in bright array.

Westward their wind-whipped coursers sweep,
Hailing the shore to greet the day,
Then turn and toss their flying waves
In rippling silver o'er the bay.

Their trumpets sound from reef to reef,
Their gold-red pennons flaunt the skies
As mailed in silver, girt with jade
Dawn comes up with flaming eyes.

NATURE POETRY IN THE WEST INDIES

by A. J. Seymour

This is the Wordsworth Centenary year and I want to conjure the spirit of Wordsworth, the poet who perhaps more than any other of the great English choir of poets deserves to be asked to preside in spirit at this new dish in the English language. His heart leapt up when he beheld the rainbow and his was the mind which communed with the sense of something deeply interfused, whose spirit is the light of setting suns and the round ocean and the living air. And now that we are thinking of Wordsworth, I want us to go from England over Europe's troubled mid-rib, over the Alps and also back in time to the first known civilisation that sprang up about the waters of the Nile. And there as we pause on the glory of Ikhnaton, that subtle Pharaoh who conceived God, I call up the spirit of an unknown Egyptian worshipper who wrote a hymn to the god Aton. Addressing the god he says reverently: *"Thou makest the Nile in the lower world and bringest it whither thou wilt, in order to sustain mankind, even as thou hast made them...Thou hast put another Nile in the sky so that it may come down for them and may make waves upon the mountains like a sea in order to moisten their fields...whereas the real Nile, it comes from the lower world for the people of Egypt."*

There you have the nature-loving attitude — in Wordsworth it is mystic and the other is more explicitly reverent; but both are common to man who is a singer and a maker of images when he is struck with the beauty and wonder of the earth.

It is significant, that we have chosen England and Africa as our basic terms of reference because I have the conviction that within the framework of the English speaking tradition now operating in the W.I. the ancient religious impulses from Egypt and Africa are seeking a deferred and hidden expression in Caribbean poetry. And who knows but that in *"this Mediterranean of the New World"* as Philip Sherlock describes the Caribbean — who knows but that we here in these gracious islands which Divinity has wooed out of the

Caribbean, may not be a fertilising ground where the Atlantic civilisation with Europe war-weary and soul sick and America materialistic and grossly thickening to empire may gain a new lease of life with the re-affirming of religious values.

But perhaps we go too far afield there as we touch world values. Let us merely remember that Africa and Europe meet and mingle in the Caribbean together with streams from Asia and come back to the nature poetry written in this area. We have fixed our nodal points and I suggest we first have a look at a phenomenon which has a striking tropical characteristic and which has, shall I say, forced itself on the attention of W.I. Poets. I mean the rain.

The English drizzle cannot be compared with the tropical torrential downpour. In the W.I. we live on the invincible tops of otherwise submerged mountains based on the Caribbean sea-bed. We are the visible peaks of an archipelago, continually forced to take note of the hydrographic factor. Water is all about us. But not only so. There are times when it seems that the Atlantic rises from his bed and hurls himself, wrapped in his rainclouds, upon these islands and drowns their business with his rain.

There is a certain reality-principle which runs through literature, that the writer and the poet writes and sings of what he knows and what he sees around him and I'm indebted to Margaret Lee for noticing that in Barbados both Vaughan and Collymore have noted their emotional reactions to rain in a Bridgetown Street.

Collymore has not named his location but he shows us the asphalt square in the courtyard thronged by the shiftless crowd. The asphalt square is drab and like a tettered scab. How long ago since green things grew and burned there, asks the poet. Then the rain comes in a sudden shower and the crowd scatters and the rain lashing the metallised surface makes beauty live again.

“Here as each shaft of rain strikes home
Mark what ghost flowers spring
Up from it...
Bells of water air and light
Unfold, expand and fall
To rise again petal upon petal
A myriad dancing small
Rain flowers, rain fairies
Leaping, sparkling run
With waving arms and tossing heads
Catching the threads of sun
To weave a pattern diamonded
Flower bubbles, frail
Crystal goblets, lilies spun
From glass ephemeral.
They bloom, they dance, they shine and each
As individual
As you or I...”

Then the rain ceases and the asphalt square is bare and blank and the shifting feet spurn it again. The minute’s magic is over and from being a stage for rain fairies, the street becomes again a pavement for heedless feet.

Vaughan has been less anonymous. He gives us the name of the street in his poem, Hunte Street. Walking along he sees the rain begin to drizzle, although the sun is still shining through it; so he catches the glitter of the rain drops in the air and above the surface of the road. Then his mind tells him *“Surely this is another road, in spite of these sagging tenements, and these little children, barefooted, should have not thoughts that harden or corrode”* and the poem ends -

“If this fine drizzle falling on the grass
And the sun’s rays that through the droplets dance
And on the one small flaming garden glance
If all this heaven-sent loveliness must pass
Why doubt the end, beyond all grim mischance
Of all the dreariness that men amass?”

You may say that Collymore is pantheistic and Vaughan humanistic, but that is an avenue we must not pursue for the moment. I want to take you now swiftly to another island in the Caribbean. I warn you as we go that we leave the urban streets, we are out on open lands, even upon the mountains. The tempo changes, there is no sophistication, nature is untamed.

“The rain poured down
Upon a passionate thirsty earth
Swiftly, unrelenting, with immeasurable power
Then vanished suddenly in a peal of childlike laughter.”

This is a land of mountains obviously and the poet is Carberry who says in another place of his native Jamaica -

“We have neither Summer nor Winter
Neither Autumn nor Spring
We have instead the days
When the gold sun shines on the lush green canefields
Magnificently.
The days when the rain beats like bullets on the roofs
And there is no sound but the swish of water in the gullies
And trees struggling in the high Jamaica winds”.

Carberry is describing the Jamaican scene. The curious reader might begin to wonder how far the difference in attitude between the Barbadian and the Jamaican poet is due to temperament as individuals or how far the difference rests upon the complex of tradition that belongs to an aristocratic Barbados shall we say, or to a fiercely direct and democratic-valued Jamaica. But again we ignore the byway.

We can almost hear the water rushing down the Jamaican hillsides — *“the swish of water in the gullies”* — but if the land were level that volume of water might not find its home so easily in the sea; so let me take you now to a land of waters which is the meaning of the Amerindian word *“Guiana”*.

“And there are times the rain’s persistent mutter
Runs on through night and day and starts a flood
To ruin crops and drown the livestock
Till roads and trenches and the vast savannahs
Become an undistinguishable sea”.

Of course there are more extracts of this kind but we must abandon this rain anthology and ask ourselves what is the fruit of the rain, what grows in the West Indies beside that most important grass, the sugar cane? In addition to fields there are gardens and in a garden each flower is a miracle of beauty that nature creates almost negligently from mud and water and sun and the life in the seed. I doubt whether I can do better than to lead you into the garden of West Indian poetry and present to you a bouquet of West Indian and other flowers.

What shall we begin with? The variety is confusing:

“There are wedding-belled carnations
Always nodding, never tail
Huge hibiscus set a-quiver
Flaming from a live green wall
Heavy dahlias drooping over
All imperially dyed
On the grass’s light green carpet
Golden daisies, starry-eyed.
But the flower to take my fancy
And to launch my thought on flight
Is the buttercup, that youngster
Leaning out to catch the light.”

I have an idea. Let us use our rain theme as a bridge and so come to the bouquet. If we follow Una Marson we shall see her leave a hard tarred road and enter a meadow in Jamaica.

"I did not know" (she said)
There were so many buttercups
In the green meadows
Until the raindrops came
Kissing each gentle bud to life
Bidding them laugh and sing
And now the byways are gold fringed
Golden glory that lingers in the heart."

I hope Una won't mind if we overhear now this confided
whisper as she bends over a violet -

"Listen, little wild violet
Your heart beats wildly as mine
When you hear the feet of your lover
Stop by the Celandine."

Our versatile friend Collymore can help us here too. He once celebrated the beauty of hazy days and I'm not quite sure what apparatus he used, but he conjured a princess from a bouganvillea hedge. It happened in Barbados and this was how he did it. He wrapped the day in a tender haze and set the winds a-blowing -

"And tree and bush and shrubbery
Clad in their best array
Sway to this choreography
An evergreen ballet...
And from the bouganvillea hedge
A princess would appear
Wrapped in a dusky cloak of green
With flowers in her hair."

In another mood, Collymore saw lilies -

“Scattered upon the grass
The lilies gleam at dawning
Like small birds too innocent for fear
Too young for flight
A delicate breath of colour
Exhaled upon the dewy grass
Swift and fragile nestling there
Upon the green breast of the valley”.

I cannot in any way claim that I have exhausted this rich vein available for students and researchers. Where the West Indian poets speak or sing of tropical fruit, I should warn you that one of the tasks awaiting the Natural Science Section of the University College in Jamaica is that of classifying the species of fruit and regularising their names. With our present West Indian inadequacies in canning facilities we merely eat our fruit — that’s the important thing — by whatever name we may call it, and I remember our mutual surprise some years ago when McDonald Bailey and I reached for the same fruit in a Martinique wayside market tray — fortunately we didn’t have occasion to run for it — and I said it was a tangerine while he called it a Portugal.

There are of course many other extracts dealing with what we may presume to call the flora of the Caribbean although in no way peculiar to the Caribbean alone. We too will celebrate the rose. In a manner that reminds me at times of the sympathetic vision of D. H. Lawrence who could almost get within the heart and mind of an animal when he was writing about it, Ingram, a Jamaican poet has written on the way God made sheep in the early morning; and of the green-world of the lizard and the way the wildest forest jungle lies within the domestic bundle of a cat huddled on the household mat.

Of course, Ingram is not singular. If we go through the pages of West Indian poets, we will find many an emotional reaction to living things. I haven’t quite decided what I would call the West Indian counterpart of the nightingale or the skylark in English literature although in Guiana, many have poured out their music to the song of the little kiskadee, and in Jamaica, the solitaire is by way of being the poet’s inspiration but Constance Hollar, that Jamaican coloratura in

poetry, whose voice is now unfortunately stilled in death, has celebrated the rich enamelled splendour of the pigeon's wings around her cottage while a Guianese, Leo, 70 years ago set a swallow out on flight in a mad wild joy for the possible admiration of Lord Tennyson. And if we cared to pause, we could see how forest hills and moonbeams and the darkness of a Barbados night by the cane-brake, or the sight of a dead silkcotton tree on Essequibo's bank, or a live *lignum vitae* tree in blossom in a Jamaican garden or a flowering poui tree in a Port-of-Spain park — how these natural themes have stimulated West Indian poets to express their emotional quickenings and their gift of language in words that will become the common treasure of West Indians who are now children or perhaps not yet alive. Like you, I look forward to the day, when anthologies of W.I. poetry praising their own environment shall feed the young intelligences growing up in this region. May that day be soon.

But I'd like us now to embark on the second half of this short and I'm afraid, most inadequate survey of the nature poetry written in the West Indies. We leave now the water theme of rain and our bee-like hoverings over the flowers that have exhaled their beauty on the air in the mental gardens of West Indian poets. We leave behind too the animals that grace Caribbean landscapes. Where do we go?

But soft, we haven't finished yet with water. What about the Caribbean itself? What about the sea? Michael Smith of Jamaica has written of the sea's half-breath, half-moan sweeping in fugues through him, he has seen the waves as lines of epic and the sea as a deep quotation and to him the mass music of the dark falls fragment into foam which is the complete poem. And Collymore has written a book of practically all sea poetry in his *Flotsam*. The words float on the surface, a broken message, but over and under and around the words there is the element the sea.

First he shows us by daylight -

“Like all who live on small islands
I must always be remembering the sea...viewing
Her through apertures in the foliage; hearing
When the wind is from the south, her music
Her lullaby, her singing, her moaning.”

We're still on the shore there. Collymore takes us next into a schooner and shows us the sea by night where the rocking on the sea makes a rhythmic disturbance among the stars, the fixed eyes of heaven, and he has written here what I feel is some of his finest poetry. He says: —

“The ship's prow dips with the kiss of the wave and
The sails' saga is told in slow syllables as we plunge onward.
 ...Voyaging is slow
And mists spiral through the waiting mind; the night is long.
 ...Fugue of forgetting,
While stars rush silently in swooping curves and the night
Is hooped around the sea's endlessness. There is
No meaning here but the song of the sails, no end
To wandering. And across the waters strides the wind
To lay its reckless head upon the bosom of the night.”

The sea is the great connecting mobile web around our archipelago of islands, and by night or day as Keats says, it “*keeps eternal whisperings around desolate shores*”. We live on the mountain tops rising from the Caribbean sea floor, and one of the great bases of a culture (by which, I mean the way of life of a community) is the manner in which that community anchors itself in its environment. This anchoring means that the poets of the West Indian islands and on the shores of the Caribbean, begin to write what we may call place-poetry which celebrates their pride in the country they are making their own just as Shakespeare and de la Mare write about England, and Walt Whitman and Robinson Jeffers write about America.

There is a considerable amount of this proud poetry being composed by British Caribbean poets. It can express itself simply as a vignette of Saturday morning at Coronation Market with its almost photographic description by Faith

Goodheart (incidentally, what a lovely name) of pumpkins, potatoes, pears, plantains and pimento or it can be a verbal snapshot by Una Marson of the thousands of beautiful coconut trees fringing the Jamaican southern shores at Darlingford.

These are merely descriptions. Our place-poetry can add nostalgia and history and pride. It can be a poem to *"this legendary clay of Atlantis, the land of sea-eggs, flying fish, rum and freshwater springs...where Africa and Britain meet"* in Collymore's poem on Barbados '**This Land**'. Raymond Barrow in British Honduras and poets in British Guiana go back to Spanish and Mayan or Arawak and Dutch days respectively. Kaieteur and El Dorado have their place-poetry. Derek Walcott releases his mourning over the conflagration of Castries in his poem, '**A City's Death by Fire**', or gives wing to his love of St. Lucia in the poem '**As John to Patmos**'. Or the simple descriptions can be increasingly overlaid by tones of social protest. Vaughan and Mittelholzer produce their satire.

In Jamaica, this national urge works through many poets. Clare McFarlane sings of Port Royal and the Hills of St. Andrews. Basil McFarlane can declare *"I am Jamaica"* and so can Michael Smith; Carberry, now thousands of miles from the Caribbean, writes his testament of allegiance *"I shall remember the beauty of my people and the beauty of my land"*.

But I want to end this short introduction with references to two poems, written by Philip Sherlock. Both are examples of place-poetry but the poet has charged them with a passionate rhythm and he returns to the religious urge that we noted in the unknown Egyptian worshipper who wrote a hymn to the god Aton on the Nile.

It is significant, by the way, that for the people of the West Indies their religious poetry (and there are more than a few poems written in this reverent vein) was an inversion, but a direct result, of their environment. Because of slavery and the hard bite of conditions into his spirit and before he could take pride in the place where he lived, the only place he could sing of and wish for was the other world; and even today with the awakening national urge of West Indian peoples, this vein displays itself in sometimes unexpected ways. But that merits another essay on its own account.

Sherlock writes in '**Pocomania**' —

“Long Mountain, rise
Lift, you' shoulder, blot the moon,
Black the stars, hide the skies
Long Mountain, rise, Lift you' shoulder high.”

And as he goes on, he invokes the spirit of Africa among the trees, Asia with her mysteries when the ancient gods chose man for their victim.

But as a partner to '**Pocomania**', there is the unnamed poem that begins -

“Clear as the clear sun's light.”

This second poem is a vision of apocalypse that shows how Eden stands by Gordon Town in Jamaica and is in the tradition of the mystic poetry written in the English language.

And this is my final remark. The nature poetry being written today in the West Indies shows that the people of this region are taking a pride in their environment and in the natural phenomena around them and that the possibilities exist which will permit them to reach out after universally great themes even while rooting themselves fully in their own growing West Indian tradition. We have come a long way from the simple elements of flower and rain that we noticed at the beginning but I hope we agree that these elements can be taken, here as they have been taken in other parts of the world, and woven into a tradition we may eventually be proud of. Creative imaginations are at work producing a distinctive way of life and you and I are the consumers who must encourage them and show faith in their work, because the tradition that is rising about us is one that belongs to us all.

Tale of the Guiana Indians

MEDICINE MAN

by Basil Balgobin

The bright rays of the early morning sun shone down on the forest and on the broad, black river, as it flowed smoothly through the great Guiana Jungle, on its way to the distant ocean.

All around the scene was calm and quiet save for, perhaps, the faint rustling of the wind in the branches of the giant trees around and the occasional distant scream of a red howling monkey. From the forest floor, a profusion of wild flowering plants released their perfumed aroma on the cool, fresh air, their delicate multi-coloured beauty imparting a magic touch to the scene that seemed to transform the place into a veritable fairy land.

This lovely scene was hundreds of miles away from the beaten tracks of the jungle — a place where but seldom, the feet of civilized man trod. Here, the true sons of Guiana — the hardy Aborigines lived the simple lives of their forbears, free from the fettering conventions and diseases of civilization — trusting in the strength of their arms and the keenness of their eyes for a livelihood. The forest and the rivers supplied the few things they needed to support life; the flesh of the deer and of the fish. The fertile soil produced an abundance of cassava roots which these children of Nature made their bread and from which they also obtained their cassareep — a piquant condiment.

Here, every man was a man, free to follow the dictates of his mind; to wander where he will, safe in the knowledge that he was answerable to no man and that in the vast storehouse of the jungle, there was unlimitable food for his needs. The laws of the tribe were few and simple. The Chief was greatly honoured and respected as the father of the tribe. Next to him the 'piaiman' or medicine man, was held in awe and reverence. In sickness they turned to him with implicit trust, to cure them. By his wisdom and knowledge of invoking the aid of the good spirits, wonderful cures were effected.

So in peace and quiet, lived these Children of the Wilds, untrammelled by the shackles of Society, toiling and resting; feasting and rejoicing; trusting in Makonaima, the Dweller of the Heights; and looking forward with equanimity to a prolonged sojourn in the Happy Hunting Ground of the Braves, after death.

Maraka, the Medicine Man, stood on a high hill and surveyed the landscape around. Beneath him lay the tropical verdure of the forest roof extending as far as the eye could see. Far to the South lay the great mountain range that began in the Guiana Jungle and continued unbroken through the great South American continent. As he gazed at this awe-inspiring spectacle a thrill ran through his cold bosom; the amazing and spectacular grandeur of the great mountain evoked an involuntary tribute of admiration of the works of Nature, from this unemotional son of the forest.

It was some time before he tore his gaze away from the scene. He looked to the far north where, at the edge of the jungle and where the flat savannah lands began, the village of his people was situated. It was too far away to see the smoke of the fire-places, but Maraka knew that life in the village was pursuing its placid course. Then he looked down on the river noting how the dark, rushing waters contrasted pleasingly with the dense green-coloured plants on its banks.

Maraka felt a great peace in his bosom; the peace of the jungle, and he gave a grunt of contentment. He turned to go about his duty—that of collecting herbs and roots for medicinal purposes—when he stopped suddenly and lifted his nose in the air and sniffed. Borne on the scent-laden breezes, came the acrid aroma of smoke.

Maraka sprung behind a large boulder and scanned the landscape carefully. Soon his keen eyes made out a wisp of smoke, scarcely discernable in the bright morning light, rising above the trees on the river bank. He tried to trace the source of the smoke but could not do so. He changed his position to one more advantageous and from the new point of vantage he saw the fire and three men by it. He made

out two of the men to be white men and the other, like himself, was an Indian.

Maraka wondered what they were doing here, so far away from their usual haunts. No white man had ever ventured so far into this wild country. Neither had the black man, who wandered afar to seek the 'bully tree' to bleed it of its sap.

Maraka saw the Indian throw a few things into a corial. He saw one of the white men talking wildly to the Indian, while the other one lay stretched out on the ground. He saw the Indian shake his head and pushing past the white man, spring into the corial and paddle away downstream. The white man watched him as he went rapidly downstream and finally disappear around a bend in the river.

As the corial with its human cargo went out of sight, the man went back to the tall bearded man lying on the ground. Maraka was too far away to hear the conversation that took place between them. In any event he would not have understood.

"Well, Dr. Bates", the man was saying to the recumbent figure. "Our Indian has deserted the party. We're on our own now. I can't say that I blame the fellow for wanting to go; we took him on for two months and we've kept him more than three. Now he has gone back to his tribe, and here we are, in God knows what part of this great jungle without a guide. What are we going to do, Doctor?"

The man on the ground gave no reply; his eyes remained closed.

"Why don't you give up?", continued the first man. "It is an impossible quest! You'll never find what you are after! These Indians are as close as oysters They never tell their secrets. Give it up, Doctor, please!"

Dr. Bates opened his eyes.

"We must not think of giving up now," he said, in a weak voice. "Having come thus far, we might as well go on. Think of the benefits to humanity if we succeed! No, we must not give up now, Charles".

"But how can we go on?" expostulated Charles. "You are weak and helpless! The jungle fever has well nigh crippled you. It is now two weeks since you were able to walk. Quinine has not helped you and you are getting weaker. Look, I'll tell you something, doctor! I

did not want to mention it before, for fear that it might worry you, but I've got that fever, too. It has been coming on slowly. Last night I had a terrible bout of ague and it has left me rather shaky this morning. We can't go on! We should have gone down the river with the Indian."

The doctor opened his eyes. "Not till we find 'Paran Opiana', the fever medicine of the Indians", he said.

"Well, if we don't get some of that stuff ourselves, our bones will be left here", said Charles. He passed his hand over his forehead. "The fever is coming on again. I had better make some coffee."

"Never mind about the coffee. Let us go on up the river. We must find this 'Paran Opiana' to save our lives", said Dr. Bates.

Charles looked doubtful.

"Do you think we could pull against that tide? The Indian isn't here, you know", he said.

"I'll help", said Dr. Bates.

Charles looked at the man on the ground. He could not but admire his courage.

"Just as you say, Doctor. Just as you say".

Maraka stood on his hill and watched. He saw one of the white men place the camping impedimenta into the corial, then assisted the other man into the craft, got in himself and pushed off. He was mildly surprised when they turned the bow of the corial upstream. The white men were venturing deeper into the unknown without a guide. He gazed at their laboured efforts with the paddles and doubted their ability to pull the craft against the running water. Soon the feeble strokes of the bearded man ceased, the paddle slipping from his nerveless grasp as he fell back into the corial — spent and fainting.

The other man ceased paddling for a moment and the impetus of the rushing water swung the corial out into the middle of the river. He dipped his paddle again and toiled feverishly to get the craft to shore. For five minutes he struggled drawing nearer and nearer to the riverside. Once, he paused momentarily from sheer tiredness to rest his aching back and arms and for a moment the corial seemed about to be swept away. Frantically, he dug the paddle into the water and drove the little woodskin forward. After what

seemed an eternity to Maraka, the craft reached the bank and the man tumbled ashore. He drew the corial up on the bank and then helped the bearded man out on the sand. The sick man fell helplessly to the ground and lay still. The other man stood over him reeling groggily from weakness and then he too, fell, unconscious, to the ground.

Maraka watched the little drama being enacted below him with interest. Who were these men and what were they doing on the ground of his people? He wondered if they were dead. Something within him urged him to go to the assistance of these humankind. Who was better fitted to go, he thought. Was he not the medicine man of his tribe. He peeped down again; the two were still lying motionless on the sand.

He placed his medicine bag about his shoulders and took the path down. When he arrived at the spot where they were lying, he stood still and scrutinized them closely. They were indeed, white men with gaunt, hollow cheeks and wasted forms. One of them had the grey flush of death on his brow. Maraka touched his forehead. It was burning hot.

He drew their inert forms upon the grassy fiat and with the skill of his kind, quickly erected a shed over them to keep off the sun's burning rays. Then he washed their thin, sun-baked faces with the cool water of the river. One of the men stirred and muttered "*Marie*". Maraka did not know what the word meant; he did not understand the white man's language.

From his medicine bag he took some dry herbs and steeped them in a gourd with water, pounding them with a short stick after the fashion of a chemist using his mortar and pestle. When he had done this to his satisfaction, he poured the liquid down the men's throats. Then he took some more dry herbs from his bag and these he placed on the ground between the men and set fire to them. The herbs burned, giving off a dense, pleasant-smelling smoke that entered the nostrils of the unconscious white men. They coughed and spluttered until the smoke and the fire died down. After a while, their breathing became easy and regular; they were asleep.

All through the day Maraka tended them. Several times before 'Adaili' (the sun) went down, he repeated his dosings and smokings of his patients. The white men slept on. When 'Kaci' (the golden moon) peeped down on the quiet earth, she

saw him keeping vigil. All through the night he watched. When in the early morning hours it became cold, he lighted a fire to keep his charges warm. He himself, did not sleep.

As the first flush of the coming day dawned in the East Maraka quietly gathered his accoutrements together and packed them in his medicine bag. With a last look at the sleeping white men, he stole quietly away.

Then the birds awoke and the lively simians roused themselves from their sleep and hailed the new day with every manifestation of joy. The other denizens of the jungle awoke to face the new day with its vicissitudes.

Under the fragile shed, one of the white men turned and groaned. He yawned and opened his eyes and looked around. For a few moments he remained in thought and as the memory of recent events returned to him, he started up. His eyes fell on his companion and he breathed a sigh of relief. Leaning over, he shook him.

"Wake up, Dr. Bates", he said. He shook him again.

The doctor opened his eyes and looked up. Then he got up and walked. The other looked at him in surprise.

"You're walking, Doctor!" he exclaimed in tones of incredulity. *"It is two weeks ago since you were strong enough to walk! What has happened to you?"*

But Dr. Bates was looking at the little shed and at the charred remains of the fire-sticks that lay in a heap before him. Through his veins he felt health and life coursing freely. Strength had returned to his body. His lips gave expression to his thoughts.

"'Paran Opiana'! It's 'Paran Opiana' that has wrought this miracle," he said with deep emotion *"Charles, we will return to civilization, re-equip and come back here to find this wonderful drug."*

High up on his hill, Maraka watched them. He gave a grunt of satisfaction for his patients were well again.

He looked down and saw them launching their corial into the river and he grunted again.

The white men were going down stream—going home.

THE HISTORY OF THE GUIANA SCHOLARSHIP

by N. E. Cameron

From the inception of Queen's College it was in the mind of the founder to provide a Scholarship or Exhibition to enable deserving students to take up professional studies in British Universities.

Indeed the Governor and the Court of Policy in 1843 approved of a sum of about £2000 being reserved as the nucleus for such a scholarship fund. This foundation sum really cost the Government nothing as it represented the "*unexpended balance of slave compensation money*".

However, when the need for a new building arose, the Government in 1853 permitted the Council of the College to divert the £1,928 to the building fund, the building being more immediately necessary.

Although the foundation fund for a Colonial Scholarship was thus removed, the idea of sending exhibitioners to England had already been put into practice by 1853. For during the debate arising from the request of the Council of the College to use the grant for building purposes, the Chief Justice, remarking on the good work of the School and how all classes were benefiting, observed that a black boy had already been sent to England to study Theology and that there were others in the school.

There is no record of how many exhibitioners were thus sent abroad from time to time. But there were others. A Commission on Education appointed in 1874 reported on the 7th June, 1875 that two exhibitioners had been sent to England by resolution of the Combined Court to study medicine, and that they were then (in 1875) practising members of the profession in the Colony.

For the institution of the Guiana Scholarship in 1882 much credit must be given to Exley Percival, B.A., (Oxon.), Principal of Queen's College from 1877 to 1893. In his report on the College to the Governor in 1880 he strongly recommended that such a scholarship should be granted annually to the boys.

The enthusiasm of the boys was unbounded. They followed subsequent developments with great interest and when the Bill was passed recorded their gratitude in the School Magazine.*

On the 30th June, 1881, the Governor and Court of Policy with the Financial Representatives in Combined Court resolved that:

“This Court respectfully recommends that three Colonial Scholarships, to a University in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland be established subject to such rules as His Excellency the Governor and the Court of Policy may deem necessary; and that this Court pledges itself to provide the necessary funds for establishing such scholarships.”

NOTES:

**“On reading the Principal’s report on the College to His Excellency the Governor and the Court of Policy for the year 1880, we observe that he strongly recommended that Colonial Scholarships should be given to the boys. Now we have no hesitation in saying that such a thing would be hailed with joy as we have reason to know that many of them have often complained of the want of some inducement for them to work hard...We sincerely hope that the Court will give to the Principal’s recommendation the weight it deserves, and that before long we will be able to congratulate ourselves on at last having something for which we can work.”*

—Editorial *Our College Gazette* April 9th, 1881.

In *Our College Gazette* of June 6th, 1881—

“‘On dit’ that Financial Representative Cameron in the coming session of the Combined Court will bring forward a motion for the introduction of a Colonial Scholarship.

We are sure that all Creole lads will join with us in rendering him our cordial thanks.”

In *Our College Gazette* of June 18th, 1881 —

"We see that in the Combined Court Mr. D. C. Cameron has made an amendment of his motion about Colonial Scholarships, extending the age of the competitors to 19 years, and making each scholarship worth £150 tenable for 4 years."

In *Our College Gazette* of July 2nd, 1881—

"It is with great pleasure that we are able to record the passing of the motion in the Combined Court for the institution of Colonial Scholarships. For some time we have all been eagerly looking forward to this step . . . Our thanks are due not only to the Governor and the honourable members of the Court, but also to our worthy and universally respected Principal, who first recommended the introduction of such scholarships in one of his reports on the College."

The first scholar was elected in May, 1882, after an examination conducted by the Inspector of Schools. There were two candidates J. H. Conyers and Farnum. The former was declared the winner.

A Committee, appointed in 1883 to consider suggestions for the examinations for the Guiana Scholarships recommended that the test examination should be the Cambridge Local Senior Examination, the qualifications being at least Second Class Honours or Third Class Honours with a distinction.

The value of the Scholarship was £600 tenable at a British University or an Inn of Court.

The age limit was 19 years of age at the commencement of the examination, but, as the Cambridge Syndicate awarded Hons. Certificates only to students under 18 years of age, an announcement was made in issues of the *Official Gazette* during August, 1883, that candidates *"may present themselves if under 19 years of age but the result of the Examination of candidates over 18 will be notified privately by the Syndicate to the Colonial Government and will not appear in the ordinary list of the University."*

"The holder of the Scholarship shall be entitled to a free passage to England, and also to a free return passage to this Colony, if he satisfies the Governor that he intends to take up his residence in this Colony". (See 1891, Ct. of Policy)

There is no mention of free passages in the Regulations from 1901, but many free outward passages have been granted.

The minimum standard of third Class Honours with a distinction remained until 1902, from which year the standard was First Class Honours with a distinction in one at least of *"Classics, Mathematics, Natural Science or Modern Languages"*.

The Editor of the *Daily Chronicle* of July 11, 1901, commenting on the raising of the standard remarked : *"The decision may be called a step in the right direction, since it opens the possibility of effecting a saving to the colony"*; but he advocated as he had *"repeatedly pointed out"* the complete abolition of the scholarship.

No candidate had qualified for the 1885 and 1886 scholarships. The Guiana Scholars from 1882 to 1889 were boys of unmixed European parentage. In 1890 two scholarships were awarded, one going to the first coloured boy to win the Scholarship and in 1894 the only candidate to obtain First Class Honours was the first African to win the scholarship.

On the 12th of March, 1880, a Member of the Combined Court moved the following Resolution :

"Whereas by the foundation of the Guiana Scholarships...a great stimulus has been given to higher education in this Colony, as evidenced by the increased number of candidates who have attained the standard necessary for qualification for the said scholarships ; be it resolved:

That this Court respectfully recommends the foundation of a second scholarship of £150 per annum to be competed for and held on the same conditions as have been laid down for the one already established, and this Court pledges itself to provide the necessary funds for the foundation of such scholarships".

The Motion was not seconded and fell to the ground.

In the *Argosy* of January 15, 1898, there appeared an editorial on 'Discontinuing the Guiana Scholarship'. The writer argued that when the scholarship was instituted the Colony was flourishing but not then.

He suggested changing the amount so that there might be 3 or 4 endowments. For boys — to an agricultural school and farming or master-carpentering, to tailoring, shoe-making, printing and such like. For girls :— "*young ladies*" we should say, cooking, nursing, hairdressing, dressmaking, millinery, photography or else. "*But the absurdity of giving £200 a year for 3 years to any one lad or lass, to enable him or her to become a lawyer or doctor, or a prig, ought to be stopped forthwith.*"

In the *Chronicle* editorial of July 11, 1901, the writer gave as his reasons for abolishing the scholarship that the Colony could ill afford the expenses of a scholarship and that boys were winning it who, as he thought, were not originally conceived as winners. In spite of the Editor's hope that the scholarship would lapse occasionally as the result of the new standard, the scholarship was awarded every year from 1902 to 1905. The value of the scholarship was £200 a year for 3 or 4 years.

"The scholarship may be awarded to the candidate who is placed first of the Seniors from this centre in each year if such candidate satisfies the Governor that he is eligible and of fit character and antecedents, provided that he is certificated by the University Syndicate to be up to the Standard of first Class Honours, with the mark of distinction in one or more of the following subjects, namely, Classics, Mathematics, Natural Science, or Modern Languages. On the arrival of full particulars of the examination from the University Syndicate, the Local Secretary will report to the Governor upon the results of the examination and the eligibility of the candidate or candidates competing; and the award will there upon be made by the Governor-in-Council".

In December, 1907, there was no scholarship examination in order to allow for the change which had been proposed by the Commission of 1898 and which was to come into operation from June, 1908.

The more important scholarship changes have been associated with the regimes of the various Principals.. The founding of the Scholarship with Mr. Percival, B.A. (Oxon), the raising of the standard in 1902 with Mr. J. A. Potbury, M.A. (Cantab.), the placing of the Scholarship on a level with that of the English Open Scholarship with the regime of Mr. T. A. Pope, B.A. (Cantab.), the substitution of the Oxford and Cambridge Higher with Mr. E. R. D. Moulder, M.A. (Oxon.), the present London Higher Exam, with the present Principal Capt. H. Nobbs, M.Sc., (Lond.) F.R.I.C.

For seventeen years the standard of the British Guiana Scholarship was that for Open Scholarships to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. The prerequisite for candidates competing was the holding of Junior or Senior Honours Certificate (Cambridge Local). The actual test was a specialized examination in one of Classics, Mathematics, and Natural Sciences with a paper in English Essay.

Minor alterations and additions were made in the syllabus in 1910.

The value of the Scholarship was still £600, with a possible increase for medical students. The Scholarship was tenable in the British Empire and the USA. Candidates had to be not more than 20 years of age on the 31st May immediately preceding the examination. Later (1913) it was enacted that no change of College or course of studies being pursued could be made without the approval of the Governor.

As regards the method of award —

“The examiners, after perusal of the answers returned, will report in order of merit such of the candidates as in their judgment would have been eligible at their College for open Scholarships or Exhibitions, and the candidate, if any, that stands highest amongst those reported to be qualified will be elected the British Guiana Scholar for the year”.

This standard and method of award caught the popular fancy. The people liked to feel that the conditions for the British Guiana Scholarship were the same as those for open scholarships to the “ancient Universities”. Indeed some Guiana Scholars were able to arrange their departure so that

they arrived in England in time to take the examinations for open scholarships or exhibitions at Oxford or Cambridge.

The main objections to this method of examination were that students strong in Modern Studies were not catered for and that unsuccessful candidates found themselves at the age of 20 without an additional Certificate to their Senior. The first attempt to remove this situation came with the Regulations to make the examination for the Oxford and Cambridge Higher Certificates the test as from 1925.

There was the same age limit as in the preceding period, the total value of the scholarship was now £900. The prerequisite was the School Certificate (formerly Senior) of Cambridge or of the Oxford and Cambridge Schools Examinations Board with a credit in one at least of the subjects to be offered. In addition to English Essay candidates had to offer one of the four following groups :— Classics, Modern Studies, Mathematics, Natural Sciences (any two branches), and not more than four subsidiary subjects.

As regards the method of award —

“ The Oxford and Cambridge Schools Examinations Board will furnish a report on the work of the candidates and will further state to which of the candidates it recommends that the Scholarship should be awarded. Upon this report and recommendation the British Guiana Scholar for the year will be elected by the Governor-in-Council.”

Now, although this examining Board awarded certificates to all the candidates who reached a certain standard, it was found that the certificates did not exempt the holders from the Intermediate Examination in Arts or Science of London and the Universities. So that whereas the mental discipline was unquestioned and the attainment considerable, the value of the Certificate to those intending to pursue further studies was doubtful.

To remedy this and other anomalies the then Director of Education made certain proposals in 1930. He submitted that, as that Higher Certificate did not entitle to exemptions which could not be obtained through the School Certificates, there might conveniently be a change to the School Certificate Examination of the Oxford and Cambridge Joint Board as the

test. In such a case there would be a greater number competing than the 7 to 10 on the specialized system; moreover the age limit could be lowered to 18. The unsuccessful candidate at the age of 20 years who joined the Civil Service received no consideration for his higher studies and his higher Certificate and found himself two years behind his confreres who joined at the age of 18. The suggestion then was that, if the age limit was 18, unsuccessful candidates could know of their position earlier and take steps accordingly.

For the years 1931 to 1933, the School Certificate of the Oxford and Cambridge Joint Board was the examining test. It appears that the candidates had the option of submitting 7 or 8 subjects and in 1932, a candidate from St. Stanislaus was awarded the scholarship who offered 8 subjects and obtained a higher aggregate but a lower average on the 8 subjects or on his best 7 subjects than the runner-up from Queen's College who offered only 7 subjects. This created a big controversy and in the following year the Regulations were amended so that it was definite that only 7 subjects would count towards the scholarship even if a candidate offered 8 subjects for the purposes of the Certificate.

The present standard of examination — the London Higher Certificate Examination — instituted in 1937 solves most of the problems arising from the specialized test. But there was a short experimental period before the present position was reached.

No examination was held in 1934 but two scholarships were awarded on the result of an examination held in 1935. Candidates from St. Stanislaus College and the Bishops High School for Girls won these scholarships. The test was a Special Examination conducted by a Board of Examiners in the United Kingdom approved by the Governor-in-Council. English Essay was compulsory and four optional subjects had to be offered from a syllabus approved by the Governor.

The age requirement was that candidates should be under 19 years of age on the first day of January of the year of the examination. Of course an adjustment was made for those who could not take their examination in 1934.

The examiners had to *“report stating which of the candidates they recommended that the scholarship should be awarded.*

The report shall be considered by the Governor-in-Council who shall elect the British Guiana Scholar for the year”.

In the following year there were some changes in the syllabus.

Valuable exemptions from pre-Degree examinations or from parts of such examinations may be gained from the present examination for the B.G. Scholarship the value of which is now £1,100.

(For list of British Guiana Scholars, please see Appendix).

I SAW TWO FLOWERS

by E. McG. Keane

I SAW two flowers floating on the tide—
Both alike
In form and motion—
Like wedded royalty riding a throne
Of ocean decked with foam-lace. Between them
Nothing was except a whirlpool of tears—
Discarded tears—too cold to mate the seamy
Blushes of petal...

I saw two flowers struggling with the swell;
One sank,
The other—stalking the sunset—floated on.

I saw two thoughts, two lives, two visions—
Both alike
In impulse and conception—
Come, like lost children, over the waste
Of unreality—weeping and clinging.
Around, eddying bubbles rose, grew, burst
Into stranded notions, then settled back
In little, leaping maelstroms of doubt...

I saw two liquid thoughts, two lives, two visions;
One perished,
The other, claiming conviction, thickened into actuality.

MY LOVE ARE YOU STRONG?

by E. McG. Keane

My love, are you strong?
I will bring my life to you like a bundle of washing:
And all they say is my soul
I will bring
Like washing to your sweet rivers.
And will you say this?
 Will you say,
 Drink deeply
 Sink deeply
 Dream deeply of cleansing
In the rivers' bones...

My love, are you strong?
I will bring my sins to you.
On the breast of your rivers, like stones
I will bring my sins
Prayerful to be swept along and away
And will you say this?
 Will you say,
 Sigh sweetly
 Die gently
 Dream deeply of cleansing
In the rivers' bones...

CYNIC AND EAGLE

by A.J. Seymour

"Why should the broken eagle fly?
The hero's a fool", the cynic said.
"I'd nurse my shattered wrongs instead
And claw my brothers till I die".

The one-armed eagle stormed the blue
And towered the reckless sky
Till limping down the firmament
The shout failed to a sigh.
But spirit had toughened the broken wing
Eager blue lanes invite
And treading up the eternal paths
The eagle's out of sight.

"A double fool he", the cynic sneered.
"With a broken hinge and a wing that's wrung.
A matter for tales blind fools have sung".
But crying and laughing, the fool world cheered.

The Stage - I

RECENT DRAMA HIGHLIGHTS

I have not had the privilege of seeing all the dramatic productions in Georgetown for the past eighteen months or so, as a result this review must necessarily be incomplete, but looking back in memory there seems to have been few dramatic performances in the past year or two apart from those given by schools. Of these, I can recall three, by pupils of the Bishops' High School, which stand out in my recollections.

'**Quality Street**' is still so vivid in my memory that I was surprised to learn, when verifying the date of its production, that it had taken place in 1946. This play was beautifully produced. The stage setting was a little gem, with the window at the back in the sisters' home, showing the street outside. The players had been most carefully trained, and were word — and action — perfect. The girls who acted as men had been taught to stand, sit and walk like men, not girls.

'**The Importance of Being Earnest**' also by B.H.S. girls took place in 1947 and was another great success on all counts, viz., acting, diction and stage dressing.

In 1949 the School produced '**The Far Off Hills**', a refreshing Irish comedy, which had a slight connection with British Guiana, for its author is, I believe, a brother-in-law (or son-in-law) of the late Mr. Dorman, formerly Manager of the Demerara Railway Company. This play brought to light many new actresses of the School, and again there was evidence of the careful training which they had received.

The pupils of the Ursuline Convent in 1947 produced a pageant in honour of the Centenary of the Convent, depicting the founding of the Ursuline Order, with scenes also portraying the beginnings of the Convent in Georgetown, and the early school life. This pageant was written by one of the Sisters, and proved to be an instructive and entertaining one, with the many actresses acquitting themselves excellently in their respective roles.

They also produced '**Little Women**' in 1948 and '**Pride and Prejudice**' in 1949, to the delight and pleasure of all who witnessed the performances

Mrs. C. W. H. Collier wrote several short sketches about marriage and divorce, which were performed in the Ursuline Convent Hall to good effect. Her biggest effort was '**Quiverful**', a four-act play about family life — the family life we used to know half a century ago, not that of today, alas! It stressed family prayers and parental control. This play was produced in 1948 and was a great success. It was repeated several times, and was revived again later in the year.

Of adult amateur theatricals, the finest production I have ever seen in British Guiana was '**Arsenic and Old Lace**' produced by Dr. A. W. H. Smith and a company from Berbice in 1948. The production demonstrated the great care which had been taken to have every detail as perfect as possible. The stage setting was a marvel. The play was produced on the tiny stage of St. George's School Hall, yet a well-appointed living room was presented. There was a staircase leading to a landing for an upper storey, a street door with a lighted street outside, a cellar door and stairs, and a kitchen entrance were indicated besides the usual furniture, such as dining table, settee, chairs, etc. The secret was that everything was in miniature. The stairs were very tiny and shallow, and needed practice to use them in a natural manner. The dining table was only half a table. The settee was of child-like proportions. The actresses were dressed to suit the characters and period. All the players were word-perfect. Their actions were meaningful, not aimless meandering and arm-sawing. It was production which compared favourably with professional standards. The drop curtains also merit mention, with their glasses of wine and borders of lace.

In 1949 Mr. N. E. Cameron's play '**Sabaco**' was produced at old Queen's College. This was an elaborate production, with many players taking part. The play was put on with some excellent scenery, especially the decorated pillars in the palace scenes. The hall at Queen's is long and narrow, and does not lend itself to good acoustic properties, and in consequence, unless seated well to the front, one loses the speeches. Amateurs seldom realise how clearly and

deliberately they should articulate their words to be heard by all in the hall.

The same year we had Robert Adams playing **'Emperor Jones'** at the Astor Cinema. Needless to say, Mr. Adams gave us good diction, expression and action, but the production was hampered by the shallowness of the stage, and the almost total lack of stage effects.

In 1950 we had **'Charley's Aunt'** performed at the Ursuline Convent by a company from Berbice. The stage settings were quite good, and as a rule the players knew their lines. On the whole it was a creditable effort. This well-loved comedy is a period piece, but the players were not dressed to suit the period — one in which chaperones were absolutely essential — and in which it was unheard of for ladies to be received by young men not wearing jackets or blazers, but only in their shirt sleeves. This was a serious lack to an old-timer, who had seen the play often before.

Amateurs, it seems to me, should aim at perfecting their performances to the highest standards. One great fault is complacency. If a player has once got through a part on the stage without breaking down, he (or she) feels that he knows all there is to know about stage acting. The real actor, amateur or professional, goes on learning, practising and polishing up for as long as he has any acting to do. Today, there are opportunities to study professional performances at the cinema and over the radio. Much may be learned from both — action and movement from the cinema; accent, emphasis and timing from plays broadcast over the radio.

Many more people are being drawn out to take part in dramatic productions. With good training and a willingness to learn they can only benefit by such opportunities, for they gain in poise, body control, improved speech and movement. One thing is needful — that they are willing to be taught, and willing to try, try, try again, until they attain as near perfection as possible.

—SARA VEECOCK

The Stage - II
'WHILE THE SUN SHINES'

When the Georgetown Dramatic Club was considering presenting Terence Rattigan's comedy **'While the Sun Shines'**, doubts were expressed as to whether audiences in British Guiana would respond to the presentation, for it was intended to run the play in the country districts, under the auspices of British Council, so as to spread dramatic activities. Another point was that the period of the play was during the last war, and all the main characters, except two, were connected with the war services, and the dialogue made many references to the war. The fact that the play was a tremendous success in England did not mean that it would necessarily have an appeal in British Guiana.

The G.D.C. nevertheless took the plunge, and in March, 1950 there were six presentations of the play — at Buxton and Ogle; three shows in Georgetown at the Children's Dorcas Club; and a special request for a performance in New Amsterdam in April. To say that the play at every one of the six presentations was enthusiastically applauded is no exaggeration. In the country districts, the Estate and Village Authorities willingly cooperated by affording all facilities to assist in the decor suited to a Lord's residence. At Plantation Ogle the stage setting left little to be desired for the lighting and furniture placement were artistic. In Georgetown the furniture was obtained from a leading furniture department, and the scenic effects were fully appreciated when one actor had to remain alone on the stage for a brief period.

The main theme of the play was the impending marriage of Lady Elizabeth Randall, daughter of the Duke of Ayr and Stirling, to Lord Harpenden. Complications set in when Lord Harpenden's past, in the form of the personable Mabel Crum, keeps popping up at the most inopportune times. Lady Elizabeth's hand is the target of Lieut. Mulvaney, an American, and Lieut. Colbert, a Free Frenchman, who jointly and severally declare hostilities against Lord Harpenden.

The play gained momentum with every act, and the actors stood the test well. They had to contend with the polished English accent, American and French. A valiant effort was made by all to sustain their respective accents, but at times lapses were audible. On the whole, however, individual performances were creditable, with some outstanding characterisations. It was a tussle to pick the best actor unanimously, but most audiences liked the Duke of Ayr and Stirling, with Lieut. Colbert a close second. In the latter case, the actor portrayed the Frenchman as a sort of calm philosopher, quite contrary to the popular conception of a gesticulating Frenchman. This deviation was seen to advantage in dialogue between the Duke and the Lieutenant when the former always tried to drive his point home most forcefully. Another aspect of the play handled in the most amusing manner by the Duke was the stress on the fast dwindling fortunes of the British aristocracy.

The consensus of opinion was that the G.D.C. had drawn a winning ticket in its selection of '**While the Sun Shines**', and the praise heaped on the hard-worked Director and adaptable cast was truly merited.

—J.D.

"There is always a plausible solution to every human problem: neat, plausible and wrong." — (H. L. Mencken).

SHAKESPEAREAN CINEMA

by David Ford

We have not too long ago seen films made from three Shakespeare plays: '**Henry the Fifth**', '**Hamlet**' and '**Macbeth**'. '**Henry V**' was I think a very good picture; '**Hamlet**' and '**Macbeth**' were to my mind considerably less than good films. Why was this the case?

Firstly, because the Cinema is much more than the Theatre photographed. The Cinema is more than the Theatre in that it is not subject to the shackles of time and space. The playwright has his three or four sets in which he lays his drama. His action is confined to the place and space of those sets and has to follow a chronological sequence. His play can of course be set in any period and his dialogue can range backwards and forwards in time but it has to be acted out within the three walls or such other forms of set as he chooses and it has to follow the natural sequence of time in those sets. In these matters the film is free. At one moment we are so to speak in the physical presence of the actors; at the next we are in their imaginations or dreaming their dreams. We can start at the end of the story and learn how that end was reached by "flash-backs." We can travel where we will over the globe. We can observe how the hearer really reacts to what has just been said, not merely how he appears to. We can see what has frightened and what is relished, what is looked forward to and what dreaded. There is no rein on the director's imagination except what he chooses to impose. Visually we are ubiquitous and not with a mere human ubiquity.

But then we see all this and to really **see** there must be movement. The film is essentially a visual art, an art of motion. True there is dialogue and there is music but these are more or less both accents to point up what we see. On the stage dialogue plays a much larger part than on the screen, particularly on the Shakespearean stage where memorable speech is the great thing. Visible motion is the be-all of the cinema. A motion picture is by no means just a photographed play.

You may well ask by now: what has this got to do with films of Shakespearean plays? Well, let us look at '**Henry V**', '**Hamlet**' and '**Macbeth**', with which we are concerning ourselves. '**Hamlet**', we were told at the beginning of the picture, was the story of a man who could not make up his mind. You will remember that. To me it was a promise unfulfilled. I did not see a picture about such a man. Shakespeare has Hamlet learn from his father's ghost that he was foully murdered and ought to be revenged. Hamlet stages a play in which his father's murder is re-enacted in order to :convince himself of his uncle's guilt, feigns madness and causes his sweetheart's suicide and then finally procures his father's revenge in a scene in which he and all that matter in the play meet their deaths at the sword or the poison cup. This is the action. The rest is magnificent soliloquy and dialogue, in which Hamlet debates with himself the good of living, sends Ophelia to a nunnery, upbraids his mother or Polonius, sends Laertes to Paris with sound advice and counsels the King as to Hamlet's intentions. Or take '**Macbeth**': the story of a couple who go from murder to murder until they reach their own violent ends. Duncan is murdered (off-scene as Shakespeare requires) and Macbeth becomes King, then Banquo is murdered. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth then gradually go to pieces, the while MacDuff's family are murdered and the country becomes disaffected, until finally Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane and they meet their respective ends.

As films these would fall under the heading of psychological drama and they would be quite different films if they started from scratch to be such. We should experience the horror of Duncan's murder and see the smearing of the guards with blood. We should shudder at the irony of Macbeth discovering their heinous deed and stabbing them to death in his outraged anger. We should observe the harassed and indecisive Hamlet not only in flesh intoning "*to be or not to be*" ...with a dagger at his breast. We would see these thoughts taking shape in his mind. The suspense of the climax of this play would be...well, terrific. And yet these would be films that still lacked the essentials of cinema.

Now let us look at '**Henry V.**' Here we have history, action, romance, handled with cinematic freedom. After a panorama of south Thamesbank we reach the Globe theatre of Shakespeare's day where the first part of the play is enacted. But we go backstage and we mingle with the audience in addition to seeing the play on the boards. Then we take ship for France, but not before we see Falstaff on his death bed in the words of Mrs. Quickly. We note the apprehension of the French Court, we follow Henry visiting his soldiers on the eve of the Battle of Agincourt. And the Battle itself on the fair fields of France (Ireland), the French knights arming and mounting and charging, the English archers standing firm until they get into range, the flights of English arrows, the rallies on both side and finally the French suing for peace. All the movement that is the essence of cinema. And the frankly painted castle of the King of France in the frankly painted landscape, Henry's spirited wooing of Katherine and the wedding when we leave the French Court where Renee Asherton plays the French princess and end up where we started in the Globe with Katherine played by an Elizabethan boy actor. All this freedom and motion, the crowded scenes, the visual ranging to and fro, not merely egged on by the imagination of the prologue, all this is cinema.

The conclusion, prejudiced no doubt, appears to be that '**Henry V**' could not escape being a good film and that '**Hamlet**' and '**Macbeth**' cannot hope to be such. I hesitate to say, on a knowledge of these three plays only ('**Hamlet**' and '**Macbeth**' were done at school) that we should look to the historical plays and perhaps the comedies for good Shakespearean films, but the tragedies might need to have such liberties taken with them to make films such that the Shakespeare might not almost disappear.

TO A FRIEND

by Basil McFarlane

You are somewhere an essence never dreamed
By me or other fortunate mariner who holds
Steadfast a course among ungainly seas to find at dawn
Staggering across his track your starless vessel.
You are that fate for being inconceivable no man
Anticipates nor wishes on his friend
Yet having found nurtures in it forever
A strange irrational joy.

The rescue

You accept an accident as any
Other in the endless chain you celebrate
No more; the accident we are this only
Will overtake you slowly, outshadowing
Others. See already you would forsake
The more complacent rhythm of the deck
But newly gained. The ocean beckons.

POEM

by Basil McFarlane

Music a kind of sleep
imposes on this weary flesh
wind beyond silence
speech of the God who ordered trees
flowering of dark earth
light, essence of darkness
birth

Lucifer massed
in arrogant disorder all about
pale quiet strength of constellated presences
hears in a wonderful dread
music a calm persistent tread
above the wild torment of nameless waters.

Social Institutions—I
BRITISH GUIANA'S Y.W.C.A.

In accordance with its desire to contribute in the planning of an informed and educated citizenship, the activities of the Y.W.C.A. are wide and varied. Fellowship Services, Bible Study Groups, Week of Prayer and World Fellowship Sessions feature the first and most important phase of its work.

Ranking second is the work done in the Girl's Clubs and Girl Reserves. At present there are eleven such groups in British Guiana under trained leaders who benefited a great deal from the Leadership Courses given under the auspices of the Association. This section of the Association is affiliated to the Youth Council and much splendid work, of which the Association is proud, has been and is being accomplished. This is due to the enthusiasm of the very energetic Secretary, who, although handicapped by a small and totally inadequate building, bravely pressed onward and organised classes in Handicrafts, Plain Sewing and Dressmaking, Keep-fit, Dramatics and Glee Club, Mothercraft, Home Nursing and First Aid.

At the monthly general meeting special speakers are asked to address the girls on some topical subject or give a review of their travels and work in other lands.

A very interesting feature of the work of the 'Y' is its annual-camps, one for juniors and one for seniors. Out-of-town camp sites are chosen for the beauty of their surroundings and facilities for outdoor life and the benefits derived need not be enlarged upon but are better experienced.

To fit in with the Grow More Food Campaign, kitchen gardening has been introduced and many good crops of green vegetables have been reaped. Another important phase of its work is the Social Welfare Section.

This committee, although handicapped by lack of funds, tries to relieve the suffering and to shed some rays of joy and hope into the lives of unprivileged children. Visits are paid to their homes and whatever help is available is given. At present a Sunday School is run solely by these kind ladies for

the benefit of the children who are housed at the Alms House. At Christmas some cheer is brought to these unfortunate children when they are at a Party and receive either gifts of clothing or gifts of toys.

In the new building which is being erected now, there will be hostel accommodation for guests from country districts and overseas.

The Association has grasped with both hands the splendid opportunity to serve — not to one section of the community — but all classes, regardless of race, colour or creed, and are really 'building' not mansions of wood and stone, but the minds and bodies of our women of today and tomorrow.

Book Review:
**A HISTORY OF INDIANS IN
BRITISH GUIANA by Dwarka Nath**

Mr. Nath has made available to the public a factual account of the development of the Indians in the Colony today. Commencing at the period (1834) when the newly freed African slaves refused to work on the estates, thereby dislocating the cultivation of sugar, and necessitating the importation of labour, Mr. Nath concisely relates the Indians' progress from 1838 when the first batch (numbering 414) of immigrants arrived from the hill country in Chota Nagpur, from Burdwan and Bancoorah.

The book is divided into three parts. The first is a detailed account of the Emigration experiment, with particular reference to the number of men and women who emigrated, the Ordinances concerned, and the Administrators who worked unceasingly to improve the lot of the labourers.

The second part is devoted to the Reforms in the System of Indenture, and the History of Land Settlement up to 1943, and the cessation of indentured emigration.

The social development of the Indian in the Colony is outlined in part three. We are told that the descendants of Indians who were at first immigrants styled "hill coolies" had, in the 20th Century been awarded scholarships, and had qualified as doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc.

This history does not hold the readers' interest for long. Peter Ruhomon's style is freer, and one is in sympathy with the person who complains "*I do not get proper quantity of rice, butter, tamarind...or any plates, or cups to drink water from*" etc. The immigrant's plight is at once vivid and one wants to discover how the problems between employers and employees were resolved. Whilst, in comparison, the quotation "*Indolent, dirty and vagrant in their habits, ...irregular in their attendance, ...begging and filling the most menial situations for a bare pittance*" is too general a statement to be effective. In the history of indentured labour for these colonies such a statement can be made with equal truth in relation to the Chinese, Africans or Portuguese.

Mr. Nath has spent a great deal of time in research, and the statistical tables appended are of great value to those who are interested in figures and numerical facts. The book should be of great value to the student of our times, and to those who are interested in the events which helped to shape the Indians and their history in British Guiana.

—A.M.L.

Book Review:
***A MORNING AT THE OFFICE* by Edgar
Mittelholzer**

Coming as it did, shortly after I had read *New Day*, Vic Reid's novel, I felt that *Morning at the Office*, Edgar Mittelholzer's latest novel lacked the solidity of *New Day*. Of course, *New Day* is founded upon historical facts and the characters live in one's imagination. Old man Campbell and John Campbell live because of their indomitable will and determination. Mittelholzer's novel on the other hand portrays character sketches of the cosmopolitan community in the West Indies; and gives a picture of how several races can work together and live together in a community without displaying racial animosity. From this point of view he has done a good job of work but we in the West Indies are so accustomed to living together that we look for other meat in the book, to be left somewhat disappointed in the end.

To Europeans and those living outside of the West Indies who are not accustomed to races intermingling and intermarrying, this novel shows the social scene in the West Indies and the pretentious craving of the middle class to become upper class and so on.

The romantic interest introduced is rather thin and ends in an over-dramatic outburst by Xavier, the office-boy, which leaves a bad taste in the mouth. One wonders if Mittelholzer intends to show the emotional instability of the African against the silent, resentful attitude of the East Indian.

The characters are nearly all true to type but one wishes so much of the sexual side of the male characters portrayed had been rather understood than expressed.

Mittelholzer, in depicting East Indian characters, has been as successful in this as he was in his previous novel *Corentyne Thunder*.

Jagabir desires to be called Mr. Jagabir by the messenger boy and the sweeper because he feels he is a class above them and it would boost his ego. Yet for all that he feels insecure when he sees the grease stains on his jacket pocket from the roti for his lunch.

On the whole, a revealing picture of the rising middle class
in the West Indies.

—E.E.S.

Review:
'HENRI CHRISTOPHE' by Derek Walcott

The poetry is there in all its power with lightning at times etching the lines on a dark night, the poetry we now know Derek Walcott can provide. This Chronicle of Seven Scenes reminds this writer of Cyril Tourneur in its swift powerful imagery —

" This world is like a teardrop poised
In the eyelid of eternity, then dropping down the dark
I shall build chateaux
That shall obstruct the strongest season
So high the hawk shall giddy in its gyre
Before it settles on the carved turrets."

I read the play some weeks ago, was disappointed at the Henri Christophe I saw depicted herein, and so decided to learn something of Haitian history. Adolphe Roberts helped me with his history *The Caribbean* and then in *Caribbean Circuit* by Sir Harry Luke I came upon a heartening and sympathetic study of the ways Christophe employed to make Haiti a fruitful land after the wars that ravaged it. His currency device, and his nobility hierarchy and then the Egyptian sickness after the monumental overtook him and left that sky-rivalling castle now being restored by the Haitian Government.

Then I came back to Walcott's Chronicle and examined the three tensions of representatives of the military, the Church and the State and the modulations he evokes upon the pallid theme of terror. Of course, one must never forget Haiti's legacy of superstition and voodoo, a legacy that I could feel within my nerves some months ago as I stood watching examples of Haitian primitive art on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince — serpents and the blood sacrifice and strange geometrical patterns drawn upon a floor. So the spirit of Haiti is passionate and darkly morbid and consorts with the ceaseless fear and terror that plays over the text.

If I say that in the Chronicle itself I discovered echoes, that is not a major criticism. To write in the English language about men's lust to be kings is to invite the ghosts hidden in that language of Marlowe's Tamburlaine and Eliot's Beckett and Shakespeare's Caesar on the Lupercal and the death of O'Neill's Emperor Jones to escort the sensitive reader through the pages. But the dramatic tension began too slowly, I consider; it is from the fourth scene with the argument of the young and old murderers, that the action holds and it mounts through the offering of the mitre. Of course one never knows how well the script will act but this reader found the last scene not quite satisfying.

So far as characterization went, I found Toussaint noble even in death and Dessalines brutal. I rather liked Sylla, the old general who almost assumes the role of being the conscience of the play and Brelle's dignity towers towards the end. For Christophe himself — well, I don't know. Walcott makes one general say

“Christophe is a two-sided mirror, under
His easy surface, ripples of dark
Strive with the light, or like a coin's two sides
Or like the world half blind when moons are absent
And brilliant in the glare of sun
Under that certain majesty he hides
The teaching of Toussaint, the danger of Dessalines”.

In Walcott's interpretation, the danger found Christophe out.

And now a final word. Derek Walcott realises we in the West Indies must feed our minds with our history. We are glad to have this Chronicle from his hand. The black and white problem common to the Caribbean grips the story nakedly but this is the way it must not and cannot be solved.

Book Review:
L'OUBLI— Poems by E. McG. Keane

In the Mediterranean world, the ancients used that laurel, the bay tree, in order to make wreaths for poets and heroes whom they desired to honour. One of the many inspiring facts about the Caribbean that I recently added to my stock was the information that Jamaican poets have adopted the **lignum vitae** as the W.I. parallel to the bay tree and I assume that in 1933 when Tom Redcam was posthumously crowned Poet-Laureate of Jamaica, the **lignum vitae** wreath was used.

So instead of saying "*the islands of the Caribbean are sprouting their laurels*", the critic noting a new poet in the West Indies will remark "*the Caribbean is sprouting its **lignum vitae***" and he will dwell musingly upon the implications of the meaning of the wood of life, because this book of poems *L'Oubli* by Ellsworth Keane of St. Vincent can be taken as asserting that another possible star soloist is preparing to add his gift to the choir of West Indian poets.

L'Oubli is a booklet of 19 poems but its pages contain quality for it can be said immediately that Keane uses language emotionally and that he is an engineer of the soul. In this collection among others '**Cantique**', '**The Palm**', and '**Love Story**' are complete evidence that Keane is a poet and on other pages may be found a flock of successful images in fragmentary support. As an instance of Keane's use of language these opening and closing stanzas of '**To...**' may be taken —

 "...Shyly a little
because your innocence is still innocent of itself
And you have not
learned your modesty by heart
my thoughts' embraces
Of your Soul
end every searching their sadness
.....
my searching is forever
and so be your innocence."

One finds there a keen appreciation of certain facets of human nature well phrased — *“you have not learned your modesty by heart...my searching is forever and so be your innocence”*. The overtones are rather ironic here, but these fit in with a temper that produces a poem like ‘S.O.S.’ and that can write as Keane writes there.

“This neurotic generation
Seeketh after a sign
Sponsor a dream that’s part of a habit
Build an aversion that coils like a spring
Or an emotion that works by a trigger
Give them that for a sign.”

This irony is very apparent in the poem ‘**The Proposition**’ which is Keane’s mathematically-toned version of the Creation (with several glances sideways at the ‘**Quartets**’ of T.S. Eliot?)

It begins —

“Before there was any sugar or nationalism
Before there was any political situation
.....
Everything that was anything was nowhere
And nothing everywhere...”

The third stanza of this poem is reprinted here in its entirety. There is the third day of Creation—

(III)

“Not that there was nothing to go on
Tentative decision could be taken
Like for instance
“Until further notice from floods
Storms and earthquakes concerned
The sea would be here and the land there
And moreover
To avoid the unnecessary, there would be grass”.

His Creator is a mathematician who decided on the sixth day —

“Now that the axis was laid and
All feasible fluxions worked out.
Now that alidads and orbits
Were believable, the revolving radius
A workable construction...
It remained only the day
For fashioning the mirror out of the dust
Reflecting the Unapparent.
Neither the whale nor the seaweed can
Commit a Sin to memory
Nor is the ocean capable of nakedness
But here in the garden was a breathing
Thing of dust that narrowly escaped perfection.”

Keane is a poet; that emerges clearly from his use of imagery and his basic conceptions. One sees the successful marriage of word and thought. Much here is experimental thinking and a seeking after ultimate knowledge. But one can respond either favourably or otherwise to the essential quality of those conceptions. And looking behind the conceptions given verbal form in these poems in an attempt to learn more of the corpus of thought and imagination that bodies them forth, this writer is struck by the rather pessimistic tinge given to the poems. For instance the “sick” tends to recur in phrases like “*sick crust, sick blight of prayer unanswered...sick latitudes..., last fanatics sick for new slogans*”. In an “Easter poem”, Keane writes—

“...Only
The suffering flesh crawls
Up the cross, tasting the
Age — dry blood where eternally
Rots our faith”,

and in his most ambitious poem ‘*L’Oubli*’ (six variations on a theme) the theme seems to be the proposition that the “*soul that dares to remember dies*”. One seems to see what is

possibly the frustration of intelligence in a small community borrowing, through the medium of the English poetic tradition, too much of the European death wish that Auden and Keyes display in varying degrees in their verse. So a Caribbean poet has his frustration deepening from his affiliations.

But the young and challenging Caribbean environment must and does assert itself in Keane's poetry. In the poem '**Perhaps not now**', he writes —

“And yet this soil is ours
And toil is love; ...
So with the clod's naked caress on our feet
We can hate in silence the sun laughing
At our bent backs, knowing
That the same fingers that hollow out the seed's grave
Will nurse soon arisen spirits of a tender vengeance
Sprouting green winged over the dust...
Yams and cotton, the cane's generous blood
And the white dust, binding the veins
Of arrowroot in season — these will in time
Shelter our children's backs from the sun's slaughter.”

This young and able poet should take for himself as a motto, the opening lines of his poem, '**Country**' —

“It is in the raw country that we come upon ourselves,
Here the hoeman is no rejecter of heaven
And people wriggle their toes in the mud
And say:
Something for all of us here
Come dig, time to plant up.”

There is much “*raw country*” in our young Caribbean.

Review:
'VALLEY OF A THOUSAND HILLS'
by H. I. E. Dhlomo

This is a poem of considerable power that sings itself out of a yearning Bantu heart. The burden of the song is may the dawn come soon for the ever blooming soul and seed of this African people, and the Epilogue runs—

“Creator who created sights so fair
Create again
But leave out pain
A world of Love and Truth, divinely fair.
For pain and sin our weary eyes have seen.
...Create therefore again.
“O Lord, but let now reign
The beauty that this day my eyes have seen”.

Structurally, the 42 page poem is built on the epic plan. The Prologue is an invocation to the gods and heroes of Zuzuland, to Mvelinqanga and Nkosazana and the others, and to Shaka, Hannibal, Aggrey and in spite of some sentimental overtones there are a sweep and an appeal to the tradition of the past that remind the reader more than a little of Homer's attitudes.

“...These men and places call to me
They speak out of Eternity.”

Then at the sight of the Valley, Dhlomo speaks ecstatically—

“Hold still
You gasping craggy heights, you valleys deep !
Sway not you bushy-bearded hills...
Ancestral spirit great, vouchsafe me power
This beauty fierce to seize and rape and make
My own ...to express ! The poet does not jilt
Give me the words, the depth, the holiness
This magic sight to hold, imprison, sing
This myriad beauty of the Thousand Land.”

These hills have been the playing ground of the four tribal gods, the god of earth and the Lord of heaven and the goddesses of light and love. These have received the wonder working warrior sons of the tribe Mageba, Nbada, Phinqa and Shaka and to their praise, the Imrilozi Voices sing a lovely lyric of the way the music of the harbingers of love fills the rills like milk and curdles into hills.

Here is Dhlomo's pride in his valley:—

“...here in truth is heaven — sculptured land
Sweet hill on hill piles high to form and mould
...This spirit-teasing speaking miracle
With patient ancient homes not built but sprung”

He sees and hears the silent dreamy cropping herds, the whisperings and the pangs of love from black ebonied buoyant hearts, tilt god-like wrinkled men around the chocolate pots, these wrinkled men who have the magic of creation,

“The many things they voice
Out loud are ripples on a deep rich sea...
A flowering into never-ceasing maze
Of beauty's silent song as gods compress
Their magic notes into a vale, or touch
The strings into a tingling rill, or swoop
A chord into a bulging hill, or fling
A theme into a scattering coloured swarm
Of winging melody”.

But no paraphrase can convey this poem's power. This playwright, Dhlomo has brought his own nuances and subtleties of thought and expression. In his warm, uninhibited reactions to the tragedy of African peoples, he uses English in a way no Englishman would and could use it. But his images have power; he knows the secret of the rolling verse paragraph in which he can pass from the vision of the high ideal to the ant crawling up his leg; and he sees the “Valley of a Thousand Hills” either instinct with its tribal life or under the vision of his Utopia. Incidentally the power of the ideal

woman is the theme he stresses again and again. In one or two sections he reminds the reader of the Wordsworthian nature vision. But the poetry is his own, and it fits the unsophisticated form of Africa like a cloak.

Book Review:
A TREASURY OF JAMAICAN POETRY
(edited by J. E. Clare McFarlane)

There are three main points which make an appeal to the reader and they may be taken as notes on the three important words in the title of this Anthology.

First, "Poetry" — McFarlane's anthology is a fine blending of the conservative and experimental in Jamaican poetry, and one that can be taken almost as a definitive volume of the best work written in Jamaica up to 1949. The editor in his preface points out how earlier Jamaican poetry had adhered to the established traditions of English verse and that the last 10 years have been responsible for a new spirit and attitude which belong to the social and political upheavals of the present times and which may be called modern and national.

Secondly, "Jamaican". It is interesting to realise that the villanelle has been used in a distinctive way by Jamaican poets: Vivian Virtue's sequence '**King Solomon and Queen Balkis**' is of a very high order indeed and around it in a family constellation cluster Constance Hollar's '**Night**', Clare McFarlane's '**Immortal love**' and last but certainly not least '**The Villanelle of the Living Pan**' by Walter Adolphe Roberts who first brought this French verse-form to the notice of Jamaica.

Finally, "Treasury". It is a real pleasure to find together within the covers of one book, George Campbell's '**Litany**', Adolphe Roberts' '**Maroon-Girl**' and '**The Cat**', Philip Sherlock's '**Pocomania**', Redcam's '**Legionary of Life**', Clare McFarlane's '**Port Royal**', Claude McKay's '**Spanish Needle**' and '**Flame Heart**' and Ingram's '**Sheep**'.

Shorter Notice:
***A SHORT HISTORY OF THE BRITISH
WEST INDIES* by H. V. Wiseman**

Addressed to an English audience, this short study suffers from the divorce between the British story and the story of other European nations in the Caribbean, since the history of the Caribbean as Adolphe Roberts shows is an integrated pattern and a mosaic. The chapters dealing with the European rivalries are therefore confusing; and, because of the modest scale of the book, the chapters on social conditions up to 1939, and the West Indies since 1939 provide an inadequate treatment of the complex truth. There are some errors too, (among them the misconception of Spanish American influence on British Guiana, common to both Simey and Wiseman, deserves an article in rebuttal) and the style especially in certain sections leaves much to be desired.

But there are many good features in the book. Wiseman's assimilation of much of Simey's arguments sets the train of thought moving in the right direction and there is an excellent account of the pre-Columbus times in the Caribbean. The chapters on Federation and Constitutional development are simple and the excellent illustrations will make the book attractive to many of the younger generations.

Philip Sherlock's Foreword with its broad urbane view and thumbnail sketches from the Caribbean's history sets a very high standard of expectancy in the reader. Perhaps too high. It is certainly one of the best sections in the book.

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APPENDIX

BRITISH GUIANA SCHOLARS

1882.	J. H. CONYERS	Edin.
1883.	W. FARRAR	Oxon.
1884.	S. H. A. LAMBERT	Cantab.
1887.	H. A. Burr	Cantab.
1888.	R. P. STEWART	Cantab.
1889.	J. C. SMELLIE	Lond.
1890.	W. deW. WISHART	Edin.
	T. H. K. MOULDER	Oxon.
1891.	E. R. D. MOULDER	Oxon.
1892.	W. I. VEECOCK	Edin.
1893.	C. KING	Edin.
1894.	W. W. CAMPBELL	Lond.
1895.	G. O. LAMBERT	Cantab.
1895.	G. O. LAMBERT	Lond.
1896.	J. DALGLIESH	Edin.
1897.	J. FAIRBAIRN	Edin.
1898.	C. F. BRAITHWAITE	Cantab.
1899.	Miss IDA C. TENGELEY	Lond.
1900.	E. S. MASSIAH	Edin.
1901.	E. J. MACQUARRIE	Cantab.
1902.	R. L. HUNTE	Edin.
1903.	A. G. BELGRAVE	Cantab.
1904.	F. G. ROSE	Cantab.
1905.	H. W. McCOWAN	Cantab.
1907.	C. S. WILLS	Edin.
1908.	S. D. NURSE	Cantab.
1909.	A. E. P. VANIER	Edin.
1910.	L. W. BRUCE-JAMES	Oxon.

1911.	E. M. DUKE	Lond.
1913.	M. P. J. SURREY	Lond.
1914.	S. J. VAN SERTIMA	Oxon.
1915.	A. D. GASKIN	Oxon.
1916.	B. PERSAUD	Cantab.
1917.	B. E. LEWIS	Edin.
1918.	J. E. AGARD	Lond.
	O. C. HUTCHINSON	St. Andr.
1919.	C. R. MITCHELL	McGill.
1920.	M. L. HUTCHINSON	Lond.
1921.	N. E. CAMERON	Cantab.
1922.	E. M. H. SHARPLES	Lond.
1923.	S. JAIKARAN	Cantab.
1924.	A. G. McLEAN	Edin.
1925.	P. G. BARROW	Edin.
1926.		
1927.	Miss WINIFRED HALE	Cantab.
1928.	G. McR. FARNUM	Liverpool.
1929.	I. H. PREMDAS	Lond.
1929.	L. M. F. CABRAL	Oxon.
1930.	P. A. CHAN-CHOONG	Lond.
1931.	S. H. WAN-PING ..	Lond.
1932.	P. DeCAIRES	Edin.
1933.	L. N. YHAP	Lond.
1935.	Miss LILIAN DEWAR and A. LEE	Lond.
1936.	W. R. PAKEMAN	Lond. et Oxon.
1937.	C. O. J. MATTHEWS	Lond.
1938.	L. B. GRACE	Lond.
1939.	H. ANNAMUNTHODO	Lond.
1940.	E. F. HARRIS	Lond.

1941.	M. BELGRAVE	Lond.
1942.	L. F. S. BURNHAM	Lond.
1943.	Miss ELSIE GOVEIA	Lond.
1944.	F. A. CHANDRA	Lond.
1945.	G. B. DELPH	Lond.
1946.	D. C. PANDAY	Lond.
1947.	F. R. WILLS	Lond.
1948.	J. D'OLIVEIRA	Birmingham.
1949.	L. E. RAMSAHOYE	Lond?

