

# TIME

THE WEEKLY NEWSMAGAZINE



Peter Stackpole

GINGER ROGERS  
Irene Castle's slippers fit.  
*(Cinema)*



Literary Life

**Idaho.** It was 2:30 on a Sunday morning in quiet Nampa, Idaho. Straight down Third Street South, past the Pacific Fruit Express yards, a car raced at 70 m.p.h. It slowed to turn left on Eleventh Avenue, sailed past the historic Dewey Palace Hotel before State traffic officers caught it, arrested Vardis Fisher, 44, impassioned Idaho novelist. Writing an impassioned account for the *Idaho Statesman*, Author Fisher said he was taken to jail, told to put his heels together, hold his head back, and close his eyes, to determine if he was drunk, was then locked in a verminous cell while officers examined "love letters from a dozen women" found in his pocket, and his Colt revolver. Officers said there was nothing to it—that they wondered why he made such a fuss, suspected he wanted something to write about, collected \$10, took him to the city limits, sent him on his way.

**Wolfe.** Announced for publication next June is the first section of Thomas Wolfe's posthumous novel, *The Web and the Rock*. Next month's Scribner's will carry a 15,000-word Wolfe novelette, *The Party at Jack's*. This month's *American Mercury* has Wolfe's *Portrait of a Literary Critic*, a mock tribute to a corkscrew reviewer. Next issue of *The Virginia Quarterly Review* will carry Wolfe's *A Western Journey*, diary of his trip to the Northwest last summer, taken from pencil notes written at night, or scribbled in an automobile going 60 m.p.h. Current issue of *The Virginia Quarterly Review* carries a memoir of Thomas Wolfe by Henry T. Volkening, a colleague of his teaching days. Theme of Volkening's recollections—Wolfe's difficulties and anxieties about getting his work published.

**Bargain.** For rare book buyers, the current Scribner Book Store catalogue announces a first edition of *The Communist Manifesto*. Price: \$750.

Promise Kept

PALE HORSE, PALE RIDER—*Katherine Anne Porter*—Harcourt, Brace (\$2.50).

Not many writers can sustain a literary reputation on the strength of one short story. But for almost ten years that has been the achievement of Katherine Anne Porter. Probably no U. S. writer has been praised so highly while writing so little. The story that made her reputation was *Flowering Judas*, a sensitive, finely-grained piece of prose, but hardly a lifework in itself.

Critics threw their hats in the air, hailed Miss Porter as one of the most promising American writers when it first appeared in 1930. They tossed them again, finding her just as promising, when it was republished in 1935.

Last week she kept her promise. *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* is a collection of three short novels which belong with the best of contemporary U. S. writing in this diffi-

cult form. A distinctive book, elusive as quicksilver, it has the subtlety that has marked all Miss Porter's writing, none of the preciousness that has previously marred it. *Old Mortality* tells of the legend-haunted girlhood and runaway marriage of Miranda, a skinny, freckle-nosed Southern girl who is such a relief after traditional Southern belles that she is almost an achievement in herself. *Noon Wine* is a deceptively artless picture of life on a South Texas farm, written with such quiet good nature that, when it sud-



KATHERINE ANNE PORTER  
*Huey Long helped keep her promise.*

denly turns into a tale of murder and suicide, the transition is almost as shocking as the events themselves. *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*, the title story, brings Miranda back, separated from her husband, working on a newspaper during the War, learning that Wartime love affairs have less chance of survival than influenza victims.

**Baton Rouge.** *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* is the second book in three weeks to come out of the new Southern literary centre at Baton Rouge, La. That eminent patron of the arts, the late Huey Long, inadvertently started a writing colony there when he imported a group of young Southern writers to give his Louisiana State University intellectual prestige to match its new buildings. Leader is Robert Penn Warren, who found time to edit a critical quarterly, *The Southern Review*, while writing his first novel, *Night Rider* (TIME, March 27).

Katherine Anne Porter is a newcomer to this group. Born in Indian Creek, Texas 44 years ago, the great-great-granddaughter of Daniel Boone, she was educated in Louisiana convents, worked for New Orleans and Manhattan newspapers, has lived in Paris, Majorca, Berlin, Vienna, Mexico City, where Calles' official cameraman used her shapely legs as models for a cinema short on shoes. In 1931 she went

to Berlin on a Guggenheim Fellowship, met Göring, Goebbels, Hitler, whom she considers "detestable and dangerous," moved to Paris, where she lived for five years. Last year she divorced her first husband, married Albert Russel Erskine Jr., English professor and business manager of *The Southern Review*.

Now she is living in a two-room apartment on tree-shaded America Avenue in Baton Rouge. Charming, quiet, well-liked, she cooks, sews, collects old records and music, reads medieval documents, and modern poetry. Her slow writing bothers her not at all: "There are too many bad books without me trying to turn out two a year." But she is working on a novel, *Promised Lands*, wants to write four books, one for each section of the U. S. If they live up to *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*, the literary colony of Baton Rouge may turn out to be far more durable and important than most of Huey Long's works.

Close Harmony

NORTH OF THE DANUBE—*Erskine Caldwell & Margaret Bourke-White*—Viking (\$3).

A record of six months' travel in Czecho-Slovakia before Munich, *North of the Danube* contains eight sensitive, compact sketches by Erskine Caldwell, 64 photographs which include some of the best Margaret Bourke-White has done. Slighter than their classic word & picture study of the South, *You Have Seen Their Faces*, it unfortunately appears when Czecho-Slovakia is a last year's bird's nest. But this is a travel book with an interest which survives politics; even as its subject, the Czecho-Slovakian peasantry, will survive Hitler. Best sketch: A scene in the Carpathian Mountains where, protected by a chauffeur with club and revolver, the authors distributed black bread to starving peasants, some of whom had not tasted bread in seven years. Best photograph: A Slovakian goosegirl, ganders and geese against a background of rolling, lawnlike fields, mountains, summer clouds.

Apart from its subject matter, *North of the Danube* offers the two collaborators\* second example of a word & picture book which shatters the whole complacent technique of travel books.

Bricklayer

CHRIST IN CONCRETE — *Pietro di Donato*—Bobbs-Merrill (\$2.50).

This is the precocious first novel of a precocious bricklayer. Born 28 years ago in the slums of West Hoboken, N. J., handsome Pietro di Donato was 14 when his father was killed in a construction accident, leaving a widow and eight children. Pietro, a "bricklayer in diapers," took up his father's bricklaying trowel, has supported his family ever since. In his off-hours he read everything in sight, especially Russian novels.

*Christ in Concrete*, autobiographical but imaginative, is a passionate, humorous, pathetic story of peasant Italians in the U. S., at work, in tenements, in animal anguish and animal high spirits. Author

\* They were married last February 27 (TIME, March 6).



di Donato's Italians speak a translated Italian, lyrical, bawdy, tender, crude.

Three scenes stand out as among the most dramatic in recent fiction: the collapse of a jerry-built building in which Paul's father is slowly drowned in concrete; an accident in which Paul's godfather plunges 20 floors from a skyscraper scaffolding; an all-night Italian wedding fiesta, a triumph of descriptive gusto over disgust.

With so much to recommend it, *Christ in Concrete* has one unfortunate fault—



PIETRO DI DONATO  
... inherited a trowel.

its occasional passages of impressionistic, Joycean rhetoric. But these passages are not structural. Without them, the book would be as solid as one of Author di Donato's brick walls.

### Holmes's Heir

HOLMES OF THE BREAKFAST-TABLE—M. A. DeWolfe Howe—Oxford University Press (\$2.50).

In a Beacon Hill drawing room one Saturday afternoon in 1893 an awed young man was introduced in a loud voice to a tiny, asthmatic, homely oldster. The young man was Mark Antony DeWolfe Howe, 29, recently made assistant editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*. The old man was Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, wittiest man of his day, unofficial Boston poet laureate, last surviving petal of the literary flowering of New England. By the next autumn, feeling "like my own survivor," Dr. Holmes had died quietly at 85 in his armchair. It was their only meeting. But of the next New England literary generation, Mark Antony DeWolfe Howe has come nearest, by temperament if not by talent, to carrying on the Holmes traditions.

Now 74, a genial wit who looks like a diffident Boston banker and has been rumored to be the prototype of *The Late George Apley*, Mark Antony DeWolfe Howe is a writer of light and occasional verse, author of 28 books, including the Pulitzer Prizewinning *Barrett Wendell and His Letters*, the monumental five-volume

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