

BOOKS and REVIEWS

Forbidden Childhood

By Ruth Slenczynska and Louis Biancolli. 236 pp. New York. Doubleday. \$3.95.

Reviewed by ROBIN R. BAHR

Ruth Slenczynska learned to play the piano at the age of three. She gave her first public concert at four. At 14, having played to rave notices throughout Europe and America, she retired temporarily from the musical world—almost a has-been.

With the aid of Louis Biancolli, Miss Slenczynska has told the story of her extraordinary life in "Forbidden Childhood." It is an incredible, at times horrifying story, for the price of her phenomenal success and child prodigy feats was enormous.

MR. SLENCZYNSKA had determined long before Ruth was born his first child would be a son and the greatest violinist the world had ever known. Instead, the first child happened to be a girl, a piano prodigy. Miss Slenczynska's plan was changed, but only that he would NOW produce the greatest pianist the world had ever known.

Practice for nine straight hours at three. Before Ruth knew the alphabet she had learned the piano keyboard. Adherence to this unbelievable schedule was enforced physically and mentally.

Each mistake was rewarded with an automatic slap across the face. Abuse, ridicule, loss of food were frequently used to achieve a desired effect. Toys, books, friends, candy—anything the normal child desired—were denied so that, de-

By Richard Chase, 246 pp. New York. Doubleday & Company, Inc. \$9.95.

Reviewed by JOSEPHINE MASON

This is a brilliant and thought-provoking study of the American novel and its tradition. The author's choice of writers, which he admits is arbitrary, includes Charles Brockden Brown, Edgar Allan Poe, Herman Melville, Mark Twain, Henry James, Frank Norris, George Washington Cable, Ivan Hovell, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Faulkner.

All of these writers with the exception of Fitzgerald and Faulkner made their name in the 19th century and it was their influence, Mr. Chase tells us, that has dominated 20th century authors. (Mr. Chase concludes that American novelists, writers of prose romance mainly, are strongly dominated by two great forces. The first is our need to identify with a mythic hero, the conqueror of the wilderness, personified in Natty Bumppo of the Leatherstocking Tales. This, he implies is a rather childish desire to retreat to a simpler, more pastoral existence.

THE SECOND great force stems from our Calvinistic background, and the larger part of this book is spent in a discussion of the novelists who attempt to interpret the Puritan concept of good and evil, the eternal struggle of man against his environment.

Mr. Chase writes: "Hawthorne and Melville understand fate as being inner or psychic—the ruin of the hero or hero-villain as he often is, come about as a result of the clash between his will and the adverse circumstances he finds himself in."

"Naturalistic doctrine," he goes on to say, "assumes that fate is something imposed on the individual from the outside. The protagonist of a naturalistic novel (Frank Norris' McTeague) is therefore at the mercy of circumstances rather than himself; indeed he often seems to have no self."

THE CONCLUSION appears to be that the most gifted of our

The Gift and the Giver

By Nella Gardner White. 316 pp. New York. The Viking Press. \$3.95.

Reviewed by LYDIA ROTHMAN

The Gift and the Giver concerns the frequently examined problem of disturbed youth. The author reveals the tragic and destructive effects of a mother's possessive love on her family.

After 14 years of marriage, Walter Boone leaves his wife, Cornelia, a strong-willed, dominating woman with their young son Philip.

PHILIP BECOMES the subject of his mother's all-consuming love which robs him of his individuality and independence.

He becomes a problem child in school and a chronic liar as well as becoming completely unmotivated to do anything constructive with his life.

The peak of the story is reached when Walter's book is published and acclaimed by the critics.

WALTER'S children are deeply moved by the book and see it as a description of their own lives. Cornelia on the other hand sees nothing in the book and in fact does not even understand it.

With their patience and understanding, however, Cornelia's children help her to understand the significance of Walter's book. In this way, too, they also help her to understand herself a little more and how she had almost destroyed the lives of those she loves best.

The story is told in the first person—by Cornelia. This reviewer felt that the stream of consciousness technique that was used was poorly handled. Although appropriate to the character of Cornelia, the dialogue becomes boring for lack of action.

THE FLASHBACKS which told Cornelia's version of the story did not follow smoothly or naturally and appeared to be imposed and contrived.

Nonetheless, this reviewer felt The Gift and the Giver was a book well worth reading because of its theme and character portrayals.

Know Your State

League of Woman Voters of Michigan. 88 pp. Detroit \$5.00. Reviewed by GAY G. SYKES

In the glaring light of recent happenings in Little Rock, Arkansas, it is interesting to note that Negroes were allowed to attend school in Detroit with white children as early as 1869.

This is but one of the informative facts contained in a little 88-page booklet which has been brought to the attention of this column. It has more direct bearing on the everyday lives of Michigan residents than any book so far received, and, as such, demands and deserves the attention of all Michigan citizens.

"Know Your State," title of the League of Woman Voters of Michigan, was prepared by the grand part of a national non-

partisan organization which urges citizens to participate actively in their government and in the political parties.

ALL THE areas of state government and the various functions involved are thoroughly and readably explained. Pertinent history of Michigan's Constitution is included.

This pertinent aid and guide to state and local government should find a place in every school room as well as in every thinking citizen's home. Copies may be obtained for 50¢ each from the League of Women Voters of Michigan, 4612 Woodward Avenue, Detroit 1.

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The American Novel and Its Tradition

By Richard Chase, 246 pp. New York. Doubleday & Company, Inc. \$9.95.

Reviewed by JOSEPHINE MASON

This is a brilliant and thought-provoking study of the American novel and its tradition. The author's choice of writers, which he admits is arbitrary, includes Charles Brockden Brown, Edgar Allan Poe, Herman Melville, Mark Twain, Henry James, Frank Norris, George Washington Cable, Ivan Hovell, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Faulkner.

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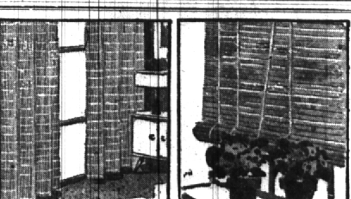
Who'll Volunteer?

Aged residents in the Evangelical Home would welcome women who would volunteer to visit or give small parties. For further information, please call South Oakland Volunteer Bureau, LI 7-1660.

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