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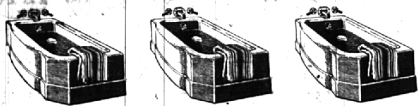
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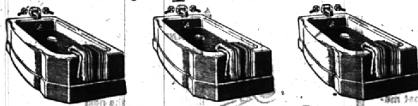
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BOOKS and REVIEWS

Our Friend James Joyce

By Mary & Padraic Colum.
289 pp. Garden City, New
York. Doubleday. \$4.00.

Reviewed by
JACK JACOBS

There is a ready market for books about famous people by those who knew them, with sales usually in direct ratio to the intimacy of the acquaintance (witness the Barrymore Sorrows, as called by Diana).

Most curious to me, is the popularity of books about writers. I envision hordes of authorities on the most intimate personal life of Dylan Thomas who have never read his poems.

I suppose that the answer to this puzzle is simple expediency. Why struggle to read Thomas through his work when you have such a good "proxy" (translation) as his wife, Caitlin? Then too, there is more "human" interest in a man's flaws and foibles than in his creations.

THESE recollections of James Joyce by two of his contemporaries and admirers will disappoint the seeker of intimate revelation, partly because the Colums are not sensationalists, but primarily because Joyce was an aloof and private person. (This aloofness suggests itself even in the book's inept, almost defensive title, which sounds as if the authors were trying to reassure themselves that Joyce's feelings towards them was friendship—not condescension.)

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Their relationship is described from student days in Dublin, through the visits to the self-exiled Joyce in Paris, to the time of his death in 1941.

PADRAIC COLUM, a writer himself, gives some insight to Joyce's methods, and throws light on some of the obscure local references which abound in his work. There are also mentions of his difficulties — with publishers, with money, with his daughter's loss of sanity — but these are described with loyal restraint.

The Colums' reminiscences, in their reverential tones, may have failed to convey a warm, living image of Joyce, their friend, but they have succeeded in showing him as he was—a distant, awesome, creative man.

Schools Without Scholars

By John Keats, 202 pp. Boston. Houghton Mifflin Co.

Reviewed by
JAMES DOLAN

In the light of all the reader and editorial comment which has recently appeared in The Birmingham Eccentric on the new high school, a reading of Keats' book is especially timely.

Keats presents a study of current educational trends as contrasted with the philosophy prevalent in the generation or two ago. His treatment is serious but not without a generous sense of humor. It is by no means a dull compilation of statistics, as a matter of fact, there are no statistics at all.

He treats such topics as athletics, vocational training, what makes a good teacher, buildings and administration, curricula and others of current interest to some of our local citizens. The reader's attention is won and held by describing two imaginary teachers, Miss Alpha and Miss Omega and two imaginary schools, Metal Prep and Pragmatic Tech, which exemplify the good and bad features (as the author sees them) in public school systems across the nation.

Let No Man Write My Epitaph

By Willard Motley. New York. Random House. \$4.95.

Reviewed by
TOM PHILLIPS

Willard Motley's latest novel, "Let No Man Write My Epitaph," is not for the queasy stomach and easily shocked.

It offers the interested reader, and there should be many, a vivid, often brutal trip into a nightmare world of drug addiction, prostitution, juvenile delinquency, miscegenation and murder.

It also contains such virtues as love, loyalty and honesty.

Motley's highly successful first novel, "Knock On Any Door," was the story of an Italian boy named Nick Romano, his life in the slums

of Chicago and his eventual death in the electric chair for the killing of a policeman.

"Let No Man Write My Epitaph" is a sequel to "Knock On Any Door."

THE LATEST book deals with the illegitimate son of Nick Romano, the electrocuted man's family and the many people they encounter in their daily lives.

It carries the son, who is named Nick Romano, from babyhood to his late teens.

But young Nick's career through life is not merely chronicled. It is drawn with large, powerful strokes against the greater background of Chicago, especially the sordid parts of West Madison and North Clark streets and the people who live there.

Nick is a sensitive and appealing boy. He is also talented, preferring drawing and painting to the jacking, drinking and wenching practiced by the other neighborhood youths of his age.

DESPITE this longing for better things, Nick is unable to fight off the overwhelming influence of his environment and eventually he is drawn into drug addiction.

His fight to escape the drug habit, assisted by several loyal men of the slums who have been interested in his welfare since babyhood, concludes the book on a hopeful note.

It is the story of his cousin, Louie, brother of young Nick's dead father, and the tender but hopeless love he shares with a colored girl. It is about young Nick's mother, Nellie, who wanted her son to have the advantages she never had but instead drove him to drugs for the affection she was unable to give.

THE OVERALL cast of characters in this powerful novel is a rich and varied one.

"Let No Man Write My Epitaph" is a brutal book. It deals with things many persons would rather not be reminded, existed. But it also is a powerful book and compelling. It is a shout of rage directed by Motley against an unheeding society.

It is a good book and should be read.

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