

Herald and News Book Reviews

Literary Highlights

One of the biggest riddles that has always beset science is, How did life begin? Theory after theory has fallen into discard as new knowledge made it untenable. But the ultimate secret lies hidden — may even be unfindable. But science can never give up, and every so often a member of the fraternity brings us up to date on the quest. J. H. Rush, on the science faculty at Texas Technical College, has done an exceptionally lucid job of telling the story in "The Dawn of Life" (Doubleday). He gets mildly technical in places but his gift for clear exposition keeps the main story in focus.

Another excursion into science, but more down-to-earth is "Science in Everyday Things," by William C. Vergara (Harper). This is a

book that can be opened at random for scientific light on all sorts of puzzling matters: What is the shape of a raindrop? What is sonar? What are voltage and current? Which animal lives the longest? Vergara covers so many unrelated items that he made no effort to arrange them in any kind of order in the book, but he did furnish a good index.

And last, but by no means least in importance to the seeker after scientific facts is "Van Nostrand's Scientific Encyclopedia." Here are thousands of definitions and articles on everything from aeronautics and astronomy to medicine, navigation and zoology. This is the third edition of this big (\$30) book and it makes available in one place basic facts about an enormous variety of subjects and terms relating to the natural and technical sciences.

Current Best Sellers

FICTION

BY LOVE POSSESSED, Cozens.

RALLY ROUND THE FLAG, BOYS! Shulman.

BELOW THE SALT, Costain.

THE EDGE OF DARKNESS, Chase.

THE SOUND OF THUNDER, Caldwell.

NONFICTION

PLEASE DON'T EAT THE DAISIES, Kerr.

KIDS SAY THE DARDEST THINGS, Linkletter.

BARUCH: MY OWN STORY.

WHERE DID YOU GO? OUT, Smith.

TO LIVE AGAIN, Marshall.

"Peace River Country," by Ralph Allen (Doubleday) is the warmly human story of a family in flight — to a destination that seemed not much farther on yet was ever receding.

Bea Sondern and her two children had left her alcoholic husband Chris to head toward Peace River Country in northern Canada where they had heard land was cheap and living was good. They couldn't make the whole distance at once but had to work their way from town to town. Chris followed, unable to stick to his resolution to stay out of their lives. Along the way they had adventures, settling down for a while in each town, but always uprooting and moving on when Chris threatened to catch up with them. He finally did in a climax which brought him into his own Peace Country but left his family still pursuing theirs.

This is an interesting tale with well-drawn characters and enough incidents, pathetic and humorous to keep the story moving.



DANIEL CATTON RICH, director of the Art Institute of Chicago, examines Georges Seurat's masterpiece, "La Grande Jatte," one of 150 paintings by the French artist exhibited in a unique showing arranged by Rich.

Chicago Boasts Rare Exhibit

CHICAGO — "To be a great artist, one must produce a great many things."

Georges Seurat took this advice seriously when it was offered by his artist friend, Paul Signac. He determined to leave his mark on the world of art.

Seurat died in Paris on March 29, 1891. He was only 32.

But he had made his mark. How well is revealed in an exhibit of 150 of Seurat's significant and serene paintings and drawings at the Art Institute of Chicago.

In his short span, Georges Seurat became one of the four great post impressionists, along with Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Cezanne and Paul Gauguin.

Seurat is noted for a style of painting he called "neo-impressionism or pointillism." His friend Signac helped him popularize it. The method consists of a mottled technique with definite spots of different primary colors laid side by side with infinite care.

The Chicago show, the first of its kind in the United States or

anywhere opened Jan. 16 and runs through March 7. Complete with Seurat's masterpiece, "Sunday Afternoon on La Grande Jatte," the exhibit will move to New York's Museum of Modern Art March 26 and remain there through May 11.

"This is perhaps the last time or at least last for a long time, this many of Seurat's works will

be seen in one exhibition," said Daniel Catton Rich, director of the Art Institute.

Rich assembled the collection from 81 leading museums and private collectors in the United States and Europe.

Known the world over, "La Grande Jatte" is part of the Helen Birch Bartlett Collection at the Art Institute. Rich says he has permission to loan the huge 81 by 120 1/2 inch work once and only once.

The painting of vertical and horizontal lines and repetition of hats and umbrellas in delicate yellows, purples and greens, was purchased by Frederick Clay Bartlett in 1925 for \$22,000. In the early 1930s the institute was offered \$400,000 for it by a syndicate of French art dealers.

"La Grande Jatte" is one of seven great canvasses of Seurat's career.

Two of them: "Le Chahut" and "Le Cirque," were brought to the United States under escort by representatives of the European museums that loaned them.

Several drawings never seen before are in the exhibit. The male nude sketches were among 50 packed away by Seurat between newspapers of 1877-79 and discovered only two years ago in a button factory owned by the Seurat family near Paris.

Director Rich, personally made the selections and talked with Seurat's nieces and nephews, his only descendants.

When "La Grande Jatte" was finished after two years work in 1886, it caused an artistic scandal. Not since the first showing of the impressionists 12 years earlier had a painting received such abuse or ridicule.



IMPRESSIONIST Georges Seurat at the easel, as painted by Maximilien Luce.

LOST EXPLORER

Road Amundsen, famed explorer and finder of the Northwest Passage, was lost in the wastes of the Arctic while a member of a flying expedition attempting to rescue the Italian explorer Nobile.

Old Fashioned And So Irish

MAGGIE-NOW, By Betty Smith. Harper, \$4.

In her direct unsuited way, familiar to several million readers of "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn," Betty Smith again takes us back over the East River to the Irish Catholics, their family problems, their money troubles, their getting jobs, falling sick, being buried, and carrying on the same everlasting pattern — once a tree grows in Brooklyn, always a tree grows there.

This time Pat, a boy-o in Ireland, loves a 17-year-old black-haired sweetheart but his mother hates to have him marry her, her mother and brother hate to have him not, and he escapes to America. Instead, he marries a ward politician's daughter, Mary. They have two children, one of them Maggie-Now, and we're launched in this new, or sort of new, novel. Impudent young fellows want to kiss the pretty girl, and more, but she puts them off, or her father does it with a poke in the nose to the unwelcome suitors. Then she meets Claude. Maybe he should have poked Claude, too, but there's a dependable rosy romance before it ends.

For page after page, over 400 of them, it's the wedding, the clowning, the birth and death, the brogue, the Irish temper, the clay pipe, the pall of beer, the rent, the taxes, the cousins, uncles, sisters and brothers.

Murder & Mystery

Stark terror comes to five persons in a quiet English village when each, in turn, has a nightmare.

It comes first to the village postmistress. She tells her woman friend about it. Suddenly, the postmistress is freed of the terror.

The friend then has the nightmare, and is released from the spell of horror when she describes it to her husband. The husband has the dream and tells the village doctor. The doctor tells it to the beautiful divorcee with whom he is falling in love.

Each time the nightmare becomes more vivid, more frightful. After the doctor tells it, he finds

his sweetheart in bed, apparently dead.

In desperation, the doctor enlists the aid of a writer friend in London. This friend, after surveying the situation on the scene, decides to call in Dr. Amenu King, a London doctor and psychiatrist — a Negro who in his youth was a witch doctor in Africa.

That is the plot of "The Dreamers" (Simon and Schuster) by Roger Manvell, a British writer and broadcaster. It is Manvell's first novel, and about as good a mystery story as has come along for quite a while. Page by page, it unfolds a story of black magic, of a curse and of a process of dream transference through a chain of persons of its intended victim. . .

Revolutionary American Press Examined By Noted Historian

PRELUDE TO INDEPENDENCE: The Newspaper War on Britain 1764-1776. By Arthur M. Schlesinger. Knopf, \$6.

Compared to the great modern daily, the Colonial press wasn't much. Valiant editors and publishers, having a hard time making ends meet, willingly bartered subscriptions for grain or firewood. Their four-page sheets were smaller than our tabloids, the fine type strained the eye, and the crude presses ran off, or rather walked, only 200 pages an hour. Yet this press, despite its physical failings, despite the penalties laid on it by the arrogant British, and despite its inexperience and lack of a guiding tradition, helped us most importantly to throw off the yoke of King and Parliament and achieve liberty, or in Schlesinger's words:

"The movement (toward Independence) could hardly have succeeded without an ever alert and dedicated press."

We had no press at all until about 60 years before history summoned it to its momentous task. The first real paper, says Schlesinger, was the Boston News-Letter founded in 1704 by John Campbell. By 1764 the Colonies had 23 from Portsmouth, New Hampshire, as far south as Wilmington, North Carolina, and Savannah, Georgia. In 1775 there were 38.

Boston sparked the drive for independence, and did not always win the support of other cities. Its jubilation over the Tea Party was countered in Philadelphia by chilling regrets over vandalism; its anguished cries of "Massacre!" — a kind of yellow-journalism description of an encounter between

a mob and Preston's panicky soldiers, Schlesinger says — were not echoed elsewhere. New York for instance omitting the word "massacre" itself.

The press, with its passion for liberty, was not invariably a stickler for accuracy, either. Boston Whigs broadcast a "Journal of Occurrences" which amounted to almost wholly imaginary atrocity yarns, but which whipped up laudable patriotic emotions among the readers of many papers that did not balk at printing them.

But the positive accomplishment, Schlesinger is convinced, bears out an early historian's claim that "in establishing American independence, the pen and the press had a merit equal to that of the sword." It spoke out first for Independence, for a Bill of Rights, for a Continental Congress — which incidentally had no editor on its benches — and it paved the way for the pamphleteering Thomas Paine. The Pennsylvania Evening Post scooped the world in printing the full text of the Declaration of Independence, on July 6, though by the end of the month almost 30 other newspapers had carried it.

In sum the press in those hectic times greatly increased its influence, and established its position as an opinion-maker. And we also have it to thank for seizing upon and holding fast to freedom of utterance and for teaching us that this freedom, Schlesinger concludes, is always being threatened and that it can be preserved only if we work for it. This lesson "next to independence itself, was the Revolutionary generation's greatest legacy to the American people."