NOTES FROM THE LIBRARY

A BASEBALL NOVEL

THE BRIDE AND THE PENNANT. By Frank L. Chance. With a preface by Charles A. Comiskey, President of the White Sox. Chicago, Laird and Lee, 1910.

Everyone who speaks American has heard of Tinker to Evers to Chance. The baseball literate know that this was the double-play combination of the Chicago Cubs of 1909 and 1910. Older fans remember Frank Chance not only as a great first baseman and hitter but as the manager of the Chicago Cubs of those years, then considered one of the greatest teams ever assembled. Baseball fans with very good memories indeed will also recall that Chance returned to baseball for a brief period as manager of the Red Sox about 1923, at a time when the fortunes of that team were dismal and they were about to field some of the most dreadful hooligans ever seen in professional baseball. Chance died in 1924 and in 1946 was recognized by the Baseball Hall of Fame.

Few indeed are the persons who think of Frank Chance as a writer. The Rutgers University Library, through the courtesy of Mr. J. G. E. Hopkins, the well-known Scribner's editor and book collector, has possessed since 1949 Chance's paper-bound novel, *The Bride and the Pennant.*

Let it be said at once that the position of Balzac and Flaubert, Dickens and Dostoievsky as masters of the novel is in no way challenged by Frank Chance. Amateur writers of fiction have a way of falling into one or the other of two pitfalls. Either they stick too closely to actual experience and miss that Aristotelian verisimilitude which is higher than actual historical truth, or they become unbearably "lit'ry" and serve up the pure conventions of prevailing literary fashion. Chance falls into both of these pitfalls. The romantic part of his novel is as dated as the Gibson Girl, the linen duster, and the chafing dish. The baseball part, on the other hand, is close to thinly disguised National League reality.

Here is the plot. Harry Sherman, star pitcher of the University of Chicago nine, has become ineligible. This fact is brought home to the reader starkly in the first sentence: "He had flunked!" He joins the Chicago Cubs, masking as Bears, and learns to be a real major leaguer. His Lucile, however, appears to become indifferent to him and even snubs him cruelly. This leads to a decline in his pitching fortunes. In the final games of the season, with the pennant at stake, he recovers his poise, inspired by the sight of Lucile in the grandstand waving a pennant, and ends in the Frank Merriwell tradition by striking out the side and then hitting a pennant-clinching home run off Babe Adams of the Pittsburgh Pirates, thinly disguised as Pitcher Adam of the Buccaneers. The final strike-out was a memorable one, for the batter was Hans Magner (surely recognizable to all readers as Wagner) and the final strike was a straight ball over the heart of the plate, signaled for by none other than Lucile herself, which completely crossed up the National League's greatest right-hand hitter.

The baseball portions of the nar-

rative make the best reading. There is some good advice to pitchers from Three-fingered Mordecai Brown (here called Black). The disguising of Johnny Evers as Beavers clinches once and for all the question of how to pronounce his name. No baseball fan of whatever age has much difficulty in recognizing the characters, but to dispel all doubt the publishers have kindly afforded a key. It is not quite complete, and the reviewer can point out that Manager McGrabb of the Goliaths is a certain John McGraw and that his star pitcher Masterson is to be interpreted as Mathewson! A searching analysis of the latter's weaknesses as a pitcher is given and may be of interest to old-time fans. Much of the wisest baseball advice comes from the lips of the catcher Bowman. This pseudonym is the one really poetic one in the lot, and stands of course for Jimmy Archer, a great catcher whose name still appears from time to time on all-time all-American teams. He must have been embarrassed to see himself described in Chance's prose as "of middle height and rather slender build, with two keen dark eyes looking out from between dark eyebrows."

Except that it is suspiciously unprofane, the baseball dialogue has an authentic ring about it. The author's desire to represent baseball as a respectable profession is evident, and accounts for the enthusiasm with which the college athlete is received into the professional ranks. It is ironical that today that particular shoe seems to be on the other foot.

If the baseball dialogue rings reasonably true, the same can not be said of this conversation in a fraternity house: "You certainly put over a peach of a cram, and everybody thought you had a cinch. I tell you, there is no bucking these faculty guys. If they want to get you, they'll get you. I'll swear Prexy's got a bet on Michigan for this season! Moly Hoses! . . . Why, Northwestern'll beat us!"—"Cut out the jollying, Tubby," returned Harry. "I can stand that all right, but how in the name of the deuce can I face the pater and the mater? . . . Don't speak of it! Chop it! . . . Tubs, I am not going to go back home and tell the mater her little boy is on the pazazz."

This curious little book is of undoubted interest to the baseball fan or to the baseball historian. As literature, it does what the minor works of a period always do: it throws into relief, as by a process of caricature, the conventions and fads of the moment and becomes thus a kind of sad and amusing footnote to Edith Wharton.

CLARENCE E. TURNER

FRENEAU AND BION

PHILIP FRENEAU was an admirer of Bion, the ancient Greek bucolic poet and philosopher, for almost certainly he contributed a translation of a Bion "idyllium" to five newspapers, though he never included it in his collections. These contributions were made at widely separated intervals: in *The Freeman's Journal* (Philadelphia, September 29, 1784); *The Daily Advertiser* (New York, December 16, 1790); the *National Gazette* (Philadelphia, October 16, 1793); *The True American* (Trenton, November 23, 1822); and *The Fredonian* (New Brunswick, N.J., November 28, 1822). Of the first and second, Fre-

neau was a sort of assistant editor, of the third the responsible editor, and of the others a contributor. The translation as it appeared in the *National Gazette* follows:

IF God, or Fate, to man would give
In two successive states to live;
The first, in pain and sorrow pass'd [.]
In ease, content, and bliss the last,
I then would rack my anxious brain
With study, how that state to gain,
No task too hard, too rough no road
That led to that serene abode—
But since to all impartial heaven
One fleeting life has only given,
'Twere madness, sure, that time to waste
In search of joys I ne'er can taste;
What hope can bloom on life's last stage
When each delight is pall'd by age!

This version may be compared with that of Francis Fawkes, who includes several lines of an introduction omitted by Freneau:

IDYLLIUM V.
LIFE TO BE ENJOYED.

If merit only stamps my former lays,
And these alone shall give me deathless praise,
But if ev'n those have lost their bright applause,
Why should I labour thus without a cause?
For if great Jove or Fate would stretch our span,
And give of life a double share to man,
One part to pleasures and to joy ordain,
And vex the other with hard toil and pain;
With sweet complacence we might then employ
Our hours, for labour still enhances joy.
But since of life we have but one small share,
A pittance scant which daily toils impair,
Why should we waste it in pursuit of care?
Why do we labour to augment our store,
The more we gain, still coveting the more?
Alas, alas! we quite forget that man
Is a mere mortal, and his life a span.[1]

Freneau differs from Fawkes in the conclusion, decrying the pursuit of pleasure rather than of wealth. The word involved is 'ὄλβω, whose literal meaning is happiness or prosperity, but which is here used to mean pleasure in material wealth. And Freneau gives to Bion a yearning for bliss absent in Fawkes, whose objective interpretation is supported by Edmonds in a prose rendition:

I know not, and 'tis unseemly to labour aught we wot not of. If my poor songs are good, I shall have fame out of such things as Fate hath bestowed upon me already—they will be enough; but if they are bad, what

[1] *A Complete Edition of the Poets of Great Britain*, Robert Anderson, editor (London, 1795), XIII, 214.

boots it me to go toiling on? If we men were given, be it of the Son of Cronus or of fickle Fate, two lives, the one for pleasuring and mirth and the other for toil, then perhaps might one do the toiling first and get the good things afterward. But seeing Heaven's decree is, man shall live but once, and that for too brief a while to do all he would, then O how long shall we go thus miserably toiling and moiling, and how long shall we lavish our life upon getting and making, in the consuming desire for more wealth and yet more? Is it that we all forget that we are mortal and Fate hath allotted us so brief a span?[2]

With each insertion, Freneau added a paragraph of comments, pointing out the striking idea that a pagan could be attracted by a Christian conception, of doing penance for the reward of happiness hereafter:

The above lines, in the original, were written by BION, a celebrated heathen philosopher of *Smyrna*, in the lesser Asia, and commonly classed among the minor Greek Poets. He is very ancient, and not long after the time of Homer. From many passages in the fragments in his writings that remain it appears he believed that the soul and body died together, that the former could not exist without the *organization* of the latter. Yet it is remarkable, he here declares that if he could persuade himself there was to be a future state of happiness to those who deserved it, he would think no diligence or pains too much, to be partaker of that eternal inheritance. What a lesson for the professors of christianity from the pen of a child of nature and heathenism![3]

Freneau is inexact as to Bion's time, which is the third century B.C. His comments, moreover, ignore Bion's conclusion, which returns to the pagan view. On a cool appraisal, the Greek poet—who according to Fawkes and Edmonds was interested, not in immortality, but in another life of pleasure—appears to be a poor prospect for Christian conversion. But how could a romanticist like Freneau dwell on anything but his possible yearning for Heaven?

The ascription to Freneau is nearly certain. The appearance of the same translation, with similar prose comments, in five newspapers of which he was editor or contributor or both, and especially in the *National Gazette*, "By Philip Freneau" (of which he was editor, contributor, and to a large degree the writer), with comments obviously as an editorial insert, is convincing enough. The item in *The True American* is signed "R."—part of a pattern of Freneau signatures noted by Leary.[4]

Interestingly, each insertion appeared near the end of an editorial or contributory service, as if, weary from struggles with a recalcitrant world, Freneau turned to Bion, like him yearning for a haven of rest.

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[2] J. M. Edmonds, *The Greek Bucolic Poets* (London, 1925), pp. 409-411.

[3] *The True American* (Trenton, N.J.), November 23, 1822.

[4] Lewis Leary, *That Rascal Freneau* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1941), pp. 355-362, 475-479. Leary mentions the item on page 445 as appearing in *The Fredonian*, stemming from a similar one in *The Daily Advertiser*, apparently missing those in *The Freeman's Journal* and *The True American*, but noting printings in the *National Gazette*, *The Boston Gazette* (1793), and *The Kentucky Gazette* (1797).