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Prize Stories: The Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature

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The overly pious reader will no doubt shrink at the recital of the intricate maneuverings which took place in the consistory which finally elected Aeneas Silvius to the papal throne. Not a trick or argument is left untried to deflect votes from the hated Cardinal of Rouen. Although these human qualities never left him, as the problems of the Church and Christendom grew more complex and the danger of the Turk became more threatening, the spiritual force of the pope came to the fore. To weld the disparate nationalistic forces of Europe into a single army against the enemy was the obsession of his closing years. He failed in his purpose, but in his failure the real calibre of the man of God emerged, purified in great part in the crucible of physical suffering and frustrated purpose.

If there is one lesson to be derived from this warmly human document, it is the realization that God often uses very human instruments to guide the destinies of His Church. Their very humanity is one of the surest guarantees that the Church itself is sustained by that divine power which gave it origin and will remain with it till the end of time.

SAMUEL R. WILEY

PRIZE STORIES

THE CARLOS PALANCA MEMORIAL AWARDS FOR LITERATURE. Prize Stories 1950-1955. Edited by Kerima Polotan. Copyright 1957 by La Tondeña Inc. Manila. 435p. ₱4.70.

The Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature began in 1950. "It has been the best thing to happen to Philippine Literature," says Mrs. Tuvera in her introduction to this volume. The volume under review contains the winning thirty stories in the annual contest from 1950 to 1955. Fifteen of the stories are in English, fifteen in Tagalog. The editor, Kerima Polotan (Mrs. Juan C. Tuvera), is herself one of the prize winners, whose story "The Virgin," published under the pseudonym of Patricia S. Torres, was reviewed at length in the first issue of this Quarterly (Vol. I, No. 1, June 1953).

Two other stories in the present collection have also been reviewed in these pages: "Children of the Ash Covered Loam," which won second prize in 1952, and "Lupo and the River," which also won second prize in 1953. Both stories are by N.V.M. Gonzales and are included in his CHILDREN OF THE ASH COVERED LOAM AND OTHER STORIES, which was discussed in these pages in March 1956 (Vol. IV, No. 1).

Among the remaining stories, the best written seem to be those by Andres Cristobal Cruz ("The Quarrel"), Gilda Cordero Fernando ("The Morning Before Us"), and Bienvenido Santos ("Not Even Purple Hearts"). This latter story seems the best written in the entire collection from the point of view of technique. It suffers from the lack of a moral dimension which would have enriched the narrative, and afforded a critical perspective. The story is about an otherwise beautiful love-affair, which was destroyed in the very act of consummating it without benefit of wedlock.

Gilda Cordero Fernando's story, like her other stories, is told with sprightly vivacity. Mrs. Fernando is a charming writer, and this reviewer hopes that she will find time to collect her stories together into a single volume.

The first story in the book, Mr. Juan Gatbonton's "Clay," deserves special mention, although it is not among the most technically perfect in the collection. It was awarded first prize in 1950-51, the first year of the Palanca Awards. The story is told from the point of view of a barrio boy, who strikes up a friendship with an American soldier called Clay. The soldier's coarse language and even coarser thoughts do not affect the boy, until they are directed towards the boy's idol, his lady teacher. The boy's disillusionment, and his repudiation of his coarse soldier-friend is well told.

Some other stories in the collection are competently written. Their number and their quality are a justification of the Palanca Memorial Awards.

The Tagalog stories raise critical questions quite different from those of the stories in English, and therefore merit a separate discussion.

MIGUEL A. BERNAD

THE MUZZLED PRESS

THE PRESS IN AUTHORITARIAN COUNTRIES. IPI Survey No. 5. Zurich: The International Press Institute, 1959.

In 1955, the International Press Institute issued a study bearing the title, GOVERNMENT PRESSURES ON THE PRESS (IPI Survey No. 4). While generally welcomed by serious students of journalism, the work left an immense area unexplored—for nothing was said about conditions in authoritarian countries. For this omission, no apology was necessary: the editors of the study had deliberately centered atten-