
Books

THE LETTERS OF MARY W. SHELLEY, Collected and Edited by Frederick L. Jones, Norman, The University of Oklahoma Press, 1944. Two volumes. \$12.00.

The editor of *The Letters of Mary Shelley*, has made a notable contribution both to the scholarship and to the source material of the Romantic period of English literature. Over 700 letters form the collection, and approximately half of these have never before been published.

Among the new letters are almost a hundred to Claire Clairmont, belonging to the 1840's. From these we learn a good deal about Mary Shelley's later years and about her friends. We learn, for example, for the first time about her unhappy experience in Paris with the Italian political exile Gatteschi who turned out to be a disappointing blackguard.

To the American reader, the 46 letters, 13 here printed for the first time, to John Howard Payne are the most interesting. The author of "Home Sweet Home" fell in love with Mary Shelley and proposed marriage. She appears to have liked him very much, and to have treated him with kindness and frankness. But he stirred neither her emotions nor her imagination, and the "affair" soon developed into a sensible good friendship.

Mary Shelley was also interested in Washington Irving whom she met more than once at her father's house. A longing for friends was a marked trait of this woman who during the 29 years she survived her husband spent many lonely hours. John Howard Payne tried to encourage a marriage between Mary Shelley and Irving. There is not the slightest evidence that Mary ever gave the idea of marriage to Irving a moment's serious thought, and Irving was not interested.

As editor, Mr. Jones has done excellent work. He has prepared the text of the letters with painstaking care for accuracy and completeness. His notes are full but concise; they are a help instead of a distraction.

The University of Oklahoma Press is to be congratulated on publishing this book. From the beautiful title page to the index this is a handsome job of printing.—L. N. MORGAN.

► Foster Harris, who works with W. S. Campbell in teaching the remarkably successful classes in professional writing at the University of Oklahoma, tells his students that the basic formula for successful fiction is extremely simple—as simple as "one plus one equals two."

In his new book *The Basic Formulas of Fiction* (University of Oklahoma Press, \$2.50), Harris explains in clear and entertaining fashion how to apply this theory to the actual production of short stories.

By reducing plot structure to bare essentials, this book helps the beginning writer to avoid getting lost in innumerable complexities of writing technique. Many experts have written books on plot construction, and most of the systems will work out very well if the instructions are followed carefully. However, it is doubtful whether any other formula has reduced fiction to such a simple and easily understood basis as the plan which Harris offers.

The Basic Formulas of Fiction includes chapters devoted to viewpoint, character creation, the part and processes in fiction writing, and the finishing touches. Some of this material is not much different from other books on writing technique, but Harris's clear treatment of the importance of a subjective viewpoint by the writer is an outstanding piece of work.—ROSCOE CATE.

IMAGE IS NOT AVAILABLE ONLINE DUE TO
COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS.

A paper copy of this issue is available
at call number LH 1 .06S6 in Bizzell
Memorial Library.