his life had given him such satisfaction as putting Wilde in prison. The father was the type of rough, mediocre Philistine so often delineated by Shaw. The Douglas family had considered placing him in a lunatic asylum. As for the young, flowerlike Douglas, he was a seasoned artist in a debauchery in which Wilde was just the ingenue.

Wilde relates how the crowds at the railroad station jeered at him; he was standing between two policemen, handcuffed and with bowed head. The propensity to jeer is an unlovely and almost universal human failing, and from this moment "De Profundis" is our own yoke. We watch as Oscar Wilde turns to the Gospels; each day he reads the New Testament in Greek. His mother has died and the law, as he writes, has taken from him his two children. When he hears this he falls to his knees and cries out with some obscure pain in him that the body of the Lord is the body of a child. After many months in Reading Gaol the doctor allows Wilde to have white bread instead of the ordinary brown prison loaf. For the first time in his life he has tasted bread of the poor and the hungry. He gathers up all of the white crumbs, adding with the naive trembling which comes over men who have had some terrible suffering that he ate the remaining crumbs because he did not wish to waste them. This was possibly one of Wilde's few chaste remarks, but it is a lie.

Wilde was by nature and mind perverse; he thought that beautiful lies are art. This is wit, but not the truth, and paradox is a sin because the man that utters it is more interested in pleasing and amusing than in writing what is good or just. Cicero was very acute when he wrote that in Epicurus, the philosopher of pleasure, such words as good and evil and justice are not to be found. It is important to emphasize the sin of paradox in Wilde because we are likely to believe that he received some benefits from Reading Gaol. True, he sat in shame. He was also penitent; but it is a paradox that a perverse man shall repent but remain steadfast in his errors.

Gide writes of Wilde after his release from Reading Gaol; Wilde took the name of Sebastian Melmoth and he resided in an obscure village in the neighborhood of Dieppe. Wilde had left prison with a high motive; he wanted to write one beautiful book to "rob malice of its venom, and cowardice of its sneer . . ." But he was broken; he looked like a bloated Nero with his rotten stumps of teeth and corrupt skin, and he wore on one of his fingers a ring with the setting of an Egyptian scarab in lapis lazuli. He was a fallen dandy, a rouged fop, with the prayers of Golgotha on his lips.

Wilde has always been in some ways Gide's teacher. What did he teach? In this little book Gide writes that Wilde told him that art does not hurt people. Gide then retells one of Wilde's New Testament fairy tales . . . Jesus returns to Nazareth which is no longer a humble village of fishers, but a Greek town of nard, honey, white roses and slaves. He sees a familiar man in long, disheveled tresses, smelling of wantonness, and sorrowfully asks him why he led such a dissolute life and the man replies: "I was a leper — Thou hast healed me." Wilde also said, "To regret one's own experience is to arrest one's own development." It is a clever remark and one has to give it very close thought to see how wrong it is.

Wilde perverted the New Testament no less than Gide, his disciple, garbles old Greek fables. Gide says that Wilde told him that his lips were too straight to be artistic and that he would teach him how to lie. Evidently Gide accepted the words of his master, for his "Theseus" is a piece of intellectual perversion. In his froward rendering of the ancient legend, Theseus's infamy is his shallowness; Theseus's hatred of his father is the malice of a modiste, and Pasiphae's passion for the bull, tragic to the ancient poets, is vaudeville lechery.

Gide writes with such artless simplicity that the reader is likely to forget that he is not reading Matthew's but Caligula's Gospel. Gide says that Wilde had told him after he had left prison that he had given his genius to his life and his talent to his writing. It is a pathetic epigram — something like the gargoyles on great cathedrals, which do not represent terrible sins any more than Wilde's remark indicates insight. Wilde thought he had to be clever to the last. Christ, as Wilde writes in "De Profundis," compares the soul to the smallest cummin seed. Man's folly is that he does not know that his brain is much smaller than his soul; for how few have enough judgment to know that the mind is absolutely helpless and wicked without the spirit.

EDWARD DAHLBERG

WHERE MAN IS DWARFED

Sheep Rock, by George R. Stewart. *New York: Random. $3.00.*

Good writing comes partly from love and partly from calculation; too much or too little of either may spoil it. Mr. Stewart has kept a nice balance through the series of somewhat cosmological romances that began several years ago with "Storm"; he has written with an eager and loving curiosity about all created things, and with the shrewd skill of a professional man of letters. His heart and mind have soundly collaborated. But in "Sheep Rock," the newest of the series, the balance is tipped a little; there may be too much heart in it, too much "grim fascination," to use the author's own phrase. Though he intended a novel, and so named it, it turns out in the end to be a sort of amorphous poem.

The motive of it is a place in the western mountains — in Utah, perhaps — where there is a boiling hot spring, a tall rock pinnacle, and a vast salt lake-bottom thirty miles across. Except for the strangely boiling spring, the region is arid and desolate. But to Mr. Stewart it is a focal point of wondrous significance and fabulous revelation; he perceives its geological evolution, its eons of natural history, its ages of rich vegetation and lake water, its slow change to salt desert and dry heat; he chronicles the phases of life, the coming of the big-horn sheep from which the pinnacle got its name, the coming of Indians and scouts and wagon trains and soldiers, and finally an infrequent assortment of squatters, campers, geologists, poets, and in the end the author himself.

It makes a tremendous panorama in time and space; Mr. Stewart's imaginative grasp of the cosmic and microcosmic material is really astonishing, and he pursues his clues and uncovers his evidence with contagious eagerness. In an enterprise where sentimentality and false analogies would trap the inexperienced and unwary, he maintains his perspective wisely. Yet, after all, the book is not quite successful; with all its richness, it doesn't fully emerge from the confines of its author's personal enthusiasm.

Henry James protested that Kipling seemed to be moving steadily from the less simple in subject matter to the more simple, from Anglo-Indians to natives, and thence to quadrupeds, fish, engines and screws. There is certainly a Kiplingesque quality in Mr. Stewart's work, and in "Sheep Rock" we have arrived at a point where the human problem is rudimentary. The chief actor in the story — protagonist is too positive a word — is a poet who comes with his wife and two children to live for a year in a cabin near the hot spring under the shadow of Sheep Rock. He there struggles to write a great poem about the place and records his labors and failure in a series of letters to a friend; but the poet is hardly more than an abstraction, and his poetic efforts are theoretical and unconvincing. Mr. Stewart, recognizing the inadequacy of his poet, implicitly confesses his own inadequacy to create either a true poet or a true poem.

There are minor actors, however, and one has glimpses of the same sort of human activity that made "Storm" and "Fire" so attractive: two episodes could stand as memorable short stories, especially the account of a wagon train in '49 and how it came to Sheep Rock. But such dramatic interludes are almost lost among the explorations of time and change and the enormous geological and paleolithic enthusiasms. All that is left of humanity in the end is the imagination that so bravely tried to grasp it all — an imagination filled with zeal and knowledge and, in a sense, love ("I took it all into my mind as a furnace takes lumps of ore," Mr. Stewart says *in propria persona*), but lacking in the sort of calculation that might have shaped a work of art.

GERALD WARNER BRACE

THERE AIN'T NO SUCH ANIMAL

Henry Gross and His Dowsing Rod, by Kenneth Roberts. *New York: Doubleday. $3.00*

This book, which from its title might be a bucolic novel, deals with the same subject as the simultaneously issued Report of the President's Committee on Water Resources, and may turn out to be vastly more important. It assembles impressive evidence that the best way to find water is to ignore what the geologists and the professional well-diggers tell you, and instead consult an experienced and reputable dowser, or water witch.

The evidence is good enough to convince Kenneth Roberts, a distinguished historical novelist and a capable farmer, Dr. Horace Levinson of the National Research Council, and many other persons of solid repute, some of them trained in the sciences. Similar evidence was good enough to convince the French physiologist and Nobel prize winner Charles Richet who wrote, in his "*Traite de Metapsychique*," published in 1923:

> The fact of the turning down of the dowsing stick when above water veins or metals is uncontestably true.

Perhaps it has to be seen to be believed. During the mid-thirties this reviewer built a new house on a dry hilltop in Fairfield County, Connecticut. When I expressed dismay at the prices charged by the professional well-drillers, a farmer friend introduced me to a local worthy who undertook to dig and stone up an adequate shallow well — provided his dowser could find a dependable water vein within a reasonable distance of the house. The dowser was a grizzled countryman who went about his business with a quiet, scholarly air, contemptuous of the gibes of the workmen who were laying the foundation of the house. About a hundred feet from the house his peach fork dipped as suddenly as if it had been shot. When I held it at the dowser's suggestion, it did the same thing for me; and I am contemptuous of people who tell me that *I* did it by a conscious or unconscious movement of the hands. The well-digger then signed the contract — it came to about $150 as I remember it — and hit a strong vein at 18 feet, exactly where the dowser said he would. The water was excellent, and the well never went dry while I owned the house.

My neighbors took a matter-of-fact view of dowsers. Like veterinarians and doctors, they were good, bad and indifferent. It was a gift, like the Cogswell kid's ability to draw horses that looked like horses. My dowser was a good one, they said; more reliable on the whole than some of the local medicos!

Henry Gross, the principal hero of Mr. Roberts's account, is evidently an exceptional dowser. Sitting in Mr. Roberts's home in Kennebunkport, Maine, Henry dowsed the island of Bermuda, where supposedly the only source of potable water was the cistern. At the time of Henry's dowsing, Bermuda was suffering from an acute drought and importing fresh water from Canada. From 800 miles away Henry located on the map of Bermuda three water domes. Later he confirmed his long-distance dowsing on the ground. Wells were dug and water struck at the depths indicated by Henry's rod; one of them flowed 44 gallons of pure, fresh water a minute. Test holes dug elsewhere yielded only brackish water.

Henry Gross's talents are exceptional but not unique. There is also Evelyn M. Penrose, the celebrated English dowser who in 1931 was successfully employed by the government of British Columbia as official water-diviner, to locate water veins and well sites in the drought-stricken Okanagan and Peace River valleys. From the other side of the world, in Perth, Australia, Miss Penrose also dowsed Bermuda by passing her hands over a large scale map. She roughly confirmed the findings of Henry's maple dowsing rod. Miss Penrose reports that about 5 per cent of modern dowsers now use map-divining. Just before World War II there was a Society of Map-diviners in France.

Henry's rod will answer practically any question he asks of it: how many water veins there are on a given property, their precise location, direction, depth and rate of flow, and the answers have been proved accurate — invariably, according to Mr. Roberts. Henry successfully dowsed the estates of Kenneth A. Phillips at Higganum, Connecticut, and Raymond Harper at Princeton, New Jersey. Sometimes Henry's rod, to the faint disapproval of his novelist sponsor, indulges in frivolities. If he touches the tip of his rod to a bottle of bourbon, it will then point to caches of bourbon anywhere in the house but will ignore scotch, not having had any instructions about scotch. The rod will also locate missing people, silver quarters tossed in bushes, and outboard motors dropped in lakes. But after his Bermuda success, Henry properly