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**At Home in Weird Company**

**High Life and Learning Are  
Combined by Van Vechten**

**"The Blind Bow Boy" Has Some Posers for  
Edison in Conversation of Sophisticated New  
Yorkers Who Know Art as Well as Cocktails**

To read one of Carl Van Vechten's books is to feel like the victim of an Edison information test—except that the information is of quite a different sort from that which Edison requires for a job in his works. Van Vechten knows a lot and he loves to let you know it, not with a pedagogic seriousness, but as who should say: "Ah, ha! Caught you that time!"

Take, for example, the passage from "The Blind Bow Boy" that reads: "Everything one called modern a year or two ago is old-fashioned: Freud, Mary Garden, Einstein, Windham Lewis, Dada, the Six, vers libre, Sem Benelli, Clive Bell, radio, the Ziegfeld Follies, cubism, Sacha Guitry, Ezra Pound, the Little Review, vorticism, Marcel Proust, The Dial, uranians, Gordon Craig, prohibition, the young intellectuals, Sherwood Anderson, normalcy, Guillaume Apollinaire, Charlie Chaplin, screens in stage decoration, **Aleister Crowley**, the Russian Ballet, fireless cookers, The Chauve Souris, Margot Asquith, ectoplasm, Eugene Goossens, the tango, Jacques Copeau, negro dancing." On this intelligence test, we'll admit that Sem Benelli, uranians, Goossens and Copeau find us among the unenlightened.

Van Vechten loves to name the pictures on the walls, the books on the table, and the furniture in one of his luxurious rooms, not to show off, but just to caper. No one can possibly begrudge him the good time he has in doing it. He also loves to be just as improper as he can be, like a little boy being impudent to his aunt to try out the precise point when reprimand will give place to spanking.

One must be frightfully sober-minded to begrudge him these cavortings of ribaldry, or, on the other hand, to find them amusing. The effort to shock is so patent that, like the stewed turnips, it leaves us cold. The one really amusing example of these efforts is, we find on discreet inquiry, not original at all, but an antique smoking room wheeze.

It is not surprising that we have gone thus far without coming to the substance of "The Blind Bow Boy" at all. For here is a book in which the decoration far overbalances the substance. There is a story, to be sure, but "only a very little one." It concerns the induction of the young and ingenuous Harold Prewett into the excessively sophisticated lives of a group whom he is ready to concede are beautiful and damned.

Van Vechten conventionalizes them into bright and decorative and absurd but assuredly not damnable figures. Swinging round the circle of complexity, they have arrived at the simplicity of a complete individualism. The author assures us that they are not bored. We should be. But then, we don't lay claim to being a sophisticated soul. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf; price, \$2.50 net.)