

*The Breath of the Runners*, by Mary Mears. owes much of its strength to an appreciation of the value of contrast. There is, to begin with, the contrast of stage setting, the scene shifting from the

art circles in New York to the studios in Rome and Paris. And secondly, there is a more significant contrast between the two principal characters in the story, two young women whose careers are traced from the hour when the ambition first comes upon them to study sculpture down through the years of toil and discouragement and uncertain progress until they work out their respective destinies. In her symbolic title the author would apparently say that the struggle for fame in art is like the desperate straining of runners in a race, whose breathing comes in quick, painful gasps as they press onward towards the goal. As in other races, there are among those who run for fame some who would win by foul means if not by fair, and others who count a clear conscience a higher victory. Such is the contrast between the natures of Beulah and Enid, the one deliberately flinging away a golden opportunity rather than take an unfair advantage of her friend; the other contemptibly creeping into Beulah's studio and wantonly destroying the patient work of months because she felt herself being distanced in the race. In the end it is the unscrupulous runner who reaches the goal, but only after passing through the gateway of death; while the other, who has been distanced on the path to fame, finds a truer contentment in a husband's love. There is much knowledge of the art world, much keen insight into the hearts of men and women, and no small amount of healthful philosophy of life in this unpretentious story, *The Breath of the Runners*.