

will hate me for it, but he reminds me of Hemingway. His first preoccupation is to show that what appears to be a massacre is really an art form. Get far enough away, and a disease becomes positively symphonic. A quiet beginning with a few sporadic cases. Then the crashing splendors of the great epidemics. Finally a dying down to a peaceful equilibrium when the former agent of pestilences causes an occasional headache or sore throat. Such a view would not have consoled most of the thirty million or so persons who had typhus between 1914 and 1924. But if Dr. Zinsser was one of them, as he may well have been, for he certainly has followed typhus about the world, it probably consoled him. So his philosophy is a real philosophy.

Seen through his eyes, the vast muddle and misery of war and disease begins to take on a pattern, as the rout after Caporetto did for Hemingway. He even produces the equivalent of the Old Lady, a "literary friend," who unfortunately succumbs to the vigor of his argument in Chapter II. Nevertheless there are enough digressions to allow us to form a fair idea of whom our author doesn't like. It is a formidable list, including popularizers of science, communists, bankers, new-dealers, Gertrude Stein, Whitehead, and T. S. Eliot, and people whose Christian name is Mungo.

Indeed the book might be called an exercise in digression. And it will be read for the digressions. Its readers will learn what Shelley was thinking about when he wrote about a cloud, why the sage Thales did not marry, when people in mourning started wearing black, and how George Washington is instructed to deal with fleas. In these digressions the author shows a varied learning, and it is clear that he has a large enough store of it to pick out those particular items which make up the pattern that he desires. I like these displays of obscure learning. We found them in Norman Douglas, James Branch Cabell, and Aldous Huxley,

and in the pages of the *Journal of Experimental Medicine*, and in the pages of the *Journal of Experimental Medicine*, and in the pages of the *Journal of Experimental Medicine*.

Nevertheless, just as I can occasionally catch Cabell and Huxley napping, so I can catch Zinsser. For example, the habit of phthorophagy, or louse-eating, practised by the Budini, is attributed to them by Herodotus, who lived over two thousand years before Wanley, the source here quoted for the anecdote. Herodotus also used the compound word for the custom which I have transliterated above. Read Herodotus, Dr. Zinsser. Like you, he loved digression, and enjoyed tracing historical events to obscure causes. There are a few other slips whose detection I leave to the learned and perspicacious reader.

I wish, too, our author had sometimes spread his net a little more widely. Since violent headache is one of the most striking symptoms of typhus, I should have liked to hear his views on the nature of the fatal disease prevalent among the Sumerians five thousand years ago, whose main feature seems to have been a very intense headache. And at the other end, I should like to hear his views on the quite recent work of Elton, who has succeeded in predicting mouse epidemics correctly some years ahead.

Never mind, Dr. Zinsser must do it again, for unless I am greatly mistaken, this book is going to sell, and the public will ask for more. I do not know of any books on similar topics aimed at American audiences, though of course we have them in Europe. The medical interpretation of history is great fun. There are two ways of doing it. Like Maclaurin in "Post Mortem" and "Mere Mortals" one may reconstruct the medical history of great men and women, Mohammed's fits and Louis XIV's fistula, and thus show how history was influenced at various points. Or one may deal with diseases of ordinary men.

Here I am inclined to join issue with our author. Granting the importance of epidemics, I am still inclined to think that chronic diseases affecting a whole population and permanently lowering its vitality have counted for more in history than pestilences. For example, I do not think the British would ever have conquered India if their way had not been prepared



HANS ZINSSER

by the malaria parasite, and I incline to the view that the American Civil War was won by the hookworm rather than Ulysses S. Grant. So if we must put down the fall of Rome to non-human agencies, I am prepared to back Jones's theory of malaria against Zinsser's epidemic hypothesis.

At the present moment I think such theories may be rather valuable. Since Spengler appropriated Flinders Petrie's theory of the inevitable rise and fall of civilizations we have been rather too apt to believe in our own approaching doom. This gives an excellent excuse to people who are disgusted with politics and would like to sit back anyway. Now whatever else is going to smash our civilization, it probably won't be a disease. So let's all start believing that disease decivilized our predecessors.

At the end of his book our author tells us that this book is not "popular science," a form of production which he detests, and I am inclined to believe that he is quite right. I do not take issue with him on this point. I get some of my income from Mr. John D. Rockefeller, and endeavor to persuade him, or rather his representatives, that what I am doing is worth while. I also get money from the British people, and I think they have a right to be told in words of one syllable what I am doing with it.

The average man and woman derives most of his or her ideas about disease from advertisements, and much of the rest from folklore. I feel that if I try to replace these ideas by something a little more accurate, even if not as accurate as the *Journal of Experimental Medicine*, I am doing something worth while. Dr. Zinsser does not have to read my efforts. They are not meant for him. But he need not detest them.

No. He must face the fact that he is on the way to becoming one of our leading popular scientists. If he succeeds he will at least be able to look forward in old age to an income somewhat larger than he would have earned as the reward of a life spent in a rather heroic struggle with disease. After all, it is no crime to write well. Nicolle, who discovered that typhus was transmitted by lice, was a novelist as well as a scientist.

This book will appeal to three classes of readers. First, those miserable sinners who like popular science. Secondly, amateurs of history who enjoy novel viewpoints and curious anecdotes rather than ponderous and systematic works. Thirdly, people who like to study the reactions of a vigorous human mind to its environment. Perhaps this is the best recommendation of all. Few scientists, even popular scientists, let themselves go about as many different subjects as completely as Dr. Zinsser has done. At the end of the book we can draw up a comprehensive and highly individual catalogue of what he likes and dislikes. I doubt if he will find a single reader who will agree completely with both columns of his list. But read it yourself and find out.

If enough people read it perhaps Dr. Zinsser will do it again. And that will be to the advantage both of science and of literature.

Moments of Peril

THE BREATHLESS MOMENT. Pictures assembled by Philip Van Doren Stern. Introduction and descriptive text by Herbert Asbury. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1935. \$3.

Reviewed by ROBERT DISRAELI

WHEN I received this book and looked through it for the first time the effect upon me was cumulative. I opened it to the first page and there was in one photograph the story of that stark tragedy which was visited upon San Francisco on that memorable April in nineteen-six. A long and deserted street filled with dust and ruin, the aftermath of the earthquake. Then followed pictures of hurricanes in Florida, with the trees bending in agony before the wind; tornadoes in Kansas grotesque as gigantic mushrooms; waterspouts at sea, and other phenomena of nature that can be so catastrophic to man. While these were all interesting and excellent news-photos, the absence of the human element left me emotionally untouched since we tie up experiences of others with our own.

But as I turned the pages and saw pictured all the calamities that are visited upon man by his defiance of nature, of society, of the machine, a chill crept slowly through my body. I saw pictures of sinking ships, wrecked cars, overturned locomotives, and smashed airplanes. The machines striking against their masters and annihilating them with a horrible and complete efficiency. I saw in the pictures of drivers being hurled to death out of colliding and somersaulting race cars, and in the picture of the remains of a stunt parachute jumper who defied death once too often, a totally unnecessary tribute to the sadistic entertainment of our leisure hours. The photographs of those dying legally by the firing squad, the rope, the guillotine, the sword, and the electric chair pictured to me their agonies. I saw and I could hear the moans of the victims.

When I had turned the book I began to think about the causes of these things. I was over in my mind the causes that would give rise to the events which these photographs revealed. The feeling of chilly horror became complete. I rushed out (I was alone in my studio) to participate in the trite contacts of the everyday street scene.

The camera is today the true recorder of those phases of life which historians generally gloss over, but which are highly important since they show us the reality, the grossness, or the horror of the evanescent moment. How inadequate is the narrative of an event as compared to its recording by the camera! In a picture of the disastrous Triangle Waist factory fire we see the bodies of girls lying on the street smashed and broken like useless crockery. Immediately we react sympathetically. There rises within us a feeling of horror and of indignation at the causes that make such things possible. Would

we react as quickly to the yellowed accounts of that tragedy written by the reporters of that period? The callousness of time stands between us and those writings; but a photograph of that tragedy or of any human beings in peril, in agony, or death, is timeless. The camera has ensnared time and the picture is of yesterday, today, or of tomorrow.

This is a picture book that must be taken seriously. It is not entertainment, but rather a sad comment on unnecessary death, on cruelty, and on lust. It pictures us as still the playthings of nature and as the unlucky victims of human fallibilities. To many, the contents of this book will be an incentive for hours of discussion about the events and conditions pictured.

The Luxury of Liberty

WAS EUROPE A SUCCESS? By Joseph Wood Krutch. New York: Farrar & Rinehart. 1935. \$1.

Reviewed by LAURENCE STAPLETON

THE praise of these essays will be higher than they deserve, and the blame more bitter. Few will care to distinguish between, on the one hand, Mr. Krutch's sentiment for liberty and hatred of "Marxian" fanaticism; on the other, his shoddy historical theses and his confused intimations of political principle.

Although cleverly defended, Mr. Krutch's argument fails because his point of view is so parochial. European thought and art are *not* superior to all others, and were not always the product of freedom and individualism. And communism is not eliminated when the sores of its leaders are uncovered, any more than the French revolution is disgraced by an exposé of the Jacobins.

"Was Europe a Success?" is strongest in its defense of liberty, a term, however, which is not defined. It is meaningless to say that "individuality, and non-conformity, and freedom, are goods in themselves." They are goods only in view of the ends which they serve. The ends which they serve are the happiness and well-being of men, will make that freedom more than a luxury (as Mr. Krutch admits it now is)? To answer, he would have to indicate the economic basis of his thought, which he refuses to do.

One analogy is suggestive. Mr. Krutch compares liberal distress at the advance of the left with the distress of an intelligent Roman at the rise of Christianity. "There must be other old Pagans like myself." One may point out, to reassure him, that Christianity absorbed much of the best of ancient thought, and that "Europe" would be but the poorer without the legacy of the Christian church. And finally, Christianity might have grown up with less struggle, with fewer cultural restrictions, had the Old Pagan pitched in to build a better foundation. "Europe" and the liberal likewise need some restorative stronger than the embalming fluid of the status quo.



QUEEN VICTORIA OF SPAIN BIDS GOOD-BYE TO LOYAL FOLLOWERS AS ROYAL FAMILY GOES INTO EXILE (APRIL 4, 1931)
From "The Breathless Moment."

Partners in Blunder

(Continued from first page)

type most dangerous to communism—those who make it look silly and ridiculous. Better save your two dollars and a half. You won't even get a thrill unless you happen to have a sly salacious bent—there is one filthy little word-picture near the end of the book—if the Postal Department lets it get through the mail. It isn't worth \$2.50 though—you can see the same kind of primitive self-expression any day drawn in chalk by some dirty little boy on brick walls, shutters, or sidewalks in any shabby street.

["Partners in Blunder" is both a politico-economic attack on our present system, and a factual study of what is going on in American business. It seemed best to the Editors to have two reviews of the book, one of its political, one of its factual aspects. We therefore asked General Hugh S. Johnson to discuss its implications, and the economic and business expert, William O. Scroggs, to examine the facts submitted as evidence.—THE EDITOR.]

A REVIEW BY WILLIAM O. SCROGGS

THIS book is not merely a criticism of modern business methods; it is an appeal for the destruction of the existing business organization and for the creation of a new system in which "all men must stand primarily in the position of consumers." It is the authors' thesis that under the present regime producers and consumers have nothing in common, and that in the clash of their opposing interests consumers invariably get the worst of it.

On superficial examination the book appears to be a product of painstaking research. It teems with carefully documented quotations from scientists, engineers, economists, government officials, trade journals, and newspapers. There is a patent effort to make it appear that the authors have assembled a great mass of facts and after weighing them carefully have formulated their conclusions in the most approved scientific manner. But on dipping further into the volume one discovers that its authors have done nothing of the kind. What they offer as the product of their research is nothing more than a skilful piece of muckraking. Now there is certainly muck a-plenty in some places, and it is well that it should be exposed to disinfectant sunlight. To the extent that the book does this fairly and honestly it serves a good purpose, though much of the evidence is only supplementary to what has been presented by other hands.

It is not the authors' purpose, however, merely to expose the shortcomings of modern business by giving illustrations of the ballyhoo of high-pressure salesmen, of the inanity and the trickery of some forms of advertising, and of various other methods of exploiting the consumer. They maintain that these evils are only by-products of a greater evil—namely, the profit system. According to their thesis, profits are the result of successful efforts to get something for nothing. They are fully aware that the destruction of profits means the overthrow of the capitalist system, and they regard such an outcome as not only desirable but inevitable.

It is not the purpose of this review to discuss the political and social philosophy of Messrs. Matthews and Shallcross, but to consider the facts which they adduce in support of their views and their method of interpreting these facts. As nearly as I can estimate, they cite approximately 750 "cases" from all kinds of sources to build up their indictment. Their method is not that of the research worker but that of the prosecuting attorney. Everything which is in any way favorable to the accused is rigorously excluded from their presentation of the evidence.

It is possible to give here only a few examples of their methods of selecting and interpreting data. Let us begin with the homely business of bottling soft drinks. Figures are taken from a food-trade journal to show that the soft-drink bottling industry gathers in \$650,000,000 annually from American consumers. Then we are told by the authors that "something like eighty per cent of this sum is profit to the bottlers and retailers." An industry with total annual costs of \$130,000,000 and profits of \$520,000,000 seems

too good to be true. But to prove their case the authors cite the same trade journal as showing that the ingredients in a bottle of soda pop cost slightly more than half a cent. Since a bottle of soda pop retails for five cents, they conclude that the profit is "something like eighty per cent." The veriest boob of a small tradesman is familiar enough with wages, interest, rent, taxes, insurance, and expenses of upkeep to know that profits are not the difference between selling prices and the cost of the materials used.

Rarely, if ever, do the authors' facts justify the conclusions drawn from them. A few more examples will suffice to show their methods. They quote one lone automotive engineer as speaking of "the desirability of building automobiles for a limited life." This statement is duly documented, and is the sole basis for this sweeping verdict: "Just how to make automobiles that will, like the famous one-horse shay, suddenly fall apart at a predetermined time is a problem which engineering skill has not yet solved, although engineering minds desire it and are planning towards it." Again, a physician is quoted as saying that preventive medicine and a lowered death rate will not diminish the people's need of doctors because "the longer they live the more medical service they require." This rather trite observation, also carefully documented, is a basis for the charge that "the mainsprings of life are poisoned in a system which suffers exploitation of any human need, whether for health, medicine, food, or clothing, for the sake of profit."

By such methods of distortion and exaggeration the authors strive to make it appear that the government, the churches, the schools and colleges, the learned professions, and the newspapers are being made to serve the interests of "the moneyed and money-making class." A diligent search has resulted in the finding of but two instances in which the authors speak a good word for anything or anybody. In the first place, they admit that the market for industrial goods is conducted on a fairly rational basis. When a manufacturer buys his industrial equipment he acts with knowledge and understanding which is lacking in the market for consumers' goods. This admission greatly weakens their plea for the abolition of the profit system; for the profit motive is just as keen in the rational market for industrial goods as it is in the irrational market for consumers' goods.

Again, the authors have a good word for the government of Soviet Russia because it placed a pair of galoshes on trial and found them guilty of shoddiness and poor workmanship. Such a thing, they say, could never happen under a capitalist regime which "thrives upon shoddiness and adulteration of goods." The authors also announce with much satisfaction that other Soviet products, including phonographs, bicycles, electric irons, and household utensils, are to be brought to trial before the bar of consumers' justice. They overlook the fact that these shoddy materials have been made under a regime where the profit system does not exist, and where experience so far has shown that the abolition of profits has not resulted in a square deal for the consumer. Indeed, in their exultation over the Russian procedure they have come very near to giving their case away.

Girl in the Sun

By KATHERINE GARRISON CHAPIN

HERE on the smooth white sand, by the blue water,
Sleek brown body and limbs of a sea god's daughter,
Powerful, indolent and sophisticated,
Studied simplicity of nakedness, decorated
With scarlet mouth and toes and pointed finger tips;
Short white tunic drawn tight over breast and hips,
Small breast, strong thighs,
Anointed with perfumed oil,
Complete in the sun she lies.

Yet there is a strange kinship
With a bedecked and powdered queen, who played
Lovely and indifferent, at being a dairy maid;
Nor heard the long low wake
Of thunder. There is little sound
In a world about to break.

A Story of Revolution Told without Dogma

LEAN MEN. By Ralph Bates. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1935. \$2.50.

Reviewed by WILLIAM HARLAN HALE

ANOMADIC Englishman becoming a labor organizer for the International in Barcelona during the recent Spanish revolution—this is the character around whom the amazing narrative of "Lean Men" is built. And it is built in such a way that everyone who is interested in new proletarian fiction and the controversy around it ought to stop and take notice.

The regular objection to the working-class fiction of many writers like Michael Gold, Josephine Herbst, and Robert Cantwell has been that, despite the vigor and heroism of their themes, their characters are often mere wooden pegs of dogma, illustrative of Marxian terminology, but without blood of their own.

Here is the importance of Ralph Bates's book; he takes a group of Barcelona dockworkers, communist organizers, anarchists, and makes them come alive as individuals, without propaganda. He is able to

concerned with organizing communist industrial cells, conducting workers' meetings, and seeing the final disappointments and breakdowns of his groups, he does not fail to discover many separate individuals, both strong and pathetic. There is, in a higher economic sphere, the Trepatt family of metalsmiths, inheritors of a long bourgeois tradition. There is the young cellist in a disreputable music-hall—a tender portrait of the frustrated artist. There is Teresa, a girl revolutionist, a waif of the plains, drawn with lyrical passion.

And behind all this—or opposite it, presented in a sort of counterpoint—is the Englishman's memory of England, his Browning-like nostalgia for it, and the brooding thought of two Englishwomen with whom he had become simultaneously involved, and from whom he had escaped to Spain. From them constantly come, across the sea, snatches of music and affection; and to these he turns when, in frequent moments, his faith in the Cause is at an ebb.

So varied a narrative defies synopsis; one can only say that, despite numerous blemishes of form, it is the most vivid and convincing of recent working-class novels.



THIS POLICE DOG GOES TO SCHOOL EVERY DAY
And the children use him as a model for sketching.—From "Willingly to School."

do that, in the first place, perhaps because he himself has had so much experience with revolutionary action—as opposed to word-action—that he does not have to use his fiction as a tract. He does it, in the second place, because he has a rich and virile imagination, an ear attuned to the varieties of speech, an eye for grace as well as brutality.

Incidents and characters of the novel are, we are told, largely transcribed from actual experience in Spain. The book thus takes on a loose, rambling, autobiographical flavor; but what it loses in invention here it gains in the strength of actual thrilling deed. Within the first hundred pages the author, or protagonist, has dangerously smuggled a revolutionary leader out across the Pyrenees; within the second he has joined in a high-minded hold-up of dire consequence; within the third he has celebrated Alfonso's abdication with the mobs.

But while the protagonist is anxiously

A Scrip of Joy

WILLINGLY TO SCHOOL. Photos by Wendell MacRae, text by the staff of Fox Meadow School. Foreword by William H. Kilpatrick, Teachers College. New York: Round Table Press. 1935. \$3.

Reviewed by CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

IT'S an odd thing that we generally suppose pain and death have more News Value than happiness. A book of photographs is published containing scenes of misery, disaster, and violence; fires, earthquakes, foundering; collisions, lynchings, the electric chair. It is assumed that everyone will be interested, and gape with sickly fascination; like socialice at the Hauptmann trial.

Here, at the same time, appears a book, mostly photographs, so fresh, so sane, so truly touching and healthy, so beautiful with the beauty of the commonplace, that there is danger of its being missed. This book sums up in pictures of infectious charm the whole progress of primary education in a generation. It is what Sir Philip Sidney called a Scrip of Joy; it shows children in every phase of their schooling, in and outdoors, with books, pets, flowers, machines; gay, curious, intent, unconscious, fulfilling the purest bliss of humanity—to be happy doing. Every one of these superb pictures is worth dwelling on; every one is a story in itself and in those strangely different and mysterious faces how much there is to learn. A famous educator has written a foreword for the book and other famous educators have praised it, in their humdrum way. But it's infinitely better than they say: it's laughter and pathos and fun. Forget News Value. This book has heart and soul value; it is the essence of a religion that never knew an agnostic; who touches it touches the meaning of man.