

SPEAKING OF BOOKS

FOR THOSE able to read between the lines and evaluate critically the most obvious and harmless-sounding statements, I most heartily commend George Seldes' latest opus, *The Catholic Crisis*. Though it lacks some of the objectivity of his other book on the Mother Church, *The Vatican*, this new effort, nevertheless, is marked by commendable restraint of the author's prejudices.

Mr. Seldes falls into the trap that has ensnared so many of his ideological compeers: the web of labels. Men and their organizations cease to be complex organisms, differing from geological specimens because of the fine nuances and individual shadings which are constantly in flux and become bloodless, immutable concepts. I can project Mr. Seldes (in spirit) back to the beginning of this century. There he sits among that then startling group of earnest young souls called the Liberal Intellectuals. They were a little confused and very unhappy over their own confusion. A tidal wave of rebellion swept their ranks and all labels were thrown overboard. The ship of categories was neatly scuttled. Those brave young souls, now arrived at middle-age or beyond, are still floating aimlessly about on a puny raft fashioned from the jetsam of their old hated ship of categories. Having been deceived into believing that getting rid of labels would solve all their problems, they now recognize the deceit and have gathered up those old labels to their

bosoms. So now everyone is either a Fascist or a Communist, a Catholic or a Protestant, an Arab or a Jew, a sheep or a goat.

And with all their raillery at the Church for its herding of mankind into the good and the bad, the saved and the damned, they make precisely the same judgments—usually with Dorothy Thompson sitting in the judgment seat. When Dorothy Thompson fails him, Mr. Seldes falls back on the eminent Father Cox, of Pittsburgh, for his interpretation of Holy Writ. They and the rest of the 'sheep' are easily identified by Mr. Seldes. Unfortunately — or perhaps fortunately—the rest of us cannot tag them so unerringly. Then Mr. Hilaire Belloc, Cardinal Hinsley, Archbishop of Westminster, the Most Rev. Michael J. Curley, Archbishop of Baltimore, and others are lightly consigned to life among the 'goats.'

The burden of Mr. Seldes' book, as the title suggests, is that the Catholic Church, like the nations of the world and all human institutions, is in the throes of conflict from within born of political and economic dislocation. Of course, my information may be a little antique and I admit it is not taken from Vatican press releases, but I am under the vague impression that the finances of the Catholic hierarchy are not yet completely dissipated among warring factions, and I am further convinced that the Papal Court is far more interested in the preservation of the ancient Divine Authority of the Church than

in the favor of temporal governments (so long as those governments are not antagonistic).

THE terms 'Crusader' and 'Reformer' have fallen upon evil days. But time was when they had no such connotation as we of this day ascribe to them. The reason for the decline and death of the honorable titles (like that of Kentucky Colonel, or a gentleman and a scholar) lies in the type of men who preempted those rôles and made of them lucrative businesses rather than selfless public services. With the growth of industrialization in America there arose a horde of demagogues to trade upon the ignorance or semi-education of masses of economically transformed dolts.

South of the Mason-Dixon line a fine culture was giving way to a new economy from the sixties through the nineties. And that period produced a long line of great men in the 'Old South.' I venture the opinion (conscious of snipers in the ambush of history) that few of his era will loom larger to posterity than Josephus Daniels, Secretary of the Navy, under his intellectual frater, Woodrow Wilson. And now we have a book about this crusading, reforming editor, the man best fitted to write it, Mr. Daniels himself. But it is inaccurate to say that *Tar Heel Editor* is about Mr. Daniels, because it is a fine piece of reporting of the times in which it has its being. The book is more than reporting, however. It is the best kind of confession story, an intimate, gossipy, uncolored, honest record of all that Mr. Daniels has picked up during his early life about his neighbors, friends, political associates and the social forces that engulfed them.

This is only the first of four volumes, and deals with Mr. Daniels' youth. When the great task this gentleman has set himself is completed, we should have an amazing history of North Carolina, perhaps the best documentary evidence on any state in the Union.

Mr. Daniels was a liberal, in a day when liberalism involved great risks. It was an extremely unpopular belief and brought down upon its professors all the cruel punishments that youthful culture could devise. Unscrupulous antagonists have never ceased trying to blacken the name and reputation of Mr. Daniels and those who fought shoulder to shoulder with him for better schools, better conditions for labor, against bigotry, drunkenness and political corruption. In the ranks of the leaders who fought this battle with Daniels were men like Woodrow Wilson, William Jennings Bryan, Thomas Nelson Page, Sidney Lanier. These and many others forgot their own advantage to bring to America those social reforms upon which F.D.R. has based his own crusading.

Tar Heel Editor is as American as chewing gum in both context and style. Those who fail to read it will have missed an important facet of what is really America.

ANOTHER volume, quite different from Mr. Daniels', *The Living Tradition*, by Simeon Strunsky, is yet a valuable addendum to it. Mr. Strunsky's book almost begins where Mr. Daniels' series will leave off.

The Living Tradition, though subtitled 'Change and America,' really attempts to show the continuity of the American Way, from the beginnings of this nation to today.

This book is a happy, hopeful antidote to the religion of gloom and despair ladled out by both left wing radicals and right wing reactionaries in this era of contradictions and confusion. Its solid, authentic reasoning and flavor of normal people (rather than the usual neurotic and frustrated geniuses) made my Christmas season happier.

LEON BRYCE BLOCH

MOMENT IN PEKING. By Lin Yutang. New York: The John Day Company. 1939. 815 pages. \$3.00.

TO ANYONE familiar with the family life of China it will occasion no surprise to learn that the characters in Lin Yutang's absorbing novel, *Moment in Peking*, number more than forty; and that a prefatory page should be devoted to genealogical charts in which the family position of each character is clearly depicted. No story of the life of a Chinese can be told sincerely and completely without embracing the story of his family as well. This is not the simple family unit of husband and wife and children as in America, but a more complex entity consisting of parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, nephews, nieces and, in some instances, concubines and faithful old servants. A complicated but common-sense code of manners and morals regulates the conduct of each member of the family toward the others, mitigates, if it does not prevent, disputes, and out of it emerges a family unity which is the outstanding social fact about China.

What a treat is in store for those who for the first time learn about the intricate and interesting family life of China through the pages of this brilliant book! It is more revealing than half a lifetime in China itself. Taoist philosophers, Confucian scholars, concubines, slave girls, domineering grandmothers—people who have before been only names or mysterious and unbelievable characters come to life and march across the pages to take their predetermined places in the life of the family. The canvas is broad and the perspective deep, for the story covers the lives of several families of different social strata over a period falling within the lifetime of

the author. Unlike other historical novels of serious importance, this was not written as a result of research into musty old records, but is about a period through which the author lives, scenes with which he is familiar and people he knew. It is at once a story of entrancing interest, a history of the period from the Boxer days to the present time and a complete compendium of social usages. A thousand years from now historians could accurately reconstruct the present-day civilization of China without recourse to any other authority than this book.

The central figure, the heroine of the story, is Mulin, the daughter of a wealthy Peking merchant who has turned the management of his business over to his brother-in-law and devotes himself to collecting art objects and studying Taoist philosophy. The Boxer outbreak in Peking drove the family in flight to Hangchow. On the way Mulin was lost, was kidnapped and held for ransom. The ransom was paid by a chance acquaintance of her father, a Confucian scholar and government official, whose son she later married. Shortly after her marriage the Republican Revolution of 1911 brought an end to the Manchu dynasty, with the consequent fall in the prestige of the family to which she now belonged. The Japanese invasion of 1937 brought another crisis in her life for her son, and his cousins volunteered for service in the Chinese army. Later the Japanese soldiers invaded her refuge in Hangchow, struck and insulted her, and she joined that great mass of millions of homeless refugees who trekked to the West to build their lives anew.

The China of the present in which Mulin is playing her part is still in a state of flux, but I feel sure that most readers of this book will agree with me that Japan will never be able to conquer a country composed of Mulin and her sisters and their multitudinous relatives.

—CARL CROW

NO COMPROMISE: THE CONFLICT BETWEEN TWO WORLDS. By Melvin Rader. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1939. 403 pages. \$3.50.

AS THE title suggests, this work is basically a plea for united opposition of all those who still believe in the significance

of reason in human affairs and in the desirability of a search for justice and social well-being against the Fascist régime. Yet it is not, as many a recent work with the same general purpose has been, simply a savage denunciation, nor yet is it an analysis in detail of the failure of those régimes to achieve certain ends which they profess in the economic sphere and in the solution of problems of class struggle. Dr. Rader does, indeed, touch on this failure. Yet his basic concern is to analyze the underlying philosophy of totalitarianism; to show its heritage, and to suggest the degree to which it is a false front, disguising a very ugly building. It may be at once surprising and perturbing to the average reader to discover how considerable a history the current anti-intellectualist philosophy possesses, and to learn how distinguished are the names that have given aid and comfort to its making—particularly, one might add, the German names.

But, this apart, what is especially impressive is Dr. Rader's demonstration of the degree to which an appeal for idealism against the somewhat narrow materialism now so widely prevalent has itself been a technique to persuade men, not simply that they cannot live by bread alone, but that they should endeavor to live without it for the sake of the power of disembodied abstractions, such as state and race, themselves mere stalking horses for maniacs in the seats of the mighty. Finally, and most important, chapter three of this book, entitled 'Valuations: Sentimental or Scientific?' is the most thoroughgoing and patiently reasoned demonstration of the errors in anti-rationalist ethical relativism that the present reviewer has encountered. Numerous essays have, indeed, been addressed to this theme. But they have all too often assumed what was to be proved, and, secure in the conviction that rationalism was in need chiefly of propaganda, have failed to expound the true bases on which it can legitimately rest. In particular, to show that rationalism and universalism in ethics are not unconnected is especially valuable, not only as an indictment of Fascist ideology, but as a warning against that subtle crypto-Fascism that is the chief danger we ourselves confront, a danger made the more insidious because it has the apparent sanction of great names known to be in the forefront of the fight against unreason.

—THOMAS I. COOK

EUROPE: VERSAILLES TO WARSAW. By Ronald Stuart Kain. *The H. W. Wilson Company*. This compact volume seeks to bridge the years between the two wars in Europe by providing the reader with the texts of all the pertinent treaties, with excerpts from newspaper and magazine articles, the bulletins of various official and unofficial organizations devoted to study of foreign affairs, and other material chiefly of a factual nature. The documents are connected by much over-simplified paragraphs by its editor-compiler, Ronald Stuart Kain. Unfortunately, these transitional passages do not make the work more readable for the layman, and for the professional historian and the student the work is too tabloid in arrangement for use. Has a valuable and well arranged bibliography, although limited to English-language publications; incidentally, the eye of this reviewer noted the preponderance there of *Living Age* citations.

JOURNAL AS AMBASSADOR TO GREAT BRITAIN. By Charles G. Dawes. *The Macmillan Company*. General Dawes publishes the daily journal he kept between May 1929, when President Hoover nominated him Ambassador to Great Britain, and February 1932, when he resigned to become head of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. Here are collected the envoy's experiences at the London Naval Conference in 1930, in the League of Nations' crisis over the Manchurian grab (in which 'Hell 'n Maria' could not persuade the MacDonald government to back up Secretary of State Stimson); his opinion of such people as André Tardieu ('my old friend of war days'), the Prince of Wales, whose 'charm and manner of friendliness' impressed the General, Lady Astor and 'her genius,' and Ramsay MacDonald, of whom it appears the American Ambassador was genuinely fond. Only rarely anecdotal, the author discloses a forthright grasp of the realities of his mission in London.

RECONQUEST OF MEXICO. By Nathaniel and Sylvia Weyl. *Oxford University Press*. This is a definite social analysis rather than a travelogue. It is refreshingly different from the usual run of recent books on Mexico—meaty with facts based on recorded happenings with ample references to sources. Particular light is shed on the recent oil controversies and their effect on U. S. interests.

THE SOUTH TO POSTERITY. *By Douglas Southall Freeman. Charles Scribner's Sons.* Some excellent source material for students of the War Between the States and the period of reconstruction. The author gives much needed explanations of the discrepancies so apparent in previous presentations by drawing on a wide variety of writers of the period. There are suggested avenues of approach to many problems of the 1860's that have never before been adequately explained. The book contains a really fine bibliography of contemporary sources, many of which are magazines still being published.

MODERN POLITICAL DOCTRINES. *Edited by Alfred Zimmern. Oxford University Press.* This is a book of selections from the works of leading philosophers, statesmen, and philosopher-statesmen of modern times. It is divided into four parts. The first, on government, reveals pungently the issue between the rule of law and arbitrariness as it has shown itself from Burke to Hitler. The quotations make clear in themselves that the underlying problem here is not simply democracy versus dictatorship, and that democracy may be espoused by those who are not believers in the rule of law; though, lacking that belief, their régime is apt to commit suicide. The second part, on the economic problem, not only reveals the issues between classic economic liberalism and the socialists' concept in its reformist aspect, but shows also the deeper gulf between those who, taking the Marxist viewpoint, desire a completely new order of society, and constitutionalists of all sorts, socialist or capitalist. The third section reveals the growth of national aspiration from Herder on. Finally, selections from post-war commentators illumine the frustrated search for the rule of law in the international sphere.

ALL THE TOMORROWS. *By Naomi Lane Babson, Reynal & Hitchcock.* Out of the author's many years' residence in the Far East, her affection for the Chinese people, her indignation at the falling of Japanese bombs in China's swarming cities, grew this big episodic novel. It opens on the China of the 1860's, when the feet of well-born women were painfully bound and stunted, and their lives impounded behind walls of inflexible tradition. It is in her evocation of the psychological conflicts deriving from the slow death

of ancient convention, the impact of Christian and Marxian ideals on a disorganized inhibited people, that Miss Babson achieves best results.

LOST LIBERTY? *By Joan and Jonathan Griffin. Oxford University Press.* The prologue of this work is a plea for the democracies to become genuinely democratic and to fight Fascism. The body of the work is an extraordinary indictment of the betrayal of Czecho-Slovakia. It argues not simply that Hitler was, as usual, perfidious, but that England, in particular, conspired with him deliberately to betray Czecho-Slovakia, and gently bribed France, who, on the whole, needed little urging to assist in that dastardly undertaking.

BOOKS ABROAD

PROLOGUE TO DRAMA

UNDECLARED WAR. *By Elizabeth Wisemann. London: Constable. 1939*

(Wickham Steed in the *Spectator*, London)

IF TRAGEDY is the conflict between right and right, this war is no tragedy, for it is a conflict between right and wrong. Should any be tempted to think since war began that the foes of Hitlerism have overstated both their own rightness and the wickedness of the Nazi system, they will do well to read Miss Wisemann's admirable study of the undeclared war which Nazi Germany was waging before war was declared. Her whole book was written by the end of July. Very wisely she has not attempted to bring it up to date. Thus it stands as a document, a record uninfluenced by the war itself. There is no better proof of her painstaking accuracy, or of the insight which it served, than the fact that her conclusions can be read in the light of war as though they had been reached since last September.

Her earlier work, *Czechs and Germans*, was and is the best exposition in English of the Bohemian problem that was mishandled in September, 1938, and fatally misjudged at Munich. Her *Undeclared War* deals more summarily with Hungary, Rumania, the Southern Slavs, the Poles, Ukrainians and Balts, as well as with Scandinavia and Switzerland. Here and there some detail

may need amplification, some adjective a little toning down. But, on the whole and as a whole, this book merits only praise. By publishing it unchanged Miss Wiskemann has rendered a service to all who may need, as the war goes on, a reminder of how things stood before it began. She has set up a 'point of coördination.'

More than one passage has now acquired rare irony. The forced migration of the Baltic Germans into the Third Reich, which intends to settle them in partitioned Poland and elsewhere, has added a pungent footnote to her description of Nazi influence among these people. She writes:

'In districts adjacent to Germany, like Danzig and Memel, the Nazis were helped first by their good fortune and skill in abolishing unemployment, the news of which made a good impression; and, secondly, by the intimidation they were able to practice. In districts farther away from the Reich, in Esthonia, or in Latvia, where some 60,000 Germans lived mostly in Riga, the Germans did not hear so much of the disagreeable discipline imposed in the Reich, but were readier to accept romantic accounts of how splendid everything had become, and particularly enjoyed the idea that they themselves constituted, not a dissident minority in a tiny State, but the advance posts of a mighty Empire, and that, as such, they had a claim to hitherto unformulated privilege.'

We may well wonder what these people are thinking today. Are they still beglamoured or have they found Hitler out—as some of our own Ministers tardily found him out? Nowhere does Miss Wiskemann speak more truly than in those pages of her 'Conclusion,' in which she analyzes the Nazi technique. In the pre-Munich days, she says, those who doubted Henlein's words, and pointed to the chauvinism of the Sudeten Germans, were ignored, because it was believed that the Henleinists could never be guilty even of the chauvinism of the Czechs since they complained of it so loudly. Today 'conditions in the Sudeten German districts and in Bohemia and Moravia show a ruthless oppression of the Czechs, with which the pre-Munich lives of the Sudeten Germans compare so favorably that there is no comparison. This throws light upon Nazi technique, or at least upon two of its principles. The first of these is, "Always denounce others for

things you would not hesitate to do yourself; abuse your enemy as oppressive, although you oppress ten times more grimly when you can." Why? "Because people are deceived into believing that you could not have the effrontery to do the things you yourself have so bitterly denounced."'

I hope that Lord Runciman, and some others, will have the courage to read this book.

ANATHEMA ON CRITICS

REVIEWING. By Virginia Woolf. London: Hogarth Press. 1939

(Y. Y. in the *New Statesman and Nation*, London)

MANY hard things have been said about reviewers—they have been compared to lice and all sorts of unpleasant creatures—but Virginia Woolf's verdict on them, in her new Hogarth Pamphlet, *Reviewing*, if less insulting, is surely the most contemptuous yet uttered: she tells them that they have ceased to be of any use in the world and that for various reasons it would be a great deal better if they were abolished. They are salt that has lost its savor; the caudal appendix of literature; weedy descendants of a tribe which the civilization of today, such as it is, is gradually squeezing out of existence.

Mrs. Woolf's essay, like all her work, is beautifully written, and reviewers could not ask to be dismissed to their doom in more graceful English. At the same time, her pessimism seems to me to be the result of a misunderstanding. She has overlooked the fact that, whatever people talk about, they also want to read and write about, whether it is books, birds, politics or the cinema. So long as hundreds of thousands of people are interested in books, they will talk and read about books.

The fact is, books to a large part of the public are news. They are news in much the same way in which Stock Exchange prices are news. And there is this also in common between the literary page and the financial page in the newspapers—that it is the purpose of each to provide the reader, not only with news, but with advice. It is the function of the reviewer to be at once a reporter and a guide. If he is lucky enough to come upon a work of genius—say a new book by Mr. de la Mare—he writes as a critic judging by

'eternal standards,' crying 'Eureka!' over his discovery of gold and giving reasons for the faith that is in him. Unfortunately, however, most books are not works of genius; and the reviewer has to measure them by a different standard. This is not difficult, and ought not to put a strain on his conscience. He realizes that there are two kinds of literature—permanent literature and temporary literature and that the best of temporary literature is both admirable and enjoyable in its own generation. And most of his energy will necessarily be devoted to discovering what in temporary literature is most admirable and enjoyable.

In doing this he has to think not only of himself but of the public. He must ask himself not only 'Do I like this book?' but 'Is it a good book of its kind—a book that will entertain the public for whom it is intended?'

But, protests Mrs. Woolf, there are so many reviewers nowadays with so many different opinions that, as guides to a choice of reading, they are merely bewildering and therefore useless. 'The reader asks the reviewer to tell him whether the poem is good or bad in order that he may decide whether to buy it or not. Sixty reviewers at once assure him that it is a masterpiece—and worthless. The clash of completely contradictory opinions cancel each other out.' But surely this clash of opinion is no new phenomenon. Johnson and Horace Walpole differed about the genius of Gray. Leigh Hunt and De Quincey held opposite opinions about the poetry of Keats. How much better this is than it would be to have all the critics repeating the judgments of the latest orthodoxy—echoes of the mass-mind of a coterie! And, in point of fact, the reader who looks for guidance to the reviewer does not read sixty reviews. As a rule, he has confidence in the taste of this or that reviewer because he

has found by experience that it usually accords with his own, and he ceases to set any store by the opinions of a reviewer who by his recommendations, he feels, has again and again 'let him down.'

Mrs. Woolf, however, attributes the decline and fall of reviewing, not only to the number of mutually contradictory reviewers, but to the fact that reviews have become 'shorter and quicker.' As regards the speed at which the modern reviewer has to work, I doubt whether that greatly hampers judgment. Reviewing was always good, bad, and indifferent. It remains good, bad, and indifferent today.

Mrs. Woolf, I see, raises the question of the value of the reviewer's office, not only to the reader but to the author. It seems to me that a reviewer's work may be of some accidental service to an author; but the reviewer does not write for the purpose of influencing authors any more than a sports writer writes for the purpose of improving the style of batsmen and bowlers. He has only one duty to authors—to be fair to them, to remember that they are human, and not to indulge too freely in the sadistic pleasure of flaying them alive.

Incidentally, of course, the good reviewer performs as great a service to the author as to the reader. In an age of publicity, he gives him publicity. He is the go-between between the public and literature, even if most of this is only temporary literature. In the present age of universal education, he is probably more necessary than ever before. I hold that the reviewer's is a reputable, essential, and vital craft—with a future. Mrs. Woolf has written the most charming of epitaphs on him—but it is an epitaph on a cenotaph. There is no corpse there—yet; and I fancy that the corpse will still be missing in the year 2039.

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THE GUIDE POST

(Continued)

country as he is in England. The European *Who's Who* describes him as 'a poet, historian, novelist, essayist, journalist, traveler, politician and Roman Catholic apologist.' [p. 442]

LUCY CORES, who wrote the profile 'Madame Minister' [p. 449] is an Associate Editor of *The Living Age*.

KURT GROSSMANN, author of our sketch on Walther von Brauchitsch, Germany's Number One Army leader [p. 448]), is a German writer now living in this country. As secretary general of the German League for the Rights of Man, which fought against anti-democratic forces during the Weimar régime, he became so hated by the Nazis that he had to flee Germany when they came to power in 1933.

P. GONZALEZ ALBERDI, author of 'Pan-America Faces World War Problems,' is a writer on sociological, economic and political problems. He is a frequent contributor to South American magazines. [p. 467]

WALTER C. FRAME is a San Francisco lawyer who claims that he wrote 'California Faces Totalitarianism' [p. 477] just for fun, so to speak, while in a confessional mood, and to blow off steam. We can only hope that the future will disprove the dire predictions he makes.

DOROTHY G. WAYMAN spent the summer of 1939 carrying out research in Japan. In her article, 'American Lady in Japan,' [p. 486] she has recorded some of her political thinking about American-Japanese relations. She is now working as a newspaper correspondent for the *Boston Globe*.

MEMO:

February 1940

THE WORLD OVER: 1939, THE LIVING AGE
annual chronology and commentary, is
coming out this month - - - - -

It's the only book I know of that can
give me an account of any given event
in 1939 on any given day in any given
country. I certainly must get it.

“Looking Forward”

Gunther

Sheean

Van Loon

Beals

Dupuy

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