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Books of Special Interest

Maya Homeland

ATLANTIS IN AMERICA. By LEWIS SPENCE. New York. Brentano's. 1926. \$4.

Reviewed by ALFRED M. TOZZER
Harvard University

ATLANTIS has again thrust itself above the waves of the ocean to furnish a foundation for the most elaborate structure that has ever been erected upon this fabulous island. Atlantis not only serves as the home-land of the Mayas of Central America but also as the starting-point for those "Palaeolithic Greeks," the Cro-Magnon "race" of Europe.

It is perhaps needless to say that our structure must necessarily be somewhat nebulous as the site of the building rests upon distinctly insecure grounds. The presence of a land bridge in the north Atlantic between Europe and America in early geological times is verified by several kinds of data but this is quite a different thing from the existence of a mid-Atlantic avenue between the Old and the New World extending into late Palaeolithic times. William H. Babcock in an excellent summing up of the question of the legendary islands of the Atlantic, published by the American Geographical Society, writes, "Atlantis was a creation of philosophic romance, incited and aided by miscellaneous data out of history, tradition, and unknown physical phenomena, especially by rumors of the weed-encumbered windless dead waters of the Sargasso Sea." Even the Sargasso Sea seems now to have been a myth according to the late expedition of Mr. Beebe.

Let us grant, for the moment, a firm terrestrial site for our structure; what about the foundations? There is no reinforcement to the underpinnings. It is interesting to note that some of the same stones, mummification, head-flattening, art forms, pyramids, and others, are used by Elliot Smith and his followers to erect a building of entirely different character and orientation. Dr. Smith quarries these stones in Egypt and brings them to America by way of Asia. Our author finds them *in situ* in Atlantis and has them carried both to Central America and to Europe.

The time has probably arrived to cease speaking of a Cro-Magnon "race." Dr. Hooton in an extensive study of the crania from the Canary Islands, a publication of the Harvard African Series, has made a strong case for the thesis that the Cro-Magnons are by no means a "race" but are more or less varying types of hybrid formed by a cross between the long-headed and very large skulls of the Galley Hill type and the somewhat smaller and broader skulls of Mongoloid extraction. This hybrid may have been responsible for the artistic achievements of the Upper Palaeolithic but his Mongoloid mixture could hardly have come from anywhere other than the east of Europe.

The author writes, "I have concluded that the Maya civilization was an Atlantean offshoot because I do not see from what other part of the world it could have emanated." He would have the Mayas leave their original home in Atlantis, sojourn for a time in the West Indies, "from which they withdrew to the Central American mainland" about 200 B. C. There are no Maya remains in any of the islands of the Antilles and no evidences of an early occupation of Yucatan. It is difficult to understand the repression of this gifted people on their trek westward from Atlantis during their residence in the West Indies and on the Atlantic coast of Middle America. The earliest Maya remains are far inland, in the interior of Guatemala, and the peninsula of Yucatan, the nearest land to Cuba, was not occupied until the sixth century of our era. Quetzalcoatl, whom the author makes a leader of the western branch of the Atlanteans, has been proved by Dr. Spinden to have been an historical character of the Maya-Toltec peoples, the main events of whose life occurred from 1168 to 1207.

There are several very dangerous cracks in this building; a few only can be pointed out. If the Atlanteans on their arrival in Europe as Cro-Magnons had long heads, broad faces, and were very tall, how could they be short and with round heads when they came to America? The question of language is another difficulty. Presumably the Atlanteans brought their language with them. If it were Maya, then it seems curious that it conforms in general structure to all the other languages of the New World. We know nothing of the speech of the Cro-Magnons, was it Maya too?

The author of this book has written a

number of excellent works on Mythology and, more especially, on the myths of Mexico. This book should be classed in the same way, placing Atlantis in the mythical world where it rightfully belongs.

An Old-Time Thriller

WIELAND. By CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN. Edited with an introduction by Fred Lewis Pattee. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1926. \$2.

Reviewed by JOHAN J. SMERTENKO

The chief purposes of the present series of volumes are two. The first is to provide for college students, teachers, and general readers authentic texts, with explanatory and critical commentary, of books in American literature unexploited but secure in reputation. . . . The second purpose is to furnish complete texts of individual writers rather than selections from them. . . . Early texts will be reproduced, so far as practicable for their study in college classes, with the original spelling and punctuation. The American Authors Series will also include texts of the standard writers of our literature.

WITH this modest declaration Stanley T. Williams, the general editor, introduces the American Authors Series to the public. Professor Williams might well have added that though the books are primarily intended for academic uses, there is to be—if one may judge by "Wieland"—none of the pedantic air which makes school texts abhorrent to general readers.

In "Wieland" the scholarly elements, exceedingly valuable for those interested, are not imposed on the layman; they are supplementary, not interstitial. Professor Pattee establishes in the special introduction a background for the novel and presents, less successfully, a critical estimate of Brown. He rightly minimizes the influence that Godwin's "Caleb Williams" is said to have had on the author, especially in the writing of this horror-story. But his enthusiasm for "the most noteworthy piece of fiction produced in America during the first generation of the republic" leads him to confuse relative with absolute values.

Even as a wholly original work "Wieland" is but a garrulous tale of terror distinguished, to be sure, by an intelligent appraisal of its characters. Certainly to the modern reader it is not "a tragedy, Grecian in its unities and in its intensities of horror." While it undeniably will still send a pleasantly uncomfortable shudder down one's spine, its murderous and abnormal features are too often duplicated in our newspapers to evoke that sense of loss and pity which distinguishes the tragic from the frightful.

How many will read it as a variant of the murder-mysteries that are now so popular there is no means of telling; it can be honestly recommended as a genuine blood-curdling yarn with the qualification that Brown wrote for educated people and could not anticipate the tabloid newspapers, whereas the authors of contemporary thrillers seek to intrigue the servant girl and the office boy and to compete with Mr. Hearst. In other words, Brown narrates his story at his leisure, voicing his colorful observations and his moralistic philosophy in words suited to his sense and to his rhythm.

Those who still demand something beyond a monosyllabic exposition of plot will find an added and special charm in Brown's grotesque circumlocutions. The work has a pungent taste, at once irritating and pleasing, which makes it impossible as a steady diet but welcome as a spice to contemporary writing. In this respect "Memoirs of Carwin, the Biloquist," the fragment which Brown intended as a sequel to "Wieland," and which is here for the first time printed with it, has more to give to the reader. The old manner is accentuated by the fact that its psychological analysis is altogether modern, if a bit naive, so that the humor which the author lacked is now furnished by Time.

It is obvious to this reader that the American Authors Series will render its greatest service in resurrecting the books worth knowing in early American literature. It is to be hoped that the decision to include the works of our "standard" writers will not interfere with this purpose. We need the selections from the Connecticut wits far more than Irving's "Knickerbocker History," a volume of Cotton Mather more than Franklin's "Autobiography"; we need them because they are less available and because it is well to emphasize that the American literary tradition is not wholly expressed in its most unpopular achievements.



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A Long Road

THE TRAIL OF A TRADITION. By ARTHUR HENDRICK VANDENBERG. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1926. \$3.50.

Reviewed by WILLIAM MACDONALD

Mr. Vandenberg's book is undoubtedly of a kind to please a good many people. A few pages of the preface should suffice to win the approbation of the Ku Klux Klan, the embattled American Fascisti, and a goodly proportion of the one hundred per-centers who, in spite of the ravages of death, time, education, and travel, seem still to be many and conspicuous. It ought to be extremely useful, also, in Americanizing the considerable number of intelligent adult foreigners who have made this country their home, but who are still more or less unfamiliar with American history and ideals. Beyond this obvious audience, however, is another, less assertive and with little apparent solidarity, who will find the book irritating and unpleasant, but who may nevertheless do well to ponder its doctrine and ask themselves whether, all things considered, the unwelcome truth has not at last been told.

Mr. Vandenberg is a champion of nationalism. The "tradition" which he unfolds, "disclosed in cameos of fact," consists in "the cumulative testimony of American experience that we want friendly and cooperating intercourse with all the nations of the earth, but constricting alliances and leagues with none." It is "intelligent Nationalism as opposed to emotional Internationalism," "the doctrine of preserved American Independence as distinguished from mere American Isolation," "the tradition of American Citizenship as opposed to the aspirations of cosmopolites." Translated into other speech, the tradition means an America which has its own policy, pursues its own course, minds its own business, fosters its own interests, sets up and maintains its own standards, and eschews foreign entanglements that might compromise its independence. Mr. Vandenberg does not make the mistake of confounding nationalism with cocksureness, or vaunting American superiority in the face of mankind, and whenever we can help a good cause we apparently ought to do so, but none of these reservations affects the primary point of view. Our duty is to be national to the core, within as well as without, and by so much as nationalism is the proper aim, internationalism is a seductive foe to be resisted whenever and wherever it ventures to show its head.

For proof of the doctrine, "mile-stoned by romance" and "illuminated by sturdy courage," Mr. Vandenberg turns to history, and trails the tradition from the great days of the fathers to the spacious times of Henry Cabot Lodge and President Coolidge. We could hardly have won the war of independence without the aid of France, and for that aid we are, or should be, grateful, but we have paid the debt and the incident is closed. Washington, with Hamilton as mentor, stood for nationalism when he issued his famous proclamation of neutrality in 1793, Madison was for it in the war of 1812, Monroe and John Quincy Adams sealed it in the declaration of the Monroe doctrine, and Lodge saved it from destruction when he opposed Wilson and the League. To the same great end a host of lesser personalities — Webster, Lincoln, Cleveland, McKinley, Roosevelt, even Harding—have contributed, and for the preservation of the same high tradition the present generation ought to strive if America is to remain free. "High-purposed theorists, scorning the admonitions of yesterday, may clothe their call to other roads in all the habiliments of an evangelical crusade, but this independent Nation of justly proud Americans will meddle with such vagary only at its peril."

All this, it is needless to say, will be anathema to the internationalists, and if they have the patience to read the book at all it will probably be only to adjudge it fantastic or condemn it as mischievous. Whether, on the other hand, the doctrine which Mr. Vandenberg enforces, when stripped of the perfervid rhetoric and one-sided emphasis in which he garbs it, has not a good deal more of historical foundation than any internationalist interpretation can claim, is something to be pondered. The historian who sticks to the documents and avoids turning philosopher or prophet has a hard task if he tries to show that America has ever been, for any long period, internationally minded. We have been much less disposed, in a hundred and fifty years of contacts with other nations, to

yield a point in controversy than to have our own way, and the same statesmen who have talked benevolent platitudes about the pound of flesh have usually contrived to obtain about all that they set out to get. Geography and experience have made us provincial, and now that our fingers are still smarting from the burns they received when we were induced to play with international fire a few years ago, the prevailing temper is wary. It is greatly to be feared that Mr. Vandenberg's book, with its exuberant appeal to the experiences and temper of national adolescence, will only help to keep us in the same narrow rut, but it may do some good if it shows, to those who would gladly look upon a wider horizon, the length and steepness of the road that has yet to be travelled.

A Famous Rogue

CAGLIOSTRO. By W. R. H. TROWBRIDGE. New York: Brentano's. 1926. \$3.50.

Reviewed by ERNEST SUTHERLAND BATES
CAGLIOSTRO seems to have been the first modern "psychic," unequalled by any of his successors. He exercised his occult powers with a prodigality unknown in these degenerate days. He was a champion table tipper, spirit rapper, crystal gazer, clairvoyant, telepathist, evoker of the past and foreteller of the future, ghost-seer, materializer of spirits—a hundred modern mediums in one. He was also an alchemist and healer of the sick. The methodology of occultism is today just where he left it. Jargons, symbolisms, pretence of esoteric wisdom, travels in the mysterious east, the inevitable secret master—all were his. High spiritual doctrines were ever on his lips. His attempts to establish Egyptian Masonry probably gave Mme. Blavatsky the first cue for her similar endeavors. Exposed again and again, he found new believers wherever he went. His life was spent in prisons and at the courts of princes, in dire poverty and in fabulous wealth. To crown all, he was persecuted and done to death by the Catholic Church, the traditional foe of occultism from the earliest times.

No wonder that this prince of charlatans fascinated Dumas, disgusted Carlyle, and perplexed sober pedestrian historians. Now after the lapse of over a century he has reached out from his unknown grave to cast his spell upon Mr. Trowbridge. The latter, to be sure, indignantly disclaims the idea of "whitewashing" the subject of his biography. But, if not whitewash, he at any rate uses soap-and-water, with a liberal supply of antiseptic. Mr. Trowbridge has striven valiantly to be impartial. With painstaking care he has followed the trail of his hero through its doublings and turnings. He has apparently consulted all known sources—and there are a vast number of them—and has subjected them to close scrutiny. But there is a lack of both lucidity and logic in his presentation. Arguments based upon evidence previously discredited serve to bewilder; so also statements made at critical points without indication whether they are factual or conjectural; even Mr. Trowbridge's good intentions add to the confusion, since while he is manifestly inclined to interpret his hero's actions in the most favorable light, he still part of the time holds this tendency in check so that one cannot, as with more unscrupulous writers, allow for the personal equation.

There are, however, two important contributions in Mr. Trowbridge's book. He casts serious doubt upon the customary identification of Cagliostro with Joseph Balsamo, a slightly earlier charlatan on a much lower level. Should his position be established—Mr. Trowbridge's arguments are plausible rather than entirely convincing—the traits of positive rascality would be eliminated from Cagliostro's character, and he would remain, what Mr. Trowbridge virtually considers him, a kind of exalted Mr. Sludge the Medium, possessor of ill understood powers, self duped as well as duping others. The second contribution is Mr. Trowbridge's careful study of Cagliostro's connection with the revolutionary activities of the Masonic orders, which raises the whole question of the importance of Masonry as one of the agents of the French Revolution. For the rest, Mr. Trowbridge's work is written in an interesting manner and will completely satisfy those who desire merely to pass a pleasant evening in company with one of the most famous rogues of history.

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