

Books of Special Interest

The United States

THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. A History by THOMAS JEFFERSON WERTENBAKER. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1926. \$5.

Reviewed by ELLIS PAXSON OBERHOLTZER
Author of "A History of the United States"

THE vision of a history of the United States which shall present an accurate and, at the same time, entertaining account of the country's progress in a comparatively brief compass, that it may be brought within the covers of a single volume, has been before us for a long time. Various endeavors have been made to achieve the end in view, none of them very successful; though the demand on the side of the publisher, as on the side of the reader too, quite probably exists and needs some day to be satisfied. Another essay in this field has been undertaken by a professor in Princeton University. Mr. Wertenbaker attacks the subject without gloves. He has about 470 pages octavo, large print, at his disposition and, full of his duty of making his subject "interesting," he writes the story from 1492 to the present year of grace.

It is ungracious to assail a work so pretentious in its object. Yet it would not be very feasible to praise it, did it not in some measure fulfil its purposes. The compression of a history of a country, or its people, presupposes the command of that history in fulness and detail. The impression must prevail that the author, in this case, is not thus equipped for the task that he has chosen. He, therefore, is not very well able to take the essential facts and make them into a narrative which can carry us through four centuries feeling that we are in the hands of a competent cicerone. With emphasis on the importance of making himself "fascinating," to meet the requirements of the description on the "jacket," and of becoming a successful rival of the "decade" authors and other journalist-biographers and historians, he fills his pages with adjectives, floridities, accounts of the knee pants, queues, curly hair, and the large noses and mouths of the men he selects for treatment,

instead of giving us information about the matters of importance which cry out for consideration and use. To make the narrative the more seductive to the customer for the much-wanted one volume account of the annals of our country many sentences are put into quotation marks, so that the pages have the appearance of fiction instead of that stodgy and forbidding thing which history is accounted to be. In one place we meet this statement: "Just as ceaseless contact with wood is essential to the proper development of the woodpecker's bill, so is opposition the life of a political party." So much may indeed be true, but the writer who wishes to indulge himself in such images ought, we think, to have more than 470 pages in which to develop his thesis, were it his wish at the same time and in this space to deal honestly with the entire history of a continent which is the home alike of the woodpecker and of several political parties.

Some of the writers of "short histories" add bibliographies to their chapters, or find a few pages at the end of the book for classified references to the source material. There is not a reference in footnote or appendix to any fountain touched by this author in the work of gathering the great mass of knowledge that has furnished out his mind for the business of telling us what it is worth our while, and what it is our right, to know about American history in one small book. The author, doubtless, was of the opinion that his work would be no better for this, and he likely is correct in the view. It is essentially immaterial whether we have chapter and verse, or collateral reading guides; for whosoever shall be satisfied with what Mr. Wertenbaker is giving him will not require more, and whosoever shall not be satisfied will, perhaps, crave better direction.

How the author has disposed of his subject after the Civil War (Lincoln is shot on page 360) may be guessed when we know that there is a chapter of 15 pages on "Reconstruction," 13 pages on "The Changing Order," which carries us from the Pittsburgh Strikes to Henry Ford; 15 pages on "A Nation Moving West," a like number on "Dominion Over Palm and

Pine," with similar dabs at "The New Freedom" (whatever this may be), "The European Maelstrom," and "Problems—Solved and Unsolved." The greatest of the "problems unsolved" continue to be the writing of a history of the United States in one volume.

On Education

THE FOUNDATIONS OF EDUCATION. By J. J. FINDLAY. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 1926. \$2.50.

Reviewed by C. MOLANPHY

J. J. FINDLAY, professor of education at the University of Manchester, and for many years associated with the English private and public schools, has just issued the first volume of his latest work, "The Foundations of Education."

The scope of the first volume of this study was planned to cover the aims and organization of education. There are many who will object to this plan of work, since by organization, Dr. Findlay means the mechanics of administration.

It is futile to discuss organization before we decide what is to be taught. The entire structure of the school system depends on that, because it is according to curricula that we shall grade our schools. Once the school exists in the pupils, subject matter and the teachers' organization will evolve. If the existing scheme of organization is faulty, it is not merely a matter of administration or of educational polity. It does not refer only to questions of financing or of county divisions. We are not concerned in dealing with numbers, we are to train individuals. Dr. Findlay feels that the topic of curricula is best treated in a second volume. Few will concur in that opinion. It is because school organizations have been a *tour de force* to provide for the registration of the school population and their assignment to some group or other that we have had failure. There has been frantic desire to place, without regard to the needs and potentialities of the student. Once placed, a superhuman struggle must be made if the subject is to win through to his proper grouping. The machine is unwieldy and its operators are stultified by its ponderousness. It is because organization has been considered before curricula that we have what is labeled the academic type of mind, vague, impractical.

In the consideration of supervision, we feel the traditional antagonism of the schoolmaster to state supervision. Dr. Findlay pleads for the superintendent with advisory rather than supervisory powers. It would seem that since education is properly a concern of the state these functions could be combined in a competent director. Incompetency in this field has been a thorny question, but we do not solve it by abolishing certain of the powers of the supervisor. Secure competency and the establishment of common ground between him and the teacher. In a modern state, a system of check is unavoidable.

One looks for something which will help in solving present problems, but there is nothing. Dr. Findlay feels an injustice in forcing youth to a trade through the medium of pre-vocational education which eliminates academic studies. Two years spent at a lathe at this period of a boy's life are not irremediably lost. Even if vocational advisors have failed, the loss is not as irreparable as that which occurs in the lives of thousands mistakenly directed to college and academic life.

Let us not pass lightly by one point which is made. The race tradition has provided for the subjection of the youth to the adult, to whom he looks for guidance. We are warned that we are confusing youth instead of liberating it when we place on it the burden of decision in every matter which concerns its welfare. In our desire to encourage independence of spirit and initiative we forget the claims of immaturity.

Outside of the statement of aim, none of the larger issues of education is touched. The important question of to whom we shall give formal education, how far shall it go, and how we shall adapt it to individual potentialities and needs is ignored. Dr. Findlay speaks of the purpose of education as the progress of the species. In his first volume, there are few indications of the means which he would adopt to secure this progress.

Careful editing would have helped the general reader, and the proofreading is slovenly in spots. This is an unforfeitable crime in the book of a schoolman.

New Methods for the Study of Literature

By EDITH RICKERT

"Surely," says the author of this book, "it is time to begin to study literature in a new way." She has therefore outlined new methods of approaching literature by way of remedying the curious situation created by the fact that scientific study of literature itself is in neglect while the study of its environment is conducted upon the most modern scientific principles. The general method of this book is to analyze style into its several strands—imagery, words, thought patterns, and, what is often disregarded, visual devices upon the printed page—and for each of these to find statistical and graphical methods by which its varied manifestations in literature may be understood with a certainty impossible through reading alone.

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DORAN BOOKS

Foreign Literature

German Stories and Novels

DAS OPFERFEST. By OTTO, FREIHERR VON TAUBE. Leipzig: Insel Verlag. 1926.

TRENCK: ROMAN EINES GÜNSTLINGS. By BRUNO FRANK. Berlin: Ernst Rowholt. 1926.

DER AUFRUHR UM DEN JUNKER ERNST. By JAKOB WASSERMANN. Berlin: S. Fischer. 1926.

VERWIRRUNG DER GEFÜHLE. By STEFAN ZWEIG. Leipzig: Insel Verlag. 1926.

UNORDNUNG UND FRÜHES LEID. By THOMAS MANN. Berlin: S. Fischer. 1926.

ULRIKE. By TONI SCHWABE. Munich: Albert Langen. 1926.

DER AUSBRUCH INS GRENZENLOSE. By TONI SCHWABE. Munich: Albert Langen. 1926.

Reviewed by A. W. G. RANDALL

THIS batch of recent German fiction is very mixed, but at least the miscellaneous styles, lengths, and subjects of the seven books named above enable all tastes to be met. The first is a regular long novel, on a theme which one imagined had become old-fashioned, namely, the *echt deutsch* craze, the propaganda in favor of the supremacy of Germanic blood, associated before the war with the well-known "Foundations of the Nineteenth Century," by Houston Stewart Chamberlain. The hero of the novel, after an early life the description of which gives an interesting social picture of the German middle-class, develops into a race-theorist, in several features recalling Herr Chamberlain in his antipathy toward everything "romance," and his fixed belief that anything good in modern civilization is to be traced to German origins. So fanatical does this belief become that at length he founds a separate community in which to keep up his race-religion, with all the accompaniment of ancient Scandinavian ritual—hence the title. The satire in all this is so delicate that often the chapters read like a real-life transcription of actual discussions by race-theorist fanatics. If this is so, all one can say is either that Freiherr von Taube's novel must have been written in the heyday of Chamberlainism, or that the war has taught that particular section of German jingoes nothing. In any case, however, it is a most readable piece of fiction for anyone with an interest in German social and intellectual life.

"Trenck" is quite a different type of novel; it is an historical romance, written round a personage to whom, two or three years ago, Herr Frank, in a volume entitled "Tage des Königs," devoted three short stories of considerable merit—namely, Frederick the Great. The titular hero of this latest work is, of course, the famous ad-

venturer who served in Frederick's army, but his doings there, and above all his supposed love-affair with the King's sister Amalie, are so many pegs on which to hang a series of fresh pictures of the Prussian monarch, often to the complete exclusion of Trenck himself, whose varied career is frequently compressed or left neglected. The best chapter is the one least founded on history, namely the passionate love of Trenck and Amalie, while the closing scenes, with the composition of Trenck's famous biography and his execution in Paris, are also spirited writing. We cannot recall any other historical romance on Trenck, and there are not too many on Frederick himself to make us withhold a hearty welcome from such a thoroughly interesting contribution to historical fiction as this.

Herr Jakob Wassermann's "Erzählung" has an historical background, but is even less concerned, primarily, with history than Herr Frank's romance. It is placed in Bavaria, in the seventeenth century, when heresy-hunting, and witch-hunting in particular, was at its height. The most fanatical in the campaign against magic was the Bishop of Würzburg, whose natural zeal was inflamed by the Jesuit Pater Gropp—a figure whose sinister features are drawn almost to the point of caricature. To the Bishop's castle comes his nephew, the Junker Ernst, for whom his uncle conceives an extraordinary affection. He is a strange youth given to day-dreaming and the spinning of fairy-tales. He is ingenuous enough to let this habit of his come to the ears of the ecclesiastical authorities and he comes under the suspicion of communion with evil spirits. Much against his will the Bishop delivers him over to be tortured, and his guilt having been established, his execution is decreed. The decision is made known, however, to all the children and youths of the country round, to whom the Junker was a well-beloved friend, and they raise a rebellion with the object of saving him. In this they succeed, and a story which had begun in sinister gloom ends in joy and the spirit of rebellious youth triumphant, belonging less to history than to the fairy-tale.

There is nothing *märchenhaftes* about Herr Zweig's three stories. Psychological motives, human passion, and pathos, the everyday life of men and women of our own time—these are the elements in his art. His first story tells, with compelling verisimilitude, the confession of a respectable woman's first and last lapse from virtue at Monte Carlo where, by a misunderstanding, she gives herself to a young man to save him from suicide. The last story is an equally incredible story of passion, but told as if taken from life, a technical achievement which few writers in Germany could have attained so convincingly as Herr Zweig. But the best story, in our opinion, is the middle one, in which we are shown

the remarkable pathos of an old, wealthy man, left high and dry by the tide of time, while his wife and young daughter sail off on the sea of passion and sensual enjoyment. Anyone who, in a smart hotel ballroom, has watched an aged father gazing at his daughter and her rejuvenated mother fox-trotting, with all the consciousness written on his face that he no longer mattered except to pay for their dresses and cocktails, will realize the remarkable force and truth of this story by one of the best short-story writers Germany has today.

A similar sense of recognition and familiarity comes upon the reader after reading Thomas Mann's story. It is a simple "interior," of a German Professor's house, of his family, in the time of greatest distress for the German middle classes, in 1923, when the professional men, inhabitants of comfortable villas in the comfortable quarter of Berlin, had come down to the level of the "intellectual proletariat," but had not yet taken, as, of course, many of them did, to actual manual labor to gain the wages which were denied to the brain-worker. The Professor is shown in the bosom of his charming family, especially the delicious Lorchen, a child of five or six, apple of her father's eye, who watches her, as she dances to the gramophone, with all a lover's jealousy. So passes this one day in his life, and so appealing a transcription from life has Thomas Mann's skill made that there are already German critics acclaiming this as his masterpiece, finer even than "Tod in Venedig."

In "Ulrike" Frau Toni Schwabe has also written an idyll with an undercurrent of pathos. It is the story of Goethe's last love, his late passion for Ulrike von Levetzow, which inspired his "Trilogie der Leidenschaft." The gay, girlish company which surrounds the aging poet is delightfully portrayed and the pathos of the irreconcilable contrast between old age and admiring but not fully understanding youth is excellently rendered. In the second novel it is a more enduring passionate episode in Goethe's life that Frau Schwabe has taken for her theme, namely, his love for Charlotte von Stein, but it is all told with the shadow of parting over it; it is all conceived as a preliminary to the "Ausbruch ins Grenzenlose," Goethe's longed-for-escape from bourgeois realities to the limitless possibilities of romance, that is, to Italy. Students of Goethe's life will read these two novels with much enjoyment.

To meet the growing demand for information regarding the life and work of the poet, Houghton Mifflin Company have prepared for free distribution a booklet entitled "The Poetry of Amy Lowell." A drawing of Miss Lowell appears on the cover, and the body of the pamphlet is given to a twenty-five page critical article by Charles Cestre, professor in the University of Paris. The booklet also contains a biographical outline and comments on Miss Lowell's ten volumes of poetry, her two books of criticism, and her biography of John Keats.



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