

Letters to the Editor: *Literary Aspects of the League of Nations*

Books and the League

SIR:—There are not many people, who, amidst the excitement and confusion of an Assembly of the League of Nations, notice its literary aspects. There are many pro-Leagueurs who continually draw one's attention to the success of the League as a social and technical organ of international coöperation, thus easing their consciences as to its failure as a political organ. But there have been few to congratulate those who are responsible for the literature of the League, those who have been attempting to contribute to the proper functioning of the League of Nations as an instrument of international government and who have tried at the same time to establish a new and international point of view in literary circles.

League literature divides itself easily into two categories. First there is the part that concerns itself with expediting the work of the League meetings: the daily journal, which summarizes the work of the preceding day and announces the agenda of the meetings of the day; the reports of the various sub-committees distributed in advance; and, most important, the reports of the various technical experts in the Secretariat which make possible the discussion of social and technical problems. Second, there are the books which explain the League and its purpose, and which are invaluable to any student of international politics or to the person who stops in to visit the sessions of the League to see what it is all about.

From time to time one of the League publications of a more serious nature catches the public interest, as have in the past year the report on the distribution of raw materials and that on world trade in 1937. But for the most part this League literature remains known only to those who attend the sessions of the League or to an extremely interested student of international affairs. Yet, it would be difficult, I believe, to overestimate this part of the functioning of the League of Nations. It is something permanent and tangible and has given the League roots which will be difficult to eradicate.

Last year Miss Vera Brittain wrote a very interesting article in *The Saturday Review of Literature*, entitled "Literature and World Peace." In it she stressed the importance of an impartial attitude in literature toward the great political and social problems of our day. It was a point well taken at a time when there was a great deal of literary propagandism being circulated, striving to influence people to take sides in the civil war in Spain, the war in China, or the approaching conflict between democracy and dictatorship.

It is probably owing to the fact that it is written by research experts that the literature published by the League of Nations seems to have achieved this impartiality, even in the books written to inspire an interest in the League itself. And despite the League's failure to deal with the international situation as it now exists, it is somewhat encouraging to the pessimistically inclined to feel that at some future



"Oh, I'm fit as a fiddle, Doctor. I just called you in to autograph my copy of your book!"

date, when one is studying these troublesome times of 1938 as the prelude to international anarchy or to a better world order, that no one will be able to say that the League has not made an honest effort to create a new world literature based on the international point of view and untainted by national bias.

LOUISE MORLEY.

Geneva, Switzerland.

"Pursuit of Happiness"

SIR:—Mr. Robert C. Brooks concludes his review of "Pursuit of Happiness" by Herbert Agar, in your issue of October 8, as follows:

It is to be regretted that Mr. Agar did not extend his study to the present time, which would have permitted him to discuss the policies of President Roosevelt as fully as those of Jefferson and Jackson.

May I point out that Mr. Agar concluded his narrative just after the election of 1928 because he was writing history, not political journalism, and acted upon his belief that "a discussion of the New Deal, written today, can only be subjective comment without a full knowledge of the facts and their effects."

DALE WARREN.

Houghton Mifflin Co.
Boston, Mass.

"The Pump's Froze"

SIR:—In your issue of September 17th you printed my letter regarding "Mr. Weller's Pipe" in which "lighting his pipe from the ashes of the old one" seemed to me an insoluble mystery.

To my surprise and genuine enlightenment, I find in your issue of October 1st a letter from Mr. Joshua W. Smith explaining the trick; and another from Mr. W. H. Fetridge showing, but in an entirely different manner, how easily it was done.

However, as both letters concluded with a quite excusable satisfaction in having

proved that Dickens "knew what he was talking about" and "was right once again," I should like to refer to the eighth chapter of "Nicholas Nickleby" wherein is described Nicholas's first day at that eminent seat of learning, Dotheboys Hall.

Mr. Squeers announced early that morning, "Here's a pretty go, the pump's froze." No water was available because of ice in the well. The ground was covered with snow. Under these arctic conditions Mr. Squeers was haranguing his school. "Where's the second boy?" he asked. "Please sir," replied a small voice, "he's weeding the garden."

Now that appears to be an authentic spot on the literary sun, and I am wondering whether among your talented and resourceful readers (including Messrs. Smith and Fetridge) there may be found one who can explain how *this* was done.

CHARLES A. AUSTIN.

Scarsdale, N. Y.

Richest Man in Washington

SIR:—Readers of the SRL might be interested in a little item that appeared in the *Buffalo Express* on September 7, 1871:

Walt. Whitman, on his salary of \$1,600 a year as clerk in the office of the Attorney General, is said to be the richest man in Washington. The secret of it is, not that he has all he wants, but he never wants what he does not have.

ROBERT M. BOLTWOOD.

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Justice Cardozo

SIR:—I am engaged in writing the biography of the late Justice Benjamin N. Cardozo, and should be very grateful to receive from friends and acquaintances of the Justice exact copies of his letters to them and personal reminiscences.

GEORGE S. HELLMAN.

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Fascism—East and South

Japan in China

SECRET AGENT OF JAPAN. By Amleto Vespa. Boston: Little, Brown & Company. 1938. \$3.

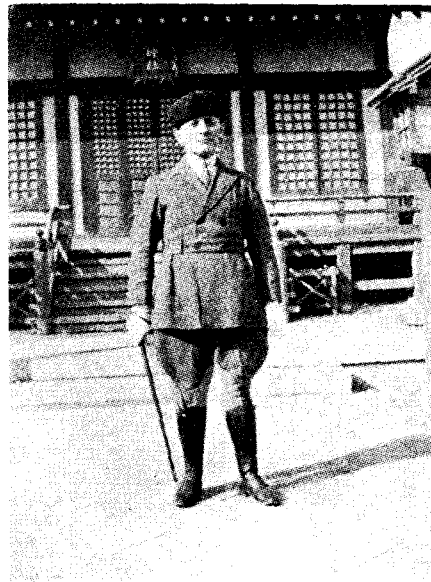
Reviewed by T. A. Bisson

UNTIL the horrors at Nanking were attested by missionary eye-witnesses, few Americans were willing to credit the degree of savagery exhibited by Japanese militarism in China since 1931. Informed observers were aware of the sufferings endured by the Manchurian people from Japanese rule, but this information never became generally known. An *exposé* of the Japanese system in Manchukuo, written by an Italian who acted for nearly five years as an official in its intelligence service, thus becomes a document of great historical importance. The fact that Mr. Vespa is a supporter of fascism and an admirer of Mussolini lends added weight to his evidence. An introductory note by Mr. H. J. Timperley, formerly correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* in China, vouches for the authenticity of the author's revelations.

The personal history of Mr. Vespa is not the least interesting phase of his exciting narrative. In September 1920 he became an intelligence officer in Chang Tso-lin's service. When his efforts to stop the flow of illegal munitions imports into Manchuria from Italy raised difficulties with the Italian authorities, he became a naturalized Chinese citizen. As a result, the Japanese were able to force him to enter their own secret service early in 1932, on pain of threats to the safety of his wife and children. His escape to Shanghai was finally effected in September 1936, after the Japanese became aware of contacts he had maintained with Chinese guerrilla forces in Manchukuo. For six months he despaired of obtaining the release of his family, which was held as a hostage by the Japanese authorities. Eventually the Chinese guerrillas freed some Japanese prisoners in exchange for the release of his wife and children.

Only those who have talked with some of Japan's victims in Manchukuo can fully accept the picture which Mr. Vespa draws of conditions in that "independent" state. In stark horror, and in the almost unrelieved cynicism, savagery, and corruption of a military caste and its hangers-on, it recalls the worst practices of colonial exploitation in Africa. Mr. Vespa's main task involved control of the operations of Chinese bandit gangs—real bandits, not the Chinese guerrillas—who were utilized by the Japanese secret service for various purposes. These gangs wiped out Chinese or White Russian villages to make way for Japanese settlers, wrecked trains on the Chinese Eastern Railway before it passed into Japanese ownership, and

created "incidents" on the Manchurian borders which were attributed to Soviet troops. Agents of Mr. Vespa also spied on the activities of the Japanese gendarmerie and other police forces in Manchukuo. These latter were the chief rivals of the Japanese military for the "spoils" of the Manchurian conquest. Japan's police and army units made a regular business of kidnapping wealthy Chinese and White Russians, and subjecting them to incredible tortures until sufficient ransom was paid. The police and their *ronin* hangers-on racketeered on an enormous scale in opium, prostitution, and gambling, and levied tribute of all sorts on legitimate Chinese businesses. Opposition meant arrest, torture—often death. In military op-



Amleto Vespa in 1927

erations, whole villages were laid waste, the men killed, and the Chinese and White Russian women used at will by the Japanese officers and soldiery.

Especially illuminating is the record of some of Mr. Vespa's talks with his "chief," who vigorously asserted that the mission of the "chosen race" was to subjugate China, drive all white men from the East, and establish world dominion. The lies put out for foreign consumption were good-naturedly joked about among these Japanese officers. Their cleverness, however, did not match their brutality. Mr. Vespa carefully describes the measures adopted to hoodwink the Lytton Commission; when the Lytton Report was published, his "Chief" was summarily replaced. Japanese militarism has been scathingly denounced in the past, but no previous work has so convincingly revealed its actual lineaments and its threat to the rest of the world.

T. A. Bisson is a member of the staff of the Foreign Policy Association. He has recently returned to America after a residence in Japan.

"Peaceful Penetration"

THE COMING STRUGGLE FOR LATIN AMERICA. By Carleton Beals. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott. 1938. \$3.

Reviewed by ERNEST GRUENING

CARLETON BEALS shares with Samuel Guy Inman preëminence among American writers on Latin America. This timely book is his tenth within that vast field, not counting two novels and an autobiography dealing largely with Hispanic American experiences. The first half of this study is an excellent presentation of new material. It deals with the commercial and cultural invasions of the other Americas by Japan, Germany, Italy, Britain, Russia, and Spain. Four of these are marching triumphantly ahead. Only the British Lion is in retreat, and the Soviet effort is now negligible. Japanese sales are furthered by goods stamped "Made in USA", Usa being a Nipponese town rebaptized for an obvious purpose. German efficiency sends salesmen into remote jungles, leads them into social and cultural contact with natives which Mr. Beals contrasts with the inbred exclusiveness of the typical American colony in Latin American capitals. But conversely, he castigates the sinister effects of the Nazi hymns of hate and the injection of new poisons into regions traditionally tolerant. This campaign proceeds virulently by means of radio, press, subsidies, barter, and strong-arm methods. Mussolini's men have sold Peru their aircraft, trained its aviators, supplying perhaps five hundred war planes "within less than a day's flying from the Panama Canal."

"Fascism is at our door in bloody earnest," writes Beals, and its invasion of Latin America "has been carried out swiftly and brilliantly." Most interesting is that its greatest gains have been not on its Nazi or Italian fascist sectors, but through its Franco front—by way of rebel Spain. Mr. Beals affirms that peace or war in the Western hemisphere is more likely to be decided on Spain's battlefields than in Pan-American conferences, and that Franco's successes have gone far to consolidate the fascist forces in Latin America, because, obviously, the currents between Old and New World Hispanic cultures have been long established. Mr. Beals emphatically views our "neutrality" policy in Spain as helping fascism both there and in Latin America. He reiterates that its states are not democracies, and is highly critical of the illusion, propagated by American statesmen, that they are. That they are not democracies is correct; that dictatorships, varying ruthlessly or benignly, operate under republican forms, is true. But his generalized denunciation of those governments as "run by cut-throat dictators" is not justified. It is cer-