

COMMON GROUND

Upper Missouri country ready to welcome the Scandinavians, Russians, Finns, Yugoslavs, Italians, and Czechs who have enriched their cultural life.

Joseph Henry Jackson has collected in *Continent's End* (Whittlesey House, \$3.50) some of the best prose and verse descriptive of the pageant of life in California as writers in the last quarter century have portrayed it. Some scenes are historic, others current; some are tragic, some thrilling, some just human. (Bits from Saroyan, Bezzerides, and John Fante are among these last.) Social conflict (Lincoln Steffens) has a place here, and the cinema. An inclusive selection of good modern writing.

Keith Jemison's album of *New Hampshire pictures* (Holt, \$2.50) gives us the rural version of an old and settled life of democratic tradition. Laconic comment from persons in the scene set off these enchanting triumphs of the camera.

Under its new title, *One America*

(Prentice-Hall, \$5), the comprehensive survey of *Our Racial and National Minorities* published in 1937 has been brought down to the end of 1944, with needed additions and complete revision. Forty-one groups are represented. Francis J. Brown and Joseph S. Roucek are the editors, with thirty-three others—each an authority in his own field—contributing. In five parts, this admirable compilation gives the history and cultural progress of each of our minority peoples, separately; then their activities and characteristic organizations collectively; the racial and cultural conflicts involving some of them; the educational problems that concern them all; and lastly the trend toward a cultural democracy in which problems still acute and distressing may be solved and minorities as such disappear along with the resolving of group conflicts. The goal is a harmonious society based on pluralism of racial and cultural stocks: *One America*.

THINKING ABOUT RELIGION

Children and adults will welcome a beautiful and important juvenile by Florence Mary Fitch, *One God: The Ways We Worship Him* (Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, \$2). Miss Fitch is a teacher of comparative religion at Oberlin College. Very simply, in text and photographs, she tells the story of the three great religions of America. The book is divided into three sections, *The Jewish Way*, *The Catholic Way*, and *The Protestant Way*, and each has been endorsed by leading educators and national organizations of the three faiths. The book is beautiful and relevant, a joy to read and own.

Sabbath, the Day of Delight, by Abraham E. Millgram (Jewish Publication So-

ciety, \$3), while saying not a word about anti-Semitism, may serve better to combat it than any argument. Controversial matters are excluded. Here are brief accounts of the Jewish Sabbath as observed in the home (with "mystic sweetness and spirituality"), in the synagogue, in literature, in music, and in art. It is significant that quite one third of the 493-page volume is devoted to observance of this "Day of Delight" in the home and for the children. Songs, hymns, in Hebrew and in translation, enrich this section. Next come varied selections from prose and poetry—particularly a group under "The Sabbath in Short Story," that are of universal appeal. The whole effect is one of refreshment.

Let's Think About Our Religion, by Frank and Mildred Moody Eakin (Macmillan, \$1), may be heartily recommended to mature readers of any (or no) church affiliation as a frank inquiry into the relation between the supernatural and the spiritual, and a candid examination of the reasons why so many men of goodwill

have cooled toward a system that stressed the supernatural—a power above life, virtually outside and apart from secular interests and affairs. A very thoughtful discussion, and one in which the need of the average man for guidance that enters into the field of his actual experience is well understood.

HEMISPHERIC NEIGHBORS

Cocks and Bulls in Caracas (Houghton Mifflin, \$2.75) is Olga Briceño's intimate account of family and social life in Venezuela and is one of the most charming books ever written. The author, as hostess, takes us into the home that has been that of the family for generations, where every room has its legend and life is lived in a pattern set during centuries. We come to know the mistress of the house, the devoted servants, woman's manifold cares and self-imposed responsibilities, material and spiritual. We meet the friends, share their diversions, observe the townsmen and sense the spell of timeless, unhasting tempo. True, modernity is intruding; but Olga Briceño has caught for us the magic of gracious living, interpreting it as only one can who is as much at home in New York as she is in Caracas.

In *Costa Rican Life* (Columbia University Press, \$3), John and Mavis Biesanz give us a solid, three-dimensional picture of social and economic living in a country favored from the start for liberal progress by its remoteness from the zone of large estates and early colonial exploitation. Ingratiating themselves with the people and dwelling for ten months in Heredia (a coffee town and typical), our authors gathered their information from all sources, and present it here in friendly and candid fashion. Every phase of social,

political, economic, and educational life is covered, revealing a people sworn to democratic ideals (and proud of it), partial to culture and the professions, but clinging to class distinctions in matters of marriage and social relations; held back also by dominance of the coffee-growing élite and want of diversification, with too great a gap between peon and employer. Yet of their tranquillity and freedom, Costa Ricans may justly boast.

So far as a faithful rendering of history can provide it, Hudson Strode's *Timeless Mexico* (Harcourt, Brace, \$3.50) gives us a key to the understanding of that troubled country. Powerfully written, exposing with ruthless realism the sins of Mexico's despoilers and the weaknesses of its would-be saviors, fairly bestowing credit and discredit where due, the book is a dramatic recital of a people's long struggle toward civil liberty and economic rights. Characterizations of leading figures are superb. But more searing to our conscience than internal injustices Mexico has endured is the story of sabotage by North American business interests of liberal projects undertaken there. This frank exposure we read with shame and remorse.

Hubert Herring's brief appraisal of *America and the Americas* (Claremont College, \$2) forecasts a better all-Amer-