

BOOKS IN BRIEF

THE ROOSEVELT REVOLUTION, by Ernest K. Lindley (Viking, \$2.50). If you want to know what it's all about—from the banking crisis to the NRA—you could ask for no more conscientious history of the New Deal than Ernest Lindley's. Necessarily such a chronicle does not make easy reading—crammed as it is with facts, statistics, and explanations of specific bills and measures—but it is reading that ought to be required. There are, moreover, lighter aspects. Mr. Lindley (who was assigned to "cover" Roosevelt several years ago and has stayed on the job ever since) has some interesting things to say about the early phases of the President's political growth, and about the roots of a philosophy which, Mr. Lindley maintains, was well matured before Roosevelt reached the White House. Add Mr. Lindley's character sketches of the Brain Trust and of the other men close to the President, and one can see that the book is not all hard going. With Roosevelt as an individual, and with his fundamental policies, Mr. Lindley is obviously in sympathy. He is not so rash, however, as to predict the outcome of the experiment. "Mr. Roosevelt," he says, "may turn out to be the Kerensky of the Revolution. However, Mr. Roosevelt is a far abler man than most of the figures who have been thrown up in the transitional periods of history."

THE MAN OF THE RENAISSANCE, by Ralph Roeder (Viking, \$3.50). Obviously this is one of the books which will long outlive a single publishing season. A whole age is Mr. Roeder's subject, and in order best to point it he has chosen four figures who exemplify the leading traits in the man of the Renaissance. Savonarola, Machiavelli, Castiglione, and Aretino are these four, running the gamut from religion to sensuality. Tidy, isolated biographies, however, are no part of Mr. Roeder's plan. His book covers the whole period from 1494 to 1530, and its pages are so richly freighted with fact, anecdote, color, and theory, so packed with personalities, that one is almost exhausted by plenitude. Mr. Roeder is a psychologist at heart, and his prose has the rich, grave cadences of the conscious stylist. Occasionally his rhetoric runs away with him, and occasionally he trifles too imaginatively with history. These are minor flaws, however, in a book which is endlessly engrossing without ever being slick and cheap. Too scholarly and too well written to be called a popularization, it recreates the Renaissance by a kind of intuitive magic.

THE NEW PARTY POLITICS, by A. N. Holcombe (Norton, \$1.75). As the cities gain in population, says Professor Holcombe, the rustic, sectional politics of the United

States must inevitably give way to an urban politics based on class rather than sectional lines. This sounds as if Professor Holcombe were a Marxist—which he is not. In fact, much of his book is devoted to an attack on Marxism for its oversimplified version of class alignments, of exploiters and exploited. What about the new middle class? he asks—and proceeds to analyze the diverse elements which make up that class, and which might be expected to join a median movement between the extremes of wealth and poverty. Neither communism nor fascism is likely to flourish in America, Professor Holcombe believes. He prophesies, and advocates, a great middle-class party which will be able to hold the balance of power by adroit compromise—and he sets forth, though somewhat vaguely, a possible program for such a party. His book is undoubtedly provocative—though he appears to bank too much on the *status quo* and on relative economic equilibrium.

THE JOURNEY OF THE FLAME, by Fierro Blanco (Houghton Mifflin, \$3.00). This is one of the most enjoyable pieces of verbal wandering that has appeared for many moons. Its authenticity may be questionable, the accuracy of its facts open to doubt, but from the moment that Juan Colorado, son of a red-haired Irishman and a girl of Lower California, tells his first tale it becomes apparent that this is romance of the ancient kind, worthy of unquestioning and uncritical surrender. Juan left his village at the age of twelve to avoid a blood feud, but he left it as a trusted member of the train of a Spanish governor bound north to Monterey. What befell them on their travels, how his wits served him and them, what were the details, the preoccupations, the adventures of a journey such as this in days such as those, make up the book. It is regrettable that the publishers have not chosen to be more specific about the author and his translator, but one forgives them a possible hoax for the sake of Juan's sage and salty observations on life as he saw it, his intimate knowledge of hogs, his details about mules, Mayas, and women, and the unforgettable picture he paints of that great lady whom he worshiped.

TIMBER LINE, by Gene Fowler (Covici, Friede, \$3.00). The squeamish will have reason to shudder at this slice of Americana, but it is, nevertheless, a rip-roaring, hugely entertaining book. Himself one of their reporters, Gene Fowler has written the fantastic saga of Harry Tammen and F. G. Bonfils, owners of the *Denver Post*. Adventurers both, they took over the worthless little paper in 1895 and by their screaming red headlines, their preposterous stunts, their general un-



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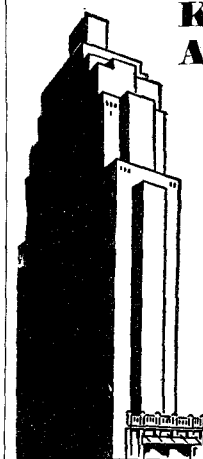
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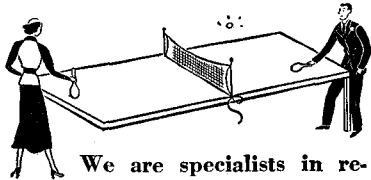


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scrupulousness they were able to convert it into a great power in the Rocky Mountain region. People charged that Tammen and Bonfils blackmailed their advertisers; they were excoriated by virtuous citizens; they were shot at by indignant victims. Nevertheless they flourished. Gene Fowler writes of their exploits with florid Menckonian gusto and without a trace of moral indignation. He tells tall tales of Denver in the early 1900's, of Buffalo Bill, Eugene Field, Judge Ben Lindsey, and the Unsinkable Mrs. Brown. His book is rambling and disorganized, but it is grand fun. Memorize some of the better anecdotes, and your success at dinner parties will be assured.

JUNÍPERO SERRA, by Agnes Repplier. (Doubleday, Doran, \$2.50). The subject of this biography is California's most famous missionary pioneer. The author is Philadelphia's most famous essayist. The result is no more than what one might expect — a pleasant, seemingly sympathetic book which gives the staunch old founder of missions and savior of Indian souls his just due, and does very little to make him or his passionate endeavor comprehensible to modern Americans. Part of the trouble may lie in that incorrigible complacency of ignorance which the northern East preserves toward the Spanish West — an attitude that even Miss Repplier's Catholic scholarship could not quite overcome. Part of it undoubtedly lies in the gulf which yawns between the steel and concrete materialism of to-day and that mixture of mysticism and politics which ruled Spaniards two hundred years ago. The effort to lift Father Serra out of his provincial fame and place him among American heroes is kindly, but the result is disappointing. California enthusiasts cannot afford to neglect the book, but neither can they afford to be satisfied with it.

WITHIN THIS PRESENT, by Margaret Ayer Barnes (Houghton Mifflin, \$2.50). Already labeled the *Only Yesterday* of fiction, Mrs. Barnes' new novel is a shrewdly evocative chronicle of the years 1914 to 1933 — that era of fever and folly. It is a lavishly documented comedy of manners, and very quaint manners they seem even at this brief distance. Sally Sewall, child of a Chicago banking family which had pushed up from decent obscurity in her grandfather's day, was sixteen when the war broke out. Her absurdly early marriage was a direct result of the war, and it came to grief afterwards as a result of post-war restlessness added to too much leisure and wealth. It was saved from permanent wreckage, however, by the depression — which destroyed the Sewall banking business and forced the younger generation to face reality as its elders had

done. Superficiality and a rather credulous optimism are Mrs. Barnes' chief faults. Her book, however, has real charm, and she has done excellently by the numerous Sewalls, whose sense of the family was so strong. *Within This Present* will date badly. At the moment it is a very entertaining novel, more substantial than most, and as topical as a newspaper.

PROMETHEANS, by Burton Rascoe (Putnam, \$2.75). So random and erratic is Mr. Rascoe's choice of Prometheans — those who have brought fire and warmth to literature — that despite his supposed theme this book reads like a haphazard collection of essays. Certain it is not comparable to *Titans of Literature*, either in bulk, interest, or importance. Mr. Rascoe is deliberately iconoclastic concerning St. Mark, Petronius, and Apuleius; excellent in his chapter on Lucian (the best in the book); remarkably superficial in his estimate of Aretino, Nietzsche, and D. H. Lawrence. His final chapters are on Dreiser and James Branch Cabell — to whom he still swears unqualified allegiance. Those who are enchanted by Mr. Rascoe's provocative ways, and impressed by his classical erudition, may be willing to forgive the publishers for padding out the format of this book, and for making it seem like a really substantial volume.

HEAR, YE SONS, by Irving Fineman (Longmans, Green, \$2.00). To his children, who have grown away from the ancestral ideals, a prosperous Jewish lawyer tells the story of the first twenty-five years of his life — before he made his fortune in America. Actually Mr. Fineman's book is hardly a novel at all, but a moving and beautiful re-creation of life as it was lived by devout Jews in Russian Poland. Old customs, old legends, the formal loveliness of feast days and marriage ceremonies are what one remembers best of Joseph's narrative. His personal history, his escape from the bitter slavery of the Russian army are unimportant in comparison. *Hear, Ye Sons* has something of the quality of poetry. It is a paean of praise for the spirit and culture of the Jewish race, exquisitely evocative of a world which the children of Joseph have forgotten.

SOUTHERN MAIL, by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (Smith & Haas, \$2.00). As *Night Flight* sufficiently proved, Saint-Exupéry is essentially a poet who writes of men in airplanes as few have written before. In this new novel there are passages of genuine beauty — as in the mail pilot's flight over the Sahara — but on the whole the book is too slight and too obscure, and the love-story too tenuous and remote, to engage one's interest deeply. A curious and exotic tale, it seems a little alien.