



THE BOOK FORUM



PIONEERS OF PLENTY — Christy Borth (Bobbs-Merrill, \$3.00)

MODERN MIRACLE MEN — J. D. Ratcliff (Dodd, Mead, \$3.00)

CONQUESTS OF SCIENCE — edited by Ray Compton & Charles H. Nettels (Harcourt, Brace, \$1.75)

ACCENT ON POWER — Valeriu Marcu (Farrar & Rinehart, \$3.00)

GIDDY MINDS AND FOREIGN QUARRELS — Charles A. Beard (Macmillan, \$0.50)

LAW AND POLITICS — Felix Frankfurter (Harcourt, Brace, \$3.00)

SIDNEY HILLMAN — George Soule (Macmillan, \$2.50)

FROM ANOTHER WORLD — Louis Untermeyer (Harcourt, Brace, \$3.00)

AUTOBIOGRAPHY — A. A. Milne (E. P. Dutton, \$3.00)

BRYCE'S 'AMERICAN COMMON-WEALTH' *Fiftieth Anniversary* — edited by Robert C. Brooks (Macmillan, \$2.50)

THE ideal book for parlous-times publishing is science aimed at the layman. Three extraordinarily good ones appear on this month's list, offering all things to all readers: escape into an orderly world of scientific miracles, if you like; or cogent reasoning against the senseless destruction and waste of "scientific" warfare.

If the nations could only hold their fire for another decade or so, they could get everything they need without stealing it from each other, says Christy Borth. In *Pioneers of Plenty*, the story of chemurgy, he outlines this future march of empire.

Chemurgy is a new word meaning "chemistry at work." In practical application, it means converting, at low cost, plant and animal material into manufactured products truly fabulous in their variety and quantity. At the rate chemurgy is progressing, Mr. Borth figures that many countries of the world even now could approach self-sufficiency, given the proper research and manufacturing equipment. A land that is short on minerals can go to the farmer for aid; for plastics made from such things as milk and soybeans have already replaced much metal in automobiles and airplanes. The silk-worm is losing to the test tube. A product made from skunk oil tastes exactly like coffee. The oil fields of the future will be planted every spring.

Add to these the thousands of other odd and fascinating and useful discoveries and you will have an idea why Mr. Borth writes like a crusader. He tells his story of chemurgy in terms of the men who have pioneered in this new branch of science. They had to be fighting men, most of

them, because they were heralds of a new era. The chemical age is superseding the machine age — the faster the better. Perhaps you won't be as optimistic as Mr. Borth about its immediate peace-furthering influence, but you can't help sharing his enthusiasm for the pioneers and for the plenty they are able to distribute.

IN *Modern Miracle Men*, J. D. Ratcliff gives stirring accounts of other battles fought without benefit of captains or kings. The conquest of disease, not only in man but in animals, soil, and plants, makes up most of his story. The rest is concerned with the application of scientific knowledge to preserving and extending our food supply.

This is terrain already familiar in popular science books, but Mr. Ratcliff has mined it for an enormous amount of new material: a little-known treatment for the paralyzing diseases that attack children; research into the relation between tuberculosis and geology; a new phase of pellagra cure. A chapter called "91 Billion Acre Farm" sets forth the mysteries of our sea-food grazing grounds. Another gives the first clear explanation we've seen of the practical uses for heavy hydrogen atoms and for the Carrel-Lindbergh machine, which keeps organs alive outside the body. The author has a tidy manner of writing that we particularly liked. Coming close to the sensational in much of his subject matter, he treats it with restraint and good taste and makes it all the more absorbing.

SOMETHING fresh in anthologies is *Conquests of Science*, edited by Ray Compton and Charles H. Nettels. Part of its twenty-two chapters are written by scientists themselves; others, in biographical or narrative form, cover the history of man's "unending exploration in search for truth." Briefly but authoritatively they touch on most of the fields in which the search goes on. If we had to choose a favorite among the lot, we'd name the episode from *Animal Treasure*, by Ivan T. Sanderson, a brilliant young English naturalist who relates his adventures in an African bat cave. With William Beebe, he shares honors for a combination of literary and scientific skill.

"This book was prepared," say the editors, "in the hope that it will open to you the enjoyment to be found in books of science." It can be used merely for your own diversion. But, with its glossary and selected reading list, it is also an excellent thing to hand on to the inquiring young.

THINK FOR YOURSELF!

Are you an ISOLATIONIST? A WORLD-LEAGUER? Whatever group you support, the books listed below will clarify your thinking.

Are you an isolationist?

GIDDY MINDS AND FOREIGN QUARRELS

by CHARLES A. BEARD

The strongest case yet presented for the complete separation of the United States from European entanglements. 50¢

Do you believe in a Union of Democracies?

ANGLO-SAXONY and ITS TRADITION

by GEORGE E. G. CATLIN

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DEMOCRACY TODAY AND TOMORROW

by EDUARD BENEŠ

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The Book Forum

No phrase has been more bandied about in recent fateful weeks than "power politics." But what exactly does it mean? Is power in and of itself evil, as Lord Acton implied in his epigram, "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely"? Or is it rather the unlovely ends to which it is sometimes directed which make the word a part of the vocabulary of abuse?

A colorful, timely answer to these questions emerges from the free and abundant pages of Valeriu Marcu's *Accent on Power*. This is a biography of Machiavelli and a history of politics at a time, like our own, of great changes. It is a study in the growth of Machiavelli's understanding of power. And, being these things, it is something of an objective essay on power as a phenomenon.

Catching the immense variety of Florentine life at its turbulent peak, the author paints a whole city — indeed, a whole society — while telling the story of the astute secretary at the Signory. Machiavelli lived at a time when military science was revolutionized by the introduction of firearms and trenches. He pondered on arms as they related to control of states. Intrigue never thrived more, nor chicanery, and the cold-blooded analyst had sufficient material on which to base his realistic conclusions.

Princes and rebels alike have served themselves well ever since with lessons learned out of the writings of this strange Machiavelli who, for all his shrewdness, died penniless and without any of the power it was his delight to reflect on.

THERE is not a person in America but has thought deeply, since war broke out, about certain questions: Will we be drawn in? Can we keep out? Are Hitler's collaborators at Munich, Chamberlain and Daladier, so much better than Hitler that we want to involve our country to keep them in power? Peace and neutrality are the overwhelming desire of the country, and so a tart little pamphlet by Charles A. Beard, entitled *Giddy Minds and Foreign Quarrels*, comes to a nation very ready to receive its doctrine. It is possible that Mr. Beard will send some people off into arguments not so much for peace as against President Roosevelt. Nevertheless the affirmative voice of the millions who want to keep out of a trouble which is none of our business will give a generous "Yea" to his pamphlet, in spite of its criticism of the chief executive in whom they still believe.

WHEN Felix Frankfurter came to this country at the age of twelve, he did not know a word of English. He grew up to tilt against legal windmills — and win. He attained some of his popularity by defending unpopular causes. Such is the

rather melodramatic background in any comment on the new Justice of the Supreme Court. In the foreground and in his *Law and Politics* are his calm and urbane manner, his charity and sophistication.

Papers read before bar associations make up part of this book; articles for the *New Republic*, letters to the *New York Times* are included, together with his famous ventures into journalism on the Scottsboro and Sacco-Vanzetti cases and on child labor and freedom of the press. Introduced by Archibald MacLeish, this is a civilized, illuminating, and (rare these days) perceptibly optimistic volume. All these fugitive pieces may well be samples of future history — straws in the wind indicating possible lines of struggle within the Supreme Court that will develop in the quarter-century or more during which Justice Frankfurter may reasonably be expected to serve.

ANOTHER success story, quite as unconventional and quite as American, is told by George Soule in *Sidney Hillman*, which reveals as much of the life of the labor leader as a diligent biographer could find out from a reticent subject.

The circumscribed world of a Jewish household in old Russia was just about all Hillman knew of men and affairs until his education began in prison, where he spent six months for demonstrating against the Czar. After the failure of the revolution of 1905, at the age of twenty, he came to this country and began to look for work. Before long he was an obscure employee in the clothing industry, and here the story really begins. Unionization was virtually unknown at that time among clothing workers. Now Hillman is head of a C.I.O. industrial union with a quarter of a million members. How he and the union got there is an exciting and altogether important chronicle, clearly and factually set down by the distinguished editor of the *New Republic*. Since Mr. Soule is also an authority on labor and economics, his biography is a guide to understanding all the organized social forces shaping the destiny of the country.

SOMETHING between a history of a period and an autobiography — so Louis Untermeyer describes his *From Another World*. It is that and a good deal more — a thoroughly delightful collection of reminiscences, anecdotes, shrewd criticism, epigrammatic comment. With a remarkable talent for knowing the people who contributed, whether in small or great degree, to the progress of American art and letters in the last thirty years, Mr. Untermeyer has also a gift for keeping discipline in the ranks of his memoirs. Never for a moment do they sprawl. Which is not to say there is any lack of variety in his