

# Books in Brief

BY JASPER R. LEWIS

## SOUTH AMERICA'S OPINION OF U.S., AND VICE VERSA

WITHOUT doubt, it should be salutary for us to stop and see ourselves as others see us, and by the same token it will be enlightening to the others to read what at least one serious investigator thinks of them.

*What the South American Thinks of Us*, by Carleton Beals, Herschel Brickell, Samuel Guy Inman and Bryce Oliver, (McBride, \$3.00), is what the authors believe are the opinions of our distant neighbors. In some instances it might be well to remember, then, that the South Americans themselves are not reporting.

The symposium is by no means flattering to the United States. More, the experts whose work it is apparently accept the opinions of our friends there at face value, sometimes stating their premises as though there could be no question of their correctness or importance.

Writing of Peru, for example, Carleton Beals, in stating that nation's objections to a postwar organization, thinks that "Peru simply cannot dissociate herself from Chile, Brazil and Argentina. There is also the important question of Oriental relationships, especially with Japan." One ventures the thought that if Peru must

tie in with fascist-minded Argentina and Brazil, or worry about her future trade with Japan, then South American opinions are in need of education, rather than exposition. Beals points out, with pertinent examples, the causes of South America's scepticism of the stability and honesty of our policies, and here he is on sure ground. The record is full of wavering, indecisive adventures in political and commercial diplomacy.

In Bolivia, a handful rules an ignorant, downtrodden mass; the tin cartel and its hirelings practically hold the country in slavery. The choice of Nelson Rockefeller as South American Co-ordinator was flaunting the power and sins of Standard Oil in the people's faces. Still, what Bolivia's leaders think seems mostly a matter of what will Uncle Sam do for or give to Bolivia. One can understand the fear of financial control by Wall Street and the big corporations. Even here it seems unfair to confine this fear to American institutions; British, German and French exploiters have been as rapacious in the past.

In some of the countries, a politically-minded Church, combined with the feudal ruling classes, formulates the opinions, which are

unfavorable to the United States and seem based largely on a desire to perpetuate its own existence. The greatest fault is our failure to reach the masses which, under the conditions, is not hard to understand.

Sentiment in Brazil, according to Bryce Oliver, is unfriendly to us because of our many errors in judgment, and President Vargas, unless we misunderstand the author, is only a dictator for the sake of his people. In fact, he is "the perfect political leader."

Hirschell Brickell writes on Venezuela and Colombia and finds them democratic in their objectives and friendly toward us. It comes almost as a shock to find any kind word for us from South America, but Brickell thinks the doubts in those two countries stem chiefly from fear of our hasty exit after the needs of the war are liquidated.

The part of the book most difficult to sympathize with is Samuel Guy Inman's section on Argentina and Chile. Inman portrays the former as a country of big industrialists and farm owners, and a mass of ignorant toilers who are just peons. This seems perfectly true. The "top drawer" is in favor of any regime that will secure its own position. He describes the "important people" as delightful, hospitable and democratic; the opponents of the United States have been the best brains of Argentina, as well as the leaders in moral reform. There are hopes that if the Argentines recover their liberties from the dictatorial

group, overdue emphasis on social questions will come to the fore, but if the leaders up to now have aligned themselves with the dictators, who is to lead the way?

Inman feels that relations have already deteriorated. Argentina's leaning toward the Axis was rather a leaning away from us. Since the infiltration of German influence during the war is commonly known, it is not easy to accept his views, which have the hallmark of agreement with the aforesaid "top drawer" element.

Now take, and I warmly recommend it, *South America Uncensored* by Roland Hall Sharp (Longmans, Green, \$3.50). Sharp's background of staff correspondent for *The Christian Science Monitor* merits the assumption that he has investigated fairly and weighed conservatively. He doesn't seem to see the same things the experts write about; although in over 100,000 miles of travel he has observed some of the same defects of our policies, he differentiates between the fascist ruling classes and the liberal minded masses.

The inconsistency of our supporting Dictator Vargas in Brazil, and frowning on the same type of leader in Argentina does lay us open to criticism, and surely does tighten Vargas' grip. Argentina is definitely the refuge for world fascism, and this is solely because of the ruling class. Labor and farm workers have no voice in politics; labor is mishandled generally, not alone in Argentina, but elsewhere. The Indians, partic-

ularly in the Patino tin mines in Bolivia, are victims of cruelty and despotism, all in the name of aiding the United Nations by producing raw materials. The rich live lavishly, Patino spending \$30,000,000 on residences and doing nothing for social welfare.

The doctrine of good-neighborliness appears to have been largely bunk, suffering from the demands of expediency. Sharp recites some examples of ineptness in our ideas of propaganda to build good will, and these are definitely known. One fact is noticeable: he thinks it is "a prime necessity to meet the United States halfway"—not for us to go all the way to meet the South Americans.

In a section, "Portrait of a Continent," he gives an excellent picture of the countries, the difficult physical geography and the natural obstacles to progress. In contrast to the poverty and filth, however, he finds admiration for some of the native population; for instance, the Peruvian Indians, free from the mixtures of Spanish blood of the old conquests. Amidst his political and economic comments he finds time to translate the beauties of the scenery to paper; here is a real travelogue, detailed and with a note of careful observation throughout.

Coming to the question of the future, he thinks South Americans will respect us for being more realistic and less romantic. The difficulties facing agricultural development, the overworked mines, are obstacles too little understood by us. The Ford rubber plantation proved a failure, except for experimental purposes, largely because of natural difficulties alien to the knowledge of the foreign developer.

The net conclusion is that in many ways South America is its own enemy; science and education have their tasks before them, but the ironbound customs and the selfishness of the ruling class apparently are the greatest hurdles over which South America must struggle to modernize itself. The greatest need is a change of attitude among the ruling class. Sharp's basic belief is that people make a country; the masses have been oppressed by social, religious, geographical and political circumstances. Democracy, purer forms of religion, plain cleanliness and initiative in learning, are fighting their way up, and fascism will lose out.

Sharp's book is a wholesome and discerning outlook on a subject that has not before had such a balanced and frank exposition.

## BRIEFER COMMENT

### WAR

*Mission Beyond Darkness* by Lt. Com. Joseph Bryan III, USNR, and Philip Reed, (Duell, Sloan & Pearce, \$2.00), is the battle record of an Air Group of the car-

rier Lexington. It is said to be factual, with few trimmings, and makes a simply told but stirring story.

It is the distaff side of war, but it belong to the record, too. Mar-

got Kurtz in *My Rival, the Sky*, (Putnam, \$2.50), tells about her combat pilot husband, Frank Kurtz, her meetings with him between assignments, and their partings. It is sincere, frank and unashamed in its admissions; it is probably the story of many an airman's wife.

All of the travail of birth is in *The Superfortress Is Born* by Thomas Collison (Duell, Sloan & Pearce, \$3.00). The conception of it, creation and production; the tests, and unfortunately, the tragedies of early experiments, before this huge weapon was perfected. It is well told, detailed and sufficiently technical to be an adequate description.

Yet another vista of military life is in *Proceed Without Delay* by Sgt. Thomas R. St. George (Crowell, \$2.00). In the South Pacific the author found fun, made recreation, evaded regulations if necessary, and generally tried to make life livable during off hours. It is amusing in spots, revealing in others, and an altogether interesting history of GI life.

### BIOGRAPHICAL

*One Who Survived* by Alexander Barmine (Putnam, \$3.75), is a disturbing book. Barmine was a soldier in the Russian revolution, a diplomat stationed in Greece, a "member of the Party" and eventually a fugitive from the disciples of liquidation. His book is a revelation of the terror that has ruled Russia under Stalin, documented with names and dates, but without resort to theatrical exposures of

the measures of cruelty. The author evaded death in 1937 by leaving his legation and going to Paris, later coming here. It is a story of treachery, opportunism and betrayal of principles. If his statements are true, those who distrust and fear Stalin have ample cause. Beside being educational, the volume is an exciting narrative.

The non-military side of the hero of Gettysburg shows him to have been a roaring, tough old bird, something of a soldier of fortune, and a gay blade with the ladies. *Dan Sickles, Yankee King of Spain*, by Edgcomb Pinchon (Doubleday, Doran, \$3.50), is a live, amusing and enlightening tale of the general's private life and some of his war exploits.

*Home to India* by Santha Rama Rau (Harper's, \$2.50), is a pleasant introduction into the Brahmin household of the author, after her return upon graduation from Wellesley. It gives pictures of Indian life, although as a literary product it is not particularly notable. "They ate with their fingers," although "the technique was hard to master, particularly with liquids."

A woman's point of view of life in the Aleutians may serve the purpose of discouraging any hardy souls who think they would like it. *Prekaska's Wife*, by Helen Wheaton (Dodd, Mead, \$3.00), relates Mrs. Wheaton's experiences as the wife of the storekeeper at Kiska. Modestly if not too well told, it is descriptive of the odd customs of the natives and inci-

dentally of the job of keeping the native women away from one's own husband.

### IDEAS

Otto F. Reiss has compiled a number of instances to show how the experts create "planned brainstorming." *How to Develop Profitable Ideas* (Prentice-Hall, \$3.00), relates some of the methods and the sources of new stunts, in the ever present race for profitable business, including some well known current examples of successful adaptation of basic ideas.

### FICTION

The soldier's return is a common theme today, but J. B. Priestly does a fine job of conveying a message in *Three Men in New Suits* (Harper's, \$2.50). The three men just released from service meet their new civilian problems directly and with the dissatisfied reactions natural after years of war. The story is simple, well if not brilliantly told, but the message is the important thing. Will the world go back to its pre-war blindness of social selfishness?

If you would like the illusion of seeing the war and manipulations of power by the bigwigs from the inside, read *Dragon Harvest* by Upton Sinclair (Viking, \$3.00). Lanny Budd, his Amer-

ican hero secret agent, lives through the days of Hitler's rise and early successes. It makes lively reading with an historical background.

*Laughter on the Hill* by Margaret Parton (Whittlesey House, \$2.75), is her story of Bohemian life in San Francisco as she saw it in her early newspaperwoman's career. The bits of pseudo-historical description of people and events are entertaining, which is more than can be said of the peculiar people she met and played with in her working hours and after.

Ferenc Molnar's *Farewell My Heart* (Simon & Schuster, \$2.00), is the somewhat unbelievable and sticky love story of a fifty year old Hungarian refugee correspondent and twenty-one year old refugee dancer. It is mildly entertaining in the French tradition, rather thin, and quite unconvincing.

The age-long problem of Jew and Gentile and the intolerance of almost every people for every other, is the basis for *By the Waters of Babylon*, by Stephen Lister (Dodd, Mead, \$2.50). It is a change from the run of current fiction, with frank expressions of problems that exist, and a setting of current life against a background of the prejudices and customs of long ago.

\* \* \*

● "At the present time composers are not following the old masters, but writing something which has no past, and, in most cases, no future."

—Sir Thomas Beecham

# Classics and the Censor

BY SYDNEY J. HARRIS

From his column "Strictly Personal" in The Chicago Daily News

"**A** CLASSIC," said Mark Twain, "is a book that everybody wants to have read and nobody wants to read."

Much of Shakespeare is spicier than *Forever Amber*, in addition to being pretty fair literature, but millions of young people studiously avoid reading him out of school because he is embalmed as a Classic.

There is more frankness in the writings of Martial and Juvenal than you will find in Joyce or Hemingway, and Aristophanes makes Bernard Shaw sound as decorous as a deacon. They can't help it if we call them Classics.

Mortimer Adler could have devised no faster way of killing off the world's literary masterpieces than by labeling them the "100 Great Books."

The way to make the Classics popular is to crack down on them. Get them banned in Boston or burned in Tennessee.

Then the publishers could set up a black market in the original editions, bootlegging their books the way "Lady Chatterly's Lover" was smuggled in after the last war and peddled on dark streets like French post cards. Yum-yum.

Mortimer would have done better if he had denounced the Great

Books as being injurious to youthful morals and forbade all his students to read any of them.

What the Classics really need is a concerted campaign by ministers, judges and Parent-Teacher Associations, screaming that Shakespeare is bawdy (as he often is) and that Plato is a dangerous radical (as he often is). The cops could slap a \$25 fine on anyone caught with a copy of "Oedipus Rex" in his possession, and the bookies would spring up like gin mills in the Volstead era.

What the post office censors did for the Varga Girl, they could also do for Dante's Beatrice and Petrarch's Laura, by banning these immodest maidens from the nation's bookstores. There is no surer path to popularity.

Of course, the Classics are not lewd in any sense of the word. But they are human and earthly and full of excitement and vitality—which is something the professors forget to mention in their dry dissertations on "The Use of the Metaphor in Shakespeare" and "The Effect of the Compound Predicate in Pope's Heroic Couplets."

If we can just rescue the Great Books from the Small Teachers, they might stand a chance of getting read.

Copyright 1945, by The Chicago Daily News, Chicago, Illinois