

A very useful book, if you understand the title, is *Do You Know What You're Buying?* by Louis Ludwig (Ziff-Davis, \$2.95). It doesn't tell you what brands or makes are better or worse, but it does reveal what is meant by customary terms and names for merchandise from automobiles to wearing apparel. Surprisingly enough, terms that one hears every day are not generally known as far as technical construction goes. There is also some good advice on buying.

Hiram Bingham, better known as a former senator, is listed as discoverer of Machu Picchu in 1911. *Lost City of the Incas* (Duell, Sloan & Pearce, \$5.00), is his revised interpretation of the place of Machu Picchu in Peruvian history. It is an absorbing story of exploration, coupled with appraisal of the customs and culture of centuries ago; it is interesting for its material rather than the author's style.

FICTION

The popularity of the historical novel has not waned, and in this lucrative field no era holds more fascination for authors (or readers) than the Elizabethan. In *Roanoke Hundred* (Bobbs-Merrill, \$3.50), Inglis Fletcher fictionalizes the founding of the first English settlement in North America. The story centers in Sir Richard Grenville and the stout lads of Devon and Cornwall who made up the 100 pioneers to Roanoke. High adventure is flavored with a touch of romance as the plot unfolds. One of Mrs. Fletcher's Carolina series, this is a fast moving and well written piece.

Jan Westcott's *Captain for Elizabeth* (Crown, \$3.00), is a simpler and more popular account of another of Elizabeth's courtiers. Captain Cavendish, his young brother, and their lady loves are the main subjects of the Westcott novel, and their adventures as they sail around the world make a good story. *Captain for Elizabeth* and *Roanoke Hundred* deal with the same period, even with some of the same characters. Comparison is, therefore, tempting. Westcott's book has less historic background and is not as well written as *Roanoke Hundred*, but will very likely prove more popular.

Sylvia Townsend Warner worked on *The Corner That Held Them* (Viking, \$3.00), for almost ten years. The resulting novel of life in an English priory at the end of the Middle Ages is a rich and brilliant description of medieval life. The story of forty-odd years in the convent at Oby is distinguished by its life-like characterizations of nuns, priests, bishops, and lay people. An almost uncanny sense of historic perspective rewards the reader as Miss Warner holds a microscope to one small corner of old England. For those who appreciate fine writing and descriptions of medieval life this book is a treasure. Engrossing reading, too.

King Tut and His Friends (Harper's, \$2.75), is a book for cat lovers by John Hofsford Hickey and Priscilla Beach. Although the silver tabby Persian, King Tut, is the central figure of the book, his feline and canine friends get their share of attention. The authors of *Know Your Cat* and *Know Your Dog* have a delicate touch that will delight those who love their four-footed companions.

A little satire on Russians, American diplomacy, and Americans is Samuel Spewack's *The Busy, Busy People* (Houghton Mifflin, \$3.00). The wire-service reporters, the diplomats, the Russian officials and party members, all come in for their share of panning. The official ambassadorial mind is examined at great length but with no reflected credit, and some minor love interest helps the story along somewhat. As a satire of types, the story is delightful; as a commentary on the conflict between East and West, it never hits half as hard as the darts thrown at the characters in it.

Life on the lowest and simplest level, that of the army private engaged in combat, is the theme of Allan Lyon's *Toward An Unknown Station* (Macmillan, \$3.00). All the small hopes and fears, the gnawing frustrations, the thoughts and feelings of this indispensable part of the army are vividly and honestly related. Lyon has given us a well-written picture of the small guy, his trials and life.

Bellamy Partridge in *Big Freeze* (Crowell, \$2.75), has his hero engaging all the forces of nature, in his fight to build the first Croton dam and aqueduct to New York City. Just to complicate things further, there are lovely

ladies and crooked New York politics of one hundred years ago. Engineer David Wakeman emerges triumphant in every case for a very interesting picture of metropolitan life in the 1830's.

Although it is classed as a war novel, there is hardly anything of war itself in *The Wine of Astonishment*, by Martha Gellhorn (Scribner's, \$3.00). Most of the skirmishing takes place in bedrooms, whether it is the Lieutenant Colonel or his jeep driver, Jacob Levy, who is involved. It is, however, rather a story of deeper meaning, in its development of characters and portrayal of the philosophy of life on the part of individuals of different types.

MISCELLANEOUS

According to E. M. Butler in *The Myth of the Magus* (Macmillan, \$3.75), all great prophets, conjurers, magicians, and charlatans

are more striking in their likenesses than differences. In the legendary history of almost every people is a mythical hero, and the pattern of his life is followed in the story of most of the men she describes. Zoroaster, Moses, Solomon, Christ, Merlin, Rasputin—all of these have much in common with the legendary figure.

The author sets up a table listing the ten outstanding features common to most legendary figures. These features include: a mysterious origin, a period of wandering, a magical contest, a mysterious or violent death followed by a resurrection. The author proves to her own satisfaction the common basis on which the lives of these characters are based. This is a careful study, full of rich material. It will interest all those who enjoy folk-tales and anthropology and remind the reader of Fraser's *Golden Bough*.

A Westerner, on the occasion of his first visit to Boston, gave the following account of his sight-seeing ventures:

"The bean eaters had a sign on every corner. Here was a plate announcing that in this house John Hancock and John Quincy Adams spent the night on such and such a date; on the next corner a house will be plainly marked as the spot where the wife of General Warren died—to say nothing of the markers of the route taken by the Continentals to Bunker Hill, etc.

"I was very much interested in Boston and rode all around the town, but was particularly interested in one house out near the edge of the city marked as follows: 'This is the house that Paul Revere would have passed if he had gone this way.'"

—*The Haversack*

Some years ago an elderly man was riding a sight-seeing bus up Fifth Avenue. This was his first trip to New York, and he was sitting on the edge of his seat, taking everything in, while the conductor of the tour was calling out the points of interest.

"We are now passing the Astor mansion," he said. The rider, more familiar with the older generation, asked confidently, "John Jacob?" "No!" said the conductor, irritated at the interruption, "Vincent."

Soon the conductor announced, "This is the home of the Vanderbilts." Again the old man apparently spoke out of turn, "Commodore?" This time the fellow fairly barked at the poor visitor, "William H.!"

The man settled back in his seat, apparently duly squelched, but when the guide called out, "This is beautiful Christ's Church."

Grandpa straightened up and, with a twinkle in his eye, asked meekly: "Jesus?"

—*Digest of Digests*