

political ethics of man today. It is broad enough to offer some sincere and wise comments on social conditions, life, and religion.

For a useful and interesting introduction to one of the big questions of today, *Inside Pan-Arabia*, by M. J. Steiner, (Packard, \$3.00), has a good deal of information on the Arab world, its history and people. The Arab-Jewish impasse, its roots and its current importance, are thoroughly aired. The author includes mention of the influences of the external powers, Britain and America, on the internal affairs of the Middle East.

The romantic or story-book side of Arab life is *Black Tents of Arabia*, by Carl Raswan, (Creative Age, \$3.00), a reprint of the original published in 1935. This tells of Raswan's life among the Bedouins, about Arabian horses, beautiful women, and desert customs. It is entertaining, but in sharp contrast to current affairs in the region.

*East of the Andes and West of Nowhere*, by Nancy Bell Bates, (Scribner's, \$3.50), is a breezy volume of observations on customs, people, and animals in Colombia. Mrs. Bates, as an assistant to her husband in his work for the Rockefeller Foundation, has combined a study of the country with her domestic travelogue in the best meaning of the word.

The development of law, pictured by eminent lawyers through the ages, is the subject of *Men of Law: from Hammurabi to Holmes*, by William Seagle, (Macmillan, \$5.00). Not only is there an exposition of how laws came into being in each age, but of necessity there are many references to customs and manners. It is not technical.

What are Yankees and what are their characteristics? B. A. Botkin edits *A Treasury of New England Folklore*, (Crown, \$4.00), over 900 pages of literature devoted to the virtues and vices of the inhabitants of the section. It offers real entertainment for an entire winter's reading.

*Salem and the Indies*, The Story of the Great Commerical Era of the City, by James Duncan Phillips, (Houghton-Mifflin, \$6.00), is the chronicle of what was once the sixth city of the country. The period between the Revolution and the War of 1812 was the great era

for Salem. Legends and anecdotes add interest to the facts and figures.

George Gamow, the professor who knows the answer to scientific questions and how to make the average person understand them, writes *One Two Three—Infinity*, (Viking, \$4.75). It is too much to say everything is grasped by your humble reviewer; Einstein and relativity and some other things are still heavy going. By text and illustration, Gamow offers entertainment and instruction in varied scientific fields for the inquiring mind.

## BIOGRAPHY

*Abraham Lincoln: His Life, Work and Character*, Edited by Edward Wagenknecht, (Creative Age, \$4.00), is an anthology of pieces about Lincoln, some from biographical works and some from fiction. It offers in one volume a wealth of information and interesting tributes.

Students of psychology and psychoanalysis will find both interest and some perception of Freudian principles in *Freud: His Life and His Mind*, by Helen Walker Puner, (Howell, Soskin, \$4.00). Written as a biography, it has the merit of being non-technical for the lay reader, and with enough detail about Freud's life to make it a smooth story.

Bill Mauldin continues his good work with *Back Home*, (Sloane, \$3.50), a book of drawings and text that will be as dear to American readers as was *Up Front*. Here he tells briefly but roguishly of his exit from the army. Then he examines the state of our economy and politics far more wisely than do our legislators. Mauldin knows what the average American is thinking, and he expresses it brilliantly by cartoon and word.

## FICTION

*East Side, West Side*, by Marcia Davenport, (Scribner's, \$3.00), is an excellent novel of society life in New York, with the tangled ends of lower East Side origins evidencing their virtues to the detriment of the upper crust. It is also by way of being a study in psychology; a woman suffering long neglect at the hands of her husband, surrounded by similar unhappiness among the smart and the elect. Then of course, comes the awakening to The Man. It is good character study.

Set in a little town in Texas, with shifts to Washington and elsewhere, *The Ring and the Cross*, by Robert Rylee, (Knopf, \$3.00), is primarily a study of life and politics today in the guise of fiction. There is also a glimpse of labor restlessness in the face of war preparation in 1940. There is love interest, and there is gripping realism of modern economic conditions in the South.

A light and fanciful little tale of the theatre is *Jenny Villiers*, by J. B. Priestley, (Harper's, \$2.50). It is the drug-induced hallucination of a playwright in England, culminating in a renewal of faith and aspiration. It is deftly done.

A group of stories in his usual realistic vein is *The Life Adventurous*, the latest volume by James T. Farrell, (Vanguard, \$3.00). While many may read with disapproval Farrell's biting reflections of life, particularly in adolescence, it must be admitted that he knows human beings, at least at their worst.

*Colorado*, by Louis Bromfield, (Harper's, \$2.75), is a "western," of the cattle and mining country, when railroad pioneering was new and gambling and shootin' were big time sport. It is the story of the big man of Silver City, his family, and the politics and way of life of the era. It has all the essentials for a movie; light escape reading à la Bromfield.

California in 1846, Sutter and the gold rush, the rough and tumble adventuring of the pioneers and settlers, go to make *John Barry*, a Novel of California's Greatness, by Donald F. Bedford, (Creative Age, \$3.00), a colorful story. A touch of New Orleans and the excitement

of statehood for California help the picture. The several romantic episodes in the life of the hero are indifferent stuff, and, while there is plenty of action, the telling is rather indifferent, too.

Because stories of circus people and their affairs appeal to the romantic in us, *Gus the Great*, by Thomas W. Duncan, (Lippincott, \$3.50), holds the reader's interest. It is not literary quality or unusualness, because these are not its virtues. Its hero is a great bluff, probably giving the reader all the pleasures of vicarious puncturing of inhibitions. The story is placed in the Midwest; it is meandering, full of unnecessary details about people that wander in and out. It is escape reading of the highest sort, but it is fun.

The old story of Helen of Troy translated into the odyssey of her ravisher is told in *Paris of Troy*, by George Baker, (Ziff-Davis, \$2.75). The story is told by the faithful but unfortunate Achates; in fact, the British edition was entitled *Fidus Achates*. This current version is rather sedate, ponderous, and a little slow.

*The Hunter's Horn*, by Peirson Ricks, (Scribner's, \$3.00), is a novel of post-Civil War people and customs in the Carolinas. The aristocratic plantation owners, the poor whites and the liberated but serf-like Negroes make up its characters. The descriptions of the social habits of the times are vivid, and its love interest—the upper class boy and the poor white girl "he done wrong"—is dated. It is old-fashioned and tragic, but withal a good piece of fiction.

Caterpillar: An upholstered worm.

*Louisville Courier Journal Magazine*

Movement of wives to join husbands overseas has been labeled "Operation Hen-peck" by Army men.

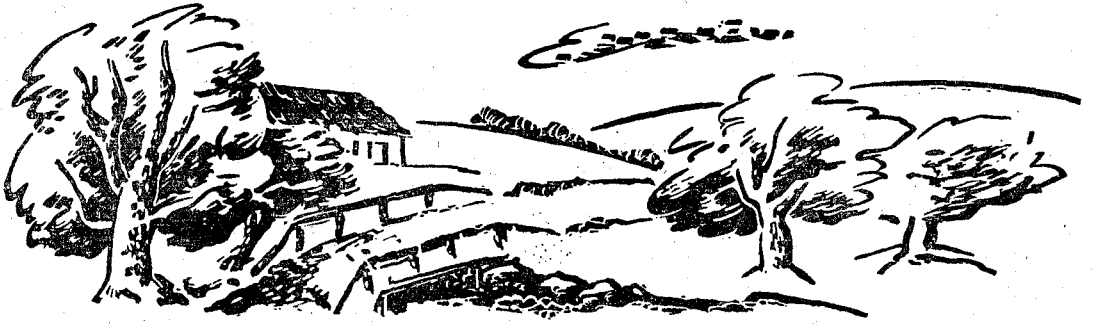
*Quote*

The florist's new assistant picked up the phone and listened attentively as he heard the order.

"The ribbon must be extra wide," the man was saying, "with the 'Rest in Peace' on both sides, and if there is room, 'We shall meet in heaven.'"

There was a sensation when the flowers arrived at the funeral. True, the ribbon was extra wide, but the inscription it bore read: "Rest in peace on both sides and if there is room, we shall meet in heaven."

*Reading Railway Magazine*



# COUNTRY COMMENT

The British Snail-Watching Society has recently disbanded. Their object was "to bring to the notice of the whole world the virtues of the snail: unhurried persistence and sturdy independence." They have disbanded because their object, so they say, has been achieved.

First reaction to this news may be one of exhilaration. In a world of clash and collision, of stalemate, impasse, and frustration, here is a group of people who have achieved their goal. If the British Snail-Watchers have done it, handful though they may be, may not some of the rest of us accomplish something constructive?

The cynic, of course, is saying that the Snail-Watchers, having practiced on snails, are now concentrating on watching the slow creep of international relations and economic recovery. But in the wording of the notice of disbandment itself, I detect no overtone of cynicism.

I am convinced that the Snail-Watchers are sincere, though over-sanguine. Has their object actually been achieved? Does everyone in fact now appreciate the snail? Has everyone seen a snail, let alone watched it with unhurried persistence?

The Snail-Watchers disbanded before some of us got around to joining, before some of us were even invited to join, possibly before some of us knew that the Snail-Watchers existed. And I would risk the guess that were they now to reorganize and send out a universal invitation, a few people would still be

unresponsive and unconverted. Can one be a horse-race-watcher or an auto-race-watcher and a snail-watcher at the same time? Can one serve God and Mammon?

I have done a little watching myself, if not of snails, of creatures comparable. I recall seeing only two snails in the past ten years. Though I watched them awhile, I now know that I did not watch them long enough. Perhaps if they had both been moving, I would have watched them longer. How long should one watch a snail that has withdrawn into its shell and is not moving at all? This much can be said in its favor: it is at least not moving backward. Perhaps the unmoving snail deserves longer watching than the moving snail.

I have watched other unmoving creatures, though some of them could move fast enough on occasion. A grasshopper pausing between leaps to look profound. A large black-and-yellow spider sitting serenely in the center of its mathematical web, waiting for the grasshopper to arrive. A frog in the sun practicing like a bronze Buddha the virtues of meditation and impassivity. A turtle halting on its long trek from the Mesozoic, peering out from its shell at the present age but never getting as far out as a snail can.

Snail-watchers are the last people in the world to disband. From snails let them proceed to crustaceans. Sooner might the Church itself have cause to disband because the world perchance had been saved.

—ROBERT FRANCIS