

Livelier and less inhibited than the *New Yorker*, the booklet is often genuinely bright and funny. At random:

If the British owned Westchester,  
It would undoubtedly become Whester;  
Or if King George's was Manhattan,  
They'd bloody well call it Mattan;  
Now aren't we glad it would break their conks  
To do anything like that to Bronx.

In addition to such flashes, there is also much information of a more solid nature, including a map of the city subways, an abstract of the state game and fish laws, a glossary of New Yorkese. FRED DAY.

### Brief Reviews

GREAT BRITAIN AND PALESTINE, 1915-1936, INFORMATION DEPARTMENT PAPERS NO. 20, *The Royal Institute of International Affairs*. Oxford University Press. 85c.

Much of the material that any person, seriously interested in getting to the bottom of the Arab-Zionist-British antagonism in Palestine, would find indispensable is summarized in this useful handbook. While the book skillfully avoids any obvious show of bias, British imperialism, as one might expect from the source, gets all the better of the argument. Practically every phase of the subject is explored except the key phase: imperialist domination over one of the world's most vital and strategic areas. Because this is taken for granted, and because practically all the sources used are either British or Zionist, the Arabs get nothing resembling justice from the implicit argument in the book. Nevertheless, with concision and authority, a vast amount of raw material is set forth on the fundamental economic and social problems and antagonisms which have made the holy land a place of unholy conflict. T. D.

THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE AND THE SOVIET UNION IN THE FAR EAST, by Victor A. Yakhontoff. *The American Russian Institute for Cultural Relations with the Soviet Union*. 15c.

According to Palme Dutt, the Far East is potentially the hottest spot on the globe today. This brief, concentrated, unbiased pamphlet will help you to understand the situation there. It contains a survey of Russian relations with the Far East from the year 1221, when the Mongol invaders crossed the Volga, to the year 1936, when Japan and Germany concluded their pact "against communism." A chronological table and a lengthy bibliography are included. F. W. D.

LANCER AT LARGE, by Francis Yeats-Brown. *Viking Press*. \$2.75.

Starting from the New Delhi, seat of English rule in India, Mr. Yeats-Brown of the Bengal Lancers, seeker for *The Light*, moves on to Meerut and Gorakhpur, attempting a picture of modern peasant life, but giving us mainly his own spontaneous impressions and a review of the past. From Gorakhpur, he travels on to Allahabad, and there at the River Ganges, he witnesses the greatest religious festival of the year. Twenty million people! Peasants, ascetics, fakirs, beggars, dwarfs, lepers! Faced by this vast press of humanity, he arrives, by rather dubious reasoning, at the conclusion that the caste system of old India is eugenics in practice.

According to one Englishwoman whom he meets, the present revolutionary beginnings in India are but an outlet for passion, a sexual compensation. The author himself wonders whether it might not be unemployment. Unfortunately, however, such flashes of realistic thinking are not too frequent with him. Perhaps the best passage in the book is that which describes Ram Lal, a tanner, an outcast, representative of fifty million poverty-stricken workers

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of India, diseased, illiterate, living in mud-huts in the smell of cow-dung, preyed on by unscrupulous grasping *banias* (money-lenders). It is a pity that Mr. Yeats-Brown did not see fit to portray India through the eyes of such a character as this. The concrete notations on Hindu life, which might have resulted from such an approach, would probably have been worth more than his own mystical visions of the country, sincere and even passionate as these are.  
 J. S.

**BARREN METAL**, by Naomi Jacob. Macmillan Co. \$2.50.

If this novel did not pretend to concern itself with problems which face Jews as a persecuted race, we could dismiss it as the romantic piece of fiction that it really is. Not that the author makes any serious effort to come to grips with the vital problems of the Jewish people. If she refers to them, it is because they seem unavoidable in a novel whose characters are Jewish, or because she feels that it helps to give her book importance. At any rate, the approach is thoroughly bourgeois, at times even snobbish, and altogether unexceptional.

The story has very little to do with the fact that Rachel, the heroine, is a Jewess. We are asked to grieve with her over the loss of her husband's companionship, when he is engrossed in making money, and to thrill over her love affair with a very cultured Englishman of leisure. There are the usual scenes of renunciation and fulfillment, replete with more than the usual number of endearments. The happy ending is accomplished by the novel expedient of letting the husband die.  
 M. G. M.

**THE HUMAN COMEDY**, by James Harvey Robinson, with an introduction by Harry Elmer Barnes. Harper's. \$3.

The late Professor Robinson certainly ranked with the better historians of his period; and this last book of his (a compilation) is good history—good in that it gives a lively, iconoclastic, extraordinarily well-written résumé of man's past, an eloquent and honest plea for historical-mindedness. We soon discover, however, that it is old-line liberalism, liberalism dying with its boots on; and all the misconceptions of Marxism, the vague idealisms, and tragic half-way conclusions are there. Worse, the analysis of imperialism and war is woefully mystical and misleading.

In the main, the book is a plea for more enlightenment, higher intelligence, better education. Very well. But such a faith blindly assumes that the existing social order will of itself usher in these missionary forces in order to convert itself; and such a faith eternally postpones and ever paralyzes action.  
 H. S. J.

★

**Recently Recommended Books**

*Behind the Spanish Barricades*, by John Langdon Davies. McBride. \$2.75

*The Final Struggle*, being Countess Tolstoy's Diary for 1910. Oxford. \$2.50.

*The New Soviet Constitution*, by Joseph Stalin. International. 2c.

*Hitler Over Russia?*, by Ernst Henri. Translated by Michael Davidson. Simon & Schuster. \$2.50.

*A Book of Contemporary Short Stories*, by Dorothy Brewster, Ph.D., with an Appendix on Writing the Short Story, by Lillian Barnard Gilkes. Macmillan. \$3.50.

*History of Florence from the Founding of the City Through the Renaissance*, by Ferdinand Schevill. Harcourt, Brace. \$5.

*Selected Writings*, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. International. \$2.25.

*The Crisis in the Socialist Party*, by William Z. Foster. Workers Library Publishers. 5c.

*Landlord and Peasant in China*, by Chen Han-Seng. International. \$2.

*The Theory and Practice of Socialism*, by John Strachey. Random House. \$3.

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