

Gossip With a Purpose

Washington Close-Ups, by Edward G. Lowry. New York: Houghton Mifflin Co. \$3.00.

PERHAPS some will feel that a book on so slight a theme does not call for critical comment. Were this book like some others of a biographical nature which have recently come from the publishers I should agree. But these are neither pen sketches done in black and white nor are they splotches of color done with realistic malice. These sketches, some of which have appeared in the New Republic, form a real contribution to our knowledge of American politics, such as we obtain at times in conversation from one who has experienced much but not forgotten that although the men we have about us are pretty much the type of men we are going to have in years to come, yet it is only the foolish who do not insist upon discriminating among the members of the stock in hand. Have you an acquaintance who in the hottest political fighting has the reputation of seeing how different are the purposes of men from what they seem to be? Sometimes he is decidedly worth listening to, whether you decide to follow him or not.

As you run your eye down the table of contents you find many familiar names. A few seem out of place; Adeed, for example. But when you read that he has been in the diplomatic service forty-seven years, and of these has been for thirty-five years Assistant Secretary of State, and that such different men as Cleveland and Blaine found him indispensable, you must admit an interest in this American who was born in 1842 and who speaks and writes French, German, Italian and Spanish. And when you have finished, you reflect, if you have read with profit, upon the dearth of such figures in American public life and the reasons therefor. Perhaps that is why Mr. Lowry included this sketch.

Of the outstanding personalities of the present or recent moments, Harding, Lodge, Hughes, Wood, Taft, Pershing, Jimms and Underwood, there is little that is new. The sketch of Lodge is, I think, the unfairest in the book, unless it be that of Pershing. The sketch of Hoover is a gem.

But Mr. Lowry knows enough of the soil of America to be revealed at his best when he is discussing Bryan, Johnson, Norris, LaFollette, Borah, Hays and McCormick. To call Bryan a troubadour was not original, but from such personal experience to present a picture of Mr. Bryan on tour in such a way as to make such an application just, is an achievement. Only as the historians come to realize his aspect of Bryan will they correctly appraise his undeniable influence. This is to reveal the fact that a basic value of this book lies in its lack of reliance upon sources from which history is usually written. It is important that at Valley Junction, Iowa, Mr. Bryan had two bowls of milk toast for breakfast, and that the baggage man on the train during the course of an entire day ran back every time the train stopped to hear Mr. Bryan speak from the rear car of the train. It is not probable that any considerable number of the prominent diplomats or statesmen of the present day will consider that it is important, but Mr. Lowry knows better than they for he has sensed the arid elements that actually enliven American life.

The faults of Mr. Lowry's own method are revealed in his sketch of LaFollette. Mr. Lowry undertakes to point out that LaFollette has no sense of proportion. Others have done that. But he undertakes to suggest that

Mr. LaFollette would have fared better had he read George Santayana, particularly his essay on English Liberty in America. The point is that LaFollette reading Santayana would find in it, not the moderation, not to say accommodation, that Lowry does, but would find his own message just as he has done in all else that he has touched, in Hamlet and in Iago, that is a message to satisfy his own impulse. It is of course highly doubtful whether that particular essay has any true application to conditions that LaFollette met in Wisconsin. Perhaps there is an application in Georgia or in Massachusetts. One might advance the view that Lodge has made an application, but what of the result?

Some day a better book than this will be written by a man who will, it is to be hoped, possess the frank enthusiasm of the author, but who, in addition to showing clearly that there are many different types of Americans, will show by a sketch and analysis of the mental and physical background of the people from which they came, why there are such leaders. Such a book will do more than present the outstanding political personalities of a generation. It will effect an explanation of these types to the people of other sections. However true this picture of Lodge may be, few in Milwaukee will understand. I doubt very much whether Idaho will realize the value of Mellon, and I know that those east of Buffalo will read with no understanding, if they read at all, these vivid sketches of America's political insurgents.

In these twenty-four sketches we find no representative of the seething millions as imaged by our radicals. These men have all arrived. But the amazing fact is that they are not of one class. They represent as many Americas as there are sections in this vast country. No better evidence have we than in this survey of leadership of the permanence of the pioneer tradition. We are still in the making. At some later time such a book as this may include a representative or so of the New America. Is there any significance in the fact that there are only two Democrats in this list? If so, what is it? E. E. R.

Blood of Conquerors

The Blood of the Conquerors, by Harvey Fergusson. New York: Alfred Knopf. \$2.50.

IF you dip into one of Zane Grey's novels you will find a sort of purple torrent of nonsense that in its own way gets along, carried and lighted with no little honest confusion and zeal. But in the end nonsense, whether western or no. If you dip back into that much prized novel, *The Virginian*, you will be shocked to find what it is like nowadays. How seriously people spoke of it; and at twenty years' distance may do so still! But on reacquaintance what journalism it turns out to be, though effective sometimes, what vim and sentimentality, what false bravado and strenuous life, and prudery! It might have been written by a kind of Rooseveltian old maid. But the promise of Mr. Fergusson's first novel and the encouraging thing about it is that none of this mincing and arranging appears. He is native to his scene and his people; and that perhaps helps him, together with his talent, to write of them without footlights, journalism or sentiment.

Ramon Delcasar is the son of a long tradition of landowners, hidalgos in a way, descended from those conquistadores who had brought with them from Spain such a mass of lordly heritages, pride, indolence, honor, bravery,

passion, vanity and ease. From the law college in St. Louis he comes vaguely back to his own country, falls in love with a girl from the East, and gets all fired with ambition and thirst for power. But this girl has always been told what to do, what to think, and what to marry. And what between her mother and her brother with his hemorrhages she is finally dragged away and married to a New Yorker. Later during this husband's absence she recalls her Western lover; but nothing follows that passionate ten days, and Ramon goes back to take up his life again. Meanwhile he has been struggling to make a place for himself among his own blood. He has become rich from his uncle's death. And then in the end his heritage is so strong within him that he fades back into the old life of his forefathers, is lost to the town and to county politics, and settles into his farm with the Spanish squaw by whom he has already had a child.

This of course sounds like the regular farrago. It would be that and commonplace and foolish enough if it were seen with the eyes of stale romance, hot blood, hidalgos, guitars, whiskey and cowboy swash. But there is nothing like that; the moods; the vain, high spirit; the capacity for violent if not sustained effort, the uneven persistence; are always, if not quite adequately done, at least soundly convincing. The story moves straight, without any apparent consciousness that there is anything that ought to come out right or that there are complications that ought to be coated with psychology, ethics, or reflection; and yet I felt that the author always knew his complexities and motivations and chose to show them by means of the story itself, by the honest and dependable development that he could give his outline. The quiet mind with which he takes his account of life is itself Western in quality; and is, moreover, what makes the book the pleasant reminder that it is of Spanish writing. The *Blood of the Conquerors* has something in it of the manner in which these Spaniards take up their subjects, warmly but not fussily. In fact Mr. Fergusson's book is like Pío Baroja's *La feria de los discretos* in pattern, though not so bright-lighted or cynically romantic or profound. But, unlike Baroja, its greatest defect is the lack of any carrying style. Often the writing is not simple but merely perfunctory and flat. I got the impression only too often that many things, natural setting, episodes and so on, were felt well enough and surely enough but were not happily conveyed. The style does not carry really the author's matter; he has invented much more than his medium conveys; and has conceived more than he has quite seen. And this more than anything else is what leaves the *Blood of the Conquerors* more interesting as a first novel than as a round achievement. S. Y.

The Evolution of World Peace

The Evolution of World-Peace, edited by F. S. Marvin.
New York: Oxford University Press. \$4.75.

OUTSIDE the university system in England, there are schools of thought, like the Fabian Society or the Civic Education League, which resemble not a little the ancient Academy of Athens. One of these is the Unity School, whose fourth series of lectures has just been put together under the title, *The Evolution of World-Peace*. Each of these institutions is in reality a School for Social Research; and its summer meeting is devoted to the exposition of a central doctrine whose application to the current order the group seeks to effect. The doctrines

that have inspired the lectures which have been previously issued under the editorship of Mr. F. S. Marvin are the unity of western civilization, the reality of progress, and the gradual incorporation of the world polity whose various communities shall live in peace. The present volume moves a step nearer contemporary affairs, and the papers promised for next year, on the relation of the Europeans to "backward" peoples will doubtless serve to tighten the bond between historical scholarship and the practical need of the moment. It is not a surprise, therefore, to find Mr. H. G. Wells a member of the Unity Group; for if he has not initiated this movement, his *Outline* has at any rate given it a tremendous impetus.

The first eight chapters of the *Evolution of World-Peace* are an "attempt to describe in some detail a few of the main stages" of the process through which communities "have become larger, and all the world has come into touch." There is an exposition of Alexander and Hellenism by Professor Arnold Toynbee and Mr. F. S. Marvin; a review of the work of Rome, by Sir Paul Vinogradoff; and sundry chapters on The Mediaeval Church, on Grotius and International Law, on the French Revolution, on the Congress and Settlement of Vienna. The lucid scholarship of the writers is so admirably maintained in these papers that the central doctrine, when all is said and done, fares rather badly. Instead of the gradual evolution of World-Peace this survey discloses no more than a series of sporadic attempts, with great gaps both in space and time, to establish a world government. This is not very assuring, for there does not seem to be an direct correlation between the growth of world government and the establishment of a state free from bellicose intrusion. On the contrary, an historic chart would show, I believe, that as governments have grown in power, and as their centralizing and unifying processes have increased, wars have been more frequent in occurrence, have involved greater numbers of people, and have wrought greater devastation. The upshot of the universalist ideas of the French Revolution, which Mr. G. P. Gooch so frankly admires, has been the institution of a multitude of obstreperous nationalisms, each seeking to inflict its conception of "civilization" upon remote and adjacent communities.

In other words, it is possible that political unification which began in Europe with Alexander, works against the modern movement of science and technology; in the sphere of international relations there may be such a conflict. Mr. Thorstein Veblen has pointed out in the economic world, between "business," which seeks to isolate pecuniary profits for limited groups, and technology, which works steadily for the service of the community at large. A study of the evolution of world peace which minimizes the counter forces, or which actually seeks to credit them with progress, has not dealt faithfully with the situation. If we wish to know how to work through the present muddle we must know the worst; and in the *Evolution of World-Peace* the worst has not been told, or at least, it has not been critically appraised.

The concluding chapters of the book, which deal with the possibilities of making history, rather than with the lesson of the past, throw one into a somewhat more hopeful mood. Mr. Wells has written an eloquent apology for a World Utopia, and in the course of it he manages, with his usual intellectual vivacity, to show the value of deliberate planning for the future; to explain the nature of the modern community, as opposed to the pattern formed in Europe.