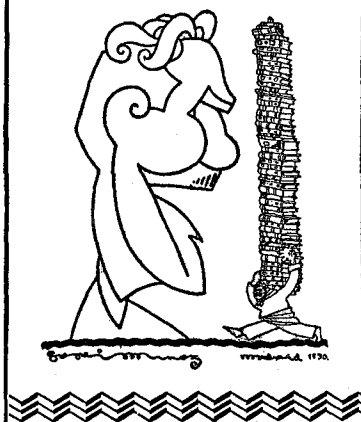


THE LITERARY LANDSCAPE

by

HERSCHEL BRICKELL



ONCE more that inveterate wanderer, the Landscaper, has made a landing, and barring the unexpected, will stay at home for a few months, devoting his time to a consideration of literary matters as they relate to life. Traveling by land, sea and air, it

is not too easy for him to realize that only a little while ago he was flying above the clouds of a thunderstorm on the way back from Paris to London, flying above white cloud-banks with the sun shining against their snowy surface, and thinking that there was something to say for an age that could provide so much beauty to be viewed in comfort. For all the pain has been neatly removed from air travel by the Imperial Airways and the other lines that ply between London and Paris; the great forty-passenger four-motored ships are spotlessly clean and silent, the food served aboard is excellent and the drinks as good, and the armchairs designed to invite relaxation of mind and body. Indeed, a sage might make a long search in this modern world before finding a better place for his meditations.

Luncheon had just been served on the 11:45 Silver Wing from Paris

when the Landscaper glanced at the altimeter and saw that the huge ship was climbing high and fast; a glance below revealed the world hidden by the blanket of clouds. Not long after, the pilot decided it would be simpler to drop down through the

clouds and pick up a landmark than to work out his position by navigation, so down went Heracles' nose; we were in the clouds and then below them, and in almost as little time as it takes to write these words, through them again, and sailing along on an even keel with breaks here and there in the masses, and the English countryside flowing by in all its peace and green charm. These maneuvers can not be said to have made all the passengers happy; now and again some one arose and walked calmly but hurriedly to the quarters provided for such emergencies. They were of the accursed division of the human race to whom anything resembling a ship is anathema; mostly people continued to chat, read, eat and drink, or to gaze at the magnificent panorama. Neither landscape, seascape, nor skyscape, no matter how beautiful, seems to affect the unfortunates just mentioned.

What a Difference

FLYING from Paris to London in two hours, or from the Opera to Victoria Station in three hours, in such ease and comfort, the Landscaper could not help but think of some of his Channel crossings a few years ago, and especially of one from Dieppe to Newhaven with a solid boatload of English trippers returning from a Continental holiday. This is a damnable crossing at best, but it is the cheapest; on the occasion mentioned the boat stood on her beam ends all the way across, and the bulldog breed, sons and daughters of the mistress of the seas, gave no very good account of themselves. Neither for that matter did the Old Mariner, otherwise known as the Landscaper. . . . As skeptical as he remains of the blessedness of many so-called strides forward in the Machine Age, there is no doubt in the mind of your correspondent that the air service between Paris and London is something to rejoice over; for one thing it enables Americans who are in a hurry to get to Paris to enjoy the spectacle of a changed and chastened city to make the journey without delay. It is mean and unchristian to mention such matters, but human nature can stand only so much, and most of us who suffered from the bad manners and dishonesty of the Parisians during the boom days can hardly be expected not to get a certain amount of pleasure out of the complete reversal of attitude. The famed French courtesy, which has seemed for long to have been one of the world's thinnest myths, is now in full evidence; even the customs officials have

learned that travelers who are treated with unnecessary rudeness do not come back unless they have to. . . . The *de luxe* business in Paris which depended almost entirely upon Americans and other foreigners is on the rocks, and hotels and restaurants where the delightful practice of adding in the date on all bills was always followed now lean backward in their honesty.

We Share the Blame

THIS is in passing; in his heart the Landscaper has never wholly blamed the French for their attitude toward Americans, for he was in Paris when the franc touched bottom, and the situation was a most difficult one, especially for a thrifty people who love and respect money. Where the French — meaning in this case the Parisians — were stupid was that they made no distinction between the various kinds of Americans who came to see them, and this mistake has something to do with a distinctly French characteristic, namely the complete self-satisfaction and provincialism of the people. This discussion is headed straight for deep waters, however, and there are many other matters that need to be touched upon.

Not the least important of these is a week-end in the English countryside, no great distance from London, and not very far from Cambridge. Beyond these hints the Landscaper can not go, because he promised an English friend he would not. It is a region of delightful villages, with some of the finest churches in all of England, most of them built of rubble and brick, and therefore with flat or wagon-vaulted roofs, since

the walls could not stand the thrust of proper Gothic vaulting. On one in particular, in which there are considerable remains of the Roman temple that preceded the first Saxon structure, there is a steeple with four of the lightest and most delicate buttresses the Landscaper has ever seen, as graceful as the design of a butterfly's wing, as exact and emotionally moving as a sonnet. There were others, but many books are waiting to be written about. Sunday was spent in Cambridge, walking along the Backs and through the colleges; afternoon service in King's College Chapel made a fitting climax. What a glorious building! How daring in its construction, telling the whole story of an age of faith for those who care to read it!

An Act of Faith

THE Landscaper was reminded of the Cathedral of Gerona, in Catalonia, the widest of all Gothic structures, which had to wait one hundred years to be built because no one could be persuaded that the vaulting would stand. But stand it did, and still stands. The Masters of the Works were marvelous architects in the Middle Ages, but it was much more than mere knowledge of mathematical laws that enabled them to rear the buildings that continue to give us pleasure; it is no accident that the Gothic arch is like the instinctive gesture of hands in prayer. . . .

But grim problems face the world, and there are many books at hand that tell us about them. In general, as the Landscaper has suggested before, it looks from this point of vantage as if most of these problems were

being handled wrongly; as if, in particular, the unceasing erection of walls to cut off the free flow of goods and money was just as wrong now as it seemed to Adam Smith. More wrong, indeed, because the world is a tighter economic unit. It is hard to get over the sense of shock in England, for example, at seeing all the fruit in shop-windows labeled "British" or "Foreign." As if an orange could have nationality. . . . An English Free-trader reported to the Landscaper that he had seen in Covent Garden a box of bananas labeled "British All Through." And every nation, including our own, which actually started most of the mischief with the last tariff bill, is determined to follow its own immediate good, instead of taking a broader view and realizing that the world can not be set right by any such narrowly chauvinistic program.

Sword-Rattling in the East

IN THE East, Japan continues to rattle the sword, and despite the somewhat optimistic statements of Mr. Walter Duranty recently reported here, there seems serious danger of a clash between the Japanese and the Russians. New books on this troubled corner of the world include *China* by Marc Chadbourne (Covici-Friede, \$3), with illustrations by Covarrubias, a study of the hidden forces at work in modern China, made by a traveled, intelligent and clear-headed Frenchman. There are many good descriptions, and the volume is as readable as it is soundly informative. Covarrubias was in China with the author and his drawings are excellent. *China Speaks in the Conflict Between Japan*

and China, by Chih Meng, associate director of the China Institute in the United States (Macmillan, \$1.50), is a straightforward statement of China's position, and contains a good introduction by Dr. W. W. Yen, delegate to the League of Nations, and Minister of China to the United States. *Awakening Japan: The Diary of a German Doctor* by Erwin Baelz (Viking, \$5) is an intimate story of the rise of the Japanese Empire to a position of world power and influence. The author went to Japan in 1876 to teach, married a Japanese woman, and has seen the whole historical episode develop before his eyes. He also knows Korea, Indo-China and China, and his book is one of great interest, as well as being a valuable contribution to history. It will undoubtedly help its readers to a better understanding of the present crisis in the East, and American readers are going to need all the understanding they can get before peace again rules the Orient.

Eastern Fact and Fiction

THE *Manchuria Year Book for 1931*, published by the East Asiatic Economic Investigation Bureau, is filled with facts that should be useful to students of the situation, and especially to business men who expect to take advantage of the opening of one of the world's richest and most wholly unexploited territories. *Jades and Dragons* by the Princess Der Ling (Mohawk, \$3.50) is an excellent collection of short stories of Chinese life. The author was at one time first lady in waiting to the Late Dowager Empress of China, and knew the court as well as any one could know it. She has a

deliciously malicious sense of humor, and an insight into Chinese character that is seldom found. America's part in the whole Eastern situation is told in Foster Rhea Dulles' *America in the Pacific* (Houghton Mifflin, \$3.50), a companion volume to two admirable books by the same author, *The Old China Trade* and *Eastward Ho!* Mr. Dulles has added sound scholarship and careful research to a first-hand knowledge of Eastern affairs and his three volumes are among the best to be had. The subtitle of the present book is *A Century of Expansion*, and it traces the growing interest of this country in the Pacific vividly and impressively. Most Americans realize this trend, but not many are familiar with the details; here they will learn just how we reached the position of first rival to Japan, and how our conflicting interests may lead us into one of the least pleasant of the numerous wars we have fought since we embarked upon a course of imperialism so curiously inconsistent with our fundamental political doctrines. Mr. Dulles writes calmly and unemotionally, sticking very closely to established fact, which makes his work all the more impressive.

A Disraeli in a Loin-cloth

ALTHOUGH India is out of the news for the moment, its return is inevitable, and there should still be interest in good books on the situation. One of these is *That Strange Little Brown Man* by Frederick B. Fisher (Ray Long and Richard R. Smith). Mr. Fisher has undertaken to do an objective study of Gandhi, in mood not unlike Robert Bernays's *Naked Faquir*, which re-

mains one of the best books on the Mahatma. Gandhi is painted in the present volume as a fascinating combination of the Holy Man and the cunning politician. Mr. Fisher calls him the Disraeli of India, which may seem a somewhat far-fetched characterization, but Disraeli was also of the East, and there are rather striking similarities. At any rate, the book offers a fair-minded portrait of one of the four or five world-figures of the moment, and this is sufficient to recommend it to intelligent readers.

North American interest in South America has been crystallized by the losses this country has suffered in investments in recent months, and so there is an especial timeliness about Henry Kittredge Norton's *The Coming of South America* (John Day, \$3.50), which is a large volume, rich in facts and observations, set down by a competent observer. Each nation is treated separately—it is impossible to generalize about countries so wholly different in population, climate, geography and natural resources as the great nations to the south of us—and careful attention is paid to the political situation in each. Also there are prophecies of the political and economic future of the different countries that should have a pocketbook interest for holders of bonds. Mr. Norton's style has little to commend it, but the facts are in the book, carefully gathered and put together. Carleton Beals's *Banana Gold* (Lippincott, \$3) deals with Central America in a much more colorful and emotional manner than the Norton volume; Mr. Beals knows as much about Mexico and Central America as any living American, and writes from the liberal

point of view. He covers Guatemala, Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua, and touches these countries at many different points. He writes of politics, corruption and heat, of Indians and American capitalists, of Sandino and other rebel leaders.

Another Hitler Study

WE HAVE not suffered from any lack of information about the odd Austrian with the Charlie Chaplin moustache who seems to be destined, by a strange trick of fate, to rule the German people, but so important is the man in question that there is room for several more books on him. Emil Lengyel's *Hitler* (Lincoln MacVeagh-The Dial Press) is a first-class piece of journalistic writing that will give any of its readers a clearer insight into the rise of the most amusing of all the post-War dictators. Several of these worthies appear in a volume called *Rebels and Renegades* by Max Nomad, which is the pen-name of a well-known revolutionary (Macmillan, \$3). The author discusses, among others, Enrico Malatesta, Aristide Briand, Schiedemann, MacDonald, Trotsky, Mussolini, Pilsudski and our own W. Z. Foster, and has something interesting to say about all of them.

Turning our eyes nearer home, we find the usual number of books dealing with our own problems. Harry Elmer Barnes's *Prohibition vs. Civilization* (Viking, \$1) is an attempt to analyze the psychology of the Drys—to get at the roots of what Mr. Barnes considers their "psychosis." The book does not seem to the Landscaper of any particular importance, but it may help along the movement

for the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment; if it converts only a half a dozen wavering readers, it will have served some useful purpose. Mr. Barnes is too excitable and too ready with his typewriter to get very far with this department; if there ever was a question that needed the calmest and fairest and most sensible consideration possible, it is this very question of Prohibition in America. We have never known how to handle our liquor, and only here and there have we ever treated good drink with the proper consideration; in short, American Wets also have a "psychosis," and until Mr. Barnes and his friends can offer a practical plan for the reëducation of Americans on the whole subject of drinking, neither making laws nor repealing those already made will advance us very far toward a decent solution of the whole engaging problem.

It Is Worth the Price

ALL American business men who can still raise the price of admission, namely eight dollars, will find *The Economic Foundations of Business* (Ray Long and Richard Smith, two volumes) both interesting and important. Walter E. Spahr, chairman of the department of economics of the New York University School of Commerce, is the editor, and there are contributions on every phase of economics, or sixteen in all. The Landscaper still places his bets upon individuals rather than upon groups for the writing of such books, but this is an unusually good symposium. There is Slichter's *Modern Economic Society*, for example, for those who want sound reading on this

vital subject, and the price is five dollars, but the larger work could be made to pay dividends. George Soule's *A Planned Society* (Macmillan, \$2.50) is another of the innumerable books that have appeared in recent months which aim at the application of sound economic principles to the whole conduct of our affairs. It is one of the best of the lot, clear and fairly simple, and not too idealistically fuzzy in its programme. *Democracy at the Cross Roads*, arranged by Ellis Meredith (Brewer, Warren and Putnam), contains contributions from such sterling party leaders as John W. Davis, Claude G. Bowers, H. Parker Willis, Brand Whitlock, Newton D. Baker and so on. Since democracy and the Democratic party are hardly on speaking terms any longer, the title means very little, and neither, unfortunately, do most of the contributions. They are somewhat oratorical, and do not attempt to explain how it has come about that it is no longer possible to distinguish between the two parties, both having abandoned their principles so completely that they can not be told apart in broad-open daylight. This heretic wonders sometimes just how to spend Election Day in case of the nomination of Messrs. Hoover and Roosevelt. . . .

More American Problems

OTHER recent books about America or Americans include *The Snatch Racket* by Edward Dean Sullivan (Vanguard, \$2), the story of kidnapping in this country and its present development; *The Experimental College* by Alexander Meiklejohn (Harper, \$3.50), an excellent account of the practical workings of

Dr. Meiklejohn's progressive theories of education that ought to interest any intelligent citizen; *Joe Bailey: The Last Democrat* by Sam Hanna Ocheson (Macmillan, \$2.50), a biography of an exceedingly colorful political figure against the background of his period; and *Jason Lee: Prophet of the New Oregon* by Cornelius J. Brosnan, professor of American history in the University of Idaho, the life story of the first missionary to the Oregon Territory, a romantic tale of the Western frontier, well done and sure of a place among the dozens of recent books on this general subject.

Novels are finding it unusually hard to make their way against the depression and publishers seem to be learning at last that cutting fiction lists is one way to save money. This does not mean that any one in search of fiction can not find it; there are still such books about as Charles Morgan's *The Fountain* (Knopf, \$2.50), carefully wrought and satisfactory in all respects. Margaret Deland's *Captain Archer's Daughter* (Harper, \$2.50) is another good novel, a story of the New England coast, with the contrast of the poor Irish and the New Englanders to give it additional interest.

A Selfish Woman

RICHMOND BARRETT'S *Madam* (Liveright, \$2.50) is a brilliant and delightful study of a rich woman who plays the invalid, and upsets the lives of most of the people with whom she comes in contact, an extravaganza that should give pleasure to sophisticated readers. Mr. Barrett knows his *milieu*, and sees into and around the selfishness of

the principal character in a way that promises well for his future; he is already one of the best of the younger novelists and has hardly had his due up to this time. *Wife to Caesar* by Berthe K. Mellett (Brewer, Warren and Putnam, \$2) is the inside of life in Washington from a woman's point of view, not a particularly important novel, perhaps, but interesting as another revelation of the workings of democracy in this century. *Undertow* by Arthur Hamilton Gibbs (Little, Brown, \$2.50) is in the Gibbs tradition, a substantial novel, well enough done, with no claims to distinction, but pleasant reading, and sure of striking the popular taste. *Romance of a Dictator* by George Slocombe (Houghton Mifflin, \$2.50) is a novelized version of the life of Il Duce, called Hannibal by Mr. Slocombe, and placed in an imaginary state, Thalia. Beulah Marie Dix has written her first modern novel in *Pity of God* (Viking, \$2.50), the story of the lives of a group of suburban people, and what goes on behind their conventional masks, a moving piece of work that should win this writer of historical romances new admirers.

For Strong Stomachs

THOSE who have a taste for strong meat will find it in James Hanley's *Boy* (Knopf, \$2), the savagely brutal tale of what happens to a young English boy at sea and in strange ports. This book has had the highest praise from many noted reviewers, but the Landscaper found it repellent; disgusting in the physical details of its horrors, and suffering from a peculiar kind of sentimentality that made it seem downright

mawkish at times; it is an emotionalism that runs through so much of the hard-boiled writing of the day, spoiling its objectivity, one of its few real virtues. In *Barton's Mills* by A. Hyatt Verrill (Appleton, \$2.50) one may read the whole story of a Maine town and its people, from the beginnings to the present, and in the hands of a man who understands pioneer America, the story is a good one. Readers in search for pleasant light fiction will find Nina Larrey Duryea's *The Pride of Maura* (Sears, \$2) entertaining. It tells the story of a love affair between a grandee of Mallorca and an American girl, and while it can lay no claims to distinction in the way of style or plot, should make agreeable enough hammock-literature. Mallorca, in sorrow let it be said, is no longer the Blessed Isle it was a scant two years ago; there is an American night club in Palma, and members of the American literary colony are reported to be going about in pink pajamas. . . . Mrs. Duryea knows the place well, having written a book about it, and her backgrounds are good.

Life in Sing Sing

OF THE miscellaneous volumes about, Warden Lewis Lawes' *Twenty Thousand Years in Sing Sing* (Ray Long and Richard R. Smith, \$3) is one of the best, the account of Mr. Lawes' twelve years of work among the convicts, a well-told story filled with human interest, and with the personality of a distinguished prison reformer. *Spook Crooks!* by Julien J. Proskauer (A. L. Burt, \$1) is an attack upon all kinds of fortune tellers, spirit mediums, etc., who have flourished, as usual, under the stress of

bad times. Mr. Proskauer declares they are all the bunk, a statement made a good many times during the past few thousand years without any very appreciable effect. There seems to be little that can be done about the infinite credulity of the human race. A prime book of adventure by a man who had the adventures for their own sake, and not because he wanted to write a book about them, is *10,000 Leagues Over the Sea*, the author of which is William Albert Robinson (Brewer, Warren and Putnam, \$3.50). Mr. Robinson sailed around the globe in a thirty-two foot sloop, with a Polynesian named Etera as his only companion, and seems to have had a very good time doing it. T. Swann Harding, well known to the readers of the NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW for his broadsides against the follies of the age, has collected a number of his papers into a volume called *The Joy of Ignorance* (Godwin, \$3). He attacks many of the sacred beliefs of the American people with savage glee and knocks the claims of more than one advertiser into a cocked hat, which is, of course, very pleasant business, but probably does not mean very much. Again people will believe what they want to believe, and life in a scientific world, science being what it is, would probably be far less amusing than the present variety.

A Poem of Importance

THE list seems to grow more and more miscellaneous as the end approaches. We are left, however, with several of the most important books of recent weeks, and heading the list for the Landscaper is Archibald MacLeish's long narrative poem,

Conquistador (Houghton Mifflin, \$2.50), in which Mr. MacLeish's full talents are engaged in handling the dramatic account of the Conquest of Mexico. He has Bernal Diaz del Castillo relate the story in the first person. Then there is the newest collection of parodies by John Riddell, called *In the Worst Possible Taste* (Scribner, \$2), a book inspired, as one might suspect, by the publication of the Shaw-Terry Letters. Mr. Riddell is as clever a parodist as is writing in English today, and some of his best work appears in the present volume. The title of one chapter, "Pop-eye the Pooh" — Faulkner-Milne — is a fair example of the cleverness of the whole show, which certainly ought not to be missed by any literate American. There are caricatures by Covarrubias, and among the people pilloried are Galsworthy, Wells, Dreiser, Mae West, Michael Arlen, Katherine and Charles Norris. Then there is a new translation of the *Memoirs of Ben-*

venuto Cellini, unexpurgated, by R. H. H. Cust, with good drawings by James Daugherty (Duffield and Green, \$3.50), which should find a welcome in many libraries. And for the thoughtful, *Challenge to Defeat: Modern Man in Goethe's World and Spengler's Century* by William Harlan Hale (Harcourt, Brace), a thoughtful volume by a young philosopher who has something to say, and an intelligent attack upon the pessimism of many of his elders.

In his leisure moments, the Landscaper has been reading a new translation of the works of Su Tung P'o, a great Chinese poet of the Sung dynasty who lived from 1036 to 1101. This is one of the bits from a great book, and need one point out its applicability to the present?

Those who have fed on butcher's meat find it hard to eat cabbages; those who have donned brocades are loath to put on cotton; those who have performed great deeds are contemptuous of doing lesser ones. This is the universal evil throughout the Empire.

