

Books in Brief

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paying special attention to the natives' taboos, magic, marriage customs, methods of schooling, and strange reactions to medication and surgery. A fascinating book, enlivened by good reproductions of photographs. The translation from the German by Mrs. C. E. B. Russell, is very readable.

MEXICO MARCHES. *By J. H. Plenn. New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company. 1939. 386 pages. \$3.00.*

As a guide to recent Mexican history in the realms of politics, economics, and the arts, this book has many virtues. It is clearly written, betrays a considerable knowledge of its subjects, and on the whole has no bias. Mr. Plenn obviously has a large respect for the Cardenas régime, but that respect he exhibits with good manners toward those who think otherwise. A few maps and other illustrations would have made the volume more useful.

Fiction

THE YOUNG COSIMA. *By Henry Handel Richardson. New York: W. W. Norton & Company. 1939. 390 pages. \$2.50.*

In this, her first novel in ten years, Miss Richardson brings to life Cosima Liszt von Bülow, her husband Hans, and Richard Wagner, the man for whom each made huge sacrifices: Hans, his own creative powers to champion the master's work; Cosima, her husband and children, her pride, to go to Wagner's side that he might more effortlessly create the titanic music-dramas, having her to serve as wife, secretary, nurse and mother. It is the interrelationships of these three that engrosses rather than their personalities. Perhaps Miss Richardson's idea in writing this book was to the contrary. If so, she has failed. Liszt is inadequate and unreal, and Cosima and Wagner are thinly sketched — subtly, perhaps, but never richly. Cosima's urge to devote herself to soothing the temperament of a genius is not convincing. One never quite knows whether she is a vain, frivolous woman or has genuine martyrlike motivations and love. From the point of view of sheer writing, there is a conversational quality about Miss Richardson's prose which marks it with simple beauty.

THE PATRIOT. By Pearl S. Buck. New York: The John Day Company. 1939. 372 pages. \$2.50.

In her first novel since she received the Nobel Prize for literature, Pearl Buck has turned out a book that compares favorably with *The Good Earth*. *The Patriot* is a genuine love story with a background of contemporary history. Mrs. Buck has done an excellent job of making her characters stand out in the pattern of the conflicts in China, both the age-old internal dissension that has ripped the Celestial Empire for the past hundred years, and the external conflict through which Japan is waging its "Holy War" to revive the old Chinese civilization in order to save it from Occidental depredation.

PALE HORSE, PALE RIDER. By Katherine Anne Porter. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company. 1939. 264 pages. \$2.50.

The three short novels which make up this volume are the title story, *Old Mortality*, and *Noon Wine*. The first, though written with Miss Porter's usual skill, somehow fails to impress, probably because she uses more words than its pattern of emotions calls for. The other two are among her very best, especially *Old Mortality*, a sharp, yet kindly tale of a woman who failed in life and love because she never found "a good dancing partner to guide me through life." *Noon Wine* treats of the old theme of guilt as impressed upon an innocent man by the community conscience, and achieves an effect seldom reached by any writer in the entire history of American letters thus far. Miss Porter's new book will solidify her already envious position in contemporary fiction.

Biography

MELVILLE IN THE SOUTH SEAS. By Charles Roberts Anderson. New York: The Columbia University Press. 1939. 522 pages. \$4.50.

Dr. Anderson here discusses in very great detail the contents and the biographical experiences behind *Typee*, *Omoo*, *White-Jacket*, *Moby Dick*, *Mardi*, and the *Piazza Tales*, presenting information that has eluded previous biographers. His general conclusion is that Melville was far from being the profound philosopher he fancied himself, that the survival value of his reputation "lies in the fact that he was the literary discoverer of the South Seas. . . . It is

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