

►► Population Problems ◀◀

As Seen in Recent Books

"OF COURSE the public cannot always be depended upon to read about problems," laments R. L. Duffus in his even-tempered and authoritative little study of *Books: Their Place in a Democracy* (Houghton Mifflin \$2). Any one who has ever tried to interest the American people in their own political problems will be in wry agreement with Mr. Duffus; nevertheless we are always intensely preoccupied with the troubles of other people.

For this reason, Colonel Arthur Osburn's *Must England Lose India?* (Knopf \$2.75) will probably attract wide attention. Colonel Osburn advances the refreshing theory that India is being lost on the playing fields of Eton, as a consequence of the British upper-class tradition of a hardening, bullying education designed to divide mankind into two classes: those who have been to a British public school and those who wish they had. The author of this irritating volume argues that the real trouble in India is the callous, stupid bad manners of the British towards the native population:

"As a result of this early training, we have now got to the stage when we consider it to be 'cheek' for a Belgian or a Hindu or a member of some weaker race than our own to demand social or economic equality or to argue against our decisions. . . . We have, in short, the prefectorial-complex."

Those who have read *Stalky & Co.* will get the Colonel's point. He claims that the Indians are treated as "fags" and he gives personal accounts of acts of brutality and bullying which bear out his assertions. He has no illusions on the subject of Indian liberty.

"We simply cannot afford even to risk losing our Indian trade (he writes). And trade in India, as elsewhere, depends on Good Will: so we can only keep that trade by beginning to behave like Gentlemen in Asia in the unconventional sense of that word, and cease acting there like successful and self-righteous pirates."

Unfortunately, his very sensible recommendations will be ignored by most people, who will instead fasten upon his unique exhibits of official stupidities in order to discredit the British Administration.

The Indian situation is only a phase of the world's population problems, which are vigorously discussed in *The World's Population Problems and a*

White Australia (London, P. S. King & Son), by H. L. Wilkinson. His book is thorough and provocative. He foresees a new age of wars for land by the overpopulated nations and reminds us that "within fifty years the question of the African colonies of Great Britain, France and Portugal will be raised by Germany and Italy. The Monroe doctrine is also likely to be challenged on the questions of certain South and Central American states and the non-use of their lands. The present barriers to the peopling of Australia will also be queried by Italy and Japan."

The author hopes that the readjustment will be peaceful but he remarks that "As an alternative to war it is difficult to find any solution which will appeal both to a hungry, overcrowded people and to a proud, wealthy and powerful nation possessing, but ineffectively occupying, fertile land and not desiring immigrants."

If this prescription is too strong for tender-minded Americans, the same subject is presented in sugar-coated and absolutely sanitary form in *Population* (University of Chicago Press \$3), a group of lectures by Corrado Gini, Shiroshi Nasu, Robert R. Kuczynski and Oliver E. Baker, in which the hope is expression for "a solution of this grave problem, not by using the dull instruments of aggression and force (God forbid!), but rather by employing the more efficacious weapons of an intelligent idealism and the scientific spirit."

That political problems are likely to be solved along historical rather than scientific lines is suggested by Thomas Ewing Moore's *Peter's City: An Account of the Origin, Development and Settlement of the Roman Question* (Macmillan \$4). The persistence of a purely historical problem such as the "Roman Question" in the face of three centuries of science and its eventual solution suggests the tenacity and inertia of the historical sense. It is particularly interesting to observe the vehemence with which the author, a former American diplomat, espouses the Vatican's side of the controversy, going so far as to brand the pre-Fascist Italian democracy as similar in character to Soviet Russia and to sneer at the Risorgimento. Passion follows the path of history, which explains the difficulty the world experiences in ridding itself of the scourge of war.

There are other problems than those of population alone, other historical

tendencies which bind mankind to the past. For example, Salvador de Mada-riaga's brilliant and authoritative study of *Spain* (Scribner's \$5) remarks that "The ambition of every Spanish general is to save his country by becoming her ruler" and points to the antithetical vitality of Hispanic culture that constantly recaptures the influence lost as continually by her political vicissitudes. Spain, he reminds us, has thrice lost her position: once when the Armada was destroyed, again under Napoleon when the Spanish colonies were lost, and again in recent times, embracing the period from 1898 to 1920. Even now Spain is recovering her economic and cultural ascendancy in the Hispanic world.

Another illustration of the tendency towards historical solutions is suggested in *Hindenburg: The Man and the Legend* (Morrow \$3.50), by Margaret Goldsmith and Frederick Voigt. This is a skeptical biography, critical of Hindenburg's military record and underlining the German President's devotion to the Imperial ideal, an ideal recently preached by Von Seeckt. Eleven years after Versailles Germany has retraced a great deal of the ground lost in defeat and is today pressing steadily towards a readjustment of political conditions created by the Allied victory in 1918.

The fact is that no political factor is too small to be ignored, as is shown by *A History of the Flemish Movement in Belgium* (Richard R. Smith \$3), by Shepard B. Clough. During the War Flemish separatism was pushed by the German General Staff and the Wilhelmstrasse. At that time the idea was contemptuously dismissed as disingenuous German propaganda. The movement still persists and, unless it is intelligently and sympathetically dealt with, will simply await another conflagration for the opportunity to find final expression.

Nevertheless, there is nothing final in politics. No question is ever settled, except by the extermination of a people or the destruction of a territorial or economic asset. In every nation of the world there are a score of political problems, held in check by repression or lulled by compromise. They slumber for centuries, perhaps; then comes their chance and what seemed solid and permanent is shattered into chaos. The greatest of all these problems is the hunger of peoples for economic opportunity, whether expressed in land or in social or political status. It is this which makes the population problem, which is identical with the race and color problem, the greatest challenge to the collective political intelligence of mankind.

JOHN CARTER.

►► The Movies ◀◀

►► Comic, Not Cosmic

LAUREL and Hardy do not, as far as I know, want to play *Hamlet*, either alone or together. They have never been officially informed that they were giant, tragic figures looming through the mists of time and laughing, laughing, laughing to hide their breaking hearts. They have never, thank God, been discovered by Gilbert Seldes or any other first rate dramatic critic. Their press agents do not send out pretty compositions about their libraries, their tastes in verse or their wistfulness. They are merely comic, not cosmic. Nobody has as yet recognized in their uproariously funny episodes anything reminiscent of Shakespeare, the Golden Age of Something, or the Greeks. Æsthetes in literature, music and painting, suddenly startled into a consciousness of the existence of the dreadful, dreadful movies, have as yet refrained from writing pieces about them in expensive, rough-paper magazines. Laurel and Hardy are as yet unspoiled . . . and, most important of all, they are still working and working hard, and producing a generous number of lively and genuinely comic short films. They are still satisfied to be comedians—and I hope that their yachts and country estates are still in the distant future. *Somebody* must pay attention and keep the American people amused.

I am not exaggerating when I say that they are the only comedians left who are doing their duty by us these days. Buster Keaton is still about once or twice a year, but except for the *Camera-man* none of his recent efforts has been



Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer

STAN AND OLIVER, PURITANS
Laurel and Hardy as little Priscilla and big, strong John Alden

By CREIGHTON PEET

particularly successful. Harold Lloyd has made about one picture a year for the past five years, although it is rumored that hereafter he will make

Worth Seeing

All Quiet on the Western Front: An honest and exciting war film—something you can not afford to miss.

The Big House: Revolt in a penitentiary with lots of gunplay and melodramatics.

For the Defense: William Powell as a persuasive criminal's lawyer. The story is weak.

Good Intentions: Edmund Lowe in a skillfully directed and therefore interesting crook story.

Grumpy: Cyril Maude in an accurate film copy of the stage play. A good, canned play.

Holiday: A civilized and well-written comedy with the lovely Ann Harding.

Journey's End: A British view of the war. Quite as satisfactory as the stage play.

The New Films

Little Accident: A successful Broadway comedy botched to make a Hollywood holiday.

Queen High: The plot of a good musical show distilled into a dull movie with ancient humor.

Rain or Shine: The superlative Joe Cook and his Broadway show pretty well lost in a mess of movie hokum.

two films yearly. As for Charlie Chaplin—well, *The Circus* was released in February, 1928, and his next, *City Lights*, may be finished any time within the next twenty years.

The trouble seems to be that Chaplin and Lloyd have grown rich—and retired. They are loafing on the job just the way you and I would be loafing if we had attained yachts and blocks of stock. Certain Hollywood critics might tell you that the talkies ruined our comedies including "screen art" and the "art of pantomime." This is sheer sentimental bunk. The talkies are twice as speedy as the cumbersome, subtitle-laden silent films, and five times as natural. In the talkies you see and hear at the same moment. In the silents you had to take time out to have things explained to you via written matter.

Stan Laurel, the little fellow with the Scotch-Cockney inflections, is English. Oddly enough he came to this country in a cattle-boat in 1910 as Charlie Chaplin's understudy. Chaplin was then on the stage. In 1917 Laurel went into the movies.

Oliver Hardy, the plump one, is a graduate of the law school of the University of Georgia, his native state. For a while he sang tenor for a living, and for many years he directed and played in silent films. It was not until 1927, however, that Hal Roach, a producer of short films, accidentally cast them together in the same comedy. Immediately he (and the rest of the world) realized that some sort of black magic

had occurred. Alone they had hardly caused a ripple; together they are unquestionably the best comedians developed in the past ten years. At present they make from eight to six films a year, the stories and dialogue being written by Harley M. Walker and directed by James Parrott. Inasmuch as Laurel and Hardy speak both French and Spanish, special editions are made of their films in these languages (in Hollywood), while authorities in the latest French and Spanish slang and wisecracks translate the dialogue. One of their films, *Blotto*, dealing with the dubious pleasures of "secret" drinking inspired by prohibition, must be pretty confusing to the French audiences. In Buenos Aires it was advertised as *Vida Nocturna* (Night Life), "entirely spoken in Castilian." In an adjoining column was an ad for champagne at a dollar and a half a quart.

►► A Recent Travel Film

So many scientists and explorers, many of them excellent photographers, have been coming back with cans of films in the past few years that we have become indifferent to even the most astonishing adventures. As usual, the Soviet cameramen have contributed the best of the lot, *Pamir, the Roof of the World*. This is the record of an expedition of Russian and German scientists to the highest peak in Russia, now inevitably called Mt. Lenin. The scientists indulge in both plain and fancy mountain climbing and the picture has almost as much ice as Byrd's record, which may be a help if this hot spell keeps up.



CONSISTENTLY FUNNY
Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy, almost our only comedians left