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Books of Special Interest

O Migration!

GRASS. By MERIAN C. COOPER. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1925. \$2.75.

Reviewed by LAWTON MACKALL

THIS book gives the story of the remarkable film of its name depicting the migration of a Persian tribe from their winter grazing ground, where the spring sun has caused the verdure to wither, to their distant warm-weather home; the journey involving the crossing of treacherous rivers and formidable mountain ranges, till, at the end of six weeks of toil and struggle, high fertile valleys are reached. These upper pastures will remain green until autumn, when the nomads will be compelled to fight their way back over the mountain snows to their summer abode. Surely the Baktyari are the hardest known race of commuters.

Mr. Cooper who, with his friend Ernest B. Schoedsack, the camera man, made the journey as guests of the tribal chief Haidar, found the experience a most exciting one. He records the events of the trip in a diary which reads almost like a dime novel. The wonder of the "show"—as he calls it—constantly carried him to the exclamation point.

And indeed it is a show which could hardly be described in anemic language. Fifty to a hundred thousand men, women, and children climbing through the snows. Nearly every woman carrying a cradle on her back. Ten thousand animals—horses, goats, sheep, dogs—goaded along a trail where a misstep may mean death in an abyss below. Hostile tribesmen attempting to bar the way. Precarious goat-skin rafts whirling in the eddies of an icy river. Such things are not to be spoken of tamely.

Still, the astounded reader might be quite as much impressed with the drama—perhaps even more so—if Mr. Cooper would occasionally abate his fervor. Even though his narrative is accompanied by sixty-four full-page pictures from "Grass," it seems hardly necessary to write always as though he were composing subtitles. To this effect reviewer Mr. Cooper's tireless vigor is at times overwhelming. The man simply snorts vitality.

I had asked for a horse at sunrise [he says], and at sunrise a horse came. The camp was still asleep. . . . I took the trail along the foot of the mountains. The air was fresh and winelike; range after range of mountains rose gigantic in the early sunlight, the snow peaks standing out clearly in the distance beyond. I waved my hand at them. "We'll be among you soon," I called.

What the mountains answered is not reported; but he goes on to say that:

Then, aglow with the delight of the morning, I threw back my head and whooped aloud.

However I forgive him for the sake of the story as a whole, which is certainly well worth the telling and well worth the reading.

A Land of Confusions

BEYOND THE UTMOST PURPLE RIM. By E. ALEXANDER POWELL. New York: The Century Co. 1925. \$3.50.

Reviewed by T. MORRIS LONGSTRETH

THE purple rim is the rampart of mountains that have protected Abyssinia from a rapacious world since the beginning of rapacity, and Col. Powell's book is the means of seeing over it. Indeed the book has saved one reader a trip thither,—for he feels that one could never have quite so fortunate a time as did the Colonel, who was taken under the princely wing of the future King of Kings, Conquering Lion of Judah, Elect of God, and Emperor of Ethiopia, and given a royal good time on champagne, jungle treks, and religious dances. Also, life in Abyssinia without a prince to look after you, would be somewhat hazardous. It is a land of confusions. The laws of Moses are observed there, and if your right hand offends you—or somebody else—it is literally cut off. It is a tropical country where you can be bitterly cold, a country of colored people who are not Negro but Caucasian, a Christian country where the Ark of the Covenant, circumcision, slavery, feudalism, and the latest thing in machine-guns can be found. It is a member of the League of Nations and practically illiterate. Its monarch is the only absolute monarch left and the old Empress has less power than her provincial governors. Her realm is so poor that it cannot finance the most pressing public improvements, yet has no national debt. Finally, Abyssinia is a pivotal point of strategy for all northeastern Africa and is

coveted by every nation in Europe, yet she not only remains undisturbed, but actually destroyed an Italian army of 15,000 men in 1896. The ruling Empress purports to be a direct descendant of Solomon and a former Abyssinian, the Queen of Sheba.

Although these 400 pages are crowded with information, Col. Powell has managed to be diverting and at times vivid. It is not easy to give the high points of seven thousand years of history in thirty pages, or to sketch in entertainingly a country's customs, geography, and character. The writer has done this, adding travel incident, personal gossip, and international allusion to taste. The book would have been much better if devoted wholly to Abyssinia instead of bringing in Madagascar and other countries, and the effect of the excellent photography of Mr. Rexford W. Barton is lessened by the same attempt to offer a complete record.

Towards Peace

THE PERMANENT COURT OF INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE AND THE QUESTION OF AMERICAN PARTICIPATION. WITH A COLLECTION OF DOCUMENTS. By MANLEY O. HUDSON. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1925. \$4.00.

Reviewed by Hamilton Holt

NO living American has gained a more enviable reputation as an advocate of America's entrance into the League of Nations and the Permanent Court of International Justice than the author of this volume. Indeed, it is safe to say that Professor Hudson is now the leading American technical expert on these two great steps in world organization.

The publishers inform us that "this is the first book published in America concerning the organization and work of the new Court." This is true, if one ignores Miss Kellor's second volume in her "Security Against War"—a veritable Borah Bible or isolationist Iliad written to belittle the Court and the League. The fourteen chapters which make up the bulky volume under review were all originally either articles or addresses published or delivered during the past three years on various and sundry occasions "for the purpose of bringing home to the American people the facts about the Court." Now collected together in permanent form and followed by a comprehensive appendix of the official documents, the book, despite inevitable repetition and overlapping, will prove of interest to all students of the Court, and will be especially valuable to editors and speakers next winter when on December 17th the great Court debate begins in the United States Senate.

Professor Hudson writes chiefly as historian and legal technician. He records, explains, and maintains. But the larger and deeper relation of the Court to war and peace and to national and international politics, he touches upon but secondarily. Probably this was inevitable, owing to the special audiences for which his papers and addresses were originally prepared. Yet if he had but taken the gist of these papers and rewritten them into a homogeneous treatise emphasizing the larger philosophical aspects of the Court, he could have made an epochal book.

Each chapter is written with that scholarship, skill, and elegance of simplicity that one would expect of a Cambridge professor. It is an especial delight to read an author who understands the emphasis of understatement. I have not space to take up the points of the book in detail. Suffice it to say that Professor Hudson's first three chapters give a complete and admirable history of the first three years of the Court. His fourth chapter deals with the Court's advisory opinions. It will be news to most readers that advisory opinions are constantly being given by many of our State Supreme Courts on request of the Governors or legislatures. Professor Hudson has brought together much interesting information on this subject.

The remaining ten chapters deal with America's possible participation in the Court. I especially call the reader's attention to the way the author "shows up" President Harding's suggestion for a self-perpetuating Court, and Senator Borah's specious arguments underlying his plea for the outlawry of war. Professor Hudson has here done a most felicitous bit of polemic writing.

Summing up, I can find no sins of commission whatsoever with which to charge Professor Hudson. But—would that he had written a book, instead of collecting some brilliant ephemeral papers in a permanent binding!

Harper Books

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By Lynn Brock

"Marked by its freshness and vividness this is a mystery story that is genuinely interesting."—*Boston Globe*. \$2.00

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By Rupert Hughes

"A swiftly moving tale—the best novel Rupert Hughes has yet achieved."—*New York Herald-Tribune*. \$2.00

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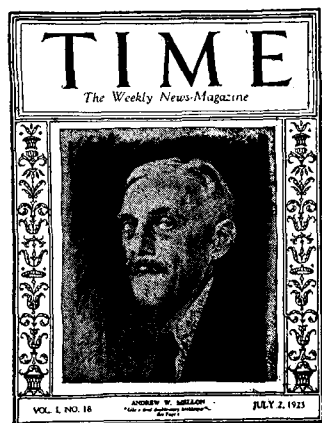
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Books of Special Interest

Jacksonian Banking

THE PANIC of 1837. Some Financial Problems of the Jacksonian Era. By REGINALD CHARLES MCGRANE. Chicago. The University of Chicago Press. 1924. \$2.

Reviewed by WILLIAM MACDONALD

THE scope of this book is broader than its title, for Professor McGrane not only traces in great detail the course of events leading up to the panic of 1837 and the history of the panic itself, but continues the narrative until the inauguration of the independent treasury in 1840. This was the logical thing to do, however, because of the continuing importance, politically as well as financially, of the second Bank of the United States. The bank, defeated by Jackson in its effort to obtain from Congress a renewal of its charter, ceased in March, 1836, to be the fiscal agent of the federal government and accepted a Pennsylvania charter; but the question how best to provide for the custody and management of the public monies divided parties and the country until the so-called independent treasury system was set up. Moreover the bank, whatever its responsibility for the panic, played a leading rôle as a State institution in opposing Van Buren and the resumption of specie payment, the history of its operations and of the speculations of its president, Nicholas Biddle, thus becoming an integral part of the history of the panic itself.

Professor McGrane has not added a great deal to this history of the bank as narrated by Catterall, nor to the history of the distribution of the surplus revenue as told by E. G. Bourne, but for the period subsequent to the expiration of the federal charter, as well as for the panic episode, his book is a contribution of notable value. The immediate occasion of the panic was the financial embarrassment of certain Irish and British banks, suspicion on the part of the Bank of England regarding American business houses in London and Liverpool, and the throwing back upon the American market, already heavily weighted with English credits, of large quantities of protested commercial paper to be made good by the export of specie. The sudden demand sent specie to a premium just at the time when the expiration of the bank charter and the removal of the government deposits put an end to the financial power which had held the State banks in check, and when the specie circular had forbidden the acceptance of anything except specie in payment for public lands. The course of land speculation, with its accompaniments of a dangerous increase in the volume of unsecured paper currency and the familiar practices of wildcat banking, is told with admirable clearness by Professor McGrane, as are the efforts to induce Van Buren, who inherited the economic chaos from Jackson, to rescind the circular. Van Buren, to his lasting credit, resisted the pressure, wisely concluding that the trouble was beyond the reach of panaceas and that the disease had best be left to run its course.

A study of newspapers and State and local records, a feature of the book which is especially to be commended for its thoroughness, shows that the effects of the panic were unevenly felt. Business losses were naturally heaviest in the East, particularly in New York and Philadelphia, and a sharp difference of opinion presently developed between those two centres over the return to specie payment and the establishment of the independent treasury. Internal improvements were generally checked and unemployment was widespread, but in New York State an increase of interest in agriculture was to be noted, and some improvements took place in the woolen, metal, and boot and shoe industries of New England. In parts of the South, on the other hand, disaster was greater than in the East; many planters became bankrupt, in Alabama "property almost entirely changed hands," and by May, 1837, Mobile could not boast of a solvent house. Until 1839 the West suffered comparatively little; then came a general decline in the prices of agricultural products, and the previous decade of unsound banking and inflated credit bore its inevitable fruit.

Professor McGrane's book emphasizes once more the need of a biography of Nicholas Biddle. As president of the bank, both as a federal and as a State institution, Biddle's position made him for years a dominating force in American business and finance and a political influence of first-rate importance. The Biddle papers, which Professor McGrane has used and some portions of which he has already edited, are a mine of information which ought to

be comprehensively worked. There is hardly a better example in our history of the interdependence of politics and economics than that afforded by "Biddle's bank" and the panic of 1837, and the contribution made by the present volume sharpens the appetite for more.

Our Universe

THE STORY OF WILBUR THE HAT.
By HENDRIK VAN LOON. New York: Boni & Liveright. 1925. \$3.50.

PLAYFULLY mingling the trivial with the tremendous, the absurd with the deeply significant, Mr. Van Loon here gives us in text and pictures a philosopher's-eye view of the universe, with especial reference to his favorite subject, Mankind. Seldom has didactic earnestness been so engagingly disguised with foolery. This book is flippantly profound.

Wilbur—a cocky, overweening felt hat from Boston, bought in a swagger moment by Haddock Junior (son of Mr. and Mrs. Haddock, the well-known tourists)—becomes so vociferously vain that he is "picked up" on the radio by Zeus. The Thunderer, annoyed at the silly racket, issues instructions to have Wilbur blown clear out of the picture by a tornado.

But Wilbur is too fatuous a hat ever to be taught a lesson. After falling through space and through chasms for eight hundred years at a rate of "128954389785¼ yards per second" and landing in a huge lake in "that part of the world which does not exist," he is still his old self. Nor, as he is wafted along from wonder to wonder and vision to vision, does he show any awakening of mind, any reaction to spectacles of sublimity beyond a sort of complacent curiosity. His comments to Cedric, a venerable cricket (cousin to Don Marquis's Archibald) who, perched on Wilbur's brim, acts as cicerone on this voyage even as Virgil did to Dante in the nether realms—Wilbur's remarks to this sapient insect are those of an idea-proof nincompoop. For Cedric the trip must have been a most trying one.

With the cricket as expositor they see the sights *en passant*: Stradivarius whittling a

violin; Leonardo conceiving a flying machine; Prometheus bringing fire to the human race; a tiny Napoleon dragging an enormous cannon; odd-looking people building bars of music in the sky; the Man Who Worries About What His Neighbors Think of Him, teetering uncomfortably on a tightrope; two devils—the only ones in the place,—hired to take care of the man who first threatened children with Hell fire; cock-sure haranguers, gesticulating furiously, each poised precariously upon the pinnacle of his own perfection; the labyrinth where plodding syllogizers lose their way; the juggernaut of machinery, a servant that has become master; a little fellow with a goose-quill upsetting a few planets. And so on. The sightseeing is brought to an abrupt end when Wilbur. . .

But what else *could* one expect of a hat like that?

The book is brief enough to be skimmed through in half an hour; but the average reader will discover in it so many "pet pages" and "favorite pictures" that he may have trouble in detaching himself from it. It is the sort of innocent looking volume that makes persons late to appointments.

Posthumous Essays

THE FREEMAN BOOK. Huebsch. 1924. \$3.

"THE Freeman Book" may be described as a cross section of *The Freeman*, that brilliant weekly which not long since died an untimely death. As such it is quite worth reading. Every department is included, and the selection, from "Current Comment" to "Briefer Mentions" is a happy and representative one.

While many of the contributions are necessarily lacking in immediate timeliness, it is significant that most of the views expressed in them have been strengthened and justified by the passing of years. *The Freeman* flourished in a more chaotic period than the present, at a time when its voice and influence were particularly welcome; for this reason, as the editors remarked in their closing issue, *The Freeman* was not in the wider sense a failure. And although quieter days loom ahead, one is glad to hear the rumor that the *Freeman* may resume publication. If "need" could be made to imply "support," its success would be assured.

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the July 4th week-end

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