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Books of Special Interest

Pluviculture

RAIN MAKING AND OTHER WEATHER VAGARIES. By W. J. HUMPHREYS. Baltimore: The Williams & Wilkins Co. 1926. \$2.50.

Reviewed by ALEXANDER MCADIE
Harvard University

ON the jacket of the book, the publishers say that it is an "entertaining and instructive account of the attempt to control rain by magical, religious, or scientific means;" and not fully satisfied with this effort, they add that it is "fascinating, instructive, and diverting." To all of this we agree. But no author is to be held strictly accountable for a publisher's state of mind, and we think our author does much better when he, with proper modesty, describes his work as a "study in *pluviculture*." The word was introduced if not originated by Dr. David Starr Jordan, dweller under the shade of Palo Alto (the tall pine), where the days are glorious and the rains are golden, when they come on time. But alas, it is a land overrun if not infested with spurious rain makers.

Professor Humphreys goes the good Doctor one better, for he bowls us over with the term *meteorological mumpsimus* which, in the vernacular of the campus, is in itself quite a mouthful. He translates it for us, as "stupid weather errors stubbornly held to despite all rational explanations."

We have a fellow feeling for any display of heat in calling down the rain wizards, as an enlightened press headlines them. Men who have devoted their lives to scientific investigation of problems connected with weather do get riled when the public falls for certain schemes of weather control put forward by half-baked exploiters, and more frequently by some who never even saw the inside of an oven, the oven in this case being an elementary course in physics. The dear public ought not to be fooled; but nevertheless the dear public apparently likes to be fooled; and that being the case what can a poor professor do but show exasperation as he bares his tired soul for the hundredth time?

In this review we need not go deeply into the scientific aspects of the case for and against rain making. Calculations of thermal energy do not appeal to the average reader who cares only for results. It is enough at present to say that control of the clouds is a long way off, though it would be rash to say that man will never succeed in modifying his ærographic environment.

Readers of *The Saturday Review* will find the book sufficiently diverting. Dr. Humphreys has the pen of a ready writer, and has a balanced sense of humor. The prefatory Rhyme of the Rain-maker by no less a person than Dr. Frank Wigglesworth Clarke, the distinguished chemist of the Geological Survey, is a gem. We might have expected it. For every now and then a sober-minded chemist, or physicist, or even a mathematician, will break out with *eruptio poetatis*, a malady which forces them to scratch clean paper with light-minded verse. This particular scratch was published in *Life*, thirty-five years ago; but is still fresh and to the point.

Space will not allow us to quote much from the book, but one or two bits are worth reprinting.

"To get rain, the Arabs of North Africa fling a holy man into a spring." For our part we would much prefer to wait for the rain rather than drink from that particular spring.

"The women of Kursk, southern Russia, break a trying drought by capturing a passing stranger, and forcibly either throw him into a river or else souse him well from tip to toe."

"But the farthest removed and most vicarious of all these wettings that rain might come is that of the Armenians who drench neither themselves nor yet their priest, but the priest's wife."

And finally we hark back to the last stanza of that literary gem from a professional geological chemist. It is still the preferred plan for stopping rain when all other methods fail:

To check the flood you started, I've heard
All efforts were in vain;
Until the Bureau at Washington stirred,
And stopped the storm with a single word,
By just predicting—Rain!

Inheritance Taxes

THE TAXATION OF INHERITANCE.
By WILLIAM J. SCHULTZ. Boston:
Houghton Mifflin. 1926. \$3.

Reviewed by PHILIPS COAN

MR. SCHULTZ, whose work on the taxation of inheritance forms the latest addition to the series of winners of the Hart, Schaffner and Marx prize, has performed an important service in chronicling and discussing the general movement among nations in the past quarter century toward an expanding use of this form of levy. He points out that there has been before the American reader no more recent work than that of Max West, of which the second edition appeared in 1908. The resort of the United States Government to sharply progressive estate duties dates from 1916, and the trouble over coinciding Federal and State inheritance taxes reached its height some years later. The period of the European war and of the financial restoration following it witnessed extension of inheritance taxation in many countries. These recent developments are now for the first time treated comprehensively from the American point of view.

For his presentation of the early history of inheritance taxes Dr. Schultz has admittedly based his work on the writings of Schanz and other Europeans. The early period in this preponderantly modern fiscal form may be said to extend to the outset of the present century. Wisely, it seems, the author has put in the lead that half of his book which comprises the historical narrative of legislation and fiscal policies in the countries chiefly involved. The time has hardly come when the critical consideration of the results, and of the incidental effects of the prevalent type of heavily progressive death tax would have a sufficient groundwork of demonstrated fact to raise it to the chief prominence in the scheme of such a work. In a brief chapter on the incidence and economic consequences of the inheritance tax, Dr. Schultz none the less expresses some interesting views. Hardship is caused in the United States, in his opinion, by the cash requirement upon taxed estates, which often renders necessary forced sales of their resources at inadequate prices. He rejects, somewhat briefly and summarily, Secretary Mellon's contention that forced sales of decedents' resources tend to cause in the aggregate a continuous depression in the capital markets. In pointing out that the custom of commuting the inheritance tax into an annual duty, by means of taking out life insurance to the amount of the expected payment, assimilates the tax to a duty on incomes, he brings to bear a strong argument against the long held view that the inheritance levy has a peculiar destructive effect on capital.

Opposing opinions of the schools holding that the tax weakens the incentive to capital accumulation, and that it strengthens this incentive, he dismisses alike, venturing the risky middle view that the reaction on business initiative is "very little one way or the other." The test of so broad a statement would be to ask the author whether he thought that a 100 per cent tax on estates would not lessen the saving initiative. It seems likely that there exists an optimum point below which the tax stimulates accumulation and above which it discourages it.

It will be of interest to many American readers to learn that the Union Death duties Act of 1922 superseded altogether the separate and overlapping taxes previously imposed by subdivisions of the South African Union. No such degree of simplification and of release from anomalies and excesses of plural taxation seems yet in sight in the United States. The history of recent State and Federal lawmaking in this country as Dr. Schultz presents it seems at least to show an encouraging effort in some of the States to abate this patent evil, even at some financial loss. In his exposition of these and other laws, Dr. Schultz is clear, wastes no words, and speaks with the plain and definite tone that commonly means mastery of the facts to be conveyed.

The first of the three monographs which the German Reichsarchiv purposes to devote to the battle of Verdun has now appeared (Oldenburg: Stallung). "Die Tragödie von Verdun: Die Deutsche Offensiveschlacht," by L. Gold and Major M. Reymann, gives a strategic outline of the initial phases of the battle.



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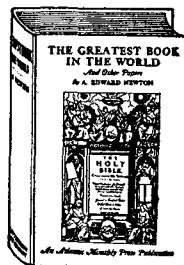
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ROYAL SEVILLE. By E. ALLISON PEERS. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1926. \$3.

SPAIN IN A TWO-SEATER. By HALFORD ROSS. New York: Brentano's. 1926. \$2.50.

THE ROAD TO LAMALAND. By "GANPAT" (M. A. L. GOMPERTZ). New York: George H. Doran. 1926. \$5.

Reviewed by DALE WARREN

THE classification of travel books is not a difficult matter, nor are a large number of subdivisions necessary. Quite naturally does one's travel library, as Caesar declared of ancient Gaul, divide itself into three parts. There are books written to

convey information, there are those which tell a story or chronicle a personal adventure, and there are others, the majority, which temporize by seeking to bridge the gulf.

"The Orient I Found" is an excellent example of the travel book which is more than a travel book. The information therein conveyed, is valuable alike to the historian, to the sociologist, and to the traveller. Conventional in appearance and restrained in tone, it commends itself to the serious student somewhat more directly than to the tourist off on a holiday. The author, in fact, admits that the book was written with some other end in view than to amuse. "The aim of my book," he proclaims, "is to bring about a better knowledge of the conditions of the Orient and a better appreciation of the Oriental peoples." The book is supplied with a good map and in the selection of his photographs the author has been mindful of his admitted purpose.

Mr. McMahon is an Australian and the trip which he records has its beginning at

Melbourne. There is a chapter on Australia, a second on Borneo, and a third on the Philippines before the author launches into his discussion of the Japan and China of the twentieth century. Chief emphasis is laid on city conditions and political aspirations, with ample space devoted to racial characteristics, national life, and Western influence. The white domination of Oriental peoples is constantly decried. The reader, however, does not lose sight of the fact that the author is on a voyage of discovery and that one who travels with an open mind is at liberty to gather impressions of his own. That the book has an intrinsic value apart from its purely descriptive features should in no way militate against it in the eyes of the prospective traveller who believes that the end of all travel is education.

In the same class we may group "Motor Cruising in France" although the book is written for those who have both the inclination and the leisure for a pleasure trip. Captain Richardson is known for his earlier "Things Seen on the Riviera" and "Vagabond Days in Brittany." Into "Motor Cruising in France" he packs a wealth of material relating to the principal

ports and river cities of France, and gives, in addition, sound information in regard to the operation of a motor-boat. The volume is the outcome of a series of trips made by the author and is a book for those who travel by land no less than for the smaller group who are at home in the Bay of Biscay and the Gulf of Lyons. Captain Richardson has an eye trained to observation, and presents his facts in an agreeable manner. The pictures of Concarneau, Arles, and Carcassonne make the reader wish that all travel books were illustrated with photographs indicative to the same careful selection.

The third volume is somewhat disappointing. The author feels that she must describe Corsica in detail from Bastia to Bonifacio, yet at the same time tell the story of her four months' visit to the island. Consequently, we find the narrative constantly broken with historical description and the body of the text interspersed with anecdote and incident. The result is a hybrid which requires continual mental readjustment on the part of the reader, and leaves him with a distinct impression of the author's conscious effort to "write a book" about her trip.

With more skilful manipulation "Royal Seville" has come into being. Here is a book which, as the title indicates, describes Seville, but the author has achieved a far more personal volume than is the fortune of Miss Hawthorne in twice as many pages. Of few other travel books can it be said, with sobriety, that the reader does not want to miss a single word. Nor does he want to dismiss with a cursory glance the pencil sketches by Edwin Avery Park. There is a Spanish proverb to the effect that "he is no king that is not king of Seville." Surely Mr. Peers qualifies with ease.

In "Spain in a Two-Seater," we discover a cleverly disguised guide-book. In it is to be found all the information required by those who tour Spain in an automobile built for two, four, or an indefinite number of persons. Halford Ross recently went "To Venice and Back in a Two-Seater," and now heads south over the Pyrenees in a similar vehicle. The trip is recorded in story form and done with a light, deft touch. History is embellished to suit modern demands, and we have a surprising variety of facts to choose from. On one page we are told that El Greco preferred to paint men with "formidable chins," on the next that the author's wife was given to singing in her bath. In one chapter we are shown where to buy electric bulbs in Gascony, in another we are introduced to a wine which is said to have contributed to the happy corpulence of Falstaff. This is no sketchy, facetious travel-book, but a well constructed, carefully planned, amusing adjunct to movement and enjoyment which deserves a place in any satchel labelled "Madrid" or "Toledo."

Few of us are apt to duplicate the adventurous journey into western Tibet described in "The Road to Lamaland," but it is, nevertheless, a capital volume for the bedside table or the shelf by the study fire. The fact that one is not interested in Lamaland is beside the point, for the author quotes at length from the poets and takes a fling at the innocuous armchair existence of latter-day Londoners. Descriptions of arid Eastern wastes are freshened by the author's timely recollection of lines from A. E. or James Elroy Flecker, and the intimate and the personal take precedence over the abstract or remote. Here, in short, is a volume which slips quite perfectly into the classification suggested in my first paragraph, one which tells a story and chronicles an adventure. The author, a man of literary bent given to philosophic musings, found himself one bright morning sitting at his office desk dreaming of Arcadia. The next move was to overturn his correspondence files, gather in two dogs, and set out for Tibet. It was a trip replete with adventure, prodigal of leisure for thought. Then came the book—a book which had to be written.

Chalcography, which has to do with the reproduction of engravings, and more especially ancient engravings of value, is one of the arts that is receiving the attention of the League of Nations. It may not be generally known that there are only three official institutes of chalcography, one at the Louvre, the second at Florence, Italy, and the third at Madrid, Spain. A conference composed of representatives of national institutes of chalcography and League of Nations luminaries, adopted resolutions concerning the exchange of proofs by the institutes in order to form collections descriptive of the international history of the art of engraving, and to permit the sale of engravings produced by others.

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