

Locke, 1927 Model

THE KINGDOM OF THEOPHILUS. By WILLIAM J. LOCKE. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company. 1927. \$2.50.

Reviewed by ELMER DAVIS

MR. W. J. LOCKE is candidly a novelist of the old school; he still spells "bloody" with a dash. Nevertheless, recognizing that the times change, he changes with them. That other distinguished apostle of mass production, Mr. Henry Ford, has lately gone in for a new model; and so has Mr. Locke. The whimsicality which used to be his trade mark is wholly absent from "The Kingdom of Theophilus." Theophilus Bird indeed does some things that his friends call quixotic and his wife insane, but that was only because he had been a minor civil servant, and had got so well adjusted to his groove that ordinary behavior seemed a little eccentric in Theophilus.

Nor is there more than a trace of Mr. Locke's accustomed sentiment; indeed a good deal of the book might be described as acid. Nevertheless the new model must not vary too far from the old; whatever Mr. Ford's model T may look like, it will probably still, recognizably, be a Ford; as this is recognizably a Locke novel. Also Mr. Ford's new car, whatever else it may or may not do, will certainly go; and so does this story. It is Mr. Locke's thirty-first or thirty-second novel (one loses count in that endless list of titles) but his eye is not dim, nor his natural force abated.

The formula of the mouse-like man (a commuter, of course), bored with his job and his wife, and unaware that the world contains anything more interesting, is probably as old as the organization of society and the division of labor; but Mr. Locke gives it some new twists. The fortune that suddenly descends on Theophilus Bird is only the beginning of his emancipation; it takes much hard luck, a trip around the world, a couple of mistresses, and the eventual resignation of the fortune to enable him to enter into his kingdom. (He has some thirty thousand pounds left, even then; Mr. Locke is too expert a romancer to reduce his protagonist to an inconvenient penury). What happens to Theophilus, and what he eventually causes to happen to other people, depends partly on his wife, Evelina, about as disagreeable a woman as has appeared even in these late years when so large a percentage of fiction is devoted to disagreeable women; and part of it depends on Evelina's cousin Daphne. Daphne is a heroine, Evelina is a villainess; they are both characters of romance, yet Mr. Locke has made them more coherent and plausible than a good many figures of what is called realism. But the determining factor in the life of Theophilus Bird, as in most lives with which he came in contact, was Daphne's father, Luke Wavering; and the skill with which Mr. Locke gradually educes the truth about Luke and sets it before the reader furnishes a model which a good many contemporary novelists might study with profit, to see what is meant by writing like an old-timer.

Mr. Locke has written a romantic story about real people; but in one respect his background must seem fantastically visionary to American readers. A crook who defrauds investors out of several million dollars is arrested, promptly brought to trial, and promptly convicted; he has to serve two-thirds of his sentence before he is paroled; and after he is paroled he is compelled to shun the public view and does not even reserve ringside tables at night clubs. But all this, of course, is in England, an eccentric and backward nation which still punishes people even for committing murders.

Middleton Murry is to issue this month the first number of a quarterly to be entitled the *New Adelphi*. The original *Adelphi* began in June, 1923, and ceased publication in June of this year.

"The foreword of the *New Adelphi* explains that the *New Adelphi* will steadily apply itself to discover or create a new comprehensive synthesis the condition of which is the realization that harmony between the intellectual and emotional part of man is necessary, and that it implies a radical change in our psychological, our religious, our scientific, and our esthetic concepts.

"Mr. Murry admits that his statement as to the principles of his management may repel some possible readers, but indicates that in practice the stories, articles, and criticisms of poetry which he will publish will not be too precipitous for ordinary thoughtful people.

The BOWLING GREEN

For a New Dunciad

(Further Specimens)

PERSONALLY we object to this aping of Pope. We have been assured, by several persons who once heard Oscar Wilde quoted, that Pope was a mere machine for turning out couplets. And they must be right, though we have been at times obsessed by an uneasy doubt that the hunchback's little finger was heavier than the loins of poets of a later time who with romantic illiberality drummed him off Parnassus.

Satire of course consumes itself in its own flame. But there have been phoenixes in that fire, though there will be none in this particular conflagration. At this point we proceed to set it alight.

THE STAR-MANGLED MANNER

In piping times, ere Frances Starr turned grey
Victorian morals in "The Easiest Way,"
When first Belasco through the startled town
Shook drama up and audiences down,
When there exhaled a still remembered aura
Of fame about the cast of Florodora,
When many a wayward girl and backward boy
"Whistled the Geisha and adored San Toy,"
Then, to the pale confusion of the arts,
Came the dramatic critic to these parts,
Who as a stylist was the cat's pajamas,
While even I know more than he of dramas.

The critic's job as yet was not on ice.
Domestic ivory could fetch no price.
It still was a man's duty, in a way,
To talk objectively about a play.
And it is here permissible to add
That plays in general were pretty bad;
Flash dramas like "The Lion and the Mouse,"
"The Auctioneer," "The Servant in the House,"
Soft lights, and Maeterlinckéd symbolism,
And oily, glittering, Clyde Fitch mechanism.
Oh many a playwright heaved a monkey-wrench
In bedroom scenes adjusted from the French.
In humor's apple meal-worms gnawed the core.
"We bore it all, and knew not what we bore."
And then, and then, and then, and then, and then
Awoke the terrors of the fountain-pen,
That oceanic flood of ink undiked
To splash about the kind of shows they liked.
They must have liked Belasco anyhow,
To judge them by the things that they like now.
Men heeded not the portent in those days
Its product was more boring than the plays.
Beyond conception slow and densely solemn,
It filled laboriously a meagre column.
Between arriving and departing ships
And equally ingenious market-tips.

Tempora mutantur (What's the line?) *et nos*
Mutamus in illis. How one's Latin goes!
Nevertheless I'll venture to translate
That battered proverb into Billingsgate:
"Even critics alter as the seasons range."
The wise guy changes. Crikey! what a change!
Defiant or of reasons or of rhymes,
Rise Shadwells of the *World*, the *Sun*, the *Times*,
Critical Shadwells, one turn on the screw
Worse than the poet-bully Dryden knew.
Against her better judgment fate consented.
So personal criticism got invented.

The trick is this. A new play shows tonight.
You go with hangers-on to left and right,
With some attendant virgin, through whose skull
It percolates that you are wonderful.
Parked between her and some adoring male,
You sit there waiting for the play to fail.
When finally the pleasures of the night
Begin, and you go home to wrong and write,
To write in clattering clichés that clank
The history of your soul—a perfect blank,
Which in some twenty years of sprawling spiel
You have managed only too well to reveal.
Consider, over Dryden's sentence mull:
"Trust nature! Do not labor to be dull."
Continue your inimitable way
Of missing points in every sort of play.
Let your brash sentences their length extend
In thimblerrigmarole, end over end.
Murder the lexicon. Eviscerate terms
Of such slight meaning "as was in their germs."

Pour on the slithering, slithering slush and slosh.
Add to eternal tripe continual tosh.
In further Orange and in darkest Rye
Runs the sweet rumor of that lullaby.
And men whom the effort of opinion stuns
See taste in quips, and intellect in puns.
Cock-eyed from many cocktails at the board,
Bankers draw cheques on that dramatic hoard,
And jet-bedizened dowagers efface
Their rivals with congenial commonplace.
Your nonsense has this virtue, be it noted
It gains enormously when it's misquoted,
And has the swank and pomp etcetera
To fit with any line of social blah.
That's why the stuff gets over. To the hicks
Who populate these steel and concrete sticks,
And that nomadic and illiterate mob
Who range the roads from Newark to Cos Cob,
I'd have you know your labor stands for style,
Polish, elegance, the labor of the file,
Because it gives the lowdown, and with grace
Acts as pace-maker to the commonplace.

So long as padlocks grace the night-club door,
So long as Forty-second Street shall roar,
While buildings like Himalayas and Alps
Tower over lobbies where the scalper scalps,
While at the stage-door throbs the lengthening queue
"Ingenuous waiting for the ingenoo,"
Nay, when the last ham-actor has been slain,
Nevertheless ham-critics will remain,
And New York crowds will follow their pet ham
On Judgment Day—to the wrong side of the Lamb.

At the bottom of the sack, which contained "The Stable for Critics," and the foregoing poem, we discovered a fragmentary palinode, appended to "The Poison Iviad" which will perhaps serve as well as anything to wind up the series.

Satire, farewell. I take my leave of you.
Although you understate, you overdo.
The tide of fools you cannot hope to stem.
I loved true poetry, and hated them.
And right or wrong, the enterprise I shirk.
Yours is a leadmine, I no more will work.
Why piffle more of Occidental letters?
Or traffic with these imbeciles in fetters?
So long as our half-witted Babel's babble
Compares A. France unfavorably with Cabell;
So long as tyros read with popping eyes
What Mencken thinks of Nathan the Unwise,
And critics keep (like Mencken) the *Andenken*
Of equal weight, what Nathan thinks of Mencken;
So long as Bodenheim in anguish vapors
Of daily wrongs done by the weekly papers;
So long as those uncleanly brats are loose
Who write of sex, yet cannot reproduce;
So long as Volstead Acts are unrepealed;
So long as this shall grieve Frank Crowninshield;
So long as the *New Yorker* seeks to shock,
There'll be sufficiency for you to mock.
Yet all in vain you'll travesty their stuff.
"Themselves they satirize quite well enough."
From quivering lips, I put away the cup,
Which Pope himself, I think, would have passed up.
For spite of all his powers, not even he
Could have much sport with animalculæ.
Oh, for a Theobald mangling Shakespeare! Oh,
For visible idiots of long ago!
Oh, for a Cibber full of life and breath!
You cannot war against bacterial death.
Go drown yourself with Truth. This life's a sell.
On sterling golf my soul prefers to dwell.
Till the eighteenth then, Satire, fare you well.
LEONARD BACON.

A merger which will bring together two prominent American publishing firms, Doubleday, Page & Co. and the George H. Doran Company, with a total capitalization of between \$5,000,000 and \$6,000,000, was announced recently.

The consolidation, which will make one of the strongest publishing firms in the country, will become effective January 1, through interchange of stock certificates and establishment of a joint directorate. The company in America will have the name of Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc., in Great Britain the name of William Heinemann, Ltd.

Among the reasons given for consolidation are intensive advertising and wider sales for their authors. The emphasis which the Doran house has always placed on religious books and realistic literature will be balanced by the more general and educational lines of Doubleday.

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Books of Special Interest

Jewish Farmers

ON THE STEPPES. By JAMES ROSENBERG. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1927. \$2.50.

By ARTHUR RUHL

IT is a great thing to ride or drive through new country, preferably prairie country, the first green of the wheat coming up. Here, isolated by silence and solitude, and unmused as yet, by the questionings and half-realities that will seep in with the first shop, you get the pioneer drama stripped to its essentials—man, woman, and the earth.

Russia isn't a new country, but the southern steppes are much like our own West. The neo-pioneers who have started building life all over again on estates the ownership of which disappeared in the earthquake of revolution, are, for all practical purposes, just as genuinely pioneers as were the first settlers of Kansas and Nebraska. And what Mr. James N. Rosenberg, vice chairman of the Jewish Distribution Committee saw, therefore, when he went to Russia to inspect the new Jewish farms and farmers in the Crimea and southern Ukraine, was, in effect, what any wide-awake American would have seen, twenty years ago, let us say, riding or driving, for days on end, through some former Indian reservation six months after it was thrown open for settlement.

Naturally, he gets enthusiastic. The thing is irresistible, and cumulative—as each new white pine roof comes pushing up over the horizon, as you leave each new farmer behind, waving bravely there in the emptiness, like some mid-sea sailor in an open boat. Add to this the fact that Mr. Rosenberg was seeing Jews turned into farmers; white-faced, anaemic slum-dwellers and petty traders from places like Kishenev and Minsk, with a life-time of pogroms and persecution behind them, growing bronzed and horny-handed, and doing what the world had said the Jews (his own people) couldn't or wouldn't do—dig in and make a living from the land—and it's a wonder that Mr. Rosenberg's pen doesn't simply bounce off the paper.

Old hands at the pioneering game, who know that bringing a crop out of new land and making a farm a going concern are two very different things, and that behind most new-country farms are two or three waves of settlers, may discount somewhat Mr. Rosenberg's enthusiasm. Moreover, these Jewish settlers, like many other Communal and other farmers in Soviet Russia, are dodging some of the usual risks. Their land, confiscated from its original owners, costs them nothing, and they are receiving substantial help from the philanthropic organization of which Mr. Rosenberg himself is vice chairman.

However, pioneering in the vast emptiness of the Russian plain is quite real enough, and it is doubtful if the advantages aforesaid more than outweigh the disadvantages. Taking things just as they stand, certainly the facts are interesting and encouraging. One reads such figures as "ten thousand families put on the soil" by the JDC, with an expenditure of \$2,300,000, most of which Dr. Joseph A. Rosen, who has had direct charge of the work, hopes to get back from the settlers. The Soviet Government granted in 1926, to the JDC settlers, land with a pre-war value of \$12,000,000, plus \$250,000 worth of lumber and \$1,000,000 worth of long-time credits in cash and farm machinery. The winter crops of 1926, Mr. Rosenberg estimated, would be worth over \$2,000,000, without taking into account live stock, machinery, buildings, etc.

None of the settlers with whom Mr. Rosenberg talked, apparently, had any thought of giving up the experiment. He speaks several times of their open-eyed wonder at the question. Most of them seem to have waved their calloused hands round the horizon in the manner of the old-style Indian chief, as they spoke of broad spaces and the distasteful prospect of returning to their old lives of peddling and small merchandizing in the Pale.

The very type is changing. Mr. Rosenberg mentions the "psychological effect of the ox on the Jew"—"the city Jew, nervous, impatient, fidgety, restless, eager. Little by little he learns to adjust himself to the even disposition of the animal, learns something of the value of slow, steady, deliberate, patient work. He can't hurry his ox, his crops, the sunshine, springtime. He becomes a part of the deep current of Nature. Thank God.

"Two years ago this land was a deserted waste. Now it's part of world economics. We see one of the tractors—one of the first eighty-six shipped from America. Two men are running it. One of them talks with me. Two years ago he was a trader in Chernigov. His family was starving. Now he is brown and strong. It is hard to believe he has ever been anything but a farmer. Rosen tells him I am from New York. He stretches out his oily, grimy hand and says something in Russian. 'Greetings to the Jews in America. God bless them for what they are doing for us!' *Do svidanya...*"

This is the style of Mr. Rosenberg's narrative—a diary, jotted down just as things came (he several times mentions dictating in the motor-car) or at any rate made to seem so. The pseudo-breathlessness gets a little wearisome now and then, but the author sees a lot, and for an inspection trip of this sort, the historical present is less cloying than usual.

And what about a Jewish state within Russia? Mr. Rosenberg deprecates the premature talk about this. The Soviet government has already encouraged several so-called autonomous districts or states, based on ethnological lines. If that continues to be the Soviet policy, and if the Jews meanwhile get their roots into the soil deeply enough so that a Jewish district with its own schools, local self-government, etc., seems to develop naturally, all very well. But a "paper" Jewish state would, Mr. Rosenberg believes, offend majority populations and make trouble, generally. In any case, the JDC doesn't want to meddle in politics—simply to help build up a strong body of Jewish farmers and let the future take care of itself. He does seem to feel, however, that the Jewish farmers in Russia might well get more help from their friends in America. "This doesn't mean that after three or four years we have still financially to support them . . . but that they will feel that they are tied up with the Jewry of America, and that, in case of distress, this Jewry will come to their help."

English Records

THE PRIVY COUNCIL OF ENGLAND IN THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES (1603-1784). By EDWARD RAYMOND TURNER. Volume I. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press. 1927.

Reviewed by LEWIS REX MILLER

NOT infrequently, he who starts work upon a comparatively limited problem of historical research finds that he has set himself a task for life. It was sixteen years ago that Professor Turner "undertook to write from the sources an account of cabinet government in the period of Walpole." His project has grown until, when completed, it will consist of five volumes. This, with another volume on the Privy Council, will be followed by two volumes on the Cabinet Council, and finally by a study of King, Ministers, and Parliament in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Students of English constitutional history in the seventeenth century will welcome the appearance of this work. The Registers of the Privy Council for this, the great century of English constitutional history, remain almost entirely unpublished. Only a small portion of them have been calendared. Hence, the careful study which Professor Turner has made of them, along with other manuscript records, will prove most enlightening. The substitutes for a Privy Council which functioned in England during the Interregnum, the committees of safety, the Committee of Both Kingdoms, the Committee of Both Houses, and the numerous Councils of State, are exhaustively dealt with.

This first volume carries the story of the Privy Council to the year of its great crisis, 1679. In that year writes, Professor Turner:

Charles remade his privy council partly in accordance with what he thought were the wishes of the majority in the House of Commons; he promised to limit the number of the council thereafter to what was considered the proper size; he promised that council business would be done in his privy council; and he promised that he would not have cabinet councils in the future. . . . But the attempt to reform the privy council was followed by failure speedy and complete. . . . Yet, had success attended the reform . . . as it seemed to be planned and as Charles II announced it, there might have been no revolution of 1688, and the whole course of English constitutional development might have been anticipated and sooner carried forward.

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