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Books of Special Interest

The Bartrams

THE TRAVELS OF WILLIAM BARTRAM. New York: Macy-Masius. 1928. \$2.50.

JOHN BARTRAM established his collection of trees, shrubs, and plants (later called "Bartram's Garden") at Kingsessing, on the Schuylkill near Philadelphia in 1728. It is now a part of the public park system of Philadelphia, though it is not kept up as an aboratum. The bicentenary of the founding of the first botanic garden in North America (and for all I know in the Western Hemisphere, for I find no records of an earlier one in the Spanish colonies) could not have been better celebrated than by reprinting in the American Bookshelf series these travels of William Bartram, in North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida. The book has long been out of print and was difficult to obtain even in public libraries. It is now available in a pleasing format, unabridged, and with an excellent index which was lacking in the original edition.

The Bartrams, father and son, were so closely associated in their travels and in their botanic studies that a brief biographic note may be of interest to readers unfamiliar with the old brown leather quarto beloved of Dorothy and William, Coleridge and Carlyle, Emerson and Thoreau, and a host of others. John Bartram was born in Darby, Pennsylvania, in 1699, the son of English Quakers who had come to America in 1682. He early developed an interest in natural history and botany and the explorer's passion for the discovery of new plants in a New World. Self-educated and self-disciplined, he was brevetted by the great Linnaeus as "the greatest natural botanist in the world." Through a Philadelphia Quaker, Joseph Breintnall, he became the correspondent of an enthusiastic botanist and plant collector in London, Peter Collinson; and through Collinson, Bartram came to correspond with some of the most eminent men of science in Europe. Encouraged by Collinson, Fothergill, and other members of the Royal Society, who supplied him with money and apparatus, the elder Bartram made annual excursions, in the late summer when seeds were ripe, to collect plants and specimens which were shipped to Collinson and distributed by him to scientists, public botanical gardens, and private collectors.

The correspondence which passed between the European savants, aflame with eighteenth century "curiosity," and the New World Quaker, bred to a pioneer life, and amusingly detached from Old World conventions, was published by William Darlington in 1849 ("Memorials of John Bartram and Humphry Marshall") and is, for the present reviewer, the most interesting collection of eighteenth century letters extant.

Bartram kept journals of his botanical expeditions which were duly sent to his London friends. Two of these have been published; the "Journey to Lake Ontario" in 1743 (published in 1751), and the "Journey from St. Augustine up the St. Johns," in 1764-5 and published in 1765. This latter was his most extensive expedition, undertaken after he had been appointed by George III "Botanist to the King," and it resulted in a harvest of hitherto unknown plants, which were distributed among the great botanists, Dillenius, Gronovius, and Linnaeus for identification and classification. His son William (the "Billy Bartram" of the letters) accompanied him on this occasion and was so fascinated by the beauties of tropical Florida that he remained on a plantation on the St. Johns river and was found a year later by Col. Henry Laurens struggling for a livelihood on "poor land, with few necessities and bad negro slaves."

William Bartram was born in 1739 and died in 1823. Concern for his career is recorded in many of his father's letters to Collinson, Franklin, and Dr. Fothergill, but unfortunately, William cared only for two things, drawing and botany and after unsuccessful attempts to apprentice him, a patron saint appeared in the person of Dr. Fothergill of London. This benevolent scientist gave him a sufficient allowance to enable him to devote his time to botanical exploration and the collection of specimens, and to exquisite drawings of plants, birds, and shells. The Travels recorded in the present reprint were undertaken between the years 1772-78 at the instigation of Dr. Fothergill, who supplied the funds and

published the volume in 1791. The friendship of the old scientist in London and the young romantic traveller in the West, friends who never met and yet for whom neither war nor distance were insuperable barriers, is a delightful evidence of intellectual fellowship. The book should appeal to three classes of readers. The first are students of historical botany. The Bartrams are the outstanding representatives in the eighteenth century of the great English line of botanical explorers. They rank with the Tradescants, founders of the Ashmolean collection at Oxford, in the seventeenth century, with Robert Fortune in the nineteenth century, and with Dr. E. B. Wilson, now of the Arnold Arboretum in the twentieth. When the history of plant discovery is written, these names will rank with those of Columbus, Drake, and Magellan in the humble annals of the vegetable world. Secondly, students of American ethnology will find the description of the "Cherokees, Chactaws, Muscolges, Seminoles, Chicaws, and Creeks," by one who lived for months at a time in their villages, of absorbing interest.

And finally, lovers of literature will find in Bartram's Travels not only a chief "source" of many of the masterpieces of English Romantic movement, but itself an early item in the literature of that movement. Readers of Professor Lowes "Road to Xanadu" are aware of the immense influence of Bartram's book on Coleridge and Wordsworth. It is unfortunate that the pagination of this reprint is not identical with the original edition. This makes difficult the fascinating business of tracing in Bartram the sources cited by Professor Lowes of phrase, imagery, and epithet in the "Ancient Mariner," "Kubla Khan," "Lewti," "Ruth," and a half dozen others. But besides the direct influence on the great masters of English poetry, Bartram's narrative of his adventures in sub-tropical America contributed to English thought and imagination that fuel for eighteenth century revolutionary philosophy which Professor Chinard of Johns Hopkins calls "L'Exotisme Americain." In innumerable pen-pictures of life among the Indians, he paints the "Noble Savage," "contented and undisturbed, they (the Seminoles) appear as blithe and free as the birds of the air, and like them as volatile and active, tuneful and vociferous. The visage, action, and deportment of the Seminoles form the most striking picture of happiness in this life; joy, contentment, love, and friendship, without guile or affectation, seems inherent in them." His descriptions of their village government as one of equality combined with due reverence for the experience of the older and wiser, is a bit of idyllic philosophizing on the "State of Nature." And he queries, "Can it be denied that the moral principle which directs the Savages to virtuous and praiseworthy action, is natural and innate?" In other words, here are evidences of "Original Virtue" in the "Perfectable Man."

With the exception of Professor Chauncey Tinker's four charming essays in "Nature's Simple Plan," and the late Sir Walter Raleigh's "English Voyages in the Sixteenth Century" no serious enquiries into the effect on English literature of traveller's tales from the New World have been made comparable to Professor Chinard's studies of the influence of the reports of Spanish and French explorers and missionaries in the Americas on French thought in the eighteenth century. In Bartram's "Travels" we have the raw stuff for such a study. His rhapsodies on the Earthly Paradise, the State of Nature, the Noble Savage are interspersed with such acute scientific observation, and with such a wealth of botanical lore, that the marvel is not that so many Englishmen emigrated (or like the young Pantisocrats planned to emigrate) to the New World, but that any remained in the Old.

Styrian peasant life and the Styrian country are vividly depicted in a novel by a young Styrian writer in her romance, "Das Grimmingtor," by Paula Grogger (Breslau: Ostdeutscher Verlag). The story plays partly in the time of Andreas Hofer and weaves into its background legends and folklore.

Forms of Society

SEX AND REPRESSION IN SAVAGE SOCIETY. By BRONISLAW MALINOWSKI. New York: International Library of Psychology. Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1927. \$2.50.

Reviewed by C. K. OGDEN

TO many who have found the data provided by Freud and his followers more attractive than the fundamental principles with which they are associated, Dr. Malinowski's work, "Sex and Repression in Savage Society," is like a load of cement poured into the fragile psycho-analytic framework. Certainly it makes a solid unromantic block, but at least this part of the edifice is now secure. We now have facts in the light of which to scrutinize Freud's theory, as empirical as those which he himself observed when evolving his method.

The first section is a comparison between two different forms of society, and it is from his own field-work among the Trobriand Islanders that Malinowski illustrates matrilineal society, as opposed to the patrilineal of our own modern civilization. He traces in detail the growth of a child in each, from infancy to maturity, showing the different influences to which it is subjected and the different organization of the sentiments formed. In the matrilineal society, the maternal uncle has all the authority, and consequently the father is regarded with none of that resentment which is the result of the double rôle he plays in our own society. Conversely, in the sister-taboo, we have a factor which makes her the object of repressed desire, in place of the mother.

All this compels us to realize that the Oedipus complex, far from being universal, is simply a particular form, peculiar to our own type of social structure, of what Malinowski calls "the nuclear family sentiment." This position is reinforced in section two from accounts of myths and legends of the Trobriand Islanders; it is the maternal uncle against whom the young hero revolts, and it is the sister who is incestuously desired. These myths and legends speak as plainly of the repressed desires of this community as do our own.

Section three is a critical discussion of the points raised in the foregoing comparison. A singular straightforward simplicity characterizes Malinowski's explanations and his treatment of the conventional psycho-analytic outlook. Dr. Ernest Jones, for instance, holding that the Oedipus complex is universal, and finding no trace of it in the matrilineal society, suggests that it is merely screened by another complex, and that the sister is a substitute for the mother, the uncle for the father. Even less convincing is his explanation that the ignorance of paternity among the natives is a repression, "a tendency to divorce relationship and social kinship." Against this, Malinowski holds that the nuclear family complex is a functional formation dependent on the structure and culture of the society.

In the last section, "Instinct and Culture," stress is laid on the difference between biologically defined reaction and cultural adjustment. Each important stage in the life of animals and men is compared, and Malinowski develops the theory of the plasticity of instincts under culture, and the transformation of instinctive responses into cultural adjustments. He maintains that "The neglect to study what happens to human instincts under culture is responsible for the fantastic hypothesis advanced to account for the Oedipus complex."

In marriage, for instance, the "cultural apparatus works very much in the same direction as natural instincts, and attains the same ends through a mechanism entirely different." Again, in parental love we see "How the dictates of culture are necessary in order to stimulate and organize emotional attitudes in man and how innate endowment is indispensable to culture; social forces alone could not impose so many duties on the male, nor without strong biological endowment could he carry them out with such spontaneous emotional responses."

The book is by no means one for the anthropological specialist alone. It has wide general interest, and anyone who has watched the meteoric rise of psycho-analysis will welcome this verification of what must at times have seemed in jeopardy from its over-ingenious first causes.

Freud, as a pioneer, rightly concentrated on the facts before him, which were to revolutionize our conceptions of mind; Malinowski in his turn brings facts to light which place psycho-analytic theory on a level with its observations.

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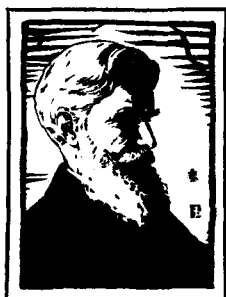


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