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Books of Special Interest**A History of Rome**

THE ROMAN WORLD. By VICTOR CHAPOT. Translated by E. A. PARKER. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1928. \$6.50.

Reviewed by TENNEY FRANK

IN 1904 Victor Chapot established his reputation as a penetrating student of Roman government by his volume on the Roman province of Asia. "Le Monde Romain," of which the present book is a good translation, was published last year in Henri Berr's series, "L'Evolution de l'Humanité." It is Chapot's first essay in popularization and will perhaps make stiff reading for Americans accustomed to diluted and dramatized history. But it is sound, intelligently proportioned, and well-written.

After a rapid review of Rome's territorial expansion beyond Italy and a neat explanation of Rome's manner of governing her provinces, it surveys the cultural and economic conditions of the empire somewhat in the manner of Mommsen's fifth volume, which is now of course out of date. Just before it appeared, Rostovtzeff's "Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire" came from the press covering the same ground with a wealth of details and of brilliant interpretations that placed Chapot's volume somewhat in the shade. However, the book was well worth translating. It aims to give a conservative statement of well-established conclusions rather than to offer daring hypotheses, and it too is based upon many years of deep study among the scattered sources and journeys far afield for purpose of observation. Even the specialist will find much of value in this work which is among the best of the eight volumes devoted to Roman history in Ogden's "The History of Civilization."

One is inclined, however, to question the wisdom of dividing national histories meant for general readers into several vertical compartments, giving government, art, law, economics, etc., in separate volumes. The objection is not only that this method necessitates repeating the basic chronology in each, but, what is more serious, that the interdependence of culture, economics, and politics is too frequently obscured. The ideal history like Mommsen's cuts one wide swath through the whole domain of a nation's civilization. Unfortunately in our day of specialization there are but few scholars left of Mommsen's commanding scholarship and, concomitantly, few readers of broad enough interests to ask for his type of history. If division of labor is necessary the Cambridge method is perhaps preferable, for that at least groups the specialists' chapters in close chronological proximity. However, if we grant that the exigencies of modern research excuse the method, we are ready to give a most cordial welcome to Chapot's volume.

Penology

THE EVOLUTION OF PENOLOGY IN PENNSYLVANIA. By HARRY ELMER BARNES. Indianapolis: Bobb-Merrill, 1927. \$5.

Reviewed by AUSTIN H. MACCORMICK

NEVER more than to-day has the study of penology needed the long look of the historian. We are barely emerging from a period of public hysteria during which we have approached the solution of the problem of crime with the unrestraint and abandon of a lynching mob. To-day twenty-year-old boys are serving life sentences as habitual offenders. In some states the penalty for robbing a bank is more severe than for taking a life. Not knowing history, we have reverted to the King James version of the way to stop crime: by savage and unscientific punishment.

The famous Pennsylvania system of penology was based on just such a belief, the belief that the criminal—"perverse free moral agent"—would inevitably, if kept throughout his sentence in absolute solitary confinement, think himself into a state of rectitude. In fact, he thought himself into insanity. Yet for half a century this barbarous and unscientific system largely influenced American penology and was very widely adopted in Europe. It was abolished legally in Pennsylvania only in 1913, although its full application came to an end in 1869. Professor Barnes's admirable work is more than the history of penology in one of our oldest states: it is a study of the basic and characteristic penology of a century.

Much has been written of the history of Pennsylvania penology. This work is, however, the most careful and exhaustive study yet made of the subject. It acquires added value from the fact that its author is not only a competent historian, but an advanced

and discriminating sociologist. Professor Barnes presents here the background of provincial Pennsylvania, with its humane Quaker penal code and its savage Anglican and Puritan code, the long history of the Pennsylvania system, and the gradual emergence of more enlightened social concepts. These he evaluates from the standpoint of modern sociology. Among the most significant chapters are those on prison industry, for Pennsylvania, like most other American states, is to-day completely baffled in the attempt to establish an adequate prison industrial system.

It is only in the assessment of recent developments and present conditions that the author is less discriminating than one would wish. Such matters as the abortive and grossly extravagant attempt to establish a new joint prison at Rockview, the notorious McKenty régime at the Eastern Penitentiary, and the development of a remarkably progressive institution for women at Muncy are too lightly touched on, while the progress of the new Department of Public Welfare in promoting prison industries is viewed with an optimism not warranted by the facts. The weaknesses which at times appear in the survey of the period since 1918 cannot, however, detract seriously from the unquestionable value and significance of this historical study.

History in Headstones

GRAVESTONES OF EARLY NEW ENGLAND AND THE MEN WHO MADE THEM. By HARRIETTE MERRIFIELD FORBES. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1928. \$12.50.

Reviewed by GEORGE DUDLEY SEYMOUR.

THE reviewer confesses to being a devoted student of early New England history and, therefore, what he has to say about Miss Forbes's book may be discounted, but only moderately because the book makes a wider appeal than its title suggests. Gravestones are not to be viewed merely as slabs of slate, sandstone, or marble, lettered and carved. When their study is once begun, they immediately assert themselves as documents, which they in fact are, and documents of surpassing interest and widely varied appeal. The word "document" evokes pictures of manuscripts to all laymen and indeed to most of us. But the old headstones decorating (I use the word "decorating" advisedly) the graveyards of our New England cities and villages are as truly documents as any catalogued in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress or filed in the pigeon-holes of old secretaries and stored in trunks in old garrets. These old headstones, so many of which are reproduced in Miss Forbes's book, may be studied from the angle of sculpture, the history of design, the artistry of lettering, theology, the social and economic status of early New Englanders, the question of transportation, the rise and fall of our old colonial families, genealogy, heraldry, and I do not know from how many more angles.

The reviewer has haunted graveyards for a lifetime and spent many hours kneeling in front of and fairly peering into old gravestones, but at that had not sensed the extraordinary artistic qualities of the old work, now made so plain by Miss Forbes's beautiful photographs of it. The boldness and virility of the borders of the earliest stones around Boston make our modern ornamental sculpture seem tame and flat. As to the matter of lettering, a comparison of the very early work with the lettering on the headstones a full century ago, when the decadence of that art set in, makes one wonder how it was that the classical tradition of lettering was so lost. A couple of hours spent moving from stone to stone in the Capps Hill Burying Ground in Boston is an education in the art of lettering for anyone who has "eyes to see," and makes him turn with pain from the bulk of modern work, save the very latest.

Some of the old stones are of beautiful bold design, some delicate, some are pathetic, some are humorous, all are interesting.

Miss Forbes's scholarly text is worthy of her pictures. She has discovered a *flair* for rare and out-of-the-way items. She has effectually demolished the widespread notion that many of the old stones were "ordered out" from England. Some were so ordered, but the bulk of them were home-made and so well that one wonders that this fascinating domestic "industry" has been left so long untouched, despite its mortuary character. The writer apprehends that pilgrimages to burying-grounds will now become a fashionable cult with the devotees of Americana.

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The New Books

The books listed by title only in the classified list below are noted here as received. Many of them will be reviewed later.

Fiction

ECHO. By SHAW DESMOND. Appleton. 1928. \$2.

A taste for reincarnation propaganda is a costly luxury. On it the producer of "The Ladder" has squandered a couple of million dollars, and Mr. Shaw Desmond has squandered some good material. On the first page one learns that the lady who is with him, or with his first-person narrator, in his London garden, is also the one who was more or less with him when he was an Irish gladiator in Rome under Nero. Our narrator, whether Neronian gladiator or contemporary man of letters, is one and the same person; and no doubt to him and enthusiasts for reincarnation it is natural enough that in his Roman character, lounging about the Palatine or the amphitheater, he makes remarks, whenever they seem apposite, about Trafalgar Square, Jack Johnson, Nietzsche, and the war of 1914. And whenever one of these observations intrudes, a reader who might have been slipping into the illusion that these were real things that happened to real people is reminded that it is after all only a story that a man made up—a man who does not care enough about his own story to preserve its plausibility.

Not that Mr. Desmond ever strained himself in an effort for plausibility. His apparent belief that first-century Romans spoke Latin with the modern English pronunciation is symptomatic of a large indifference to historical and archaeological exactitude. Yet there is the rudiment of a good story in this history of the Irish gladiator; and however distorted Mr. Desmond's picture of Neronian Rome, he has come near achieving the almost impossible—a plausible picture of that mad, bestial genius, Nero himself. There are two or three other good characters; and along with some fight scenes that hardly come off there are two that are magnificent. But they would go down better if they were set in some realm of the imagination, such as one of Mr. Edgar Rice Burroughs's Maritian kingdoms rather than in a city and a period about which a good deal is accurately known. And whenever one is in danger of giving up to the illusion Mr. Desmond interpolates a twentieth-century reflection.

However, these reminiscences by a reincarnate protagonist have this advantage, if you call it that—they enable a first-person narrative to end in the death of the narrator, a feat somewhat difficult of attainment by any other method.

HILLTOP IN THE RAIN. By JAMES SAXON CHILDERS. Appleton. 1928. \$2.

It is seldom enough we find a novel, the tone of which rings true. But when we do we are grateful. "Hilltop in the Rain" would never live through the ages, but it will provide some people with moments of exciting reading. Sections of it are done in a simple, unassuming manner; other portions are only tritely handled. There is, however, a verisimilitude to life running through the whole book and a great deal of the novel comes within the common experience of everyman. And that is saying a great deal for any story.

The tale unfolds against the background of a small Southern college town. It is the story of Morgan Henley, a young man with ambitions caught in a dragnet of prosaic circumstances which seem to forbid realization of his dreams. He is a man married and struggling forward on the meager pay of a distasteful occupation. He is hemmed in by a mountain of small things, introspective doubts, and financial difficulties. After years of quiet acquiescence in the forces of circumstance Henley revolts—and the revolt means his salvation.

There are three other characters in the book that stand out with an individual appeal: Unserheim, the delightful old bookseller; Sylvia, whose story, unfortunately, is left untold; and Kathleen, Morgan's wife, whose fidelity and devotion are those of the unquestioning medieval woman.

"Hilltop in the Rain" is a book the literary qualities of which are only average. The theme—man struggling against circumstances—is as old as "Oedipus." Yet, in the final summing up, it is more satisfying than many a more finished and more original novel. Quite probably this is because the author deals with life as it is and not life as he imagines it to be.

THE EARTHEN LOT. By BRADDA FIELD. Harcourt, Brace. 1928. \$2.50.

A particularly earthen lot one is tempted to say. For the people of whom Miss Field writes in her first novel are an unleavened crew who are so busy adding action to action and gesture to gesture to perfect each his own type that they have no time for the more general and fundamental traits which make characters live. Aside from the heroine no one in the book does anything that a casual reader of fiction might not foretell from a hasty recognition of type. If the book were badly written this would not matter; it could be whole-heartedly dismissed and the trouble ended. But "The Earthen Lot" is not badly written. The first quarter of the book keeps one interested. It seems a little slow-moving, but suggests that when the author gets into the heat of battle the necessary verve will make its appearance. The second quarter of the book effects the reader in exactly the same way. Everything goes on preparing for action, but the action never comes off. And so it goes, with less and less hope as the end is neared and no match is forthcoming to light all the material that has been gathered together for the fire.

Bradda Field shows in "The Earthen Lot" that she can observe and record, that she has an appreciation of the beauty, and a feeling for the futility, of life, and that she can write clear and flowing prose; but when the moment comes for more than this, a moment which she easily creates, Miss Field is not equal to it. The subject in this particular case (the story from childhood to motherhood of an English girl in a series

of stultifying environments) tends, of course, to emphasize the drab and unclimactic in life, but even so, the telling of a colorless tale dare not share its dinginess.

DAWN. A BIOGRAPHICAL NOVEL OF EDITH CAVELL. By CAPTAIN REGINALD BERKLEY. Sears. 1928. \$2.

The dual purpose of Captain Berkeley's study of Edith Cavell is unfortunate. As this book now stands, it is neither a sound record of events nor a good novel. Intended to be both illuminating and moving, "Dawn" is merely a moderately interesting narrative, completely lacking suspense and solidity. For anyone, however, who is ignorant of the events leading up to Edith Cavell's execution, the story will be superficially informative.

Captain Berkeley is conscientiously dispassionate. We feel him straining to be fair to the German authorities in Brussels and temperate in his eulogies of Edith Cavell. The result of his hold-back is a forcelessness that is ill suited to his subject. We see the Germans as petulant and harassed. Edith Cavell appears well-intentioned, but extraordinarily unimaginative. "Dawn" does one thing for us, however; it makes us wish for an honest and painstaking biography of this now legendary figure.

MEN AT WHILES ARE SOBER. By STEPHEN RAUSHENBUSH. A. & C. Boni. 1928. \$2.50.

The theme of this book is the typical one of a man for whom the world—and particularly the women in it—are more than a bit too much. He is always falling in the mire because of an insatiate passion for beauty. And everybody stands around more or less wringing their hands, taking life generally as a bad dose, sophisticated but quite without humor or wit. One reads of them with an increasing sense of being stuffed and stuffed.

The book is one of those energetic observant ones that seems to be only half-cooked, since it lacks fusion and feeling. It has action and ideas, but no heart.

THE FRENCH WIFE. By DOROTHY GRAHAM. Stokes. 1928. \$2.

Dorothy Graham has very slowly, carefully, and delicately created a mood and then, apparently without a qualm, has destroyed it for a story. She has, in a day of bold black and white portraiture, painted a softly tinted miniature on ivory. The French wife is not a deep character, but the author has really caught her as she moves graciously in and about the small amenities of life. An American girl marries, very much for love, the dashing son of an old French family. To please him she sets out to become the wife he shall admire. It is here that Dorothy Graham turns her clever trick; the gradual growth to a thing-in-itself of an ideal originally adopted on the most pragmatic grounds. Showing Denise (the French wife) consciously adopting her husband's ideal of the chatelaine of his home, Miss Graham dexterously shifts the motivation until Denise is playing her rôle after her husband's death for the sake of the rôle itself.

When the story opens she has completed her French self. She is the Countess de Lambesc. In speaking to American friends it is necessary for her deliberately to translate her thoughts into English. So it is with her mannerisms, her habits, and her character. When Dorothy Graham has completed this beautiful little figurine she disastrously tries to breathe into it the breath of life. Denise, the Countess de Lambesc, on her pedestal can be walked around and admired; Denise off her pedestal develops into a common-place heroine of a fairly obvious love story.

(Continued on next page)

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