

Foreign Literature

In Southern Waters

LA MÉDITERRANÉE AMÉRICAINE.
L'expansion des États-Unis dans la Mer
des Antilles. Par JACQUES CROKAERT.
1927.

Reviewed by EDWARD T. BOOTH

ACCORDING to the preface by M. Jaspar, Prime Minister of Belgium, this book is a report of missions which the Belgian Government ordered the author, M. Jacques Crockaert, to undertake; a precise and lucid presentation of the political evolution which is going on in the Caribbean countries and the Pacific Ocean. The endorsement is qualified by the Prime Minister's statement that he does not always see eye to eye with M. Crockaert in matters of opinion.

For the general reader who wants information about the political fortunes of the Caribbean lands since the Discovery—especially since the Spanish-American War—"La Méditerranée Américaine" is a very readable and useful handbook. Our own journalists who have written about this region have not been so well informed and impartial. Even irresponsible travel books about these countries by Americans are apt to be colored by the author's prejudice for or against intervention. For the life of us, we see what we want to see politically, when we go voyaging in the American Mediterranean. Furthermore, it is fair to say that, compared with educated Europeans, we are generally superficial observers.

M. Crockaert's book is by no means profound. Much of it is frankly impressionistic. Some of it, mere prophecy. But it is written with a respectable special knowledge and considerable penetration and an almost perfect impartiality. If there is bias in the author's mind, it is a scarcely perceptible preference for American "imperialism" as compared with the British variety. There are passages which appear to tweak the Lion's tail ever so gently.

The author reminds us again of what Goethe may have been the first to observe, that Suez and Panama are the keys to political domination in the Eastern and Western hemispheres. He works out in detail strategic parallels between the old and the new Mediterranean; Panama-Suez, Cuba-Malta, St. Thomas-Gibraltar, *et al.* He interprets the American Mediterranean in terms of straits clustered about the Panama Canal and does not withhold any secrets, nor offer praise or blame of the rapid growth of American influence in the Caribbean countries since the Battle of San Juan Hill in 1898. If American public opinion were as well-informed on this subject as M. Crockaert, there would be less wrangling and less insincerity in the public prints about intervention. If "La Méditerranée Américaine" were translated and widely read in this country, self-justification could be based on self-knowledge and American foreign policy would be greatly clarified for the average citizen.

A Frustrated Life

PARACELTUS. By FRIEDRICH GUNDOLF.
Berlin: Georg Bondi. 1927.

Reviewed by A. W. G. RANDALL.

A FEW years ago the German novelist Erwin Kolbenheyer wrote two novels on the subject of Paracelsus, and this seemed to bring a renewed interest in the life and works of that curious, frustrated, but undoubtedly important pioneer of modern science, for a glance at publishers' lists in the past year or two would have revealed one or two editions of his chief works. And now here is a distinguished German critic with a monograph which is an excellent introduction to the story of Paracelsus the man and philosopher. It is curious that Herr Gundolf, in mentioning the literary inspiration of Paracelsus, which he parallels with Dr. Faustus, does not mention the best-known example of all, Browning's poem, but it may be said at once that those who find the English poet's note at the end of his poem insufficient, and other popular accounts, such as that of the Encyclopædia Britannica, too much engrossed in his scientific achievements, will derive no little benefit from this book. An English translation has much to recommend it, provided illustrations from Browning were added, for long passages there, the page-long soliloquy at the end, for example, find their apt elucidation in two or three lines of Herr Gundolf's biographical sketch.

The facts of Paracelsus's origins are soon given. He was born in 1493 at Einsiedeln, in Switzerland, from an impoverished noble family. His father was a village doctor, who

early turned the boy's thoughts in the same direction. Herr Gundolf, basing his conclusion on certain remarks by Paracelsus later, insists on the importance of his mother's influence, but we know really nothing about her. It was a time of general enquiry, but Paracelsus went further than even his most thoroughgoing contemporaries. They went to origins of a kind, but stopped short on arriving at certain authorities, at the Bible in religion and philosophy, at Galen in medicine, at the Corpus Juris in jurisprudence. Paracelsus, with an intolerance and directness that were the cause of his undoing, brushed all these aside. Without in the least being an alchemist, he urged direct enquiry into natural objects. Chemical combinations, organic substances, had an almost sacred significance for him. His long journeys, of which very little is known, were certainly much devoted to the direct investigation of natural phenomena, and it is a fact that he established the medicinal properties of the earth and springs in certain regions of southern Germany long before there was any science of geology, any idea of thermal therapeutics. For the world of natural phenomena Herr Gundolf places him with Columbus and Vasco di Gama—Erfahren, Durchfahren, Landfahren. And he had no negligible importance in the history of general German culture, for he gave expression to his thoughts, his speculations and experiments in the German language, rejecting the universal Latin medium.

For this Herr Gundolf ranges him with Luther, between whom and Grimmelhausen, he says, there was no German writer who wrote so directly from his actual experience, for his world was wider and his eye more piercing and comprehending than Hans Sachs and Fischart. He did not make of German a world-tongue, but he did what no one had done before, he established it forever in the German lecture-rooms, stating his motive clearly enough: "I write German, for if a new thing be found, why should it not have a new name?" It is, in short, as pioneer of German linguistic nationalism and scientific rationalism that Herr Gundolf here presents his hero, a *feurig-dunkle Faustseele*, whose general significance has too often been lost in technicalities and in the mass of his own verbiage.

Foreign Notes

STRAVINSKY has written a new opera entitled "King Œdipus," which is said to be a remarkable work, though from the nature of the play, which follows the classical tradition, it is said to be better adapted to the oratorio form in which it was recently presented in America, than to opera. "For the first time in the history of opera," according to a Viennese correspondent to the *London Observer*, "the men's choir will be posted in the orchestra. The soloists and choirs will be divided into two large groups—movable and immovable. Apart from the choir, which has to tell the story, Theiresias, the blind seer, has an 'immovable' part, while Creon, the messenger, and the shepherd are movable."

Under the general title of "Nesobrannje Pisma" some hitherto unpublished letters of Chekov have recently been issued in Moscow (State Press.) They have been edited by N. K. Piskunov.

In connection with the Ibsen centenary the University of Oslo this month opened an exhibition. Among its interesting features are a collection of all the known portraits of Ibsen; twelve paintings by the dramatist, who, had it not been for his father's bankruptcy, would have taken up art as a career; a miniature theatre showing the conditions which prevailed on the stage in his youth; first editions of his works, together with later editions in the Norwegian and foreign languages. Literature dealing with Ibsen and his works, letters, MSS., and illustrations are also included.

The Golden Cockerel Press has recently issued two new volumes, "The Fables of Æsop," in L'Estrange's translation, and "The History of Pompey the Little." The volumes are admirable library editions, adorned with wood engravings in the modern manner, and satisfactorily printed in Caslon type on fine paper. The Golden Cockerel Press is one of that numerous group of small printing and publishing ventures which seem to thrive in England. It was founded in 1920 by the late Harold Taylor, and is now directed by Robert Gibbings, at Waltham Saint Lawrence, in Berkshire. The Golden Cockerel books are interesting as being examples of thoroughly good type-setting.

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The Wits' Weekly

Conducted by EDWARD DAVISON

Competition No. 24. A prize of fifteen dollars is offered for the best set of verses called "The Passionate Policeman to his Love." Entries should reach *The Saturday Review* office, 25 West 45th Street, not later than the morning of April 2nd.

Competition No. 25. A prize of fifteen dollars is offered for the best description, in the manner of Mr. Thornton Wilder, of Mr. Sinclair Lewis's thoughts and feelings on coming back to settle in Gopher Prairie after having won fame in the world. Entries, which should not exceed 400 words, should reach *The Saturday Review* office not later than the morning of April 9th.

Competitors are advised to read carefully the rules printed below.

THE TWENTY-FIRST COMPETITION

A prize of fifteen dollars was offered for the best rendering of "Mary Had a Little Lamb" into not less than ten lines of Milton blank verse.

Won by DAVID HEATHSTONE

THE PRIZE-WINNING POEM

In legend it is told that Mary held
The lamb in vassalage and him possessed,
Who bore a fleece as soft and white as snows
That on a winter's night bedeck the crest

Of some Norwegian mountain top.
And he
His adoration rendered unto her
Nor wished a higher joy: and where-
soever
She bent her way, with bleat and
gambol swift
Pursued the lamb, encircling all about
Like seraph clad in white, with
trem'lo trump.
About the time of Mary's middle
youth
When she had ventured forth unto
the seat
Of learning which hard by her own
abode
Stood fairly reared, came also there
the lamb.
Oblivious to all the laws was he
That sternly had forbade his pres-
ence there
Nor recked as ought the gamin
laughter raised
Against his entry where in serried
rows
On benches sate a breed inferior
To his beloved mistress, though like
her
In form were molded. Nor was he
dismayed
When sternly thrust without by her
who ruled
With written book and birchen rod:
but near
He lingered, till at last all bathed in
light
Against the darkness that within pre-
vailed
Upon the threshold Mary stood re-
vealed.
Then all the lesser humans raised a
cry
And queried her who by appoint-
ment held
Sway absolute within the schoolroom
walls
"Oh wherefore, what doth it be-
token? Tell!
That as the angels of high heaven to
God
Their endless adorations sing, the
lamb
With like devotion renders Mary
love."
Then of her wisdom she who taught
spoke thus,
The while she laid aside her rod and
book.
"Long ere the lamb loved Mary, or
had wit
To know her voice midst the chaotic
noise
Of mortal babble: ere that day had
dawned,
First Mary loved the lamb."

Mr. Heathstone's determination to win the prize was so keen that he submitted two entries, but he forgot the prosaic formality of appending his address, an oversight of which his great model might, after all, have been guilty. He still has, therefore, the duty of informing the *Saturday Review* office where he wishes his prize sent.

The list of entries was very large, and the average of them surprisingly good. Unfortunately most of the competitors limited their efforts to a more or less close paraphrase of the invocation to Book I of "Paradise Lost," and in attempting to reproduce the Miltonic language and manner forgot that it was merely the medium for telling the story of Mary and her lamb. Nevertheless some of these paraphrases were exceedingly good, so good in fact that the final decision rested on the quality of moral earnestness in Mr. Heathstone's contribution, which seemed to me to come closer to the spirit of Milton than did the others. In the pure imitation of the Miltonic style and in the ability to capture the phrases of the original several of the other entries were superior to his, especially at the beginning, where his is weakest. L. M., the winner of last week's competition, came the nearest to sustained parody of the form.

But Orpha Wellman succeeded better in conveying the movement and excitement of the famous scene in which the lamb is expelled. This quality of excitement is repeated several times in her long entry, but unfortunately her choice of words is not always as ingenious and discriminating as it should be.

RULES

(Competitors failing to comply with rules will be disqualified.)
1. Envelopes should be addressed to "The Competition Editor, *The Saturday Review of Literature*, 25 West 45th Street, New York City." The number of the competition (e.g., "Competition 1") must be written on the top left-hand corner. 2. ALL MSS. must be legible—typewritten if possible—and should bear the name or pseudonym of the author. Competitors may offer more than one entry. MSS. cannot be returned. 3. *The Saturday Review* reserves the right to print the whole or part of any entry.

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