

# The BOWLING GREEN

## Geography

THIS was an expedition to study Geography. There were no plans and no preparations other than to pack five small suitcases (one apiece) and Scally's plaid overcoat (Scally is a cocker spaniel). After a long winter in town the Family had a desire to see how mountains, rivers and roads fit together in the great jigsaw puzzle of New England.

Everyone has his chosen way of escaping from New York City by car. The Geographer, who had not done much driving for quite a while, was anxious to avoid heavy traffic. The path chosen he calls Goat Boulevard. (The vehicle in question is the kind whose name seems to mean a smallish goat.) Amsterdam Avenue up to 155, then the Harlem River Speedway, cross by the 207th Street Bridge, Fordham Road to Webster Avenue and up Webster past the Botanic Garden and Woodlawn Cemetery. Thus you reach the Bronx River Parkway and are safe. The Geographer does not assert this route as ideal, but he once found himself taking it and he sticks to it. The quickest issue of all is the George Washington Bridge into New Jersey, but it's a roundabout way of getting to Connecticut. The winding Bronx River Parkway lures you on and on until you find yourself at the enormous Kensico dam and reservoir. Then comes the village mysteriously named Armonk which apparently also has a reservoir of another sort. A roadhouse out that way somehow got me on its mailing list, and I long received agreeable passport cards vouching me for refreshment, which I never had opportunity to enjoy.—I'm afraid my study of geography is all involved with purely personal associations. Anyhow, after Armonk you steer for Bedford Village and Cross River. By the time you reach Koch's Log Cabin you'll be fit for hot dogs and beer, and within easy reach of the country where they eat doughnuts for breakfast.

In driving from New York City into Connecticut you may avoid the Boston Post Road, or you may avoid Danbury; it is almost impossible to avoid them both. The number of signs pointing to Danbury finally coerces you. I was glad we went through that Hatter's Castle, for I think it was near there we saw Venus Brothers' Garage. After one experience trying to drive a heavily loaded car over the forest trails near Mount Equinox, this time I was minded to follow valleys. The chief feature of our geography lesson, I think, was the importance of rivers. I know them largely by their appearance on the road-map given away at Socony filling stations. The General Drafting Company, publishers of those Socony charts, deserves a handsome credit for a good job of drawing and printing. Until we have touring maps (like Bartholomew's) showing differences in elevation by different colors, a study of the river systems is the only way to guess the lie of the land. The children vote for Gulf filling stations because the Gulf issues a comic paper once a week, but I am generally faithful to Socony as I think their maps are more explicit, better for the meditative tourist who likes to avoid the main highways occasionally. But almost all filling stations are places of cheer; some day they will find their Chaucer. As Titania remarked with truth, in the middle ages pilgrims got their refreshment and succor at monasteries; now they find it at gas depots. In their priestly smocks the service men look more and more like monks; the bright pumps and oil-bottles shine like altars and holy vessels. As we have said before, this is the true wayside shrine of the American folk, and all it needs now is some form of pious ritual.

Perhaps it is wise not to be too systematic about one's gas. By the time the Little Goat had been on the road several days,

picking up fuel wherever it seemed convenient, her tank was filled with a chance mixture of Socony, Gulf, Shell, and Imperial Three Star from Quebec. (The filling station Frenchman at the top of that steep hill at Levis, across the river from Quebec, told me he had never heard of Socony, which pleased me.) It must have been something like O. Henry's *Lost Blend*, a chance elixir not to be discovered again. Certainly the engine liked it: how she roared through those lonely woods of Maine.

Our anatomy of rivers was quite simple. The Connecticut, faithfully pursued, will take you all the way up to the Canadian border; the Kennebec will bring you a good part of the way back again. Of course we added certain ribs and parallels. After crossing those beautiful Connecticut ridges at Newtown (a village one loves at sight) and Middlebury, the Naugatuck valley leads you up toward Winsted—a town as oddly mixed in character as were its eccentric news dispatches in the old *New York World*. Above Winsted the lovely Colebrook stream winds you well into Massachusetts. Then again crossing comfortable hills you come down to the Connecticut valley at Northampton. We had had some notion of taking another look at Blythe Mountain, Vermont, but this time we were searching still bigger hills. Blythe (aged 10) was consoled by taking her collecting-case and butterfly net. In the fields above Northampton she pursued various moths which were put to sleep in a glass jar with fumes. The qualms of her family were allayed by her assurance that this was important for science. Hearing her allude to cyanide I was alarmed. "What have you in that jar," I asked. "Carbena," she said, and added serenely, "carbon tetrachloride."

Northampton and Amherst were peaceful in the calm sunshine of Independence Day. Literature was forgotten: I should like to have seen Emily Dickinson's home but never thought of it until now. The Lord Jeffrey Rabbits amused us in Amherst, and we found the "Candlelight Den," on the road to Sunderland, an agreeable place for lunch. At Sunderland we countered the strong New England influence by getting gas from Mr. Toczydlowski. In Brattleboro, in honor of Rudyard Kipling, I bought a road-map of Vermont.

But we didn't stay in Vermont long. It was an afternoon that called for swimming and we saw Lake Sunapee on the map, colored a delicate blue. We crossed the Connecticut at Bellows Falls, and leaving the fine profile of Ascutney on our left, we bore away from Claremont along a river called Sugar. The first view of Sunapee is a bit disconcerting, but some exploring brought us to Elm Lodge at George's Mills, a friendly and comfortable place, in time for a swim before supper. I remembered that my last previous swim had been in the Pacific at Palos Verdes.

But I was speaking particularly of rivers. It was fine at Franklin, N. H., to meet again an old friend, the Pemigewasset—just before it joins the Merrimack if I can trust cartographer Socony. In the Pemigewasset, 33 years ago (at North Woodstock) I had my first real swim—I mean lifted my feet off the bottom for the first time and realized that it could be done. It was a glorious afternoon as we drove up that noble valley, with the shapes of the Franconia Notch growing larger—that exquisite mountain profile which, once impressed on the mind, never quite fades from memory. As we went north from Winnepesaukee, the various peaks, Whiteface, Moosilauke, Kinsman, Lincoln, Lafayette, gradually shift in perspective, fall into position, take the stance they had so long ago. Not far from the Flume there's a place where the mountain stream

pours down in a flush of cold foam, polishing a basin of pink granite. I recollected from childhood the rounded cheeks of those fawn-colored rocks, the chill breath of the stream mixed with balsam smells. Doesn't it make you hungry for maple sugar? California friends are eloquent—and justly—of their high glimpses; yet let's not be too humble about our own White Mountains. We paused, of course, at the Great Stone Face, which reminded me to send a postcard to my publisher. PARK HERE FOR OLD MAN, says the sign. The children were specially pleased that their first view of Mount Washington showed it veiled in cloud, which made it seem incredibly tall.

At the very pleasing town of Colebrook, N. H., where the Farmers & Traders' Bank gave me \$27 Canadian for 25 U. S. dollars, I was surprised to find a Mt. Monadnock rising nearby, across the river. I had thought of Monadnock as being farther south. There is evidently a professional mountain-rivalry between the two neighboring States, for the druggist said, "Oh, that's only the Vermont Monadnock. The real one's down near Peterboro, in New Hampshire." I looked them up in Socony, and truly the southern one has 26 feet advantage. But we did not stay to argue the point, for now a fine clear morning tempted us to make a bold strike for Quebec. A clear morning which was deceptive, for late that afternoon on the hills above Valley Junction, P. Q., we ran into as sharp a squall as one has any need for. The rain, driving across an open car, was blinding; if it had not been for a covered bridge, which gave opportunity to draw breath and rub eyes, we might well have been ditched. I had forgotten that the Province is famous for lively thunderstorms. But the earlier and more agreeable impression, after the courteous welcome of the Canadian customs, was the brilliant colors of wild flowers in the open fields—buttercups like fields of golden cloth, and daisies and paintbrush. If you drive that way I commend lunch at the little hotel in Sawyerville—"Meals 50 cents; Beer and Wine." I remember the fried turkey and the Black Horse ale. And Canadian ales, unlike our own, are guaranteed to be not less than a given alcoholic content.

My friend Bill Britton, who drives from Los Angeles to San Francisco (450 miles) between noon and midnight, wouldn't think much of the Little Goat's champion day's run—259 miles from Bretton Woods to Quebec. But with a fierce rainstorm en



CHIEN D'OR (Quebec)

route, over the gravel detours of Quebec, and with a car-full of children, it's plenty. And the day ended with a full moon seen over the St. Lawrence. Much as one has read and heard of that city, it is more beautiful than I had any notion of. And also far more French. Particularly I was delighted by the horse-carts of the bouchers which reminded us of old house-keeping days in Normandy—and by a bishop (or a dean?) in gaiters on his way to some morning advowson. He gave me a good appetite for breakfast. Scally, the spaniel, was pleased by the Chien d'Or, on an old unexplained stone now embedded over the post office doorway, with its motto:—

Je suis un chien qui ronge lo (l'os)  
En le rongeant je prend mon repos  
Un tems viendra qui nest pas venu  
Que je morderay qui maura mordu

How good to be reading again tags and affiches in French. *Faites Cesser la Depression*, said one. *Chaque piastre dépensée durant le mois aidera à faire tourner la roue de la prospérité*. Our 27 Canadian

dollars, which went off rapidly on the spin of the wheel, will hardly be noticed by the fiscal experts of the Province; but to us they felt as important as the fly in the old story who sat on the cart-wheel. "See what a dust I raise."

*Shadows on the Rock* by Miss Cather is still well displayed in all Quebec bookshops; it is evidently a steady favorite. I bought myself a French translation of one of E. C. Bentley's detective stories, *L'Affaire Manderson*; then found it was *Trent's Last Case*, which I had read; but I'm enjoying it again in the French version. Of course there is no such thing as what we think we mean when we say a translation. There is no equivalence between two words or phrases in different languages. We should not say that one word in French means a word in English—only that they both approximately render the same idea. Perhaps we should not use the word *translation*, but *version* or *substitute*.—What is the peculiar charm and mystery of the French language that makes each lover of it feel that he, more than anyone else, inwardly perceives and relishes its quirks of suggestion? Of course as long as one thinks of "translating" a foreign tongue one has not even begun to savvy it. The fun begins when one instinctively accepts it in its own words, and does not attempt to transpose them into English. But the psychology of all this is too interesting to be approached in haste. Quebec makes all her official pronouncements in double, both French and English, but you cannot regard either version as a translation of the other. They are two independent approaches to one purport.

I paced a number of toises, as Uncle Toby would say, round the ramparts of the citadel. The re-entrant angles of the moat would please that old amorist of fortification; as also the trim garden of the Garrison Club where the Ladies' Entrance is alongside a lawn ornamented with pyramids of cannon-balls. From the high vantage of the hill there is much to see: the sentry in scarlet coat and busby at the gate of the fortress; wildflower yellow, white and purple; the bigger dandelion globes I've ever seen; and a constant salute of larks. Why is it that nature always makes herself specially charming round any antique monument of man's angers? On the breeze was that specially French savor of burning wood-smoke. Britain has made many mistakes, but her tact in encouraging two different cultures to grow side by side in Quebec might suggest that all those centuries of war were unnecessary. Such a suggestion would probably be amiss. It is dangerous to reason about history, which is a chancy topic. Safer to stick to geography.

Incidentally, confirming the Bowling Green's theory that drinking places are valuable agencies of international conciliation, I note that the only channel of diplomatic exchange between Washington and the Soviets (in negotiating the return of Mr. Mattern) is through Kings' Brewery in Brooklyn.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

## A Sea Captain's Story

DEEP WATER. By Pryce Mitchell. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1933. \$2.50.

Reviewed by CAPTAIN FELIX RIESENBERG

HERE is a seamanlike yarn, the story of a man's lifetime on the sea, man and boy, sail and steam, that carries the reader across the wide oceans with its author. The book is stowed close with great yarns of the sea. For instance, there is the tale of the running down of a small schooner. "The first thing we knew we had struck her amidships and cut her in two. . . . Although we hung around until daylight, none of her crew were found—only some wreckage and a piece of sail." You can add to the story as you go, for Captain Mitchell writes with an objective simplicity, a modest use of his vast experience, that leaves the reader with a feeling of having come upon truth. It is one of the best books of its kind, and deserving the attention of those who love the sea and take pleasure in reading the adventures of a sailor.

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# An Italian Letter

By SAMUEL PUTNAM

WITH the publication recently of the first number of Massimo Bontempelli's new monthly review, *Quadrante*, following a spirited literary-esthetic controversy that swept the peninsula and overflowed into the popular press, Italian *evanguardia* may be said to have entered upon a new and important phase; and along with it all, there is a certain subtle change in polemic tone that may not be without its implications for the national literature as a whole.

*Novecentismo*, the "900" or Twentieth Century Movement, has never become as well known abroad as has Signor Marinetti's Futurism, which, coming in one of the dullest decades in history (a decade, none the less, in which many seeds, including those of Cubism, were stirring), had a *succès de scandale*. Futurism owed no little to the fact that its birthplace was Paris' Left Bank, and the further fact that Marinetti's early *chefs-d'œuvre* were originally written in French. The early 900, likewise, had a good deal of a Parisian tinge; the first four numbers of the review were published in French—to get away from "style" and back to a universal myth-content, the founder asseverated; and Bontempelli, although he now violently resents the insinuation, was prominently identified with the *Stracittà* or "Super-citizen" movement, as opposed to the xenophobic *Strapaese*. French and other foreign writers, including an American or two, sprinkled the "900" pages at the start; and then, for a reason never any too clearly explained, the *Novecentisti* went back to the Italian language and, more or less, to Italian writers of their own particular group.

Launched with a sufficient blare of trumpets, *Novecentismo* continued its fight—while pretending to avoid controversy, it was always engaged in it—for a "magic realism" and an "atmosphere of magic," for the work of art as an incantation, for the rights of fancy and the imagination, but a fancy and an imagination with roots in the life of everyday, for life itself as an incessant journeying and thirsting after adventure, and for an esthetics conceived as action. The five original *Novecentisti*, Bontempelli, Solari, Aniante, Alvaro, and Gallian, proceeded to attack nineteenth century realism and impressionism, on the one hand, and on the other, the "advance guard" of the day, in Italy and elsewhere, with its initiate air, its aristocratic refinements, its essentially anti-popular character and Ivory Tower tendency. They were soon joined by others: Spaini, Bertuetti, Moravia, Massa, Santangelo, Radius, Artieri, Napolitano, Cipriani, etc.

It all sounded very thrilling to the young, and was beautifully upsetting for the elders. There was, all in all, a great to-do. And then, the usual thing happened. The various group members began dropping off or pulling away, one by one. The movement, it was discovered, had been "still-born"; there had never been anything alive in the "tendency" it represented; it was, in short, a one-man "school," and "900" was nothing more nor less than—Bontempelli! The old reproach of "*Stracittà*" was, moreover, dug up. But *Novecentismo*, meanwhile, had taken with the public; it had always proclaimed the gospel of a "popular" art, but it was now becoming popular in a way that seemed likely to make it ridiculous in the eyes of its enemies. The furniture dealers had decided to exploit the publicity centering about the name and had put upon the market a ghastly and abortive "900 style."

This was too much for Bontempelli and his new-won ally, P. M. Bardi, who, by the way, is a co-editor of *Quadrante*. Bardi came out with an attack on and a sweeping repudiation of the new furniture, which practically amounted to a repudiation of the term, "*Novecento*." Bontempelli, in the interim, was storming the *Italia Letteraria* with a vigorous reply to his critics and opponents. His statement was not remarkable for its consistency, but consistency has never been a Bontempelli or a *Novecentist* quality—they would repudiate that, also. With this, G. B. Angioletti, editor of *L'Italia Letteraria*, came forward with a mock retraction. No, "900" was not still-born; it had never existed! Never, that is, as a school or a tendency. It had lacked from the start the necessary underlying principles; it had been without a program; above all, its personnel had been too mixed. It was at this point that Bontempelli found it advis-

able to restate the bases of the movement, taking occasion to repeat that *Stracittà* was something which "I have always refused to accept."

Things were at about this stage, when a new war broke out. This time, it was over architecture, and the architects themselves were leaders in the fray. Hostilities were precipitated by a mass attack of the old school practitioners upon the new "rational" and "functional" style, which has the *avanguardia* solidly behind it. It was this controversy, conducted in the press, that brought Bontempelli and Bardi together, and which led to their launching *Quadrante*.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find the new review running rather heavily to architecture, an architecture viewed as a "collective art," embodying "the language of an epoch" and constituting "the expressive center of our lives." Other arts included are typography, photography, music, and the cinema. The first number inaugurates the policy of reproducing a number of drawings by one man, in the first instance, Corrado Cagli. The work of the artist so presented is allowed to speak for itself, with only the briefest of comment. The real life element is represented by a fashions article, a contribution on corporate factory life by a factory superintendent, and a fascinating letter on American gunmen.

What, it may be asked, is all this doing in a literary magazine, or a magazine which, if not literary, is edited by literary men? Bontempelli's reply would be, that the object is to put up an esthetic "solid front." He sees "the quest of unity" as mankind's "only problem," the discovering, or uncovering, of a "central rhythm." In this, possibly, may be glimpsed a reaction from the centrifugal tendency of the after-war young. "Only the present is interesting," Bontempelli goes on to declare, which on the other hand sounds like the old "*istantaneità*," or cult of the moment.

The new organ is decidedly Fascist in character, bent upon creating "the art of the Mussolini era." It announces that it will be combative and close-packed in its reading matter. It takes up an "anti-literature" position not unreminiscent of Dada, and for this reason, looks with favor upon the cinema. Literature, if literature there be, must be action (Cocoteau, somewhere, has said something of the same sort). The new *Quadrantisti* (we have not heard the name yet, but probably shall be hearing it before long) are against a "sedentary intelligence." They are against a number of other things, as well, including "*francesimo*," or a snobbish adulation of importations from the French.

The conclusion of it all, with Marinetti and Bontempelli both members of the Royal Academy, would seem to be that advance-guardism in Italy has definitely become a function of the Fascist state; it has, in a manner, been "crowned by the Academy." One wonders, does this have anything to do with Signor Bontempelli's vigorous repudiation of "Super-citizenship." In any event, Fascism is wise. So is the advance-guard. Which is in no wise to challenge the latter's sincerity.

## Salvation by Art

EUPALINOS. By Paul Valéry. Translated by William McCausland Stewart. New York: Oxford University Press. \$2.75.

Reviewed by NATHALIE COLBY

IN "Eupalinos," Phaedrus and Socrates on the "pure bank" of the shades discuss analytically and constructively in platonic dialogue the architectonics of art. There Socrates, the "knower," questions Phaedrus, spokesman for the "constructor." Slowly the superiority of the artist's point of view emerges, luring even Socrates, who was born "several" and ended "one," into an anti-Socratic passage which brings out the buried artist in him and ends the poem with the triumph of art.

Architecture, which fulfils the demand of a complete work possessing "beauty, solidity, and lastingness" is chosen as the symbol of construction. Phaedrus draws his arguments from his reminiscences in life, where he was a friend of Eupalinos, the architect of Megara whose buildings led one "to a sort of bliss by insensible curves, by minute and all-powerful inflections."

"Phaedrus" he was saying to me, 'the more I meditate on my art, the more I practice it, the more I think and act, the more I suffer and rejoice as an architect, the more I feel my own being with an ever surer light and clarity.'

"I go astray in long spells of waiting; I find myself by the surprises I give myself; by means of these successive degrees of my silence, I advance in my own edification and I draw near to such an exact correspondence between my aims and my powers, that I seem to myself to have made of the existence I was given a sort of human handiwork. 'By dint of constructing,' he put it with a smile, 'I truly believe that I have constructed myself.'"

Although this book, which has been beautifully translated by Mr. Stewart, is one of Paul Valéry's later poems, it is the best portal by which to enter his mind. Written at forty-five, it is an "act of construction" whose philosophic basis is to be found in Valéry's essay written at twenty on Leonardo da Vinci. Through the classic form, in which he finds the "dynamics of resistance," he channels out to us the living spirit of the day. For in this poem he presents us with the content of a post-war creation, where his intellectual sensibility perpetually refining itself in every sentence, pierces us with its sharpness, so that his intellectual emotion flows into us—inoculating us with its superior expression.

## ERRATUM

A typographical error in the Oxford University Press advertisement in the July 8th issue of the *Saturday Review* made it appear, though somewhat ungrammatically, that "What the Author Meant" was somehow connected with F. Anstey and still to be published. The F. Anstey part refers to his English adaptation for Little Theatres of "Three Molière Plays" which the Oxford University Press will bring out shortly. "What the Author Meant" has been out for some time, having been published on December 1st, 1932, and is by G. R. Foss only. A malign fate seems to have dogged this gentleman in the pages of *The Saturday Review*. Throughout a long review in our issue of March 18th he was unfortunately referred to as "Mr. Ross."

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