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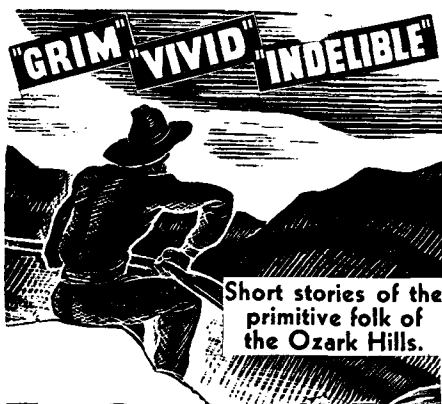
—by THE NEW YORKER

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Sir Arnold Wilson's Study of Persia

PERSIA. By Sir Arnold T. Wilson. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1933. \$5.

Reviewed by BETTY DRURY

A CARTOON once published in *Punch* showed a Persian cat sitting uneasily between a Russian bear and a British lion. "I will pat its head," said the bear to the lion, "and you shall stroke its tail." "But I have not been consulted," cried the cat.

It is Great Britain's turn to pat Persia's head, while Russia pulls its tail, in the opinion of Sir Arnold Wilson, leading authority on present-day Persia, in this masterly study of the country which has figured for so many bitter generations as a sphere of contested commercial influence and served as buffer state on the western frontier of Britain's Indian Empire. Sir Arnold feels that Persia's days as an independent, sovereign entity are numbered if she is not supported diplomatically and commercially against Soviet Russia, for the latter, "concurrently with a 'liberal' policy in purely political affairs, is strangling Persia by economic means in a way which Czarist Russia never attempted."

All is not darkness, however, and the Persian is fighting valiantly to maintain a national independence. The recital of the struggle is stirring. It would seem absurd to look for a definite history of a nation compressed within 400-odd pages; the greater is the surprise, therefore, to find this work, embracing Persia's geography, ethnic problems, commerce and industry, transportation and communications, foreign relations, literature, judicial system, irrigation projects and mineral wealth, currency and finance, so thoroughgoing and complete. It will be an invaluable handbook—and entertaining guide—for traveler and business man, government functionary, and political economist. It contains some theory and much fact—what is it that Sir Arnold says about Americans collecting statistics as they do antiques?

Its pleasantest feature, it should be noted, is the friendly and unpatronizing attitude of the author toward his subject. He likes Persia, appreciates the sterling qualities of the Persian; finds him level-headed and humorous, kindly, self-reliant, and a pretty good fellow generally. Cosmopolitan and sophisticated, his striving toward the recovery of the cultural unity of his nation—composed of goodness knows how many races, creeds, and colors—deserves early realization. Accustomed to making the best of things and noted for his adaptation to circumstances, the Persian is turning now to the West, and particularly to France, for inspiration in industrial, cultural, and political thought. And for good or ill, the spirit of progress is upon the land.

Persia, it will be found, has become "air-minded." Climatic conditions are favorable to flying; fog is seldom encountered, while high winds are exceptional. There are many good aerodromes, and planes are proving their usefulness in the transportation of valuable freight—particularly opium. And here Sir Arnold puts in a good word for the much-maligned drug. Why, he asks, for the sake of a few weak-minded addicts in Western countries, should Persia, where the drug is comparatively little abused, be obliged to curtail production of one of her really profitable crops? For the poppy is immune to the onslaught of the locust, as few crops are. Opium may be compactly shipped and the cost of long-distance transportation is as nothing compared with its value. Nor is its use of necessity immoral. "It is the soldier's emergency ration, the muleteer's tonic, and the starving's solace; it is daily used to ease the pain of thousands of sick and injured men who cannot hope to obtain skilled medical assistance." In European markets it is preferred for the manufacture of morphia.

But it is petroleum, of course, which comes first in Persia's list of exports. Sir Arnold, who was general manager in Mesopotamia, Persia, and the Persian Gulf of the Anglo Persian Oil Company, Ltd., describes the hygienic and educational benefits which came to the country as a result of the discovery of oil-fields, and his words carry conviction.

A chapter on literature (not the best in the book) provides an adequate notion of the cultural background of the Persian (who sets more store by Anvari than Omar Khayyam), shows the Francophile tendencies of modern writers, and the movement away from Islam. There is not space for a discussion of Persia's art. But

a really fine section on education demonstrates the hold upon Persia of the French tradition of centralized control, with its corollaries of vocational education, military service, and training in the duties of citizenship, and quotes a little verse of Sadi's (clever people, these Persians) to the effect that education is for those who can profit by it—lines that might well be taught in many an institution outside of Persia:

Where the innate capacity is good, education may make an impression upon it: but no furbisher knows how to give a polish to badly tempered iron.

Were they to take the ass of Jesus to Mecca, on his return from that pilgrimage he would still be an ass.

The Ancient Art of Fresco Painting

FRESCO PAINTING. By Gardner Hale. New York: William Edwin Rudge. 1933. \$2.50.

Reviewed by ALAN BURROUGHS

IN a small volume of about sixty pages of text, the late Gardner Hale has given the essentials of what has wrongly been called a lost art and has translated into simple, practical language the teachings of the famous Cennino Cennini. Mr. Hale announces no new discoveries in the art of fresco painting, which is the art of painting directly on a still wet plaster wall. But he explains that art from the point of view of a practising artist, instead of from the point of view of an antiquarian. And the illustrations of his own work in fresco assert his workmanlike spirit and skill.

Naturally Mr. Hale's attitude toward fresco painting is reverential, since he was apparently the pioneer of its revival in this country. For him frescoes are living things; "your plaster, born so to speak in the morning, must have lived its life before night. Every instant it has its requirements and at moments when time grows short, its desperate needs. The tendency to work by the watch should make it the most modern of mediums." He believes in a future for fresco painting in America, pointing out that the opportunity is here, "in so far as great wall spaces constitute that opportunity, and in so far as that inner wistful and yearning quality detected in our business men is ready to pay tribute to the need of art." But opportunity, he wisely adds, is not enough.

Mere wall space will not do; mere opulence, power and cockiness will not do; mere fatness will not do . . . only profound and excited feeling, only a sense of something to say and courage to say it, only, according to Orozco, a prophetic sense, will produce great fresco art.

As for illustrations, it is a pity that more could not have been included, especially in the variety suggested by the eleven plates chosen, which include something from Pompeii, Giotto of course, Ghirlandajo, Tiepolo, Orozco, and so on. More of this kind in conjunction with the three plates of Mr. Hale's own medievalistic and decorative art, would give a background necessary for the non-expert reader to whom a sense of craftsmanship means little. Additional illustrations of the "prophetic sense," for example, might further stimulate the serious art student to a point where he would actually begin to experiment with Mr. Hale's and Giotto's medium.

Alan Burroughs is a member of the staff of the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University.

"In the last fifteen years or so the sales of Carlyle have fallen off more completely than those of any other notable Victorian author, more even than those of Ruskin, which I should think must be a good second in the decline," said Arthur Waugh in a recent interview in the *London Observer*. When asked what he thought the reason he replied: "I think it is because Carlyle was a prophet most of whose prophecies have failed to come off. And then, again, he was tremendously obsessed by German ideals which the war sentiment scattered. Don't you think, too, he was a kind of forerunner of Nietzsche, and that his superman, following on the strong man who was rather embodied in our time in Bismarck, 'the man of blood and iron,' is utterly out of sympathy with the ideas of the present day?" The interview did not go on to prophesy whether the sales of Carlyle might pick up if dictators become more popular.

Germany and Austria

AUSTRO-GERMAN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS, 1908-1914. By Oswald Henry Wedel. Stanford University, Calif.: Stanford University Press. 1932. \$3.

FALL OF THE GERMAN EMPIRE, 1914-1918: DOCUMENTS OF THE GERMAN REVOLUTION. Selected and Edited by Ralph Haswell Lutz. Translated by David G. Rempel and Gertrude Rendtorff. Stanford University, Calif.: Stanford University Press. 2 vols. 1932. \$12.

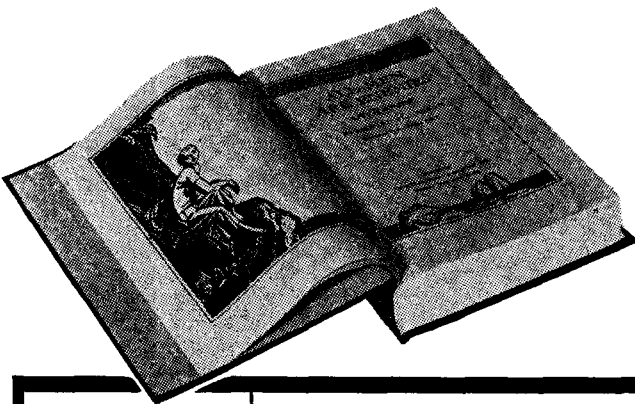
Reviewed by BERNADOTTE E. SCHMITT

BEFORE and during the Great War it was commonly believed that the foreign policy of Austria-Hungary was dominated and controlled by the German Government. The assumption was not unwarranted, given the comparative weakness of the one state and the great strength of the other. Actually, as Professor Wedel is able to show from the diplomatic documents and memoirs published since the war, it was generally Vienna, and not Berlin, which called the tune from 1908 to 1914. Prince Bülow, dismayed by the failure of his Moroccan policy and alarmed to find Germany isolated at and after the Conference of Algiers, resolved to maintain the alliance with Austria-Hungary at all costs. He therefore abandoned the precept of Bismarck, according to which Germany was not bound to support an Austrian policy of adventure in the Balkans, and gave *carte blanche* to the Cabinet of Vienna.

The result was the dangerous crisis over the annexation of Bosnia, which made the Austro-Serbian quarrel a prime danger to the peace of Europe and seriously undermined Germany's relations with Russia. The Cabinet of Berlin was never able to recover its full liberty of action or control of the alliance. A valiant effort was made by Kiderlen-Waechter, foreign minister from 1910 to 1912, but he died before he had fully succeeded, and his successor, a weak man, did not know how to finish the job. In the end, the Bülow doctrine reasserted itself, not because Germany approved the policy of Vienna—the Austrian attitude towards Serbia was sharply criticized in Berlin—but because, so Mr. Wedel thinks, the refusal of Tirpitz to make a naval agreement with England left Germany at the mercy of Austria. Yet there was just enough uncertainty about the German attitude to make Austria hesitate, until 1914, to attack Serbia—the only alternative to internal reforms, which alone would have permitted a solution of the Yugoslav problem in the interest of Austria-Hungary. That German policy towards France and Great Britain was gravely mismanaged, has long been recognized, even by many German writers; the same criticism evidently applies to German relations with Austria-Hungary and Russia. Mr. Wedel's book, in spite of being somewhat carelessly written in places, is an interesting essay, and has been awarded the George Louis Beer Prize of the American Historical Association.

The German decision to support the Austrian programme in July, 1914 led to the Great War, and the war to the German revolution of 1918. For the study of those years Professor Lutz's stout volumes will be indispensable. His book is not a history, but a collection of 611 documents from which future writers will quarry many stories for their historical edifices. Covering the period from July 31, 1914 to November 11, 1918 and dealing with every phase of the war—diplomatic, political, military, economic, social—these papers make fascinating reading, but defy a review. Suffice it to say that most of the documents are to be found only in very large or specialized libraries or have been secured from archives, including the treasures of the Hoover War Library at Stanford University. To Americans, the most interesting sections will be those dealing with submarine warfare, the work of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, the conversations of Dr. George D. Herron, President Wilson's unofficial representative at Geneva, with German politicians, the armistice negotiations, and the abdication of the Kaiser. The wartime speeches of Gustav Stresemann will also repay attention, for he was then as extravagant as anyone in supporting a policy of annexation and conquest; his gradual evolution as a constructive statesman and man of peace is one of the most remarkable episodes of our time. Professor Lutz has rigorously refrained from all commentary on his documents, and earned the gratitude of historians for his careful and comprehensive selection.

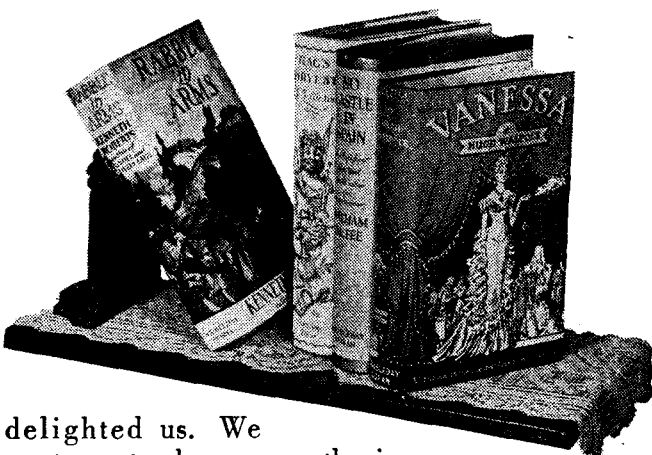
A Publisher's Report to Saturday Review Readers . . .



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