

Palestine, Its Past and Its Present

HISTORY OF PALESTINE, THE LAST TWO THOUSAND YEARS. By Jacob de Haas. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1934. \$3.50.

Reviewed by WILLIAM THOMSON

WITHIN the 523 pages of this book Mr. de Haas has sought not only to compress the story of Palestine for the last two thousand years, but also to set that story against the background of world history. The success of such a venture depends upon a judicious balancing of background to foreground and a careful and skilful choice of details. Mr. de Haas's background, however, so overshadows his foreground that the reader is often beguiled into forgetfulness of the subject of the book. Roman, Persian, and Byzantine emperors, Muslim caliphs and emirs, crusading counts and knights, Tartar khans and Turkish sultans, popes, pilgrims, and priests strut across the little stage, trailing after them such clouds of detail to explain their entrances and exits, details which are frequently impertinent and are sometimes just unsavory morsels of private and public morality, that Palestine and its story lie buried often beneath the records of their marching and counter-marching, their victories and routs, their rapine and murder, the scandal and lechery of their lives, to emerge again clearly only when Mr. de Haas has found some description of its economic condition, or in a few, fleeting moments of history when Palestine itself was the definite objective of a campaign as in the Crusades and the Jewish rebellions of the first two centuries A. D. The art of Mr. de Haas has made Palestine the pivot of the world and the focus of world history, but it cannot truthfully be named even "the world's unending buffer-state," as he calls it. It has been for the most part just a corridor for conquerors advancing against a distant objective, in itself unimportant, and Mr. de Haas's study suffers not only from a lack

of proportion and perspective, but also from an original bias in the general historical conception of his problem.

A more definite objection, however, can be urged against Mr. de Haas's work. He has never once defined what he means by Palestine, except to say that it is "a state of mind." Sometimes he seems to give it the dimensions which the Syrian Arab Nationalists give to the Syria of their dreams, from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean and from the Taurus Mountains to the Gulf of Aqaba. At other times he includes in it Judaea and Samaria, Galilee and Transjordan. Again he is soberly content with Judaea and Samaria. This vagueness may plague the reader, but it is a very present help to Mr. de Haas in creating his impression. Thanks to it Palestine may be called the chief state of the Omayyad Caliphate (661-750 A. D.) and become even a cause of the World War.

Symptomatic also of the bias of Mr. de Haas's mind and of the cause of that bias are his statements that the World War was fought for the possession of the East and that Asia Minor has displaced the Balkans apparently as the plague spot of Europe, and the same prejudice is revealed in his discussion of the Palestinian campaign, his disparagement of the part played by Lawrence and the Arabs therein, and his discreet silence on the Arab nationalist movement of the last decades of the nineteenth century in Syria. The primary reason for the British advance into Palestine may not have been the defence of Egypt. That may have been "a professional afterthought." But so also was the Palestinian campaign. The failure of their two flanking attacks on the Turkish Empire at Gallipoli and in Mesopotamia forced the British to make a frontal attack through Palestine, and that attack would never have been undertaken without assurance of Arab neutrality at least and would have been hazardous, if not impossible, without Arab help. Lawrence's "intrigue" and "desert conjurings" practically imprisoned 25,000 Turkish troops between Amman and Medina, who otherwise might have fallen upon Allenby's right flank, helped to hold the Turkish fourth corps idle at Amman, and broke the Turkish communications with Damascus at the vital hour of Allenby's final assault,—perhaps not impressive military operations, but essential nevertheless to British success and very welcome.

So much concerning the form of Mr. de Haas's book and its general historical outlook. To convey his picture of Palestine he has amassed a vast amount of detail, but his judgment has not always been sound, nor his authorities always good, or else he has misquoted them, for his pages bristle with mis-statements. We are informed, for example, that the Council of Nicea recognized Christianity as the state religion, that the Monophysite conception of the nature of Jesus Christ was that the human nature became divine, that Khalid al-Walid (sic) was the leader of the Muslims at the battle of Muta, that Kainukaa and Nadhir are places in Arabia instead of the names of the two Jewish tribes that Mohammed drove out of Medina, that Merwan I was a son of Mu'awiya, that Merwan II was an Abbasside and not the last of the Omayyads, that Adh-Dhahir's reign ended in 1036, but that he died in 1027, that Omar Khayim (sic), the poet and astronomer, and Nizam el-Mulk, the famous Seljuk vizier, helped Hassan ibn Subah (sic) organize the Assassins, that Ibn Khalikan (sic), born in 1211, reports watching Saladin superintending repairs on the walls of Jerusalem in 1187, and that George Adam Smith is an American. We are told further that the Fatimids were Moorish-blooded, that Saladin came from Kurdistan, that Zenobia was a Jewess or an almost Jewess, that Mu'awiya was a Syrian nationalist, that the Omayyads induced a great mass of translation from Greek to Arabic, and that there was a British offensive in Palestine in the Third Crusade. We have Sabas for Saba, Abu'r Rahman for Abdur-rahman, Abu Sufian for Yezid ibn Abi Sufian, Ommayads for Omayyads, Kasim Ungur for Abu'l-Kasim Ungur. Some of these names may be misprints, but others are just sheer misapprehensions. And there are others.

And yet Mr. de Haas has a way with him, and a style that is swift, indeed almost breath-taking, and a genuine enthusiasm for his subject, and he has created a book so readable that it is almost a sacred obligation to discover to readers the bias of his point of view and to warn them concerning his facts.

William Thomson is a member of the staff of Harvard University.

Balzac and His Family

HONORÉ DE BALZAC: *Letters to his Family (1809-1850); Including a series of Letters from Madame de Balzac to her Son. Edited by Walter Scott Hastings. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1934. \$5.*

Reviewed by WILLIAM HOBART ROYCE

PROFESSOR HASTINGS, to whom Balzac students are indebted for his publication of "Cromwell," Balzac's first work, and of the letters of Balzac and his publisher Souverain, has made another important contribution to our knowledge of the great French novelist by editing this volume. It contains 190 letters: 116 of which have appeared incorrectly and incompletely in the Calmann-Lévy editions of Balzac's general correspondence, 1876; six of which have been published elsewhere; and seventy-one letters hitherto unpublished, thirty-eight of which are by Balzac, and thirty-three written to him by his mother.

Nearly all of the letters here presented were copied directly from the original holographs in the Spoelberch de Lovenjoul Collection at Chantilly. The curator of this library is M. Marcel Bouteron, the foremost Balzacian in France, and Professor Hastings acknowledges the hearty coöperation of M. Bouteron in the arduous task of preparing this volume.

The urgent need of a new and accurate edition is shown by Professor Hastings, who says: "No single letter to Balzac's family, in the volume of general correspondence, is free from distressing faults; the majority of the letters are found to contain astounding variants, omissions, and elaborations when compared with the originals; some are fabricated from fragments of letters bearing various dates; some are entire forgeries. What is more serious still, the dating of none may be trusted."

The unreliability of the text of Balzac's previously published correspondence has long been known and lamented by Balzac students. No index had previously been attempted, because such an index would have omitted a large number of the facts, names, and opinions which Balzac actually wrote. Professor Hastings supplies complete indexes to all the letters contained in this volume.

The falsification of Balzac's correspondence, though deliberate and ill-advised, was not wholly culpable. Such letters as were deemed most important underwent the affectionate scrutiny of Balzac's sister, Mme. Laure Surville, and her daughters, and then passed the even more exacting censorship of Balzac's widow, the former Mme. Hanska. Every letter and passage which in any measure offended the susceptibilities of these ladies; or which revealed too intimately any details concerning the members of Balzac's family circle, their friends, and other persons who were still living; or which seemed to violate the canons of good taste, family pride, and personal privacy—were either rigorously cut or omitted altogether, or were altered in words and meaning to conform to their high though narrow standards. Nothing which might adversely reflect on Balzac's name, fame, and character, or on the dignity and respectability of his relatives, was allowed to remain in his published letters.

Now, as in the abridgment of Pepys's Diary, the letters and passages omitted or changed are perhaps the most interesting and important portions of this correspondence. Balzac wrote these letters for no other eyes than those of the recipients, from whom, they being his own blood relatives, he had nothing to conceal, good or bad, about himself, nor his frank opinions of them. In these letters more than in any others he wrote—certainly much more than the purposeful missives penned to Mme. Hanska, his prospective bride—Balzac reveals himself without guile or subterfuge. His lifelong ambition, his independence, his egotism, his vanity, the power of his will, the selfishness of his demands, the depth of his discontent, and the idiosyncrasies, great and small, of his all-embracing genius,—are more fully and truly self-depicted in these letters to his family than anywhere else.

And what a family! Balzac himself wrote to his sister: "Oh! There are not two families in the world like ours, and I firmly believe we are unique of our kind." A more unhappy, unharmonious, unsympathetic set of persons it would be hard to imagine. Living in constant bickering, working at cross purposes, suffering from real or imaginary diseases, harassed by financial distress (which was not imaginary), unloving, jealous of one another, the Balzac ménage must have been a

seething nest of vipers and wildcats. No wonder that the youthful Balzac separated himself from his family, and sought sweet solitude in a cheerless attic!

The father, of Rabelaisian mind and bovine mien, thinking of naught but his physical welfare and longevity; the mother, thirty-two years younger than her husband, a woman of highly nervous temperament and restless energy, with a tongue "barbed at both ends and hung in the middle"; two daughters, one a dolt and the other a darling; two sons, one a ne'er-do-well, the other, the world's greatest novelist! Professor Hastings, in an admirable introduction gives a succinct but comprehensive picture of this family group and their forebears, to enable the reader of the correspondence to obtain the proper focus upon each personage.

Mme. Laure Surville, Balzac's favorite sister, the only member of his home circle to receive and return his love and confidence, undoubtedly thought she was improving his style when she changed a passage in one of his letters to read: "My two only and immense desires, to be famous and to be loved, will they ever be satisfied?" This, the most quoted passage from Balzac's correspondence, he did not write!

William Hobart Royce, associate of Gabriel Wells in his collecting of rare books, is one of the outstanding authorities on Balzac in this country.

On the Supernatural

GOD AT WORK. By William Adams Brown. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1933. \$2.50.

Reviewed by EDWIN DANIELS

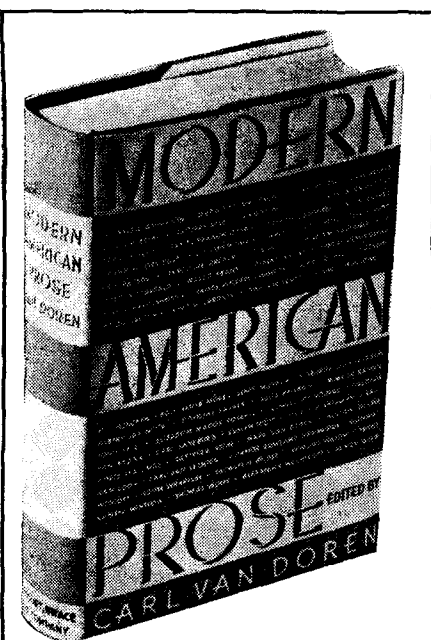
THIS is a good book and an important one. As a study of the supernatural it not only breaks ground for the enlarging of our concept of how God works, it likewise points the way to a series of emphases which must be made in order to understand the action of the divine in present-day life.

The supernatural is defined by contrast, as well as affirmatively. Nature is physical; the supernatural is spiritual. Nature is rational, predictable, measurable; the supernatural is creative. Nature is the actual, the limited, the imperfect; the supernatural is the ideal, the limitless, the perfect. According to Dr. Brown, the supernatural may be seen in its first two aspects in human personality, in its perfection it is seen in God alone. Realizing this, man worships and is held in awe by it, and in the last analysis, the perfect is revealed to the religious man by faith.

Dr. Brown does much to put to rest the confusion which generally attends discussions of the natural and supernatural. His debt to Oman's "The Natural and the Supernatural" is evident, though by contrast his language is simple and untechnical. He has not contented himself in this study with the usual classic philosophico-theological references but instead has made abundant use of contemporary religious movements such as the First Century Christian Fellowship, the movement of Karl Barth, the Anglo-Catholic revival, and the work of such men as Schweitzer, Gandha, Kagawa, and others in order to point out where God is at work in this generation. He sees them as "parts of one great movement in which God is recalling our generation to himself." Be that as it may, (and here one cannot refrain from feeling that they can't all be right) he writes with clarity and understanding and the result is an eminently readable book.

Conversant as he is with contemporary movements, he is not unfamiliar with the old theologies and one cannot help but notice that many of his roots lie there. For example, discussing how God reveals himself to man, he says, "God makes his presence known with irresistible conviction in the act of the will by which man surrenders without reserve to the highest he knows." "Act of will" is Kantian, "highest he knows" is Ritschlian. He leans heavily on them but they are not his "guide and stay."

This selection of the Religious Book Club will be valued by many because of its concise definitiveness. No postulate goes unexamined, no theory is advanced but it is sustained by a shrewd insight into the motives which move men. With clear comprehension William Adams Brown has pointed out that the workings of God, the difficulty of faith, the question of the miraculous, the problem of evil, are all problems of personality, and must be seen in that light in order to be understood.



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Modern American Prose
Edited by Carl Van Doren

HARCOURT, BRACE AND COMPANY
383 Madison Avenue, New York

The New Books

Fiction

RED MACAW. By Phoebe Haggard. Scribners. 1934. \$2.

Of only mediocre value as a novel, this book has the sort of interest you can sometimes find in the *National Geographic Magazine*. It is the history of the first hundred years of an estate in the Brazilian interior, tied together by the biography of a century-old macaw whose broken wing kept her in the vicinity of the house; and of a negro slave, Philomena, who lived almost as long as her feathered friend, and died with her.

In 1800, when the cousins José and Joao Fernandez brought a cargo of slaves from the Guinea Coast and chopped themselves a plantation out of the jungle of Minas Geraes, there was no check on the rights of the master; he could kill a slave or kill his wife without question. The early chapters are a tale of horror—vicious and superfluous human bestiality superimposed on the cruelty of the jungle. By the end of the century manners had moderated, great plantations were no longer profitable, and the slaves were free, without knowing what to do with their freedom. Apparently without intention, the book conforms in some respects to the canons of the proletarian novel; there is less interest in any individual than in an oppressed class—its sufferings, its pathetic submission, its tenacious survival. But the real protagonist is the atmosphere of the tropical jungle—merciless and murderous, but counteracted by the tropical fertility and vitality not only of animals and vegetation, but of the maltreated negroes. A strange and sometimes awkward book, but worth reading.

E. D.

ALL THE SKELETONS IN ALL THE CLOSETS. By Keith Fowler. Macaulay. 1934. \$2.50.

In a New York 1934 version of one of civilization's oldest rackets, three callous rascals issue a blackmailing sheet called *The Social Arbiter*. Hundreds of dollars were extracted from struggling bankers and merchants in return for ludicrous adulation (with pictures) in the pages of the magazine. But the thousands came from the climbers who were trying to force their way into the Four Hundred, and could afford no unfavorable publicity. Ultimately a group of the victims got together and gave the district attorney enough evidence to send two of the rascals to jail; the third was too stupid, the law decided, to be worth bothering with. At any rate, *The Social Arbiter* was done for, and a great many small souls rested more quietly.

This unedifying narrative is a compendium of petty blackmailing tricks, a study of methodology in the half world of ratty confidence men. Mr. Fowler knows his cheap crooks; he delivers their talk and their manners to us with little or no regard for our possible sensibilities. There

is an air of verisimilitude about the book so long as it deals with anti-social activities, but when Mr. Fowler introduces his good citizens—Tom O'Malley and his daughter Pat, Mrs. Ramage, and Jimmy Calvert—the feeling of truth is absent. These people who are morally estimable are stuffed with literary sawdust and tend to annoy us. That is a fault in Mr. Fowler's work; it is not, surely, intentional. But the fact remains that most of the bad people are good characters, and though we are jolted by their speech and actions, they themselves are usually enjoyable.

Thus, "All the Skeletons in All the Closets" is an uneven story, sometimes dully conventional, sometimes entertainingly raw and brutal. At its best, it depicts low tricks played on stupid people; and when it rolls most shamelessly in the gutter it has the most vitality.

R. B.

NIGHT SHIFT. By Richard Blaker. Appleton-Century. 1934. \$2.

Richard Blaker always has a plot better than the average, and characters far more out of the ordinary run than the characters of most novels; but plot and characters never satisfy him. He must get behind them, probe into the tangle of motives, interactions, causations; every one of his novels is a metaphysical research. In "Night Shift" he glorifies extrovert mechanics, men concerned with tangible things and not with analysis, relations, explanations—which he contemptuously calls "a sort of yapping and blinking and choking and sneezing in the dust raised by one's heels." Yet in every page he shows himself as a man incurably interested in relations and only indifferently concerned with tangibles.

But readers with no taste for metaphysics will find an excellent story in "Night Shift," and with it a picture of life in a suburban London garage operated on a twenty-four hour basis which is almost as carefully exact as if it had been done by Sinclair Lewis. Winter, the day foreman, despising the human race and given to snooping into what did not concern him, was always delighted when he found evidence that his worst suspicions were justified; and he presently found such evidence about the lovely Mrs. Hudson, one of the garage's customers. But Hales, the night foreman, adored Mrs. Hudson with an inarticulate and altruistic devotion—and Hales at the moment was a nervous wreck, worn down by the sufferings of his wife who was dying with cancer; distinctly not a man to trifle with, as Winter did with his repeated malicious jibes at Mrs. Hudson. Out of this record of a neurasthenic's distorted reaction to his environment there leaps a tragedy, as sudden and unforeseen as some of those you read about in the newspapers; and into the situation created by the tragedy steps the owner of the garage, a god from

the machine who saves the situation by an act perfectly in character. Read it simply as a story and you will get your money's worth; but it was not simply as a story that Richard Blaker conceived it.

E. D.

BROKEN MUSIC. By Morna MacTaggart. Dutton. 1934. \$2.50.

Miss MacTaggart's story is a likable, sensitive, sincere, and thoroughgoing picture of a marriage between a nice, middle-class English girl and a young German of corresponding background. The Marvells lived in their own house in the country—Mr. Marvell having brought his family down to Somerset when he felt able to retire from his job in the City. The Eckharts lived in a comfortable flat in one of the German university towns, with a river flowing just underneath the windows. Emily was like any number of other well-brought-up English girls, fond of the country, already engaged to a nice boy of her own sort, although not wildly excited about it, when along came Kurt, with his Doctor's thesis on Wordsworth, sympathetically taking a summer bicycle trip through the English countryside. The engagement was broken, Emily and Kurt were married, and went back to Germany, where he was going to teach English literature in the university.

That was before the war. The novel follows them into middle-age—first readjustments; the coming of the two children; the war, to which Kurt had to go, and all that it brought in suffering, strain, and divided loyalties; and even goes on (for Miss MacTaggart is nothing if not thorough) into the lives and loves of the second generation, with their son married to a German girl and settled in New York and the daughter back in England, married to a young London newspaperman.

Although "Broken Music" has the flow, variety, and humor of a very readable novel, and quite stands on its own feet as such, it suggests at times those records of personal experience, of homesteader's wives, women rice-planters, and the like, occasionally published in the *Atlantic Monthly*. The domestic detail is so affectionately and plausibly painted in, that is to say, that one has the feeling of following something more than a fictional record. The reader wouldn't be surprised to hear that Joyce, Emily's novelist-sister, who enters the narrative from time to time, bore some relation in life to Miss MacTaggart herself.

A. R.

A STORM IS RISING. By George Dyer. Houghton Mifflin. 1934. \$2.

Nothing is harder to find than a good novel of action, in which there is excitement without outrage to the laws of probability or rhetoric; but such a find is "A Storm Is Rising." It describes a terrifyingly plausible attempt at a Communist revolution, to be made by paralyzing four or five of the principal cities and holding them as hostages against the rest of the country. In New York, for instance, a handful of men are to destroy the public services, smash the means of getting off the island, blow up most of Wall Street as the whiff of grapeshot that shows they mean business, and then wait for the hamstrung giant to come to terms. The entire conspiracy (if one grants the author his base of operations, a castle fortified by the eccentricity of a dead millionaire, which seems more appropriate to Mr. Dornford Yates's Austria than to Pennsylvania) is altogether too probable, and the means by which it is frustrated are probable also. The conspirators accidentally arouse the suspicion of a group of young people, their neighbors, whom Mr. Dyer has managed to make gallant and humorous without making them as offensively rollicking about saving their country as such characters sometimes are; and by the narrowest possible margin they prevent the coup d'état at the end of 1931.

For this book is original in being laid not in the immediate future, but the immediate past; and the reader feels an extra shiver when it is explained how near he came to destruction, and never knew it. It may be objected to the novel that the specific suspense might begin earlier; the communists spend rather a long time in being sinister in a general way before they reveal the extent of our danger; but no one could wish more suspense than he gets before the book ends. As the White King very justly said, there are better things than hay, but there is nothing like it; and though there are better kinds of literature, every one has times when nothing takes the place of a book of this kind; and of this kind, this is a first-rate piece of work.

B. D.

BROTHERS AND LOVERS. By John Hampson. Farrar & Rinehart. 1934. \$2.50.

Mr. Hampson's American publishers, not unreasonably wanting to change his English title of "Strip Jack Naked," were rather unhappy in their choice of a substitute; especially as it moves them to hail him as "the heir-apparent of D. H. Lawrence in English letters." This is the story of Ted Borlay, working in his father's store in an English midland city, and pathologically devoted to his older brother Alf. Alf's intended marriage sets him spiritually adrift; but when Alf is killed in an accident, leaving a pregnant fiancée, Ted steps into the breach and marries her, and through the responsibilities and joys of matrimony eventually sets himself psychologically on his own feet. It is a pleasant little story, told in the main with an effective simplicity; but if Mr. Hampson is the heir, apparent or otherwise, of D. H. Lawrence, this reviewer is the greatest secretary of the Treasury since Alexander Hamilton.

E. D.

Miscellaneous

CRIMINAL LAW IN ACTION. By John Barker Waite. Sears. 1934.

We live in an era in which established institutions and procedures are subject to constant questioning. It is no longer enough that something has been, it must meet the requirements of a new appraisal. "Criminal Law in Action" is an intelligent exposition of our present methods of procedure which are supposed to control crime. Mr. Waite has treated the subject in a scientific, yet popular, manner.

This book touches upon most of the shortcomings and problems of the criminal law. It discusses the lack of any clear-cut philosophy regarding the theory on which our criminal law proceeds.

Innumerable technicalities of the law are pointed out. The fetishes of judicial form and procedure are discussed. In a chapter entitled "The Law: Safeguards,"

(Continued on next page)



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D. D.

Over the Counter

The Saturday Review's Guide to Romance and Adventure

Trade Mark	Label	Contents	Flavor
CONSIGNED TO DAVY JONES George H. Grant (Little, Brown: \$2.)	Sea Yarn	Captain Grant has placed the fiction tag on his story of adventures aboard a collier out of Cardiff when war declaration diverted his course across the Atlantic. After attempted mutiny, a submarine got her.	Obvious
BLUE PLATE SPECIAL Damon Runyon (Stokes: \$2.)	Short Stories	More about Broadway's humorously human guys and dolls, written as a mug would write them.	B'way & 42nd
THE HARVESTING Irving Bacheller (Stokes: \$2.)	Romance	The story of the young man who assumed responsibility for his old man's crime. "North Country" setting.	Oke
THE RED TIGER Don Skene (Appleton-Century: \$2.)	Farce	The <i>Herald-Tribune</i> sports writer spins one about the large but timid young man whom boxing's sharpest-shooting manager built into a heavyweight champ. It's funny.	Cauliflower
NEXT YEAR'S ROSE Diana Patrick (Dutton: \$2.)	Romance	Cinderella makes the grade.	Ladies only
SINISTER EDEN Brian Cotterell (Lippincott: \$2.)	Romantic Adventure	The hard-boiled skipper, his crack-pot mother, the kidnapped gal, treasure, murder, and hurricanes all in a South Sea palm-tree set.	Hashish