

Southern Traditions Look to the Future

CULTURE IN THE SOUTH. Edited by W. T. Couch. Chapel Hill, N. C.: The University of North Carolina Press. 1934. \$4.

Reviewed by JONATHAN DANIELS

FROM bleak board cabins along the roads of dust and clay and sand in the eighties and nineties, the farmers of the South went to school houses and lodge halls to form Farmers' Alliances, to turn into Populists, and to put to rout the Confederate brigadiers who captained the South's solid democracy. There were more cranks than intellectuals in the Populist ranks, more angry men than wise ones, but they broke Southern complacency in native demand for reform. They failed. Their failure left the South for three decades without a social or a political philosophy save that of taking what came, which was generally pretty bad, and blaming the Civil War, the "niggers," and the Republicans for everything from malaria to miscegenation.

The modern South has slumbered undisturbed unless the so-called progress of the twenties, when bonds were swopped for roads, and acres were cut up into lots, and chambers of commerce offered cheap labor and low taxes in exchange for mills, be called the expression of an awakening. Actually it was the reverse of thinking. But it engendered thinking. From Nashville it brought a thoughtful protest in a well-modulated Southern voice which in academic language urged the South to spurn the "Northern" thing called industrialism and return to the old faith of an agrarian people. These neo-Confederates undertook to state Southern culture in terms of Southern tradition but they failed to touch the South because they misunderstood both the aspirations and the facts of the great body of Southern life. For W. T. Couch in "Culture in the South," thirty-one Southerners, including one or two of the Nashville sect, have stated these facts and aspirations better than they have ever been stated before. This is so because of, and not despite, the fact that their statements are almost as diverse as their number.

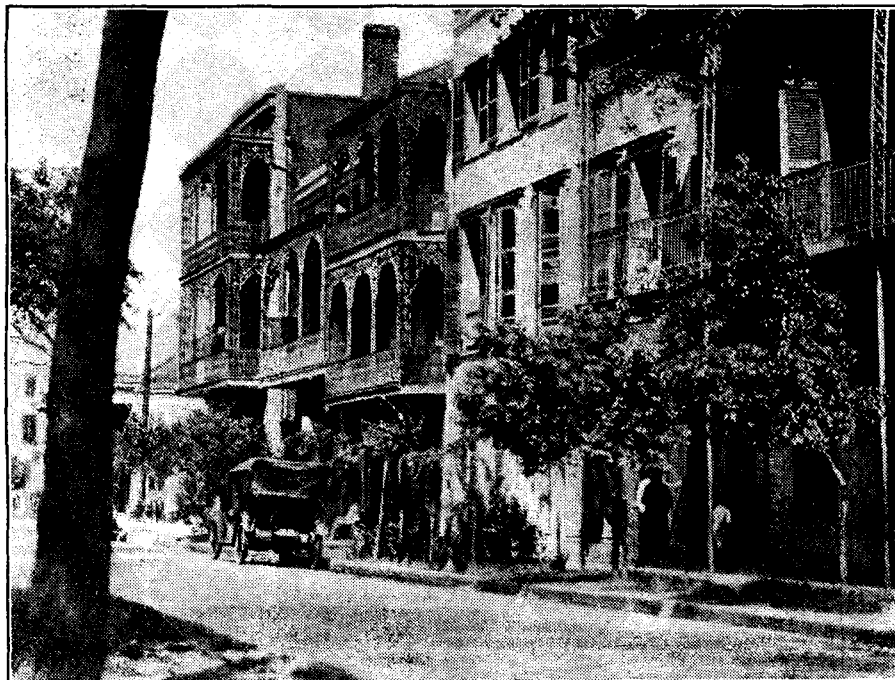
There is no classical attitude in the majority of these essays. There is rather both the dogmatism and the determination of the reformer. Their heritage is more nearly that of the Populists than the Confederates. For Broadus Mitchell, with his eyes on the future, the plantation system of the past and lingering present was a pond in which there were no currents. "Organic matter decayed, and a miasma hung above the surface," and "Whatever industry killed should, by comparison with social change elsewhere, have perished before." Other writers speak with a similar vehemence of the *ancien régime* and of the tenant farming which followed it, but at the same time and with an equal zeal they condemn the evils of low wages, mean housing, and industrial overlordship which have marked the growth of in-

dustrialism below the Potomac. Without choice between the land or the factory, they cry the need for reform in both.

Many of the twenty-eight men and three women who here speak their sharp dissent from Southern complacency have been speaking individually through all the last decade when the poverty-stricken South thought that it was rich. Here for the first time they speak together. Charles W. Hansell, outlining the Southern heritage, concludes, with what might serve as a thesis for the book, that whatever the future of American life may be, the Southern people will share it. Rupert B. Vance describes the land which is the South and Josephine Pinckney provides the note of nostalgia for the past which serves to emphasize that most of those who follow her are not only ready but eager for the future. With the past well damned, they demand a future of social justice, collective economic control, better education, more livestock, and more libraries. They speak in truth more of the times than of the South. Their regionalism is purely geographic. It is their problem and not its solution that is Southern. Whatever else they may be, most of them show themselves as the heralds of the up-and-coming South not in terms of mills but of men. There is little sympathy among the majority of these for Miss Pinckney's suggestion that the South's "alleged laziness and shiftlessness" may save her in the conflict between "her ideal of fine living" and the "forces of steel and electricity" and standardization. Donald Wade's expression, anent Southern literature, of his hope that the South will go back wisely from a loud present to a quieter past, is utterly lost in the noise of demands for social and economic reform.

To this diversity of attitude, Mr. Couch has deliberately added an almost too wide diversity of subject which results in occasional repetition by writers dealing with closely related fields. Every phase of Southern culture is presented from farming to folk-songs, from the fine arts to murder, which in the South, innocent of DeQuincey, is not practised as a fine art. Well informed contributors have drawn the portraits of the various Southern types and classes of Southern society, and Clarence E. Cason provides in "Middle Class and Bourbon" some fine pages of merry satire which enliven the all-too-serious tone of the book. The only non-Southern contributor, A. N. J. Den Hollander, a young Dutchman, has written an excellent essay on the myth of the Southern poor white. Mr. Couch himself has devoted his own contribution to the Negro. Excellent as it is, one cannot help wishing that as editor he had devoted his energies to giving, beyond his brief preface, greater form, interpretation, and coherence to the other essays he has gathered. The reader would have welcomed a helping hand on the long road through the many facts and opinions presented with such diversity of manner and authorship.

Jonathan Daniels is editor of The Raleigh News and Observer.



A STREET IN THE VIEUX CARRÉ, NEW ORLEANS
From "Romantic America" by E. O. Hoppé (Westermann)

Tremendous Trivia

ALL TRIVIA. By Logan Pearsall Smith. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1934. \$2.

Reviewed by DON MARQUIS

THERE are no trivial things; but those which seem trivial, lack interpreters. Planets pivot upon atoms. That tumble-bug, kicking his ball of dung down the garden path, is as important as a Demi-Urge propelling a sun across space. Do not tread on that ant . . . he may be a champion ant, set on by the gods to eat down some prodigious, imperial marble city. There . . . be careful! You have broken that filament of cobweb with your inquisitive nose . . . and now what will the Deity do? The Deity planned that particular thread and put it there to strangle a burly empire to death, and you have sneezed your way right through it. Unless you are more heedful, you cannot go for any more walks with Logan Pearsall Smith.

As Mr. Smith walks, the universe about him swells or shrinks, grows diaphanous or solid, with the pulsations of thought in his mind. Sometimes God leans down from heaven and shouts to a taxicab not to run over him—because he is God's chosen one, God's precious lamb. Sometimes the fiend bowls him down the slopes of hell, with a recollection. He is a little bit in doubt himself, from moment to moment, as to what his Self is. Perhaps, like everything else, his Self is really only an illusion. He is curious about his Selves, as well as about everything else. One day he followed one of his Selves. We quote:

I sometimes feel a little uneasy about that imagined self of mine—the Me of my faydreams—who leads a melodramatic life of his own, out of all relation with my real existence. So one day I shadowed him down the street. He loitered along for a while, and then stood at a shop window and dressed himself out in a gaudy tie and yellow waistcoat. Then he bought a great sponge and two stuffed birds and took them to lodgings, where he led a shady existence. Next he moved to a big house in Mayfair and gave grand dinner parties, with splendid service and costly wines. His amorous adventures among the High-up Ones of this Earth I pass over. He soon sold his house and horses, gave up his motors, dismissed his retinue of servants, and went—saving two young ladies from being run over on the way—to live a life of heroic self-sacrifice among the poor.

I was beginning to feel encouraged about him when in passing a fishmonger's, he pointed at a great salmon and said, "I caught that fish."

It is a temptation to quote and quote and quote from Mr. Smith's latest book, "All Trivia." If he ever wrote anything that isn't quotable, he didn't publish it. He has discovered—or rather, he must have been born with the knowledge—that levity is the most important quality in the cosmos. For levity is wings. When the weight, the gravity, the terrible heavy solidity, of the social order seems about to bear down upon him and crush him out of existence, with a twitch and flicker of his pinions he darts from under the impending crash, and a moment later you see him perched shimmering above the avalanche, like a dragon-fly which has just escaped an earthquake.

He is at once poet, philosopher, and humorist. But you can't take him to pieces like that and analyze and catalogue the parts, for he is above everything else a rare individual. And his style—ye gods! how the man can write. He wraps his subtleties up in the cover of a most deceptive simplicity of manner.

I am minded, as I read some of his brief stories, of the anecdote of the negro who was an expert with the razor. He cut a man's head off so neatly and quickly that his victim didn't know, for a moment or two, that anything had happened; and made some comment to the effect that nothing had. "Just wait till you try to move your head," retorted his executioner. I tackle one of Mr. Smith's innocent-looking little fables, and enjoy it, and chuckle over the graceful criticism of humanity in general—and it is a minute or two before I realize that I have been run through the heart by a Cyrano-swordsman who was, after all, doing something more than merely making a ballade with a foil in his hand. But he is too much

the assured master ever to allow his social criticism to become ill-natured. He kills you politely; and with the courteous appearance of slaying himself; he attacks no one but himself, and if you wake up to find yourself dead also, pierced by the same stroke, you feel that Mr. Smith rather regrets your death than otherwise. Your vanity and life were just there, where that particular thrust went through, and in a way invited the steel; and the whole thing is regrettable, but what are we going to do about it?

All his effects are produced with that masterly economy which marks the technique of the mature and controlled artist; and out of a hundred-word essay of his I get more of the sense of the intricacy, the beauty, the bewilderment, the mingled despair and victory of human existence, than out of many a three-hundred-thousand-word novel, announced with the thunder of drums and the clamor of trumpets. These "Trivia" are, in reality, "tremendous trifles." For he penetrates into the secret chambers of the mind and captures the shifting moods and movements of the psyche which are in reality the hidden springs of human life and action.



GORDON SINCLAIR
With Native New Guinea Boys

Broadway in Borneo

CANNIBAL QUEST. By Gordon Sinclair. New York: Farrar & Rinehart. 1934. \$2.50.

Reviewed by WILLIAM DOERFLINGER

WISE-CRACKING his way through the oblivious East from New Guinea's "Voodoo Valleys" to Borneo and Siam, thence to Burma, India, Baluchistan, and the Khyber hills, Gordon Sinclair has found more than the human ogres and other social extravaganzas which were his immediate quarry. "Cannibal Quest," though it seems to have been planned as a glorified "Believe It or Not," repeatedly gets beyond its own sensationalism to provide graphic and enlightening descriptions. The rapid-fire vernacular of Broadway is a lingo refreshingly new to travel writing, and as handled by this young Toronto news-chaser it often expresses the truth in trenchant terms.

Here is the West giving the East the once-over. Never the twain shall meet, but in Mr. Sinclair's case their transitory contact makes for novel, interesting reading. His impudence is rampant but clear-sighted. Emphasis in the book is on details, an entertaining assemblage of trail-side wonders, while the broader pattern of the author's wandering is veiled in cheerful insouciance. Mr. Sinclair is not an explorer. Traveling on luxury liners, on river freighters, on camels' backs, he has strolled through the East of the 1930's, which is the dawn-lit end of the earth no longer, for the earth, where inhabitable, has no longer any ends. He notes that in the Caves of the Dentists in Bangkok, where brilliant designs are drilled into Siamese clients' front teeth, our own Mickey Mouse is one of the favorite embellishments.

Mr. Sinclair has acted none too soon. Gather ye cannibals while ye may!

The BOWLING GREEN

"Effendi"

(FRANK NELSON DOUBLEDAY, 1862-1934)

"EFFENDI" (the nickname was Kipling's coinage, suggested, of course, by the initials) suited him perfectly. It had the quality of affectionate intimacy, but no one was likely to use it prematurely; and one did not forget that the word is a title of respect. All, whether editorial cubs or the most irreverent inkstained printer in the press-room, loved him for his humor, his easy masterful way, but respected him also with a little something of awe. The good old monosyllable *big* is the word that comes first to mind. He really was an effendi. In his office at Garden City there used to be a photograph of him taken in the burnous of an Arab chief. How well he looked the part: the tall, athletic figure, the bronzed face with its fine eagle nose, the brilliant eyes. It was always a thrill for us youngsters when we saw him coming into the office with his long swinging stride. One was instantly aware of power. The sound of the bindery machines on the floor below seemed to move with steadier rhythm; everything began to co-ordinate a little faster, a little smoother. People began going in and out of the big room in the corner, and there was an exciting feeling that things were doing. If I could just give you an impression of the strong, unhurried and yet unstoppable way he used to come down the aisle you would get some notion of the man. He seemed to gather speed and force (but never mere *hurry*) as he got near that corner room. He always came in as though some idea was urgent and motive in his mind, something he wanted to do promptly. I used to think what a grand experience it would be to serve as his secretary for a while, to get some idea of his extraordinary gift of easy, calm achievement, his genius for human relations. He was himself a writer of much humorous charm. There was once a little book called *A Plain American in England*, published as by "Charles T. Whitefield," which even many of his own staff did not know was by him. It was delightful, dwelling upon phases of Anglo-American comedy which always amused him. He, no less than his partner, Walter Page, was one of the most valuable ambassadors of friendship the two nations have ever had. His insistence on his own plainness, rusticity, was very characteristic of so subtle a negotiator.

It was touching to see, among the flowers at his funeral the other day, a large floral replica of a book—from one of the departments at the Country Life Press, I expect. There was a good simple symbolism about that, like the old workmen or warriors who were buried with their tools and weapons beside them. It was an afternoon of brilliant sunshine and snow, and after the service at the church it occurred to some of us to go over and look at the sun-dial in the garden at the Press. Snow was crusted deep over it, but we rubbed it away; the bronze facsimiles of the old printers' marks were bright and clear. How surprised Aldus of Mantua would have been to find his own dolphin and anchor reprinted in that Long Island garden. And those of us who in one way or another had worked for Effendi and loved him couldn't help feeling that what would please him most would be for us to get back to town and sell some books. His passionate enthusiasm for the job never failed even in the long years of illness. George Seiffert remembers how, long ago, he was hustling to catch a train back to the city after the weekly conference at the Press. Effendi met him in the aisle. "Selling any books, George?" George, caught unawares, and modestly embarrassed, took refuge in jocular. "Once in a while," he said bashfully, and hastened

on. Effendi called him back. "Try all the while," he said.

Not only for his enthusiasm, for his organizing genius, but for his delicious humor The Boys loved him. There was a peculiar tenderness in the relation during these last years when the man we had known so strong, so unshakable, was broken down with long illness. Even then he would drive over to the Press every day; when he could no longer get out of the car members of the staff would go out to drive with him; his passion for every business detail never left him. During long drives he enjoyed dictating reminiscences of the various humors and crises of publishing. I wish I had available at this moment a copy of those *Indiscreet Recollections*, as he called them—a book printed in only a few copies for his immediate family. That, I remember telling him, was the true *Parnassus on Wheels*, for it was composed entirely in his famous Packard—which, he thriftily liked to remark, had run over 140,000 miles. Shrewd sense about money matters was strong in him as in all great men of affairs. He never forgot, in telling the story of the time when he and Sam McClure, a pair of young publishers, were offered the management of the famous Harper business, that the excited McClure interrupted him in the middle of a telephone call to Philadelphia which cost 90 cents.

Anecdotes of Effendi would be innumerable wherever publishers, booksellers or writers get together. Some of those anecdotes would concern famous names, for he had walked with greatness of many kinds. We used to think secretly, we young zealots of his renown, that in any company anywhere Effendi would be at once recognizable as extraordinary; and indeed it was so. Men of every sort had always recognized him as someone to tie to. He had hardly started his own business when President McKinley wanted him to print a book of his speeches—a fine way to lose money, and Effendi was shrewd enough to evade it. John D. Rockefeller told him his life story during games of golf. Andrew Carnegie advised him about his savings. Frank Norris read manuscripts for him. Rudyard Kipling wrote *Just-So* stories for Effendi's youngsters. (Doubleday had slept on a couch in Kipling's sitting-room at the Grenoble Hotel when Kipling was desperately ill in New York, so that he might not be disturbed.) A Prime Minister of Great Britain has testified to the lasting impression a meeting with Effendi made on him. Even while sitting in the chair at an Imperial Conference, he confessed, he found his thoughts wandering to a recollection of Frank Doubleday. But I am thinking now of the love and admiration he inspired in those who worked closest to him and who saw him in the full gusto of his power. He had also a delicious skill in pricking bubbles that needed bursting. I remember once, long ago, going in (after secret indignant brooding) to tell him that I really thought a raise in

salary was disgracefully overdue. I had fermented the matter in private (it was very serious to me) until I was probably a bit incoherent, but he listened patiently. When there was an opportunity he asked how much I was getting. I told him. "Yes," he said blandly, "there must be something wrong if you haven't made yourself worth more than that." He must have passed on a good word, for a raise came through the next day, but the double significance of his comment remained memorable.

In his private office there was always a framed notice to the effect that a man can get a lot of good work done if he doesn't worry about who gets the credit for it. Lyman Stowe, another of his alumni, is reminded by this of a time when Effendi himself brought up some idea at the weekly editorial meeting. Everyone except Stowe was opposed to the suggestion. After the meeting Effendi called him in.

"Stowe," he said, "you seemed to be the only one who thought there might be a glimmering of sense in that scheme. Suppose you wait about six weeks and then bring it up again as your own idea. Maybe then we can put it over."

There was an office episode Effendi enjoyed recalling, one which I often think of when I find myself buried rather deep in papers. A young man of whom Effendi was very fond, son of one of his North Shore neighbors, had a minor post in the

Manufacturing Department which involved checking a great many orders, estimates, job schedules, etc. It so happened that the shortest path to Effendi's own office led past Billy P's desk, and Mr. Doubleday was always annoyed by the enormous mass of papers there. The Effendi was a great believer in cleaning up one's desk before going home, and finally he mentioned the matter. He did it in his usual oblique way: he took Billy into the private office, pointed to his own desk, which was clear of all debris, and remarked that that was what a desk should look like. But Billy, a young man of thoughtful disposition, always liked to rationalize everything with a little argument. "Yes, Mr. Doubleday," he said, "but you forget the volume of work that passes over my desk." Effendi used to continue the story by insisting that one evening, coming by after Billy had gone home, he swept off all the floating papers, deposited them in a drawer in his own room, and waited to see what would happen. He used to affirm that everything went on just the same and Billy never knew the difference. This, however, I do not quite believe.

Effendi always had his own singularly humorous way of going after what he wanted. When it didn't work he was just as much amused as when it did. I've been told of the time when he wished to dismiss a private secretary without having to tell him so in so many words. He dictated a letter to the man himself suggesting the advisability of his resignation. The victim took it down without comment, but replied with another letter, duly sent through the mail, insisting on his merits and the desirability of his remaining. I believe he left eventually; but Effendi always enjoyed audacity that had some warrant of ability behind it.

An old incident dating from his days at Scribner's was very typical of his ingenious stratagems. When he was the young manager of *Scribner's Magazine* he was disturbed by a series of articles on philosophy by William James which the editor

gave first position in the magazine every month. Doubleday thought them too heavy for the lead-off position; he was fighting hard, as always, for large distribution, and hankered for some more popular feature. His protests did not seem to have any effect, so one day he cut out a particularly solid paragraph of Professor James's text and pasted it in his hat. He began leaving his hat around where he thought Mr. Scribner would see it. Perhaps Mr. Scribner did see it, but with good old-fashioned gentility believed that what another man carries inside his hat is his own affair. But finally, as they were going out to lunch one day and the inside of the hat was carefully exposed to Mr. Scribner's view, he could restrain himself no longer.

"Doubleday," he said, "what on earth have you got in your hat?"

This was the young manager's moment of triumph. "I'll show you," he said, and held out the passage from Professor James. "That's the kind of thing you expect me to sell on the front page of *Scribner's* every month." Mr. Scribner read carefully some passage or other on the *Validity of Conscience* or the *Ontology of Being*, and admitted that perhaps it was not good editorial strategy.

Effendi was really the first of a new era in book publishing—which he visualized foremost as a business, not merely as a dignified literary avocation. He realized, perhaps more clearly than any other man, that the possibilities of book distribution have hardly been scratched. He developed the Mail Order and Subscription phases of the business to remarkable dimensions. Against much opposition and advice he moved his business 20 miles out into the country to secure space and attractive working conditions; he repeated the same brilliantly successful experiment when he became majority owner of the famous Heinemann imprint in England. He was inexhaustible in fertile schemes for larger distribution. The idea that publishing should be essentially an intelligently conducted commerce, not a form of aesthetic bohemianism, appealed strongly to his authors. He was, I think, the first publisher anywhere to submit to his authors royalty statements checked and substantiated by outside accountants. He developed a successful chain of his own bookstores as laboratories of selling. He was frequently under fire from the Trade for his experiments in new directions, but I think he firmly believed that every form of book distribution is ultimately a repercussion of benefit. No man was ever more enthusiastic in his heart for fine things; he dreamed night and day of a List which would be the greatest ever put together. When a group of de luxe French binders found the going too hard in New York he moved them bodily out to Garden City to do special jobs of beauty. Years ago, before the name of Joseph Conrad was known to more than a few critics, he was contributing a monthly stipend to keep Conrad writing—and this long before any of Conrad's books were under his own imprint. It was his young enthusiasm that first got all Stevenson's books together under the Scribner name. On his own list, to speak only of the greatest, there were three for whom his service can never be forgotten—Kipling, O. Henry, and Conrad. Those are his classics.

And now, as he would say when talk began to run overlong, let's get back to work.

P.S. I was late with this copy and was hastily reading it over as I came downtown in the subway. I looked up and saw a girl carrying a book—a book that has Effendi's name on its back and which would never have been written but for him. And that, I thought to myself, is the great publisher's real epitaph. Many thousands, to whom his name may mean little, yet carry it round with them. It seemed symbolic of the endless way in which our trade, though small in figures, interweaves human lives and can even move the globe itself. It was that "dynamite and wildcats" (a phrase of his own) which he felt in the publishing business, and in which he took more manly joy than any man I have known.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.



F. N. DOUBLEDAY