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## Rewriting History

MERIWETHER LEWIS OF LEWIS AND CLARK. By Charles Morrow Wilson. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co. 1934. \$3.

Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS

WESTERN biography is a rich field, but it has seldom produced anything so remarkable as this. The book well merits the term astonishing. It is full of astonishing new discoveries, astonishing reversals of earlier judgments, astonishing twists and variations in previously accepted history, and astonishing bits of rhetoric. It leaves the present reviewer breathless. Mr. Wilson observed, as others have done, that no biography of Meriwether Lewis existed. Others have been deterred by the circumstance that data for such a biography—outside the well known story of the Lewis and Clark expedition, now exhausted by scholarship—is painfully meagre. But he boldly plunged into his task—and what a plunge! There are chapters which read like a novel; if not as well written as most novels, they are just as full of exciting invention. There are other chapters which, to those who know a little Western history, come like a priceless work of humor. We close the book feeling that we have been treated to a delightful extravaganza. And yet the publishers, as well as one or two unwary critics, have apparently regarded it as authentic biography.

Mr. Wilson's boldness demands admiration. Any other author who set out to contradict all previous authorities in his field would proffer a few footnotes to substantiate his statements; but he disdains mere documentation. Other writers have begun by saying that Meriwether Lewis's mother was named Lucy; here she is Ann. Other writers have it that his father died in 1781; here he dies at some date before 1779. Other writers tell us that young Meriwether passed some five years of his boyhood in Oglethorpe County, Ga., an interesting experience; but Mr. Wilson never takes the lad out of Virginia. Other writers have him studying under the Rev. Matthew Maury, who teaches him some science; our present author merely places him in "Professor Tally's Latin Academy." We are told by other authors that his mother had soon married John Marks, who died when Meriwether was about eighteen; but Mr. Wilson is speaking of "the widow Lewis" long after he reaches that age. Thus the story runs till the fateful time when Meriwether heard that his friend and protector Thomas Jefferson had been elected President of the United States. According to previous writers Lewis was at Detroit when he learned this news; but Mr. Wilson places him at a fort away over on the Mississippi, not far from the site of Memphis.

Then, of course, came Meriwether Lewis's summons to Washington. There is material for a good chapter on the months he spent in the White House; and we look forward to a treatment of the young man's relations with the President, his impressions of Randolph, Madison, Monroe, Burr, Marshall, and other political figures, and his acquaintance with Tom Paine and Joel Barlow. But our author does better than this. He fills whole pages with an account of the wild, romantic affair between Meriwether Lewis and Theodosia Burr Alston, an episode hitherto ignored by history. It seems that Theodosia liked cockfights and hunting-parties; that she and Meriwether met at a White House dinner given to "the British Ambassador" (curious that most histories defer the arrival of a British Ambassador till 1893); and that thereafter the two young people, ignoring Theodosia's husband, were inseparable. Again there is a total lack of references to sources. This is the more regrettable because the affair is apparently ascribed by Mr. Wilson to the spring of 1802, at least in its acuter stages; and there is extant a volume of Aaron Burr's correspondence which shows that he was alone in Washington that spring, and writing long letters to Theodosia in South Carolina with her husband! The same letters, with plenty of other evidence as well, indicate that Theodosia was genuinely attached to her husband.

The most thorough study of the Lewis and Clark expedition yet made is, of course, the large two-volume work on "The Trail of Lewis and Clark," published by Olin D. Wheeler in 1904. It is unfortunate that Mr. Wilson, as the evidence of both his text and bibliography shows, was deprived of the assistance of this book, as well as of the researches of such men as Dr. Elliott Coues. His inquiries sometimes led him to conclusions which are novel, and it would be interesting to know his reasons for setting down statements at

wide variance with theirs. But again he eschews footnotes, and treats conflicting statements with silent disdain. Perhaps his originality is most striking when he comes to the tragic story of Meriwether Lewis's death. Everyone knows how, when governor of Louisiana Territory in 1807, Lewis set off on an official errand from St. Louis to Washington; how, accompanied by a half-bred Spaniard and a negro, he rode along the Natchez Trace; how at a miserable little inn about sixty miles southwest of Nashville he put up for the October night, and how next morning he was found dead. Mr. Wheeler, who made an extensive study of the evidence, and Miss Louise Kellogg, an equally careful student, alike reach the conclusion that he was murdered. He had no motive for suicide, his Spanish companion was a highly suspicious character, his money was taken, and his watch was later recovered in New Orleans. But Mr. Wilson revives the old theory of suicide—suicide prompted by a deep melancholia. He writes in characteristic style, again without footnotes or other citations of evidence:

Here and there a horse's hoofs scraped through the fallen leaves. Winter would soon be taking the forests. Meriwether Lewis felt a strange burning sensation in his forehead. Pains like daggers of ice shot through his shoulders and back. John Neely named the ailment as long-gone malaria. Maybe it was... Maybe it was the first touch of death. The Virginian was changing his notions of death, all at once. Now he rather wanted it, wanted it worse than he had ever wanted it before—even more than he had wanted Theodosia Burr.

Perhaps it was suicide; perhaps Meriwether Lewis had a premonition of this biography.

## Persecution in Russia

ESCAPE FROM THE SOVIETS. By Tatiana Tchernavin. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1934. \$2.50.

THIS is a simple and evidently sincere account of the persecutions suffered by a little family which tried to stay in Russia and play the game according to the new rules; of the husband's imprisonment on Solovetsky Island in the White Sea, and the final escape of the husband, wife, and young son, through the forests above the Arctic Circle and across the border into Finland.

Both husband and wife, the former an engineer, the latter long associated with educational work, were at first sympathetic to the Revolution, and they contrived to keep afloat until 1930 and the heightened drives and "cleansings" which began about that time against the remnants of the former educated class. The husband was accused of being a "wrecker" and sent to Solovetsky, the wife also spent several months in prison, leaving their child, born in 1918, to shift for himself with the neighbors. Only last year, were they able to get together and to make their thrilling escape.

Mme. Tchernavin has written an authentic and vivid story of personal experience, which has its own freshness. She is "prejudiced," naturally, but whatever subjective over-accent may here and there creep in, every detail of her narrative has been lived over and over again by others in similar case.

## English Life in the Eighteenth Century

JOHNSON'S ENGLAND: An Account of the Life and Manners of his Age. Edited by A. S. Turberville. New York: The Oxford University Press. 2 vols. \$14.

Reviewed by HARRY H. CLARK

THIS handsomely bound collaborative work, parallel in format and plan to "Shakespeare's England," supersedes H. D. Traill's work as a history of social backgrounds for the period from 1734 to 1784. After Mr. Trevelyan's sketch of the age as a whole, there are twenty-six essays by distinguished authorities, mostly English, on the church, the navy, the army, exploration and discovery, travel, London life, town life, industry and trade, agriculture, poverty, crime and philanthropy, manners, sports, costume, taste, painting, architecture, house interiors, the drama, music, education, science, medicine, the law, authors, booksellers, the newspaper.

On the whole, it is to be feared that many readers will lay aside this very expensive work with a feeling of disappointment. The absence of chapters on philosophy, political theory, economic theory, literary theory (beyond the superficial chapter on taste), and philology, the absence of any thorough analyses of the thought of the deists, of Warburton, Butler, Middleton, Paley, Hume, Adam Smith, Bentham, Gibbon, Burke, and Sir William Jones, illustrates the fact that this account "of the life of a past age in all its varied aspects," as the editor describes the work, is conceived in terms which seem to give a very disproportionate emphasis to surfaces at the expense of intellectual motivations. Beyond the device of heading the individual chapters with relevant quotations from Johnson's writings, the work cannot be said to have a high degree of unity or focus. The materials do not seem to be fused or integrated into an ordered argument. Like so much contemporary history, this work is essentially a well written and accurate description of surface chaos.

If, however, it fulfils its avowed aim of treating the life of the age "in all its varied aspects," if it seems unduly unvaried in its disproportionate concern with surface chaos, if the growing conflict of conservative and radical ideas (in political, religious, economic, social, literary fields) which was to culminate in the French Revolution just four years after Johnson's death seems very inadequately presented, nevertheless its shortcomings can be remedied from other sources and we should be grateful for its many distinguished merits. It presents a mass of information in very readable form for those who are willing to "accept the limitations of contemporary vision." Many of the chapters are colorful, pictorial, and richly appreciative. One hundred and fifty-eight well-chosen illustrations supplement the verbal attempt to describe surfaces. The brief bibliographies at the end of each chapter are useful, although one misses critical annotations. The changing conditions relating to the agricultural and industrial revolutions are vividly and ably described. If supplemented on the subjects we have suggested, the work is of great value in suggesting the richness and complexity of the external life of this great period.

## The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
DESIRE TO KILL Alice Campbell (Farrar & Rinehart: \$2.)	Murder of rowdy English heiress at Parisian dope orgy pinned on sweet American (from Dixie) succored by nimble newspaperman.	Abnormality and decadence run gorily riot with a climax that knocks out the old optic. Sleuthing excellent.	Top-flight
DEATH ON THE OUTER SHOAL Anne Fuller and Marcus Allen (Dutton: \$2.)	Strange deaths of fishermen off Hammerhead Island stir local patriarch to a little investigating.	As mystery nothing extra but well worthwhile for background, plot, and exciting situations.	Unusual
MR. PARKER PYNE, DETECTIVE Agatha Christie (Dodd, Mead: \$2.)	Mr. Parker Pyne, happiness - consultant, straightens out marital upsets in London, solves a few murders on trip to Near East.	Unusual character of central figure pulls together loose collection of stories designed to keep Christie pot simmering.	Readable
THE CHINESE ORANGE MYSTERY Ellery Queen (Stokes: \$2.)	Fatality and philately (say it fast and you're sober) weirdly mixed but laboriously unscrambled by pair of Queens.	Corp had his clothes on backwards and everything else was in reverse—including the interest.	Not so hot

## Sir Wilfred Grenfell's History of Labrador

THE ROMANCE OF LABRADOR. By Sir Wilfred Grenfell. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1934. \$4.

Reviewed by ROYAL J. DAVIS

ONE does not think of Labrador as the crossroads of the world, but in these pages it seems no less. Indians, Eskimos, Vikings, French, and English seek its shores as if drawn by a magnet. They set up industries, have adventures, leave records. In 1802 the number of vessels on the Labrador coast was estimated as a thousand and the value of the annual export of codfish as a million dollars. But "the story of Labrador has always been like that of the sea, succeeding waves with high crests, and in between deep hollows." Few Indians are left, the Eskimo is vanishing, the Viking settlements came to an end in the fourteenth century, and even the codfish appear to be less numerous than formerly. There is always some novel development in Labrador, however, and its latest distinction is its attractiveness for tourists.

To the Moravian Brethren must be given the credit for the circumstance that there are any Eskimos left. They showed a common sense not always displayed by missionaries when they refused to work among the Labrador Eskimos until they received a land grant large enough to protect people who would settle around their stations from unscrupulous traders. "It would be better," they said, "to leave them ignorant of the Gospel altogether than to expose them to the dangers that would otherwise be involved." The thousand Eskimos living in Labrador today are on Moravian land. Still, one likes the story of the Eskimo who, at the first Moravian ceremony, the audience being deeply moved, exclaimed that he, too, believed very much but that what he wanted most just then was a knife. We hope he got it.

Labrador's massive scenery—its lofty, jagged peaks; its gorges and canyons, its immense treeless plateau—receives due attention as the first of the "pageants," ending with that of Dr. Grenfell's own forty years on the peninsula, which constitute this scientific, historical, and human volume.

## The Old Order

GENTLEMAN OF VIENNA: Memoirs of Count Wilczek. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock. 1934. \$3.

Reviewed by ARTHUR RUHL

COUNT WILCZEK was tall and handsome. He knew all the best people, lived all his life in surroundings of elegance and charm. A redoubtable runner and jumper as a youth, he duly went to the wars when the time came, fought with distinction, and in later years, varied his decorative existence in town or country-seat, with hunting, mountain-climbing, the collecting of antiques, and the encouragement of good works. He loved the Alps, his native Danube, people, good architecture, good food, and good wine. He disliked politics, finding the inevitable sharp practices hostile to his nature, and remained throughout his long, crowded, healthy, and happy life, the gentlemanly amateur. He was, in short, a great nineteenth century gentleman, of a sort which Europe will scarcely see the like again.

It is for what he was, rather than for what he writes—as writing—that the present generation will find interest in these recollections, for he was already past eighty when he dictated them to his daughter, Elizabeth, and they are published, she explains, without embellishment. The sidelights cast by the usual memoirs of statesmen and diplomats on past events will be looked for in vain; nor does the record suggest any curiosity on the Count's part as to social or economic forces, or the least suspicion that the sort of world into which he was born wasn't going to last forever. The interesting and significant thing is the picture gradually and unconsciously built up of—as matters now are—a veritable museum-piece of the charming and excellent personal side of the old European order.

Wilczek's reminiscences of the war of '66 between Prussia and Austria are more like memories of some sort of hunting expedition than of anything connected with the Great War. Every now and then he ran across family friends in the country through which they were campaigning and had time for good food and wine, and once, under fire, he stopped, though close to being killed in doing so, to gather in an

ancient Celtic sword he found in the grass and kept it in his castle, Kreuzenstein, ever after.

In his late forties, Wilczek organized several polar expeditions and had both danger and fun in the region of Franz Josef Land. He married happily at twenty-one and raised a large family. He knew Alexander Dumas well, and Franz Liszt, Johann Strauss, Wagner, and pretty much everybody else of his time. He organized Vienna's first boating-club, stroked his crew to victory one day before the Princess Schwarzenberg, drank champagne, rowed the Princess part of her way home, then went to the laundry-girls' ball at Ischl, and "danced merrily all the night through." He founded Austria's first Volunteer First-Aid Society, helped at the Messina earthquake, and did everything that a man of his age could do for his country during the Great War. He seems to have derived a maximum of satisfaction out of life with a minimum of harm to others, and he died peacefully in 1922 in Vienna, in his eighty-fifth year, in the house in which he was born and in which he celebrated his diamond wedding.

## Nine Makers of Modern Europe

NINE ETCHED FROM LIFE. By Emil Ludwig. New York: Robert M. McBride & Co. 1934. \$3.

Reviewed by R. GATEWOOD

WHEN individuals attain to the control of millions of men, their lives at once become the subject of valuations which are the more necessary as they are the more difficult to make. For the mists of legend obscure the fullness of their personalities and the pressure of power presents their traits in a deceptive relief. A clear perspective, however, is the best guarantee of a true understanding of their achievements and it is this service which Mr. Ludwig has attempted to perform for the nine European leaders sketched in this book.

They are a group as diverse as the politics in which they engage. First of them is Nansen, the Norwegian Stoic, who fought with a cold passion to rescue the expatriates of the World War, and whose earlier career as an explorer and professor was a constant dedication of himself to others. The rise of another professor, Thomas Masaryk, is traced from the humblest of beginnings to his successful creation of a new nation. The aloof Rathenau, brilliant organizer of German recovery, is drawn with a personal care that goes far toward explaining Nazi hatred of his principles; and the life of Motta is almost an idyllic picture of the Swiss lawyer, whose talent for compromise has been invaluable to the maintenance of the League of Nations. Much the same gifts and the same usefulness is to be found in the life of Briand, who is well suited to take his place beside these intellectuals as a "servant of the people."

More forceful are the "rulers of the people," all of them of proletarian origin. The first of these post-war dictators was Lloyd George, whose greatest achievement was not so much the management of English victory, but the equalization of English purchasing power which he accomplished as Chancellor of the Exchequer. He shares with Venizelos a mercurial quality that would tax the insight of any biographer; and indeed, in describing both Welshman and Cretan, Mr. Ludwig strikes an enigmatic essence which sometimes baffles him. Mussolini, however, he has known well and he engagingly portrays the vivid pride of the Duce. This Latin characteristic is in such strong contrast to the massive energy of Stalin that one could wish that Mr. Ludwig, following his favorite Plutarch, had added a short comparison of the two to his volume.

A few photographs might have given a more direct grasp of these outstanding figures, who both shaped the past and anticipated the future; this is especially needed, as Mr. Ludwig's flair for dramatic detail and for reconstructing dialogue is restrained throughout in order to fit the compact form of the lives. Yet these are not intended to be final assessments of greatness: they are rather straightforward impressions of statesmen whom the author has met face to face, some of whom he knew intimately, others whose careers he has long and acutely observed, and all of whom have had a hand in the making of modern Europe.

During the past year 10,933,203 copies of the Bible were circulated by the British and Foreign Bible Society, according to a report recently published in England.

## The New Books

### Biography

YOUTH IMMORTAL. By Emily Easton. Houghton Mifflin. 1934. \$3.

This is a life of Robert Herrick. Herrick is one of the most charming of English poets, but the events of his life were not of great interest. He was goldsmith's apprentice, literary man about town, and finally, for most of his long life, country parson. By his biographer's own account, nothing extraordinary befell him in any of these not very unusual circumstances; and by her account, likewise, there was nothing extraordinary in his inner life. She believes, indeed, that the poems to Julia trace a real and unhappy love affair, but beyond the poems themselves even speculation is very thin. Thus she writes:

To Elizabeth Wheeler, to Dorothy Keneday, and to Dorothy Parsons (the two Dorothy's may have been but one), to Mistress Pot and to Anne Potter (possibly the same person), Herrick wrote love lyrics in their own names. . . . These ladies he truly loved. One of them was his Julia: all of them may have been Julia at one time or another. Three true loves in a long life are not too great a strain on the belief in the sincerity of Herrick's passionate love.

When that is all that can be ascertained about the chief fact of interest in a man's life, the task of writing his biography might well be considered hopeless.

Miss Easton has concentrated upon Herrick's poems, as must have been done if the biography was to be written at all. She quotes so many that the book is almost a volume of selections, with a running commentary. Unfortunately she has

no special qualifications to undertake such a commentary. She betrays her entire want of scholarship by calling Saint Disstaff's Day "a saint's day known only through this poem," though there must be half a dozen common works of reference which explain that maidservants had a prescriptive right to steal one more holiday at the end of the twelve days of Christmas by hiding their distaffs on the seventh of January. Of criticism in any real sense there is almost none. The principal thesis which the author is concerned to develop is that Herrick's poetry was not obscene "except for the coarse and vulgar epigrams." Her statement is true enough; but it is questionable if anything is accomplished by showing that a man is not obscene, or not possessed of any other quality, except in the passages where he is so. On the whole, intending purchasers would do better to buy the collected poems of Herrick instead. B. D.

### Drama

THREE PLAYS. By John Dos Passos. Harcourt, Brace. 1934. \$2.50.

Two of the plays in Mr. Dos Passos's book, "The Garbage Man" and "Airways, Inc.," have already been produced. The first was presented in Cambridge and Boston by the Harvard Dramatic Club in 1925 under the title "The Moon Is a Gong," and the second was put on briefly by the New Playwrights Theatre at their little house in Grove Street, New York, in 1929. "Fortune Heights," the longest and probably the strongest of the trio, is now being considered for production both in this

(Continued on next page)

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