

socks," which came out in *The Idler* magazine, where it excited my youthful interest as deeply as did Booth Tarkington's "Monsieur Beaucaire" which appeared in the same periodical. Street, more than twenty years ago, took on the ungrateful task of reading plays for the Lord Chamberlain. He was not, as he used patiently and rather wearily to point out, the Censor of Plays. The "reader," who is appointed by the Lord Chamberlain, only acts as his adviser. Still, it is possible that George Street, who edited Congreve's plays, was not without influence; and we can probably see his influence in the greater freedom now enjoyed by the London stage—in the removing of the Censor's ban from such plays as Ibsen's "Ghosts," Brieux's "Les Avarés," Maeterlinck's "Monna Vanna," Harley Granville-Barker's "Waste," and Shaw's "Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet." Street was an essayist of rare and delicate quality. His output was small; and I suppose his best-known book is "The Ghosts of Piccadilly," a book in which a man of the nineteenth century combines exquisitely not only the urbanity of his own day, but the more formal civilization of the previous century, to which he seemed naturally to belong.

Looking for Stories

I FOUND NO PEACE. By Webb Miller.
New York: Simon & Schuster. 1936. \$3.

MR. WEBB MILLER has written a very readable account of how he was transformed from a shy farm lad into a star foreign correspondent. He is yet another of those foreign reporters who, because of journalistic talent, have been able to educate themselves in public. He confesses, being more candid than some others, that he was unfitted for the career. Nevertheless his success in scoops and his easy style enabled him to roam the world on behalf of the United Press.

The publishers announce that Webb Miller sought peace for twenty years and found none. Mr. Miller's book tells how he sought wars, riots, revolutions, murders, and executions and did find them. From the time he headed away from cub-reporting in Chicago and voluntarily observed the Villa campaign in Mexico he was on the track of anything but peace.

He writes entertainingly of his participation in most of the front page stories during this time. Among other exciting events, he covered the World War, the Riff campaign, the Gandhi troubles, and the Italian adventure in Ethiopia. Much of his tale has lost its news value with the passage of time but his personal angle can often still make stimulating reading. Despite our knowledge of the decline of democracy we can still be shocked in reading "about four-fifths of the world's area has fallen under some form of censorship."

Mr. Roy Howard contributes a chapter to the book giving the behind-the-scenes story of the premature armistice announcement of November 7. Like the rest of the book it is interesting not so much as history but in its revelation of the mechanism of news gathering and transmission.



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Biography

WANDERER FROM SEA TO SEA: A True Narrative of Modern Man in Search of His Soul. By Maarten Matisse. Harcourt, Brace. 1936. \$2.50.

There are two ways of reviewing this very interesting book which has been translated and well translated from the Dutch. It is an autobiography of a spiritual trend. A young Dutchman with the soul of a seeker, the eye of a painter, and the mind of a poet, in a flowing narrative vividly descriptive and full of charm, tells the story of a life which, regardless of its object, is crammed full of the most extraordinary contacts with people of all kinds but particularly the poor, the barbaric, and those hungry either for life

or for spirituality. Beginning with the tough adventures of a sailor-boy, he drifts off through the south of France, falling in love with a gypsy, and on among the Arabs and Jews of North Africa, whom he sees not as a tourist sees them but as a vagrant depending upon their hospitality. From there in search of his main objective he crosses Persia, mostly on foot, and so on into India where that variegated life again provides human contacts, many of them extraordinary. Thus the narrative from this point of view is a kind of picaresque romance excellently written and never dropping in interest. But the Matisse book is not a picaresque novel. It is a closely knit story of a modern, a Westerner, an artistic temperament who seeks to satisfy his spiritual craving by first-hand experi-

ence of the wisdom of the East. His quest finally takes him to Gurukula, a school of the Arya Samaja, a liberal sect which trains its pupils in the "pure spirit of the precepts of the Vedas and at the same time . . . in the sciences of the West." Here in this sylvan retreat at the foot of the Himalayas he knows pure happiness and a cessation of desire, but the Westerner dies hard in him and at the end he returns to Europe as a missionary of the truth he has found; he discovers in the chaos of contemporary Europe no place for his teaching, yet the struggle between spirit and matter is taking place there also; and it is with deep satisfaction that he finds that the serenity he had learned in the East can keep his spirit whole in the West.

There is much interesting pure information in this book as to the practice of Yoga, as to teachers in India true and false, and as to the Westerner's reaction to an Eastern ideal. But I think it will be read chiefly as highly original and highly picturesque biography of originality and some distinction.

H. S. C.

Fiction

JOHN DAWN. By Robert P. Tristram Coffin. Macmillan. 1936. \$2.50.

This novel opens at quarter before midnight, December 31, 1799, in the kitchen of Captain James Dawn of Merrymeeting in Maine. His wife is in labor upstairs, and James Dawn is determined that his son should not be born until after midnight—which the captain, who no doubt knew more of navigation than of mathematical paradoxes, erroneously regarded as the beginning of the new century. The assembled neighbors protest that he cannot be sure of such a thing, and he cries,


"I have a wager on it." He stood there, head and shoulders over them all in the tobacco smoke, holding his huge watch in his great fist. He was the only one whose hair was not white. He wore it natural. It shone golden in the firelight, drawn back and tied with a black silk ribbon.

The clock strikes twelve and the child appears, not altogether to the reader's surprise.

There could not be a more appropriate opening for the book, in spite of the fact that it necessitates a rather awkward flashback to get in the Revolutionary War; for the Dawns are all like this more fortunate King Canute, and if you like this incident you will like the book. They are all handsome and virile and lucky and picturesque. They win their fights and their women; Jacob Dawn, the founder of the family, licked the Tory squire before the Revolution. John Dawn, the boy born on New Year's Day, attained command of a ship at fourteen, in the War of 1812; and while foraging ashore in Devon was helped by a squire's daughter, a girl of twelve, promised to marry her, and four years later came back to keep his promise.

To include four generations of so adventurous a family in three hundred pages something has to be left out, and what is left out is characterization and plausibility. One cannot altogether escape

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