

course, he is one of those frantic patriots who consider Jim Farley, Joe Kennedy, and John L. Lewis communists. He suggests that part of the communist power in America stems from the "7,000,000 aliens and their dependents" living here, while the truth is that the present number of unnaturalized foreigners in the United States is only 4,300,000, and most of them are more conservative than Herbert Hoover or Patrick Cardinal Hayes.

Anticipating the importance of John L. Lewis in the next few years, Mr. Sullivan exerts himself to present him both as a near-communist and an ambitious seeker of power for the sake of power who uses labor to attain his personal ends. He does not know, or chuses to ignore the fact, that to a representative of the East St. Louis (Ill.) *Journal* the head of the C. I. O. recently made the following statement:

I had read and digested and disagreed with Marx long before many of my Socialist friends had heard of him. His ideas and policies, I believed, never had a place in America. And I still believe that. Those ideas grew out of conditions in Europe and many have had application there, but not in America.

Nor does Mr. Sullivan appear to know that Lewis was forced into his present challenging position by the problem of existence his United Mine Workers face in the America of 1936.

In short, while Dr. David's book, despite its above-mentioned shortcoming, belongs in every library, the place for Mr. Sullivan's volume, although it contains, as I say, not a few significant surface facts, is the nearest rubbish-can.

Popular Philosophy

GUIDE TO PHILOSOPHY. By C. E. M. Joad. New York: Random House. 1936. \$2.50.

THIS book, within its limits, for it deals only with a particular range of problems of philosophy, those that have to do with the nature of knowledge and with the scientific and idealistic theories of the world, is a real feat of popular writing. Without being historical, it presents the views of a number of historically famous philosophers, such as Kant and Hegel, in a manner that is comprehensible without too great over-simplification. Joad even undertakes a fairly successful chapter on A. N. Whitehead, and another on Marxian dialectical materialism. He is constantly argumentative, and mixes an occasional bad argument with the good, in a way that should arouse the reader's critical alertness. The book is not quite the masterpiece it has been proclaimed, but it is just the thing as a guide for the reader who is already interested in philosophy as a reasoned pursuit, but whose knowledge of the subject needs to be amplified and brought into order.

Oxford in Nigeria

THE AFRICAN WITCH. By Joyce Cary. New York: William Morrow & Co. 1936. \$2.50.

Reviewed by GEORGE DANGERFIELD

MR. CARY'S book, I am convinced at the moment, is one of the most readable novels I have ever read. It is, on the whole, the story of a very minor prince, educated at an English public school and at Oxford, who returns to his Nigerian state as a claimant to the throne, if you can call it that. He is full of the ideas which one is apt to pick up at a public school and at Oxford—education, enlightenment, good form, reform. It is unfortunate that the other claimant should be a painted Moham-medan who has apparently never heard of these ideas; it is unfortunate, too, that the English resident and his officials are inclined to think them unnecessary in a Negro. But then the author seems indifferent to them as well; to him, the arrival of a Negro prince with Oxford ideas is an incident no more remarkable in Africa than fever, and no more susceptible to remedy than magic.

This is a great relief: we are not to be preached to. The English people in this book are not serving any particular end—or rather such ends as they serve are purely personal. They are in Nigeria because they were bored somewhere else, or because they were curious, or because there was no better job for them. One or two, it is true, believe in medicine, one (but he is a German missionary) believes in God, and all of them believe in the superiority of the white man. But nobody serves a flag or a cause; and their existence, deprived of a past or a future, is a day-to-day affair, activated a little improbably by the author's plot.

The plot is highly complicated, very strenuous, and very unimportant in the sense that it illuminates no contemporary question. The important thing about the novel is that the people in it are so alive, so unimportantly and vividly alive. They are in love, they drink whisky, they play polo. A white girl (she is an Oxford don with advanced ideas) is rather too kind to Aladai, the Oxford prince; another white girl dances with Aladai by moonlight, which starts a scandal; and the Resident writes equivocal reports, and just occasionally somebody gets worried about the status of

the English in Nigeria. There is also a Wazir, a master of the horse, a girl half-burned for witchcraft, a pimp, and a whole seething, contemned, contemptuous native town.

What about the plot? It would have to be an ingenious one to bring order to this babel, and it is. There is war between the claimants: and Aladai (who has offended the English) gets mixed up with a lunatic convert, who hopes to please Jesus by feeding girls to a sacred crocodile, and with his witch sister, who starts a woman's war on the side. The women attack the English and the male principle with an indifferent but genial fury. Everything gets completely out of hand, and at the end all is as it was in the beginning.

Is there, possibly, a moral to be discovered here? Something about education, something about empire, something about how nice it would be if the nicer English stayed away from Africa? I don't think so. I doubt if you could even

venture an opinion whether the author is an important author or not. The progress of his book does a certain violence to one's ideas of fiction; it is a rambling sort of a book. But if it had been otherwise it would not have achieved what it does achieve so triumphantly—a portrayal of the immense, the passionately variety of a perfectly pointless existence. Do the English

and the natives really live this way in Nigeria? The author offers no assistance. He is writing, on his own confession, an imaginary tale about imaginary people, and the things that interest him are pride, fear, goodness, cruelty, obscenity, and fun. He is also deeply interested in the whites and the blacks and how they get on together: but his interest is not sociological, he has no point of view. It is probably very wrong of him to have no point of view; it is even more probable that, if he had one, he would have produced a very second-rate novel. I find his novel very soothing as it is; and when my head begins to ache with causes and doctrines, I shall take it down and read it again.



NIGERIAN DRAWINGS BY
C. LEROY BALDRIDGE.
From "White Africans and Black."

Mr. Nathan Reports His State of Mind

THE THEATRE OF THE MOMENT. By George Jean Nathan. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1936. \$2.50.

Reviewed by RICHARD LOCKRIDGE

AT agreeably frequent intervals, Mr. Nathan's shears go snip-snip along the pages of those periodicals habitually intrusted with his uncollected works. The paste brush swishes and for a time the Nathan typewriter clicks over some new tribute to Eugene O'Neill. Then off it all goes to Mr. Knopf, who receives it, I am sure, gladly, and a new report on Mr. Nathan's state of mind is available for those interested. Those interested must now, one guesses, number many thousands and can hardly fail to include all who are stimulated in any fashion by the theatre—the theatre which has for so long stimulated Mr. Nathan in so many fashions, bringing from him so many crisp yelps of dismay, so many indignant pish-tushes, and so frequent expressions of an undiminished devotion.

Those devoted to the theatre are, of necessity, impressionable and moody. Give them a bad year and they are sunk in deepest gloom, forecasting the end of all things and a determination to retire to the golf links. Treat them nicely, and their spirits soar. They recall that the theatre is "the gilded and sometimes golden toy of the arts, and it has been that for centuries on end"; remember that "it has behind it tradition and the memory of countless nights of thrill and beauty, and some of the greatest literature ever written, and a thick album of tenderly remembered personalities—and each year, whether it is healthy or whether it is ailing, it manages to recapture and to offer at least a snatch of its old glory." Thus Mr. Nathan, after a season when the theatre was healthy. Optimism arises which not even the "Moon Over Mulberry Street" can eclipse. And optimism is good for Mr. Nathan.

There was a time, not too far in the past, when Mr. Nathan seemed in some slight danger of outmoding himself. There was the day of "Since Ibsen," and then Mr. Nathan lodged himself a little awkwardly. It was difficult for his admirers not to suggest that he was then fighting battles already won; that most of the abuses and stupidities against which he was crusading with so much vigor were, if not downed, at least seen clearly for what they were by all to whom Mr. Nathan might address himself. He seemed, then, indeed, to be unaware that the prejudices which William Winter, *et al.*, sought to establish as rules were prejudices dismissed not only from the Nathan mind but from the minds of many other literate persons. His was the uncomfortable position of a reformer who has succeeded and not noticed it.

But that, it now appears, was only a temporary state. In "The Theatre of the Moment," Mr. Nathan neither fusses nor fumes. He is caustic only about humbug and insincerity. His preoccupation with obscurities from the Hungarian has abated and even his style is less mannered, while it retains its characteristic wit and crackle. He has, in short, achieved a book which is, much like the recent couple of seasons on which it is largely based, stimulating and tangy.

He has, for example, a chapter on the talking pictures which is incisive, entertaining, and altogether convincing. In enthusiasm he is equally generous; his analyses of Maxwell Anderson, Robert Sherwood, Sidney Kingsley, and others of our playwrights are sharp, intelligent criticism. He digs now and then at his confreres in criticism, and not always too fairly. (He has the habit universal among weekly and monthly critics of attributing to all daily reviewers opinions expressed by one or two of them. This habit provides the weekly writer with a pleasant buildup.) But they can always dig back. He continues to admire "Within the Gates" and "Richard of Bordeaux" with an intensity which remains bewildering. He has discovered a new young actress of transcendent beauty and his enthusiasm ripples. His book is characteristic, topical, and his best in several years.

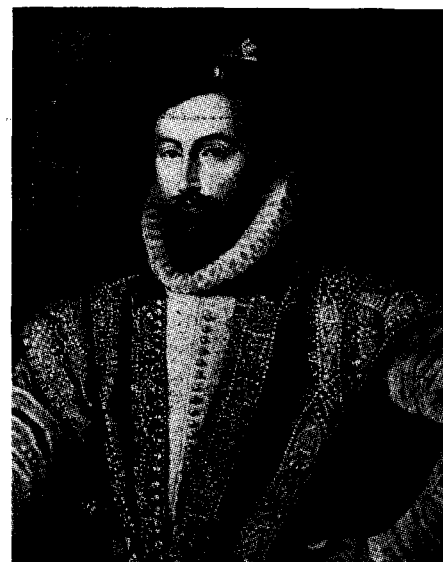
Richard Lockridge, dramatic critic of the New York Sun, is the author of "Mr. and Mrs. North," recently reviewed in these columns.

Last Man of an Era

SIR WALTER RALEIGH: Last of the Elizabethans. By Edward Thompson. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1936. \$4.

Reviewed by MILTON WALDMAN

SIR WALTER RALEIGH is an incredibly hard man to write about because, as Mr. Thompson remarks in his Preface, he is so very difficult to believe in. There is no discernible pattern, no even faintly guiding purpose. He lived a full half dozen lives, all of them brilliant, all dazzlingly unsuccessful. The pieces refuse to fit together. What battles did this distinguished soldier take part in? Why did the sailor universally acknowledged to be Drake's heir never receive an important independent command? Which were the verses that this friend of Marlowe and Spenser, and almost their peer, actually wrote? What has become of the colonies that the first of English imperialists attempted to settle? The answer in each case is ignorance, dispute—or simply nothing. He was one of the three great party leaders of his time, yet he never was admitted to the Privy Council where so many commonplace lesser men sat. He attempted a gorgeous feat of exploration and only



SIR WALTER RALEIGH

succeeded in getting himself beheaded for trespassing on other people's land.

Perhaps the answer to his life is the one implied in Mr. Thompson's subtitle: "the last of the Elizabethans." A man laboring under the oppression of mortality, he tried to squeeze the whole activity of a great turbulent era into his own single lifetime. The era ended before he did and he was left stranded—"a man," to paraphrase his own lovely epithet during his trial on his dead mistress Elizabeth, "whom Time had surprised." The age of King James had no use for restless geniuses, for gallant failure; it preferred sober, cautious fellows who knew on which side their bread was buttered. James almost realized the fond wish of the Roman Emperor who lamented that his people had not one neck: by removing Sir Walter Raleigh's head he was able to decapitate with a single stroke of the axe the age of his illustrious predecessor.

Basing himself upon Edward Harlow's study of "Raleigh's Last Voyage," Mr. Thompson produces a new and extremely plausible account of what really happened during the most obscure episode in his hero's life, the second voyage up the Orinoco. His lieutenant Kemys violated orders, went twenty miles beyond the destination to which he had been sent, became involved in the fatal fight with the Spaniards which caused his own suicide, young Raleigh's death, his master's execution. Mr. Thompson writes with a scholar's thoroughness in a poet's prose. When one has finished one knows not only the story of Raleigh's life in true perspective and against a full background, but also what the author's predecessors in the field (those entitled to an opinion, at any rate) made of it. To the "half dozen good lives of Raleigh in two centuries" Mr. Thompson has added a worthy successor.

Milton Waldman is the author of a life of Sir Walter Raleigh and other historical studies. His book on Catherine de Medici is shortly to be published.