

# The BOWLING GREEN by Christopher Morley

## "Purely Original"

I SAID this was going to be a good winter for reading poetry, but I hardly expected to begin the New Year with J. Gordon Coogler. The Duke University Library kindly lent me its precious copy of *Purely Original Verse* (Columbia, S. C., 1897) and as I promised to return it promptly I began studying it at once. Perhaps, since this famous little tin treasury is now 40 years old, a modest anniversary should be celebrated. Mr. Coogler is best known for his famous lament—

Alas for the South, her books have  
grown fewer  
She was never much given to liter-  
ature—

but this is by no means his only jewel.

There was only one disappointment in seeing Coogler's book again after all these years. Tradition and hearsay, which gradually mould really bad poems into their final perfection of bathos, have long misquoted one of the bard's stanzas. It was a shock to me to find that the really superb couplet always ascribed to him (by envious Yankees):—

My feet are so tired, they must have  
rest:  
I'll pillow them on a maiden's breast

was never actually written. No, this was only somebody's mischief; what Coogler said was:—

How sweet when our lonely soul grows  
weary,  
And our tired feet need rest,  
To recline 'neath the shade of the wil-  
low tree,  
Pillow'd on a maiden's breast.

As a matter of fact anything that might seem like disrespect to the Sex was usually unnatural to Coogler's muse. As long as they conducted themselves as Southern gentlewomen, and particularly if fragile in constitution, nothing could excel the lugubrious lushness of his homage. (I can't help wondering if some epidemic, or imperfect drainage, may not have afflicted Columbia in the 90's; so extraordinarily many of the young women of his poems seem to have died rather. In this necrology of ill health we do not include the one who "came to her death by being run over by an electric car.")

The student of Coogler sometimes wonders whether the poet did not almost prefer these nymphs to perish, and so become a dulcet theme for recollection, than to pass into the innocent vanities of womanhood. How prompt, nay how tart, he is to rebuke the first symptoms of folly. *More Care for the Neck Than the Intellect* must have cost the idolater of

beauty a pang, but he was conscientious in reproach:—

Fair lady, on that snowy neck and half-  
clad bosom  
Which you so publicly reveal to man,  
There's not a single outward stain or  
speck;  
Would that you had given but half the  
care  
To the training of your intellect and  
heart  
As you have given to that spotless  
neck.

When the moiety of exposure decreases  
to a more modest one-third he is cor-



J. GORDON COOGLER

respondingly less bitter, and speaks (with more subtle disapproval) of the ballroom dancer

Two-thirds clad in garments rich and  
fair.

But he is not uncharitable. He knows their frailty. He knows what they're up against—

Alas! poor woman, with eyes of spark-  
ling fire,  
Thy heart is often won by mankind's  
gay attire;  
So weak thou art, so very weak at best,  
Thou canst not look beyond a satin-  
lined vest.

He broods, not unkindly, on the lady who said to him "I am now on the verge of womanhood; eighteen summers' old; but oh, how unsteady I stand!" Surely it was this periculous wabblor he had in mind when writing:—

There's a tide in the affairs of woman  
Which if taken at the eddy,  
Would make her life steady,  
And give her time to get ready.

There was never any doubt of Coogler's allergy to feminine charm, though his expression of it may sometimes have startled his lady friends, as he called them:—

On her beautiful face there are smiles  
of grace  
That linger in beauty serene,  
And there are no pimples encircling  
her dimples  
As ever, as yet, I have seen.

The offence here, surely, lay in the prudential "as yet." And if the current mode displeased him he was frank to say so. Thus he cried:—

You are not masculine or neuter,  
Neither of those genders;  
Therefore, I'd advise you to  
Pull off those suspenders.

This seems a little froward unless expounded by his note which says "It used to be the style for ladies to wear suspenders, or at least a good imitation of same."

I don't know whether it was this vein of rugged Hyrcan frankness, or dysentery and malaria, that cost Coogler so many sweethearts. Certainly, if his rhymes are veracious, they did seem to slip away. Even "Lassie," of whom he is precise to say they have bussed 500 times—

To kiss that lassie, I'll confess, 'twas  
then I did not loath,  
For I was young and she was fair, so  
please excuse us both—

even Lassie, he admits, is now making hay in "some sweeter meadow." But, setting aside the long list of obits, I think we find a clue in the "pretty brown-eyed girl, in the month of August," who asked him "to write a poem for her while she reposed." Can we not imagine the scene: the warm South Carolina dusk, the vine-hung porch, the drowsy hum of insects, the distant clank of old Mammy washing dishes in the summer-kitchen, and the intolerable tedium of J. Gordon? She "reposes" and he, enchanted by this flat-tery (both astute and confiding) stands beside the hammock or rocking chair benumbed with doggerel. Not to this day, I expect, does Mr. Coogler realize why the nap lasted until it was time to go home.

Smooth-tempered fellow, he was never really annoyed unless his Muse was aspersed. The heroine of the enigmatic ballad *That Upper Western Room* probably was cold to some doleful iambics—

I hate that upper, western room  
In which a cruel lady sat;  
Ah, yes, I feel toward that room  
As the mouse t'ward the hungry cat.

Oddly enough, after inauspicious beginning in this poem our friend very nearly

crosses the shadow-line between tripe and real verse—

I hate the memory of those hands  
That used to curl that raven hair;  
Ah, yes, I hate it, for they moved  
As if no other hands were fair.

He must have been really angry; this poem comes within a breath of saying something. And as for the cruel lady, I see her there, enjoying the sunset, and not unwarrantably fed up by her troubadour. But the most lucid ember of Coogler's indignation is *In Memorial*. He explains it: "To a young lady who sought publicity by attempting to belittle in public print a poem by the author, entitled *Beautiful Snow*.—She has never been heard from through the press since." Of the quatrain itself, only two lines are memorable; alas that their élan did not carry through—

She died after the beautiful snow had melted,  
And was buried beneath the slush—

Here is one of the heroic torsos of American verse; a Venus without arms, a Victory without wings. Will not someone add the two lines it desiderates, and let it belong to the ages? . . . a tentative suggestion, to go on with—

But as my shoes were so thinly welted,  
I staid indoors and said Tush.

The devotee of Coogler (there must still be some; the *New York Sun*, years ago, was his particular fogleman, joshing him with delightful serio-comic reviews, which he quite innocently reprinted in his books) will realize how few phases of his complex and morbid character are here mentioned. Coogler on *Fallen Women* would be a rewarding theme; Coogler on *Perseverance* also. He was pretty stern with his critics sometimes—

Oh, jealous heart that seeks to belittle  
my gentle muse,  
And blow your damnable bugle in  
my lonely ears;  
You'll lie some day in expressing your  
recognition  
Of this very song you disowned in  
other years.

The appeal to Posterity is always a comfort, because none of us will be on hand to hear it sustained or denied. At any rate Coogler kept a stiff neck in his own generation—

You may as well try to change the  
course  
Of yonder sun  
To north and south,  
As to try to subdue by criticism  
This heart of verse,  
Or close this mouth.

This was the mouth which the *New York Sun*, in one of its engaging comments, described as follows:—

"Mr. J. Gordon Coogler has the eye of a falcon, the nose of a pelasgian, the mouth of a nightingale, the chin of a lark, and his jaw is melodious like a harp in flesh. His sentiments are as sound and his conjugations are as original as his lineaments are imposing. . . . J. Gordon

Coogler has often been called the Sir Edward Arnold of Columbia."

Coogler was a godsend to editorial pages all over the country, a generation ago. He was self-made in more senses than one: not only did he, scorning the venal embrace of publishers, "conduct his Muse all the way from the frowning heights of Olympus to the tender clasp of a half-medium job press," but, as he several times mentions, he had the privilege of naming himself. Until he was fourteen his praenomina were left blank—he was simply "Coogler"; at that age he was allowed to choose his own. I have always thought that "J. Gordon" was probably assumed in memory of Byron; the lad supposing that George was spelt with a J. Internal evidence in the text suggests that he was born in 1869, and if, as I hope, he is still with us, let him be reminded that few poets have given more unintentional pleasure. He does much to reverse the condition of which he complains—

From early youth to the frost of age  
Man's days have been a mixture  
Of all that constitutes in life  
A dark and gloomy picture.

I'm going to tell the editors of the new edition of Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations* that I think some Coogler should be included. He has always lived up to his motto "My style and my sentiments are MY OWN, purely original."

### A Visit to Jules Verne

An inquiry in the Green, some time past, as to Jules Verne's visit to the U. S., has brought us the following letter:—

In 1904 while on the road up to Paris, and just five years after I had spent nearly a year in Paris at medical work so that my French was reasonably good, I stopped off at Amiens and spent a couple of hours with Jules Verne.

Jules told me all about his visit to America. I think he stayed with us altogether only about a week, some time about 1884. When they asked him what he wanted to see he said above all Niagara Falls, though he also wanted to get to the Fenimore Cooper region.

After a while Madame Verne, his second wife, as I recall it, came in, and she monopolized the conversation and I went around to the city hall to see Puvis de Chavannes' murals.

JAMES J. WALSH, M.D.

### SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 146)

PHILIP FRENEAU.—  
"TO A HONEY BEE."

Welcome! I hail you to my glass.  
Yet take not, oh! too deep a drink,  
And in this ocean die;  
Here bigger bees than you might  
sink,  
Even bees full six feet high.  
Like Pharaoh, then, you would be  
said  
To perish in a sea of red.

## Peopling the American Past

(Continued from page 4)

tation of personality. The writer shows, as satisfyingly as anyone in these volumes, how greatness of achievement grew out of greatness of soul, and he does better than Vasari in illustrating greatness of soul by apt anecdote and pungent quotation. Of course the longer essays are likely to be the more readable. With more room, the authors can escape the tyranny of fact, can place men in the proper frame of reference, and can rise to philosophical and pictorial presentation. Thus we have robustly vigorous sketches of Charles W. Eliot and William James by Ralph Barton Perry; of Lee by Douglas S. Freeman; and of Tom Paine (wittily done) by Crane Brinton. The handling of Mary Baker Eddy by Allen Johnson lacks nothing in forthrightness.

But taken in the mass, the shorter essays are the more valuable part of this Dictionary; and this for a self-evident reason. However valuable the essays on Washington and Lincoln, Emerson and Whitman, Grant and Lee may be, it must be remembered that the libraries are full of books on these men. Other books are constantly being added. No student is at a loss to obtain material on their lives, work, and ideas. Even of men of the second rank biographies are usually obtainable with little effort. In fact, the writing of biographies of outstanding national figures is perhaps the one phase of scholarly or semi-scholarly effort in this country that is overdone. But the lesser figures—the personages who give us some eighty names under Brown or Browne, some sixty-odd under Jones, some seventy under Johnson and Johnston, and a much larger number under Smith—have in two instances out of three been unjustly neglected. Any delver into the past often finds himself facing a blank void when he tries to give these names shape and character. What is more, he sometimes does not know even where to look for the names. These small lives have in the aggregate had great results. Their interrelation with great lives is frequently part of the primary stuff of history, and if we do not understand them we cannot truly understand Jefferson, Emerson, or Lincoln. Articles upon them usually have to be specially compiled from old newspaper files, old manuscript collections, local histories, volumes of memoirs, and specially-sought family records. If such articles are scamped, the Dictionary will lose much of its utility.

Happily, in this work they have seldom been scamped. In each of these twenty volumes scores, in some volumes even hundreds, of small men and women for the first time take their due place in our history. Many who were unknown save to specialists spring into existence for everybody who cares to look them up. Even the specialist will be surprised at new figures in his field. Their work is for the first time adequately out-



lined. Often 750 or 1,000 words in these brief sketches has cost more labor than 5,000 words on a better known figure. In hundreds of instances we meet evidence that the writer, who received but a few dollars for his labor, searched out old manuscripts; in hundreds of others that he hunted up family survivors who held old records. The Dictionary has saved for us much historical material that would otherwise have been lost. One defect is to be noted in viewing these short sketches. The editors have not always insisted on full bibliographical information at the close for further research; and the inclusion of such information is important to students. It may often be the most important feature of a brief article. But the articles themselves are seldom perfunctory.

It is this huge array of second-rate people, each with some noteworthy relation to the general stream of the past, which gives these twenty volumes their richness. They populate the American scene. They illustrate its variety, energy, color, and scope as no history yet published begins to do. Take the letter W in the last two volumes. Under it appear the articles on Washington, Woodrow Wilson (excellently done by Charles Seymour), Noah and Daniel Webster, Walt Whitman, and other men familiar to every schoolboy. The careers of such men are in no danger of being forgotten or underrated. But the work of their alphabetical neighbors was all too likely to be overlooked. Here we meet Daniel B. Wesson, who was responsible for the Smith & Wesson revolver; Edward Noyes Westcott, whose "David Harum" sold more than a million copies; Joseph Wharton, the steel manufacturer, who did as much as anybody to fasten high tariffs on the unfortunate republic; Benjamin Ide Wheeler, who long governed the University of California in "somewhat dictatorial" fashion but gave way to a committee when the World War rendered him suspect of German leanings; Lewis Wetzel, the pioneer, who pioneer-like shot the good old Indian who released him from the stake; "Fighting Joe" Wheeler, who was in 200 engagements and 800 skirmishes (his own count) in the Civil War; Thomas W. White, founder of the *Southern Literary Messenger*; Lambert Wickes, naval officer, who cruised as daringly as John Paul Jones in British waters during the Revolution; and "Chevalier" Henry Wikoff, the great American dilettante of his time. The list might be duplicated three times over in any volume. Big men have often stood out spectacularly in front; but the host of lesser leaders really brought up the slow, steady march of society.

Till lately our histories have been primarily political. Probably no one can fully realize how absurdly inadequate such history is until he reads extensively in this Dictionary. Once he realizes it, he will never forget the impression. Prob-

ably, too, nobody can comprehend the vast scope, variety, and incessant mutability of American life until he goes through the volumes. Of all nations, the United States has been the richest in personal adventure, in displays of individual resourcefulness, and in fluctuations of personal fortune. Its national biography exhibits more of the unexpected than any other. The British Empire may be a close second, but it is second. We set out with this Dictionary, let us say, to look up Adoniram Judson, the Christianizer of Burma, whose life was one long adventure. We at once find ourselves halting over that other Judson whose pen-name was "Ned Buntline." He was a seaman, a soldier in the Seminole War, a fur-trader in the Yellowstone, a murderer and rowdy in Nashville, where a mob tried to lynch him, a leader in the Astor Place riots in New York, an organizer of the Know-Nothings, was indicted in St. Louis for riot, sergeant in the Civil War, was a hymn writer, the man who gave "Buffalo Bill" his name, author of hundreds of dime novels, and husband of four women. During his last years "he suffered from the numerous wounds received in campaigns and gun-scrapes, from several unexpected bullets, sciatica, and heart trouble, but remained cheerful and wrote steadily until his death."

We turn from John Paul Jones to a more gallant figure still, "Mother" Jones, who lost her husband and four children in the Memphis yellow-fever epidemic of 1867, lost all her property in the Chicago fire of 1871, and then began her real career as a labor agitator. Or we turn from the adventurous Frémont to the still more adventurous Edmund Fanning, the discoverer of Fanning Island and the first great promoter of South Sea trade; the first man to see the full possibilities in exchanging Pacific sealskins and sandalwood for Chinese goods; a director of more than seventy Pacific enterprises, until he died broken hearted because the government would not let him share in Wilkes's explorations. Or we turn from the gaudy career of L. B. Maxwell, whose Southwestern land-grant (1,715,000 acres) was the largest in the United States, to the still gaudier career of Henry Meiggs, who fled from California in 1854 owing \$800,000, became the greatest railway builder in South America, built a \$500,000 mansion in Santiago, and in 1870 celebrated the completion of one of his lines by a fortnight's party for the Peruvian president and two thousand other guests which cost \$200,000.

The final requirement—the highest requirement—of a work like this is that it shall be organized and written with sufficient interpretive power to give us a new sense of the American character. Of conscious, studied interpretation there is naturally not a great deal. Yet there is some, and almost everywhere we meet with a real feeling for character, per-

sonal and national. The resourcefulness of Americans, the versatility of many figures in the pioneer and post-pioneer ages, come out strongly. Who would be more typically American than Eleazer Parmly (1797-1874), who was one of the founders of modern dentistry, and was also a lay preacher, a writer of verse, a hotelkeeper, and a realty speculator who finally became a millionaire? Or F. Hopkinson Smith (1838-1915), who built the Race Rock lighthouse, the Block Island breakwater, and the foundation of the Statue of Liberty; painted excellent pictures; and when past fifty began a new career as writer of novels? Or William Steinway (1835-96) who manufactured pianos; built Steinway Hall in London; and was also primarily responsible for the Steinway Tunnel under the East River? What could be more American than the long succession of figures who, diverted by misfortune or accident from one career, promptly made a success in another?—Hiram Maxim, who went into explosives when the typewriter and fountain pen ruined his "penmanship" business; C. J. Van Depoele, manufacturer of church furniture, who received three hundred patents in the electric railway field and became wealthy; E. R. Squibb, whose difficulties as ship's surgeon led him to become the principal drug manufacturer in the United States. Or what could be more American than the wealth of eccentricity revealed here? Every volume has its creatures like Abby Smith (1797-1898), who refused to pay taxes until she received a vote, and whose cows were so frequently sold by the sheriff that her sister wrote a book known even in Europe, "Abby Smith and Her Cows"; Charles Pinckney, who "honestly believed that he had virtually written the Federal Constitution"; and Jacob Osgood, religious enthusiast, who developed so powerful a curse that repeatedly persecutors were killed in accidents after he had threatened them with the wrath of God. Anyone who reads herein will exclaim with Isaac Bromley, the newspaper wit, "I like the American family."

In these twenty volumes, waiting to be organized and synthesized—and a one-volume index would provide a good start in this work—is more of our history than has ever before been written. Here, in fact, is more of our history than we previously dreamed that we had. Here is the richest exhibit yet made of the American character in action—a panorama ready for the novelist, the poet, the scenario writer, and the journalist to levy upon it. Here are materials which, as they gradually seep into the literary consciousness of America, and into its social consciousness, will change our attitude toward our national past; deepen our respect for our ancestors and ourselves; and by giving us a larger sense of the grandeur of the drama that has just begun on this great North American stage, alter for the better our demands for the present, and our hopes and expectations of the future.

# The New Books

## Archeology

**MITLA, TOWN OF THE SOULS.** By Elsie Clews Parsons. University of Chicago Press. 1936. \$4.

In attempting to present serious and detailed ethnological studies as popular books, the University of Chicago Press has bitten off more than it can chew. Getting off to a flying start with Redfield's "Tepoztlan" it has followed with a number of publications of the first importance to ethnologists but which could not be read with interest by a layman. Dr. Parsons's book is written with genuine feeling for the people of Mitla, a Zapotec town of southern Mexico. It is a very complete and well balanced ethnological study, and is not devoid of good writing. A person genuinely interested in the subject would read it with profit, but as in every work of this kind the scores of pages of important detail would completely defeat the general reader. As an attempt at making a straight, specific study interesting, it shows about how far one can go, and deserves commendation. The work would be more readable were it divided into a few more chapters.

O. La F.

## Fiction

**CITIES OF REFUGE.** By Philip Gibbs. Doubleday, Doran. 1937. \$2.50.

While the younger generation of English novelists marks time, the older generation confesses itself to be very uneasy. The world in which the traditional novel flourished is cracking underfoot. Sir Philip Gibbs is in a state of considerable perplexity.

Has he not felt, beneath the foundations of the Athenæum Club and other civilized institutions, the rumblings of the earthquake? It is not a pleasant feeling; he would like to give it an artistic form, and it would be very interesting if he could. But, alas, he is not that kind of novelist. The design of his latest novel is merely bewildered. He traces the wanderings of a family of titled Russian refugees whom first revolution, then economic depression hunt from Sebastopol to Pera, and from Pera to Vienna, to Berlin, to New York, to England. He invites us, in a guarded and gentlemanly fashion, to contemplate the courage and dignity which accompany this sort of exile. And though one would have to be very narrow minded to assume that courage and dignity could not accompany it, none the less—is it because history itself has turned its eyes elsewhere?—it is extremely difficult to involve oneself any longer in the fate of a family of Russian refugees.

The theme itself—the creeping of an economic shadow from city to city across Europe and time—might produce an ironic and terrifying piece of writing. But Philip Gibbs is a sentimentalist, a word which excludes irony and clouds terror. His young Count Markov, who makes his living with a violin and loves a ballerina from afar, doesn't seem in the least real.

What is real is a certain ingenuous contrast in his creator's mind. To Gibbs, Moscow is a cold hell which may—at some time, one can't be certain—possibly produce something. Meanwhile, in a New York party for a Grand Duchess, Prince Matchabelli dances, dances with such passion and innocence and courage! This latter scene, though brief, is the most vivid in the book, and it is difficult to resist the conclusion that Philip Gibbs has found there a symbol of something fine and permanent. Perhaps he is right. But the symbol is a difficult one to manage, to judge from "Cities of Refuge." It is centrifugal; literature flies from it, and disperses into nothing.

G. D.

## Government

**THE NEW DEAL: AN ANALYSIS AND APPRAISAL.** By the Editors of *The Economist* (London). Knopf. 1937. \$1.50.

As experts the editors of *The Economist* have produced a book on the New Deal which can be read with understanding only by experts. Simple as their language is, the compression necessary to present so large and complicated a subject within 150 pages makes the text difficult to follow. On the other hand the authority of the writers and the caution with which their judgments are expressed will inspire confidence. Perhaps they overestimate the advantage of a position "three thousand miles away from the heat of political partisanship." Critical and fair as their work is, it must be admitted that the same qualities were equally displayed in the briefer "Balance Sheet of the New Deal" published by the editors of *The New Republic* in June 1936, also in the more extended and much more readable book by Ernest K. Lindley entitled "Half Way with Roosevelt," which appeared late in the presidential campaign.

Of all the New Deal measures the edi-

tors of *The Economist* treat most severely "that extraordinary catch-all, the National Industrial Recovery Act," which they characterize as "more of a muddle than a policy." Evidently NIRA was too confused even for Britishers, often as they themselves have been charged with trying to "muddle through." On the other hand, what they say about the burden of our public debt affords no aid or comfort to the partisan orators who represented it during the recent campaign as breaking Uncle Sam's back. According to the editors of *The Economist* the total per capita debt of the United States is about £72 as compared with a per capita burden of £166 for the British National Debt alone. In a final summary they conclude that compared with Utopia the achievements of the New Deal are small; compared with the performances of other governments it comes out well; compared with the situation which confronted the United States in March 1933, it is a striking success.

R. C. B.

## History

**SCIENTIFIC INTERESTS IN THE OLD SOUTH.** By Thomas Cary Johnson, Jr. Appleton-Century. 1936. \$2.50.

This book is concerned with showing that the Southern people did not lack an interest in the natural sciences before the Civil War. Proof is offered in the form of what amounts to a sprawling catalogue of instances, good, bad, and indifferent. Without comparing Southern achievement with that of the North or of Europe during the same period, the author flings out angrily at Yankee historians who, he asserts, have maintained "that the Old South was intellectually dead and that after 1850 it began to stink." Yet his own grudging conclusion is that the South's "contributions to the world's knowledge were neither so numerous nor so important as one might have expected." Despite obvious limitations the volume represents a welcome foray into a new and what should be a rewarding type of Southern history.

A. M. S.

## The Criminal Record

### The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
<b>FIGURE AWAY</b> Phoebe Atwood Taylor (Norton: \$2.)	Efforts to ruin old Home Week at Billingsgate, culminating in 2 murders, enlist Asey Mayo, whose taste for jelly saves day.	Quaint and peppery Cape Codders, male and female, consid'able humor, and criminal, who for good reasons, almost outwits Asey.	Excellent
<b>THE DOOR BETWEEN</b> Ellery Queen (Stokes: \$2.)	Lady novelist found dead with all evidence pointing to lovely girl. E. Queen extricates her from prison's yawning portals.	Very slick article, with numerous big scenes, an engagingly tough private dick sharing Queen laurels — and far-fetched "solution."	At your own risk
<b>SEVEN SUSPECTS</b> Michael Innes (Dodd Mead: \$2.)	English college Pres. killed in study. Numerous suspect colleagues winnowed by Insp. Appleby (and clever undergraduates) with amazing results.	Closely knit, erudite, engagingly written, occasionally somnolent, but always interesting tale of great intellects gone murderously askew.	Very good