

# The BOWLING GREEN by Christopher Morley

## Friends of the Library

(By a Local Speaker)

Nine hundred members and guests of the Friends of the Library, a lay organization to promote the interests of libraries throughout the country, attended a luncheon in the ballroom of the Waldorf. In a broadcast from London Arundel Esdaile, secretary of the British Museum, expressed appreciation for the gifts of the late John D. Rockefeller to libraries in many countries. . . . Dr. John H. Finley presided and introduced both the London participant and the local speakers.

—New York Times, June 24

WE long ago constituted ourselves an unofficial supervisor of the good old New York Times; we have never scrupled to praise its journalistic efficiency. So now a rousing compliment on its courageous restraint. Only a great paper could be so resolute to conceal the identity of the "local speakers." Obviously it was not in the public interest to let this shameful secret leak out.

So the Bowling Green won't betray it either. But with our newspaper-trained instinct for accuracy we pursued one of the "local speakers" and asked him for the MS. of his palaver. He said there wasn't any, and that anyhow as the conversation was being broadcast time was limited and he didn't get down to what he most wanted to say. Well, we suggested, write out for the Green a little of what you did say and the gist of what you didn't. He agreed, went home to collect his thoughts, and later handed us the following.

LOCAL SPEAKER:—The enigmatic gaiety of Dr. Finley [editor-in-chief of the N. Y. Times] is undoubtedly due to the fact that within a few days there will be one less morning paper in New York City. (Applause.)

A word of homage; a word of hope; and—since alliteration is not dead—a word hortatory.

On Michigan Avenue in Chicago, not far from the headquarters of your American Library Association, I always notice scraps of newsprint on the pavement, spinning angrily in the wind. This pathetic flotsam twirls outside the windows of the Chicago Public Library where those austere ladies can be seen at their task of compilation and preservation. I used to suppose that perhaps the Chicago Street Cleaning Department was not up to its job. But no, it is the turbine and hungry instinct of printed matter to swarm and funnel toward a library. This forlorn newsprint is jealous to get in. We know, we practitioners of ink, that the library is our frail affiliation with the future. The librarian is the life guard watching over the heavy surf of Today. O strong swimmer (we cry), O life saver, O life preserver, rescue my little testi-

mony that strangles and struggles in that treacherous undertow. Bring it safe to the shining sands, to the dunes of duration.—Such is the absurdity of the human heart, we don't so much mind dying if someone will some day know that we once were alive.

There are Ten Thousand libraries, public or quasi-public; and Mr. Wyer your retiring president, Mr. Craver your incoming president, Mr. Milam your permanent secretary, are the Xenophons of that army. Dr. Finley remembers how the Ten Thousand, after struggling through Asia Minor among the wild forefathers of Michael Arlen, reached a mountain ridge and saw the sea. They cried *Thalassa*—I hope I have the quantity right: I don't remember if it was *Thálassa* or *Thálássa*, but there was also a certain



LIBRARIAN AT ATHOS MONASTERY  
Photo by Arnold Genthe.

tentativeness about some of Dr. Finley's pronunciations from the classics. As my old sales manager at Doubleday Page and Co. used to say when he sent us on the road, Be sure to get quantities.—And so I would like to cry *Thálassa* (or *Thalássa*) with your Xenophons. The library profession, after struggling through the wilderness, now sees a new horizon—the public recognition of its vast social importance.

I also was born in a library, if by being born you mean not just the physique of parturition but the first stirrings of intellect. I was born about the year 1898 lying on my stomach on a cocoanut matting in the little iron gallery that runs round the North wing of the library at Haverford College. I was reading an author whom only the mature among you will remember, Captain Mayne Reid. It made a lasting impression on me; I mean

the cocoanut matting did. I still have a corrugated waffle pattern around what geographers call the Tropic of Cancer. From that day to this some of my greatest excitements have happened in libraries. Not only in great libraries like the Bodleian or the Congressional or the New York Public or (my favorite of all) the Hartford Public Library. That is my favorite because a certain Book Thief specialized in stealing my books from them, and they had to keep on buying new copies. But small libraries too—even Rental Libraries, those alcoves of the ho-dier-nal and hypervendible, which Mrs. Malaprop called an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge.

Some of you librarians from out of town have been shocked to find in the New York telephone book the entry *The Saturday Review of Literature, A Pub.* To avert any further misunderstanding let me say it is not a pub in the convivial sense; and the nearest bookshop to us is a religious one which faithfully observes the church calendar. I was in there towards Easter time, buying a prayer book. I don't know whether any of this group have noticed it, but a few years ago a number of fine new petitions were put in the Book of Common Prayer, and I wanted to bring my orisons up to date. A lady of sorts came in, looked around, chose *Anthony Adverse*, and after estimating its heft asked how long she could keep it. They said, Why, if you pay three dollars you can keep it forever. Oh, she said, isn't this a library? No, they said, it was a bookshop; and of course she went away at once. When I went out I saw what had caused her misunderstanding. Pasted on the window, in ecclesiastical lettering of lavender color was a sign, LENTEN READING.

A witty bookseller friend of mine, Ben Abramson in Chicago, recently wrote a piece on *The Influence of Books on People who Don't Read Them*. There is more than mere paradox in the idea. An interesting thesis could be written about the *Influence of Libraries On People Who Don't Use Them*. Not to be a hypocrite, I am one of those. I am the kind of person who can be at his happiest in a library, but by the irony of chance I am so swamped in reading matter that I rarely have a chance. But I think about libraries a good deal. They are a laboratory for the attempt at solving a great social problem, what I call the Dynamics of Anger. Engineers have learned to take two hostile elements, such as Fire and Water or Electricity and Gasoline—if not hostile, at any rate suspicious of each other and evidently partisan—and by rubbing their noses together under controlled conditions, create from their in-

dignation beneficent power. (I wish we knew how to do that in Spain, or in steel mills.) In the library we see a similar synthesis working on another pair of dangerous opposites, Action and Thought. In the library do we not observe Allegro and Penseroso struggling for parity; De-liberation getting the upper hand over mere Carcase? Where else, in our noisy age, do you find posted, and heeded, the immortal and healing word SILENCE? The library draws its holy line, divides Action from Thought. The staff are active, the patrons have a chance to think.

We take libraries too much for granted. Suppose librarians were to go on strike? I often wonder why they don't. A sit-down strike, and a chance to read the books themselves. It is only the stone lions in front of libraries that look supercilious. The librarians themselves are very modest people; too much so. Our county seat in Nassau County has the largest jail and the smallest library I have ever seen in a town of its size. I often wonder if this mightn't be an "extreme and mean proportion"—perhaps if the library were bigger we could get along with a smaller jail?

That is my word of hope.

In conclusion: [the Local Speaker would have said, had there been more time] a good many of you will soon be reading a remarkable First Novel, a story called *The Anointed*, by Clyde Davis, a Buffalo newspaper man. (It is to be a Book of the Month in August.) There's a delightful librarian in it, with all the charms of her profession: shell spectacles, and a pencil with rubber stamp on the end of it, and cards that drop into a slot. She is a gay and positive little creature, but be on the lookout, please, for the irony at the end of the story. Sometimes I have just a little fear lest the fascinating mechanics of bibliothecary science, the exemplary efficiencies of cataloguing, accessioning, Dewey-decimalizing, filing, indexing, staff bulletineering, may not a little outrun our intuition of the urgent human need. Some kinds of books, even some kinds of people, thrive best on a little dust and dinginess; I like to think that the most valuable libraries are those where someone, even the librarian himself, can be surprised by finding something he didn't know was there. Remember the old statutes of the Bodleian, which allotted a day every year—chosen in November, when daylight was short—when the doors were locked and the staff should "perlustrate"; go glimmering around to see what they had and whether everything was in order.

Those things you have on your shelves are not just groceries, they are the joy and trouble of actual human beings. In that story *The Anointed* a young sailor in from sea appeals to the librarian for a book that will guide him in his mortal perplexity. She recommends a book by Watson on why people behave, or don't

behave, as the case may be. The sailor's conclusion, after attentive reading, is "I don't think this Watson has been around very much." Librarians have got to get around, in a spiritual sense. E. M. Forster said, in one of his acute essays, that Gibbon was great as a historian because he knew how people who are not historians behave. The great librarian must know how people behave who are not book-worms.

I wonder if any graduates of the Library School of the University of Minnesota remember a sentence that was written on their classroom blackboard some years ago? It was a quotation from one of Erasmus's letters. He wrote to his friend Bishop Fisher, *Assiduus sis in bibliotheca, quae tibi Paradisi loco est*—May you be assiduous in your library, which for you is in place of heaven. The damsels of the Minnesota library school even formed themselves into a sorority which they called the Assiduous Sisses.

To that quotation I should like to add one more—a noble line of Hilaire Belloc's in his *Life of Milton*. He is speaking of the Grace of Literature, and particularly of Poetry, "whereby," he says, "man, the exile of the outer night, got a glimpse of light through a crevice." For many a hungry and groping creature, the public library is that crevice. You librarians, by unselfish and unwearied service, have created a new order, a new voting power in the parliament of civilization. You—far more than that emotional trollop Radio—are the Fifth Estate.

### Lines Written on a Birthday Card From One Quakeress to Another

This card it seems was made in Hollywood.

We went there once and came back just as good

As when we went. Does thee remember, dear,

Our fellow guests who sat in groups to hear—

Not scandals of the stars of stage and screen,

Not scantiness of garb or flaunting mien,

Not quick-change artists in the line of spouses,

Nor wild night parties, orgies and carousals;

But gathered round the tables set for tea,  
With knitting, tatting or embroidery,

These uncontaminated, gentle folk  
Of all their little homely doings spoke.

The most intriguing topic that they treated—

Which here and there among them was repeated—

Borne on the breeze to ears of thee and me,

Was such and such a friend's too high "B.P."

We left them there as we went on our way

To "House of Rothschild's" opening matinée.

A. L. T.

## The Pulp Magazines

(Continued from page 4)

ladder to climb again when he comes back. It is doubtful whether any such writer imagines he is producing literature; yet there can never be altogether absent the feeling that he is in the antechamber of letters without quite enough talent to enter the lower salon. The only solace is large bundles of delicious money, and the upshot a collection of neuroses that would gladden the heart of a Vienna doctor.

Colonel Dey spent his considerable income traveling from place to place without cease, wrote most of the Nick Carters on trains, and wound up with suicide. Hersey tells of another unnamed who advised him to shoot himself, quite calmly and not in any despairing moment; H. Bedford-Jones seeks release through the mental gymnastic of writing two or three stories at once—paragraph of one, then paragraph of another on separate typewriters—maintaining a fine house in the suburbs of Paris and never speaking English; Henry Leverage did much of his pulp work from a prison cell; A. Merritt lives in seclusion and raises roses for flower shows.

It is rather strange, indeed, how many pulp writers find surcease in endless and rapid travel—or perhaps it is not so strange, for after all, the worst feature of writing for the pulps is the fans, the people who really enjoy this form of opiate, who get out multigraphed magazines of their own to discuss the latest developments, and who every so often hold get-togethers, at which editorial fiat compels all the writers within reach to present themselves, shake hands, and partake of the ham sandwiches and Coca-cola which are the usual collation on such occasions.

This, however, is not all or the worst, even Coca-cola becoming palatable after you get used to it. There is a good deal of mail ("mash notes" in the trade vernacular, regardless of what they say), which must be scrupulously answered, or there will be complaints in the fan sheets and to editorial headquarters with the omnipresent danger of the loss of star rating. Worst of all are the occasional and appalling domiciliary visits. A. Merritt was working in his garden when called on by a fan who had dipped heavily into his fantastic stories of never-never land. "Oh, please don't tell me you're A. Merritt!" begged the caller, with perfectly genuine tears; Mr. Hersey (who then edited a love pulp) tells of his horrible experience with a young lady who arrived from Nebraska with a suitcase full of new underwear and every intention of marrying him on the spot; and another writer was called on by an indignant parent who said his son had constructed a small model of the interplanetary rocket described in one of his stories, blowing three fingers off his hand, and what did the author propose to do about it?

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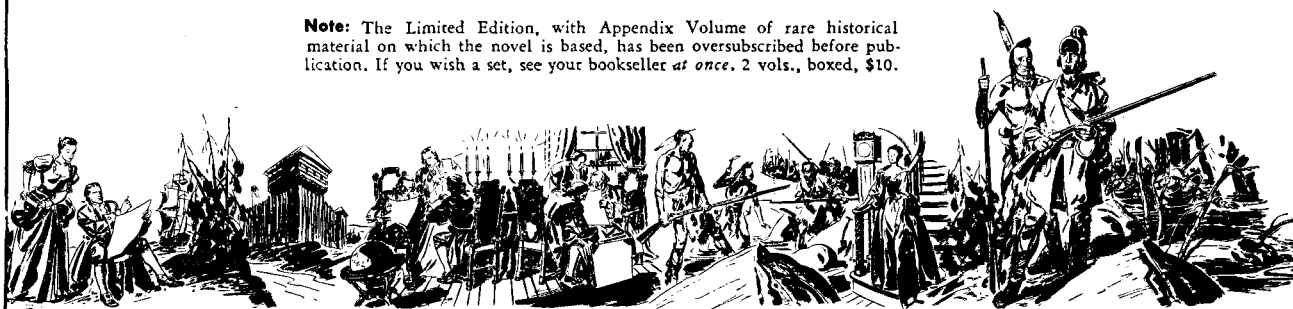
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# Both Sides of the Rio Grande

*PERILOUS SANCTUARY.* By D. J. Hall. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1937. \$2.50.

*NEW MEXICO'S OWN CHRONICLE: Three Races in the Writings of Four Hundred Years.* Adapted and Edited by Maurice Garland Fulton and Paul Horgan. Dallas: Banks Upshaw & Company. 1937. \$3.50.

*HISTORICAL HERITAGE OF THE LOWER RIO GRANDE.* By Florence Johnson Scott. San Antonio, Texas: The Naylor Company. 1937. \$3.

Reviewed by EDITH MIRRIELES

THE three books listed above are tied together by two threads and by two only. One is the thread of geography; all three deal with the Southwest. The other is of history, for all three, though in very different degrees, reintroduce to the reader's imagination the days of Spanish domination along the Rio Grande—days so far back in history that Raleigh was in his cradle and the forefathers of the Pilgrims still placidly telling their beads.

Except for these two connections, the books are far apart in form, purpose, workmanship. "Perilous Sanctuary," the one novel of the three, tells the story of a misfit Englishman—university man, pseudo-communist—who jumps ship in an American port, meaning to make for himself a new life. The new life is promptly complicated by an accidental killing. To escape arrest, he loses himself in the New Mexico desert, is saved from death there by a Spanish-American grandee. Part guest, part prisoner on his host's isolated estate, the refugee spies on the Lenten rites of the Penitentes, makes a little surreptitious love to the wife of the man chosen to represent the Christ in those rites, is warned by that same man of the approach of State troopers, and again escapes into the desert, where, presumably, he dies. The author emphasizes his hero's early conceit and materialism, his gradual awakening to things spiritual, but at neither end of the scale do the notes ring true. The mixture of races and cultures in New Mexico, the clash between fifteenth century minds and twentieth century procedures, offer material enough for drama. What "Perilous Sanctuary" succeeds in extracting from the mixture is melodrama. The account of the Penitentes holds some interest, the descriptions of desert scenery are frequently impressive, but except for the briefest intervals both Englishman and Spanish-American remain wooden throughout the book.

"New Mexico's Own Chronicle," on the other hand, seeks for drama in original documents and finds it in plenty. The

purpose of the compilers, as explained in the preface, is "to reveal under a chronological pattern the essential features in the discovery and development of New Mexico." They succeed to admiration. Divided into fourteen sections, each section preceded by a page-length table of its important events, the book covers New Mexico history from legendary times down to the present—and throws in a "Preface to the Future" for good measure.

Contemporary records fill most of the pages. Letters, diaries, official reports, editorials are included. But to call the volume a compilation only is to do it scanty justice. The compilers are authors as well. Each section is preceded and followed by succinct comment. The excerpts which fill the section are tied together by explanation and summary. There has been, too, a deal of excision, some paraphrasing. The result is an anthropological triumph, for what emerges is a narrative loosely related indeed, but as informative as it is entertaining. It is the more informative rather than the less, because here and there is included an excerpt which is frankly fiction.

The first section in the anthology, filled with Indian legends, and the last, concerning itself with the present State of New Mexico, are the least interesting, whether to the casual reader or to the historian. Indian legends translated into English escape mawkishness only by the grace of God, a grace not conspicuously manifested within the present volume. And the State of New Mexico, though no less picturesque than the territory, has been far more exploited. Between these two weaker parts, however, lie a dozen of high excellence. The book is admirably illustrated, is supplied with source references and an adequate index. Though obviously planned for general reading, it can hardly fail to be useful as well to the student of Western history.

Florence Johnson Scott, author of "Historical Heritage of the Lower Rio Grande," has already published one book—"Old Rough and Ready on the Rio Grande"—devoted to Texas history. This, her second venture, had its beginning as a piece of historical research at the University of Texas. It was later revised and extended to cover the entire history of white exploration and colonization within the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

The subject is one of enormous interest. Even though the writing is stiff and frequently awkward (the "sin of whichcraft" is particularly in evidence), even though the pages are overloaded with catalogue, that interest makes itself felt. One reason for its doing so is that the study is centered around a river, and water in the Southwest is synonymous with life. Another is that the genuine statesmanship shown by some Spanish colonizers re-

ceives here fuller recognition than has been usual in American writing.

"Kaleidoscopic Changes on the Rio Grande," the second and shorter section of the book, sets forth the dilemma of Spanish settlers after the Mexican War. The tangle of land grants which accompanied change of sovereignty and the slow and imperfect solution of that tangle are given, however, only the briefest treatment, though appendices and bibliography will help the student somewhat in his search for further information.

## Oriental Loyalties

*THE NEW CULTURE IN CHINA.* By Lancelot Forster. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company. 1937. \$2.50.

Reviewed by ALBERT PARRY

IN this collection of most interesting essays Professor Forster of the University of Hong Kong seems to come to the conclusion that there is no new culture in China. According to him, the old culture based on the teachings of Mencius and Confucius is gone or going, and nothing sturdy has come in its place. He describes sympathetically the mass education movement; with guarded deference he touches upon the materialistic ideas of Dr. Hu Shih; he is not at all complimentary to the American mixture of "sentiment, idealism, and materialism," being frankly alarmed over its tremendous influence upon the young Chinese. He does not believe that the scientific spirit and entire civilization of the West would or should spread in China as the basis of her new culture, for, says Dr. Forster, China lacks the spiritual foundation upon which our civilization reared its proud structure. China, he tells us, must have an ennobling, unifying religion before she could build lasting universities; "the mistake of the past was the exclusion of scientific thought from China's scheme of education, the danger of the present is the crowding out, and therefore the exclusion, of cultural and ethical studies."

The reviewer shares the author's point that China should have wider loyalties than those of the family. Indeed, the family basis of China's old culture has had a narrowing effect upon her progress. The impact of the West and life's growing complexity are already dealing blows to this ancient sentimental-materialistic usage. Despite the present chaos in China, the state is gradually stepping into the breach to take care of the aged and the infirm. Thus, inevitably, it will be the state (society), not the family, that will claim men's loyalty. Nationalism, patriotism, however belatedly and slowly, do emerge in China. China has the beginnings of a new culture. Mainly borrowed from the West, it is being fused with the old. There is nothing unnatural or deplorable about it, even if loyalties and not worship serve as its basis.