

## Behind the Lines in Wartime Richmond

**BUGLES BLOW NO MORE.** By Clifford Dowdey. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1937. \$2.50.

Reviewed by STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT

THE hate that goes on behind the lines is usually the worst, in any war. In his picture of wartime Richmond, from April 1861 to April 1865, Mr. Dowdey has, deliberately, focused his story on the beleaguered capital and the men and women who stayed behind in it, rather than upon the Army of Northern Virginia and the great exploits. And the war itself is very largely seen through the eyes of Richmond rather than through the eyes of Brose Kirby and the fighters. It is an interesting point of view and realistically set forth. Here are the profiteers and first enthusiasm, the wild rumors, the false hopes, the waiting for news, the petty jealousies, and the long attritional grind of day by day. The women play as important, or more important, a part than the men, and the whole backwash of war is sketched with vividness. Unfortunately, however, if Mr. Dowdey is thorough, he is also somewhat pedestrian. He has written a readable story, and flavored it with accurate detail. But he has not written a story that carries the reader away in spite of himself and makes that reader unwilling to put the book down.

The central thread of the book is the love story of Mildred Wade and Brose Kirby. Brose Kirby had been her father's clerk—she should have married the suitable Dennis Leatherbury. But when she saw Brose Kirby first, in the wildness of Secession Night, there was a wildness in him that corresponded to the wildness in herself that she barely knew. The conventional barrier between them was broken by war as many such barriers are broken. But, besides the central love story, there are many other threads. There is the over-imaginative weakling, Philip Parramore, who would rather do anything than fight and comes to the bad end of all self-betrayers. There is Virginius Kirby, who kills himself like Edmund Ruffin, after the fall of the Confed-

eracy. There is Brose's darkling mother and his sister Elizabeth, gone mad after the death of her husband. There are, in the offing, the great figures of legend, Stuart with his beard and banjo-player, Stonewall Jackson, and Marse Robert. And, always, there are the buzzing and the whispers of wartime Richmond, and the small, stinging rumors that fly from mouth to mouth.

Unfortunately, and in spite of Mr. Dowdey's solid realism, the fictional characters remain, for the most part, one-dimensional. Brose is a sultry violence and Mildred a girl in love against her traditions, but that is all that they are. Philip Parramore is consistently weak and self-deceiving, Milton and Lorenzo Duke consistently villainous, Elizabeth and her Chester little more than lay figures blown in a storm. There is a certain reality in Brose's mother, and a decided reality, oddly enough, in the minor figure of Den-

nis Leatherbury, who never got to be a hero but lost his arm instead. The bread riot is vivid enough, and the final description of the fall of the city, with its looting and confusion, has a nightmare vividness. But, in the end, the characters are swallowed by the city—and yet one wonders whether there weren't other people in Richmond, too, even in those war years—people a little less limited than the ones Mr. Dowdey has chosen to describe.

As far as the historical point of

view is concerned, "Bugles Blow No More" is violently partisan, not only in its characters but in the quotations from documents with which Mr. Dowdey has seen fit to adorn the heads of his chapters. The Yankees get short shrift—Jefferson Davis fares little better. I think in the end the partisanship gets a little shrill—even for Mr. Dowdey's rather restricted scene. For it, too, is one-dimensional, as are his characters. There is a great deal of interesting and fascinating material on life in Richmond—there are some telling, individual scenes. The love story is an adequate one, and Dennis Leatherbury is somebody I would like to know more about. And yet, and in spite of the realistic detail, there is something oddly old-fashioned about "Bugles Blow No More."

Stephen Vincent Benét, author of "John Brown's Body," has read extensively in the history and literature of the Civil War.



CLIFFORD DOWDEY  
Drawing by John De Groot

## Academic Atmosphere

**NEIGHBOR TO THE SKY.** By Gladys Hasty Carroll. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1937. \$2.50.

Reviewed by KENNETH P. KEMPTON

NOW Mrs. Carroll leaves the Maine farm she remembered so clearly and recreated with such tender strokes, to wander disconsolate among American colleges. Her protagonist is a farmer's son; by letters and an occasional visit he keeps in touch with Derwich throughout the story; and at the end he is headed back there for good. But it is a trying experience for all of us.

This experiment in education is no mere flight of fancy. Mrs. Carroll is a skilled worker who knows that only by dramatic technique based on accurate detail can she hope to get her point across without sounding like a tract. If the method creaks at times, as the speech and thoughts of her characters seem more hers than theirs, it is still dramatic. If the detail is heaped up with a shovel concealing the image it was to illuminate, with one or two minor exceptions it is nonetheless accurate detail. So the book is readable. From Derwich we go, culture-bent with Carpenter Luke Gilman and his bride, first to Foster College, New Hampshire, where he gets his A.B., next to the Harvard Summer School, then to Columbia Teachers' College, and finally to Lorado University, Wisconsin, where he becomes instructor, then assistant professor and acting head of an endowed research laboratory. There is fresh detail all the way there is vivid action, there is sharp contrast; there are convincing impressions of the Yard, married graduate life in New York, a university medical center, classrooms of every sort, scholars who don't teach and deans who ought to be selling insurance. The flat taste of one kind of higher learning is indubitably here.

And yet there is something wrong with the book—something below defects of method and beyond the disappointment of one reader who loves to read of Maine next best to being there. It is as if Mrs. Carroll had doggedly shaped a narrative that would take her through—of all things—a syllogism; had conceived an exercise not in plotting but in dialectics; and will brook no interference by a little thing like human nature. But the grand conclusion turns out to be a truism that we took for granted at the start.

This trouble is clearly revealed by her chief characters, especially by Luke himself. He is simply too good to be true. Many readers may like the book. Others will wish they might say to the author, without giving offense, "See you next time on the farm, now you've come out of the sky. Drafty up there."

Kenneth P. Kempton is the author of "Old Man Greenlaw."

# To Rio, and Beyond

*DISCOVERING SOUTH AMERICA.* By Lewis R. Freeman. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co. 1937. \$3.

*LAND OF TOMORROW.* By R. W. Thompson. New York: Appleton-Century Co. 1937. \$4.

*RIO.* By Hugh Gibson. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1937. \$3.50.

Reviewed by HASSOLDT DAVIS

IT is probable that Lewis R. Freeman knows more about South America than any native resident, more, unquestionably, than any foreign writer today. Since his first visit in 1905 he has returned four times; he has seen it grow during those thirty years, and written of it always with affection and the knowledge bred of comparative experience. Thus the groundwork was laid for his "Discovering South America" by flight around and across the country.

Most of the trip was by plane, a summary visioning of the land as nearly entire as is possible to man. The scenes beneath him, the jungles, cities, and pampas, he was able to examine, like Le Sage's devil on two sticks, with the eye of memory, but he descended at every scene of interest, with the exception of the Chaco, to note progress and change. He went by boat through the straits of Magellan, and by "switchback" railway, with the aid of oxygen tanks, 15,000 feet up into the Andes. And wherever he stopped he studied the history, politics, economy, and promise of the place.

The list of South America's industrial assets is as immense and various as the country itself, but Mr. Freeman has considered them thoroughly, nitrate of soda, guano, coffee, ore, oil, beef, a dozen

others, with the history of their development and sometimes, as in the case of rubber, their tragic decline. The growth of jungle provinces into republics, the exploitation of every resource, and the new facilities for transportation, both achieved largely with North American assistance, concern him deeply. What does not concern him, it seems (and this is the book's greatest lack), is individual men. There are few faces here; there is too much topography and too little humanity for such otherwise well-rounded research. But Mr. Freeman is not a literary man; and as a scholar he would have more wisely spared the purple passages of scenic description, for those fine phrases, those filliped metaphors, usually land butter-side down. However, this is a book of infinite value to all who are seriously interested in South America, and with the addition of a detailed map and index it would be incomparable in its class.

For those who are not serious at all, but who want to travel pleasantly and see accurately the only part of the same vast country that Mr. Freeman has slighted, there must be recommended R. W. Thompson's "Land of Tomorrow." Mr. and Mrs. Thompson left England for a trip of ten thousand miles through South America with only five pounds in hand; twenty were to be paid them on arrival and, in two installments later, eighty pounds more. They were off for adventure, if they had to starve for it, and the amazing thing is that even in the depths of Bolivia and Paraguay, when their money was long delayed, they lived happily and well.

"If ever I have appeared sophisticated it has been a pose," the author writes. There is no pose here. The many adven-

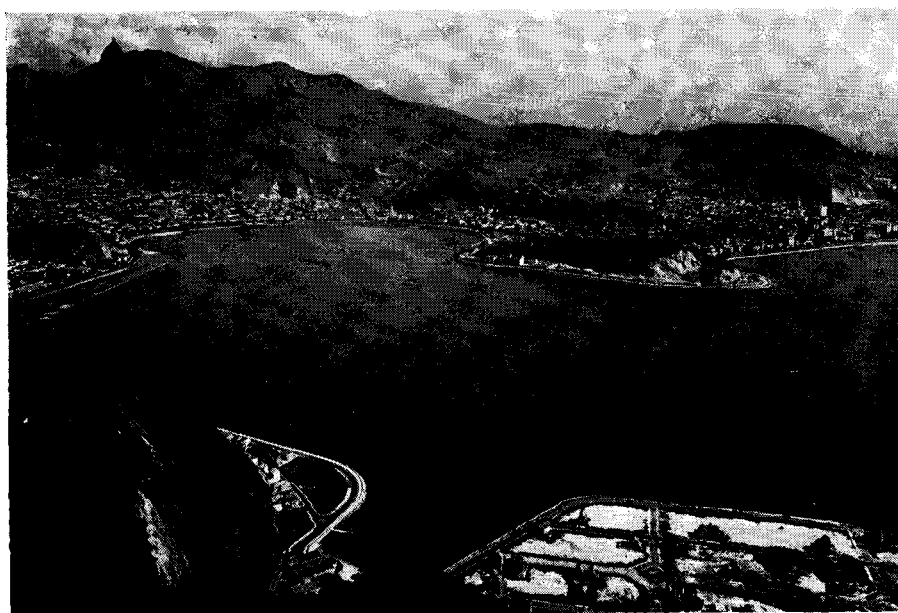
tures he had he describes with a refreshing joy in them, and that is rare among travel writers today. He visited the English and German colonies in the heart of the jungle, and the great ruins of the Jesuit missions. He played "Truco" with the natives everywhere, and was frankly frightened by the midnight dance of the Lengua Indians, a race which still kills superfluous grandparents and children.

But the Chaco war between Paraguay and Bolivia was the goal of Mr. Thompson's journey. Standard Oil was financing it, the Paraguayans said, and the United States was backing Standard Oil, as evidenced by the U. S. Army uniforms on the Bolivian troops. To discover the truth of these wild assertions Mr. Thompson left his wife in Buenos Aires and set off by train for the scene of battle, travelling up to La Paz and down again, up to the Alti-Plano desert at the top of the world and down to the hidden Yungas "valley of perpetual spring." Paraguay was already winning, with untrained Guarani Indians depending entirely upon arms captured from the German-trained Bolivians to replace their poor machetes. The author's conclusions as to the cause, maintenance, and strategy of the war are squarely presented at the end of the book.

Mr. Hugh Gibson, as United States ambassador to Brazil, has written, in "Rio," a most diplomatic guide to the city of his legation. It is hard to believe that Rio is quite the enchanting place he makes it seem, where even taxi drivers are courteous to one another, and diplomats laugh sweetly when for the dozenth time in a day of carnival some wit squirts perfume and ether into their eyes. But Mr. Gibson is well-nigh convincing, so simply and charmingly does he write. Very wisely, too, he has substituted splendid photographs for the gaudy description usual to books on Rio.

It has sufficed him to tell of drives and excursions, of markets and cathedrals, of exquisite insects, of means to pleasant living which the tourist might ignore. Dourado fishing appealed to him, and stag hunting with hounds in the jungle. His book is filled with seasoned counsel, of how, for example, to deal best with sleepy Brazilian business men, or shoot tigers cheaply. His history of the city must interest any visitor, enlivened as it is with such tales as that of St. Anthony's statue which was created a captain in the Portuguese army and gradually promoted to lieutenant colonel, receiving full pay the while. The author's pleasure in salvaging a home from the tropical bush, and gardening in that urgent earth, is spontaneously communicated. It was a sort of negative gardening, a struggle to weed out beauty rather than to pamper it.

Even though we may never roll down to Rio, and must fend a sterner climate with cod liver oil (prepared from the viscera of Rio sharks), we shall be thankful for the grace and intelligence of Mr. Gibson's book.



RIO BAY FROM THE SUMMIT OF SUGAR LOAF  
From "Discovering South America."

Pan American Airways