

Roman women (at least those who were prominent enough to get into the news) had a taste for variety in husbands, but not in costume; they wore substantially the same styles for seven hundred years. Even for men the mode changed only about once in a century, and some respectable economists think that this was one reason why Rome fell. If there had been a consumer demand for new styles, a society in the incipient stage of capitalism might have stepped up production in response and pulled itself through the hard times. Roman men did indeed get tired of the toga, which (like the tail coat) was once the garment of everybody, but eventually became something that even persons of quality put on only on formal occasions, and then with groans and sputterings. But substantially Roman costume for both sexes consisted of a tunic and a cloak; which, in winter time, could hardly have been comfortable.

The barbarian slacks were always bad form for a Roman, though one cannot quite share Dr. Wilson's certainty that they were never worn, even on campaign in the North. For the rigors of Gaulish and German winters the Romans had recourse to a sort of tight-fitting knee breeches, supplemented on occasion by puttees. But though they had sleeved tunics they never thought of the sleeved overcoat; a Roman who wanted to use an arm had to get it out from under his cloak. Their more intimate garments, too, must have been inadequate even for Italian winters. Augustus, who had low blood pressure and was inclined to chills, could think of nothing to do about it but to wear four tunics over his drawers instead of one. He ended a political and social revolution that had been going on for a hundred years, he restored peace and prosperity to a world on the verge of suicide; but it never occurred to him to tuck his shirt in. One cannot help wondering what omissions of the glaringly obvious men of today will be noted by historians of the year 4000.

But perhaps the question answers itself, and Augustus has the last laugh after all. Contemporary statesmen know enough to tuck the shirt in, whatever its color; but none of them knows how to stop war and restore prosperity.

Australian Parenthood

COMING INTO BEING AMONG AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES. By M. F. Ashley-Montagu. New York: E. P. Dutton & Company. 1938. \$5.

Reviewed by HARTLEY BURR ALEXANDER

SUBSTANTIALLY the volume here presented is a monograph on the ideas of parenthood native to the aborigines of Australia. For many years anthropological literature has discussed or echoed the notion that certain tribes of men, and in particular the blackfellows of Australia, have no notion that sexual intercourse is causal of the birth of children, or, briefly, that fatherhood is a physiological function. This is the question which the author of "Coming into Being" proposes to settle in his study, and in effect he has given us an exhaustive survey of its literature.

He begins with an analysis of the

Arunta, as the type pattern of Australian native culture, utilizing for basic materials the long-famous "Native Tribes of Central Australia" of Spencer and Gillen and the later (1927) volumes of Spencer on "The Arunta." He proceeds from this to a series of chapters on the "Procreative Beliefs" of the several other groups of blackfellows as these are indicated in the writings, very liberally quoted, of other observers, early and late. He then sums up the data in a concluding chapter dealing with the ceremonial aspects of sexual life and native beliefs associated with it. The work is introduced by a highly laudatory Foreword by Malinowski, who is apparently not only virtually convinced by the author's argument but is happy to accept his study as a model of sanity in anthropological procedure.

Dr. Ashley-Montagu's conclusions are most interesting. In the first place he finds that the blackfellow is not only ignorant of any physiological fatherhood, but even of any "blood-relationship" between either parent and their child. The mother herself is no more than the host, as it were, of the child who decides to be born of her body; she is in no sense its shaper or genetrix. Motherhood and fatherhood both in Australia, are essentially social; they "are based upon and fulfil certain fundamental social needs . . . there is nothing of any biological or physiological nature nor any concepts of consanguinity associated with these relationships." "Intercourse is nowhere considered as capable of producing pregnancy, but what is

considered to be the effective cause of pregnancy, and nothing else, is the immigration into a woman of a spirit child from some definitely known external source, such as a totem center, an article of food, or a whirlwind, etc.; the spirit child being in origin entirely independent of its future parents."

Such is the thesis and the conclusion. In the development the author certainly throws frequent illumination upon the knotty problem of totemism or again upon ideas of incarnation and reincarnation or the curious and repeating conception of unborn infants as sprung from the fruit or blossoms of trees—all wide-cast among mankind, and perhaps because widecast likely to arouse some dubieties as to the adequacy of the local Australian picture even for Australia. Further, although the author assures and reassures his reader that he has certainly arrived at a final statement of the blackfellow's thought in the matter, it is to be questioned if his interpretation of his own evidence can persuade all. For difficult as it is to suppose much dissent from his demonstration of the native's ignorance of biology and embryology as taught by our own experience, it would appear to the reviewer that so far Dr. Ashley-Montagu has shown little more than this. As he himself says many white men are in the same sense ignorant, and indeed it would be rash to affirm that our biological wisdom at its best offers any very satisfactory solution of the problem of coming into being.

by Laura Krey

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The New Books

International

THE PERIL OF FASCISM: THE CRISIS OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY. By A. B. Magil and Henry Stevens. International Publishers. 1938. \$2.50.

Here is a typical Communist analysis of the American scene which will be illuminating to those who do not follow the party's publications and superfluous to those who do. Fascism—"the open terrorist dictatorship of the most predatory sections of the capitalist class"—is, according to the authors, the deadliest peril lying before us. In Germany and Italy it has ground down the miserable proletariat for the benefit of finance and monopoly capital. In this country its threat is apparent in innumerable incidents which prove that monopoly capitalism tends to utilize fascist demagoguery for its nefarious ends. The whole long list of anti-labor bodies, the utterances of our most outright reactionaries, the professional patriots, the anti-Semites, the radio priests, and the secret terrorist societies—all are neatly catalogued, with a creditable wealth of invective. And the path we must follow is clear: the progressive forces of the nation, including the Communists, must stand together in defense of democracy, by pressing for a program of social reform here and combating the fascist juggernaut abroad.

This is a persuasive thesis, but it will scarcely be accepted in full by the average, slightly confused American. He will see in fascism abroad not the dictatorship of big capital but the enforced subservience of both capital and labor to an iron-clad political machine with an impressive mass basis. He will distinguish between reactionary Americans who would merely stop the tide of social progress and those who would actively curtail existing democratic rights. After all, a politi-

cal victory for American industrialists in 1940 or 1944 may give us a government like that of Neville Chamberlain or Edouard Daladier. To stigmatize such a government as fascist, or to force its hand by making impossible social demands, would be the best way to weaken the democratic fabric. To lead the nation into a crusade against fascism abroad might be the best way to establish it here. Above all, to trust the democratic fervor of the Communists—here today but gone tomorrow unless you believe that the fullest democracy on earth exists in the U.S.S.R.—is to vitiate the effectiveness of the truly social democratic movement in which America's hope must lie.

D. H. P.

MUSSOLINI'S ROMAN EMPIRE. By Geoffrey T. Garratt. Bobbs-Merrill. 1938. \$2.50.

Mr. Garratt's book—150,000 copies of which were sold in England, at sixpence the copy—contains no major revelations for the well-informed in this country, however startling it may have proved to our British brethren. Its theme is the spinelessness, the chicanery and the downright dishonesty with which Britain has responded to the Italian drive for empire. Mr. Garratt has spent a good deal of time in Ethiopia and in Spain during both of Italy's imperialist wars—he regards them as nothing less—and is a keen student of British diplomacy. When he attacks the falsehoods about the justice of Italy's aims, the prowess of her soldiery, and the undesirable traits of her enemies which have filled the conservative press in Britain, he does so with power and conviction. But the connivance of the British with the Italians revealed in the Hoare-Laval deal, the sham sanctions, and the Spanish-intervention policy are the daily stock in trade of most American foreign correspondents.

Where Mr. Garratt fails is in his attempt to explain satisfactorily the conduct of the British Foreign Office. Its sins, he assures us, spring from the fact that "a large proportion of the Foreign Office are drawn from wealthy Catholic families, and that the general atmosphere is extremely friendly to Fascism." The officials, we are told, are backed by the Catholic hierarchy, certain business and financial interests, and their subservient back-benchers in Parliament. Thus it is a divided and irresolute Britain which faces each test of strength with that reckless gambler who commands the full support of the Italian nation. Thus the British are relinquishing their strategic footholds in the Mediterranean and the Red Sea to those who would make them the basis of a new Roman Empire.

If this were the whole story, however, we should scarcely expect to find the bulk of British public opinion solidly ranged behind Neville Chamberlain. Most Englishmen are not fascists; but neither are they war-mongers. They would rather see the Italians mired in Spain and Ethiopia than risk a general war by defying Italy. If war must come, they would pre-

fer to postpone it as long as possible, while their gigantic rearmament program progresses. This may be a mistaken policy. But it commands the support of hundreds of thousands who are not Catholics, fascists, or capitalists. By not giving due weight to Neville Chamberlain's *Realpolitik* Mr. Garratt has diminished the value of an otherwise competent and forceful book.

D. H. P.


Miscellaneous

MENTAL CONFLICTS AND PERSONALITY. By Mandel Sherman, M.D. Longmans, Green. 1938. \$2.25.

Against a background of the work of others who have explored the dynamics of human behavior, Dr. Sherman rapidly sketches an immense variety of personality of conflicts. In places the background seems rather vague, when we read "various writers have emphasized," "some writers have put it," "some psychiatrists believe," and so on. On the other hand there are many short, definitive references to representative investigators. The studies of sociologists as well as of psychologists and psychiatrists come in for considerable notice, although it is clear that the author's greatest debt is to psychoanalytic thought, even though Freud receives actual mention but once in the index and psychoanalysis not at all.

From anthropological and sociological considerations the book goes on to discuss various matters, such as personality testing, sexual disturbances, rather ineptly termed "sex conflicts," antisocial behavior of children, and neurotic behavior. This quickly served melange would be difficult of digestion in even advanced courses of psychology and education, and it is in immense contrast to the detailed original contributions of the Shermans and their colleagues.

But what are these mental conflicts that Sherman is talking about? Psychiatrists generally consider a mental conflict to be purely an intrapsychic affair, mainly unconscious. Some urges are at war with other inner forces, perhaps conscience. But over and beyond this, for Sherman a mental conflict is also the pattern of mental activity characterized by unpleasant emotional attitudes "involving a discrepancy between one's desires and the acceptance of social or other restrictions to their attainment." This latter concept of a mental conflict, of course, designates merely the uncomfortable tensions which arise when inner attitudes are ranged against cultural requirements and restrictions. A considerable share of Dr. Sherman's book is taken up with discus-



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SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 229)

LEIGH HUNT: "TALKING OF
NONSENSE."

The difference between nonsense not worth talking and nonsense worth it, is simply this: the former is the result of a want of ideas, the latter of a superabundance of them. . . . A Quaker's coat and a garden are not more dissimilar.