

and others imagined, is intended in some way to serve as a preparation for some new economic ideology? There are critical references in the book to "concentration of control," to "social turnover," and to sympathy for the "socially minded citizens of California who supported Upton Sinclair in his campaign for Governor."

Present-day business in general, and advertising in particular, are far from perfect. Constructive criticism is always needed. There is always room for improvement. Perhaps something of value of this sort can be read into this work. But to those of us who have enjoyed Mrs. Woodward's previous books this one is disappointing.

Paul H. Nystrom is Professor of Marketing at the School of Business, Columbia University.

French Panorama

RESIDENTIAL QUARTER. By Louis Aragon. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1938. \$2.50.

Reviewed by GILBERT CHASE

THE former leader of the Dada and Surrealist movements in France, having hitched his wagon to the hammer and sickle of communism, has lately turned his attention to large-scale social fiction, planning a vast panorama of contemporary French life, of which the first volume, "The Bells of Basel," appeared in 1936. This is the second volume of the projected series, which bears the general title, "The Real World," and it deals with the period just before the World War. Part I has its setting in a small town in the south of France, Parts II and III in Paris. It is one of those far-flung canvases on which we see many lives intertwining, private dramas being played against the background of public events. The book is very uneven in quality. Aragon has much talent: his power of description is remarkable, his virtuosity brilliant, his style nervous and swift. He keeps the complicated strands of his oversize novel well in hand; sweeps the reader along, achieves excitement, terror, and emotional stress. But his novel is marred by gratuitous obscenity and a ribald vulgarity that detracts from its serious purpose as a social commentary. In the Parisian section of the book, the two provincial brothers, Edmond and Armand, the former a medical student with high ambitions, the latter still groping for a way of life, are involved in melodramatic complications that eventually lead to blackmail and murder. In Edmond's thoughtless affair with an elderly professor's wife and its inexorable aftermath of sordid tragedy, the author is dealing with realities. But he cannot stay on this ground very long; he cannot refrain from undressing humanity in public. The result is not only unedifying, it is often grotesque.

The Theater in the Seventies

ANNALS OF THE NEW YORK STAGE. By George C. D. Odell, Vols. VIII, IX, and X. New York: Columbia University Press. 1938. \$8.75 each.

Reviewed by JOHN ANDERSON

PROFESSOR ODELL is doubtless tired of hearing his great work referred to as "monumental" but plainly it comes within the strict meaning as both substantial and important. The fact that it is also faintly incredible as a research achievement lends it an extra quality of astonishment which is increased as each new volume issues from the press. Beyond that it has the ever saving grace of being not only a scholar's history of the New York stage, but the record of a passionate playgoer undaunted by the calendar. These qualities, uniquely combined, guarantee the work an obvious permanency and an immediate fascination.

Volume X brings the annals up to what Professor Odell calls "the mellow seventies," and it does somehow suggest the sauntering charm of a town that was expanding in its post-war and post-panic affluence and evolving a gently cosmopolitan air that was to be lost in its later stony vastness.

In the diminished modern theater it is difficult to imagine how completely the life of the town was reflected in its entertainments. We may be inclined to smile tolerantly on what, at first glance, might seem the naiveté of the public of the seventies, but sophistication, alas! remains firmly a matter of the date line. Tomorrow will inevitably smile as indulgently at our own dazzling smartness, and wonder how a ventriloquist could become a national idol, and the biggest musical show on Broadway, A. D. 1938, contain a disappearing act and a big bicycle number.

Historical parallels have a way of driving people either to disillusion or to J. B. Priestley and his time plays. These annals are full of details likely to make the contemporary jump and take a quizzical look at the date. A new Hamlet was being acclaimed by the critics because he had freed the part, at last, from its gathered effeminacy; a company of French players was, even then, trying to establish a foothold in the town (what despairing persistence!); a production of "Julius Caesar" was one of the glories of the time, and the situation was such that Professor Odell could write "the theater now struggled for its life."

P.D.Q. was new and rather daring slang in those days; gasping audiences assembled in Brooklyn to hear music played over the telephone from Philadelphia, a newcomer named John Drew was Booth's Guildenstern, while Maurice Barrymore, in a blond wig that was the wonder of

the moment, was playing "Our Boys." "Pinafore" was not a production but a plague. Six companies in joyously pirated versions were playing in town, and in the surfeit of such a fad, burlesques were cropping up under such dubious titles as "H.B.S. Venus," and "T.P.S. Canal Boat Pinafore." It was undoubtedly a whizz.

The more sedate theater was in the throes of a controversy over the merits of Mary Anderson and Mme. Modjeska, and Modjeska's "Camille" as compared to Matilda Heron's (Gilbert Miller's grandmother) was a point of issue. Charles and Rose Coghlan were playing in "School for Scandal," and poor Fechter in his age had returned, as Professor Odell movingly puts the tragedy which overtakes all stars, "to a public that had grown used to doing without him." Ada Rehan, at his period, was playing an obscure part in a Bowery theater before her great acclaim, and Augustin Daly was becoming the arbiter of the polite drama. At the turn of the decade Gilmore's became Madison Square Garden. It retains the name if not the square.

Towards the end of a volume of 775 pages, with an index of 105 more, Professor Odell jovially remarks: "I omit several walking matches of April in Queens County, and frequent strawberry festivals in June."

That would seem, at a guess, to be about the extent of the omissions. I must say that many of the amateur entertainments in outlying sections of the town seem unworthy of such careful excavation, and suggest an archeological digging for the mere fun of exhumation. Now and then they do make an irrelevant clutter to the main business, even when they are amusing in themselves. But such tenacious research proves its value again and again. Without it we might never have known that the horse in "Mazeppa" was named James Melville.

As Professor Odell approaches the present, the periods covered by the separate volumes become shorter, since the material grows more voluminous. Vol. X covers the years from 1875 to 1879, Vol. IX from 1870 to 1875, Vol. VIII from 1865 to 1870. Before that date they range around nine years, except the first, covering the colonial years.

The last half of the decade (Vol. IX) was to see the introduction by Wallack of the American dramatist, Bronson Howard, who was to dominate the period. An era was passing, and the American theater was trying to stand shakily on its own feet, instead of Europe's. Boucicault came back, and brought with him "The Shaughraun," Adelaide Neilson played Juliet, E. A. Sothorn appeared in "Our American Cousin," and the panic put the whole theater through the rigors of imminent collapse. New ideas were drift-

ing in from Europe and the theater was facing the period of its greatest expansion. Professor Odell is to get to that later, for it is to be continued in his next, a breathless chronicle for which he is to be thanked. It is a challenging job, and it is being done with great scholarship, energy, imagination, and love.

John Anderson is dramatic critic of the Journal American. His book, "The American Theater," recently appeared.

Dickens: a Self-Portrait

(Continued from page 4)

manuscripts with untiring comments: he wastes his genius over mere minutiae of editing. He is in Boulogne and Paris during the Crimean War. He sees nothing but an amusing spectacle; the "war news" to him turns comic in the reading.

Everything that happens here, [he writes (Boulogne Oct. 13, 1854)] we suppose to be an announcement of the taking of Sebastopol. . . . Everybody says, every day, that Sebastopol is in flames. Sometimes the commander-in-chief has blown himself up with seventy-five thousand men. Sometimes he has "cut" his way through Lord Raglan and has fallen back on the advancing body of Russians, one hundred and forty-two thousand strong whom he is going to "bring up" (I don't know how, or where from, or when, or why) for the destruction of the allies.

Seen in this light, Waterloo or Gettysburg would have been uproariously funny.

Much more real is the comment of a letter on the War written (Jan. 3, 1855) after his return to England.

The absorption of the English mind on war is to me, a melancholy thing. Every other subject of popular solicitude and sympathy goes down before it. I fear I clearly see that for years to come domestic reforms are shaken to the root; every miserable red-tapist flourishes war over the head of every protester against his humbug; and everything connected with it is pushed to such an unreasonable extent that, however kind and necessary it may be in itself, it becomes ridiculous. For all this . . . it is an indubitable fact that Russia must be stopped and that the peace of the world renders the war imperative on us.

This is the real Dickens, an anti-militarist but unfortunately one who takes for granted that of course his own life and property will be properly looked after by the police, and that the government will not allow war to get nearer to him than the morning paper: failing this, he will write to the press.

In the opening portion of Volume III we have the interest of the letters, such as there are, which deal with Charles Dickens's separation from his wife, still imperfectly explained by history and still obscured by that conspiracy of silence with which his friends saw fit to surround it. Dickens, in all that he wrote about it, insists on referring to it as a separation by mutual desire. The reality, no doubt, was that Dickens put his wife away from him. Her consent, as far as she had any choice,

was only formal. But there is something verging on the contemptible in what Dickens wrote of it. "My elder children all understand it [our separation] perfectly, and accept it as inevitable." In the same letter (the famous and oft-quoted letter of May 25, 1858 to Arthur Smith, his lecture manager, with full permission to show it) Dickens declares himself too "manly" to give the *true* reason for the estrangement but says,

In the manly consideration which I owe to my wife I will merely remark of her that the peculiarity of her character has thrown all the children on some one else. I do not know—I cannot by any stretch of fancy imagine—what would have become of them but for this aunt [his sister-in-law Georgina Hogarth who lived with him then and till his death] who has grown up with them and to whom they are devoted.

In other words Dickens "merely remarks" that his wife was such a woman that if her own children were placed in her care, they'd have presumably all gone to hell—just what kind of hell not stated, but so bad that even Dickens couldn't imagine it. It is a sorry record, worth reflection.

Much more "manly" is the tone of the letter of young Charles, the son, then newly come of age:—

My dear Father, what you told me this morning so completely took me by surprise that I am afraid I did not completely make myself understood to you and I think I can write you better what I mean than say it to you. Don't suppose that in making my choice I was actuated by any feeling of preference for my mother to you. . . . In doing as I have done, I hope I am doing my duty and that you will understand me.

What is it that took the son by surprise—the fact that his mother was to be separated or that he was given his choice of living with her if he wished to?

Dickens in a letter of the same day to John Leach tries to imply that this latter alternative was the surprise. If so, we have to understand that young Charles "understood the situation perfectly and accepted the inevitable," but had of course supposed that Mrs. Dickens would be sent off alone, without any of the children. Is it not more reasonable to suppose that young Charles, in spite of all the family difficulty, could not believe that his father would put his wife away from him? It was a mean business. Dickens, as a matter of fact, never saw his wife again and the allowance he made her, compared with his enormous income of the period, was not generous.

There follows the epistolary record of the "public readings" that had already begun and that followed after the separation, a success even greater, though necessarily more ephemeral, than that of Dickens's work in print. We read of how at Clifton, "the people were perfectly taken off their legs by the 'Chimes'"; at Dublin "the crying [over Paul Dombey's death] was universal"; at Belfast, "I have never seen men go in to cry so undis-

guisedly as they did at that reading yesterday afternoon." At Harrowgate one gentleman "after crying a good deal without hiding it, covered his face with both hands and laid it down on the back of the seat before him, and really shook with emotion." "At the end of 'Dombey'" (and these were Scots at Glasgow), "in the cold light of day . . . they all got up and thundered and waved their hats."

Such episodes with scenes of mass hysteria, with women carried out in fainting fits and strong men frozen into horror, followed Dickens in these and the other lecture tours which lasted till the close of his career.

Lecturing took him a second time to America, in a tour from November, 1867 to April, 1868. In spite of his triumphant platform success the record is a sad one. Dickens had long since forgiven the Americans for being Americans and the Americans had long since forgiven Dickens, because he was Dickens. But he was too old, too tired, too self-centered, too eager (already rich) for more money, to care about their country. The few gleams of real interest which he showed were for Boston, the early city of his adoption. "It is the established joke," he writes, "that Boston is my native place." Here he dined with Longfellow, Emerson, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Agassiz, and in some small measure rekindled earlier fires. He speaks of Cambridge where (letter to Georgina Hogarth Jan. 4, 1868) "a delightful domestic life . . . is seen in an admirable aspect. All New England is primitive and puritanical. All about it and around it is a puddle of mixed human mud, with no such quality in it."

The letters of the period between Dickens's return from America in May, 1868 and his death in June, 1870 bear witness to the unhappy strain of continued lecturing, of needless overwork, by which his life was shortened. One would gladly discover here some new clue to the unsolved "Mystery of Edwin Drood." But Dickens in his intimate correspondence preserved his secrecy. "There is a curious interest," he writes to his American friend James T. Fields, the publisher, "steadily working up to No. 5, which requires a great deal of art and self denial . . . at No. 5 and No. 6 the story will turn upon an interest suspended till the end." Those who believe, with the writer of this review, that "at the end" Edwin Drood appears alive and active in pursuit of Jasper, will draw what consolation they can from this cryptic sentence.

The letters end with a communication June 8, 1870 saying to a correspondent, who complained of something or other as irreverent, "I have always striven in my writings to express veneration for the life and lessons of Our Savior." This is characteristic of Dickens. The silliest of criticisms stung him to defend himself. He lived, and died, explaining himself.

Stephen Leacock is the author of "Charles Dickens: His Life and Work."



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The Byzantine World

IMPERIAL BYZANTIUM. The Thousand Years of the Eastern Roman Empire. By Bertha Diener. Translated by Eden and Cedar Paul. Boston: Little, Brown & Company. 1938. \$3.50.

Reviewed by ELMER DAVIS

"BYZANTINE" was once a term of reproach, owing to various reasons listed by Miss Diener and one that she omits—the bad impression created in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Western Europe by the numerous emissaries of a dying empire, who came looking for help against the Turks. But for centuries the Eastern Roman Empire had been the bulwark of Europe against barbarism, a fortress behind whose protection the Western nations were able gradually to grow out of savagery. When they grew strong enough they pulled the bulwark down; but for the overthrow of the eastern Empire by the Venetians and the Franks of the Fourth Crusade, the eventual destruction by the Turks might never have been possible. (It seems to be a habit of Europe to pull down its bulwarks against barbarism.) Such a state merits, and of late years has been getting, more study and more appreciation; for a long time it was the greatest power in the world, for a longer time Constantinople was the greatest, richest, and most sophisticated of cities. Miss (or Mrs.) Diener has made a gallant effort to analyze that peculiar

state, spiritually and socially; her style is sometimes pretty tough going and sometimes her thought does not seem to be quite clear, but it is a fascinating book for those who have the industry to wrestle with some unfamiliar ideas.

The Roman Emperor in Constantinople was also, in effect, the Pope of the Eastern Church; the theme of Byzantine life was "the world-embracing mysteries of God and Man," the Empire was in effect "the kingdom of the Holy Grail." In many respects it would seem far from holy to us; but for a thousand years theology was the dominant interest, with war, fornication, and horse-racing competing for second place. Of the hundred and seven Emperors who sat on the throne some were duds, some were mediocre, but a considerable number were men of the very highest ability; few of them died in bed, but "though there were sixty-five revolutions not one of them was directed against the system as such."

Not more than half the book is analysis; Miss Diener then sets down some of the stories from Byzantine history—mostly from the imperial family—which the twentieth-century reader might well digest to make himself realize how little of the world's history has resembled the progressive optimism of the nineteenth century or the "smooth and settled temper" of the eighteenth. Such a story as that of the Emperor Andronicus Comnenus, for instance, is more wildly fan-

tastic than anything in the "Arabian Nights"; yet it is true (Gibbon gives it in more detail than Miss Diener) and it happened to the ruler of the most powerful state in the world. If we are slipping back into an age of irrationality and violence, we are no more than reverting to the normal lot of man.

For Musical Amateurs

THE OXFORD COMPANION TO MUSIC. By Percy A. Scholes. New York: Oxford University Press. 1938. \$6.50.

Reviewed by PAUL HENRY LANG

THIS is evidently the year of musical encyclopedias. We have hardly recovered from the shock suffered from reading the first of the brace, a miserable compilation, when the second, this time by a British editor, is offered to the public, with still another American work just off the press.* It should be said at the outset that the "Oxford Companion to Music" is a respectable manual and, once the reader has steadied his nerves after beholding the "new portrait" of Beethoven which adorns the frontispiece, he will find a lively, informative, chatty sequence of articles, profusely illustrated, and covering a wide range of musical subjects. On the whole, the volume is much better than the average run of lexicons for the use of the general public.

The reviewer's task would end here, were it not for the author's assertion in the preface that "old literature and long-bygone musical journals . . . have been searched in the endeavor to obtain light upon details of musical life which are ordinarily ignored by the historians and encyclopedists of music." This remark as well as the general tone of the preface indicates that the author claims scholarly aims and qualities for his work. In fact, the author is guilty of the very offense he intended to remedy: he has ignored a great many findings of musical historians and encyclopedists. Throughout the work, we often miss the results of modern musical research commonly known to serious students of music. It is unpardonable to give a succinct history of the opera by jumping from Monteverdi to Gluck and leaving out the great figures of Baroque opera such as Cavalli, Cesti, Rossi, and many others, or to give characterizations such as "Mozart's art was founded on that of Haydn as that of Haydn had been on that of Emanuel Bach." The history of these great masters and their music is not so simple as that. Similarly, Schubert's musical style is explained in the following lapidary fashion: "He was Beethoven's contemporary in Vienna (twenty-seven years his junior) and like Beethoven he represents the classical school of Haydn and Mozart carried forward into the opening of the 'Romantic Period.'" In the more technical articles, injudicious use of material and lack of scholarly information is often embarrassing. And finally, we must protest the omission of even a rudimentary bibliography. As a popular manual, the book is commendable, but it cannot be considered a reference volume for scholarly work.

* To be reviewed next week.—Ed.

The Criminal Record

In the absence of new detective fiction this week, the Hon. Judge lists the nine best of the year

Title and Author	Summing Up
THE FASHION IN SHROUDS Margery Allingham (Crime Club: \$2.)	Albert Campion at his shrewdest as a sleuth, glittering background of London gown-shops and gaudy restaurants, galaxy of interesting characters and first-class writing.
FAST COMPANY Marco Page (Dodd Mead: \$2.)	Tough goings-on in the rare-book biz, a detective—and his wife—who can deduce and wisecrack at top-speed, dialogue that crackles, and an A1 puzzle.
THE CROOKED HINGE John Dickson Carr (Harpers: \$2.)	Aura of supernatural around quite mundane but mystifying murder of claimant to old English estate adds triple zest to marvelously well-spun puzzle for adipose Dr. Fell.
MURDER ON SAFARI Elspeth Huxley (Harpers: \$2.)	Complete education in big-game hunting (African); delightfully obnoxious tycoons—American and English; robbery, murder, and a jungleful of excitement.
LAMENT FOR A MAKER Michael Innes (Dodd Mead: \$2.)	Eerie Scottish castle houses eccentric laird who goes boomp over battlements. Continuously creepy chapters lead to totally unexpected ending and all is braw—but for the tale-bearing rats.
DEATH FROM A TOP HAT Clayton Rawson (Putnam: \$2.)	Ex-Magicker Merlini manipulates coins while solving strange deaths of occultist and card-trickster. Huge amount of fascinating facts on magicians, much humor, and a hurricane finish.
A PUZZLE IN POISON Anthony Berkeley (Crime Club: \$2.)	Death—by arsenic—of retired English engineer brings numerous nice people under suspicion. Detectives clear them all but an amateur comes to conclusion that leaves reader agasp.
THE WALL Mary Roberts Rinehart (Farrar & Rinehart: \$2.)	Divorcee, lurking round ex-husband's seaside home, slain with golf club. Other deaths, and romance, follow—all satisfactorily solved in spite of clues left hanging.
WARRANT FOR X Philip McDonald (Crime Club: \$2.)	American playwright on London holiday overhears plot, almost gets bumped off before Anthony Gethryn, in class A comeback, nails plotters.