

Irish Edwardians

THE RISING TIDE. By M. J. Farrell.
New York: The Macmillan Co. 1938.
\$2.50.

Reviewed by CHARLOTTE MOODY

THIS is an extremely interesting and absorbing novel by the author of "Full House" and "Conversation Piece," books which attracted some attention in recent seasons. It is as much a story of a place and a period as of people; the place is Garonlea, an Irish estate, the period 1900 to the first years after the war, the people are the family of French-McGrath. Despite its setting and period, the war and the Irish Troubles are not important to the story, which concerns itself entirely with personality and environment.

Garonlea was Gothic, beautiful and melancholy, with a vague atmosphere of stuffiness and unhappiness. It was a perfect background for Lady Charlotte French-McGrath, an admirable setting in which to bully her docile daughters. But this is not the conventional picture of an Edwardian household. Lady Charlotte never met her match until she acquired her daughter-in-law Cynthia. Cynthia is the most important character in the book, with her unrealized cruelty to her own children, her hunting, her beauty and popularity, her drinking which she mostly fooled people into thinking was moderate, her decorous love affairs, her selfishness and efficiency. Cynthia, in time, altered Garonlea, making it comfortable and easy, throwing out the occasional tables, the tassels, the Dresden china black boys (life size), providing plenty of hot water, plenty to drink, and excellent food. But "in all these locked, out-of-the-way places—bedrooms still waiting their sack and purification, cupboards where old hoards of rubbish had not yet been dealt with mercilessly, trunks of photographs fading in their expensive silver frames, corners of the shrubberies and old airless parts of woods—the spirit and power of Garonlea still lived with a tenfold strength." It is impossible to say, until the last page, whether it is Lady Charlotte, now long dead, or Cynthia who wins in the end; or whether it is Garonlea which has vanquished them both.

It is difficult to give an accurate idea of this book without falling into phrases about Periods of Transition and the Spirit of the Times, which would be unfair, because the book is too human for that, some of its scenes too indelible. It is written with considerable beauty and sensitivity. If it has a flaw it is that feminine one of over-sensitivity, a too-great absorption in flower forms, a too-frequent use of the word "sleek." But a too-precise delicacy does not seem to matter here, where there are humor, perception, detachment, and penetration in a novel which is true of its period.



FROM THE JACKET OF
"THIS PROUD HEART"

Woman's Woman

THIS PROUD HEART. By Pearl S. Buck.
New York: Reynal & Hitchcock. (A John Day Book.) 1938. \$2.50.

Reviewed by FRANCES WOODWARD

PEARL BUCK likes women, and she writes very well indeed. So women like Pearl Buck's books. To say that a novel is for women readers is to imply that it is not of much account. Why, I'm sure I don't know. If a woman doesn't like a book about tall ships, fine bluff men, and the folkways of the male native guides in the upper Andes, she is practically forced to apologize publicly or play she has conjunctivitis until it recedes from the best seller list. But if a man doesn't like a book about a woman's life he can smile indulgently while the little woman wastes her time on it.

"This Proud Heart" is not cosmic. It is a good story, well put together and fast moving. The heroine is a sculptress, and to be perfectly frank I thought her a tiresome woman. Pearl Buck, I am sure, didn't think so when she contrived her. Remember, Mrs. Buck likes splendid women. This is her first attempt to do a novel with American characters. O-lan was the fine woman of China victimized by the Oriental attitude toward women. Susan Gaylord, fine to the cracking point of credulity, is the fantasy life of every woman in this too-enfranchised country.

Susan is physically and morally stronger, more sensitive, more talented, than any of her family, than any of her community, than either of her husbands, than either of her children. Her enormous capability, whether with pies or with heroic statues cut directly in the marble, alienates her from other women. But she is not embittered by it. She knows that loneliness is the price of creative genius. (She also, I suspect, comforts herself from time to time by thinking they are just jealous.) Susan has no sense of humor. Neither has Pearl Buck. This is perhaps the reason why though Mrs. Buck does, and should, command a large feminine reading pub-

lic she will never entrench herself in the permanent affections of the really literate women for whom she writes as that manhater, "Elizabeth," has done.

But Pearl Buck creates good characters. She does know what things twist a woman's heart through sleepless nights. She is far too skillful and sophisticated to mistake bathos for sentiment. Many of the minor people in "This Proud Heart" seemed to me more living than Susan Gaylord. She struck me as continually, annoyingly out-size, clear-eyed, and pure in soul. But maybe, like the women she grew up with, I was just jealous. Anyhow, it's a far better than average story. And if men can spend happy evenings in the secret bitter knowledge that were it not for the dreary fact that biology trapped them young into matrimony they could be Moby Dick the Great White Whale, cannot their wives, in the other chair at the other side of the fireplace, be allowed the conviction that except for the identical accident they would be Susan Gaylord, America's greatest woman sculptress, self-taught at that?

A Civil War Journal

'WARE SHERMAN. By Joseph Le Conte.
Berkeley: University of California Press. 1937. \$1.50.

Reviewed by STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT

THIS journal, kept by Joseph Le Conte in the last days of the Confederacy, has, nevertheless, a curiously contemporary flavor about it. For Le Conte was neither soldier nor politician, but a scientist. The beginning of the Civil War found him quietly teaching chemistry and geology in South Carolina College at Columbia, S. C. The end of the war was to find him scrambling through woods and swamps and the backwash of Sherman's invasion, first of all to get his sister and daughter safely away from the former's plantation near Savannah, and second to save his own household treasures when Columbia was taken.

The Journal itself, written down on scraps of paper at the time, and later revised, is vivid, unpretentious, and thoroughly good-tempered. Le Conte took trains that were shelled and other trains that got nowhere—he hid in the swamps from the Yankees, with a copy of a novel by G. P. R. James. "In the story of this novel I was soon so deeply absorbed that I forgot entirely the presence of the Yankees. The popping of their guns, unless they came very near, did not in the least disturb me." It is all like that—unforced, genuine, and the work of a civilized man. When he got to his sister's plantation, he found things better than he had expected. The Yankees had been rude and noisy, but nothing more; after one burlesque false start, he finally managed to get his relatives away. He was not so lucky, trying to get his household goods and papers

away from Columbia. The wagons were found and burned—the goods burned or stolen. He himself had to hide in the woods for days. Finally, however, he got back home. Columbia had been burned, but his house was still standing, his family unharmed.

As I say, the book is thoroughly good-tempered. But its picture of the confusion and improvisations of a collapsing civilization is none the less sharp. Though Le Conte was somewhat luckier, in one respect, than a Le Conte might be today. His house in Columbia was in the hospital district and was neither bombarded nor burned. And, later on, he was to round out a distinguished career at the University of California. But he had meant to work in the South—the War and Reconstruction stopped that.

The book contains an introductory reminiscence by Caroline Le Conte, a portrait of Le Conte himself, and a number of sketches from the original Journal.

Fuehrer's Dilemma

THE HOUSE THAT HITLER BUILT.

By Stephen H. Roberts. New York: Harper & Bros. 1938. \$3.

Reviewed by JAMES FREDERICK GREEN

IN lieu of the proverbial visitor from Mars, what more detached observer of the Nazi dictatorship could be desired than a scholar from Australia? Dr. Roberts, professor of modern history at Sydney University, has compressed the results of a long European sojourn into a remarkably objective book. Broad in approach and moderate in tone, "The House that Hitler Built" is a complete and trustworthy account of contemporary Germany. While the democratic and individualist predilections of its author are obvious, they rarely impair his capacity

for accurate reporting and balanced judgment.

In outlining the origin and development of Hitlerism, Dr. Roberts adds little to the studies of Schuman, Hoover, Gunther, and others, but he denies the frequent allegations that Hitler is merely the puppet of industrialists and munitions makers. Providing amusing glimpses into the ever-multiplying bureaucracy, he skillfully analyzes the conflicts of personality and policy within the Nazi party, and favors Heinrich Himmler as the probable successor to Hitler. In the asset column of the German ledger, this Australian visitor places first the revival of national self-respect and courage. The Nazi regime is almost universally popular, he believes, despite a declining standard of living and the opposition of church leaders. While condemning the intellectual degradation of the younger generation, Professor Roberts praises the physical training and social service provided by the youth organizations.

The economic balance sheet is of course less satisfactory. Dr. Roberts is convinced that the attempts at autarchy, however ingeniously undertaken, will eventually prove disastrous, and that "this fight for Ersatz goods is bound to fail." While admiring the dexterous "financial jugglery" of Dr. Schacht, whom he describes as "the most distinct personality" among German leaders, the author is pessimistic over the outcome. He regards the agricultural policies of Hitler as totally unsuccessful, in respect of both self-sufficiency and reform of Junkerism.

With regard to the cultural and racial aspects of Hitlerism, Dr. Roberts becomes almost completely antagonistic. Perhaps the most tragic effect of National Socialism upon the individual is the destruction of ability and desire to criticize.

Anticipating the current struggle between army and party leaders, Dr. Roberts predicts and favors the ultimate supremacy of the military group, which would provide the patriotism and strength needed by Germany without "the erratic uncertainty of the present regime." This observer corroborates the opinion of many others that an understanding or even alliance between Germany and the Soviet Union is not impossible, and that Hitler has not discarded his earlier ambition for a rapprochement with Britain. He presents an effective case for return of German colonies, and quickly disposes of British and Dominion objections. The tragedy within Hitler's new house, however, lies in "his basic dilemma. If he persists in the policies he has enunciated, he plunges Europe into war; if he abandons them, he can no longer maintain his position within Germany."

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Animal Sanctuaries

WARDENS OF THE WILD. By T. C. Bridges. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company. 1938. \$2.50.

Reviewed by DONALD CULROSS PEATTIE

THE tide has turned, in the last forty years, and the biological history of the world is entering a new chapter. For the human animal has begun to adopt towards the other animals an attitude scarcely dreamed of before the opening of the present century. Formerly a king might set aside a sanctuary for animals—that is to say a sanctuary which it was reserved unto himself and his favorites to violate. Today the English-speaking countries of the world (and just a few others) have come to recognize that animals other than "pretty" animals are, in their own way, beautiful. That an extinct animal is irreplaceable. That the time to save a species is before it becomes rare. And that, economically useful or not, pestiferous or not, beautiful or not, all animals have their place in the structure of the biota. So that you cannot withdraw one brick without toppling the structure.

Mr. Bridges writes of the sanctuaries set aside in Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States. And he writes with a fluent ease and enthusiasm that make one long to rush to a ticket office and take passage for far lands. Or even visit the North American parks! In reading a foreigner's description of the American parks one comprehends what an impression their scenery makes. We have nothing, however, to compare with the big game of Krueger Park in the Low Veldt, where it is necessary to post signs warning the tourists not to get out of their cars when lions, crocodiles, elephants, and cobras are



KOALA. From "Wardens of the Wild."

seen. Still, to the foreign visitor our bison, grizzlies, big-horns, and gila monsters are in their way astounding.

There is a splendid chapter on the Carl Akeley sanctuary for the persecuted gorillas of the Belgian Congo. This is the only extended account of animal protection in a country not under Anglo-Saxon government. Actually, the Dutch government also undertakes to protect its colonial wild-life; and it would be surprising if the French and Russians, in their great empires, were blind to the economic importance of maintaining wilderness areas.

The koala bear was brought close to extinction by the trade in its fur. Mr. Bridges in his narrative points the sound moral that laws to protect the koala bear (no bear, really, but a marsupial) were not enough. It had to become unprofitable to market the pelts before the wanton destruction was halted. Education in the primary schools rounded off the victory. And that is the second excellent moral of this excellent book.