

Annual Report

IN 1937. By A. C. Eurich and E. C. Wilson. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 1938. \$2.50.

Reviewed by CHARLES McD. PUCKETTE

MR. EURICH and Mr. Wilson, who are the news questionnaire makers of *Time*, bring out promptly this annual summary of events. Like last year's, the volume is a workmanlike achievement—concise, well-proportioned, and with just enough background information to help the reader to a better grasp of the news. The authors' style is readable, their matter informative, and one who wishes to brush up on affairs will find it profitable to survey the year with Mr. Eurich and Mr. Wilson. The review form is popular; the newspapers and the news magazines now give weekly summaries, other magazines provide monthly histories, the book publishers offer reviews of the year, the decade, the generation, and Mr. Van Loon and Mr. Wells eventually boil mankind's achievements all down into single books.

The compilers of "In 1937" properly put the constitutional issue and the Supreme Court struggle first in importance in the national section of the book. Their analysis of this bitter fight is impartial, except that one or two more proponents from the law schools might have been mentioned. Otherwise the report on the state of the nation in 1937 is excellent, and the same comment can be made on the chapters on world affairs. Perhaps finance and banking rate another page or two more than is given to them.

THE CITIZEN'S CHOICE

by Ernest Barker

Democracy or Dictatorship?
Communism or Property?

This book is a challenge to the intelligent citizen to decide what system of government must prevail in the world to-day. Professor Barker states the case for each side in a cool-headed way without the prejudice which too often goes with a discussion of this subject.

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It is interesting to compare the relative space given to fields of news in the daily newspapers and in this annual review. Sports lose in importance in the perspective of a full year; the really significant news in this department is small. The chapters on science and religion, and on literature and the arts are interesting and helpful.

A few suggestions occur to a hasty reviewer of a year boiled down—more specific dates of events might add to the value of the summaries; the photographs could be better selected; and the important Kennedy report on shipping seems to have been omitted.

Charles McD. Puckette is on the staff of the New York Times.

The Chances for Life Extension

THE SPAN OF LIFE. By William Marias Malisoff. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co. 1937. \$2.50.

Reviewed by MABEL S. ULRICH, M.D.

THIS is a difficult book to classify. Full of fascinating facts every educated layman should find of interest, it will prove pretty stiff reading for most of them, in spite of the glossary appended, while to the scientist it may seem more like a note-book than a treatise. Nevertheless few who attempt it will be sorry, for it is stimulating throughout. Concerned primarily with death, it is far from depressing. The author belongs to those scientists who by reason of study as well as temperament, support the "open door" policy for all scientific investigation, and he spurns the "gray little men of science" who accept any theory in the field of the sciences as settled for all time. Thus he refuses to consider the span of life as indubitably determined either by heredity or a super power, and he thinks it extremely likely that something can be done about it. As a chemist he is inclined to think that the way may lie in part at least in finding a method of getting rid of the cholesterol that piles up with the years in our tissues, destroys their elasticity, and is largely responsible of many of those signs of senescence more distressing to onlookers than death itself. But by whatever means, he is convinced that if scientists are unflagging in their search, human life may be prolonged almost indefinitely. This in his thesis, his slogan, "Time and Tide will wait."

All of this comes in the last two chapters. In the first five he attempts to review the entire subject as pursued down through the ages by philosophers, quacks, and scientists. To encompass so vast a field necessitates a certain sketchiness of treatment, but the interest does not flag, and the book is refreshingly free from the banalities of the life-begins-at-forty school, which he dismisses as "attempts to shout the nasty discomfort down. Dr. Malisoff with all his optimism is a realistic scientist. He offers no hope to those now living who yearn to reach the hundred mark. If we are to circumvent age and death, a vast amount of research will be required.

Democratic Leader

HIS EXCELLENCY GEORGE CLINTON: Critic of the Constitution. By E. Wilder Spaulding. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1938. \$3.50.

Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS

MR. SPAULDING tells us that George Clinton is the most important individual in American history who has not had a biography. It is a bold assertion, but perhaps it is true. Because he was always a local figure, never a national one; because his Federalist opponents, Jay and Hamilton, towered so distinctly above him; because his nephew DeWitt Clinton was so much more salient and interesting a leader, he has been neglected. Yet he was the most consistently successful politician of his time. Seven times elected governor of New York, twice elected vice-President, once brought almost within grasp of the Presidency, he was the idol of the New York masses throughout most of his adult life. Not Silas Wright, not Samuel J. Tilden, not Alfred E. Smith, equalled at the height of their influence the sway which George Clinton exercised over the plain voter of the State. He ruled it, moreover, at a time when the importance of the State as compared with the nation was far greater than today. In a negative way, he did become a national figure. Paradoxically, he may be called one of the makers of that Constitution of which Mr. Spaulding justly calls him a critic. Because he so sturdily opposed any increase in the powers of the general government under the Articles of Confederation, because in 1783 he vetoed for New York the proposal to give Congress a five per cent impost, the Confederation broke down, and the new frame of government became an absolute necessity.

The principal significance of Clinton's career is as an early type of democratic leader. To follow him in detail throughout the intricate labyrinth of New York politics from independence down to 1812 is a dull and not very profitable task. But to study the methods by which this son of an immigrant farmer, himself by turns farmer, soldier, surveyor, rural lawyer, land-speculator, and politician, took a commonwealth long dominated by a few aristocratic families, caught it into the palm of his hand, and held it tightly there, is a task of fascinating interest. Clinton knew how to build up a machine and to keep it well lubricated. He had personal qualities, too, a rugged manliness, a transparent honesty, which the plain people loved. Jay and Hamilton were manifestly greater men, but the very complexity and profundity which made them great aroused popular distrust.

Mr. Spaulding has told his story well. He has concentrated his attention upon the essentials; his research has been thorough and shrewd; he has planned his book carefully, and written clearly and at times vividly. He has added to our knowledge of New York and national affairs during and just after the Revolution. But what is more important, he has presented an excellent portrait of one of the most successful political leaders the country has known, and provided the materials for analyzing his success.

Trade Winds

BY P. E. G. QUERCUS

OLD Q found himself a little fore-done by a long succession of impinging pressures, so he filled a bag with publishers' publicity-notes and here he is at a hotel in Atlantic City listening to a February wind moan about the lofty structure. And by happy chance at Clement's bookstore on the Boardwalk he found (for 10 cents) a Clark Russell sea-story he had never read, *Little Loo*, which is good going as a winter's tale. Another pleasant book-find, up toward the old abandoned Absecon Lighthouse, was at Frank's Newsstand which sells hot dogs, coffee, sauerkraut, old magazines and old books. Frank himself was erst in the book business but found it difficult: when he fell back upon hot dogs he took his overstock along, and there they are shelved up above the sausage alcoves. In the 15 cent lot Old Q found a copy of Richard Garnett's *John Milton* with the late James Huneker's bookplate in it. This had come to Atlantic City, according to a label in it, by way of Charles Pratt's famous old second-hand store at 161 6th Ave. And another adventure: in Robert Housley's little portrait studio opposite the Heinz Pier we saw a drawing (and a very good likeness) of Joseph Conrad. We stopped in to examine it, and Mr. Housley said he keeps it there to see how many of his customers identify it. "Most people think it's the former Kaiser," he remarked. Mr. Housley, who came originally from Lancashire, is a great admirer of the magnetic Pole, so much so that he named his son Conrad. With his customary good fortune, Old Q was the first to meet the beautiful Dream girl who was the feature attraction of the Artists and Models Ball being held at the Traymore Hotel; she was elected as America's Dream Girl, it appears, by a jury of artists in New York, and sent down to Atlantic City to be queen of the occasion. Old Q, in honor of the State of Georgia for which our Dream Girl is named (Georgia Carroll) bought her a Coca Cola and gave her good advice. "In your arduous career as a Dream Girl," he said, "always carry one of these," and showed her his own talisman. It will be more useful, he asserted, than the key to Atlantic City which had just been given her by the local Chamber of Commerce. It is a paper-clip which, straightened out to serve as a pipe-cleaner, can also be used as paper-cutter, toothpick, skeleton key, corkscrew, manicure, swizzle-stick, or even eye-gouge.

The lovely Miss Carroll, gentle and perhaps somewhat baffled by her responsibilities, did not take this very seriously; but no Dream Girl ever had better counsel. After which Old Q went to bed with a copy of the *London Times Lit. Supp.* and slept peacefully. In the latter he found a most interesting item, viz. that Edward Perry, graduate student at the University of Toronto, is working on a biography of Alexander Smith (1829-67) the author of our old favorite *Dreamthorp*. We are gratified to learn also that the illustrated edition of that book, for which Walter Jack Duncan has done some remarkably charming drawings, is now definitely announced by Lippincott. In the same issue of the *Times Lit. Supp.* we found a very intelligent letter from a Scottish correspondent (G. St. Quintin) suggesting that the famous lines of Keats, "Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty, that is all Ye know on earth and all ye need to know" are addressed *not* to mankind in general but to the figures on the Grecian Urn itself. This, truly, is the only way that famous utterance would make real sense. We haven't had much time to get at our bagfull of publishers' notes because the air on the Boardwalk is strong and keen, and we have been listening to the hullabaloo of the auctioneers selling off lace tablecloths. On the train to Philadelphia we saw a man deeply absorbed in *The Brothers Ashkenazi*; he identified himself as the proprietor of the lunch-wagon at Bryn Mawr, Pa. In the train to Atlantic City was a stripling reading *Lord Jim*.

Pleased to see that one of the new Modern Library titles is the late Edmund Pearson's *Studies in Murder*, including

not only one of Mr. Pearson's pieces about Lizzie Borden (who was Pearson's King Charles's Head) but also that very grievous story of the assassination on 23rd Street, N. Y. City, in 1870, in which the victim was a collateral ancestor of one of our most admired novelists today. Incidentally, the Modern Library catalogue is probably the only place in literature where Swinburne is always referred to as Charles (without the Algernon). Among recent detective stories of more than usual merit, we recommend *Warrant for X* by Philip MacDonald. The hero of this tale is an American dramatist in London, and the starting-point of his disconcerting adventure is reading G. K. Chesterton's *The Napoleon of Notting Hill*. The current rate for a good copy of Gissing's *Ryecroft*, in first edition, seems to be (according to the catalogue of Retz & Storm, 598 Madison Ave., N. Y. C.) \$40. The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, celebrates this month sixty years of publishing activity. Its earliest publication was the *American Journal of Mathematics* which began in 1878. Though several other university presses issue annually a larger number of books than Johns Hopkins, its latest catalogue shows as many as 950 titles in print. An even longer record is that of the distinguished old house of D. Van Nostrand Company, which completes this year nine decades of scientific and technical publishing. The company was organized in 1848 to import military books from Europe, and one of its early publications was Casey's *Handbook of Military Tactics* which was the official manual of the Northern armies during the Civil War. To celebrate its 90th birthday, Van Nostrand publishes this month a one-volume Scientific Encyclopaedia in 1500 pages with 1200 illustrations. A comparison that somehow strikes us as quaint is the assertion in Doubleday's spring catalogue that Mr. Maugham's *The Summing Up* will take its place in literature beside Newman's

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S
DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 203)
LANG—"LETTERS TO DEAD
AUTHORS."

How poor the world of fancy
would be if in some ruin of the
social system the books of Dickens
were lost and if The Dodger and
Mr. Crinkle and Miss Squeers and
Sam Weller and Mrs. Gamp and
Dick Swiveller were to perish.

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