

Boys in Britain

THE HONEYSUCKLE AND THE BEE.

By Sir John Squire. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1938. \$3.

A SON OF SCOTLAND. By R. H. Bruce Lockhart. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1938. \$3.

Reviewed by IVOR BROWN

SIR JOHN SQUIRE has taken the title of his book from a vaudeville song which was popular during his boyhood. Like everybody else he has gone in search of his youth, much of which was spent in a state of intellectual hoboism. He used to walk from Cambridge to Devonshire with books of verse, jugs of beer, no funds, and queer company. Why not walk again? So Sir John sets out from London with a pack on his back and, with occasional lifts in motor cars, reaches his goal in the deep south of England's now heavily macadamized and motor-stinking land.

Sir John is the kind of person who knows everybody, and England is a very small country. He has broken more appointments and kept more friends than any man in his time. If the proper author of a book of reminiscences is the most forgetful, he is the man for it. Naturally when he set out over Putney Heath (the Swinburne Country) he had every temptation to turn aside and seek those old comrades of his—with their nice English houses and their even nicer unearned incomes—and so forget the dust of the day amid the wine of the night. He seems to have resisted temptation quite a lot and modestly records drinking "a sherry" with so-and-so after a long day's tramping. The "a sherry" is charming. But it confirms one's opinion that this is a book of illusions as well as of observations.

It has great attractions, for the simple reason that it represents the collision of two most attractive forces or entities, namely Sir John Squire, vagabond, and the deep south of England encountered in high summer. The author did not make the mistake of walking straight. He made upwards as far as Bath before he tumbled on the Old School, Blundell's of Tiverton, where the sturdy men of Devon have always sent their boys from the age of Blackmore's John Ridd to that of Mr. C. E. M. Joad. During this trek Sir John thought about and regarded a number of things, and he has set them all down, from poetry to ornithology and politics to public houses. He does not so much take traditional views of verse and virtue as brandish them. If you like a genial mixture of theory and topography, of grumbling and gossip and of praising the Lord, of cursing the sad cacophonists of the modern Muse and of rejoicing in old wine, old song, and old stone houses, then here is your book.

Mr. Bruce Lockhart, also hunting boyhood, is far more faithful to his quest. The author of "British Agent" is a pure Scot, half Highlander, half Lowlander, who was educated solely in Scotland and received his schooling in fairly hard schools. He is no complainer, for he comes of a sturdy breed whose ideal was ever to mingle the palms of scholarship with the laurels of the football-field. His family have been mighty players of the game, winter and summer, and he has much to say of fearful struggles on the muddy field of football and the scorched turf of the cricketer.

His book has a far more limited interest than Sir John Squire's and one can imagine the American reader being baffled by its long accounts of schooling in a strange and far-off place. But the book, within its limits, is just in its survey of a particular kind of training and graphic in



Elliott & Fry

SIR JOHN SQUIRE

its disciplined portrayal of the gray Scottish scene. There are accounts of the holidays in the Highlands as well as of the school-terms on the windy East Coast and in the noble city of Edinburgh, which Mr. Bruce Lockhart was shrewd enough to appreciate when young. There is also some hard commentary on the collapse of the Highland economy and the Highland habit of life. The former has been destroyed by the difficulties of the small farmer and fisherman and by the temptation to live on rich and alien sportsmen: the latter has been menaced by the standardizing forces of radio, the motor, the cinema, the newspaper, and the ability to draw "relief" money instead of inventing new jobs. Sir John Squire offers a most personal and colorful view of England: he spreads himself with all the fanciful exuberance of a great enjoyer of things. Mr. Bruce Lockhart keeps his nose

to the granite grindstone. The subject forbade an exuberant or aromatic treatment. It demanded good black-and-white and has received it. If the Scottish character is a mystery in your eyes, this may unfold it. It will also encourage many to thank destiny for not sending them to school in Scotland.

Ivor Brown, dramatic critic and leader writer for the Manchester Guardian and author of numerous books, has recently been on a visit to this country.

Rightist Reports

CORRESPONDENT IN SPAIN. By Edward H. Knohlaugh. New York: Sheed & Ward. 1937. \$2.50.

SPANISH REHEARSAL. By Arnold Lunn. The same.

Reviewed by CHARLES A. THOMSON

THESE two books will be greeted with most enthusiasm by Franco sympathizers. One comes from an American journalist, the other from an English literary man; and the former has done by far the more creditable job. Knohlaugh was an Associated Press correspondent in Madrid from early 1933 until the spring of 1937. He saw eight months of the war from the Loyalist side, before difficulties with the censor led to his leaving Spain. He fell from favor, according to his story, by violating two principal taboos forbidding reference to foreign aid received by the Loyalists and to factional strife among their forces. In his book he now evens the score with the censorship by giving considerable space to the seamy side of affairs in Loyalist Spain. He presents a vivid account of "liquidation" in Madrid during the early anarchic days of the conflict, when thousands of Right-wing supporters, including numerous priests and nuns, were rounded up by unofficial execution squads and summarily shot. The war bred an acute fear of espionage, and he reports agents of the Investigation Brigade or "Spanish Cheka" as lurking everywhere. The socialization drive gave opportunity for war racketeers to prey on those whose sympathy with the government might be open to some suspicion. Goods and valuables confiscated from Rightists were at times appropriated for private use.

Thus the slant of the book may in part be due to a determination to unload what the censors had previously refused to let pass. With his departure from Spain, Knohlaugh is in a "now it can be told" position. But he eschews indignation and denunciation and writes in the hard-headed and matter-of-fact style of a newspaper man who has been around. He is apparently not so much pro-Franco as he is anti-Loyalist. What bias he has appears rather in relative emphasis and choice of facts than in specific statements; although, for example, his assertion that

110,000 foreigners are fighting with the Loyalists is at wide variance with the figures of 15,000-20,000 given by other reputable correspondents.

It may be worth noting that Knoblaugh fails to buttress the charge so often made by Franco supporters, that the rebellion was forced by the imminent threat of a revolt from the Left. He saw anonymous sheets announcing July 29 as "the day for the Red Revolution's launching," but with other journalists apparently did not credit them. He believes that the assassination of Calvo Sotelo, not fear of a "communist" plot, actually set off the rebellion. In addition, he presents evidence indicating that Right groups had plans under way three months before the outbreak of the Franco revolt. In May, 1936, he received a tip from Gil Robles, the Catholic leader, which revealed that the Rightists had at that time set the middle of August as the date for their movement.

Shortly before Knoblaugh left the peninsula, Arnold Lunn, a Catholic layman, started a journey across insurgent Spain, from Irun to Algeciras. In the first third of "Spanish Rehearsal" he tells the story of the trip, but his account is singularly lacking in keen, first-hand observations. Rather he fills his pages with what he was told and what he read in other books. The rest of the volume presents a loose and discursive argument for the Franco cause. Lunn sees the Rebels as crusaders who would save "Christian Spain" from "the Red Terror." Like many other critics of his school, he has a fixation on "communism" as the sole devil on the Spanish stage. His is the type of mind that shovels socialists, syndicalists, and communists into one bin and then labels it "Made in Moscow." With deceptive ease he simplifies the bewildering kaleidoscope of Spanish politics into a struggle between Catholic Christianity and communism.

Mr. Lunn has a way of his own with facts. He is casual. He might even be called cavalier. Despite the well-known conservatism of many Spanish Socialists, Lunn insists that they are "Communists even when they describe themselves as Socialists." He characterizes *Current History Magazine*, with its balanced policy, as "fiercely anti-Franco." On page 191 he declares that "according to the highest ecclesiastical authority in Spain, about 14,000 priests and monks have been murdered." Five pages later the statement is repeated word for word, except that the figure is reduced from 14,000 to "over 10,000." But Mr. Lunn's careless inaccuracies play an insignificant part in coloring his Spanish picture in comparison with the determination to force the whole tragedy within the framework of his narrow and dogmatic thesis. Those who have been looking for an able and convincing apology for Franco's cause must continue their quest beyond this book.

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Jerome

BOYNE GRAINGER

The Day of Miracles

THE JESTER'S REIGN. By Boyne Grainger. New York: Carrick & Evans. 1938. \$2.50.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

A LADY whose identity remains a mystery has taken, in the above novel, a flier into fantasy; has done what all of us in our day-dreams sometimes desire to do, imagine cosmic phenomena of both an amusing and a beneficial nature. A mysterious Roger Ergo who lives "in a little blind alley in one of the older regions of New York" (one visualizes such a strange cranny as Patchin Place just off lower Sixth Avenue) notes in his journal the strange manifestations of some jesting god—or human endowed temporarily with supernatural powers. The "phenomena" occur at the same time over the whole world, beginning with a peculiar laughing sound heard by all inhabitants of the globe. They are extraordinary, humane and funny at the same time—and this reviewer is not going to give them away. But they influence profoundly a small group of very mixed people: a capitalist, a munitions-maker, a rich, idle girl fond of speed, an amateur artist who is the son of wealth, and the group in the small city court under the two ailanthus trees which are the Trees of Heaven, where Mr. Ergo lives.

Accepting the premises of fantasy, one does not expect too much verisimilitude of action or speech, but this author strains credibility, I should say, to its utmost limit. Nevertheless, as amusement, with incidental reflections upon the chaos of our world today, the light and rapid story may be taken as a sugar-coated parable. It reminds me more of the earlier work of Gelett Burgess than of anything else, without the bite of his satire. One can read it at a sitting, and wish wistfully that such amiable miracles might happen at the present time.

Letters and Leadership

NEW DIRECTIONS IN PROSE AND POETRY. Edited by James Laughlin IV. Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions. 1937. \$2.50.

Reviewed by PAUL ROSENFELD

A HARVARD undergraduate, James Laughlin IV, has finely assumed a responsibility towards literature. He is sponsoring undervalued living writers. During the last years, he has published volumes of several of these authors, W. C. Williams in particular. Under the title "New Directions in Prose and Poetry," he periodically issues collections of pieces by good numbers of them.

The present "New Directions" is the second in the series, and evidences the editor's ability. True, certain of his poets seem afflicted with garrulity and others with Eliotosis. But the majority of his exhibits—only a few of them are reprints—convey the feeling of the present hour: the incertitude, the dejection, and the humor. There is unconscious wit in the bulkiest of them, the text of Cocteau's surrealist ballet, "Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel." The translation, by Dudley Fitts, incidentally reads better than the original played. And there is humor in Gertrude Stein's "Daniel Webster," the representation of a wooden American, and in the language and intricate powerful rhythms of E. E. Cummings's exuberant group of lyrics in Americanese.

Among the distinguished contributions one finds a group of verses by Robert Fitzgerald. There also are characteristic stories by Saroyan. Ruth Lechlitter's important essay points to the poets' new opportunity in the radio-theatre, and the relation between the trochee, the dactyl, and the accents of contemporary American speech. Gorham Munson's somewhat pompous but well-written one addresses the novelists to a new subject matter already adumbrated in E. C. Large's novel "Sugar in the Air": the figure of the artist-engineer as the Social Credit group conceives of it. Above all, the collection provides specimens of the work of certain relatively unknown writers of more than good promise: Willard Maas and Delmore Schwartz in particular; and, with special emphasis, a chapter of a book by one who is surely the largest force lately risen on the horizon of American letters: Henry Miller of Paris. Maas's little poems are free of the preciousness of some of his earlier ones, and have simplicity, harmony, and a touch of genuine passion. Schwartz's story "In Dreams Begin Responsibility" is a personal lyric in the form of an objective tale with continual subtle self-reference. As for Miller, his experience is the painful one of life which has lost inner direction. But he manages to project it in a sort of running confession composed of violent, dolorous mental images couched in tense, rhythmical, often elevated prose. His stuff is rich and singularly emotive.