

The New Books

Biography

MARCUS BRUTUS. By Max Radin. Oxford. 1939. 238 pp. \$2.75

If a life of Brutus was to be written somewhat from Brutus's own point of view, then Max Radin was undoubtedly the man to write it. Not only does he know so much about the period and its literature that he is able to convey the necessary portions of that knowledge to his readers by a species of apprehension which involves no special effort on their part. He is also an intelligent liberal in the nineteenth-century tradition of that perishing faith, to whom the act which raised Marcus Brutus from a character of chronicle to one of history was something more than a piece of heroic pedantry. At the same time Radin is enough a realist to grant that Brutus was living in an unreal world; in fact he makes the key of the man's character and of this book, the concept of a scholar forced into action by intelligence, status, and an education at the hands of M. Porcius Cato. This makes an interesting work about a man probably more interesting than the living Brutus. For having chosen his standpoint with regard to the historical problem, Radin uses it as a lecture platform from which to criticize the criticism of Brutus, and through it, the influence of the autocratic state upon historical thought. Theme and man are thus given a modern quality at the price of viewing some of the personalities concerned in a light more of this century than their own. Sulla is presented as no more than a ruthless cynic, for example, and to Caesar is attributed a long-range intention toward monarchy which would require some evidence. But this does nothing to damage the picture of Brutus, a fine one, and as near as we can know, a true one.

F. P.

HEAVEN LIES ABOUT US. By Howard Spring. Viking. 1939. 134 pp. \$2.25.

Mr. Spring's childhood was that of the very poor; he lived in Manchester on a bleak narrow street that ended in a pub and adjoined a slaughterhouse. His father was an unsuccessful gardener, a morose Irish dreamer who read "Paradise Lost" and died young. His mother, a grim, undaunted, tiny woman, managed somehow to raise seven children. She washed and scrubbed; they did odd jobs. When he was twelve, Spring worked at the docks from eight in the morning until six at night. There was nothing at all in his life that fitted into the ordinary categories of beauty, except his one vacation, when at seventeen he walked to Bideford with his brother. And yet Spring is not sorry for himself as a child; he narrates the chief events of

his childhood unsentimentally, almost impersonally, without the bitterness of Douglas Reed, for instance, about his own similar childhood. There were always exciting sounds and smells and happenings; it was a crowded live world in which he found himself, and for the most part he loved it. He had his humiliations, of course; he was bitterly ashamed when boys shouted after him, "Your mother takes in washing." The only completely bitter moment was when the government sent his mother a pension of five shillings a week because a son was killed in action. "They can keep it," she said: "he was worth more than that." But for the most part, she, like her son, did not consider her life tragic; it was a job and she did it.

But if the author of "My Son, My Son" draws few bitter conclusions, they are all there to be drawn. The contrast between the glow that childhood cast over his extreme poverty, and the light in which he sees it now, is plain. However, he never insists on it, never falsifies the reconstruction which he builds up in such simple, clear, evocative words.

K. S.

Fiction

STATION WAGON SET. By Faith Baldwin. Farrar & Rinehart. 1939. 378 pp. \$2.50.

The line of brightly varnished station wagons is as sure to be there as the station itself when the trains out of New York reach the little communities lying from fifty to a hundred miles from the skirts of the metropolis. It is a gay set that uses these wagons for conveyance to the morning trains and from the evening ones. The first stop after the five-fifteen is likely to be for cocktails even before home and dressing for dinner and the evening's offering in the way of gayety and dissipation. Faith Baldwin has selected more than a baker's dozen of such a group of young people for her novel with "Little Oxford" for village setting and love—light, true, and false—for her theme.

Perhaps novel is not quite the word to describe "Station Wagon Set," for although a slight thread of plot unites the separate stories of the group, each one might just as well have appeared separately as a short story. The figure which dominates the book is that of Thalia Holmes, the beautiful heiress who has to suffer unrequited love through the happy ending of all her friends' romances before she can fall into the arms of her choice. The stories range in temper from the amorous vagaries of the town's handsome, wealthy, and untrustworthy playboy to the near-tragedy of misunderstanding in marriage. The stories all have too the Faith Baldwin brittle brightness; heroines dancing

with tears in their mascara'd eyes, heroes scrupulously witty while hearts break beneath faultlessly tailored dinner clothes, and jazz and alcohol to keep the flagging spirits up to their endless round of futilities. The characters seem to be taken from the smart, long-limbed illustrations for magazine fiction rather than from the less sartorial realms of real life, but they go through their marionette antics with the same vivacity that has endeared their fellows to so many lending-library readers.

G. G.

Miscellaneous

NEW ENGLAND YEAR: A Journal of Vermont Farm Life. By Muriel Follett. Brattleboro, Vt.: Stephen Daye Press. 1939. 222 pp. \$2.50.

Somebody whose name deserves to be writ in letters of gold told this Vermont farm wife that she would probably interest a public of some amplitude if she presented readers with the simple and direct statement of what it is like to run a farmhouse for a year. This book is that simple and direct statement, with only a slight varnish of phrase before publication. There are allusions to people one has not met before; assumptions that one understands the purpose of harrowing and the difficulties inherent in setting out strawberry plants. The result is one which more com-

Before Main Street

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plex literary artisans often strive for in vain—that of inducting the reader instantly and completely into the frame of reference.

It is interesting that all the books mentioned in this book are in children's hands; no conversations on life and literature interrupt the smooth production of early June peas. Yet the existence of the narrative itself is proof that intellectual life is not lacking. Phrase and method of thought bear the impress of a culture too deeply felt to need emphasis; and this is perhaps the specific charm of Vermont—that in a hundred and fifty years its Truesdales, Aikens, Needhams, and Folletts have achieved a culture many centuries old.

F. P.

AMERICA'S HOUSE OF LORDS. *An Inquiry into the Freedom of the Press.* By Harold L. Ickes. Harcourt, Brace. 1939. 214 pp., with index. \$1.50.

The freedom of the press into which Mr. Ickes inquires is not freedom from governmental censorship, of which there is little real danger in this country, as he remarks, but from selfish interest and privilege. One may well admire the courage of a public official (even one as devoted to battles as the Secretary of the Interior) in taking on single-handed all the newspapers; generally, for political reasons, the press is immune to attack from such a source. One also may readily agree with Mr. Ickes that there have been notable journalistic departures from impartiality and truth, and that newspapers fall considerably short of carrying out their full obligation to the public in return for the constitutional right of freedom of the press. But Mr. Ickes's presentation of his case is better in purpose than in substance. His documentary proof is neither deep nor broad. The vigor of his attack is more notable than the quality of his reasoning. The point to which he returns over and over again, that the big newspapers have the sordid minds and souls of economic royalists, is not true. The finest examples of journalistic independence and public service are to be found (as Mr. Ickes's honor list of journals shows) among the largest newspapers. If his little volume will serve (as it ought to do) to stimulate the public into better realization of its right to a free press, to fair and full news, then it will have served a useful end.

C. McD. P.

INDIANS OF THE AMERICAS. By Edwin R. Embree. Houghton Mifflin. 1939. 260 pp. \$2.75.

Dr. Embree presents a sympathetic picture of the American Indians as they lived before the White settlement of this hemisphere, and as they are now living; to which he appends his thoughts concerning their future. The main emphasis is placed upon the

Indians of the United States. Realizing, however, that much of North American Indian civilization was derived from Central and South America, the author begins by describing the cultures of the Maya, the Aztecs, and the Inca. His appreciation of these civilizations is lucid; his portrayal lively without being exaggerated or spectacular. In each instance he presents a clear picture of the functioning of the civilizations in pre-Columbian times, and by comparison with familiar aspects of life in the Old World, and in modern America, makes it plausible and designates clearly the cultural position of each people. He also places these civilizations in time, by discussing their origins, their processes of growth, and the history of their destruction by Europeans. His vignettes are thus mobile, in contrast to the static and hence more patently artificial treatment usual in synthetic ethnographies.

The second half of the book treats, by means of a rapid sampling process, the civilizations of the Indians of the United States, taking as examples the Oglala Sioux, the Iroquois, and the Pueblo Indians. In the final chapter he reviews the history of the relationship between Indians and Whites, culminating in the attempts of the present Indian administration under John Collier to restore as far as practicable Indian self-government and the Indian way of living.

"Indians of the Americas" is interesting, competent, and instructive. In treatment, while lacking the complete detachment of a scientific report, it avoids at the same time the usual pitfalls of romanticism and sentimentality. It can be thoroughly recommended as a non-technical lay introduction to the subject of the American Indian.

C. S. C.

Travel

CHARLESTON: HISTORIC CITY OF GARDENS. By William O. Stevens. Dodd, Mead. 1939. 331 pp. \$3.

Mr. Stevens has written a pleasant and discriminating book about a city which, captured more than once by enemies, has itself captured the affection of peaceful invaders who love charm and gracious living. Readers who lack willingness to master the dry contents of a guide book will find Mr. Stevens's style and manner of presentation agreeable, and his volume an excellent introduction to Charleston and its immediate region. The author writes with sensible appreciation of the beauties and virtues of the city and the incomparable gardens which draw thousands yearly on a pilgrimage to the Low Country, but he also is a keen observer of local trifles which may annoy the sojourner. Mr. Stevens's own pen-and-ink sketches add to the reader's enjoyment.

C. McD. P.

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Double-Crostics: No. 301

By ELIZABETH S. KINGSLEY

	1-U	2-A	3-W		4-Y	5-V	6-M	7-F	8-O		9-J	10-B		11-Z	12-X	13-U
14-E	15-N	16-R		17-B	18-D		19-G		20-X	21-E	22-Z	23-R	24-G	25-U	26-D	
27-S	28-T	29-P	30-B	31-N		32-M	33-S	34-N	35-Y	36-X	37-W		38-B	39-P	40-K	
41-S	42-Q	43-R	44-W	45-M	46-C	47-L	48-A	49-V	50-T	51-S	52-F	53-N		54-H	55-C	
56-A	57-V	58-G	59-K		60-J	61-H	62-B		63-E	64-P	65-R	66-W	67-F		68-H	69-K
70-T		71-H	72-Q	73-I		74-T	75-M	76-P		77-V	78-S	79-C	80-O	81-W	82-M	
83-P	84-K		85-G	86-Q	87-L	88-B		89-E	90-N	91-A	92-T	93-D		94-X	95-R	96-A
97-T	98-H		99-Y	100-J	101-F	102-W	103-S		104-A	105-Q	106-T	107-I	108-E		109-H	
110-F	111-J	112-Q	113-L	114-G		115-Z	116-I	117-A	118-C	119-K	120-D		121-U	122-T	123-P	124-J
	125-M	126-G	127-S	128-R	129-J		130-O	131-C	132-F		133-V	134-I	135-W	136-U	137-H	
138-C	139-I		140-T	141-M	142-C	143-P		144-K	145-G	146-B		147-N	148-A	149-U	150-J	151-F
152-I	153-H		154-U	155-Y	156-D	157-I	158-N	159-R	160-L	161-X	162-Q		163-J	164-Z		165-S
166-D	167-R	168-Q		169-F	170-Y	171-V	172-U	173-S	174-X	175-W		176-X	177-U	178-N	179-D	180-V
181-E	182-O	183-A														

DIRECTIONS

To solve this puzzle you must guess twenty-six words, the definitions of which are given in the column headed **DEFINITIONS**. The letters in each word to be guessed are numbered. These numbers appear under the dashes in the column headed **WORDS**. There is a dash for each letter in the required word. The key letters in the squares are for convenience, indicating to which word in the definitions each letter in the diagram belongs. When you have guessed a word, fill it in on the dashes; then write each letter in the correspondingly numbered square on the puzzle diagram. When the squares are all filled in you will find (by reading from left to right) a quotation from a famous author. Reading up and down the letters mean nothing. The black squares indicate ends of words; therefore words do not necessarily end at the right side of the diagram.

When the column headed **WORDS** is filled in, the initial letters spell the name of the author and the title of the piece from which the quotation has been taken. Authority for spelling and definitions is Webster's *New International Dictionary* (second edition).

The solution of last week's Double Crostic will be found on page 17 of this issue.

DEFINITIONS

- A. Slogan; countersign.
- B. Inward flow or current.
- C. Canadian poet (1861-99).
- D. Malevolent spirits (Rom.).
- E. Mischievous.
- F. City in Scotland.
- G. Stone of Phoenician script (1868).
- H. Reeling.
- I. Month.
- J. Strengthen, ratify.
- K. Supply kit (colloq.).
- L. Western Polynesian dances.
- M. Longing (adj.).
- N. Inferior to standard quality.
- O. American poet and dramatist (1872-).
- P. Prominently advertised (comp.).
- Q. Snobbish (comp.; slang).
- R. Country of Jonah's flight.
- S. Protesting.
- T. Flaxen-colored (comp.).
- U. Severe, harsh.
- V. South American liberator (1783-1830).
- W. Choosing the best (adj.).
- X. Wild irrational talks.
- Y. Rate of activity.
- Z. Barks snappishly.

WORDS

91	96	56	48	2	104	117	148	183
17	30	62	146	38	10	88		
142	131	79	118	46	138	55		
179	26	156	166	93	120	18		
21	181	89	14	63	108			
101	110	52	169	151	7	67	132	
58	145	19	24	126	85	114		
71	109	153	68	98	54	61	137	
73	107	139	152	157	116	134		
100	9	163	124	111	60	129	150	
40	69	84	144	59	119			
47	160	113	87					
6	141	82	75	32	45	125		
90	178	147	31	34	158	53	15	
8	80	130	182					
123	83	64	143	29	39	76		
72	42	162	105	86	112	168		
159	65	43	16	95	23	167	128	
33	51	105	103	41	27	78	173	127
97	106	122	70	140	28	50	74	92
121	177	154	25	172	13	149	136	1
133	5	77	57	171	180	49		
3	44	37	175	102	81	135	66	
12	36	20	176	161	174	94		
99	170	35	4	155				
164	11	115	22					