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Trade Winds

BY P. E. G. QUERCUS

NOTHING is more exciting to Old Q. than the reports of college presidents. He loves to brood over the difficult problems of educators, which he does not himself have to solve; though his secret ambition, which he hopes to attack about the year 1940, is to write a college textbook on the English Language. *Bookworm, break this sloth urbane*, as Emerson (wish New England didn't still call him Mr. Emerson) said in his admirable poem *Monadnoc*, might be the motto of such a book. Like Emerson's mountain, Old Q. is a "grand affirmer of the present tense." In the recent annual report of the president of Harvard to his Board of Overseers, we found much noteworthy. President Conant quotes, but charitably does not identify, "a prominent official of a national educational association" who believes that the best modern English, and that most worth study by the pupil, is "the English spoken and written by the American business man."

At the Harvard Summer School last summer every State in the union was represented except Idaho, which presumably was busy with potatoes. The Nieman Fellowships in Journalism have been successful enough to be continued. This endowment made it possible to invite 9 practising journalists to spend a year at Harvard in any kind of study they wished; their stipend to correspond to the salary sacrificed by their leave of absence. The Fellows meet for dinner once a week, under the chairmanship of Archibald MacLeish, to discuss the problems of American journalism, "whose interest and enthusiasm," President Conant says, "have given this unusual undertaking a good start." Applications for the Nieman Fellowships for 1939-40 will be received until March 1st. The first year there were about 400 applicants. If the news gets round there might easily be 4,000. A memorable phrase concludes President Conant's fine summary: "we ask for the privilege of opening further new vistas in the heavy growth of man's ignorance."

All lovers of fine craftsmanship are shocked at the tragic destruction by fire of the Village Press at Marlboro, N. Y. This was the beautiful workshop that Frederic W. Goudy had remodelled (from an old water-mill) for his work in type-designing. The drawings and patterns of many of Mr. Goudy's fonts were lost. Fortunately the drawings of his latest type-face, just completed for the University of California, had been sent off only a few days before the disaster. The sympathy of all typophiles goes out to Mr. Goudy in this grievous loss.

Interest has been roused in England by Philip Guedalla's article in the *Times Lit. Supp.* urging that the history of the United States be taught in English schools. One of the things that has always amused us is the obscure and small-scale maps of the U. S. shown in British atlases. The most charming idea for a

New Year's card was that of Robert Steele in London who sent to his friends a facsimile reprint of his Life Admission card to the Reading Room of the British Museum, dated Dec. 26, 1888. "It recalls to me," he says, "fifty years' pleasurable study, with the constant help and understanding sympathy of every official." Raymond Adams (Chapel Hill, N. C.) in the January issue of his always welcome *Thoreau Newsletter*, suggests that Thoreauvians write to the Board of Selectmen at Concord appealing against any more filling stations on the road to Walden Pond. The book that received the Southern Authors' Award this year was *Blow for a Landing* by Ben Lucien Burman. Compton Mackenzie, in a lively article in *John o' London's* called *When All the Publishers Said "No,"* describes his early adventures in authorship. He remarks "Nowadays I could count on the fingers of one hand the publishers who decide on their own judgment about the fate of a MS. And that is the great weakness of modern publishing."

When Compton Mackenzie's first novel *The Passionate Elopement* was published (1911) he persuaded Martin Secker to advertise in the "tube lifts" (viz. elevators in subway stations) but omitted the one at South Kensington because the descent there is so short. It is good to hear Mr. Mackenzie praising Martin Secker's "exquisite taste" in book production, for Mr. Secker rediscovered book manufacture as an art, and many collectors in this country who have scarcely heard of him have formed their taste on his ideas. There are still many readers who probably have never seen a really beautiful book nor can imagine what one would look like. Everyone knows the little so-called Quaker Calendar, printed in red and blue with brief cheerful quotations sprinkled through the months. Its origin, editing and distribution have always been a mystery to us. This year, for the first time, we have caught it in an error. For the month of April 1939 it quotes "Abram Lindsey Gordon." The Australian poet's name was Adam Lindsay Gordon.

Always trudging a long way behind the procession, we were excited last year when we read *Mr. Zero*, a very good thriller by Patricia Wentworth. We then discovered that Miss Wentworth had written 30 or more excellent novels, and the rental libraries know her well. But she is much better than that; her new grisly *Lonesome Road* has somewhat the flavor and foreboding skill of *Rebecca*, and her little "Enquiry Agent" Miss Silver is a real character. Remove the jacket of this book (which makes it look like a juvenile) and try it on your Belloc Lowndes fans. The Hampshire Bookshop, Northampton, Mass. is arranging a Book Festival for the Connecticut Valley, April 17-22, and plans exhibits and speakers of special interest to all book-lovers "from Hanover to Hartford."