

Revolt in Haiti

THE BLACK JACOBINS. Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution. By C. L. R. James. New York: The Dial Press. 1938. \$3.75.

Reviewed by HAROLD COURLANDER

THE struggle for abolition of slavery and for independence in the island of Haiti has too often been treated as a simple nationalist movement. We see at last a clear analysis of the fight as a phase of the European competition for colonies, and particularly as a phase of the French class struggle which began with but did not terminate with the Revolution. For, on the heels of the French Revolution came the uprising of the slaves in the colonies. There was support among the Jacobins in France for the abolition of slavery, but once the step was taken—forced by the determination of the blacks—the French middle class moderated its opportunistic view, feeling that without slaves no colony could exist. The fight of Toussaint L'Ouverture and his allies (among whom complete trust in one another was a rarity) was only to preserve the new-won freedom of the blacks, to create in San Domingo (as Haiti was then called, a truly republican auxiliary of republican France. L'Ouverture was a cultured and sensitive person. Personally he was not equal to the task which later fell to the fiery Dessalines, that of severing the island from European control. Always he protested his loyalty to France, and always proved it. He opposed colonial governors as enemies of France who were sworn to repudiate the principles of the Republic. He fought against the mulattoes as against a class which wanted rights for itself at the expense of the blacks. He used England and Spain adroitly, while each of them thought of L'Ouverture as the pawn. But always this Negro leader fought for the living principles of the French Revolution. He regarded as treasonable any suggestions of independence. Toward the last he could no longer bear the political and social hypocrisies of the mother country, and retired to his estates; later he was treacherously kidnaped and shipped to France, where he died of bad treatment in prison.

From now on the struggle was clearly nationalist. L'Ouverture, for all his resolute character, was too civilized for the task, and when he went out of the picture his work was done. Dessalines answered the whites in the only language they understood, the only language they had ever spoken to the blacks—force and brutality. He settled the issue. A relentless passionate mobile war by ex-slaves, together with yellow fever, destroyed the very best of Bonaparte's troops.

It is difficult to tell the story of the Haitian's fight for freedom without telling it in terms of Toussaint L'Ouverture. Yet it is of far greater implication than a single leader can give it. Toussaint was produced by the Revolution. So were Oge, Chavannes, Christophe, Petion, Dessalines, and a hundred others. They often had divergent interests, often fought among themselves while the French consolidated gains, but their courses were parallel. The conclusion was poverty—the

result of a desolating warfare—and dignity. Time has not modified the conclusion.

"The Black Jacobins" is not a simple account of this epic revolt in the West Indies. Nor could it be simple. But for the first time the scene is viewed with complete perspective and the theme recorded with understanding. It is not only one of the most sharply defined stories of the period to be published in our time, it is told in terms which have contemporary significance. "To the African robbed of his land and segregated, what does it matter whether the robbers are fascists or democrats?" It may prove to be the text of tomorrow's events in Africa.

The Wordsworths

WILLIAM AND DOROTHY. By Helen Ashton. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1938. \$2.50.

Reviewed by ALEXANDER COWIE

IMAGINE Dorothy Wordsworth as a romantic heroine passionately in love with Coleridge. Let the casual "touch of his fingers run through her like a consuming fire." From time to time refer to her as "the fiery girl," and let her occasionally bite her lips until the blood comes—a procedure apparently guaranteed to convert any girl into a heroine. Let her suffer a "jealous pang" every time a child is born to Mrs. Coleridge—a fairly frequent occurrence. Let Mrs. Coleridge utter spiteful discourtesies such as one might expect from an hysterical boarding-school miss. By these means, and a few others as unworthy and as naive, you will have made fiction of the lives of the Wordsworths and their circle, a group as little suited to such treatment as any in English literature. At least this is a natural inference from the reading of Helen Ashton's "William and Dorothy." The fictitious elements employed not only seem as out of place as a brass band in church, but they don't square with the biographical facts which are elsewhere the basis for the book. In a typical instance Miss Ashton shows Dorothy trying to conceal from William a harmless letter she is writing to Coleridge, a letter which in point of fact was the joint composition of William and Dorothy. If this be fiction, long live biography, footnotes and all. In short, Miss Ashton should have invented more or invented less, preferably less.

Remove the spurious elements from this book—by far the least in bulk—and what remains is a substantial, fairly readable narrative of the Wordsworths and their friends and dependents from 1797 to 1855. Little new light is thrown upon the principal persons. Nor is the author's interest scrupulously literary: it is doubtful if even the prerogative of fiction warrants referring to "the long slow roll of the Miltonic hexameter" in the second book of "Paradise Lost" and misquoting (p. 192) a famous line therein. Miss Ashton is at her best when she deploys her characters in the kitchen or the garden—two extremely important loci in the lives of the Wordsworths—or follows them on one of their many delightful "wanders." The record is fascinating enough; no need to conjure scenes.

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To which we can only add, Amen, and say that if you liked *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Wind in the Willows*, or *A Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court*, you'll relish *The Sword in the Stone* immoderately. At all bookstores. \$2.50

A BOOK-OF-THE-MONTH CLUB
SELECTION FOR JANUARY

G. P. Putnam's Sons

Japanese Society

JAPAN: THE HUNGRY GUEST. By G. C. Allen. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1938. \$3.

Reviewed by T. A. BISSON

THIS volume is a careful study of modern Japanese life and society, and can be recommended as the most valuable of the recent works on Japan. The author, professor of economics at the University of Liverpool, has been a student of Japanese conditions for sixteen years, and visited Japan for further investigation in 1936. He covers social, political, and economic developments, ranging from the last century to the current Sino-Japanese war, and in all these fields achieves an admirable detachment and balance. Despite a sympathy based on an understanding of Japan's difficulties, he condemns the latter's resort to military aggression in China and deplores the violence and fanaticism which have latterly marked its internal politics and checked its progress toward democratic institutions.

A brief introduction, defining the author's attitude and point of view, leads into chapters on Japan's national traits and character, the structure of Japanese society, and the system of government. The economic sections, historical and descriptive, form the heart of the book and are of first-rate value. These four chapters embody a history of Japan's modern economic development, a description and analysis of Japanese farms, small-scale workshops and factories, and a study of the workers' conditions. The latter picture, even when painted with reserve, is highly illuminating. Average wages range from ten cents a day, as for silk reeling operatives in certain towns, up to a high of \$1.50 for a skilled machinist. Even in the modern large-scale factories, the eight-hour day is an exception; in small-scale industry, which includes the bulk of the Japanese workers, twelve to fourteen hours a day is not uncommon while sixteen hours is not unknown. A weekly rest-day is the exception rather than the rule. Only in factories with ten or more employees are working hours for women and juveniles limited—and then to eleven per day, with a break of one hour. On the background of this industrial system is the poverty-stricken agricultural population, verging on famine in some localities and continually supplying a stream of new recruits to the workshops and factories. Even in the more controversial chapters relating to the transformation of Japan's politics under military-fascist influences and to Japan's aggressive expansion since 1931, there is little to which exception can be taken, though at a few points, the author might have sharpened the significance of political events since 1936.

The chapter on "manifest destiny" is an equally careful survey of Japan's modern territorial expansion, which leaves little to be said in the way of criticism. There is an occasional hint that the Chinese boycotts were partly responsible for Japan's resort to military force; in reality, such boycotts have always been a response to Japan's prior

use of force. The "treaty provision," which the author claims debarred China from building railway lines parallel to the South Manchuria Railway, exists only in the form of a doubtfully authentic "protocol." It may well be questioned whether Russia, at least after 1928, constituted a menace to Japan's security that in any way justified the Japanese military occupation of Manchuria. The exploitation of Soviet Far Eastern resources and the organization of a large Soviet Far Eastern army have occurred only since 1931—in response to Japan's moves. Japan's military insecurity *vis-à-vis* Russia, indeed, is far greater today than it was in 1931.

The appendix, in which the author examines the economic effects of the war on Japan, deserves careful reading. In general, he concludes that "while Japan's economic position is not so vulnerable as to lead to a collapse of her military effort, the war is likely to be very costly for her, and even victory would leave her economic strength seriously impaired."

Observations in the Near East

ARABIAN ANTICS. By Ladislav Farago. New York: Sheridan House. 1938. \$2.50.

Reviewed by HASSOLDT DAVIS

IF Mr. Farago's recent observations in southern Arabia are as accurate as they were previously in Abyssinia and Palestine, before the crises occurred in those two countries, this book is bad news indeed, for it details from thoughtful, first-hand research the machinations which are menacing Great Britain through the Red Sea.

His original plan of visiting Yemen, armed with the official request of his own government, was sternly thwarted by the despot Imam Yahya, though he did manage to reach Hodeida, only to be held prisoner while the Governor was accepting delivery of fifty thousand rifles from the German house of Krupp. Back in Aden, he was dismayed by the Italian propaganda tolerated by the British. Fascist movies were openly shown to the natives to prove the superiority of Italian dominion. Fascist spies were everywhere. Mr. Farago was a chance witness to the Italian surveying of one of the Red Sea islets, not far from British Aden, and learned that of the eleven foreigners in Yemen seven were fascist agents. The only telegraph was operated by them, and it was they who circulated the tales of British atrocities to such effect that the country was rapidly becoming pro-Italian despite England's long tenancy next door.

Sailing up the Red Sea in a native dhow and traveling inland to Ethiopia, Mr. Farago was convinced that Italy still held little more than the towns in her filched province, for the country was still in revolt, and more Italians had been killed since the end of the war than during it. His revelations are frequently sensational, but they have the ring of a fierce truth to them. Excerpted from his narrative there still remains a first-rate travel yarn, full of color and excitement and wit.

A Bookman's Career

ADVENTURES OF A BOOKSELLER. By G. Orioli. New York: Robert M. McBride & Co. 1938. \$3.50.

Reviewed by TERENCE HOLLIDAY

"G. ORIOLI-FLORENCE" is a publisher's imprint that has long been familiar to modern book-collectors and readers, appearing on the "first-issue" title-pages of expensive and recondite works by Norman Douglas, D. H. Lawrence, Richard Aldington, and Somerset Maugham. On the more recondite and expensive of these, such as "Lady Chatterley's Lover," only a discreet "Privately Printed" appeared; nevertheless there was apparent here, also, the personal, characteristic touch in format that marked this series of odd and occasionally distinguished curiosa. Plain and sturdy in appearance, conceding nothing to the taste for finicking typography, hand-made paper, and elaborate binding, these volumes raised two inevitable questions: what manner of man produced them, and why should a comparatively obscure Florentine secure manuscripts for which publishers of London and New York would gladly compete?

"Adventures of a Bookseller" abundantly provides the answers to these questions. It reveals a delightful personality at once striking, unassuming, and altogether engaging, a self-made man of many parts, one whose savoir faire and invincible good humor have enabled him to achieve a high place in his profession in the face of early poverty and fantastic vicissitudes.

After a lively and hazardous boyhood and the necessary period of service in the Italian army, Mr. Orioli found himself almost fortuitously launched on a career of picaresque misadventure in London. An encounter with the now legendary Vonnich and a chance meeting with the man who became his partner in the firm of Davis and Orioli led to his return to Florence and the establishment of a branch shop for the purchase and sale of incunabula. English visitors became clients, clients became friends, and it was not long before a casual acquaintance with Lawrence and Douglas deepened into a cordial, intimate relationship. From this point on, "Adventures of a Bookseller" becomes a rich quarry for the confirmed Laurentian and Douglasite, though the more rapturous adepts of these cults must be warned that the author is by no means a blind worshipper at their fanes. Mr. Orioli saw Lawrence and Douglas plain.

A minor merit of these memoirs, yet one equally worthy of emphasis, is the author's keen perception of the oddities and frailties of human nature, and his gift for recording variations of morals and manners. Throughout his wide experience with the famous and the infamous, he has retained an eager zest for noting what is really notable and illuminating in a character whether attractive or repellant; and his colloquial, direct, economical style is exactly suited to his material. "Adventures of a Bookseller" will be savored with special appreciation by fellow-members of the author's guild, and heartily recommended by them to the common reader.