

# Four Eastern Cruises

A YACHTMAN'S COAST PILOT. By H. S. ("Skipper") Smith. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1940. 212 pp. \$4.50.

Reviewed by HARRISON SMITH

THIS is an almost invaluable book for any yachtsman to add to the collection of sea-going books on the shelf at the head of his bunk. It should have been bound in oil-cloth, for it is as useful on deck as it is pleasant to read by the light of the cabin lamp. The author takes the amateur yachtsman firmly by the hand, and after lecturing him mildly in his Introduction, leads him by innumerable buoys, shoals, and lighthouses into some of the most enchanting and sheltered harbors any sailor of small craft could wish to enter. But this is a practical volume, and it leaves the trials and pleasures of cruising to other books that record the peculiarities of amateur crews, the behavior of the lady with claustrophobia, enclosed in what can only appear to her to be a malodorous coffin, or the struggles with galley stove and engine.

"Skipper" Smith's book takes up in detail four cruises, starting at Execution Rocks light at the New York end of Long Island Sound and leading you in turn to Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket; to Portsmouth, New Hampshire; to Northeast Harbor, Maine, and to Chesapeake Bay.

With the first three cruises this critic is familiar, since he has for years in vacation time rounded most of the headlands, and has dragged his anchor in too many of the harbors, so admirably described and charted. The cruise to the Chesapeake is terra-incognita to most of the hundreds of yachtsmen who start gaily off down the Sound every year, bound East, but it should induce many to go South of New York for a change.

The large scale reproductions of harbors are most useful, since most small yachts get along with the all inclusive government charts that are apt to lead to difficulties in entering or anchoring in small or shallow places when the tides or winds play strange tricks in the night. The directions as to where to find gasoline, stores and yacht yards will be of great service. The author shows an almost scandalous familiarity with buoys, cans, and nuns. Where else could you find out, for example, that three black cans and a nun in Quisset harbor are so battered and paintless that only by their shape can you tell them? But that little note may serve to keep someone off a sand-flat. The book closes with an appendix by which you can turn compass points into degrees, discover the velocity of a tidal current, and correct your course to suit.

In fact this is a handsome and an extremely useful book, and if you have never sailed, but are thinking of try-



Harrison Smith's Cossack II

ing this finest of sports next year, you had better get it from your bookstore and look it over in the winter evenings that are not so many months away.

*Harrison Smith, also known as "Skipper," is a publisher whose hobby, as the book trade knows, is ships and sailing.*

## The Andersons

LARZ ANDERSON. *LETTERS AND JOURNALS OF A DIPLOMAT*. Edited by Isabel Anderson. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company. 1940. 672 pp., and index. \$5.

Reviewed by CHARLES DAVID ABBOTT

THIS book is as spacious as the lives it chronicles. Nearly seven hundred pages of excerpts from letters and autobiographic journals display the careers diplomatic, domestic, and, above all, social, not only of Larz Anderson, one time United States Minister of Belgium and Ambassador to Japan, but also of Isabel Perkins Anderson who, with conjugal piety, has herself arranged the selections in readable order and skillfully bridged the gaps where documents were unavailable. The result is more than a memorial to her husband. It is a kaleidoscopic, almost encyclopedic, survey of the American "upper crust" from 1888 to 1937. With unassuming naturalness it records all the minutiae of a way of life that was flawless in its conventional elegance, generous in its benefactions, extensive in its personal relationships, but somehow very remote from the actuality of the world.

It presents a continuous pageant of brilliant functions: formal dinner parties in Boston and Washington, where the Andersons kept houses; the Cup Races at Newport and the Harvard-Yale Races at New London; Exeter

and Harvard reunions; receptions and balls of the "haute monde" in London, Paris, Rome, Brussels, and Tokyo. It describes travels that carried the Andersons into every quarter of the globe, including the United States, which they watched always either from their beloved houseboat *Roxana* or from a private car chartered from the railroad for each journey. They saw everything of interest, they knew everybody who mattered, they ran three model domestic establishments where they entertained frequently and munificently, and of all their activities they kept the meticulous records out of which this book is made.

Larz Anderson started young in the diplomatic service. Fresh out of Harvard he was attached for three years to the Embassy in London, where he earned a reputation both for dependability and popularity. Transferred to Rome in 1894, he rose to the rank of First Secretary. There he met Isabel Perkins and with the announcement of his engagement to her he resigned his post to devote himself to the life they were to live together. Then began the round of travels and social responsibilities which were only slightly augmented when fourteen years later his old family friend President Taft appointed him Minister to Belgium and, the year after, Ambassador to Japan. He was not disappointed when President Coolidge did not, as he half-expected, nominate him to the Embassy at Rome. "It would have been a great sacrifice for me to take up such duties, and when Fletcher was chosen, I found myself very considerably relieved."

He was wedded to the course of life he had chosen. He lived it seriously and devotedly even when difficulties and discrepancies could no longer go unnoticed. It was not that his mode of living changed, but that the world changed. Chaos threatened. Political and social transmutations were obvious in Boston, and in Washington such a regime as that of Herbert Hoover marked a decline that was abysmal. As for Chicago, its Century of Progress (?) Exposition, with the stark ugliness of its architecture, was a portent of the unspeakable.

But the interesting thing to me was the people! I have never seen such terrible people, who fitted perfectly into the monstrous setting. Both place and people represented the tendency and taste of today, and the whole panorama was terrifying—a mass of human beings, the men in shirt sleeves, milling about. The sight of a lady or gentleman was rarer than any of the scientific exhibits. The crowd behaved well enough but gave the idea that a spark might cause a revolutionary explosion.

The America of his past had perished.

# THE NEW BOOKS

## Belles Lettres

**BAKER STREET AND BEYOND.** By Edgar W. Smith. New York: Pamphlet House. 1940. 53 pp. Illustrated with maps drawn by Julian Wolff, M.D.

This work of scholarship will delight all true Holmesians. As a fox-hunter traces famous runs on the map, we can thumb these pages and recall the many unlikely places where the game, Watson, was afoot! Professor Smith has listed all the places mentioned in the Sherlockian Saga, with a note showing how each comes into the canon. His industry has listed not only the places visited by the actors, such as "Illinois: One of the United States, whose divine origin was attested by little Lucy Ferrier, in 'A Study in Scarlet'"; he has also mentioned, for instance, Attica, because Jabez Wilson gained considerable information about it out of the Encyclopedia Britannica, and has even included Egglow and Egglonitz, which appeared in Holmes's gazetteer (in "A Scandal in Bohemia") but in no other except this one. The present volume is further embellished with maps of various parts of the world, showing their Holmesian associations; there is a particularly fine one of the United States, showing the wanderings of the Latter-Day Saints, and also a detailed map of Vermessa Valley (the Valley of Fear) which lies somewhere along the New York-Pennsylvania border. All in all, this is a valuable contribution to the rapidly growing corpus of Holmesian scholarship, which should procure its author an honorary degree from the University of Camford (which was, you remember, "the composite university where Professor Presbury taught physiology by day and practised pithecolology by night").

B. D.

## Fiction

**WEEVIL IN THE COTTON.** By Samuel Milton Elam. Stokes. 1940. 231 pp. \$2.

This is another it-can-happen-here book. A star political reporter in a small Southern city plays ball with a handful of venal politicians to start a Negro riot scare. In putting the faked riot down—there is no opposition paper to expose the plot—the politicians assume dictatorial power, organize a band of ruffians to terrorize the Negroes in true Nazi fashion, liquidate some of their enemies, and place others behind barbed wire. One of the politicians becomes "Guardian," instead of Fuehrer, and, seeing the Treasury almost empty, sets about to "protect" an adjoining community and incorporate it under his jurisdiction. The Treasury is thereby filled, but not the appetites of the fattened bosses.

Their eyes soon turn toward the State capitol, which they prepare to capture. The newspaper plays its tune well, keeping all respectable citizens frightened. Successive murders and atrocities, however, accumulate too rapidly for the good of the "Guardian." "Weevil in the Cotton" is a racy, shocking novel of no great literary merit; at times it is too blatant and the borrowings from the Nazis too obvious. Nevertheless, it contains too much truth for comfort. The author knows well the bawdy politicians and newspapermen who are democracy's worst enemies.

C. K.

**THE DELAMER CURSE.** By Anne Green. Harpers. 1940.

Like all Anne Green's books, this is a mixture of absurdity and reality. If you like that combination, a touch of inconsecutiveness and even lunacy will not disturb you. You will bear with ladies who give away their ruby rings on an impulse, and fling their flowers out of the drawing room windows. You will not balk at crystal balls and a touch of voodoo. If you don't like that combination, you won't get beyond chapter two, anyway.

"The Delamer Curse" has lost the gayety of Miss Green's first works like "The Selbys." Here the author is interested in sinister forms of magic. There is a definite fairy-tale side to the book,—the old family curse, and a beautiful heroine who escapes from it after amazing adventures. Yet it is set against a background of modern Paris, and we take a fling into cosmopolitan society with our heroine. There is a curious dream-like quality about it all; it is a modern "Mysteries of Udolpho."

Isabelle Hart, like Cinderella, starts out as a drab, quiet little mouse, and like Cinderella, she changes rapidly. At twenty-two, she is living quietly in Paris with her father, an absent-minded professor. She revolts and demands life, love, and gayety. In so doing, she discovers (a) that she is rich and owns the fine eighteenth century house in which they live and (b) that she has inherited the family curse from her mother, the beautiful Miss Delamer. The Delamer curse manifests itself in various unpleasing ways. The Delamers never live beyond thirty and they have feelings of terror and foreboding. To distract herself, Isabelle gets a position as secretary to a fashionable faith healer, Mrs. Ripplestein. She becomes part of the smart Paris world, some of whom are drawn from life. The curse becomes more involved. We have glimpses of ghostly Delamers . . . crystal balls . . . hidden gardens . . . magic mirrors . . . an African necklace, embedded spell and all in an ornate coffee pot. A sensible husband rescues Isa-

belle from this nightmare, and most of the mysteries are explained.

There is a sharp change of mood in the book that startles the reader. We jump from farce to magic to melodrama without warning as one does in a dream. It is a diverting, confusing, episodic, modern fairy tale.

R. C. B.

**A CASTLE IN CARINTHIA.** By Johann Fabricius. Random House. 1940. 489 pp. \$2.75.

This is the story of an unpretentious family of country gentry and their rural neighbors and tenants, a family who know royalty only from the newspapers and from one glimpse of the grey figure of the emperor at a military review, and who afford themselves only one brief trip to Vienna in the more than thirty years through which their doings are chronicled. Baron von Weygand, head of the family, is a retired major of Uhlans, happiest when he is riding over the fields from which he derives his modest income, and not above lending a hand with the hay fork at harvest time, his "castle" is no more than a decaying manor house, and his two daughters, about whom the story mostly revolves, are unsophisticated enough when they are nearly out of their teens to be awed by their first sight of a stationary bathtub with running hot and cold water.

In other words the Weygands are

"Like figures in a ballad," says the *Times*, of the characters in

## FRUIT OUT OF ROCK

by Frances Gillmor

A love story—simple, distinguished—laid on the southern border of Arizona, unimaginably beautiful and hard in which the author makes this region "distinctively her own."

\$2.50

DUELL, SLOAN AND PEARCE

If you haven't read **INTRUDE NO MORE**, Virginia's Creed's novel of a Beacon Hill girl who ran away to become a dancer, you're missing one of the finest treats of the season! \$2.50. DS&P.