

Great Idea

A *STAR FELL*. By H. H. The Ranee of Sarawak. New York: Harrison-Hilton Books, Inc. 1940. 257 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by TALBOT MUNDY

FROM beginning to end H.H. the Ranee of Sarawak, the white wife of the white Rajah of a part of Borneo, pervades her story. It is her tragedy, on which she has looked, articulate but helpless. A white Ranee is rare. So also is a novel that deals fairly, without malice or favor, with the tragic consequences of the teachings and disguised motives of Christian missionaries in a land where sex and sin are not synonymous—a tropical land where passion, emotion, imagination are in even more gaudy contrast than the jungle orchids to the missionaries' pale righteousness. The Ranee is not anti-Christian. The book contains no propaganda. The story presents the missionary method, some of its motives—and some of its consequences.

The hero, an epileptic Tamil named Chandra, is orphaned when a small boy, his parents being run over by a drunken driver's car. The child is taken and raised by missionaries. The character of Rama Chandra is so well presented and developed that it suggests a portrait. Simply and objectively the author reveals the child's bewilderment and the effect upon an unhealthy imagination of the Bible story of the Immaculate Conception. In Rama Chandra's mind that idea of the Immaculate Conception becomes an obsession that persists until, in middle age, it ends in madness. Unable to reconcile what he has seen with what he has heard, Rama Chandra deserts the mission school and goes in search of a wife who shall be the mother of his immaculate child. He chooses a Chinese girl and makes a modest home for her in the mountains where he can enjoy the solitude and ponder his great idea aloof from the sinful world. A girl child is born, but the Chinese child-wife dies.

Naming the child Mary, Rama Chandra now persists in his obsession to its logical, inevitable tragic ending. When nature at last prevails and Mary becomes pregnant by a rascally young mission raised half-breed, Rama Chandra believes that the immaculate conception has taken place. He falls on his face on the ground. He adores. He worships. He gives thanks. He refuses to believe, he indignantly rejects the girl's confession of how she really became pregnant. The only mercy in the story is the madness that preserves Rama Chandra from disillusion. The rest is naked tragedy without a hint of a solution.

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Road Atlases in Review

SUSAN CRANE

WITH the arrival this Spring of the new Rand McNally "Auto Road Atlas,"* we had occasion to reflect on the development of road atlases since the early days of the automobile. In this sophisticated and streamlined age we take for granted our clearly-marked highways and our keyed and accurately-labelled road maps. We have come a long way from the first "Rand McNally Photo-Auto Guide," which was a pioneer in acquainting the then-existent roads to the motorist. The directions consisted of unique photographs, two of which are reproduced on this page. Incidentally, these pictures, along with many others, were taken by Mr. and Mrs. Andrew McNally II in 1908 on their honeymoon trip from Chicago to Milwaukee. That's combining business with pleasure, for just a few months later the "Photo-Auto Guide, Chicago to Milwaukee" was published.

Since few of the roads were marked, the photographs in the photo-auto guide were used as a means of representing turns or forks in the road. In addition, the guide included several pages of crudely-sketched line maps which attempted to indicate the general direction of travel. Under each photograph was given the direction of the turn and the mileage to the point shown in the next photograph. For instance: "Turn left at end of road—cross bridge; turn right and continue east. Brimfield three-tenths of a mile, next photo six and one-tenth miles." Each picture contained an arrow of direction.

Nothing, nothing at all was left to the imagination or even to the common sense of the driver. If the auto guide took you to Chicago it was sure

to take you back by another series of photos showing you practically the same places, with turns reversed, etc. In a New York to Chicago trip, the first picture shows the Hotel Wolcott at 31st Street and Broadway. Presumably, you bring your car to that stop and follow the photos through, finally arriving in front of the Stratford Hotel in Chicago. The very next picture is of the same hotel and there ensues another series of plates taking you back to New York—to the front door of the Hotel Wolcott.

Some choice bits of Americana appear in these atlases, almost too precious to remain unmentioned. From this same New York to Chicago guide, published in 1907, we find the following instructions:

The best way to use the Photo-Auto maps is to follow the route by the topographical map and refer to the photographs only to make sure that you are turning at the right place. Use your meter at all times to get the distance between turns. The distance given between turns will vary with different machines, as a slight difference in the size of the tires, different condition of the roads and many other things tend to vary the register. Three meters were used and an average taken to get the distances given. The numbers in the squares and circles give the number of the photographs at the turns and the figures outside of them give the distance to the next photograph. The compass on each plate should be used to get correct direction. This map is not drawn to scale, but is made to show the turns to best advantage. Where turns occur close together the map is enlarged and where there is a long straight run it is condensed, so do not judge the distance by the appearance of the map. Go entirely by the meter readings. Distances between closest points are only given to insure the smallest variation. The distances given are the average

obtained from three different makes of speedometers and rechecked by the Warner Auto-Meter.

Another set of instructions under the title "Courtesy Rules of the Roads" makes a plea for sharing your gas with a fellow traveler who may be in distress: "You may find yourself in the same predicament some day."

About fifteen to twenty-five different guides were published and the average price of each was \$2.50. None was published for routes west of Chicago. The Guide for New York to Chicago and back was \$5. Compare this with the price of the present much more accurate atlas for the United States, Canada, and Mexico at 75 cents.

The beginnings of auto road maps as we know them today did not materialize until 1917, when Rand McNally finished the Auto Trail map of Illinois, which was drawn with the aid of state county charts. It was the first state map to show marked roads. Gradually, more and more states were surveyed and maps drawn. A map of each state featured marked auto routes with explanation of the markers.

The task of preparing road maps for the entire country was more than a mere job of cartography; the majority of roads throughout the nation were unmarked. The road-map makers soon found themselves in the role of pioneer trail blazers, fostering the marking of the nation's routes. Up and coming highway associations and local auto clubs joined this company in establishing routes and marking routes in their vicinities, sharing the labor and expense. Rand McNally trucks went from telephone pole to telephone pole tacking up brightly-colored signs or painting markers. If roads in a particular vicinity were poorly marked, pressure would be brought to bear to have good markings made so that these roads could be printed on their maps. More than one million trail signs for over fifty thousand miles of highway were furnished by the map company.

New York State was the first to adopt a uniform system of marking for



Photographs such as these comprised the early road atlases. These were the days of the ten-miles-per-hour speed limit, driver's goggles and driving coats.