

I Shall Always Remember . . .

TEN YEARS IN THE CONGO. By W. E. Davis. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, Inc. 1940. 301 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by LINTON WELLS

"I T was very largely by accident" that W. E. Davis, of Walla Walla, Washington, became a doctor, and "a series of entirely fortuitous events" led him to medical missionary work in the Belgian Congo from 1927 to 1937. One event was that he married a lady who was engaged in spiritual missionary efforts in the Congo, which is some 900,000 miles of jungle, swamp, bushland, and mountains spread over the west central part of Africa above and below the equator. This area, comparable in size to our fifteen Southern states, is populated by some 10,000,000 blacks and 23,000 whites, mostly Belgians.

For ten years, Dr. Davis was the unopposed medical practitioner in the

Coquilhatville Province of the Belgian Congo, which is about the size of Connecticut. During this time, he made periodic tours of inspection, traveling afoot, by river steamer, dug-out, and bicycle, through torrential rains and torrid heat, combatting swamps, insects, reptiles, and wild animals. He treated hundreds of thousands of patients for a multitude of tropical ailments, performed thousands of major operations with old and rusty instruments which "wog-gled at the joints," and otherwise fought a praiseworthy, but fairly thankless war of mercy among barbarous peoples who are notorious for their capacity to try the patience of Job.

"Ten Years in the Congo" is Dr. Davis's account of that decade of campaigning against pain, disease, and death, supplemented by Davisian observations regarding the life and customs of the Congo natives; the activities of planters, traders, agents, administrators, and fellow missionaries.

With the wealth of material at Dr. Davis's command, it's too bad that "Ten Years in the Congo" is not a more interesting yarn. It is one of those I-shall-always-remember efforts, abounding with superlatives, I-suppose-thats, and I-wonder-ifs. Moreover, it is repetitious, and the author's involved sentences, plus the publish-

ers' failure to include a map, make reading difficult. Add to all that a disconcerting variation in style and Dr. Davis's persistent use of initials to conceal the identity of the whites who flit in and out of his chronicle, and the patience of the reader is sorely tried.

I have met a considerable number of medical missionaries in thirty years of wandering around the world, including a recent visit to the Congo Belge. I have the utmost respect for them and for their splendid, self-sacrificing efforts. But I can't recall having met a medical missionary quite like Dr. Davis's picture of himself. He confesses that he was finicky about the odors, filth, squalor, and native foods; that he frequently made a hard life more difficult by "sheer pigheadedness"; that he would not take advantage of the comforts of palanquin travel, because he thought it "too effeminate a form of travel for a self-respecting man"; that he occasionally imperiled the welfare of his own family by his self-imposed devotion to medical duty in behalf of natives; and that he grew too lazy to take advantage of the manifold opportunities for scientific research.

Had "Ten Years in the Congo" contained better descriptive writing, it would have been a more entertaining book, and perhaps the reader would better understand Dr. Davis's yearnings to return to his beloved Congo and Congolese.

Linton Wells, reporter, writer, explorer, is the author of "Blood on the Moon" and "Jumping Meridians."

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A Solution Wanting

YOUTH—MILLIONS TOO MANY?

By Bruce L. Melvin. New York: Association Press. 1940. 220 pp. \$2.

Reviewed by ELI GINZBERG

OURS has been called the century of the child yet the sufferings of children have never been more intense. Striking improvements in pediatrics, education, and penology have been badly dwarfed by the ravages of depressions and wars. Nor have hunger, illness, even death been the ultimate in the tribulations of the young. Life without purpose has proved even more horrible than life without food.

Only the woefully ignorant can fail to realize that the present holocaust is in no small measure the result of Hitler's success in disciplining the bodies and directing the souls of German youth—youth whom the Weimar Republic offered neglect rather than freedom, doles rather than jobs.

In her foreword to Bruce Melvin's "Youth—Millions Too Many?" Mrs. Roosevelt warns that "a country in which there is no place for youth has signed its death warrant," and the chapters that follow prove conclusively that this warning cannot be too strongly impressed upon contemporary America.

The bare facts are appalling: millions of unneeded farm youth; more millions of unwanted city youth; still more millions of youth for whom the need is neither strong nor steady. During the past decade the problem has been attacked: CCC, NYA, WPA tell part of the tale; Y.M.C.A., Cellar Clubs, American Youth Congress tell more. But when all is pieced together the story remains hopelessly inadequate.

The failure to distinguish past from present; the failure to assume responsibility; the failure to trust their own strength have forced the democracies to fight for their lives. This incompetence in matters international had its counterpart in matters national. To educate the young for positions that did not exist; to place premiums on idleness; to expand recreational rather than working opportunities is a record sad but true.

To explain these errors is easier than to eradicate them. But if hope there be, it lies in enlarging our knowledge of basic facts and in increasing our sacrifices for basic values.

Eli Ginzberg is the author of "The Illusion of Economic Stability" and "The House of Adam Smith."

THE NEW BOOKS

Fiction

TAMARACK. By Edith Roberts.
Bobbs-Merrill. 1940. 368 pp. \$2.50.

Legend has it that Potemkin, minister to Catherine of Russia, created neat and perfect villages in advance of her infrequent trips through the provinces, so that she might see nothing about her but gay and dancing peasants, hear only laughter and balalaikas. Something of this sort is done every summer for his majesty, the American Vacationer. He moves out of his city canyons into what he fondly imagines to be the free-spirited and open-hearted country spaces, into towns that have subsisted grimly upon his imagination. Even grimmer is Miss Roberts's stripping of the pretense. "Tamarack" is a town, any town, in the North Woods—with its old families, its other-side-of-the-track, its one dance hall, its summer aristocrats, its winter poverty, its cruelty and grief and straggling humanity. Miss Roberts spares nothing; this is as bitter an arraignment of the American town as we have ever seen. Perhaps too bitter. "Main Street," as we remember it, had much humor and more humanity. Tamarack is peopled with desperate and humorless folk, harried and harrying. There are some good people in it but no happy ones, which is not credible. Miss Roberts writes expertly, with a controlled intensity that rams every detail home where it will count for the most. The sum total of her intensity here is a vigorous corrective to the old dream of happy Middletown; but probably the truth lies somewhere between.

N. L. R.

DOC'S WIFE. By Faye Cashatt Lewis.
Macmillan. 1940. 198 pp. \$2.

This is a straightforward, undramatized telling of what it means to be the wife of a struggling young doctor practising in a small town in the heart of Iowa. It is as matter-of-fact as a line-a-day book, as richly American as pumpkin pie, as homely as a baked potato. It is the voice of the forgotten woman of literature, the woman who marries, bears her children and brings them up sensibly, manages her household on a fluctuating budget yet pays all her bills as she goes, relines her husband's overcoat and addresses her club on Scandinavian literature with equal verve—and likes every bit of it. Notwithstanding the evidence of confession magazines and soap operas there are thousands like her in the Middle West, and they perhaps with their thoroughly nice, hard-working husbands, will save democracy if the job can be done.

Fay Lewis had a possible advantage over her sisters in that she was her-

self a newly-graduated M.D. when she married "P.B." and went with him to Ridgefield, Iowa, where as a fledgling doctor he hoped to establish a practice. They stayed five years in Ridgefield happily accumulating patients, friends, and a family of youngsters. Then seeking broader pastures they moved to Hamilton Center where presumably they still are. If the renunciation of a medical career of her own cost her a struggle she makes no sign. She makes no attempt to dramatize her life or the community. She sees herself as important, but merely as she contributes to the central figure, a young doctor struggling in a rural community with none of the assistance or equipment he had learned in school and hospital to depend on. But in spite of herself she emerges from her pages as much the most interesting phenomenon in the book. Because she has none of the novelist's flair for dramatic emphasis either of character or of event, you may be a little bored at times. But the chances are that it will hold you by its forthright human quality and unconscious revelation of a thoroughly likable woman in whom intelligence, humor, and honesty combine with tonic effect.

M. S. U.

Government

CLASS AND AMERICAN SOCIOLOGY: FROM WARD TO ROSS. By Charles Hunt Page. Dial Press. 1940. 319 pp., with index. \$3.50.

Mr. Page has done an excellent job in placing side by side the views on social class of the "fathers" of American sociology, i.e., Ward, Sumner, Small, Giddings, Cooley, and Ross. Page stays in the background and lets our patriarchs speak for themselves. His synopses are as clear as may be in view of the often-muddled thought of the originals; his notes, bibliography, and index are a model of scholarship. The clarifying influence of the guidance of R. M. MacIver is apparent.

It seems that thought on class has revolved largely around the Marxian dichotomy with most of the writers taking a position antagonistic to his. Sumner alone concludes that the "maintenance mores are basic" but comes nevertheless to a practical position in opposition to that of Marx. Small seemed to disapprove of class whether or not it was a fact; Giddings thought the natural hierarchy of ability critical for social differentiation; Ross admits social classes but thought he saw their end in an "open class" system which permitted general vertical mobility. On this theme, as on others, Ross socks hard. Cooley seemed to have the clearest concep-

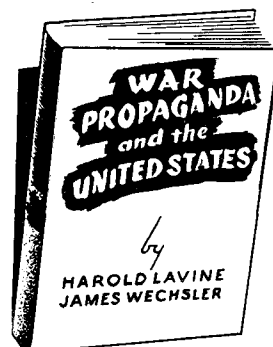
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