

dren's infections, puerperal fever, etc.). One is left with the distinct impression that the Nazi regime sets a fearful drain on the biological resources of the overburdened nations under its domination, and that at the same time it lets the humane forces to heal these deficiencies wither away. But every lover of truth is to be warned not to believe the chapter heads and the title, which is in poor taste anyhow. Undoubtedly there are

many shortages in the German food situation as compared with an ideally balanced diet or with American standards. But Dr. Gumpert says nothing to prove that the rations do not contain the minimum of required calories or that they are not available, which surely was the case in the last three years of the World War. The overconfident talk about German hunger, collapse, decay is premature and should be dropped.

## The Odyssey of One J. Beatty

AMERICANS ALL OVER. By Jerome Beatty. New York: The John Day Co. 1940. 424 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by LINTON WELLS

IT was just two years ago that Jerome Beatty and his charming wife, Dorothea—"two starry-eyed innocents"—started on what Beatty says "must have been the best assignment any reporter ever had."

That is a masterpiece of understatement. Jerry's was the best assignment ever conceived by a bibulous reporter during his most imaginative dreams. Moreover, he carried it out to the complete satisfaction of this reviewer's hyper-critical taste.

DeWitt Wallace, Editor of the *Reader's Digest*, was the angel. With the casualness for which he is noted among scriveners who have been privileged to do profitable business with him, Mr. Wallace telephoned Jerome Beatty one night and suggested that he and Mrs. Beatty go wandering around the world. Mr. Beatty to find ten unsung Americans who were distinguishing themselves among the polyglot peoples of the universe. Their accomplishments would then be recorded by Mr. Beatty in a series of articles for the *Reader's Digest*.

"When Stanley went after Livingstone," says Mr. Beatty, "he knew, lucky Henry, that there *was* such a man. But my assignment was to wander around the world kicking furiously through the underbrush and yelling, 'Hi-yo Americans!' in the hope of flushing obscure and interesting ones."

Beatty spent fifteen months traveling 46,500 miles, found fourteen Americans whose magnificent adventures in foreign lands justified a series of penetrating vignettes of the kind for which he is justifiably noted. Most of these pieces have appeared in American periodicals and been reprinted in condensed form by the *Reader's Digest*, but in "Americans All Over" Beatty has woven them into as fascinating a yarn as I have ever read.

There is no pretense to high adventure in "Americans All Over"; instead, Beatty relates the misadventures which beset a couple of amateur travelers along the highways and byways and into the back of beyond, although Dorothea had to abandon the trip when it was half over because of a son's illness at home. There were comedies of errors, of course, because the Beattys could speak no language but English and knew nothing about exploration.

Beatty's search for interesting Americans took him into the furnace which is Muscat, smoldering on the Arabian shores of the Gulf of Oman; from the dank Ituri jungle of the Congo Belge to the white coral-sand beaches of Fiji; from Piccadilly Circus to Asyut, Trivandrum, and Zambo-ango, with detours to the somnolent Sechelles, bomb-blasted Chungking, and wherenot. Nobody could have done a more entertaining job with the material he gathered.



Mr. and Mrs. Beatty visit the Pyramids.

During my wanderings through Africa last year, we frequently picked up the Beattys' "spoor." The *Reader's Digest*, which you will find in the most outlandish places, had preceded us into the Belgian Congo. At Elizabethville we heard people discussing his article about Putnam, the Harvard graduate in anthropology, who runs a dude ranch among the pygmy cannibals, witch doctors, and Leopard Men of the dense and dangerous Ituri forest, which lies to the north. At Broken Hill, in Northern Rhodesia, a resident asked if we knew "this chap Beatty." At Dar-es-Salaam there were well-thumbed copies of Beatty articles in The Club, and Major "Tommy" Nicoll, head of Tanganyika's C.I.D., waxed enthusiastic over them, more particularly because he had met the author when Jerry had passed through Mombasa some months before. In Kenya, the Nairobi residents were looking forward to Beatty articles, and we heard about their Christmas, when Dorothea had a toothache, and got mixed up with the lions.

Aside from their consuming interest, the 14 personality stories which Beatty wrote for the *Digest*, and which help to form the mosaic of "Americans All Over," had practical results. Most of them inspired sympathetic readers to send useful contributions to his long-ignored subjects, who, for the most part, have struggled along in the backwash of civilizations for decades with little material assistance and barely more subsistence than bad water, fetid air, and the sweet cud of reflection over work done well and selflessly.

Although "Americans All Over" contains many critical comments about the peoples and customs of all lands covered, Beatty never loses his sense of humor. He reveals himself as a keen observer and an adaptable traveller, who through experience has learned to comprehend the fundamental differences in the social points of view of many nationalities. But this has served only to accentuate his Americanism.

"Early in the trip," he writes, "an Englishman told me we Americans had an inferiority complex and I hotly denied it. Now I realize what he meant, and that he was right. We have absolutely no appreciation of our importance and strength. . . . The United States is the only *really* free country on earth. . . ."

And, as I always do, too, Jerome Beatty thanked his lucky stars for the privilege of being able to return to it.

Linton Wells is a traveler and newspaper correspondent whose journeyings have taken him to all parts of the world, and who has written numerous books.

## Hurricane Farm

*FOLLOW THE DRINKING GOURD.*  
By Frances Gaither. New York:  
The Macmillan Company. 1940. 270  
pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by FRANK DANIEL

**M**R. LITTLEBERRY, the overseer of Hurricane farm, told the slaves Mr. Joe had come there to build him a house. But Poldo, the headman of the field hands, soon learned the real reason for Mr. Joe's presence. He was an abolitionist, and he explained how by following the North Star a runaway slave might reach the Ohio River, whence he would be conveyed to freedom. The North Star was easy to find in the sky, off there in a line with two stars forming the Big Dipper—the Drinking Gourd, the Alabama Negroes called it.

Poldo would never have thought of running away if his wife, Yellow Mary, hadn't schemed for that free nigger Antoine to buy her. After Mary left, Poldo found farm life insupportable, though Hurricane had certainly improved under Mr. Littleberry's management. "Not that he tried to bring the place up to what it had been. Worn out land was worn out land. Plantations no older than this one were being sold all around." Hurricane itself belonged to a bank, though once it had been Mas John Austen's. Mas John had bought the new acreage along the Alabama River when his older Georgia plantation became less productive. He sent an overseer and thirty-nine Negro slaves to clear and farm the land.

"Follow the Drinking Gourd" is concerned with this colony of slaves and the farm which becomes their home, though memories of their Georgia life persist even after Mas John and then Mas Robbie are dead and gone. Poldo is the best product of such an arrangement—of the rare contact with the gentler bred owners who leave their slaves, their crops, their fields under the hard daily authority of one unsatisfactory overseer and then another. Somehow Poldo has learned to think, to feel, to evaluate; he all but realizes his own superiority to the poor white class who is the despised agent of the slaveholder.

Frances Gaither's novel realizes admirably the sentiments of her slaves and of the whites who control their destinies. There is broad sympathy in her representation of the difficulties besetting them, the sheer impracticability of the slave system. Hurricane farm, for all its rich new soil, for all its willing slaves, never makes a profit. It provides security for neither



Frances Gaither

owner, overseer, nor slave. When Mas Robbie inherited Hurricane, after a dozen years of farming, some of its

fields were already exhausted and eroded. Mas Robbie was himself enslaved. He had planned to free his Negroes, but he found he couldn't; money had been borrowed on them. And though the Austens boasted that they never sold a slave, Long Sam and his wife and his three children had to go to satisfy the creditors. Mas Robbie's predicament did not continue long; the cholera which broke out in the humble slave quarters claimed his life.

Mrs. Gaither's feeling for character, for region, for situation are alike in authenticity, and her novel is fertile with the three qualities. She presents the economical wastefulness of slavery, and its inimical effect on all concerned—even upon the land where the institutions were scarcely questioned. She tells how slaves are penalized even for loyalty, and the masters for their very solicitude.

## Munich in Fiction

*SIXTEEN DAYS.* By Hans Habe.  
Translated by Basil Creighton. New  
York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1940.  
379 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by BEN RAY REDMAN

**W**HEN a gray two-seater and a large black sedan collided just beneath the balcony of the Hotel de Russie in Geneva, on the 15th of September, 1938, the curtain rose on a drama within a drama. For the world at large that September date marked the beginning of a period of almost intolerable tension that would be known to history as the Munich crisis. For the occupants of the two cars—Anton von Römer in the one; Walter Hagenauer and his wife, Vera, in the other—the collision was the beginning of an equally crucial period of personal stress and strain. "Sixteen Days" is the story of a crisis within a crisis, of the action of the greater upon the less and the resolution of them both.

Fate decreed that Anton and Vera should meet and love in an hour when Europe seemed immediately committed to the abyss of war. By that seeming fact their actions were determined; by subsequent events that falsified every expectation their tragedy was dictated. A world prepared for war found itself condemned to a peace that was no peace; a world resigned to death—eager even for the release that it offered—found itself condemned to life. Anton and Vera, who had behaved as though a world were ending, awoke in a world that was going on. The reprieve was shameful, the emotional

collapse complete. Vera, who could stand up to war, could not stand up to peace. There was but one way for her to take, and her bemused, apparently aimless wanderings through the streets and cafes of Geneva, on the night of September 30th, symbolize the experience of a generation that suddenly felt itself betrayed, lost, and doomed when presented with the gift of "peace in our time."

For Anton von Römer the problem of love was interwoven, during those sixteen days, with the problem of patriotism. He was a German, and he was in Geneva as the representative of a German chemical company, but he loathed the leader whom his half-brother followed with fanatical devotion, and to him the activities of the Nazis were not evidence of a national resurgence, as they were to his imperialistic father, but tragic proof of national degradation. When Anton fell in love with Vera he fell in love with the wife of a man who was all Nazi. In Walter Hagenauer, Hitler-worshipper and diplomatic spy, Anton saw embodied the forces that were exploiting, plundering, and destroying his native land; the forces against which Germany's enemies must fight, from which Germany herself must be saved. Where did his duty lie? What course did true patriotism prescribe? Realization that he could not fight on the side of the new Germany involved a grave decision; determination to fight against it required one still graver. His contact with Hagenauer, and their relationship, doubtless hastened his thinking, but it did not shape or direct it. Professor Wendelin, the wise Jew-