

## Songs of the Pacific

HAITI SINGING. By Harold Courlander. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 273 pp., with index. \$3.50.

Reviewed by MELVILLE J. HERSKOVITS

THIS book is a welcome addition to the literature on Haiti. For one thing, it marks a period in which it is becoming normal to treat of Haitian life as something other than a collection of exotic rites and curious behavior presented to stimulate the jaded palate of the stay-at-home traveler seeking vicarious sensation. Again, it considers the songs, which are its chief reason for being, with not only full recognition that they play an important role in Haitian life, but also in such a way as to give a sense of the social setting of the music. Finally, this book affords definite information, for the first time, concerning the range of musical instruments employed by the Haitians in their dances and rites, thus rounding out in badly needed fashion the presentation of the music which the drums, rattles, and other devices accompany.

Mr. Courlander's work may best be described in terms of its organization. Beginning with a list of tribes which early authorities, particularly Moreau de Saint Mery, give as the African sources of the Haitian slaves, and a few comments on the nature of Negro life during slavery, Mr. Courlander moves to a discussion of the *vodun* ("voodoo") cult, which he regards as the most important single factor in making for the content, if not the style, of Haitian music. Here the organization of the cult, the rituals, which are the outer manifestation of its theology, and the ranking personalities which carry on the worship of the African gods are presented, together with an unusually useful discussion of what is customarily termed the "cabbalistic" markings in ashes and flour made by the priest in the course of most serious rites—the *ver-ver*. Then follows a consideration of the gods, the *loa*. This, again, is useful. The preceding material is then brought together by means of a description of certain *vodun* rites at Leogane, a cult center in the southern peninsula, while a final background chapter briefly indicates some of the non-religious sources of Haitian music.

In the presentation of the actual song material, we are given texts, translations, and cross-references to the musical notations which are grouped by themselves in the latter portion of the book. Noteworthy in the section giving the texts is the excellence of Mr. Courlander's translations from the *créole*; it is apparent that he has thorough mastery of Haitian speech. The transcriptions of music number one hundred twenty-six, an impressive collection under any terms, and they represent songs to all

the most important characters in the *vodun* pantheon. The collection ends with a few non-religious texts and songs, such as the Rara and Pinyique and Martinique types. The book ends with several useful appendices.

Mr. Courlander has thus achieved a substantial contribution. One might have wished for greater attention to non-religious music, for despite the statement that *vodun* "does not monopolize life" but functions "much of the time as an implied thing, as a backdrop which exists as a setting for other phases of culture," yet the fact that religious music receives almost exclusive treatment must weight the reaction of the reader, already given but little opportunity to think of Haiti as anything else but a "land of voodoo" where sacrifice and dance overshadow all other aspects of life. It is also to be regretted that the author had his eye so firmly fixed on Africanisms in collecting his data. One can understand how African elements are, on the face of it, more intriguing than Catholic, yet it remains a fact that one can hardly evaluate any phase of Haitian life unless due cognizance is taken of the European elements that have mingled with the African to form present-day Haitian peasant culture. It is to be hoped that Mr. Courlander will take this fact into consideration when he works up his most recent collection of songs, for this recorded music will permit of a full musicological analysis that should take all contributing elements into account.

The book is beautifully illustrated, and has been given a distinguished format by its publishers.

## "Cosa Desiderata"

A CONCISE HISTORY OF ITALY. By Luigi Salvatorelli. Translated from the Italian by Bernard Miall. New York: Oxford University Press. 1940. 688 pp., with index. \$5.

Reviewed by GERTRUDE R. B. RICHARDS

WITH Romans, Venetians, Lombards, and Neapolitans still waving their local banners high above the Cross of Savoy, it is not surprising that a comprehensive history of Italy has seemed something of an anomaly. The few attempts made are not particularly successful. Balbo's "Sommario" stops with 1814, and is better as a commentary than as a narrative. Cantù wrote of the people apart from their institutions. Hartmann developed some intricate political theories which he tried to apply to a civilization that was definitely cultural. Professor Salvatorelli, however, has at last achieved the *cosa desiderata*, and with distinction. His scholarly approach, his really superb organization of details, his sound conclusions, and his ability to hold his reader's attention even through the dreary periods of transition, are excellences which few "concise" histories possess.

Italy has always been allergic to unity. Giving Roman citizenship to the inhabitants of the peninsula created no organic constitutional tie between the political center at Rome and the municipalities. The establishment of the Empire all but destroyed the Italic entity by emphasizing the



**N**O book by William McFee—since his CASUALS OF THE SEA—has had such a heart-warming reception as has "WATCH BELOW." Just as it relives much of the author's own youth, it relives the "youth" of ocean traffic. It is the story of "the golden days of steam," when the tramp's smoke covered the seven seas . . . It is the story of days that have almost, but not quite, come to an end...

## WATCH BELOW

The Story of Tramp Steamers and the Men Who Sail Them

**BY WILLIAM MCFEE**

OTIS FERGUSON said in the *New Republic*: "It is the wisest and straightest and most thorough analysis of the life of ships and the men in them that was ever written."

NEWSWEEK said: "For anyone who has ever felt his pulse quicken at the sight of an old tramp blacking out the horizon, this book should be a constant delight."

Illustrated by GORDON GRANT



RANDOM HOUSE, \$3.

whole at the expense of the parts. The Lombard invasion split Italy into two sections, both governed by foreign feudatories. While certain communes with varying rights of self-government, emerged from the chaos attendant on a dying empire, these lacked any unifying ties one with the other, or any bonds with the dynasties of foreign origin in the north and south where the connections were manifestly stronger with the Transalpine world than with their own. Yet these communes, for centuries the dispensers of civilization to the world, brought Italy a far greater prestige than would have come through any form of government or extent of domain.

With the conquests by northern powers in the sixteenth century, Italy lost this cultural high-priesthood. Although the foreigners did not absolutely suppress the individualism of the pre-existing states, they extended their rule over most of the peninsula and exercised a preponderant influence over the rest. After the overthrow of the Napoleonic regime, the impulse to unity became manifest, but complex moral and material obstacles delayed the movement until 1870 when the first Italian state, in the modern sense of the term, was established.

This is by no means a political history; all aspects of civilization and all factors shaping them are discussed in their peculiar manifestations and in their relations to similar Transalpine movements. The periods of transition, usually dull as ditchwater, are clarified and given their proper place in the political and cultural sequence. The treatment of post-war Italy is terse and admirably free from any taint of propaganda. The whole volume from first to last, in theme and in treatment, is one of the finest bits of historical writing achieved under the present regime. The translation is adequate but there are occasional slips, such as the failure to discover *Champagne* in the Italic *Sciam-pagna*; there are also some typographical errors, none of them serious. The bibliography stresses critical studies rather than historical monographs.

**STOP**

says the Herald Tribune

"As a fan in good standing, you'll have to know about all this and the sooner the better."

**THE CASE OF THE  
BAKER STREET IRREGULARS**  
by Anthony Boucher

An Inner Sanctum Mystery. \$2.

## Farewell to Fury

**REVOLUTION: WHY, HOW, WHEN?**  
By Robert Hunter. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1940. 385 pp., with index. \$3.

Reviewed by CRANE BRINTON

THE American Left is forswearing revolution at a rapid rate. Almost daily someone who had at least flirted with Marx announces his farewell to revolution. It would be unfair to class Mr. Robert Hunter with the bright young proletarians of the typewriter who cleaved so manfully to the party line only a few years ago. But in addition to a long experience as a social worker in such centers as Toynbee Hall and Hull House, he has been a member of the Socialist Party, and was once its candidate for governor of Connecticut. His was, then, the revisionist and parliamentary socialism of the old days, the socialism that was to make revolution unnecessary. His latest book, though it has not the bitterness of Mr. Max Nomad's recent attack on revolutions, seems hardly inspired by even the mildest socialism.

Mr. Hunter is pretty completely disillusioned. The latest schemes for re-making the world have caught up with him in California; but he sees through them. They are as old as history. "When the same old problems reappear they are always confronted by the same old reformers and revolutionists offering the same old "irrefutable" nostrums. An anthology of panaceas from the times of Joseph, accompanied by notes of results achieved, if read along with Aristotle's "Politics," would supply any

legislator with all he needs to know." This last statement is perhaps at once too pessimistic and too optimistic. Wisdom of this sort has, at any rate, been rare among legislators.

This book is by no means a methodical survey of the history of revolutions. It has some interesting reflections on revolutionists Mr. Hunter has known in the flesh, mostly Europeans of the generation of Bebel and Jaurès. It has also some interesting sketches of historical parallels, and a good many suggestive leads for further study. Its chief contribution to the recent rather considerable literature on the study of revolutionary movements is its emphasis on the relation between certain economic variables and the stability of political arrangements. These variables are the price-cycle of inflation and deflation and the relative amount of the group income taken in taxes by the state. These two are themselves closely related. Heavy taxation may be said to bring on the revolution, inflation to make necessary the violence of the extremists. Mr. Hunter may indeed over-simplify his theory of revolutions. Furthermore, as he says with a regret that will be shared by many historians, with all our meticulous antiquarian research we yet know very little exact and solid about the history of prices. This reviewer inclines to the view that all monetary difficulties are essentially symptoms of troubles which lie beyond monetary theory. But he is also convinced that they are an important variable in most revolutionary situations. Mr. Hunter deserves our thanks for calling attention to them so emphatically and clearly.

## The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, and Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
B AS IN BANSHEE <i>Laurence Treat</i> (Duell, Sloan & Pearce: \$2.)	Arrogant Adirondack land-owner shot and incinerated. Two retainers also perish miserably. Professorial deppity sheriff finally corners desperate killer.	Invigorating mountain atmosphere and unconventional characters redeem yarn that opens well but explodes into fantastic melodrama before final revelation.	Agreeable
HOLIDAY HOMICIDE <i>Rufus King</i> (Crime Club: \$2.)	Rich realtor shot in luxury cruiser moored in East River. Private Investigator Moon and tough Boswell take over case.	Nut-loving Moon an odd fish among fictional sleuths. His quaint methods suffice to crack gory triple murder with aquatic climax.	Satisfying
MAIGRET TRAVELS SOUTH <i>Simenon</i> (Harcourt, Brace: \$2.)	Two complete stories, "Liberty Bar" and "The Madman of Bergerac," exhibiting chunky French sleuth at top of form.	Both plots based on sex crimes in sordid surroundings and handled without gloves. Maigret solves one from hospital cot!	For adepts
DANGEROUS YOUNG MAN <i>George F. Worts</i> (Kinsey: \$2.)	Peter Banyard, fresh from West, encounters murdering gangsters and slinky socialites in bullet-riddled melodrammer of wild Manhattan.	Creaky old idea freshened up to look fresh and exciting by stiff injections of gun-powder, champagne cocktails, and torrid romance.	Quickie