

"Practical Dreamer"

FESSENDEN, *BUILDER OF TOMORROW*. By Helen M. Fessenden. New York: Coward-McCann. 1940. 352 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by ALBERT N. WILLIAMS

REGINALD A. FESSENDEN, who died in 1932, was somewhat of a modern Leonardo. Although his work was primarily electrical communications, his active mind also applied itself to problems of elastic insulation, centralized power sources for rural communities, mass aircraft bombing tactics, submarine warfare, clinical antiseptics, the translation of the sacred writings of the Egyptians, the lost civilizations of the Caucasus isthmus, and Masonic lore.

When he started his career in Thomas E. Edison's plant, applied science was a little known field, most mechanical and electrical engineering being based on trial and error. His insatiable curiosity regarding the application of pure mathematics to physical problems opened many new fields of research, and his entire career was one of scientific prophecy. To the credit of this versatile genius are these now-stan-


dard inventions: the modern method of radio and wireless transmission, the oscillator, the sonic depth finder, the turbo-electric drive for warships, and iceberg detectors.

This biography, written by his wife, is a loving testimony to a great personality. The human equation frequently disappears from the discussion, and we see him only as a magnificent and benevolent mind, intent upon breaking down the barriers between men, opening up new avenues of wealth and resources. Helen Fessenden allied herself so closely with her husband and his work that we get the impression that she, too, had considerable engineering talent, so intently and intimately does she dwell upon the circumstances surrounding highly technical discoveries. Overflowing with descriptions of laboratory methods and patent discussions, the book might present some difficulty to the reader of popular biographies, but anyone with a fair knowledge of physics and mathematics and the time to read leisurely will enjoy this excursion into the personal thoughts and problems of a great practical dreamer.

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, and Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
THE GOOSE IS COOKED Emmett Hogarth (Simon & Schuster: \$2.)	Double death in N. Y. electrical laboratory and tangled love-lives of denizens give Sleuth Cohen chance to lucubrate and jest wryly.	Murderous possibilities of stupendous voltages interestingly developed, and rowdy passages aptly handled. Otherwise story nothing to write home about.	10 Watt
MURDER COMES AT NIGHT Inez Oelrichs (Crime Club: \$2.)	Fatal auto "accident" in Jersey town witnessed by Matt Winters, milkman sleuth, who soon becomes entangled in poison plot with ramifications.	Family skeletons of locality given thorough and engrossing airing in yarn which presents native acumen of rough-hewn sleuth at cannifest.	Garrulously good
THE TWENTY-FOURTH HORSE Hugh Pentecost (Dodd, Mead: \$2.)	Spoiled society darling throttled and hidden in luggage compartment of equestrienne sister's car. N. Y. cop Luke Bradley rides again.	Blackmail in the horsey sets basis of tale with galloping action, glamorous background, some acrid humor and 24-point solution.	Good
THE DEAD CAN TELL Helen Reilly (Random House: \$2.)	Anonymous note reopens case of Manhattan society girl ostensibly drowned in accident. McKee of Center Street officiates with customary skill.	Slightly over-written and not too credibly worked out tale of upper-class misdeeds with plenty of thrills and tense moments.	Enjoyable
THE DOUBLE DEATH OF FREDERIC BELOT Claud Aveline (Holt: \$2.)	Ace inspector of Parisian detectives found dying in his home with dead double lying nearby. Investigation reveals psychological reasons for crime.	Typically Gallic job, both in treatment and in explanation given for fatal collapse of sleuth's brilliant idea for hoodwinking criminal classes.	Fair



on the
**LONG
TIDE**

By LAURA KREY
author of "And Tell of Time"

'To this town, senores,' said Don Ambrosio, 'all roads lead, in the end here you have only to sit still and the world comes to you.' Here in Bexar midway on the old Santa Fe trail, two worlds met—the world of young America and the world of old Spain. Here, among the ragged priests, the royal governors, the land-locked sailors and the Mexican señoritas, Jeffrey Fentress met Teresa Manuelos 'On the Long Tide' is their story

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DINE AND DANCE

**They Don't
Dance Much**

BY JAMES ROSS

"THIS has a suspense and pace that will keep you on the edge of your chair"—*Book-of-the-Month Club News*.

"TELLS an ugly story, and tells it well. It is hard and shrewd in its picture of the roadhouse, concise and brutal in its crime story . . . very interesting reading."—*New York Times* \$2.50

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Records in Review

By EDWARD TATNALL CANBY

LEOPOLD STOKOWSKI is surely one of the most picturesque figures of the last twenty years in music. For as long as most of us can remember he has maintained for himself a spectacular popularity as conductor and impresario on the radio, on records, even in the movies, as well as in person with his famous orchestra. This incredible juggler has for years held down his job with one of the world's most staid symphony organizations (not without fighting, however) while indulging himself in various antics ranging from a species of musical plastic surgery practised on such respectable worthies as Johann Sebastian Bach to regulation film star chasing in the best tabloid-Hollywood manner. The All-American Youth Orchestra reaffirms at once that Stokowski is, still is, a great conductor, regardless of his eccentricities. This organization's recording for Columbia of that war-horse the "New World" Symphony of Dvořák (Col. M-416; 6 r.) is electric. The music is new, eloquent, vital. What Toscanini does to Beethoven Stokowski here does to the more romantic master. What personality! Even the famous Stokowski strings are here to weep, as always, but not sentimentally; this is a young orchestra, serious, never bored. It

means what it says and it knows how to play it.

★ ★

In comparison with the "New World" recording the New York Philharmonic's performance of the Brahms 2nd Symphony under Barbiroli (Col. M-412; 5 r.) is pedestrian, a poor sample of what that orchestra can do. A musician would say bad ensemble, bad attack, poor phrasing . . . to a listener it is simply a matter of the vital spark. It's not there! . . . Beethoven's 3rd Leonore Overture fares better with the Minneapolis and Metropoulos (Col. X-173; 2 r.) but not well enough to warrant replacing the Mengelburg version if you have it. This is partly due, again, to Columbia's preoccupation with the higher registers of the orchestra. Some day we will have technicians who are also musicians, like the European ones . . . before the war. The volume range has been greatly increased on the newer records; for most of us who are trained to systematic distortion this will mean many a wince, many a jump for the volume control. . . . Arthur Foote, one of our latter day American Primitives, is composer of the charming *Night Piece* for flute and String Quartet recorded by Columbia (70339-D 1 r.). Like others of his generation Foote imitated the great European Romantics with a wholehearted gusto which is wholly American. We find here passing glimpses of Debussy, an uncanny evocation of the Brahms Clarinet Quintet, and a bit of the sentiment of Mendelssohn's Songs Without Words.

★ ★

The Twelve-Tone system of Schoenberg is the bogey of modern minded music listeners, who fight hither and yon over its mathematical and philosophical possibilities without realizing an essential fact: that the system is actually a very generalized method of composition, so much so that some quite orthodox imitation Franck, Debussy, or even Bach, could be written within its framework. True, existing twelve-tone music is pretty radical, and the System is of course well suited to radicalism; but differing personalities can be easily expressed in it, as is shown by Křenek's Short Piano Pieces for students (1938) in Col X-171. (\$2). In contrast to the warped emotionalism of Schoenberg—early as well as late—the genial and sociable Křenek can be heard even through the sharp fogs of twelve-tone dissonance. . . . Kerstin Thorborg's recorded debut as a singer of songs is not too promising. She sings Schubert, Brahms, Wolf (V-16969) with beautiful tone and little imagination. The Wolf fares best, the Schubert decidedly worst. . . . That First Cuckoo in London Philharmonic (V 4496). This music has for most Americans the eminently proper vulgarity of Queen Mary's annual Christmas card; but the English think of it as the very cornerstone of modern English music. Take your choice; the performance is excellent.

Down Mexico Way

SOUTH OF THE BORDER. By Arthémise Goertz. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1940. 507 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by CARLETON BEALS

THIS is one of the best see-hear-smell-touch-taste travel books about regions south of the Rio Grande which of late have splashed so many publishers' lists with color. Perhaps no other brand of American, except one from New Orleans, could have achieved Miss Goertz's unrelenting concern about food and its savor. Otherwise Miss Goertz's penchant is for fiestas, church-ceremonies, historical sites, and museums. With smart competence, she sandwiches in between the customary brush with the police over taking photographs (first chapter) and the customary set-to with officialdom over smuggling out photographs (last chapter), a very rich and spicy but far from digestible mass of brilliant observation, chatter, scenic beauty, odd types, native festivals, literary pertness, history, and legend.

Her travel experiences are set in a loose fictional frame. The heroine, presumably herself, and a shadowy Señor Mestre, married professor of Vera Cruz, fall in love. He is always appearing just as she has to rush off in the company of portly Aunt Jo to some new town to see some carnival or tourist sight. Not even an emotional crisis develops. Far more dramatic than the *leit motif* of love is the death of the adopted cur, Georgine, and Aunt Jo ripping off her corset in the bedroom of Empress Carlota.

The real events are the fiestas—mostly of a middle-class, patriotic, or religious nature—not the indigenous variety that Erna Fergusson has so ably described in her books on Mexico and Guatemala. Again one feels the New Orleans note. The most successful portion of the volume is that concerning Miss Goertz's stay in Orizaba and environs. The story is there integrated about the life of the family with whom the two travelers stay and the quaint textile town half-way up on the rim of the plateau mountains.

During the remainder of the book Miss Goertz, rushes, eats, drinks many cognacs, and builds the stock tourist places up into a baroque dazzle of sights and smells. With the aid of Terry's guide Bernal Díaz, and other sources, she supplements her own observations with snappy summaries of the historical background and invariably the Indian legends. Her chief interest is with the antiquarian, the picturesque, and the romantic, and though she gets the esthetic moment well—all the superficial physical aspects—her understanding does not always match her cleverness of phrase. One emerges from her book feeling well-soaked in chile, mole, pulque, and insect powder, but with little sense of marching Mexico.



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