

phrases of the last war are no more in fashion now than is the 1918 Buick. The distinctive thing about this war is that in terms of all the people it is the most effective and efficient war we ever fought. We are not going "over there" to borrow French guns to fight with. We are carrying our own arms and also sending arms to our allies. On the home front prices in wartime were never so well controlled before. There has been less damage to civil liberties than in any great war we ever fought. Americans as a whole are better fed today at home than ever before in time of peace or war. Our men are the best equipped soldiers not only in the world but in history. We as a people are the makers of the most

amazing mobilization of force for a purpose in the annals of mankind.

The people are doing all right. The Americans in war have never been so well informed, armed, fed. America, including at least statistically its intellectuals, never did a better fighting job before. And despite the absence of elaborate oratory and elegant phrases, despite the grumbling which only sounds louder than the production, no Americans at war were ever so well prepared to make an intelligent peace.

What the hell are the writers or anybody else apologizing for?

JONATHAN DANIELS.

"Strictly Personal" next week will be conducted by Elmer Rice.

Treasure and Trouble to the South

MIDDLE AMERICA. By Charles Morrow Wilson. New York: W. W. Norton & Co. 1944. 317 pp. \$3.50.

Reviewed by CARLETON BEALS

THE myth of the limitless abundance of materials in the United States dies hard. Our productive capacities, so surpassing those of any other nation on earth, make us ignore the rapid depletion of much soil and mineral wealth and our lack of many strategic materials.

For many years our War Department concerned itself seriously with the problem of strategic materials, but could find no political backing for its program, partly because of American capital tie-ups with British capital in the Near and Far East, India, Africa, and elsewhere. Although every great Power on earth has had a strategic materials policy, in many instances for generations, it was not until 1939 that our Congress begrudgingly authorized the Treasury Department to lay in \$100,000,000 worth of such materials at the rate of \$10,000,000 a year. Laughable now.

It is also significant that in the first year's purchase rubber was absent, as were most key materials coming from the East Indies area. General Hugh S. Johnson, discussing the July, 1940 report of the National Defense Advisory Commission, stated, "The weakest and most inexcusable position of this administration has been its insistence that our interests are unavoidably involved in the East Indies because we are wholly dependent on them for rubber and tin." Not until that late date did President Roosevelt, according to Mr. Stettinius, suggest a study of the problem.

In the present volume, Charles Morrow Wilson drives home the fact that with proper foresight we would now be obtaining at our very doorstep an

abundance of the strategic materials cut off in the Far East, and this with benefit to ourselves and to our neighbors both in war and in peace. Since many of the master political minds now arranging our destinies in star-chamber fashion, with a secrecy they call democratic, still seem imbued with the idea that it is better for us to develop and secure such materials in the most distant and least defensible areas of the globe, Wilson's book should be required reading for just about everybody. No precaution is ever too great for national security, and national security should never be left merely to a grandiose gamble of international economic imperialism.

Mr. Wilson's long connection with the United Fruit Company, his life-long study of agriculture, his first-hand residence in Middle America and the Caribbean, make his book—like everything he has written—factually dependable and absolutely authoritative. In addition, Mr. Wilson is a vivid writer with a keen sensitivity to land and sky, people and animals, fields and plants. In this book he does not produce so many long tons of quinine a year, but rather human beings grow, cultivate, and harvest quinine.

Among Wilson's basic contentions is that the United States can never find any market of importance or achieve any enduring friendship if Middle America is to be a tropical slum. But, with even the minimum of intelligent

concern about obtaining strategic materials nearer at hand, we could create enormous productive power and prosperity in our neighboring countries. One sixtieth of our rubber requirements secured from Haiti would automatically double the export trade of that country. Competition from the slum areas of the British Empire, he asserts, can be offset in the American tropics, by greater technical efficiency and better organization, so that human beings will be able to enjoy a decent standard of living.

Some matters Mr. Wilson avoids discussing. He does not take up the question of absentee foreign capital, its benefits and disadvantages; its dual role of increasing natives wages and employment while draining out sums that perhaps should be reinvested in the given country; he does not consider the possibilities of economic nationalism; he does not, except on the health end, and briefly, discuss the elaborate loans and promotions by our Government outside our borders and the resultant political implications with respect either to the future of the good-neighbor policy or the ultimate fate of American private capital expansion.

In his lists of nations belonging to Middle America, he leaves out Puerto Rico and Jamaica entirely, and the former is not discussed. Previous conquests and annexations do not make those countries any less part of the region, and their problems cannot be isolated from the workings of any good-neighbor policy. Finally, he does not discuss the possibilities of synthetic substitutes or equivalents. How much of our rubber needs will be supplied eventually by natural hule? How much by synthetic? To promote new industries in Middle America might result in great losses, even economic disaster.

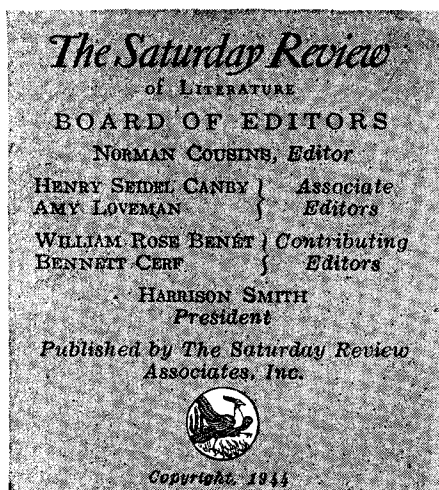
But, within the scope selected by Mr. Wilson for his discussion, he has produced a volume of extreme importance, both for its vast store of intimate knowledge and for its highly intelligent point of view. No book thus far written on the resources of the region can take its place.

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 529)

LT. JOHN MASON BROWN:
TO ALL HANDS

The melancholy job of a ship's censor is to read other people's letters. . . . He is undone by duty rather than desire. Betsy Ross turns him into a snooper, a scanner of secrets, an inkwell eavesdropper, a peruser of cherished intimacies.





The following editorial was on the press when a telephone call from the Post Office notified the editors that the postal order to which the editorial refers had been temporarily rescinded, and that we were to proceed on our own responsibility pending a further study by the postal authorities. The editorial is published nevertheless, both as the record of a correspondence that may be of interest to our readers, and for whatever value it may have in a "temporary" situation.

THE N. Y. POST OFFICE AND THE SRL

THE *Saturday Review of Literature* has received the following communication from the United States Post Office, New York:

May 12, 1944

Publishers of
The Saturday Review of Literature,
25 West 45th Street,
New York 19, N. Y.

Gentlemen:

As the May 13, 1944 issue of your publication contains an advertisement on page 21 of the book entitled "Strange Fruit," by Lillian Smith, of Reynal & Hitchcock, New York, you are informed that this book is non-mailable under Section 598, Postal Regulations, 1940, and, therefore, no advertisements thereof should be published in copies of your publication mailed hereafter.

Will you kindly acknowledge the receipt of this letter stating your intention in this respect.

Sincerely yours,

ALBERT GOLDMAN, *Postmaster*.

The following reply has been sent Albert Goldman, Postmaster, United States Post Office, New York:

May 15, 1944

Dear Mr. Goldman:

We acknowledge your letter of May

12, notifying us that we are not to accept advertisements of "Strange Fruit," by Lillian Smith, under penalty of exclusion from the mails. To come to the point at once concerning our intention in this respect, we feel obliged and privileged to state that it is our intention to continue running advertising of "Strange Fruit" should the publishers request space. In the event the publishers do not request space, we will seek their permission to publish such advertising without charge to them. We intend to run an editor's note below the advertisement, informing our readers that it is published contrary to an order from the postal authorities. If our 40,000 subscription readers are prevented from receiving that issue because it is barred from the mails, we intend to send them a postal card explaining why.

If it seems puzzling to you that we should thus jeopardize the career of a magazine which has been publishing since 1924, and which now enjoys the largest readership in its history, may I tell you something about *The Saturday Review* so that you may understand how our action in this matter represents an almost automatic decision; indeed, how it would be impossible for us to comply with your order.

The Saturday Review began as an independent publishing entity twenty years ago, striking out on its own after a long period as the *Literary Review* of the *New York Evening Post*. The central idea behind the venture was to publish a journal of ideas built around books, to encourage free expression and intelligent criticism; in short, to work for a healthy cli-

mate of opinion and intellectual activity. This sounds pretty top-lofty and inflated, I know, but please believe me when I say that the people who founded this magazine and who are still with it are completely and stubbornly taken with the idea that the magazine cannot under any circumstances trim its sails on any account, let alone because of the whim or prejudice of an official in the Post Office.

When I say "whim" or "prejudice" I mean exactly that. Have any charges been brought against "Strange Fruit" that the author and publishers have had opportunity to answer? Have any hearings of any nature been held? Who decides the mailable or non-mailable of books or magazines or newspapers or private correspondence? On what basis? On the basis of "nasty" words? On the basis of "filthy" or "indecent" situations? We notice in Section 598 of the Postal Laws and Regulations that the ruling against "indecent" material is not limited to books, magazines, and newspapers, but extends to private letters as well. To facilitate a test ruling of the applicability of your regulation in this respect, we are sending you, in an accompanying envelope, a letter I have written to a friend praising "Strange Fruit." The letter is sealed. Please notify me if the Post Office, with a knowledge of its contents, now proposes to censor or withhold my letter on the same grounds that it has taken against advertising of "Strange Fruit." Please inform me, too, whether the Post Office proposes to open and inspect all private correspondence where there is a suspicion that "indecent"

Desert Oriole

By Bridget Dryden

DO you remember, dear, that bird who sang,
a hooded oriole in the agave brush
by an abandoned quarry rank with lush
and salty scrub? The road construction gang
had flung their bottles and hung illumination
of ruby lanterns in a warning row
across the Coyote Canyon. A disobeyed Dead Slow
glared in the twilight . . . pause and hesitation . . .
the swelling velvet-throat sang on, How sweet!
like joy forbidden, a steep alternative
they could not bar for us, those phantom feet
of dead prospectors—Go, pound up, old flivv,
up to that indigo slash of sky, our goal,
obeying, not Dead Slow but the oriole.

And they who've never whiffed a pungent blue-gray bush
by Fawnskin quarry have never in the hush
of gray-blue mountains heard a seven-inch oriole
salute the sunset like a Christian soul
who glories in the triumph of creation.