

other Balkan countries, sober statistics on crop yields, standard of living, and public health show that the overwhelming majority of Rumanians live about as their Balkan neighbors do. These are only two examples of many. Indeed, the authors do not give the American layman, to whom the book is presumably addressed, any idea of what a peasant society is really like. Instead, they focus their attention upon the headline incident, dramatic interview, or striking anecdote, almost meaningless when told out of context.

The writing is slipshod, tasteless, and often illiterate. The comparison of recent Greek history to "a corny movie serial" is callous and offensive. When the authors generalize, as in the first chapter of the book, their sentences grow turgid with a succession of inept and mixed metaphors. There are frequent efforts to be folksy ("Bulgaria and Serbia have the Pan-Slav yen"); proper names are regularly misspelled (Damaskinos, Clark-Kerr); and ordinary English words misused (nadir for zenith).

King and O'Brien's book hardly lives up to the billing on the dust jacket, which calls it "an essential book for the student of current affairs." This is all the more unfortunate, since there is an obvious need for a book which renders genuinely intelligible to the American reader the swift and tragic march of the most recent events in the Balkans, where the question of mankind's survival may yet be decided.

Robert Lee Wolff served as chief of the Balkan Section of the Research and Analysis Branch of the OSS.

# FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT: No. 213

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 213 will be found in the next issue.

ZYXWVTSW YR RQTV PVOVWN

ZYXWVTSW YR MLKWJV.

PVX HYXNYX—NVHQXJN

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 212

In itself an oath is no more sacred than a lie is contemptible.

MAX STIRNER  
The Ego and His Own.

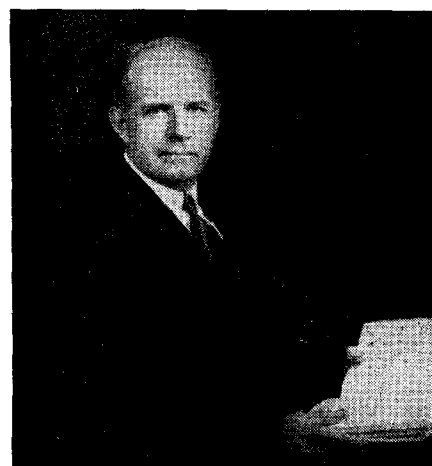
## Eloquent Brief

ETERNAL LAWYER: A LEGAL BIOGRAPHY OF CICERO. By Robert N. Wilkin. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1947. 264 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by MILTON R. KONVITZ

LIVY, who was sixteen years old when Cicero died, said of Cicero: "Yet if one weighs his virtues with his faults, he deserves a place in history as a truly great man, and another Cicero would be required to praise him adequately." In this, the nineteenth biography of Cicero in English, another Cicero praises him adequately. The book was written by an advocate in his professional capacity: an oration on behalf of Cicero. No lawyer could write a more eloquent brief on behalf of his client.

If Cicero had inordinate pride and egotism and always courted public favor, his bid for popularity, Judge Wilkin maintains, was always based on a sincere regard for the welfare of the people. If he was a proud nationalist, it was because he was a Roman devoted to universal principles. If his official conduct did not conform to his political ideals, "that was due to the conditions of the world, not to any weakness of his own nature." If now and then an oration of his was lacking in sound legal principle, it was "nevertheless charged with exalted sentiments." If at times he represented clients with questionable cases, let it be noted that "it is to the credit of the legal profession generally that it is more frequently blamed for overzealous loyalty to undeserving clients than for faithfulness or treachery to clients." It is true that Cicero practised the artifices and tricks of the legal profession, "but he admitted that he did. It is therefore also true that he was intellectually honest." If Cicero at times sacrificed his ideals to expediency, we must remember that "there are times when a public man must do so." "Charity impels us to remember," says Judge Wilkin, "how few philosophers have regulated their lives by their precepts. . . . Cicero, moreover, was as much artist as philosopher, and some allowance must be made for artistic temperament." If Cicero ingratiated himself with the leaders of a victorious party whom he had opposed as unprincipled and subversive of law and the public order, Judge Wilkin reminds us that a man must try to be of service to his time. Cicero had his faults and vices, the author admits, "but when we understand that they are only overaccentuated phases of the lawyer's essential traits



—Blank & Stoller.

Robert N. Wilkin: "Charity impels us to remember that few philosophers have regulated their lives by their precepts."

of character, we can view them charitably." In a word: when one considers that Cicero was a lawyer, a statesman, a philosopher, and an artist, one must expect to find in his character many undesirable traits, even vices, and in his life much mischief.

I am not sure that this lawyer's biography would please Cicero. He was much less charitable towards himself. In a private letter he confessed: "I know I have been a regular ass." He often boasted that in at least one case he had cast dust into the eyes of the jury. He never claimed to have been a great legal expert and was not ashamed to consult others who knew more law.

Despite this "legal biography," we shall not now begin to think of Cicero chiefly as a lawyer. We prefer to remember him as one who, though he lived a very busy life, found time to cultivate philosophy and the art of letters. His intellectual superiority is clearly manifested in the series of political and philosophical treatises, beautiful in style, which have enriched immeasurably Western civilization; and his letters still serve as a primary source of Roman history. Although not as great a figure in classical Latin literature as Horace or Virgil, his place among the great writers is secure; and one can express only gratitude to the editors of the Loeb Classical Library for devoting over a score of volumes to the writings of Cicero. It is too late to claim him for the law; he belongs to our intellectual history and to humane letters.

Milton R. Konvitz, associate professor, New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations, wrote "The Constitution and Civil Rights."

# Terrapins and Turniptops

OZARK SUPERSTITIONS. By Vance Randolph. New York: Columbia University Press. 1947. 339 pp. \$3.75.

Reviewed by THOMAS HART BENTON

VANCE RANDOLPH has investigated almost every place between the Missouri River on the north and the Ouachita River on the south, every place, in fact, where a spur of the Ozarks piles up or juts out. He is the main Ozark authority. He has collected factual stories about the region, invented stories as true as the factual ones, and gathered for the Missouri Historical Society hundreds of Ozark songs and tunes which are now being issued volume by volume. Vance has been a real hillbilly himself. Deliberately, and by preference he has lived what he writes about. He knows in a close-up fashion about corncob and hickory-chip smoked sausage and sowbelly and turniptops and plenty about what comes out of Ozark jugs, though as to this, it is said, the years have made him cautious and disinclined to continued search.

On the life he has spent and by the work which has come out of it Vance has been of very considerable service to history. He has had fun with his adventures and stories, but he has also done a job for the record that needed to be done. He has accomplished this, as he himself notes, in the face of that ignorant respectability of ambitious towns which nearly always sees truth as a slur on itself.

Vance Randolph is a pretty brave man, much braver, for instance, than I am. When I write a story or draw a true picture about a place, I get out of it and never come back. Vance stays put in the middle of his subject matter and takes the rap from the chambers of commerce, from the ladies who belong to Browning clubs (yes, we still have 'em) and from all the small-town Rotary boys who have two or three bucks extra in the bank and are intent on forgetting that Pappy smelt like hog pens and "chawin" tobacco.

In this last book about Ozark superstitions Vance stays close to the old folks and to those true children by the hills who after a look at the towns or a turn in the Army beat it back where they came from. Of these latter there are many even after the dispersals of World War II. Any run off the highways of the hill country proves it. There are still young men and women who are apparently immune to the blandishments of the radio, the movies, and the slick paper



—Thomas Hart Benton.

"I Got a Gal on Sourwood Mountain."

magazines and who would rather live and raise their kids in the shade of earth corn traditions than in the glare

of modern factory lights—cash money or no cash money. Even when they don't wholly believe the old stories these young folks act upon a lot of them in their farming and tell about them when they are loafing.

Just a few weeks ago down in an Oklahoma small-town hamburger joint I overheard a country boy say jokingly to another:

"Gonna rain like hell tonight."

"How you know?"

"Terrapins climbin' up hill. Dry land turtles never climb up unless there's gonna be too much water in the bottoms."

This is one Vance missed. I probably wouldn't have remembered it myself but for the fact that when night came it did rain. It rained a perfect flood with a scary wind to boot. This was the night of May 31 when Reedy, Oklahoma, was hit and destroyed by a tornado, and quick flood waters washed out bridges all up and down the state.

I now believe in the sign of terrapins climbing up hill, and I'll bet the boy who told it and every other backwoods Jake who ever heard of it does also.

## Prospecting for Folk Songs

THE ADVENTURES OF A BALLAD HUNTER. By John A. Lomax. New York: Macmillan & Co. 1947. 302 pp. \$3.75.

Reviewed by ALBERT N. WILLIAMS

IN THE list of labors of love, the lifetime of effort by John Lomax, later joined by his son Alan, in collecting and preserving native folk ballads, will stand well forward. John Lomax came upon the scene during the twilight days of this once lusty form of expression, just as radio was beginning to replace play-parties and barn dances with the hit-of-the-week directly from Hollywood and New York. Fearful for the fast forgetting of the old songs, he procured some complex recording equipment, which he mounted in the back of an old Ford, and spent the better part of two decades rattling through prison camps, revival meetings, mass baptisms, county fairs, weddings, and funerals, up and down the back counties, collecting scraps of old tunes, half-remembered words, and rare versions of the standard ballads.

Thousands of these recordings now repose in the Library of Congress, where they are finally preserved from the certain loss that Lomax foresaw. From this vast collection he has earlier selected the better known items and arranged three anthologies, "Cowboy

Songs & Other Frontier Ballads," "American Ballads and Folk Songs," and "Our Singing Country."

This newest book of Mr. Lomax's, while it contains the words of a number of songs, is not another collection. It is the story of his life of song prospecting. It is an interesting book in many ways beyond the actual story itself. In this day when men and women of accomplishment in so many fields are "telling" their biographies to collaborators, or having them ghosted for magazine publication, readers have become slightly dazed by the uniformly high style of intensely personal narratives. The disadvantage of this consistency of style is that all these biographies tend to sound the same, and the one distinguishing facet becomes clouded—the individual's personality.

Happily, Mr. Lomax did not take a stylist to his bosom. He merely set down the story of his search as he would tell it, and as he has told portions of it, to delighted audiences all over the United States. He describes the many disappointments he has had to digest at the hands of unsympathetic persons who hindered his activities for the simple fact that they saw no reason in his pursuit. Prison wardens, poor farm managers, plantation overseers, stewards of some of the most important cultural legacies