

The Polar Pull of the Old World

DISCOVERY OF EUROPE. Edited by Philip Rahv. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1947. 743 pp. \$5.

Reviewed by ROBERT PICK

THIS anthology of literary notes on Europe by great American men of letters has been selected "more with an eye to the subject of the experience than to its object." Accordingly it constitutes revelation rather than exploration. The European world, as Mr. Rahv puts it in his brilliant introduction, has "served the native imagination both as myth and reality." It has been "one of the poles of American culture, the other pole being . . . the frontier; and like Europe," he adds, "the frontier, too, is no less myth than reality."

In fact, preconceived concepts of themselves seem frequently to have influenced the attitude of early American travelers to Europe. Take, for instance, Abigail Adams's statement to her ambassador husband in Paris, explaining her hesitancy to join him: "A mere American, as I am, unaccustomed with the etiquette of the courts, taught to say the thing I mean and to wear my heart in my countenance, I am sure I should make an awkward figure." That proud awareness of republican simplicity, wavering between (sometimes half-ironic) self-dramatization, Puritan sobriety, and the fear of being unduly impressed, remained, well up to the middle of the nineteenth century, an attitude of American travellers in the Old World. Later that attitude coined the "Innocents Abroad." It flowered most curiously in Emerson's fierce rejection of the refined beauty of the Continental scene. "All this millinery and imbecility," he says, reflecting on a papal service which he happened to attend, "would be ridiculous to the eye of an Indian." Less than a generation later, appreciation of the treasures of Europe and the mode of life of her upper classes had become so widespread a passion, if not a fad, with monied Americans that no less a person than Mark Twain felt the urge to take issue with it. Yet the double-edged irony of his reports from Paris, reprinted in this volume, is still not entirely free from the bipolar pull of the American imagination.

Margaret Fuller distinguished three species of Americans abroad: the servile, the conceited, and the thinking—the last group consisting of people "who, recognizing the immense advantage of being born to a new world and on a virgin soil [do] not

wish one seed from the past to be lost." That noble description of the "thinking American abroad" still holds true. Its spirit reverberates even in Gertrude Stein's famous statement that America was her country and Paris her home town.

However, it was not the Continent, or even the spiritual ventures of the literary expatriates in Paris, which had the greatest impact on American thinking—nor is it, for that matter, of the greatest interest in this book. Its most significant pieces deal with England. There the voyagers stood on historic ground. Whether it is Washington Irving admiring the typically English "mingling of cultivated and rustic society" in that country, or Hawthorne comparing the British delight in permanency with "Western love for change," or Henry James whose long inner struggle (up to his final decision that the British alone were "the great race"), to quote the editor, "perfectly embodies the theme and the purpose of this book"—in

every instance their nostalgia as well as their criticism could claim, and claims, legitimacy. Even Emerson, easily the most uncompromising of pilgrims to Europe, found no way more apt of expressing his feelings than by telling Carlyle that England must "one day be contented, like other parents, to be strong only in her children."

The first proof of what today we call "world awareness" appears, in the notes assembled between these covers, in an excerpt from Melville's "Redburn." Concluding a description, Dickensian in either sense of the word, of low-class misery in the Liverpool of the 1840's, he says, "We are not a nation, so much as a world; for unless we claim all the world for our sire, like Melchizedek, we are without father and mother." Again, a family simile shapes the observation.

It took the greater part of a century to shift the explorers' interest from the esthetic and private to the socio-political sphere—although the tragi-comical adventures of Mrs. Dodsworth and her like kept on producing very good reading matter. One

Your Literary I.Q.

By Howard Collins

OCCUPATIONS MENTIONED IN POETRY

Rose M. Chudley, of New York City, submits twenty familiar quotations in which the names of occupations have been omitted. Can you fill in the blanks? Allowing five points for each correct answer, a score of sixty is par, seventy is very good, and eighty or better is excellent. Answers on page 20.

1. The, a mighty man is he, with large and sinewy hands.
2. Oh, I'm in love with the boy and he's in love with me.
3. The Walrus and the were walking close at hand.
4. "As God's above," said Alice the
"I speak the truth; you are my child."
5. Here once the embattled stood
And fired the shot heard round the world.
6. Giuseppe, da, ees greata for "mash,"
He gotta da bigga, da blacka moustache.
7. "Brave, speak! What shall I say?"
"Why, say: 'Sail on! sail on! and on!'"
8. The homeward plods his weary way.
9. "Oh, I am a and a captain bold,
And the mate of the Nancy brig."
10. Across the seas of Wonderland to Mogadore we plodded,
Forty singing in an old black barque.
11. "Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look—" (The made reply).
12. The smell of apples newly ripe, and ink on leaden type.
13. A chieftan, to the Highlands bound,
Cries, "., do not tarry!"
14. Far off the footfall dies;
The minutes crawl like last year's flies.
15. "Any answer, Madam," said my "No," I told him.
16. A who tooted the flute tried to teach two young tutors to toot.
17. I often wonder what the buy
One half so precious as the stuff they sell.
18. And the One who made the isthmus, He made the
19. But he said he was sick, and a king should know,
And came by the score.
20. The rode slowly down the lane,
Smoothing his horse's chestnut mane.

of the most engrossing pieces of the volume is a chapter from the autobiography of Andrew D. White, the founder of Cornell, on his talks with Tolstoy. In these wordy pages, the spell cast by all matters Russian on the post-World War I intelligentsia is, as it were, foreshadowed in all its facets—and so are some of the misunderstandings which since have played havoc with a great deal of that fascination. "Today," Edmund Wilson wrote in 1935, "when one has been in the United States and then in Russia [the countries of Western

Europe] seem a pack of little quarrelsome states, maintaining artificial barriers and suffering from morbid dis-temperers." This is a far cry indeed from the impressions brought home by American critics from their grand tours in earlier days.

Of the full circle of their experiences, as of each of its stages, this rich anthology gives an excellent picture. Mr. Rahv's own comments whet the reader's appetite for the full-length book that he might write on the important problem illustrated so well by his present volume.

Washington, to demand protection for the Kurds and Araman from Sovietization and to convince the State Department that the ideal site for a home for the United Nations would be Araman, where, Ide maintains, "the first systematic attempt was made to wage war against war by influencing the minds of human beings."

Those mountains [Ide argues before the State Department] can be set apart as a sanctuary of the nations. . . . We've done as much in this country for bison and Indians. . . . You would draw the best type of volunteer brains to Araman from the outlying nations. Police its frontiers, if you must, with the guards of the small nations around it . . . but protect it with the might of the United States. At long last let our nation, let all of us, do something instead of talking about.

Praiseworthy words, those, including a great idea impossible of fruition, because the United Nations already has chosen New York. A United Nations functioning in the Kurdistan "cradle of civilization" would undoubtedly achieve more effective results than among the fleshpots, skyscrapers, and other modern, and so-called, civilizing influences of Baghdad-on-the-Subway.

In the end, as in this review, Lamb gets across his message, but he has contrived his situations and characters a bit too conveniently in order to display his extensive historical knowledge and to expose Russian expansionism in Eurasia. Moreover, his characters never seem really to come alive. In Ide's case, this may be due to Aristotle, who is omnipresent.

Potpourri in Kurdistan

A GARDEN TO THE EASTWARD.

By Harold Lamb. New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc. 1947. 347 pp. \$2.75.

Reviewed by LINTON WELLS

HAROLD LAMB has dished up a potpourri of ancient history, Asiatic lore, current power politics, violent adventure, extramarital love, erudition, and idealism, concocted in the "cradle of civilization" known as Kurdistan, described by the author as "now the spot of greatest potential danger on earth." For those who enjoy Lamb, it is good provender, although a trifle indigestible.

Lame and scholarly Captain Jacob Ide, of U. S. Army Intelligence and a Manhattan newspaper rewrite desk, bought a bronze Pegasus 7,000 years old from an antiquarian in Cairo, then used his terminal leave to commence a search for its mate. His only clues to the source of a bronze *objet d'art* created in the Stone Age were three hints from a friendly Arab archeologist at Baghdad: "The place of Araman—it is on the track of the oldest lions. It's where East and West first met, and the Tower of Babel was built because of it."

Cleverly solving this riddle, Ide started looking for "a valley rather high up in a mountain chain, not so very far to the northeast of here [Baghdad], where the ancestors of the Biblical folk lived before they came down to these waters of Babylon to build their towers. The West and Far East first met there because people of this land and of China went there to get some superbly made art. . . ." The British tried to keep Ide out of what he was to consider a paradise, but an error in identity enabled him to leave Kirkuk and reach Riyat. There he met war-shocked Michal Thorne, searching for her garden of happiness, and an ailing British ex-brigadier and Orientalist, Sir Clement



Biggsby, whose ambition was to locate Araman.

Aided and abetted by bed-ridden Sir Clement, who gave him a German aerial photograph of Araman, Ide went into the wilds in quest of the site of a pre-Biblical civilization, which proved to be a truncated mountain cone with a lake and "a dozen families that speak a language of the dawn world. A fire altar as old as that. Beautiful bronze work, cliff sculpture, astronomical instruments, an aeolian harp . . . and wall paintings of purely oriental legends. . . ." En route, he is joined by love-hungry Michal and at Araman Sir Clement puts in an appearance to confront his arch-enemy of World War I, the German spy Vasstan.

Ide never found a mate for his Pegasus, but he did find himself sleeping with Michal (which cured her war jitters) and up to his neck in power politics, from which he emerged as a crusader for a Utopia. Into this paradise slithered a serpent in the form of a Soviet archeological expedition, led by a woman and followed by the Red Army supporting and then massacring revolting Kurds and subsequently taking possession. Thereafter, the only element lacking is the United States Marines, who would seem to be badly needed in the region. However, after being wounded, Ide escapes and manages to get back to

FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT: No. 194

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 194 will be found in the next issue.

SZCOI YSWOJ NQHH YOZ

RVEEK, PQE VE WOOGJ EDOY

GAAL. —BISZUVJ PSUAZ.

SGAEDOCYJ

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 193

Our ships were British oak,
And hearts of oak our men.

—SAMUEL ARNOLD.
"Death of Nelson."