

capitals in the shape of lions, elephants, horses, and bulls. On these pillars were engraved the philosophic thoughts of Asoka and, writes Mrs. Sen, "for the next thousand years, the civilization of Asia bore the deep imprint of those same thoughts." Asoka is today an Indian hero, but who in the Western world has ever heard the name?

Why did Buddhism die in India which gave it birth only to conquer most of the rest of Asia? What did ancient Rome get from ancient India? How do finds in Turkestan lay bare the past of India? See the book.

"Did you know that chess was an Indian game," the parent calls to his offspring, "and copied by the Persians?" But I give up. I thought I could communicate the thrilling nature of this book. I thought I could suggest its broad sweep and vision. I hoped to indicate its tremendous value—especially in view of the West's ignorance of Asia. I fear I have failed. It would take an entire issue of *The Saturday Review* to do justice to Mrs. Sen's wonderful volume.

Louis Fischer is author of "Ghandi and Stalin" and "A Week with Stalin."

French Past

THE MIRACLE OF FRANCE. By André Maurois. New York: Harper & Bros. 1948. 477 pp. \$5.

Reviewed by J. C. LONG

ANDRÉ MAUROIS' book is a useful, well-organized reference work, valuable for the home library; and that is the best that can be said for it. If the reader wishes a quick, condensed report on Charlemagne, Henry IV, the Bourbons, any one of the long procession of French rulers, they are all here, but more mundane than miraculous.

Curiously enough, the author is least satisfactory in what might have been a high point in his history, namely the story of Joan of Arc. He devotes only four pages to her life, apparently on the assumption that everyone knows the details, "Everyone knows how she was introduced into the castle" . . . and so on. He recites the events of the maid's career in such elliptical form as to be virtually unintelligible.

Most of the book proceeds in a



clear, direct manner which has its educational rewards. It is suggestive of the old-fashioned lantern-slide lecture wherein the pictures were the main feature, and the editorial comment of varying merit. Maurois, for example, gives a brisk account of the rise of Philip Augustus. By 1214, through the inheritance and marriage laws of the feudal system, he had become the ruler over most of the French territory. Then came war with the combined forces of England, Germany, and Flanders. Philip Augustus, with 20,000 bourgeois infantrymen, overcame his enemies at Bouvines. Thus, according to Maurois' puzzling and unconvincing comment, "the national community was born." He adds, "Nothing better unites a people than festivities. The convulsions of anarchy were succeeded by the traditions of the monarchy."

Maurois' confusion may arise from being a monarchist at heart, while mentally accepting democracy. He glows with pride whenever writing of a strong French ruler. He defends the absolutism of the Bourbons as important to the security of the nation. He regards the Parliamentary tradition of England as a luxury made possible by her protective sea wall. He does not, however, suggest monarchy as the solution for France's future.

Fundamentally, Maurois' chief moral contribution in the book is a commendable faith in the durability and adaptability of France. He sees her as garlanded with virtues. "Chivalry, courtesy, romantic love . . . are French creations." Again, France "has always driven the invaders out." Further, he affirms that France has stood as "the moral vanguard of liberty for the continent of Europe."

Maurois' faith indeed seems to know no limits. He holds it altogether likely that France will solve the riddles of the future, that she will "bring forth . . . solutions which tomorrow will make possible the continuance of the human experiment." So mote it be.

Your Literary I.Q.

By Howard Collins

"EPISTLE TO RUTH"

Ned Beatty Bartlow, of Baton Rouge, is the author of the following letter, which contains fifty-seven titles of well-known plays, most of them recent ones. Whip out a pencil and underline the titles which you recognize. Allowing two points for each one correctly identified, a score of sixty is par, seventy is very good, and eighty or better is excellent. Answers are on page 12.

FROM LETTERS TO LUCERNE:

Dear Ruth:

Morning's at seven and while merrily we roll along on our flight to the West I'll tell you the good news.

Harriet had a foolish notion that she wanted to be one of the doughgirls, since she was over twenty-one, no longer a junior miss, and afraid of becoming an old maid. It was on the eve of St. Mark that she made her decision.

Although, as you may recall, she has never been a pick-up girl, she did make an innocent voyage with Jason to Oklahoma after he had first promised not to kiss and tell. Also I remember Mama saying that she had once been Paris bound with the late George Apley.

At any rate she obviously recalled the old adage about the bird in hand, and when Harvey called her his blithe spirit and asked her to be his dream girl she said that though she was not born yesterday and was well aware that a soldier's wife often had a rugged path through another part of the forest she still had a fatal weakness for a magnificent Yankee.

Frankly, though she anticipates living a rich full life on Angel Street with chicken every Sunday, I greatly fear that she will repent her hasty heart when she finds that they have no common ground and that his only confreres are Jacobowsky and the Colonel and others of the patriots constantly in a dither over the state of the union. The boy meets girl situation sometimes proves a dead end rather than a prologue to glory.

By the end of summer I fancy that we will again find her following the easiest way and that she will shuffle along in the searching wind up in Central Park, or perhaps even take to arsenic and old lace. What a life!

Now I must call it a day, for this is no biography or family portrait, though Uncle Harry and my sister Eileen do send love. So goodbye again.

CLAUDIA.

It Happened in Rome

CICERO AND THE ROMAN REPUBLIC. By F. R. Cowell. With a foreword by Allan Nevins. New York: Chanticleer Press. 1948. 306 pp. \$5.

Reviewed by H. J. HASKELL

ROME continues to be a fascinating study in the modern world. While never industrialized it developed economic problems akin to some of those of the present age. As for its political problems, they could have been readily understood by American or British politicians.

Since the time of Gibbon—"the greatest of the amateurs," the professionals at Oxford used to call him—men have been intrigued by the reasons for the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. But for something like half of its thousand years of history Rome was a republic. The reasons for its disintegrating into the autocracy of Julius Caesar, Augustus, and their successors involve problems no less vital than those presented in the Empire's fall.

How did it happen that the great council of resolute and competent administrators, the Senate, faded into insignificance? Why did the mass of the people lose their love of freedom and become so apathetic that Cicero could say of them: "They demand nothing, they desire nothing"? Why, at the death of Caligula, less than a century later, should the Roman mob have clamored outside the walls of the Senate house against restoration of self-government?

These questions might still be asked about great modern nations. It is well that they be considered by the democracies that survive. We say, "It can't happen here." So might the Romans of the great days of the Republic.

The latest study of the downfall of the Roman Republic comes from a member of the British foreign service, a learned amateur like Gibbon. Mr. Cowell writes with authority and distinction. His "Cicero and the Roman Republic" is sumptuously illustrated and includes colored diagrams and maps showing the structure of the government and the growth of the Roman power. As the title suggests, the book is not primarily a biography of Cicero. It is rather a study of the development of Rome and the government of the Republic, with Cicero eventually emerging as the central figure, although hardly coming alive. For background there is a study of Roman culture. The conclusion is a stimulating essay on the decay of the Republic and the rise of Caesar's autocracy.

In his discussion of Roman culture

Mr. Cowell gives an admirably lucid and concise summary. The neglect of education and its abandonment to Greek slaves affected the Roman fate, as did the lack of scientific achievement which prevented industrial progress. It is hardly fair, however, to cite the murder of Archimedes by an ignorant Roman soldier in the sacking of Syracuse in 212 B.C. as an example of general Roman disrespect for science. The Roman commander made what amends he could and it should be borne in mind that a man of like distinction might have been killed by an ignorant soldier in modern war without discrediting the culture of his nation.

As for the factors that caused the decay of the Republic, they carry disquieting implications for modern so-

with the sudden expansion of Roman power the traditional framework of social life broke up and there was nothing to take its place. The Romans of Cicero's day were unable to advance rapidly enough from the traditional morality to the new loyalty that Cicero preached—loyalty to the rule of law. One reason is hinted at in the suggestion that the ruling class was more interested in getting rid of agitators than the evils upon which the agitation was based.

Why the populace was alienated from the rule of law for which Cicero stood is shown, I believe, in a famous incident which is ruled out by Mr. Cowell. He is extremely severe with the mental processes of those who believe that Catiline headed a movement of poor devils in revolt against the harsh enforcement of an edict permitting imprisonment and peonage for debt. To him Catiline was a gangster



THROUGH HISTORY WITH J. WESLEY SMITH

"I can't understand it—I took a poll of the Senate just before the Ides of March and they were against Julius Caesar to a man..

ciety. So long as Rome and the surrounding country constituted a primitive farming community with a fairly equable distribution of wealth there was comparatively little domestic trouble—none that could not be settled by fair give and take. Under these conditions the Republic drove forward from triumph to triumph. But when the riches of the East poured in through conquest the people's moral sense, as Cicero said, was depraved by wealth. The Romans were divided into what Mommsen called "the world of beggars and the world of the rich." Demoralization ensued. Government passed under the control of a selfish oligarchy which in turn after the time of Marius was dominated by any ruthless commander who had won the loyalty of the mercenary army.

Mr. Cowell makes the point that

using the poor as pawns in a game of personal political ambitions. Nevertheless, I believe the records show it is extremely probable that Catiline was honestly seeking to mitigate the condition of the debtors by legal means and was finally maneuvered into the leadership of open rebellion. Four years later the commons scattered flowers on his grave. The government against whose harshness the debtors revolted could hardly be expected to command the loyalty of the masses.

Undoubtedly there were mixed motives in Catiline's course including disappointed ambition. In a considerable experience observing American politics, I have never known as important politician whose motives were not mixed.

Despite his inadequacy says Mr.