

Mementos from Maine

MY WINDOW LOOKS DOWN EAST.

By Elinor Graham. New York: The Macmillan Co. 218 pp. \$3.

By LOUISE DICKINSON RICH



Sea-Scapes and a Way of Life

WE TOOK TO CRUISING: *From Maine to Florida Afloat.* By Talbot and Jessica Hamlin. New York: Sheridan House. 320 pp. \$3.50.

By A. K. LOBECK

TALBOT HAMLIN, architect and college professor, and his wife, Jessica, have taken to cruising, not as a means of occasional diversion, but as a permanent way of life. Upon their newest boat, *Aquarelle II*, built to their own dreams and specifications, they intend to retire. Too long the world has been with them, and the time has now come for them to escape from "the compulsion of outworn social codes, of competitive expenditure and competitive wealth, of keeping up with the Jones, of habitual and purposeless personal ambition." These they condemn and have decided at long last to be themselves.

Professor Hamlin comes, if not from a sea-faring, at least from a sea-loving, and a sea-knowing family. Ships and the sea are in his blood and will not be denied. Jessica Hamlin's touch is in this book too. Perhaps it is she who gives us on almost every page those revealing images which are the essence of the book itself, as in the opening paragraph we read, "The moon, just past the first quarter, swam through lazily moving wispy cirrus in a soft greeny sky, and the mounting night mist veiled the hills and from the wooded shores of the cove picked out plane after plane of mystery."

But when it comes to descriptions of the sea in a storm it is Talbot who is at the helm. His chapter on Crossing the Delaware Bay in a Gale holds one spellbound, and about the only assurance we have that they are going to get through alive is the fact of this book itself. There are many other squalls and storms, each as interesting as the last, with the outcome always dubious.

From Maine to Miami the Hamlins

have cruised over the past five or six years, first to Florida on the small twenty-four-foot *Aquarelle 'I*, the smallest ship that year to go through the Inland Waterway. About this famous waterway the skipper has this to say, "The way was long—longer than we had imagined, longer than the maps suggest. The Carolina coasts, feeling out to the eastward in large capes, retreating west and north in big curves, and interspersed with sounds and bays, lagoons and rivers, cover a multitude of miles and require a multitude of hours. With the stops we made it took us two weeks to cross North Carolina alone."

But this is no guide book. You will find the details in the Coast Pilots, Charts, and other references listed in the Appendix and also in his Clipping File, a sampling only he says, but it is an intriguing one. There are no maps. The end pages, however, could nicely have been used for this purpose, and Professor Hamlin's deft skill would have done it just right, for we are given a sample of his handiwork in the many alluring pen-and-ink sketches that ornament many of the pages.

This book of the Hamlins concerns the ways of people as much as it does the ways of nature. There is pathos, charm, admiration, and kindly humor; warmth of feeling goes out to all the people who march through its pages in one capacity or another. Strange it is perhaps to see this friendly human touch in one who seemingly has been trying to run away from his neighbors. But this is pleasing, indeed, and as we put the book down we feel that we have been less interested in taking to cruising ourselves—for when all is said and done, it is no child's play—than we have been in the personalities of Talbot and Jessica Hamlin.

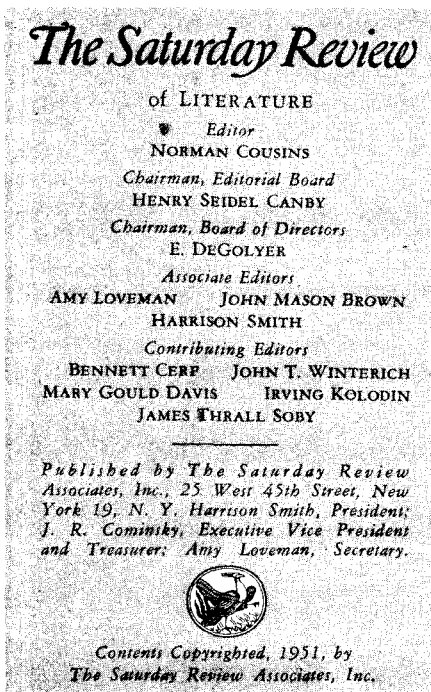
A. K. Lobeck is professor of geology at Columbia University

THIS IS Mrs. Graham's third book, and in it she has grown up. The first two, "Our Way Down East" and "Maine Charm String," were completely charming, but in retrospect and in comparison to this one they seem a little superficial. In them she wrote as an observer; in "My Window Looks Down East" she writes as a participant. It makes all the difference. This book has a warmth and sympathy that the others lacked and a much more mature outlook on life.

Mrs. Graham is a woman of many interests. She is interested in her home, in her neighbors, in collecting buttons, in the theatre, in beauty in all its forms, and in all human relations. That is one of the reasons why this is a good book. She shares her enthusiasms with us generously. She catches the true Yankee turn of speech when reporting a trade with Jake Allgood, who owns the antique, mineralogy, and junk shop, and with whom she seems to be at constant guerrilla warfare for possession of any one of a number of treasures. She speaks of her little daughter Lani with a tenderness which is not sentimental and an insight which is real rather than prettily fanciful. She is at her best when she describes the coastal country of Maine where she lives, making you see the fall of light over the sea, the millions of white violets which carpet her garden in the spring-time, the stark black lines of bare trees against the snows of winter. It is easy to become blind to beauty when you live with it day by day; but Mrs. Graham is not subject to this kind of blindness. Rather does she through familiarity acquire a wider knowledge of and a deeper insight into the background against which she lives.

The book abounds in human interest stories, so-called. The one I found most poignant, I think, is the one about the bereaved young woman who came to buy a bleeding heart plant to set on the grave of her little girl, dead at the age of four. Mrs. Graham handles this beautifully, both in the doing and in the telling. The party for Ruth Bowen, who had taught school for forty years on Flying Point, makes good, heart-warming reading, too.

But the real theme of "My Window Looks Down East" is not the people or the country. It is Mrs. Graham's
(Continued on page 37)



The Provincialism of East and West—II

THERE IS hardly an educated person today who would quote approvingly Kipling's arbitrary and meaningless pronouncement that "East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet." It seems generally agreed that to be associated with that type of global cocksureness is to be a drag on history.

Yet many educated people in Europe and the Americas — among them philosophers and scholars — will talk and write about the East in a way that helps to keep alive the Kipling stereotype. They have fallen into the habit of describing the culture and characteristics of the East in big, flat, and fixed terms, despite the fact that Asians no more comprise an entity than do the peoples of the West. The Asians — one and one-half billion of them — happen to share a continent, which is a formal geographic unit only by human designation and not by divine insistence. To make grooved and rutted generalizations about these people is to commit a sin against good scholarship and the human community both at a time when a vast expansion is needed in man's awareness and comprehension of man.

It is astonishing to see how often university conferences in Europe and the Americas on the problems of philosophy or politics in the modern world will allow stock references to Asian peoples and cultures to go unchallenged. One hears about the "disdain for action" or about "lack of systematic thought" or about the "Oriental

love of vagueness" or about the "Eastern mentality" or about "typical Eastern mysticism" or about the "propensity for negation."

One of the complaints leveled by an English philosopher-historian at a recent such conference was that there is no basis for understanding between East and West, for Eastern philosophers "attach hidden values and meanings to their thoughts which are incapable of even approximate definition."

What is most unfortunate about this remark is not so much the polite arrogance which assumes that failure of communication is necessarily the fault of the next fellow, but the unscholarly technique of placing "Eastern philosophers" inside a single academic enclosure. Anyone who has attended a philosophical meeting, whether in Japan or China or Indo-China or India or Pakistan or Turkey, is able to bear witness to the same spread of ideas and approaches, the same display of argumentation over ends and means, the same contrasts of soaring thoughts and plodding trivia which enliven similar meetings in Paris, London, or New York. Imagine, then, a meeting of Filipino, Japanese, Chinese, Indians, and Pakistani being characterized as though the ideas of only a single philosopher were being examined.

What an Eastern philosophical conference has most in common with a Western philosophical meeting, perhaps, is an apparent disposition to invest geographical entities with fixed cultural, ideological, or philosophical components. Thus it is not unusual to hear Western philosophy criticized as lacking in sufficient appreciation of the "vital intangibles" or "elusive but central values." Along with this is the criticism of "Western thought" as being overly concerned with systems and techniques and not enough with the domain beyond man's limited intelligence. This criticism, of course, is merely the Asian manifestation of a philosophical provincialism which is not centered in or confined to any single area.

So far as the overriding needs and purposes of man today are concerned, it is irrelevant to attempt to determine which set of stereotypes came first or which is more unscholarly or unfair — that of the West against the East or vice versa. What is important is that a major effort be made by all concerned to get away from the entity complex. It would be well, perhaps, if the world of scholarship would enter into a sort of compact on specificity. It should be made clear whether when we use the term East we are thinking of everything from the Bosphorus

Straits to the Bering Sea, or whether we have a specific area or culture in mind. Proper distinctions should be made between Japan and China and India and Pakistan and Indonesia and Siberia and Iran and Syria and Israel. Similarly, when Asian scholars comment on Europe and the Americas it would be helpful to know whether they are thinking primarily of the Balkans or Scandinavia or South America or France or Canada or whatever.

SOMETHING else we can do is to liberate ourselves from some of the harmful misconceptions that are so much excess baggage. Consider, for example, the frequent remark, mentioned above, that the East has a "disdain for action." It is said that it is virtually impossible to get beyond opinions and into operations. For generations we have heard about Chinese lethargy, Indian passivity, Balinese serenity, etc. In the light of recent and current history, that picture can stand some revision. The Civil War in China, stretching over fifteen years, was conspicuous for its lack of lethargy on all sides. Indeed, the missing ingredient appears to have been not action but thought. Reports coming into Hong Kong from China of the mass killings and raging terror and the resultant disillusion may indicate that some aspects at least of the revolution may not have been thought through in the general rush to the barricades. Japanese aggression in concert with the Axis only a few years ago was sharply in contrast to the prevailing conception of an Oriental nation as lacking in drive or dynamics. It is worth noting, incidentally, that industrialization, militarization, mobilization, aggression, and colonization — all of which dominated Japanese life for perhaps a quarter of a century — were almost the monopoly of the West. So far as India is concerned, the widespread outside impression of an almost universal passivity or impassiveness must be modified in the light of observable facts of life in India for at least fifty years. Passive resistance and non-cooperation were the most vital parts of a real action program. Today intense political activity on the extremes of both left and right — activity from which Indian men of learning and letters have sought no immunity or exemption — has made India one of the least passive places on the face of the globe. Bali, too, more closely resembles a hotbed of Balkan intrigue today than it does the glamorous, languorous land of Covarrubias's sketches.

As for the complaint of "Oriental vagueness," I have searched my mem-