

Whirlpools & Gold

THE FRASER. By Bruce Hutchison.
New York: Rinehart & Co. 368 pp.
\$4.

By RICHARD L. NEUBERGER

CANADA and Siberia are the lands of the great unknown rivers. These realms of icecaps and glaciers pour huge torrents downhill to the oceans. In Siberia there are the Yenisei, the Ob, and the Lena. Canada's mountain passes nurture the Stikine, the Skeena, the Athabaska—and the Fraser. After many volumes devoted to rivers which would be measured by eye-droppers alongside such foaming maelstroms as these, the indefatigable Rivers of America Series finally is getting around to the Fraser, the turbulent waterway which ties British Columbia to the rest of Canada.

No other breach in the Rockies offers access to the rich coastal lowlands that lie just north of Puget Sound. Without the presence of the Fraser "Fifty-four Forty or Fight" might have been the actual boundary of the United States instead of merely a rallying cry for the followers of James K. Polk. Today the Fraser is the conduit to Vancouver for those two immense railway systems, the only true transcontinentals of North America—the Canadian Pacific and the Canadian National. Bruce Hutchison, who has a deep affection for the cosmic distances of his homeland, has written a book which does justice to this 850-mile passage through canyons and gorges.

The first explorers thought the Fraser was the legendary Columbia. Simon Fraser, an adventurous clerk in the North West Fur Company, was the first to prove otherwise. But, like Alaska, the domain of the Fraser River lured no substantial number of white men until the report spread that the gravel of its tributaries was seasoned with gold. It took robust prospectors twenty-three dreadful days to surmount thirty-five roaring miles on one tributary, the Lillooet. But the promise of nuggets made wayfarers slog on, half-naked and unarmed, after



—From the jacket of "The Fraser."

their expensive outfits had disappeared in these watery maws.

Jack London immortalized the dash across Chilkoot Pass. Four decades earlier, in 1858, no person of such a vivid pen was among the prospectors frantically scrambling up the Fraser to the uplands of the Cariboo. Yet this rush for gold may have been as dramatic and important as the Klondike, and Bruce Hutchison has brought it to life in his book. On one rocky beach, Hill's Bar, \$2,000,000 in dust was packed into pokes during a single season. The diggings contained 33,000 Americans who had stormed over the border. In Barkerville flour sold for \$300 a barrel and a pair of boots for \$50. One packer brought in camels because a pack mule could tote a mere \$250 worth of supplies on each upriver journey. The camels lumbered into the sub-Arctic with prodigious loads, but their strong stench drove horses and mules crazy with fear. After these terrified beasts had leaped off dizzy ledges in their fright the owner of the camels found himself involved in innumerable lawsuits.

As Canadians moved westward the Fraser inevitably became the avenue to the Pacific's heaving surf. The suffering rivaled any ordeals on the trail to Oregon and California. The massive river is trapped between rock walls during most of its course. Cannibalism was practised by starving argonauts who had lost their boats. Indians picked off wretched pilgrims whose rifles lay five fathoms deep. Around each bend a whirlpool lurked.

Mr. Hutchison has lived along the Fraser, and he feels the great river in his bones. He shares some of Thomas Wolfe's fascination for trains, being in his most enthusiastic mood when he describes the locomotives and cars which cling like toys to narrow shelves far above the Fraser. "A freight train a mile long is a toiling worm, at night a glow worm, whose spark flickers for a moment and is snuffed out."

The book leaves us with the thought that the Fraser's greatest era is yet to come. In an electric age this mighty stream drops 1,280 feet "or four times the height of Niagara Falls." Only a fragment of this energy has been hooked to generators. Some day the headwaters of the Fraser may be the site of the world's largest aluminum plant, for this product requires immense quantities of power.

Richard Bennett's pen-and-ink drawings are excellent. No one who has followed the Fraser to its ultimate source can fail to feel his pulse beat faster at sight of the magnificent sketch of Mount Robson, with a glacial moraine creeping out from its snowy base.

Richard L. Neuberger is a writer on the staff of The Portland Oregonian, and has served as a state senator. His books include "Our Promised Land" and "Integrity: The Life of George W. Norris." He has also contributed articles to many national publications.

Americana Notes

JEFFERSON'S IDEAS OF A UNIVERSITY LIBRARY: *Letters from the Founder of the University of Virginia to a Boston Bookseller.* Edited by Elizabeth Cometti. Tracy W. McGregor Library, University of Virginia. \$2. In 1824 Thomas Jefferson was an old man, but his work was not finished. His University of Virginia was to open within a few months; it had the buildings and was getting the teachers. But it needed books for its library, and for the convenience of all concerned it needed a bookstore close by. Jefferson entered into an instructive and fruitful correspondence with William Hilliard of the Boston house of Cummings, Hilliard & Co., who informed Jefferson, with reasonable pride: "I have for many years supplied Harvard College with their Classical Books, as well as many other Universities."

Miss Cometti, who is associate professor of history at Marshall College, here presents Jefferson's side of the correspondence with Hilliard and supplies an introduction that really introduces. Here is not Jefferson the socio-political philosopher but Jefferson with a job to do—sending want lists, checking catalogues, asking about missing boxes, reporting damage suffered in transit, and altogether having the time of his life. This fifty-page collection is an entertaining and charming footnote to the history of libraries in America and an illuminating portrait of a great American still actively serving his countrymen as he strides into the sunset.

LITERARY I.Q. ANSWERS

1. Keats: Ode to a Nightingale. 2. Stevenson: Bed in Summer. 3. Tennyson: Maud. 4. Shakespeare: Romeo and Juliet. 5. Milton: Hymn on Christ's Nativity. 6. Wolfe: Burial of Sir John Moore. 7. Byron: Eve of Waterloo. 8. Key: The Star-Spangled Banner. 9. Arnold: Dover Beach. 10. Bourdillon: Light. 11. Hunt: Abou Ben Adhem. 12. Blake: The Tiger. 13. Shelley: The Indian Serenade. 14. Browning: How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix. 15. Coleridge: Christabel.

OUR PENNSYLVANIA: Keys to the Keystone State. By Amy Oakley, with illustrations by Thornton Oakley. Bobbs-Merrill. \$4.50. Both Mr. and Mrs. Oakley have a right to say "our Pennsylvania"; she was born in Philadelphia, he in Pittsburgh. Her words and his drawings combine to make this a pleasant and informative book—a place-to-place historical and descriptive survey that does not duplicate the Federal Writers Project manual, combined with a travelogue that never descends to the trivialities of touring. The accent is properly distributed; Philadelphia and Pittsburgh get two chapters apiece, one concerned with the past and one with the present, and the rest of the state gets excellent attention. Mr. Oakley's hundred-odd drawings are both decorative and effectively complementary to the text. There is an unusually ample index. These two Pennsylvanians deserve well of their homeland.

SECRETS OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC ISLANDS. By Edgar Rowe Snow. Dodd, Mead. \$4. Mr. Snow herewith extends to eight his archipelago of books about the Atlantic Coast. His present explorations carry him from Ocrakoke, off the North Carolina coast, to Newfoundland, with numerous stopping points between, including Manhattan. In every instance Mr. Snow has visited the island he talks about, though his main concern is usually not its relatively prosaic present but its spectacular past. He has run into some fantastic oddities, such as the case of Francis Haskell of Deer Isle, Maine, who drowned standing up and with his hat on. Mr. Snow is not the man to run away from a controversy; he believes that the famous tower at Newport, on the island of Rhode Island, "was built in 1121 by one of the early Norse explorers, Eric

Gnuppson." Mr. Snow played a literal Santa Claus at St. Pierre, one of France's little North Atlantic outposts, which became famous in Prohibition days—you can get champagne there for eighty-five cents a bottle or could when Mr. Snow was there a few months back.

MAIN LINE OF MID-AMERICA: The Story of The Illinois Central. By Carlton J. Corliss. Creative Age Press. \$4.75. Abraham Lincoln and Casey Jones both worked for the Illinois Central. In the course of his legal chores for the road Lincoln occasionally had dealings with its vice president, a former Regular Army officer named George B. McClellan. Mark Twain piloted one of the I.C.'s steamboats during the brief period in which the road maintained a water route. Dozens of other figures best known to fame outside the transportation field have a share in I.C.'s story. Mr. Corliss tells that story at lively length (500 pages) and with a technical competence born of long railroad association, most of it with I.C. itself.

The book signals the road's centennial—it was chartered February 10, 1851, though elements of the system were functioning much earlier. Mr. Corliss points with legitimate pride to the I.C.'s distinction ("rare in transportation," he adds) of "never having been in receivership, of never having undergone a reorganization, and of never having defaulted on a dollar of its bonded debt."

THE STORY OF AMERICAN ROADS. By Val Hart. Sloane. \$3. The fable that a cow laid out downtown Boston is not too fantastic a conception—buffalo made the first roads west of the Alleghenies, and the Indians and the white men took them over. (The Indians, by the way, never blazed a trail.) Vir-

ginia had a highway program as early as 1632—every able-bodied male had to fall to with a pick or pay somebody else to. The plank-road craze hit America in 1846, and in Wisconsin alone 135 separate companies were organized to levy tolls on these. By 1855 Westfield, Massachusetts, had thirty horsewhip factories.

The good-roads movement was itself set in motion by cyclists, not motorists. One "improvement" that followed the motorcar was the sawdust road, which occasionally caught fire "if someone carelessly threw away a lighted pipe or stogy." (Note to author: Men do not throw away pipes, lighted or unlighted.) The first long-distance truck run was opened in 1911—Denver to Los Angeles, sixty-six days. The following year the Lincoln Highway was born or at least christened. The name was there well before the road, on which work began in 1914. America now has 3,000,000 miles of rural highways, 200,000 of which are high-type cement. "Today, as in the past, vehicles are far ahead of roads," says Miss Hart, who tells her story with crispness and brevity.

GRASS OF THE EARTH: Immigrant Life in the Dakota Country. By Aagot Raaen. Norwegian-American Historical Association, Northfield, Minn. \$3. This is the intimate story—factual reminiscence—of a Norwegian immigrant family's life in the territory that was admitted to the Union as North Dakota. It is unusual in two respects. It is concerned not with the first frontier but with "the middle period of Norwegian settlement," as Dr. Theodore C. Blegen of the University of Minnesota characterizes it—the era that saw "the coming of the railroad, the saloon, the farm mortgage, and the sales agent." Its hero, the father of

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—Jacket design for "The Story of American Roads."

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A Tough One For History

TOKYO.

IF you want to see an economic miracle, come to Japan. Battered and defeated less than six years ago, Japan under the American occupation has had a prodigious recovery. Today Japan is easily the most prosperous nation in the Far East.

Most amazing of all perhaps is that a large part of the rehabilitation has come about during the past year. I was in Japan in the summer of 1949. The Japanese at that time were making progress but they were run down at the heels. Their clothing was skimpy and tattered. Their faces seemed drawn and tense. The food shops had little volume and variety. Housing was still a critical problem.

When I returned to Japan a few weeks ago I had to rub my eyes. The change was startling—a change in both place and people. The Ginza, Tokyo's main thoroughfare, was lit up by neon lights. The shops were crowded. About the only thing you couldn't buy was a television set. There were refrigerators, washing machines, electric bed warmers, fancy luggage, delicate lace lingerie—even pogo sticks. Food was plentiful. The people were comparatively well dressed and had far more bounce than when I had observed them eighteen months ago. "Better than before the war," a university professor told me. "Japanese people are grateful for American help in rebuilding ourselves."

What I saw in Toyko was reinforced in Hiroshima. It is difficult to tell

today that this entire area was devastated only five years ago by the first atomic bomb in history to be dropped upon a city. True, there are still some ugly scars—the famous Exhibition Hall Building and the discolored façade of the City Hall. But Hiroshima has been almost entirely rebuilt. Wide new thoroughfares are in process of construction. Modern office buildings are going up. Old trolleys are being replaced. Mayor Shinzo Hamai is busy at work carrying out his plan to make Hiroshima one of the most beautiful cities in the East. One of the principal features of the new plan is a large Hiroshima Peace Center project, which will include a hospital, orphanage, community center, exhibition hall, and an institute for the study of peace.

"Many, many changes since you were here in 1949," Mayor Hamai told me. "The psychological recovery is even greater than physical recovery. More people are working. More people have homes. The city has helped to put up new housing projects, like the one you see over there." He pointed to an impressive two-story building development, which covers most of a short block.

I was especially impressed by the improvement in the hospital facilities. At Dr. Akio Asano's hospital, for example, people are no longer forced to sleep on floor mats. There are beds and good mattresses for all. Dr. Asano proudly showed me his new operating room and equipment and his modern sterilizers. The miracle drugs—penicillin, streptomycin, aureomycin, cloromycin, and others—still are not available in large quantities, but at least it is possible to obtain sufficient quantities for the serious cases. I recalled the trouble we had to go through just a year ago in order to obtain from the United States enough streptomycin for a seven-year-old girl dying from tuberculosis in Dr. Asano's hospital.

It wasn't only Hiroshima or Tokyo. Other cities I saw in Japan reflected this spirit of recovery and well-being. The industrial centers are working at top speed. The shipbuilding business has had one of the most prosperous years in its history. In rolled steel the year's goal has been surpassed; a new goal of 4,000,000 tons has been set for 1951. Pig-iron production will probably exceed 2,500,000 tons this year. In a recent month more than 90,000 bicycles—basic transportation in Japan—were produced. A postwar production record was established in the automotive industry with an output of 2,250 cars in November alone.

What impresses a visitor from America most of all, however, is the general atmosphere of detachment

from the Korean war crisis. You have to keep reminding yourself that only a few hours away a war is going on. You seldom ever hear the war discussed. There are no big black headlines in the papers about Korea. Even among the members of the American community you find little reflection of the extreme anxiety that back home amounts almost to national jitters. I had the strange experience of being asked by an American friend, an officer in the occupation, to explain why everyone in the U. S. seemed to be sitting on the edge of his spine.

"Every time I get a letter from home the folks write as though they think I'm sitting on the edge of a volcano or something," he said. "I keep writing them that there's far less worry over Korea here than there is back home, but I guess they think I'm trying to put on a brave front."

"I'm not trying to say that we here in Tokyo are living in some wonderful Shangri La or anything like that," he added. "It's just that we've got a job to do and there isn't too much gassing about it. Maybe the closer you get to the front the calmer you get. Maybe it's because we don't see newspapers on every corner or because we're not in the habit here of switching on the radio news every hour or so. Whatever it is, we have the strange feeling that you have to be back in the States if you want to get close to Korea."

IN the Japanese there is little surface evidence of any preoccupation with the war news. The visit of John Foster Dulles has attracted a great deal of general interest, but that is because the Japanese Government and people regard a peace treaty with the United States as the number one national aim. In general, however, the comparative boom has served to focus the individual's attention on himself and his share in the improved national standard of living.

Culture and entertainment are thriving. The Japanese traditional folk theatre is having a considerable resurgence, especially among the young people, although it has not yet replaced the American movie as the nation's favorite pastime. Incidentally, I was pleased to see that the quality of American movies being shown in Japan today represents a considerable improvement over the films I saw billed last year. It seems apparent that Hollywood is taking the trouble to eliminate many of the films which give a distorted idea of life in the United States. The other day, strolling along a street leading to the imperial palace, I noticed a crowd of Japanese gathered in a large circle. A model-plane tournament was in progress, and youngsters were sending their