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The U.S.A. in Books

WASHINGTON, D.C.: "The White House," by Jane and Burt McConnell (Studio-Crowell, \$3.95), is a chatty history and description of our Presidential mansion by two authors who have written on the subject before. The McConnells here recount some of the famous historical incidents connected with the White House, describe the appearance and contents of the building—the precious collections of antique furniture, paintings, china, and other souvenirs of past Administrations—and discuss the recently concluded restorations, including the addition of the new balcony. The eighty large pages include a good many photographs and illustrations of interiors, exteriors, and contents, including some of the famous paintings of the Presidents. This is a handy volume for tourists to take along.

—WILLIAM MURRAY.

NEW ENGLAND: Hazel Young, whose previous literary activity had been confined to authorship of three successful cook books, is responsible for a pleasant new volume on the "Islands of New England" (Little, Brown, \$3.95). Island by island Miss Young whisks us down the New England coastline from Eastport to Block Island, happily and rather carelessly mingling anecdote and observation, description and narrative, fact and fancy as she goes. There are tales of islands that inspired Longfellow, Hawthorne, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and Celia Thaxter, as well as of others that no one but Miss Young, I am sure, has ever visited. Four years were spent in gathering material for this book. I am happy to say it is both entertaining and informative.

—W. M.

THE AMERICAN PAST: "A Visual History of the United States" (Abelard-Schuman, \$5) is an unusual publishing venture very much in line with current educational trends towards visualization of the school textbook. The novelty of this approach lies in the book's use of about 100 pictographs, pictorial maps, visual diagrams, and graphic stories to point up the important trends discussed in the 75,000-word text, written by Professor Harold U. Faulkner of Smith College. A pictograph, by the way, is a statistical chart made more attractive and readily comprehensible by the use of pictorial symbols and color. All the pictorial work here was turned out by the Graphics Institute,

old hands at this sort of thing, and a very impressive job it is, too. I must admit that my initial reaction to this volume was a hostile one, if only because complete reliance on visualization certainly tends to oversimplify what is after all very complex material. Let us acknowledge, however, that there is some value in the format, especially as a reference tool: the handy statistics are right there under your eyes—no need to fumble through indexes and appendices. Such a volume should not be used as a substitute for a detailed written text by an historian of the first rank, but I am sure it was not intended to be. The lazy, the hurried, and the harried, all those people who barely have time to glance at a chart but wish to seem well-informed, will also find this book essential.

—W. M.

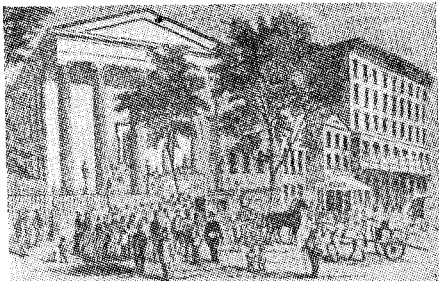
FLORIDA: If you are thinking of retiring and don't want to "cling to a life of dwindling interest in a spot determined by accident of birth or pressure of earning a living," then "How to Retire to Florida," by George and Jane Dusenbury (Harper, \$2.75), could be a useful book. The new third revised edition includes the latest information on real-estate conditions and cost-of-living figures, plus every conceivable specific suggestion concerning where and how to live in all parts of the state.

—W. M.

"NORTH CAROLINA" by Hugh Talmage Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome (University of North Carolina Press, \$7.50), is a more or less official history of that state. Official histories have a tendency to be lengthy, and "North Carolina" with its 592 pages of text and its extensive appendices is no exception. It is, nevertheless, surprisingly readable and commendably detached in its viewpoint. There has been no attempt either to "debunk" history or to view it through rose-colored glasses. The authors have



—From "Islands of New England."



—From "The United States."

done their state a valuable service. It is too bad there are no illustrations of any kind.

—W. M.

OHIO: Two Ohio State University professors, Eugene H. Roseboom and Francis P. Weisenburger, have collaborated on "A History of Ohio" (Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, \$6.50), an expanded and revised edition of the volume they first published in 1934. The text is fairly comprehensive without being pedantic and every effort has been made to interest the casual as well as the scholarly reader. The two-column format permits the inclusion of some 300 illustrations that admirably complement the text.

—W. M.

THE U.S.A.: ITS PEOPLE: Rom Landau is a cultivated and well-traveled English gentleman, a leading authority on Moroccan affairs, and the author of some thirty books of art criticism, fiction, biography, world affairs, philosophy, and religion. During the winter of 1952-1953 he revisited the U.S. in order to attend the United Nations Moroccan debates and to teach for a term at the American Academy of Asian Studies in San Francisco. He also lectured all over the land, met and talked to hundreds of Americans of varied ages and interests. The result, of course, had to be a book about America. It is entitled "Among the Americans" (British Book Centre, \$4.50) and it is somewhat more successful than the usual glib attempts of visiting foreign journalists who spend a few weeks in New York and Washington before setting out to write the book that will explain all the American mysteries and paradoxes. Mr. Landau does his best to avoid sweeping generalizations and sticks mainly to observations based upon personal experience. He does say, however, that all Americans keep the radio going full blast all day long and that "Mum" (I hope he means "Mom") is worshiped by all American men. He also states that even on elegant upper Fifth Avenue American men often go tieless to the dinner table. "Among the Americans" is an entertaining book, but like most of his predecessors Mr. Landau occasionally trips.

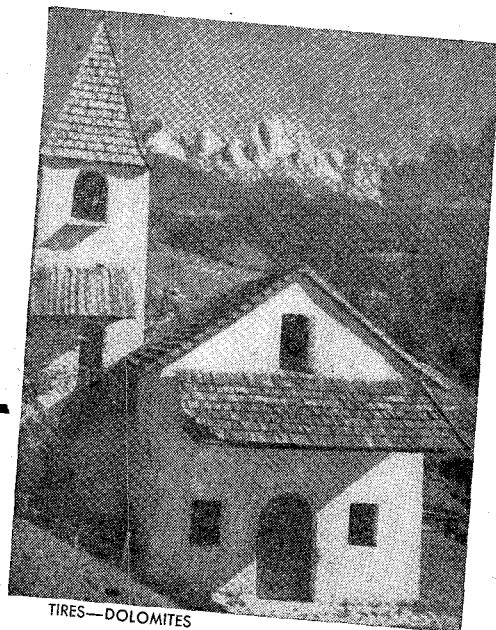
—W. M.

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ISLANDS OF NEW ENGLAND. By Hazel Young. Little, Brown & Co. \$5. A story of the islands of New England—Nantucket, Monhegan, and others, from Eastport to Block Island.

LET ME SHOW YOU VERMONT. By Charles E. Crane. Alfred A. Knopf. \$5. A guidebook to the features of the Green Mountain state and an interpretation of the Vermont people.

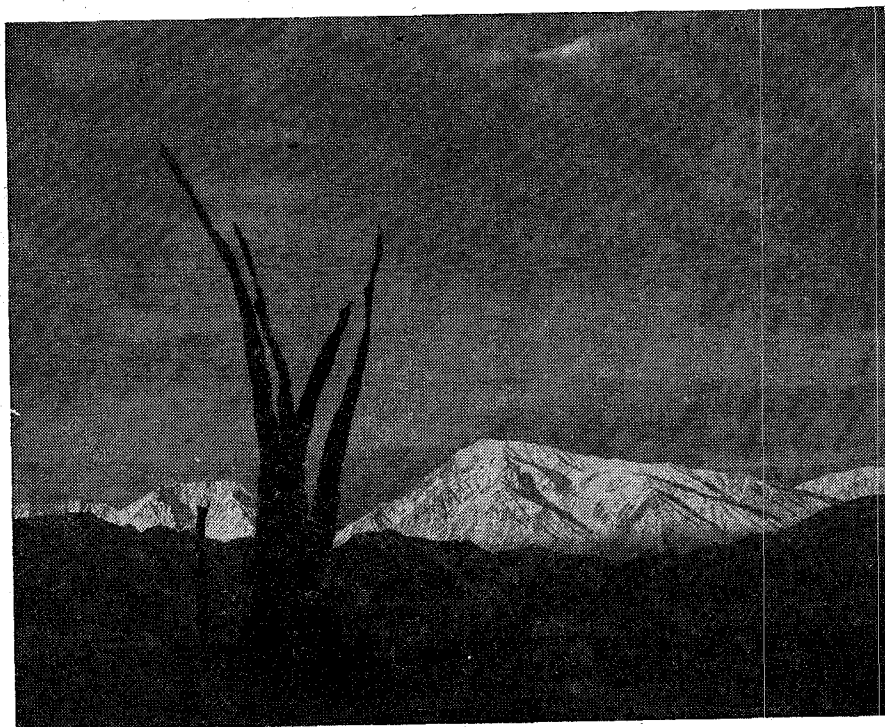
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—Photograph by Ansel Adams, from "Land of Little Rain."

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Begins to possess the ground, the flatness gathers to little humps
and barrows, low aimless ridges,
A sudden violence of rock crowns them. The crowded orchards end,
they have come to a stone knife;
The farms are finished; the sudden foot of the sierra. Hill over
hill, snow-ridge beyond the mountain gather
The blue air of their height about them."

—ROBINSON JEFFERS, "ASCENT TO THE SIERRA."