

## Serenade to the Second City

**"Chicago, with Love,"** by **Arthur Meeker** (Alfred A. Knopf, 293 pp. \$4.75), offers the boyhood reminiscences of a scion of South Side society who has since made good in the literary world. Wayne Andrews spent his formative years in that citadel of "passion for the higher life," Winnetka, Illinois.

By Wayne Andrews

THERE is, as any Chicagoan could tell you, a lot more to America's second city than anyone has been able to discover between the time the *Twentieth Century* pulls in and the *Super-Chief* heads west. The natives have always believed, and they may be right, that books about their city should be written only by those born and bred on the site of Fort Dearborn. Now, at last, we have a portrait by an author whose grandmother settled on the lake front as long ago as 1845. Though Arthur Meeker is now ensconced in a New York apartment he knows he can never say goodbye to his home town. "In a minor degree," he confesses in his book *"To Chicago with Love,"* "I am a Chicago institution."

No native needs to be told that the author's father was one of the great P. D. Armour's lieutenants. For long the manager of the packer's European business, he lost two fortunes and made three. The first vanished in the failure of Armour & Co. in the recession following the First World War. The second disappeared about the time that Samuel Insull fled to Greece. Through it all Arthur Meeker, Sr. kept his head and the admiration of his son. Only once was he discouraged, when Insull stock certificates were being used to light grate fires on Lake Shore Drive. "I can only do little things for you now, Sonny," he complained.

Readers of *"Chicago, with Love"* will understand that Father Meeker made it possible for his son to know all that our second city had to offer in the days when it had an opera company of its own. As you may remember if you have read the author's best-selling novel *"Prairie Avenue,"* he spent his childhood on that polite island of the South Side between Sixteenth and Twenty-second

Streets. Below Twenty-second the Avenue was terra incognita. "We ask them to our weddings, but not to our dinner parties," young Meeker's mother commented on the ladies down the street.

Needless to say, the Meekers moved to the North Side the day it became apparent that Prairie Avenue was no longer discreet. Settling eventually in a princely apartment at 1100 Lake Shore Drive, they pondered for a moment in which suburb to spend their summers. "In our book Evanston was down as pious and fuddy-duddy." As for Winnetka it was "sick-lie o'er with a passion for the higher life." Naturally they decided on Lake Forest and built a villa near that of Ogden Armour.

So much for the scenery of *"Chicago, with Love."* The cast, as you may have guessed, is complete. There is Ogden Armour, "a simple soul, guileless and kindly, who always sat edgewise at table, as if prepared to take flight if a situation arose." Then there are the Insulls, neither of whom were favorites of the Meeker family. "It would be hard to decide which of them deserved the prize for ignoble deportment," Mr. Meeker observes. "Each had made a study of the art of unamiability." Finally, there are all the celebrities of the Chicago social world, from Edith Rockefeller McCormick to Janet Ayer Fairbank.

Like the parents of most authors, Father and Mother Meeker were puzzled by their son's literary success. The former preferred champagne to poetry, and the latter once swallowed a wad of chewing gum while reading a thriller in bed. These are failings which Mr. Meeker is willing to forgive, and no wonder. His parents provided him with almost as many anecdotes as did Chicago's opera stars.

Though Chicagoans have been known to take themselves much more seriously than does Mr. Meeker no one can deny that the flavor of this book is as authentic as that of a soda sipped in the green room of Kranz's never-to-be-forgotten candy store. Natives may feel that here is a period piece that can be appreciated only by themselves, but they will be wrong. Social history as entertaining as this can be enjoyed anywhere on earth.



—From *"Chicago, with Love."*

Meeker père at the Opera (1927).

## Film Czar

**"The Memoirs of Will H. Hays"** (Doubleday, 600 pp. \$7.50) is the autobiography of a Hoosier politician who will probably be longest remembered as Hollywood's custodian of morality. Hugh M. Flick of the University of the State of New York, who reviews it below, has had his share of experiences as a film censor in New York State.

By Hugh M. Flick

THERE is an old movie saying that there is nothing more difficult than to make a long story short. Will Hays has sought valiantly but rather unsuccessfully to meet up to this test. Throughout the 581 pages of *"The Memoirs of Will H. Hays"* there is a constant bombardment of facts, figures, and people which gives the work a textbook flavor. There is a feeling that the text was prepared from carefully compiled notes neatly arranged and carefully selected. There is also a sort of fearful sense that someone's sensibilities might be hurt and elaborate care is taken to see that full justice is done to everyone. Even the rough and tumble of politics seems orderly and logical—and Will Hays was in the midst of political maneuvering from boyhood to the end of his public life. The smooth flow of the chronicle and the very lack of rancor present a readable but somehow not fully plausible record of his times.

These were times of unusual bitterness and hate. His life (1879-1954) spanned two world wars and sev-

eral smaller ones. He was in college in the Gay Nineties. He was in Washington in the Roaring Twenties, and he was in New York and Hollywood in the "depressed Thirties." He played a crucial role in national politics, associating with the leaders in banking, industry, and politics. Finally, for nearly a quarter of a century he stood as a buffer between the public and the organized motion-picture industry.

Throughout these stirring and controversial times the world of Will Hays was logical and rational. The endless succession of conferences and dinners, the steady stream of personalities with whom he settled delicate problems, and his inexhaustible optimism and confidence are not only reflected in his memoirs but also probably constitute an index to his character. He loved to live by formula, and minor variations served to strengthen his faith rather than weaken it. He liked to believe that he always followed his father's advice to give "Providence the glory but do the engineering." Throughout his life he felt that the hand of destiny directed his major moves and guided him in his course of action.

Thus a fortuitous train wreck had him convalescing in his hotel in Washington when Messrs. Saul Rogers and Lewis J. Selznick called and discussed the position of head of the proposed motion-picture association, and it was fortuitous when by chance he overheard a conversation of his son with his cousins acclaiming the motion-picture personality of Wil-

liam S. Hart. These observations convinced him of the potential impact of motion pictures and that his duty was to accept the motion-picture men's proposition. And thereby hangs a code.

It seems evident that Hays shared with the general public the conviction that his real call to fame was the creation of the "Hays Office." Approximately half of his memoirs deal with the motion-picture story. There are proud references to the creation of the "Hayes formula" and its successful application to various problems of the motion-picture industry. This formula was based on the principle that by producing good motion pictures the companies would cater to the best audience taste and create a demand for better pictures which in turn would result in economic, moral, and spiritual profit.

It was a good formula. The application, however, was difficult to say the least. The evolution of the formula into first the "Don'ts" and "Be Carefuls," and finally the Production Code, occupied a good share of the time of the President of the Association of Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, Inc. There can be little doubt that the application of restraint by the member companies was of real and far-reaching economic importance. It would seem equally true that the observance of positive "Dos" and "Don'ts" did little fundamental damage to the artistic development of the motion picture. The process was a sort of editorial action on the part of the major com-

panies much as a book publisher would exercise editorial discretion. The dangers of self-regulation as finally crystalized in the Production Code would seem to lie in its rigidity and in its interpretation rather than in its aims and objectives.

From where Will Hays sat the achievements were most gratifying in terms of a balance between the economic goal of the industry and the demands of various pressure groups and governmental bodies throughout the world. The story of the evolution of the Production Code as recorded and interpreted by Will Hays is reassuring. The violent claims and condemnations of the adherents and opponents of the Production Code seem to lose meaning in the light of Hays's analysis of the problem and his determination to evolve a workable compromise. Indeed, this attitude is typical of Will Hays's relations with both men and problems, and the Hays formula of improvement through understanding is one which well might be applied to other fields than motion pictures.

## Notes

**SOLDIER OF THE FRONTIER:** "Beyond the Cross Timbers" (University of Oklahoma Press, \$4) is an excellent biography about Randolph B. Marcy, father-in-law of General George McClellan, himself an Army officer who served for years on the frontier and was one of the most efficient and persistent explorers of the new lands of



—From "The Settlers' West."

Spoof of two Western terrors: Indian and grasshopper.



—From "The American West."

Restaurant manager forces new millionaire to don a coat to eat.

## WHEN THE WEST WAS WILD

THESE sketches of an uncouth millionaire, of a dancing train conductor, and of other traditional trappings of the Wild West all come from two newly published books whose purpose is to depict through

pictures and words the forces, both serious and amusing, which went into the vivid and turbulent era of the opening up of the American frontier. The books are "The American West," by Lucius Beebe and Charles Clegg