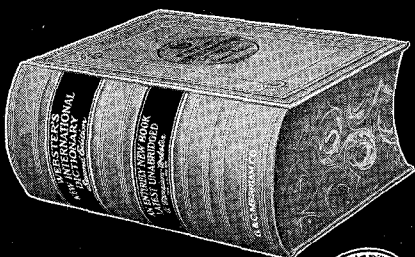


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—DOUGLAS S. FREEMAN

Foreign Affairs

Despite the fuss and bother in the Mediterranean during the past months, books on foreign affairs for the most part still draw their inspiration from the German situation. This, I suppose, is a reflection of the general feeling that, in comparison with Hitler and Germany, the Duce and his new Italy are merely second-raters. Mussolini is an opportunist (proved to the hilt in Megaro's *Mussolini in the Making*); his movement was that of an aggressive minority; and his country is naturally poor and weak, "a great power only by courtesy" as Bismarck suggested years ago. Hitler, on the other hand, is a Messiah to a majority of his people, and his people is one of the most highly endowed, most virile and, shall we say, most mystical and therefore most dangerous in the world today. This is the line taken by Hendrik van Loon in his *Our Battle* (Simon & Schuster, \$1), a concise and unvarnished broadside which deserves the numerous readers it is intended for. The only objection I have to Van Loon's book is to the title. It is not really an analysis of our struggle (and we certainly have a many-sided one), nor yet a counterblast to Hitler's effusion, but rather an exposé of what has happened in Germany, what the Nazi system involves, what the Nazi aims and aspirations are, and what they imply for this and other democracies. As such it can be warmly recommended.

Taking a somewhat novel tack, Theodore Abel, in his *Why Hitler Came into Power* (Prentice-Hall, \$2.75), has reopened the vexed question suggested by his title. Dissatisfied with the theorizing of men like Schumann and Strachey, he attempted to get at the facts by offering (in 1934) a prize for the best autobiographical essays written by Nazis or Nazi sympathizers. For a paltry 400 marks he secured upward of 600 confessions, which makes one boil at the thought that one or another of our foundations, for a few thousand dollars, might have accumulated a really impressive fund of material. Mr. Abel would be the last one to claim conclusiveness for the evidence, but the replies he elicited bear, for the most part, the marks of sincerity and artlessness. They enable him to retrace the story of Hitler's rise in very human terms and help to correct some current misconceptions. For example, among his respondents only 12 per cent were less than 26 years

old in 1934, while 51 per cent were between 27 and 40 years of age and no less than 33 per cent were 41 to 59. Of those who joined the party between 1925 and 1927 almost half were workers and about the same number belonged to the lower middle class. The majority had only a public school education, 40 per cent were war veterans, but only 9 per cent were unemployed or in economic difficulties. While the replies produced no startling revelations, they indicate that resentment against the republican regime, the undemocratic character of other nationalist parties, the appeal of the *Gemeinschaft* idea, the magnetic quality of Hitler and his oratory, the clever management of the meetings, and the generally dynamic nature of the movement had most to do with Nazi success. I found this book most illuminating.

—WILLIAM L. LANGER

Fiction

If Don Marquis had lived to finish his *Sons of the Puritans* (Doubleday, Doran, \$2.50), it would, I think, at once have found its place among the finest American novels. The unfinished book runs to more than 300 pages and carries its hero through a year at college and up to the time when he makes the break with his small town which will send him to new adventures in New York. But at the pace so far taken, and with the rich full course of the story, it must have needed still many pages—perhaps as many again—to do the theme justice. What Jack Stevens might finally have done or become can only be guessed at. *Sons of the Puritans* is merely the story of a youth in a Midwestern village. That village, however, seems to me more accurately and wisely represented than any in American fiction.

Or rather, the people in the village. Don Marquis does not make an abstract entity of the village and personify it. This is simply Hazelton (Don Marquis's native Walnut?), Illinois, just before and after 1900. The center of the town's life lies largely in its two churches, in part because Jack is the son of a minister and plans to become one, but for the most part because the churches furnished whatever center such towns had at that time. Here for once are congregations which, while truly presented, are not in the least caricatured. They are bigoted without knowing and cruel without intending it. As Don Marquis says of two of the best men in the book, "They both came of an earnest, not ungenerous, bargaining tribe, full of ingenuous sincerities and strange incongruities, a people whirling with moral-

SCRIBNER'S

istic subtleties and sophistries under their mask of simplicity; a people terribly open to satire, and always impelled by satire into a more stubborn insistence on their own essential characteristics." This single sentence is a whole history of a civilization. And the book is written throughout with precise analysis and deep understanding and affection.

When you have read the story, and look back over it, you find character after character and episode after episode crowding into your memory, as fresh as experience. And you will remember the wisdom and irony, the tenderness and humor, and above all a kind of warm pervasive charm which was Don Marquis's special quality.

The civil war in Spain has touched so many humane imaginations that it has produced a very striking body of fiction in the democratic countries. No one of these books has affected me so much as Ralph Bates's *Sirocco* (Random House, \$2.50). A volume of short stories, it deals with Spain under the monarchy and the republic and during the war, now in brief concentrated sketches, now in stories almost long enough to be short novels. They cover a wide range of Spanish life. But the central attitude is summed up in what one man says about what kind of love will make him fight for his country. "He should know and love the country he works in, the little *country*. The valley he tills, he must sing in it and listen to its peculiar echoes; the village whose gardens he tends, he must be concerned not only for its material welfare but its decorum, its dignity. . . . By such a love a man may be lifted above mere obstinacy in opinion, or dry, cackling fanaticism, and revolutionary passion will not be egotism with him." Something of the same close-packed love for a locality appears in a very different novel: Phil Stong's *The Long Lane* (Farrar & Rinehart, \$2.50). This Iowa world of his is far from war and revolution, and it is not seen in the terrible tension of Ralph Bates's Spain. But here is a searching knowledge of Iowa, as all the senses know it, and the reflective mind comprehends it, without provincialism. I suppose the best way to write a good regional novel is to feel a large affection for a little country.

—CARL VAN DOREN

Mysteries

Despite the impressive array of authors' names, this month's criminal output is marked by quantity rather than quality.

The one superlative exception, however, is *The Great Game*, by H. C. Bailey

(Doubleday, Doran, \$2). This new full-length Reggie Fortune story (Reggie appeared first via the short-story route) is Mr. Bailey's *magnum opus* to date. Two strokes of the Mary bell in the evil-laden parish of Hurst precipitated Reggie Fortune upon the trail of several fiendish accumulative crimes, and called forth his subtlest gifts of analytic and intuitive deduction. For sheer writing ability and a deep understanding of structural requirements, the book is distinctive. But we also have admirable characterizations, speed and tenseness, and a brilliant denouement in a scene that is little short of masterly.

In the new Hercule Poirot tale, *Murder for Christmas*, by Agatha Christie (Dodd, Mead, \$2), competent writing, well-ordered action, and deftly limned characters may or may not compensate the reader for a somewhat confused climax and a solution which, among exacting fans, has been taboo since Zangwill's *The Big Bow Mystery*.

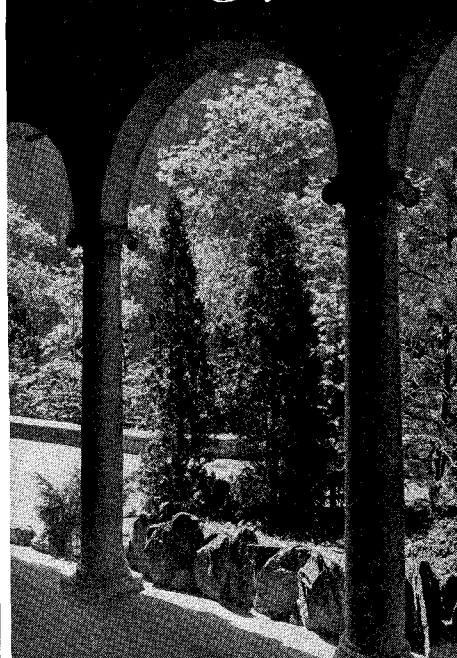
In *The Case of the Green Felt Hat* (Holt, \$2), Ludovic Travers, bespectacled detective of a dozen stories by Christopher Bush, makes his bride and her sister do quite a spot of detection for him. With their help he apprehends the murderer of a crooked stockbroker just out of prison, who unwittingly settles in an English village where lives a vengeful group of his erstwhile victims. The plot is nicely ramified and is solved with enjoyable precision and attention to detail.

The chapter headed "Brade's Bricks" in *The Moor Fires Mystery*, by Harriette R. Campbell (Harper, \$2), is an interesting elucidation of the odd methods of perhaps the most unobtrusive detective in fiction. But Stephen Brade's deductions are sound, and the solution of the murder of Lord Serbridge and his secretary in the former's Scottish castle, is a well-guarded surprise. As an intellectual exercise this is among the best.

An imperative addition to your Holmesiana is Edgar W. Smith's *Appointment in Baker Street* (Pamphlet House, 1775 Broadway, New York, \$1), an excellent and painstaking compendium of all the diverse characters who walked and talked with the immortal Sherlock Holmes. But Mr. Smith admits that this first edition is based on the apocryphal American texts, which depart in many instances from the accepted canonical forms; and a second edition is hinted at. May it come soon; and may it clear up for all time the nomenclatural confusion of the brothers Moriarty.

—S. S. VAN DINE

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