

## Books of Special Interest

### The Wide, Wide World

THE ORIENT I FOUND. By THOMAS J. MCMAHON. New York: D. Appleton & Co. 1926.

MOTOR CRUISING IN FRANCE. By LESLIE RICHARDSON. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1926. \$5.

CORSICA. By HILDEGARDE HAWTHORNE. New York: Duffield & Co. 1926. \$3.

ROYAL SEVILLE. By E. ALLISON PEERS. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1926. \$3.

SPAIN IN A TWO-SEATER. By HALFORD ROSS. New York: Brentano's. 1926. \$2.50.

THE ROAD TO LAMALAND. By "GANPAT" (M. A. L. GOMPERTZ). New York: George H. Doran. 1926. \$5.

Reviewed by DALE WARREN

THE classification of travel books is not a difficult matter, nor are a large number of subdivisions necessary. Quite naturally does one's travel library, as Cæsar declared of ancient Gaul, divide itself into three parts. There are books written to

convey information, there are those which tell a story or chronicle a personal adventure, and there are others, the majority, which temporize by seeking to bridge the gulf.

"The Orient I Found" is an excellent example of the travel book which is more than a travel book. The information therein conveyed, is valuable alike to the historian, to the sociologist, and to the traveller. Conventional in appearance and restrained in tone, it commends itself to the serious student somewhat more directly than to the tourist off on a holiday. The author, in fact, admits that the book was written with some other end in view than to amuse. "The aim of my book," he proclaims, "is to bring about a better knowledge of the conditions of the Orient and a better appreciation of the Oriental peoples." The book is supplied with a good map and in the selection of his photographs the author has been mindful of his admitted purpose.

Mr. McMahon is an Australian and the trip which he records has its beginning at

Melbourne. There is a chapter on Australia, a second on Borneo, and a third on the Philippines before the author launches into his discussion of the Japan and China of the twentieth century. Chief emphasis is laid on city conditions and political aspirations, with ample space devoted to racial characteristics, national life, and Western influence. The white domination of Oriental peoples is constantly decried. The reader, however, does not lose sight of the fact that the author is on a voyage of discovery and that one who travels with an open mind is at liberty to gather impressions of his own. That the book has an intrinsic value apart from its purely descriptive features should in no way militate against it in the eyes of the prospective traveller who believes that the end of all travel is education.

In the same class we may group "Motor Cruising in France" although the book is written for those who have both the inclination and the leisure for a pleasure trip. Captain Richardson is known for his earlier "Things Seen on the Riviera" and "Vagabond Days in Brittany." Into "Motor Cruising in France" he packs a wealth of material relating to the principal

ports and river cities of France, and gives, in addition, sound information in regard to the operation of a motor-boat. The volume is the outcome of a series of trips made by the author and is a book for those who travel by land no less than for the smaller group who are at home in the Bay of Biscay and the Gulf of Lyons. Captain Richardson has an eye trained to observation, and presents his facts in an agreeable manner. The pictures of Concarneau, Arles, and Carcassonne make the reader wish that all travel books were illustrated with photographs indicative to the same careful selection.

The third volume is somewhat disappointing. The author feels that she must describe Corsica in detail from Bastia to Bonifacio, yet at the same time tell the story of her four months' visit to the island. Consequently, we find the narrative constantly broken with historical description and the body of the text interspersed with anecdote and incident. The result is a hybrid which requires continual mental readjustment on the part of the reader, and leaves him with a distinct impression of the author's conscious effort to "write a book" about her trip.

With more skilful manipulation "Royal Seville" has come into being. Here is a book which, as the title indicates, describes Seville, but the author has achieved a far more personal volume than is the fortune of Miss Hawthorne in twice as many pages. Of few other travel books can it be said, with sobriety, that the reader does not want to miss a single word. Nor does he want to dismiss with a cursory glance the pencil sketches by Edwin Avery Park. There is a Spanish proverb to the effect that "he is no king that is not king of Seville." Surely Mr. Peers qualifies with ease.

In "Spain in a Two-Seater," we discover a cleverly disguised guide-book. In it is to be found all the information required by those who tour Spain in an automobile built for two, four, or an indefinite number of persons. Halford Ross recently went "To Venice and Back in a Two-Seater," and now heads south over the Pyrenees in a similar vehicle. The trip is recorded in story form and done with a light, deft touch. History is embellished to suit modern demands, and we have a surprising variety of facts to choose from. On one page we are told that El Greco preferred to paint men with "formidable chins," on the next that the author's wife was given to singing in her bath. In one chapter we are shown where to buy electric bulbs in Gascony, in another we are introduced to a wine which is said to have contributed to the happy corpulence of Falstaff. This is no sketchy, facetious travel-book, but a well constructed, carefully planned, amusing adjunct to movement and enjoyment which deserves a place in any satchel labelled "Madrid" or "Toledo."

Few of us are apt to duplicate the adventurous journey into western Tibet described in "The Road to Lamaland," but it is, nevertheless, a capital volume for the bedside table or the shelf by the study fire. The fact that one is not interested in Lamaland is beside the point, for the author quotes at length from the poets and takes a fling at the innocuous armchair existence of latter-day Londoners. Descriptions of arid Eastern wastes are freshened by the author's timely recollection of lines from A. E. or James Elroy Flecker, and the intimate and the personal take precedence over the abstract or remote. Here, in short, is a volume which slips quite perfectly into the classification suggested in my first paragraph, one which tells a story and chronicles an adventure. The author, a man of literary bent given to philosophic musings, found himself one bright morning sitting at his office desk dreaming of Arcadia. The next move was to overturn his correspondence files, gather in two dogs, and set out for Tibet. It was a trip replete with adventure, prodigal of leisure for thought. Then came the book—a book which had to be written.

Chalcography, which has to do with the reproduction of engravings, and more especially ancient engravings of value, is one of the arts that is receiving the attention of the League of Nations. It may not be generally known that there are only three official institutes of chalcography, one at the Louvre, the second at Florence, Italy, and the third at Madrid, Spain. A conference composed of representatives of national institutes of chalcography and League of Nations luminaries, adopted resolutions concerning the exchange of proofs by the institutes in order to form collections descriptive of the international history of the art of engraving, and to permit the sale of engravings produced by others.

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## Books of Special Interest

### Synesius of Cyrene

THE LETTERS OF SYNESIUS OF CYRENE. Translated into English with Introduction and Notes. By AUGUSTINE FITZGERALD. New York: Oxford University Press. 1926. \$7.

Reviewed by CHARLES N. SMILEY  
Carleton College

SIX HUNDRED miles west of Alexandria, on a high plateau overlooking the Mediterranean, lie the ruins of Cyrene. "Though the works of man have been destroyed, Nature has remained the same. The sun shines on the grave of the ancient town, the beneficent rain falls on the heaps of ruins, but the charm of Nature in this region, to which Hellas transplanted its enlightenment and its bloom, appears ineffaceable." So wrote Pachy, a Frenchman, early in the nineteenth century,—and his testimony has been confirmed by all travelers who have visited the spot.

The excavations of the Italian archaeologists in recent years have brought to light many evidences of the splendor of the city in its prime. The marble Aphrodite, the chief treasure of the Terme museum in Rome, once stood in a temple of Cyrene. The city also, through its gifted sons, made no inconsiderable contribution to the intellectual treasures of mankind. Aristippus, who first formulated the doctrine of hedonism, was born there,—Aristippus who announced to the world twenty-four centuries before Kipling was born, that "things were made for man, and not man for things." Eratosthenes who wrote the first geography, and was the first to make a reasonably successful attempt to compute the circumference of the earth, also was born there. A hundred years later Cyrene produced Carneades, the forerunner of William James in announcing that the human mind cannot attain absolute knowledge, and must be content to strive for probabilities.

While spiritually related to Aristippus, Eratosthenes, and Carneades, Synesius of Cyrene was not born in the golden age of that city. At the end of the fourth century A. D. (the floruit of Synesius) Cyrene was a crumbling town in a disintegrating Roman empire. Eutropius, the eunuch, was guiding the Roman state for the weak and immature Arcadius at Constantinople. Cohorts of Dalmatians and Marcomanni were the unwilling and inefficient defenders of the southern borders of the empire against raids of Ausurians. The schools of philosophy at Athens were empty shells, waiting to be disestablished by Justinian a century later. Hypatia, who was soon to suffer martyrdom, was teaching in Alexandria, but Alexandria was suffering under a Christian archbishop whom Robertson has characterized as "bold, crafty, unscrupulous, corrupt, rapacious, and domineering." It was a world from which a Neoplatonist might well seek for release in ecstasies and frenzies. So all the more is it refreshing to find in such a world such a vigorous and upstanding man as Synesius.

He was sound of body; he loved the hunt, his dogs, and horse as well as any English squire; he had a sense of humor that justified Professor Phillimore in calling him "the fifth century Sydney Smith." He could smile over the punctilios of a Hebrew pilot who deserted his tiller in a raging storm at sea on the approach of the Jewish Sabbath; he could make others smile by adducing proofs that the baldheaded were God's chosen people. Although he had his schooling at Alexandria, he was Platonist rather than Plotinist, and quoted Plato a hundred and sixty times in his writings, although he was living in a land where "one never heard a man uttering a philosophic phrase except when an echo is repeating his own voice." It is clear that he was never thoroughly trained in Christian doctrines or converted to them. Yet Theophilus, the crafty archbishop, recognizing his strength and powers of leadership, wished to appoint him bishop of Ptolemais. Much against his inclination, but on his own terms, he accepted the appointment. The letter in which he announced his acceptance to the archbishop is of considerable interest, and a portion of it may well be quoted, as an illustration of how Platonism may slip over into pragmatism. After declaring that he will not give up the wife of his youth, he proceeds to say:

It is difficult, if not quite impossible, that convictions should be shaken, which have entered the soul through knowledge to the point of demonstration. Now you know that philosophy

rejects many of those convictions which are cherished by the common people. For my own part, I can never persuade myself that the soul is of more recent origin than the body. Never would I admit that the world and the parts which make it up must perish. The resurrection, which is an object of common belief, is nothing for me but a sacred and mysterious allegory, and I am far from sharing the views of the vulgar crowd thereon. The philosophic mind, albeit the discernor of truth, admits the employment of falsehood, for light is to truth what the eye is to the mind. Just as the eye would be injured by an excess of light, and just as darkness is more helpful to those of weak eyesight, even so do I consider that the false may be beneficial to the populace, and the truth injurious to those not strong enough to gaze steadfastly on the radiance of real being. If the laws of the priesthood that obtain with us permit these views to me, I can take over the holy office on the condition that I may prosecute philosophy at home and spread legends abroad, so that if I teach no doctrine, at all events I undo no teaching, and allow men to remain in their already acquired convictions. But if anybody says to me that he must be under this influence, that the bishop must belong to the people in his opinion, I shall betray myself very quickly.

He found the burdens of a bishop heavier than Simon of Cyrene found the cross of Christ. But he did not flinch. He was a true father of his flock. A third of his letters are in behalf of the afflicted and oppressed. He had the moral courage to

excommunicate an avaricious Roman governor who filled his coffers by assassination; he had the physical courage to stand guard and fight on the ramparts of Cyrene against marauding Ausurians. He was altogether such a man as one might be proud to claim as a distinguished neighbor and fellow townsman.

We may well be grateful that Mr. Fitzgerald has made it possible for English readers to know him intimately by translating his letters into English, and by providing a lucid introduction that incorporates with his own wide and thorough knowledge of the author illuminating passages from Willamowitz and Crawford, and others who have worked this field.

The University of London Press announces a book on "The Uses of Libraries," based on a series of lectures delivered at University College by various authorities, edited by E. A. Baker, director of the School of Librarianship, University of London. Chapters are included on "The Use of Reference Books" and "Methods of Reading," by Dr. Baker; "The British Museum for Research Purposes," by G. F. Barwick; "Book Selection for Children," by W. C. Berwick Sayers; "University Libraries of the Kingdom," by Major Newcombe; "National and Other Art Libraries," by C. H. Palmer; "Library Resources of London," by C. R. Sanderson; and "The Public Record Office and Archives," by Hilary Jenkinson.



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