BOOKS And AUTHORS

Edited by Reed Sarratt

Realists Neglect Action

By MARY NORTHROP

There is plenty of action in that great Western novel, "Pecos Pete, The Gringo Coyote," where our hero fires most of the telling shots; there is suspense aplenty in "Murder Goes Mad," where the third lies in figuring out just who did fire the telling shots. But Westerns are pure hogwash unless leavened with authentic history, when they become epics; and murder mysteries, fun though they may be, have little to do with reality. In your two-dozen-odd Main Street literature that is literary has scorned action and suspense and I wish to go on record here as being against a third term in the Parties.

I am tired of day-by-day accounts of the lives of harmless little bookkeepers, their yearnings, their strivings, their timidity, their little disappointments, their utter futility. Whence this preoccupation with futility, vacuity, and defeat?

THE REALISTS

It comes, I think, from the people who, in the Twenties, called themselves Realists. It is a reality that nothing ever happens to anybody. This seems to be the idea behind Realism—that life is made of an eternity of inconsequential people and events. If that were true, it would certainly be depressing. But it isn't true. The Thirties were a time of humiliation and defeat, and small things loomed too large in the lives of most of us. But other people—not ourselves, of course, but the people we read about in the papers—were having the most incredible adventures. These adventures, too, were realities. But the majority of the literati, ever timid in showing away trends held up in the mirror to the inevitable commonplace. Adventure, they assumed, was cheap pandering to the mentally undeveloped. A queer notion. Let them read "Wind, Sand, And Stars" for only one example of supreme adventure exquisitely told. It has been for months and still is a best seller. So is "Escape" and "Prince Mahi" and "Captain Hecatte Horndecker"—both adventure all. The works of Joseph Conrad, now in an out of print, John Masefield does very well.

Neal Shute's "Ordeal" is a breathless story of the things befalling an average little English family during continuous bombing of the city that may begin any day. People meaning that the days of Zeppelins are dead must themselves be dead. When he returns from the war-lands we shall hear what W. L. White has to say about the sights of adventure and catastrophe in the lives of everyday people. I daresay that in time E. Phillips Oppenheim's elaborate international intrigues will be revealed as nursery tea compared to the actual plotting of European governments. Grantack and Barbusse will not seem as silly as of late.

SUSPENSE

Anything can happen now, and anything will—as it always has. But I suppose the letter-writers will continue to shy away from anything that smacks of "plot." Plot is jewelbrain. Dick Tracy stuff. Suspense is a cheap, false device. But the suspense in "The Forty Days of Musa Dagh" is the same sort of suspense that gripped the world during the siege of the Alcazar in the Spanish War, the rise of the Hel Peninsular in the storming of Danzig, the siege of Warsaw, and now in the siege of Viipuri.

Some radio programs are creating real life situations that would be impossible in the lives world, and I do not mean those appalling soap operas dotting the morning hours. I mean the Pot of Gold and the Count of Monte Hello and possibly others of that sort. Every time one of these programs is put on a hoit from the blue strikes somebody in the form of that unexpected sum of money we all dream about.

The Angel of the Ozarks if written up in fiction would be rejected by any publisher in the land but Lloyd C. Douglas. Yet the Angel has been taking a lot of space in the newspapers recently sending cashiers' checks from $100 to $500 to dozens of needy people mystified little people who know no one wealthy enough to do such a thing strangers to one another. Who can the Angel be? How does he (she?) know the needs of individuals in widely separated towns and cities? Has a Sandy Claus detective been moving among them disguised as the garbage man? Here's a sentimental story calculated to make the sophisticated writer turn green around the gills. It has action, suspense (who will be the next to get one?), plot and plenty of happy endings. But that's beyond me. It's a true story. It wouldn't do at all for fifty fiction.

"Airpeter" by John Walter Wood which was originally scheduled for release on March 18 by Coward-McCann, Inc., has now been postponed until duly report the publishers. The task of checking statistical data from all over the world and of securing accurate information from European belligerents has necessitated this delay.

The Garden City Publishing Co. will issue, coincident with the release date of the motion picture, a 69-cent edition of Daphne du Maurier's "Rebecca," illustrated with photographs from the movie and bearing the facsimile autographs of Mike du Maurier, Laurence Oliver and Joan Fontaine.

Book Reviews:

Potpourri

—By Reed Sarratt

These Rule France

In France there is a universal religion which has as its deity the God of free men, Stanton B. Leeds, a qualified journalist who spent sixteen years there, tells us in his book, "These Rule France," just published by Bobbs-Merrill at $3. Personal and national liberty are the things most important to the French people. To those who uphold and defend this freedom is given the power to govern. The form of government? That doesn't matter. It is the preservation by that government of personal liberty which counts.

This book does for France what John Gunther has done for Europe and Asia in his "Inside Europe" and "Inside Asia," except that in this book of 367 pages devoted entirely to France and the men who rule it much greater detail is given than is possible in such books as Mr. Gunther's. Mr. Leeds tells the personal stories, gives the character portraits of Edouard Daladier and the men around him. He doesn't confine his discussions to those men engaged directly in forming the policies and directing the translation of those policies into action in the French Government. Rather he deals with all of the men who yield influence in the affairs of France. In separate sections he writes about the politicians, the personalities, the financiers, the publicists and the fighters.

For persons who want to be accurately informed about the men who are important in France today, this is a valuable book.

The Dutch

One of the hottest spots in the world today is occupied by Holland. A portrait study of the people of Holland is given by A. J. Barnouw, Queen Wilhelmina professor of history, language and literature on the Netherlands at Columbia University, in "The Dutch" (Columbia University Press, $3).

In a somewhat different manner Dr. Barnouw does for Holland what Mr Leeds has done for France in "These Rule France." But there is a basic difference. Mr. Leeds concerns himself with detailed personality studies of the specific men who are in power in France today, and he describes them against the background of the events of today. Dr Barnouw gives a different kind of picture. His description is of a whole people, a whole nation, a whole mode of living, and individuals appear only as examples of the product of an integral society.

The Dutch are a sturdy, honest, realistic people whose history is that of seafarers, fishermen and merchants. They believe strongly in individual liberty and if put into a position which makes it necessary will give freely of their lives to preserve their national identity and heritage of free institutions. But the Dutch are not as impetuous as we Americans. They are analytical; not to be swayed easily by sentimentality, patriotic catchwords, flags and marching feet. They will fight but not for the joy of fighting.

The Dutch are among the most progressive and admirable peoples of the world community. Throughout the world they are known for their cleanliness, for their gardens, for their education, their advanced and liberal ideas. Some of the world's greatest artists, thinkers, educators, merchants and statesmen have been the product of her soil.

Dr Barnouw has given us a thoroughly delightful, informative book about the Dutch nation and people.

The Government At Your Service

No matter what it is that is puzzling you at the moment, chances are that you can get the best answer to your problem which is available by addressing an inquiry to the proper agency of the United States Government. It matters not whether the difficulty lies in a trade's failure to make crisp, flaky biscuits of the kind her husband's mother used to make or whether the plans for your new house aren't satisfactory—the Government knows the answer.

Documentary proof of this statement is to be found in "The Government At Your Service" by Archie Robertson (Houghton Mifflin $2.75). Unless I am mistaken Archie Robertson has lived in North Carolina. He is a newspaper man and recently was joint publisher and editor of a small weekly in Blowing Rock. And he had some connection with Lees McRae College in Banner Elk. There can be this slight doubt that he has produced an amazing encyclopedia of facts concerning the interest of our Government in the everyday activities of its citizens.

The chief value of the book is as a reference source. But it is a handy book to have around. Completely indexed it offers reads information about the myriad services which the Government has available for which you are paying through your taxes and which you aren't using—primarily because you don't know about them.

Problem Of The Constitution

The Constitution of the United States has been given a political interpretation rather than one derived from fundamental principles of law. Edward Jerome Meeks in "The Problem of the Constitution" (Longmans $2.50). These views of the constitution are not clear-cut. In the case of Meeks they have the impression of what it is believed the Constitution ought to mean and in the other what its words actually say and mean.

Obviously the statesman determined on changes cannot be satisfied with an inflexible constitution. He says that his citizens, so far as his rights, privileges and immunities are concerned, must have one of that kind.

Mr. Jerome also and with clarity executes the task which he sets out to do namely to prove that his point of view is substantiated in fact. Two great changes have come about in our development he says the first of which is the assumption of extensive Governmental control of the conduct of citizens and the second of which is the change of our Government from a republic to a democracy. Mr. Jerome's dominant challenge the best thought of those interested in the vital meaning to the United States of its constitution.

The Loon Feather

One of the most romantic yet tragic peoples in world history are the American Indians. One of the greatest leaders of the Indian struggle against the encroachment of the white man on his territory in the New World was Tecumseh. The heroine of a new novel by Inia Fuller is Onnia, daughter of Tecumseh. The novel is "The Loon Feather" (Harcourt Brace; $2.50), winner of the Repwood Award.

Onnia tells the story of her life first with the Indian tribe of which she was a member and later among white people on Mackinac Island in Lake Huron. Through her life Onnia had contact with people of the white race. The author has written a beautiful novel, first of Indian lore and second of human relationships. In the pages of the novel are to be found humor, drama, tragedy, romance, insight and understanding. The pathos enters the story chiefly through the many differences and consequent misunderstandings in the customs and ways of life of the Indian and the white man.

This is Inia Fuller's first novel. Let us hope that it will not be last. It can stand the test of comparison with other novels of its type. It is a novel which everyone should enjoy reading. For entertainment it is recommended without qualification.

The Log Cabin Myth

Few are they who would dispute the fact that the earliest settlers of the American continent built log cabins for their shelter. But these few would be the only ones who would be right. The earliest settlers of this country were from England. As was perfectly natural, when they built their homes in the new country to which they came, they built the same kind in which they had lived in England. And they were not log cabins. The early earlier settlers to whom log cabins were native were a few Swedes who settled in Delaware. In Sweden they had lived in log houses. In America they built the same type of log house which they had learned to build in the old country. Except for these few houses of the Swedes, no trace is to be found of log houses in America in the seventeenth century.

This interesting information is the subject of a book by Harold R. Shurtleff, now deceased, "The Log Cabin Myth" (Harvard University Press $2.50). Mr. Shurtleff was an architect and designer for half a century, he played an important role in the restoration of Williamsburg. It was while engaged in his work at Williamsburg that he became interested in the subject of dwelling places for the earliest Americans. In all pageants or historical reproductions, the first Americans were pictured as living in log houses. This mistake should not be made again. Mr. Shurtleff discusses in detail early houses from Newfoundland to North Carolina, and he tells how they were built. The book is excellently illustrated.

Simenon Mysteries Published

By HUGH WHITE

"The Patience of Maigret," (Harcourt Brace: $2), one of a series of crime mystery stories written by that prolific Frenchman, Georges Simenon, has just been translated into English and published in the United States. It justifies, in extent, the reputation its author has established abroad.

Simenon apparently can turn out a novel with as much ease as newspapers write stories. His early efforts were directed, for the most part, at the pulps and in this field he was an outstanding success. Before he was 30, he already had than published a great many novels and short stories, using some sixteen pseudonyms while doing so. Then he turned to novels of finer calibre, and in this field, too, he has been an outstanding success, with more than 50 novels to his credit.

Simenon's American publishers plan to follow "The Patience of Maigret" with other of his better works.

This first Simenon volume contains two short novels, each of about 150 pages. The first is entitled "A Battle of Nerves", the second, "A Face for a Clue." Both are absorbingly interesting and offer a new idea in murder mystery stories that is refreshingly different from the stock models.

Simenon puts his emphasis primarily on the mental characteristics of a criminal. His studies of the criminal mind are convincing and interesting. In fact, criminal psychology is the main weapon of Simenon's ace detective, Maigret, whose knowledge of the workings of a perverted mind plays a big part in his solution of baffling cases.

There is little doubt but that Simenon's work will meet with hearty approval of American detective story addicts.

Gorman Writes Life Of Joyce

JAMES JOYCE, by Herbert Gorman; (Farrar & Rinehart; $3.50).

The perversity of the self-conscious literary man knows no bounds. Last year there appeared "Finnegans Wake," the ingenious total of James Joyce's last seventeen or more years of work in progress. All except the hawks who sit around pulling literary hours from each other's heads felt sad. These last began a campaign to drive Finnegans Wake on the world, and unfailing chose the only possible weapon—snobbishness. Little by little these gentry will cause the public of will to believe that there really is something more than rubbish incontinently hurled in Joyce's enormous collection of weak puns and barbarous studies.

Herbert Gorman, a sage of the most intelligent of these, and also the only one who seems enough to choose the way of fact for his campaign. He has written the affecting life story of Joyce under the title "James Joyce." He avoids lengthy "criticism" of all the Joycean, claiming this to be the proper job of another writer. He merely writes of Joyce's life from his boy days near Dublin and at the handsome school to which he was taken when six and a half years old down to the moment when his favorite birthday diversion is to leave the party well and then dance for it.

This week, week out as a tragedy whispered was you take it. Nobody with heart can watch unstarch a man of enormous gifts slowly push away from humanity, cleave himself on a world where he can take seriously the principles of the Italian Vico, and where physical things are shot out through windows. Vico merging time and space and race and characters in a mad story which appears to have impressed Joyce and which Joyce attempted to express in "Finnegans Wake" — at least according to Mr. Gorman.

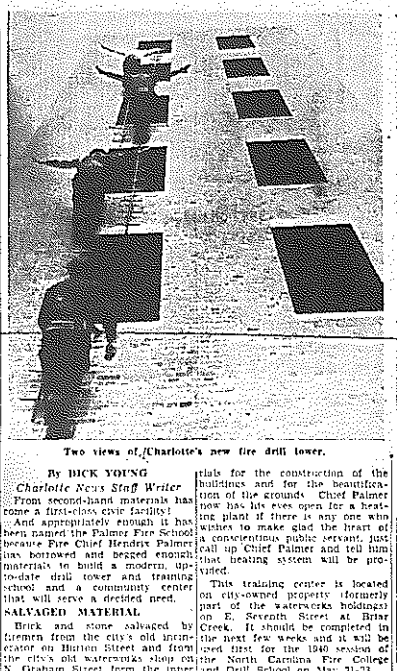
Mr. Gorman is one of the most industrious biographers of our time. A man whose research always leads him back into the roots of his subject in this case the good book centuries before Joyce's Dedalus-like father and finds the strands which knotted up into the current Joyce. But nothing is lost in such an approach, as one sentence on page 342 of "James Joyce" — "he (Joyce) was impervious to blame, praise, surprise or remonstrance."

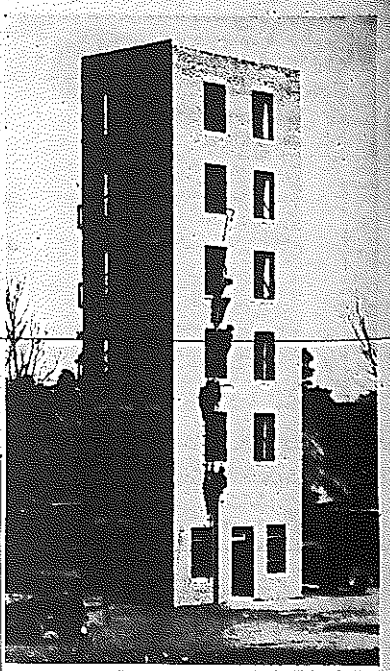
For more than an hour this industrious writer has been thinking back through the great years of history. He has not found one of whom this sentence could have been written.

Alliance Book Corp. announces the conclusion of an agreement with Sherwood Anderson. The author has notified the publishers that he has already begun the manuscript of "Homeboy." Vol. 4 of the "Face of America" series. This book will be the story of a small town, the typical American town in words and pictures. The rehabilitation of Sherwood Anderson's text with the striking photographs selected by the editor of the "Face of America" series, Edwin Rosskam, will interpret the civilization and the cultural background in which the major part of the American people live. Publication is scheduled for early Fall.

A Memorial That Will Live After Chief Palmer:

Charlotte's New Fire School





Two views of Charlotte's new fire drill tower.

By DICK YOUNG
Charlotte News Staff Writer

From second-hand materials has come a first-class civic facility!

And appropriately enough it has been named the Palmer Fire School because Fire Chief Hendrix Palmer has borrowed and begged enough materials to build a modern, up-to-date drill tower and training school and a community center that will serve a decided need.

SALVAGED MATERIAL

Brick and stone salvaged by firemen from the city's old incinerator on Hutton Street and from the city's old watermaks shop on N. Graham Street form the inner walls of the drill tower and assembly building. Scraps of other materials from here, there and everywhere have been gathered and used in the construction of the two buildings. Workmen on a WPA project have done a topnotch job in building and now the two structures, serving complete, present an attractive appearance and soon the center will become a place of utility and beauty.

MANY HELP

Many citizens have co-operated and have generously donated materials for the construction of the buildings and for the beautification of the grounds. Chief Palmer now has his eyes open for a heating plant if there is any one who wishes to make glad the heart of a conscientious public servant, just call up Chief Palmer and tell him that heating system will be provided.

This training center is located on city-owned property (formerly part of the waterworks holdings) on E. Seventh Street at Briar Creek. It should be completed in the next few weeks and it will be used first for the 1940 session of the North Carolina Fire College and Drill School on May 21-23.

There is a six-story drill tower, with open windows and an inside stairway. There is also a regulation fire escape on the rear. This building will be used for the training of firemen in scaling ladders, in handling hose, in entering buildings under all sorts of conditions. Problems that will be encountered in fire fighting will be provided and firemen will be taught how to meet these problems.

On a nearby knoll is the assembly building that will serve as a classroom for the firemen during their training period. But this is just one of the uses to which this building will be put. It will be available for all kinds of gatherings, social and otherwise. A large open fireplace will add a cheery touch on Wintry days. There is a stage at one end of the building, which will have kitchen facilities.

OUTDOOR FIREPLACE

The structure is of stone and when the planting around it has been completed will be of attractive appearance. There is also an outdoor fireplace on one side of the building where wiener roasts or similar events can be held. Inside small dances can be given.

The land around the buildings has been landscaped and grass will soon be planted. Trees and plants, donated by a generous nurseryman, have already been set out. A road sweeps from the street into the property and around the building. The whole is a scene of real beauty.

From An Old Soldier's Notebook:

Dreams Of Balingaysig Haunt Sgt. Valentine

By REED SARRATT
Charlotte News Staff Writer

"Proceed at once to Balingaysig" came the terse order to the small detachment of 25 American soldiers stringing a telephone line between Pasig and Balingaysig on the isle of Samar in the Philippines.

At double time the detachment made its way to Balingaysig, a thriving Philippine village of 1,000 inhabitants, where Company "C" of the Scout Infantry was stationed.

But Balingaysig was no longer a thriving village; it had become a city of the dead. The 25 soldiers found themselves to be the only living beings there. Around them were the mutilated bodies of the men of Company "C," all of them the victims of a brutal massacre.

WORST SIGHT IN 40 YEARS OF SOLDIERING

Among the 25 men who first arrived on the scene of the massacre was Technical Sergeant Isaac E. Valentine who now is assigned to the office in Charlotte of the instructor for 104th Engineers, North Carolina National Guard. Sergeant Valentine returned in the army on April 4, 1899. Of all his experiences as a soldier the one which remains most vividly in his memory is that which greeted his eyes at Balingaysig.

On a warm, sunny morning in March, 1902, a detachment from Company "F" of the Nineteenth Infantry, stationed at Pasig, was engaged in making a telephone connection with Company "C," stationed 39 miles away. The line had been strung 25 miles, leaving only fourteen to go.

This was during the time of the Philippine Insurrection. Every precaution was taken against ambush. While a few of the men worked, the rest stood ready to detect and to resist attack from the Philippine natives.

TO THE RESCUE AT THE DOUBLE

Suddenly came the order from company headquarters to drop all work and to proceed immediately to Balingaysig. The men traveled at double time the fourteen miles separating them from the objective in two hours. They took it that an attack had been made on Company "C" and that they were to have a reinforcement.

In Company "C" there were 130 men. Not a man was alive when the telephone detachment reached Balingaysig. They had been cut to pieces with bolo knives.

Sergeant Valentine remembers the scene very well. Every building in the village was made of boxes and bamboo, with the exception of a large stone church. The soldiers sleeping quarters were near the church. A big kitchen and mess hall had been erected nearby.

IT GOT AWAY ONLY TO DIE LATER

Twelve men of the 130 were able to escape in the night. Some of them later died but from their accounts and from the physical evidence of the struggle the story of what took place at Balingaysig was reconstructed.

During the night Philippines entered the church a few at a time. No significance was attached to this by the sentries, for it was customary for persons to enter the church at all hours of the night. But on this night it was not noticed that more than a few Philippines entered the church than left it.

The sentries were assisted in their duties by native policemen. The morning of the massacre, each Army sentry was accompanied on his rounds by a native policeman.

At the usual hour, the soldiers left their barracks and went to the mess hall for breakfast. They left their guns in the barracks. When all had entered the mess hall, the church bell rang. Immediately the soldiers wondered at this, because it was the bell at this hour.

SOUND OF THE BELL SIGNAL FOR ATTACK

The singing of the bell was the signal for attack. From the church poured hundreds of murderous Philippines, who had remained there throughout the night awaiting for the moment of attack. Each of the native policemen disposed of his sentry when he accompanied with one lusty whack with his bolo.

The attack was a complete surprise to the American soldiers. They were unprotected in their mess hall, without guns. The first thing the Philippines did was to seize the guns which had been left in the barracks. The few guns which the soldiers were able to get were thrown through a window to them by a small Philippine mascot. This young Philippine was sent to the United States to be educated as a reward for this service.

SERGEANT VALENTINE

The Americans didn't have a chance. They fought with their hands, or anything they could seize. Most of the fighting was hand to hand. Very few men were killed with guns. The bolo fight staged by some was apparent. The cook lay dead with a baseball bat grasped tightly in his hands, around him lay 30 to 40 dead Philippines. At the infirmary, one of the members of the medical detachment was found with a spade in his hands. Around him, too, was a pile of dead Philippines.

All of the native population had died. They feared the revenge which the American Army would seek. Their fears were well grounded. Brig.-Gen. "Jakie" Smith was in command of the district. He issued orders for his men to kill and destroy every Philippino and every Philippine possession across which they might come. Whole villages were razed. All living things were killed, human beings and animals alike. Every native building was burned. For this pitiless order General Smith later was discharged from the Army.

Time has dulled the picture of the massacre at Balingaysig in Sergeant Valentine's mind. He is glad for occasionally the full horror of the scene flashes across his memory; the experience is not one of which he wishes to be reminded nor one which he desires to have again.

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