

ROUND THE WORLD WITH TRAVEL BOOKS

DR. D. E. LORENZ'S "The 'Round the World Traveller" (Revell) starts the reader at Cuba and carries him through the Panama Canal to Hawaii, thence to Japan, Korea, China, the Philippines and East Indies, and finally, to India and Egypt. Information concerning each place must of necessity be brief; yet Dr. Lorenz manages to include, in addition to sightseeing data, pertinent facts concerning history, political relations, and sociological conditions. Here is his introduction to the Panama Canal:

The Panama Canal is like a spiritual, as well as a physical, oasis. It is four times as large as the District of Columbia, and quite as safe, although tropical diseases lie in wait in the adjoining jungles. Panama stands as a shining evidence of the ability of white men to live and work in the humid tropics when sanitation, transportation, medical service, hotel life and other advantages of a high civilisation are present.

If one contemplates a little private water voyage through Baltic ports, the story of "Racundra's' First Cruise" (Huebsch) will doubtless be a highly entertaining and illuminating narrative. It is not the fault of the author and amateur navigator, Arthur Ransome, that so few Americans hanker after this method of spending a two weeks' vacation. Though it can hardly be called an exciting country, there is quaint Old Worldliness and abundance of historical association on the Esthonian coast. But we fear that unless one is a nautical fan Mr. Ransome's accurate observations and descriptions of the small adventures encountered in sailing a thirty foot ketch through the Baltic will seem rather tame.

Macmillan have issued, as the first of their "University Travel Series", H. H. Powers's small volume on "Japan". It is intended not as a guide-book, but as an interpretation of "that which the traveler sees in the usual four or five weeks trip in Japan". To this end brief descriptive and historical bits are given concerning places generally visited by tourists. Mr. Powers makes this revolutionary statement: "No attempt is made to get out of the beaten track, and for that matter, not very much is gained by so doing. Other places may bring new sensations but not much in the way of new meanings. Extra time is better spent in prolonging the stay in the familiar places."

Harry A. Franck, whose travel books in the past have excited considerable admiration, is convinced of the superiority of the white races and the glories of modern civilization. This contention disturbs the splendid qualities of his latest sedative for those who must stay at home—"Wandering in Northern China" (Century). There are many pages of charming anecdote and inviting description in this thick volume, but whenever Mr. Franck bumps his American nose against an Asiatic custom or tradition or rule which does not please him, he charges it against the inferiority of the Orientals and uses it as argument that white nations should keep their greedy fingers in the Asiatic pie. He would have everything done with the businesslike precision that, in theory, is seen in the United States, and he re-

sents any variance from that to which he is accustomed. For a man who has traveled as much as Mr. Franck this seems a strange point of view; always we are told that travel is broadening. Perhaps we magnify a slight imperfection in the book, for most persons seem to agree with Mr. Franck's estimates of the races. It is delightful jaunting into Korea and Mongolia with Mr. Franck anyhow, for he shows intimate touches of the little known sections that few vagabonds have given. Certain it is the book explodes many an ill founded belief and geographical misconception, and it does this in an easy reading style and with simple verbiage.

Emile Hovelague has done well in giving to this study of his simply the name "China" (Dutton). For nothing less than a full title page would be required adequately to convey a notion of the phases covered in a volume no larger than the average novel. Beginning with "China and Europe: China Seen from Without", M. Hovelague leads us back to "Ancient China" and considers its history, religions, institutions, and art. With this background in mind, one is ready to cope with "The Exterior Relations of China" and "New China". M. Hovelague logically concludes with a glimpse of "Western Civilisation as Seen by China". As translated by Mrs. Laurence Binyon, this survey makes easy reading. Here is part of an interesting contrast between eastern

and western methods of intoxication:

There is an immense difference between the paradise of our sots and that revealed to the Chinese opium smoker; and if both end alike in consumption and imbecility, I, who have seen both vices, do not know which is the more degrading or the more deadly. Certainly ours is the coarser and more brutish. . . . When we gaze at the sumptuous surroundings of the smoking dens, at the delicate fingers which handle the precious pipes of chased silver, at those pale amber faces illuminated as by some inner light, some ecstatic radiance, at the blissful lethargy diffused through those relaxed limbs by the magic drug, we feel we are among civilised creatures, artists in sensation and in dreaming, who attain to a fine exaltation of the spirit by their vice, instead of a mere bestial degradation.

"Tales of Travel" (Doran) by the Marquess Curzon, despite the formal and official spelling of his title, is delightfully free from pomposity or pose, and relates the adventures of an observant traveler and an interesting raconteur, rather than an elderly and very dignified statesman. Lord Curzon's unaffected style lends itself well to these stories of his wanderings in far places as a young man. We especially liked the tales of the Amir of Afghanistan, the rites of the self mutilating dervishes of Kairwan, the explanation of the voice of Memnon, and the monograph on the singing sands. But all of the many other items are interesting, and the illustrations are plentiful and splendid.

The brothers Jean and Jérôme Tharaud have added to their travel sketch books "The Shadow of the Cross" (Knopf). Here is a series of pictures of a Jewish community in a Carpathian village, with its festivals and rituals, its sorrows and its aspirations. The human side is stressed throughout; but behind the chief figures we glimpse a background centuries removed, it would seem, from our western civilization. The translation by Frances Delanoy Little preserves the effect of simplicity and sympathetic understanding.

The celebrated "Crue of the Kawa" pricked the South Sea bubble too expertly for it ever to be reblown. "Isles of Illusion", anonymous letters edited by Bohun Lynch (Small, Maynard), could never for the sake of a metaphor be likened to a needle even if it had preceded the "Kawa" in its bubble bursting task. But it might have *smashed* the bubble, for it is about as bitter a book as could well be. A young Englishman of medical and Oxford training spent seven years amid malaria, elephantiasis, filth, appalling heat, diseased natives, and general degeneracy. He barely escaped, leaving behind a native wife and his half caste son whom he loved. His letters are vivid, clever, and tragic. As a lotus land the South Sea Islands have been exploited; here is the other side of the medal — the figure of Truth, shameless and naked.

In response to a request from architects of New York and Boston, Professor John S. Humphreys of the School of Architecture at Harvard made a study of the small houses and bungalows of Bermuda. He has now gathered together some one hundred and eighty of his photographs and these, together with diagrams and explanatory text, make up the handsome monograph published as "Bermuda Houses" (Marshall Jones).

It is difficult to explain why the high mountains, the polar wastes, and the inaccessible jungles of the world should exercise an irresistible fascination for the mind of man, yet it is undeniable that the untrodden regions of the earth are alluring simply because they are untrodden. Mount Everest, for example, is likely long to be the Mecca of the daring for no other reason than that it is the summit of the world. As we are reminded in C. G. Bruce's volume on "The Assault on Mount Everest,

1922" (Longmans, Green), it has already been the goal of intrepid adventurers who have risked their lives in the attempt to gain its peak. This book, which deals with the exploits of the latest climbing expedition, some members of which reached a height of 27,300 feet, describes excellently the hardships and perils that have to be endured by a climbing party in the Himalayas, and is rendered more vivid by a number of full page illustrations that tend to substantiate the conclusions of the text.

Lacking in great interest as a narration of adventure, "My Adventures in Bolshevik Russia" (Dodd, Mead) provides us with an interesting character study of an unusual person possessed of strange mental twists and positive convictions. As we read we are inclined to the opinion of the French Secretary, who told Odette

Keun that she seemed to imagine she was born to set the world right. Since her voluntary efforts to direct the policy of the Entente in the Near East were unacceptable to the diplomats of the countries composing it, she determined to withhold her sage counsel and permit them, as she says, "to go to the devil in their own way". Her arraignment of Bolshevism is mild in comparison to her vitriolic attack upon the British military police system in Constantinople, all of which would have been much more convincing if less vindictive. From an educational standpoint, her effort is not so enlightening as are many articles and books written by less prejudiced authors.

Stephen Graham chooses and groups his words in a careful fashion none too common in this age of tremendous output. "In Quest of El Dorado" (Appleton) is further proof of the

effectiveness of this manner of composition. Even when the wanderer presumes to be dogmatic regarding the political and economic future of America, the statements he makes hold one's interest by their style in being said if not by their message. Of course, everyone is free to express his opinion of American enterprise; but when one is sentimental enough to choose to discover the South American countries by duplicating as far as possible the voyage of Columbus, when one is romantic enough to insist on first seeing the Pacific from Balboa's vantage point, the rest of us cannot take his economic thought too seriously. It, too, is colored by the imaginative gift of the traveler. In reality, this is another comment on America by a visitor who did not stay here long enough. When he talks about "the Red Sox of Chicago" one may well question his information in other things. But, for all that, it is good reading.

Of the writing of books on Paris there shall be no end. In "The Lure of Old Paris" (Little, Brown) C. H. Crichton has built an elaborate machinery of fantasy and romance to bear his rather lightweight story of the French capital. Personally we prefer the much maligned Baedeker. We are weary of fantom dancers suddenly appearing on the lawns of Versailles to the amazement of the modern tourist. The theme was once used inimitably by a great writer and that serves. In extenuation of this somewhat irritable review we would plead that the author terms Paris "my ladye", an affectation hard to bear.

"My Journey Round the World" (Lippincott) represents the impressions gleaned by Lord Northcliffe on his memorable tour of 1921-22. But far more interesting than the record of places visited is the insight furnished into the personality of this remarkable man.