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## BOOK REVIEWS (Cont'd.)

(continued from previous page)

seem to have been physically normal. Yet even Whitman, "the laureate of the average man," has been accepted more by intellectuals than by the common people, and his passionate songs have had no visible effect. "The mania for owning things which he denounced has conquered the whole of the American people and produced a mass worship of possession and prosperity such as the world has not hitherto imagined, and mutual distrust and dislike are as prevalent to-day as they were before Walt Whitman began chanting his gospel of affection and goodwill to all men, over 90 years ago."

Whitman shared Emerson's vision of a national literature—a vision which seems to come naturally at a certain stage in the development of a young country; but he went beyond nationalism, and asked that an American culture should be adopted by the rest of the world. There are Americans to-day who have the same idea, although their conception of culture is not quite the same as Whitman's.

## LONELY CLIMBERS

**THE WALLED CITY.** By Elspeth Huxley.  
Chatto & Windus, London.

THE walled city is somewhere in Africa. It becomes the centre of a conflict between two colonial administrators of widely different types: Freddy Begg, who puts all his faith in regulations and memoranda, and Robert Gresham, who insists on treating natives as human beings. These men find themselves opposing each other at critical moments in their careers. Moreover, they become involved emotionally as well as professionally. Freddy admires Priscilla, Robert's attractive wife, and can never quite forgive her for rejecting his somewhat naive and pathetic advances. His own wife, Amorel, is a strong-minded woman who devotes a life without love to Freddy's advancement. In the background is the warm and exciting life of Africa.

There is an underlying philosophy in Mrs. Huxley which gives depth to the thinking and a cool preciseness of style to the writing. Although for the most part the thought is expressed in situation and dialogue, it overflows sometimes in passages where the writer is speaking plainly for herself. They range in subject from the treatment of animals to the weaknesses of "the service" and the decay of faith in the west; and they are so interesting that even the impatient reader should pause to study them.

Less successful, however, is the construction of the novel. The prologue in 1942 is followed by chapters which deal with events in 1929. This method of looking backwards from a fixed point becomes acceptable when the author's purpose is revealed; but there are later sections which return abruptly to 1922, 1919, and even 1913; and in most cases the intention is merely to give fuller treatment to episodes which have already been included sketchily—though adequately—in the main narrative.

—M. H. Holcroft

**FUSED PETARD**

A VOYAGE TO LAPUTA. By Jonathan Swift, with an Epilogue by Donald Mcl. Johnson. Christopher Johnson.

DONALD writes, Christopher publishes. Are they relatives? If they are, it would account for so much. Let

us not condemn Donald unheard—"The direct question comes: Is it possible that, either by some freak of coincidence, or by some miracle of prognostication, the incoherent picture of Laputa and Balnibarbi, supposedly made up of disjointed fragments concerning the South Sea Bubble, Sir Isaac Newton and the Royal Society, and the state of Irish agriculture in 1720, becomes a thoroughly integrated satire on Socialism two hundred years later? Is this suggestion too far-fetched? . . . it is surely not impossible for an extraordinary genius such as that of Swift's (*sic*) to project itself forward for a longer period of time." It is a pity that we have not also Swift's prognostication of his opinion of this use of his work.

Donald Johnson uses this section of Swift's great satire, *Gulliver's Travels*, as a stick with which to beat the present Labour Government in Britain. The stick is a weak one, clumsily wielded. All that does the author credit is his genuine indignation. One good result of this publication—the only one I can think of—is that some new readers may be attracted by it to the pungent and vigorous mind of Swift himself.

## QUIET WATERS TROUBLED

**BLUE DANUBE.** By Ludwig Bemelmans.  
Hamish Hamilton.

A PLEASANT satirical fantasy, wistful and comic, in which the "little people" triumph, morally if not physically, over their Nazi masters inside wartime Germany, this novel is made more delightful by its author's drawings; one may buy the book for their delicate colour alone. Satires on the Nazis, now that they are overthrown, tend to fall a little flat, even when from such skilful hands as those of Bemelmans. But its good-natured picture of German manners is itself a justification of this agreeable novel.

—David Hall

## ROUNDAABOUT

ROAMING AROUND AUSTRALIA. By Frank Clune. Distributed by Georgian House for The Hawthorn Press, Melbourne.

*ROAMING* Around Australia is an attempt to point out, primarily to South Australians, that Australia is more than the Southern States. In a general way it succeeds. Few people who read it will continue to think of Australia in terms of Sydney, Melbourne, and Canberra, but their knowledge of the rest is likely to be vague and valueless. Not that there is too little detail, there is far too much—a miscellany of historical, geographical, and economic data which is easy to read but hard to remember. All of it is interesting but not all is important. Personal histories of national figures, and of small town celebrities, are treated with democratic impartiality and the same amount of detail; vital statistics and forgotten murders are crammed into the same chapter. This is good from the human interest angle, but tends to make the book incoherent as a source of information.

The book is illustrated with photographs, but they are small and unimaginative, and placed too far from their context. It is hard to believe that Clune with his eye for the picturesque selected them himself.