

Mexican Landscape

VILLAGE IN THE SUN. By Dane Chandos. Michael Joseph.

PREVIOUS writers on Mexico have made it sound neither pleasant nor comfortable. B. Traven in *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* and Graham Greene in *The Power and the Glory* write of it from the outside, and see it through European eyes, with contempt for its disorder, its cruelty, and its lack of purpose. Although neither of these writers, the one an egalitarian, the other a traditionalist, is particularly wedded to the idea of progress, both, perhaps in spite of themselves, have judged Mexico by utilitarian standards. Not so Dane Chandos: he has lived in the Mexico of to-day, the Mexico self-dedicated to socialism, reform and efficiency, very happily because of the ineffectiveness of these innovations to change the ancient good manners, homely ingenuity, and inefficient kindness of a people whose society reached emotional equilibrium long since.

Dane Chandos, a cosmopolitan of English blood who happened to be born in Mexico and returned to it after years of wandering in Europe, writes the story of his first year's residence in the village of Ajijic, beside a lake on the plateau of Western Mexico. He bought land and built a house. Both took time and patience. Meanwhile he kept house in a rented dwelling, accumulated servants almost imperceptibly, and eventually, without entirely losing his equivocal gringo status, became the friend and confidant of many of the villagers. He soon caught the mood of the country, in which time is of no importance, and even rows and quarrels are never followed to a logical conclusion, but dissolve into an acquiescent indifference.

As well as having a human sympathy for the Mexicans as unhygienic primitives trying to put on the hard mask of modernity, Dane Chandos has a keen eye for character. Here is a village shopkeeper: "Bernardina is small and elderly and gentle and vague, and her eyes are neighbours that have fallen out." At the Holy Week fiesta, the mayor, Don Pedro, setting up a bar on the shore of the lake, also sets up "as a final amenity" on a big tree on the beach this notice: "Within a hundred metres each side of the mole it is forbidden to bring cattle or women to wash." Chandos has as good an eye for nature as he has for man. In "the calms of May," "the time when everything seems to go slowly, the men and the animals and the hours," the cultivators burn their land to clear it:

"By day, only pale plumes of smoke smear the hills. But at night long snakes of fire glitter all round the lake." The still lake, with its "satin water" and its "royal tones" offsetting more tender ones, brimmed with distant mountains, its shores studded with "wine-glass willows," where the population fishes and bathes and comes to play or to gossip, is the main element in descriptions of an external world as strange and beautiful as those who people it, "earth coloured and close to the earth."

The literal translation of Spanish conversations creates a pleasantly curious effect. In spite of his rather indiscriminate use of American idioms, Chandos's prose is clear, nervous and pointed. This is the best book of travel I have read in a long time, a document in anthropology in the broadest sense, mass observation *sub specie aeternitatis*.

STONE AND STUCCO

IN THE TOWER'S SHADOW. By N. K. Cruickshank. Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press.

THE NINTH WAVE. By Geoffrey Johnson. George G. Harrap and Co. Ltd., London.

THE first of these writers comes to poetry with a reserved reluctance. Miss Cruickshank's packed laconic style, her strong rather than melodious rhythms, betoken no breathless eagerness to write. Concentration of thought, dignity, modest assurance, are her qualities, and she is also the objective narrator—

Friends called them fools, preposterous, insane:

The pile of letters mounted in the hall,
And brass-voiced gongs were banged for them in vain.

The Oxford Press is to be commended for its habit of publishing minor poets of talent who may one day "do mair."

Geoffrey Johnson has talent too, the talent of a rhetorician, of a Georgian.

Half wild with love for the weather-reddened faces,
The dear scarred knees and unspeakably muddy fingers.

He is a sort of poetic Russell Flint, producing a brilliant surface effect whose impact is immediate and can rarely be felt again at a second reading.

—David Hall

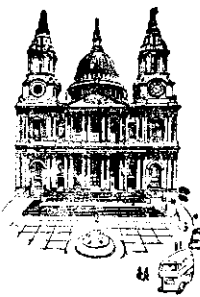
PIONEERS ON A RIVER

NO ROLL OF DRUMS. By Lieut.-Colonel Cyprian Bridge Brereton. A. H. and A. W. Reed, Wellington.

THIS little book tells the story of pioneering in Motueka, west of Nelson, a chapter of our early history known to few outsiders. Colonel Brereton was born in 1876, a generation after settlers on the Motueka river began to cope with its bush and floods, but he was brought up among the trail-blazers, and at the age of 14 his father's death made him responsible for carrying on the farm.

(continued on next page)

THE PACIFIC ISLES LEAD TO THE BRITISH ISLES



WHEN YOU FLY BCPA

It's just 5 days to London when you fly via the United States or Canada. And en route you enjoy Slumber-Seat comfort with BCPA, day-long stopovers at Fiji and Honolulu and see the splendid cities of the North American Continent.

The through fare may be paid in New Zealand currency.

Fly by Starlight
Tour in Daylight

Departures:

Alternate Wednesdays

General Agents in New Zealand and Fiji, NEW ZEALAND NATIONAL AIRWAYS CORPORATION. Reservations at any N.A.C. office or Principal Travel Agent.

British
Commonwealth
Pacific
Airlines Ltd.



BCN. 1.18

The ALL-BRITISH
**Conway
Stewart**

GIVES
PERSONALITY
TO YOUR
WRITING



THE POPULAR PEN
WITH THE
MARVELLOUS NIB
CONWAY STEWART & CO., LTD., LONDON

FEET HURT? IT MAY BE WEAK ARCHES



Arthritic or rheumatic-like pain in the feet or legs; tired, aching feet; callouses; sore heels or excessive

fatigue after standing or walking, often are traceable to weak or fallen arches. Dr. Scholl's Arch Supports and exercise will give you quick relief. Expertly fitted at all Dr. Scholl dealers.

Dr. Scholl's Shops:
9 Willis St., W'gtn.
136 Broadway,
P. North.
123 Cashel St.,
Chch.
20 Moray Pl., Dun.



Dr. Scholl's ARCH SUPPORTS