

The Listener

and

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TRAVEL BOOK NUMBER

Contributions by Quentin Bell, Andrew Boyd, W. G. Hoskins, Patricia Hutchins, Idris Parry, Henry Reed, Sir Steven Runciman, Martin Shuttleworth, Burns Singer, Norman St. John-Stevas, C. Henry Warren, and H. G. Whiteman

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Challenge to Prosperity—II

CHRISTOPHER CHATAWAY, M.P., considers how to expand British industry

This is the second of two articles based on the recent B.B.C. television series in which H. F. R. Catherwood, George Darling, M.P., and Andrew Shonfield also took part

DO most people produce no more work than they have to? One graph said to be fairly typical of the ship-building industry indicates the fluctuations in a day's electricity consumption in a certain yard and thus the intensity of work over the eight hours. Though the day begins theoretically at 7.30 the consumption of electricity does not rise appreciably until 8.0. There is a similar delayed rise during the half hour after the lunch break. Towards the end of the morning, and three-quarters of an hour before the final hooter, the graph shows a sharp decline in effort. There are, in addition, sudden dips over fifteen or thirty minutes before 9.0 a.m., before 11.0 a.m., and just after 3.0 p.m., each presumably indicating a tea break.

At the Birmingham College of Technology Dr. Tom Lupton, head of the Industrial Administration Department, has reason to believe that employees in many industries limit their work output. He has conducted an intensive study of this subject, spending six months working in semi-skilled and unskilled jobs himself. The way, he believes, in which most people control the amount of work they do is through manipulation of piece-work systems. In most systems one finds 'tight' rates and 'loose'

rates. The tight rates are the ones on which it is difficult to make money and the loose rates are the ones on which it is easier to earn well. While managements are continually looking for ways to tighten up 'loose' rates to what they consider a reasonable level, work people often go to considerable effort to preserve them as they are. The common device for taking advantage of a system is to book in times which do not expose the loose rates and to complain loudly and frequently about the tightness of the relatively tight rates.

Dr. Lupton is in little doubt, on the basis of his research, that a substantial proportion of British labour produces nothing like the output of which it is capable. He takes the view, which appeared a little over-sophisticated to me, that all this is probably socially desirable since the perpetual battle of wits with authority fosters working-class cohesion and sense of community. 'If one is anxious for people to want to work more', he says, 'one has to instil into working-class people what I call middle-class values—long-term planning of careers, provision for the education of one's children, the collection of non-consumables and the buying of a house. In short, getting an investment in one's life and career which, although a growing practice, is alien to the traditional working-class pattern of life'.

How to increase the contribution of labour and the trade unions to the country's prosperity was the theme of the third programme in our recent television series 'Challenge to Pros-

Travel Books

Rome: 'Time's Central City'

By HENRY REED

OF ALL BOOKS, travel books are probably the most ephemeral: usually aspiring to the condition of the instantaneous best-seller, and sometimes achieving it, they in either case have their day quickly and are done with. If a travel book outlasts the year of its publication, it will almost always be because it is a piece of marginalia in the work of a good novelist or poet; if it survives it will be as a cherishable part of that work. This year has brought a Penguin reprint of Lawrence's *Twilight in Italy*: the Italy it describes—and possibly the Bavaria of its remarkable prologue, too, for all I know—is scarcely there any more; but the book itself is alive from beginning to end, still. Why? I suppose it to be because a real writer, though he will avoid falsifying the surface of a foreign outside world, will instinctively deal only with what he can absorb into that inner world from which all writing flows. And what we have in the end will be himself-and-it: the value we set on the result will have something to do with our general trust in him—or its opposite.

So, at all events, with Lawrence. Only one of the new books about Italy that have come my way this year seems to me to promise a like endurance, and for like reasons. Miss Elizabeth Bowen's *A Time in Rome* (Longmans, 21s.), is distinctly part of a larger whole which one does not expect to forget. It is the exact antithesis of most travel books. It is magnificently unillustrated, for one thing; for another, its author is explicitly anxious not to be of help to any other visitor. It is essentially a book to be read away from Rome, not in it. It has further negative virtues; there is nothing about the unremitting winsomeness of the natives; there are none of those maudlin conversation-pieces with which even the sincerest are wont to bedizen their reminiscences; and none of the authoritative inclusiveness of the dug-in expatriate ('Gino smiled, as no one outside Florence knows how to smile: and all Florentines of course have perfect teeth'). Miss Bowen sees selectively, and with adequate passion; she is not an indiscriminate watcher; she is not a camera (nor, in point of fact, was Mr. Isherwood). If she tells you anything about Rome, she gives you a recognizable part of herself with it:

Rome's staid residential districts I did remember, but not their extensiveness or, on me, effect. Latin equivalent of the Victorian, they bespeak a sort of bilious prosperity. The stucco of the stand-offish, secretive houses has darkened from ivory to buff, buff to mustard; their surrounds are metallic evergreen gardens. Sometimes,

inside a railing, sounds the costive drip of a fountain not quite turned off. The palm trees look stuffy and un-Southern; any windows not masked by venetian shutters exude gloom through their hangings of clotted lace—not only is it impossible to see in, it must be all but impossible to see out. I eyed the electric bells

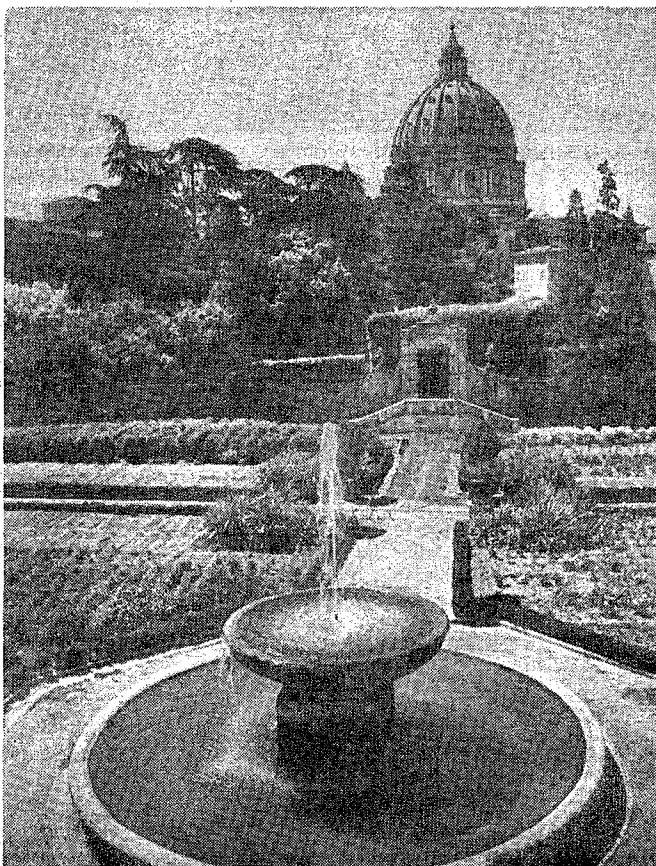
how do this ourselves. The making of a book is her real concern, and I enjoy recalling its shape even at the risk of making it seem overschematic. The first chapter is for obvious reasons called 'The Confusion'. The second is 'The Long Day': at once the feeling of the modern day in Rome, its centre a monstrous siesta, and also the long clear day of the Caesars. Miss Bowen acquires her learning on the spot, and occasionally, like King Magnus in *The Apple Cart*, she gives the impression of a slight ironic wink as she unrolls the official pronouncements. Thirdly, the night: her own sleepful nights as against the insomnia of the ancients: and also the night that the Dark Ages form in our imagination. She emerges into the fairly raffish day of the Renaissance with Cellini as an appropriate companion. Fourthly, 'The Smile'—the smile of the Roman weather, but also of Livia, the wife of Augustus; and the gentle or rhetorical tourists of the nineteenth century, and the sparkling baroque of the sixteenth. Lastly, 'The Set Free': at once the Risorgimento and the advent of St. Paul; the regular liberations from the city into the 'environs' that everyone in Rome today seeks; and her own departure.

Non-committal the beginning of the book: but highly committed the end, and the reader probably with it.

Two days later I left, taking the afternoon train to Paris. As before, I had too much baggage to go by air. Such a day, when it does come, has nothing particular about it. Only from the train as it moved out did I look at Rome. Backs of houses I had not ever seen before wavered into mists, stinging my eyes. My darling, my darling, my darling. Here we have no abiding city.

I have read Miss Bowen's book twice, some of it oftener. It is, for me, some sign of the book's completeness in itself that it does not revive, or even much recall, my own various past affections for the city. Here is a Rome, perfectly created, and separate now from the city itself. It is possible to feel that Miss Bowen has held a lot in reserve. Part of the poetry of the book comes from its deliberate avoidance of dialogue, personal encounter, the matter of fiction; and it is with a faint, and one hopes not impertinent, stirring of anticipation, that one remembers Miss Bowen observing, somewhere in the book: 'Rome demands its novelist'.

Other books about Italy which have appeared recently include: *Rome Revealed*, by Aubrey Menen (Thames and Hudson, £4 4s.); *Gardens of Rome* by Gabriel Faure (Kaye, 35s.); *Venice*, by James Morris (Faber, 30s.).



A view of the Vatican gardens from the Pinacoteca
From 'Gardens of Rome'

in their polished circles, wondering who had ever the nerve to press them: few or none are signs of coming-and-going—are the young always out, perhaps, the old always in?

Characteristically self-possessed, when she arrives in Rome on page one, Miss Bowen first finishes the detective-story she has been reading on the train. Even after this there is no eager throwing open of windows on to the magic of the well-remembered city, etc. It is night, she goes out to dinner, naturally taking a book, to a restaurant where it is clearly 'uncouth' to read. From such non-committal beginnings, and with an artistry in opening up an atmosphere as seductive as that of her novels, she embarks herself and us on her three months of winter-to-spring in Rome. Gradually one begins to see that this book, like all Miss Bowen's work, is about a form of love. Its growth, its indefinable course, she is not concerned to chart. We some-