
Books

TRAMPLING OUT THE VINTAGE by Joseph A. Cocannouer. University of Oklahoma Press, 1945. pp. 221. \$2.75. If universality is any test, this is a better book than Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, which suggested its title. Steinbeck needled the American sense of compassion and justice, but when his book was shown abroad as a film, the poor devils of peasants in the audiences got an unexpected impression. They saw the rich Americans (Oakies, by definition) riding in a wondrous motorcar (jalousy to you). Steinbeck couldn't be bothered with geographical details, and, as I recall it, moved the dry-farm area about 200 miles east. He slurred over the basic reason for agricultural distress and land depletion, slamming away at mechanized agriculture and big land-owners, both incidental to the main issue. That issue has been a lack of understanding and love of the soil and its reasons are deep in folk history. No book on my ten-foot shelf of conservation tracts makes this quite as clear as Cocannouer has done, and none is more simply, honestly, and delightfully written.

Should some wise director see fit to make a film of *Trampling Out the Vintage*, I am certain that film would be understood by men and women of all countries and classes. The story begins with the garden of Cocannouer's Dutch mother in what was then the fair, fertile land of virgin Oklahoma. Within this sanctuary of thrift, soil and plant life were cherished. All about it were the farms of neighbors bred long in another tradition—that of exploitation, intensified by poverty and lack of schooling.

And so, while young Cocannouer's eyes and heart were turned toward the soil, those of the neighboring children were turned away from it, toward the city. When later he returned, and tried to develop agricultural craftsmen in the common schools, he found the going hopeless. In the Philippines, and afterwards in California, it was better. He would find it much better in Oklahoma today, even though too many educational sights are still levelled on New York and Chicago, too few on Poteau, Woodward, Mangum, Pawhuska, and Shawnee, to say nothing of the countless villages in sore need of trained and devoted leadership.

Because the book is a rich life-story, it cannot be compressed here. Being that of a good life, it is full of good things which cannot be torn out of context. But I was glad to see justice done to the early faculty of Stillwater, working as it did against enormous odds to help the boys and girls who came to it with little more than bare hands. Another bright spot is the account of America's humane colonial policy in the Philippines, now yielding a welcome harvest. Again, the tribute to classical education from a man whose life has been, first and foremost, a practical one, is comforting in these days of short-cuts. Not least among the merits of this excellent book is the vivid insight into Chinese agriculture which is given a few pages.

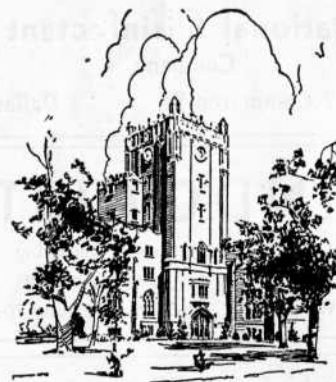
I recommend this book to every businessman, farmer, teacher, and parent in the agricultural Mid-Continent.—PAUL B. SEARS.

► Edward Faulkner's book, *Plowman's Folly*, published originally by the University of Oklahoma Press, has been reprinted in England by Michael Joseph, publishers. In a review of the book, Ralph Wightman, English farmer broadcaster, described the book as a "direct attack on the method of plowing which has since time immemorial been the basis for all farming." He urged English farmers to read the book but said "it should rigorously be kept from all townsmen because they already have a low enough opinion of farmers without being encouraged to think that the farmers have been wrong since the dawn of history."

► Will Ransom, art editor of the University Press, is in the process of revising his book, *Private Presses and Their Books*, published in 1929. The work will extend the records of the book to the end of the era defined by the present war.

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