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THE FORTNIGHTLY LIBRARY

CORN AND PUFFINS

By H. E. BATES

CORN COUNTRY. by C. Henry Warren.
Batsford. 10s. 6d.

LUNDY: ISLE OF PUFFINS, by
Richard Perry. *Lindsay Drummond.*
12s. 6d.

In a previous book, *England Is A Village*, Mr. Warren gave the impression of being a romantic on matters of the countryside, a preservationist caring more about the antique and the picturesque than the immediate problems of rural life; one felt that he enjoyed the pleasant memory to the exclusion of the unpleasant existing fact. *Corn Country* removes this impression, which caused at least one reviewer to commit the injustice of putting Mr. Warren into bad company. The story of corn is imaginative food. No other plant in the entire history of the world has become even in a remotely comparable way at once an economic and political force, a symbol, a thing of universal beauty and the synonym of life itself. Corn is all these things, and in the rural calendar is even more. Without its touch of golden splendour and all that leads up to harvest the English countryside would lose much of its best-loved pictorial life; more than half its traditional tasks, customs and festivals arise from the cultivation of this grass of which there is no recorded beginning.

Realizing all this and urged on by it, Mr. Warren has written a very able book that has some of the attributes of its subject. In its review of corn-crafts, corn customs and the minor lyrical uses of straw, such as straw-plaiting, it has beauty; in a delightful chapter on water-mills and another in early English husbandry there is a light touch of history; in the concluding chapters Mr. Warren seizes on the importance of corn as an economic and political factor. Into these pages is compressed the real value of the book—an examination of the state of English farming as it affects the life and future of the whole nation, a review of the present muddled system of impossible quotas, crippling subsidies and vague promises, a survey of that once hypothetical but now all too real situation "if we find ourselves at war," and the grave warnings given by Lord Lynton of the consequences of years of misguided agricultural policy. Measured by these chapters alone *Corn Country* is of no small constructive importance; but it pleases also by its charm, its pictures of the East Anglian countryside which gives the book its title, and its general air of having been realistically and happily conceived.

On the principle once employed by the dramatic critic who reviewed the

play *An Awful Night* in one word—"exactly"—there are occasional books that one feels might be described with a single word. The word for Mr. Perry's book might be magnificent; or if you care for understatement simply plain excellent. I should like to leave it at that and let readers themselves discover the delightful results of Mr. Perry's passionate patience on Lundy Island. But that would be unfair to someone who is not only a first-rate observer of bird life, but a writer of rare talents into the bargain. This book, with its exhaustive account of the social life of puffins, razor-bills, guillemots, cormorants and birds of passage, is remarkable for that same combination of the practical and the sensuous, the objective and the lyrical, which caused Hudson's work to be described as appealing "alike to the mind, the heart and the senses." The minute observation, the swift ability to recapture the scenes of rock and sea and sky, the sensitive and exact eye for colour and motion, all make a combination that is sometimes perfect. At that I will leave it: except to say that almost all that goes for Mr. Perry goes for Mr. Alan Richardson, his photographer, too.

ITALY IN THE MAKING: January 1, 1848—November 16, 1848, by G. F. H. & J. Berkeley. *Cambridge University Press.* 25s.

In *Italy in the Making* Mr. & Mrs. Berkeley are steadily carrying through

does, however, detract somewhat from the impressiveness of the picture presented to the general reader.

The present instalment illustrates the limitation of the appeal which a particularly important and exciting episode in the history of the Risorgimento is calculated to make. This volume of 463 pages—excluding appendices—deals only with the history of eleven months, and deals with it so minutely that the reader, unless he be a specialist in Italian history, may find it difficult, at times, to see the wood for the trees. Let me make it clear, however, that the book as a whole will be invaluable to students while many of the component chapters anyone can read with pleasure and profit.

This is true in particular of the chapters which deal with the attempt of Pio Nono to "liberalize", if not the Papacy, at least the Government of the Papal States. These chapters form, indeed, the backbone of the book and represent a fine piece of work. Not that the authors neglect other aspects of the revolution in Italy. Besides the Neo-Guelphs—the party which hoped to see the Pope bring the Italian States into a Federation under his own presidency—there were two other parties in the Italy of '48—the Mazzinian, republican and unitarian, and the party, well represented by Massimo Marquis D'Azeglio, which looked to the House of Savoy for leadership and saw the best hope for