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reviews a new book by Tschiffely, THIS WAY SOUTHWARD; David Anderson's SURVEYOR'S TREK; Hillaire Belloc's study of Charles II, THE LAST RALLY; the story of a great family, THE LOCKS OF NORBURY by the Duchess of Sermoneta, and Vardis Fisher's epic of the Mormons, CHILDREN OF GOD.

MR. TSCHIFFELY'S journey on horseback from South America to New York subsequently became, in *Tschiffely's Ride*, a literary sensation. That journey took, I think, three years, and like most of us Mr. Tschiffely likes the best of as many worlds as he can get: which perhaps explains the fact that his newest journey was undertaken not in the saddle but on the broad back of a Ford. *This Way Southward* (Heinemann, 15s. net) is the record of that journey, which began in Buenos Aires, continued south across the pampas and the River Negro, on through Patagonia, and across by air to Tierra del Fuego. "As far as English people are concerned," Mr. Tschiffely says, "Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego are literary deserts," forgetting apparently a very notable book of Hudson's. His route took him down to the Strait of Magellan, along the Atlantic coast, and back along the eastern slopes of the Andes. The roads, by American or European standards, were appalling, and throughout the second part of the journey it was necessary to make immense detours inland from the Pacific coastline in order to proceed northward at all. South of the Negro he traversed "vast arid regions, cursed by sterility"; from Cape Horn northwards it was a race against the bitter southern winter; near the Rio Colorado the car stuck in "a vast hot desert" from which he continually shovelled himself out. Once he crossed a bridge by night and discovered, half way over, that there was no bridge; he

accelerated, roared forward in air and landed safely. These, and similar incidents, pepper the narrative and keep it tasty. There seem to have been no major adventures, and in the absence of them Mr. Tschiffely falls to recounting past history: the remarkably stubborn colonization of the Chubut Valley by the Welsh, who are still there; the story of Orllie Antoine, the small-town French lawyer who proclaimed himself King of Araucania and Patagonia; the doings of the Rumanian engineer, Julius Popper, who in the 'eighties seized Tierra del Fuego and set up a dictatorship under arms. All these are interesting, though the recounted story will always lack, as Mr. Tschiffely must know, the freshness of the thing at first hand. And next time, good though this book is, he must travel by horseback once more. Does he not realize that there are fifty million of us who can travel by Ford, and that the more primitively adventurers travel the better the public likes them?

As a writer Mr. Tschiffely is not classic. Nor is Mr. David Anderson, who gives an engaging account of himself in *Surveyor's Trek* (Faber, 10s. 6d. net), but I like his Scottish mixture of phlegm and humour. I like the lack of theatricality which can cause him to begin a book with "I arrived in Southampton on a spring evening eleven years ago to learn to be a surveyor." I like his keen, bright eye for the detailed behaviour of his fellow men. Mr. Anderson's work as surveyor took him eventually to Nigeria, and his book is an account of his time there: his work, his colleagues, the country, the natives, his thoughts and reactions. There is not much of high adventure in it; even surveying mountains and making mass war on locusts can, apparently, become prosaic. But throughout the book Mr. Anderson's lively, humorous mind continually infuses the page with vivacious detail. He excels at the dry summary of character, he is admirable in the description of the Nigerian scene, he has a precise instinct for the correct ironic touch which is, I should guess, so necessary in preserving the balance of mind after some months in an outpost of Empire. In short, whatever you think of Scotsmen and surveyors in general,

*Surveyor's Trek* is well worth intelligent attention.

*The Last Rally* (Cassell, 12s. 6d. net) is Mr. Hilaire Belloc's story of Charles II. In the too early death of Charles at the age of fifty-four, Mr. Belloc sees the last glorious and genuine flame of an English monarchy flutter out. In the burning of that flame, for the quarter of a century between Charles's accession and his death, Mr. Belloc sees the most magnificent failure in English history: the last attempt of an English monarch to make kingship something more than a symbol. The whole emphasis of his book is on this point: the end of the era of government by an inspired head and its replacement by that system of aristocratic, many-powered government which has controlled the development of England, for good or bad, ever since. He sees in the rise of Hitler a resuscitation, in a more aggravated form, of the same monarchical system as pursued by Charles: the welding together of the economic, armed, and above all popular forces of the country into a single unit of power. This idea, and with it his portrait of Charles, he paints with extreme craft, intelligence, and a persuasive zeal that only rarely runs away with him. An example: being unable to disregard the question of Charles's amours, he proceeds to argue that Charles was promiscuous because the experience of puberty and "the thunder of cavalry" struck his life simultaneously; because he lacked a mother's guidance; and because "there was no home for him . . . no hearth." In pursuit of the argument he finds that there is one side of a man's life which is to-day grotesquely exaggerated: sex. It is exaggerated through the loss of that which both explains and regulates human life: Religion. (Perhaps Mr. Belloc will explain when and how religion has ever explained human life?) Such weaknesses apart, however, the book is an admirable example of that clever, didactic, zealous writing for which Mr. Belloc is famous.

Preceding the text of *The Locks of Norbury* by the Duchess of Sermoneta (Murray, 18s. net) is a family tree, its

roots planted in 1732, its tenderest branches reaching 1936, which makes the tree of the Forsytes look like a humble gooseberry bush. It is not possible to detail here all the ramifications of this great and remarkable family, who played so influential a part in the aristocratic, political, diplomatic, and cultural life of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The index to the book reads like portentous slices from Burke's *Peerage*; the illustrations are from the walls of famous galleries. The Locks had their portraits painted by Lawrence; they quarrelled with Nelson; they knew the royal, aristocratic, and literary lions of the day. To read the Duchess of Sermoneta's account of her ancestors is like receiving a costly, élite, and rather forbidding family album arranged with painstaking elaboration and care. It is one of those books in which, through the light of personal and family history, the larger history of an age is better illuminated.

Lastly, Mr. Vardis Fisher's 750-page epic of perhaps the most astounding piece of history in the development of the United States: the rise of the Mormons, the establishment of whose system of polygamy is defended by one of the characters in *Children of God* (Methuen, 10s. 6d. net) thus: "The Mormons may be guilty of what you call polygamy, but they don't sneak round and visit whores the way you Gentiles do. They don't have just one wife they lie to and a lot of harlots they go to bed with." In building up this strange section of history into a novel, Mr. Fisher follows the now prevailing American fashion: a heavy emphasis on rich, factual detail, an abundance of character, a filmic prodigality in the use of the American regional background, generous doses of dramatic realism, and, lastly, if I am not too harsh, a weather eye on Hollywood. As a writer he seems, oddly enough, to find writing hard work. He wears the huge, heavy shoes of an almost Victorian verbosity, and plods across the American continent like a lumbering pioneer. In spite of the book's rich solidity, in fact, I should have preferred it half as long.