An International Sensation-Books Abroad

Magazine Is Widely Acclaimed

WHEN the Wright brothers took their now immortal spin in their first biplane, they did something that really merited the term “unique,” a word that has been used so elastically by modern advertisers that it is now almost meaningless.

When, three years ago, Dr. Roy Temple House, head of the modern language department of the university, and a small group of associates issued the first number of a new international magazine, which they called Books Abroad, Doctor House had done something that was “unique.”

There were 900 copies issued of that first gray-hacked number and a copy was sent to almost every university in the country, to a host of famous scholars in America and abroad. Doctor House and his associates waited at home in some trepidation; it requires some hardihood to launch a new magazine, much more if that magazine is a scholarly one.

Much to their own astonishment, praise began to pour in in unstinted measure; and that was not surprising, for Books Abroad was the only magazine in America, devoted to a survey of foreign-language literature. Doctor House had no difficulty whatever in associating with himself many of the most distinguished modern language scholars in America.

The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace quickly recognized the useful service Books Abroad was rendering international understanding and gave a fund of $2,000 to it. The University of Oklahoma printed the magazine on its own University of Oklahoma Press, but because the magazine had no subscription charge, it could not obtain second class mailing privileges, thus creating a large burden on Doctor House and his department. The Carnegie fund helped tide the magazine over a difficult period.

Henry Goddard Leech, the brilliant young editor of the Forum, was unqualified in his praise, writing: “The July number of Books Abroad offers an opportunity to extend my congratulations not only on the gift from the Carnegie Endowment but also on the distinct and valuable service which your quarterly renders to American readers. Of making books there is no end, and so continuous is the barrage from our native publishers that we are likely, without a reminder like yours, to forget the quieter and often more worthwhile appearance of books from the other side of the ocean.”

“I believe that you will make this publication indispensable to all students of languages as well as to librarians,” wrote C. Leslie Cannon, chief of the book order office of the New York public library. And this great library pays Books Abroad the high compliment of using it for making many of its orders of foreign books.

UNDERLYING Books Abroad was the simple idea of reviewing the best foreign language books for English readers; there was no such publication in existence; and the public had apparently been waiting for it, for in almost no time the circulation trebled and now Books Abroad is practically at the head of the modern language field in America in circulation.

Doctor House this year was able to realize an ambition he had entertained ‘at the start,’ to enlarge the magazine and so permit the inclusion of leading articles, correspondence and other matter pertinent to the journal. With the January, 1929, issue, the larger format was used, a blue standard cover adopted, and leading articles by Emil Lengyel, Conrad Henry Moehlman and Ralph Adams Cram included.

Constant improvements in scope are being planned; but these cost money. Books Abroad has been distributed free as part of the university’s service to international good will and understanding.

A department for English and Australian books is contemplated soon. Every university in the United States receives Books Abroad and many public libraries. To meet the increasing demand, various projects have been considered for financing Books Abroad so that it might continue its free circulation. One of these is to endow the magazine and this idea is finding many real friends throughout the United States.

But whatever change is made, Books Abroad will adhere to its great mission—a literary ambassador of international good will!

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A. J. Urbanzky, ’26 arts-sc., is with the Al Heiman Insurance Co., in Oklahoma City.