

A WRITER'S OPINION OF "MY COUNTRY AND MY PEOPLE"

Author: LIN YUTANG
By PURA SANTILLAN-CASTRENCE*

Lin Yutang did a great service to China when he wrote this book—with his heart in his pen, one might say, so full of sincere feeling it is. To read the table of contents one would think it was more of an erudite dissertation of China and the Chinese than anything else. It does have that learned side to it but it is very cleverly and brilliantly cloaked in a mellow humanity that makes the work extremely fascinating and stimulating reading.

The author opens our eyes to the real China, old China and modern China. The results, deleterious and otherwise, of Western incursion into its deep, rich Oriental civilization, the effects of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism upon the Chinese "Art of living," Chinese individuality, their ethics, their art, their culture.

A note of criticism—the reader cannot but sense a sort of defensive, aggressive attitude when Lin YuTang compares Western customs with those of the East. One feels as though subconsciously, that he was answering some unspoken slighting slur on his people's manners or characteristics and he is out to defend these or give reasons for them. We cannot understand such an attitude in an otherwise extremely fair and dispassionate exposition of facts as they obtain. Indeed, one of the charms of the book is its utter lack of affectation, as though its author was calmly and proudly, but truthfully, delineating the character of something or someone he loved yet which or whom he would not spare, because he was too honest to do so.

The sprinkling of humorous touches throughout the work is very effective and natural. One can almost hear the author's understanding laughter, (a rich amused chuckle, perhaps), as he makes fun of this and that Western trait.

The interest of this book to Filipinos is that in a way we face some of the problems China is facing, the inevitable East-West problems, for instance. We are as bewildered as she is, maybe more so. But perhaps, with Lin YuTang, we can sound for ourselves and for our country the same note of hope that he did so delicately in the last paragraph of his epilogue: "For a time yet there will still be ugliness and pain, but, after a while, there will be calm and beauty and simplicity which distinguished old China. But more than that, there will be justice, too. To that people of the Land of Justice, we of the present generation shall seem like children, of the twilight. I ask for patience from the friends of China, not from my countrymen, for they have too much of it. And I ask hope from my countrymen, for hope is to live."

* A noted Filipina writer. (Reprint from "Woman's Home Journal," Sept., 1939.)