

BOOK REVIEW

Born of Those Years. An Autobiography. BY PERRY BURGESS. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 307 pp., with 16 pages of photographs. \$4.00.

Mr. Burgess, president of the Leonard Wood Memorial since its inception, and author of the book *Who Walk Alone* which has had continuous sales since its publication in 1940 and has been translated into many foreign languages, is one of the most widely known men in the field of leprosy. By himself in the earlier years of the Memorial, and in later years together with his wife, Cora Turney Burgess, he has travelled more widely and undoubtedly visited more leprosy institutions than any other single individual. The story of these and other activities on behalf of those who are afflicted with leprosy and of those who are attempting to deal with it in the field, and also the story of the earlier experiences which led to Mr. Burgess' entry into this work, are related in this autobiography.

The following passage is quoted on the book jacket: "My work has taken me over the Seven Seas, across mountains, and through jungles . . . Mine has been the most absorbing work a man can do, because it is an attempt to meet the problems of the most tragic, the most neglected, and the most gallant people on the face of the earth. . . .

"So the pictures in my wayward album do not reveal the postcard beauties of the world . . . I have explored hidden worlds of whose very existence the usual traveler is unaware. If I have seen grim sights, I have known exciting moments . . . and moments of cleansing laughter."

Of the reviews in lay periodicals which have been seen the following, by Thomas H. Maren, appeared in the *New York Times*. "And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare . . . and shall cry, Unclean, unclean.' Jehovah's orders concerning the leprosy were unquestioned human law for millenniums . . . Everything about leprosy (or Hansen's disease, as its articulate victims have crusaded to call it) is paradoxical, defiant and thorny.

"Why the unreasoning fear of the patient and semantic horror of the name, when the disease is barely contagious for the adult? What is there about New York, for example, that makes leprosy entirely non-communicable here—so that wisely no segregation is practiced? Why does the disease fail to develop in the experimental animal, or even the human volunteer, after inoculation with Hansen's bacillus? Why do some patients run a violent and fatal course, while others live with it for fifty years?

"To these, and to many other questions, there are no answers yet. But three remarkable events have occurred in the recent history of leprosy, and all together they have begun to turn the tides of ignorance and despair. The first is the establishment of the National Leprosarium at Carville, La. Second is the discovery of new drugs, the sulfones and streptomycin, which work few miracles but point the way to the future. Perhaps most singular is the life of Perry Burgess, whose autobiography now reveals his career as minister, author, and for twenty-seven years president of the Leonard Wood Memorial for Eradication of Leprosy.

"Ten years ago, in his remarkable book, "Who Walk Alone," Mr. Burgess drew the memorable character of Ned Langford, soldier in the Spanish-American war who finally fought his way to a rich life as a patient in the leper colony of Culion in the Philippines. Now he tells of dozens of other patients, and hospitals and doctors in many lands. With laudable scientific accuracy, he tells something of the natural history of leprosy, and of the many-sided attack on the disease. All of this is an inextricable part of his life; indeed, his honeymoon was a round-the-world inspection of leprosaria. There is no finer example of a man who in giving his life to others has found his own."

The book was reviewed in the *Tropical Diseases Bulletin*, by Dr. E. Muir, as follows: "Dr. Burgess is not a medical doctor, but few have equalled him in what he has done for the anti-leprosy campaign. For the last 27 years, since its foundation, he has been the president and active executive of the Leonard Wood Memorial, which has not only headed the efforts made against leprosy in America, but has, by its support of the *International Journal of Leprosy*, and by initiating the International Leprosy Association, taken a tremendous share in advancing and coordinating the fight against leprosy throughout the world. Dr. Burgess is also the author of the world-famed best-seller *Who Walk Alone* . . . which has perhaps done more towards enabling the public to understand and sympathize with the victims of this disease than any other publication. Dr. Burgess travelled over almost every country where leprosy is prevalent, and what he has seen with his kind and understanding eyes is related in this autobiography in a lively and humorous style. There are many stories of heroism, both among the patients and among those who have devoted their lives to these sufferers.

"One of the remarkable features about *Who Walk Alone* was the scientific accuracy of a book written by a layman. The present work is no less accurate.

"Dr. Burgess says: 'It is my considered opinion that segregation frequently serves as a deterrent to treatment rather than as a means of obtaining treatment.' This no doubt is very true, and if some of the money spent on the upkeep of expensive institutions was spent on suitable personnel who would visit and investigate cases and arrange for domiciliary isolation as far as could safely be allowed, at the same time giving advice suitable to each individual case, then much of the hardship might be removed and leprosy might be better controlled."

We are informed that this book has had the distinction of being selected by the American Foundation for the Blind and the Library of Congress for transcription to records and printing in Braille, as was *Who Walk Alone*. Dent and Company are publishing *Born of Those Years* for England and the Dominions.

H. W. W.