

forcing through the organization of Speakers' Committees to cooperate with the trade unions. It has exposed the rôle of a progressive group in the Union, as a pseudo-opposition. It has prepared the way for expanding the Union membership and making it more representative by winning a lowering of membership dues for teachers earning less than \$2,000. The present slate of the rank and file is to organize mass delegations of teachers to Albany, to fight the bankers' agreement, to wage an open, active, and prompt defence of victimized teachers, to secure State aid for food and clothing for needy children, to arouse teachers to the dangers of the plan (temporarily in suspension) to pay them in city bonds at par—in effect a payment in scrip—and to support the Unemployment Insurance Bill HR 7598.



### A GOVERNOR GUIDED BY DIVINATIONS

By W. D. GILLIS

Boise, Idaho

**T**HERE is no more glamorous date in the story of the West than 1849. It was the beginning of the greatest and the most adventurous search, in history, for virgin gold.

It was in that year that John Ross, a boy of seventeen, began the long voyage, from a New England port—around the Horn—to California. Having reached his destination, he mined for gold a short time, but neither hills nor streams would give up the hoped-for fortune. The packers were earning more gold dust than most of the miners found, so the boy turned patiently to guiding the pack-train as it transported the necessities of life—sardonically inventoried as “whiskey and

flour”—to the new California towns and mining camps.

The packers were a rough, hardy group. Shaving and much washing were contrary to their customs. It was solemnly claimed that they looked upon the taking of more than two baths a year—one in the spring and another in the fall—as sure evidence of effeminacy and foppishness in the male. If the winter came early to the hills, then the second bath, they insisted, might properly be omitted.

Young Ross spent a dozen years in California—mostly as packer—then moved on to Oregon.

In the early sixties, gold was found in Idaho and shortly its Boise Basin was pouring out a rich stream of the yellow metal that was to stiffen the sagging credit of our war-stricken nation. Gold signals with an imperious hand to those who have once prospected for it, or followed its mining. So John Ross now hurried to Idaho and to the allure of its boisterous placer mining camps.

In 1864, over the Oregon Trail to Idaho from Illinois came a young woman by the name of Jeanette Hadley, who within a year after her arrival became the wife of the man whose expedition we have described. She put a stop to his wanderings at once. They built a home at the lower end of the Boise Basin, where the Boise River joins the Snake; went into cattle-raising, and Southern Idaho claimed them as residents until they died—he, not until he was eighty-seven.

I have attempted, in a few words, to tell the story of John and Jeanette Ross, not because their lives and experiences were remarkably different from those of many others of the adventuring pioneers of their day, but because we would fix your attention, for a moment, to the thought that the pioneer as he wanders

in new and strange places seems, sometimes, to develop mystical manifestations or transmits them to the next generation.

To this pair, six children were born, and one of them was a boy who has a great belief in himself, and a belief in divinations. How he has followed them; how they have brought him as far as Governor, makes him unique, at least, in one detail.

They named this boy Charles Benjamin. He writes it—C. Ben Ross, and it is the official name of the first native-born Governor and the present executive of Idaho.

He attended the country school near Parma and went as far as the sixth grade. That section of Idaho was beginning to have reasonably well-organized schools at the time young Ross attended them, and as he attained his teens, so it was not altogether because of lack of facilities, but rather his dislike of the restraint of school, that made him leave it as soon as possible.

Sometimes, he causes considerable uneasiness for the teacher by telling the pupils not to worry about examinations and the passing of grades—that school is not all-important—he did not get through the grades, himself, and see he is their Governor—the Governor of a great State.

When Ben was a small boy there was open range for a hundred and fifty miles northward from the Ross ranch house. Along the Boise, the Snake, the Payette and the Weiser Rivers and their tributaries, was excellent grass. Almost as soon as he could straddle a horse, Ben was riding the range. He could by then read and write, so there was little objection from his father and the life of a cow-hand attracted the boy. It attracts the man.

Riding a cow-pony and politics (and the lofty places he believes the latter holds for him) are the only things which can now command his interested attention.

And these habiliments fascinate him: the high crowned Western hat—the silken neckerchief, of brilliant rainbow hues—the soft open-throated shirt—the leather vest—belt and holstered six-gun—tight-legged trousers—high-heeled boots—chaps—the heavy jingling spurs—a Montana saddle—and raw-hide quirt, and, of course, the lariat. These are the things—not golf, though many courses are close at hand—not one of the score of things most other men turn to for hobby or recreation—none of them interests him, only the cow-horse and equipment . . . and politics.

Bill Leigh rode the range with young Ross. "I heard Ben make his first long speech," said Bill. "You could have heard him at least two miles, that morning. We were on the round-up. Ben was doing the cooking that day. He could make the best sour-dough biscuits you ever ate. We had molasses, too, that morning. And the pesky yellow-jackets were just swarming over everything—especially the molasses. Ben had put a lot of it on a half of one of those biscuits, brushed off and picked out all the yellow-jackets—as he thought, and hastily crowded it into his mouth. But Ben had overlooked one of those jackets. As he closed his mouth it drove its stinger deep into his tongue. He's never made a louder, more forceful speech since, than that one. No puncher ever spoke more exhaustively about the ancestry and antecedents of yellow-jackets, and the curses he wished to visit upon them, than did Ben. Now, he hopped around holding his tongue, now, turned it loose, so he could let out a louder yell."

Ross was not more than seventeen when he began to tell the neighbor boys, who rode with him, that he was to be Governor of Idaho some day. Of course, they hooted in derision.

Continuously and concentratedly he wanted the office of Governor of this State. He attained it. But in doing so it seems never to have occurred to him that he should study the problems of government and be prepared to be a better Governor. It seems never to have occurred to him that he might learn much from books about government. Books do not now and never have interested him. He knows nothing about the theory of government, or of political science, economics or history—from books. He reads very little save the newspapers.

However, he recently announced a discovery of his, in reference to the Egyptian pyramids. He said they were built to relieve a local unemployment situation by giving the boys good jobs.

His practical experience with government and its administration has been more extensive. From 1915 to 1921, he was county commissioner of the politically radical county of Canyon. Three commissioners govern a county under Idaho law. Then he moved to the city of Pocatello on the other side of the State. Within two years, he was back in an executive office—this time as mayor of his newly adopted city. For eight years he served as mayor.

He made no outstanding record either as county commissioner or as mayor. He made no particular effort to save the inarticulate tax-payer's money or to give government a quality above the popular average. As mayor, he satisfied the so-called better element and also the fairly large population of gamblers and bootleggers. He is now completing his second term—four years—as Governor.

So it will be noted, that for twenty years, continuously, with only a break of two years, while he moved from the western to the eastern side of the State—through at least twelve of the twenty

of Republican rule—this Democrat has kept himself in executive office.

But during all those first sixteen years he wanted to be Governor and during all those years he worked and sacrificed greatly to attain this office he so greatly desired. Success has built a tremendous egoism for him. But he has had to pay. He does not have an intimate friend—not a friend upon whose desk he can put his feet in relaxation.

There is one other, besides himself, in whom he has absorbing confidence. It was more than twenty years ago that a woman began to advise him and foretell his future. She is a clairvoyant.

She looks to be about fifty-five. She is neat in appearance—almost prim. She speaks highly of her own abilities in the field of the occult. She says the medical world is jealous of her abilities in a field which she terms “snatching from the beyond.” She modestly asserts she can bring “back from the grave” nearly anyone, if she can only get to them before the “silver cord” is snapped or stretched out too far. She says this “silver cord” may be plainly seen (we assume by her) at times of illness, stretching out, sometimes from the top, sometimes from the back, of the patient's head. The “silver cord” apparently has only a limited elasticity. It may not be pulled out too far. A ten-foot pull she can handle easily, but let the cord be pulled out twenty feet before she gets to the person—that makes a hard fight for her—sometimes a losing battle.

According to her, all have a guardian angel in the spirit land. Someone who has passed on. This guardian protects and directs the life of its ward. Governor Ross has Abraham Lincoln as guardian angel.

But it is in securing information as to the future—directions as to what he should do—for reports as to what will happen

—that the Governor most frequently consults his old necromancer friend.

Her technic in producing this does not differ greatly from that reported of the priestess, soothsayer and seeress of ancient days. Twenty-five centuries ago the oracle of Apollo at Delphi sat on a three-legged stool over the chasm in the mountain-side, and over the sulphurous fumes, underwent some ecstatic frenzy and then told the Athenian admirals and the Lydian monarchs what would happen to the fleet—and the effects of fording rivers—other than getting their feet wet. These Idaho divinations lack the beautiful settings (ordinances and police departments cramp the style today), but otherwise they differ little from the older ones.

We are told that when the Governor tells his cabinet or a board that he wishes to “sleep on a problem” it means he wishes to consult his oracle.

But then the Governor cares little for sleep. He works not less than fourteen hours each day. His industry is enormous. He personally hired every stenographer, every employé (except a few in the offices of the constitutional officers) of the immense personnel of the State government. He uses even the Federal relief work to build his machine. The State Administrator sent this to all the foremen appointees: “On the recommendation of Governor Ross I am pleased to designate you as a foreman in the employ of the State Civil Works Administration for your county.” Ross has built a truly remarkable personal machine. It is his, alone. But he trusts no member of it. He distrusts experts. He fears his inferiors. Almost to a man, every leader or man of prominence in his own party hates and fears him. As Governor he is the head of many boards and commissions, but he dislikes board work. It apparently bores him. Questions of finance

and taxation fill him with impatience or a far-away look comes to his eyes. He gives no attention to the legislature, when it is in session, except when his remarkable mental agility suddenly seizes upon some action of theirs which he can make redound to his personal political benefit.

He has attacked the N. R. A., C. W. A., E. R. A., Wallace, Farley, Johnson and most of the other Cabinet members. Even the President has not escaped.

No Governor probably ever received a more scorching letter than did this Governor, last September, from Ickes, when Ross criticized the Department of the Interior and its Commissioner, and his manner of handling certain projects. The letter fairly blistered, sizzled and smoked. The Governor just laughed and declared his mandate came from the people—that the common people elected him—and he is indifferent to all the howls of the boys who think themselves to be statesmen.

Ross knows with canny Scotch certainty how large a percentage of us favor those who pander to our selfishness. He has found moratoriums useful instruments by which he may show friendship for the farmers. The farmers are a majority in Idaho. Here is a typical little talk of the Governor to a group from that majority:

I want to say to you folks. I want to talk to you about agriculture because that is a thing that is dear to my heart. I expect it always will be. Now, I told my legislature, last winter I wanted them to give me the right to issue moratoriums, and they did. There is talk of running a lawyer against me. And there are several Republicans, who are lawyers, who want to be Governor.

Now, you farmers, who have mortgages on your farms, know what I have done for you with that moratorium. Two or three courts have declared my moratoriums were unconstitutional but that hasn't made any difference to me. I've kept right

on issuing moratoriums. Every sixty days I've issued a new one. And I'm still doing it. Do you think a lawyer, if he had been your Governor would have done that, and kept them from foreclosing the mortgage—kept them from taking your farms?

No, sir-ee! All the lawyers say I'm wrong.

He is constantly travelling over the State. He is making speeches for himself all the time. Other office-seekers make speeches during what they call "the campaign"—a period of sixty or ninety days. But Ross speaks on every occasion offered.

He is, as has been said, completing his second term as Governor. He announced almost a year ago that he will seek a third term. This is forbidden by the unwritten law of the State. His Republican opponent has not yet been selected by the primary, nor has the more bitter opponent in his own party yet been eliminated. So the campaign in which he takes peculiar delight is not yet begun. But he is making speeches. He delights in displaying his resourcefulness as a speaker.

Over in the southwestern end of the State the denomination of the Nazarenes have a college. It happened, at the time of the gubernatorial campaign of two years ago they were dedicating a splendid new building. All the friends of the college had gathered from all the Northwest. They invited Governor Ross and his Republican opponent to deliver addresses.

The Republican candidate is a cultured man. He has written several books and went thoroughly prepared as he thought. He had an inspirational patriotic address, finished in every detail, carefully adapted to his audience. The latter was a large and attentive one. The address was received with much applause and apparently gave great pleasure.

Then came the Governor's turn. Upon the wall where it could be seen by the audience, hung a framed Bible text: "Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness." Pointing to it Ross declared, solemnly and slowly: "I repeat those words every night just before I go to bed." He paused an impressive moment and then began again: "My friends, what we need is not more patriotism, but more God." In no time there was a thunder of "amens" coming from that audience.

Some ten days later, the Governor and his Republican opponent happened to meet again, this time in a large group of mutual acquaintances, in the lobby of a hotel, on the other side of the State. There he told with much gusto how he had "put it over" on his opponent. He said: "He had made a good speech and I saw it was 'agoing' to take desperate measures to beat him. I threw the speech away I had intended to make. I preached them a sermon. I got all het up. I just climbed right over into the Manger, with the Baby. And before I got through I certainly had them yelling amens and hallelujahs."

The election returns showed that community voted almost solidly for Ross.

You wonder why, after having had the office twice, he should desire it a third time against an unwritten rule as old as the State.

He frankly tells his plans. He will, he says, be elected Governor a third time—then he will defeat the veteran, William E. Borah, for his seat in the United States Senate. Following that he will be elected President of the United States of America. How does he know this? His sibyl has spoken. She has told him these offices await him. He thoroughly believes the divinations cannot be mistaken.

# THE LIBRARY

## *Modern American Prose*

MODERN AMERICAN PROSE, edited by Carl Van Doren. \$2.75. 6 x 8¾; 939 pp. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company.

THIS is an anthology of American prose during the last twenty years. Mr. Van Doren "has chosen to deal with imaginative rather than with argumentative literature, with works of art rather than with documents," and he has tried "to demand of the examples offered only that they be truthful, beautiful, alive." The selections include almost every branch of prose writing, except mere journalism. Altogether, sixty authors are represented, and among them are Sherwood Anderson, Mary Austin, Carl Becker, Thomas Beer, Van Wyck Brooks, Cabell, Cather, Dreiser, Faulkner, Hemingway, Lardner, Sinclair Lewis, Sandburg, Santayana, Gertrude Stein, Edith Wharton, Thornton Wilder, Thomas Wolfe, and Elinor Wylie. Near the end of the volume are reprinted the last two chapters of Mr. Van Doren's "American Literature: An Introduction." This is followed by an annotated index of authors.

The book is a useful compilation, and the cheapness of its price should help get it a goodly number of readers. But it is open to several criticisms. In the first place, it is too long. At least one-fifth of the authors included have no place, by any rational critical standard, in such a collection. Among them are Floyd Dell, here represented by "Phantom Adventure" from the childish "Love in Greenwich Village"; Waldo Frank, represented by "Maya" from the muddy "America His-

pana"; Thornton Wilder, by "The Cardinal" from that horrendous piece of literary spew, "The Cabala"; and Alexander Woollcott, by "In That State of Life" from his recent raffle-barrel of gossip, "While Rome Burns." I also have grave doubts about Burton Rascoe's "Lucian" from that monstrosity of scholarship, "Prometheans"; and about the two pieces by Erskine Caldwell and Albert Halper, "Death of a Hero" and "Young Writer Remembering Chicago," respectively. The Caldwell story, like most of his stories, is no story at all; it is merely an incident. The Halper chapter of reminiscence is a dull piece of autobiography, almost completely devoid of that retrospective delirium without which no writing about the personal past is worth anything. Mr. Halper's general outlook on life is that of a fat-faced girl. He has intellectual asthma, and long stretches of writing seem to be beyond his strength, as "Union Square" abundantly showed. But he has written three or four *short things* which have a considerable lift. At the moment I recall especially "A Herring For My Uncle" and "My Brothers Who Are Honest Men." Either one is immensely better than the one Mr. Van Doren has picked. Finally, Mr. Van Doren has done an injustice to himself by reprinting the last two chapters of his brief survey of American literature. Not that the stuff is bad; it is really quite good for the audience of adult novices it was addressed to. My point is that it does not represent Mr. Van Doren in his best light. Many years ago, when he was on the *Nation*, he wrote three or four articles which still make interesting