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Book Reviews -- Monographic Musings

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As a throwback to a more genteel and relaxed time, this book chronicles Lizzie (as she was familiarly known) Coxe’s travels with her son Eckley and various Wharton and Sinkler relatives. Ms. LeClerq skillfully blends letters and journals written during their various travels dating, as the title indicates, between 1890 and 1910. What makes the reading more complete are numerous footnotes LeClerq adds including extensive quotes from travel and guide books of the period.

Born and reared in antebellum rural South Carolina, Elizabeth Sinkler married Brinton Coxe, a member of the Pennsylvania family heavily involved in coal mining. Upon marriage, Elizabeth moved to Pennsylvania; she became a mother; and she was widowed three years after her wedding. Even though she maintained very close ties to her South Carolina family, Elizabeth Sinkler Coxe remained in Pennsylvania. Despite her early widowhood, she married into an extraordinarily wealthy family. As a result, she was able to embark on her incredible travels.

While, in modern society, we demand immediate gratification, Lizzie and her companions traveled at a pace where they were allowed to appreciate everything they saw in detail at a level to which we are not accustomed. The letters and journals are beautifully and descriptively written. Oftentimes, drawings were included. They describe in vivid colorful wording scenes that are still vivid for the reader today.

Eckley Coxe, Lizzie’s son, was a scholar in Egyptian archaeology in connection with the University of Pennsylvania Museum at a time when much excavation was being done. These trips took him and his mother to remote regions of Egypt and the Sudan soon after it became safe for foreign visitors. There was a certain expectation for creature comforts, but many locales were primitive by today’s standards. Yet, in

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Column Editor’s Note: What is creativity? How do individuals get the “creative spark?” What actions embody creativity? What achievements show evidence of the creative process? ATG newcomer Steven Profit examines Creativity Theories and Themes: Research, Development, and Practice, a book that covers the major theoretical approaches to creativity.

In his commentary, Steven notes that he is “always pleased to find convergences between interesting texts currently on my reading table.” Likewise, I am always amazed that the connections that can be made between books highlighted in Monographic Musings. For example, the fruits of creativity can be readily seen in Elizabeth Sinkler Coxe’s Tales from the Grand Tour, 1890-1910, reviewed by veteran ATG critic Phillip Powell. Coxe’s letters, journals, and illustrations eloquently and artistically describe her extensive and exotic travels during the turn of the 20th century.

Many thanks to Steven and Phillip, and happy reading, everyone! — DV


Reviewed by Phillip Powell (Reference Librarian, College of Charleston) <powellp@cofc.edu>
the larger cities, they lodged and dined in considerable opulence. This reviewer was struck at how often they referred to Cook’s for their travel needs and it was just a cliché in the reviewer’s mind — giving the Cook’s Tour. With the advent of the First World War, the reading habit began when I was a little girl. My favorite uncle joined us for dinner at least twice a week, and never arrived without a book or two. I devoured over 60 Bobsey Twins books and the entire Nancy Drew and Dana Girls mysteries; the former prompted an ongoing interest in twin studies, and the latter may have had some impact on my interest in investigative journalism. The Pollyanna books, again the whole series, had a strong effect on my ability to usually find something positive in most situations, and I will defend her to anyone who thinks she was just a cockeyed optimist. I was inspired by Heidi, wept with Dickens, and was captivated by Little Women.

Every room in our home was filled with books. Additionally, my parents subscribed to at least two newsweeklies, two newspapers, a magazine about dogs, several pertaining to the arts, others that were related to their professional activities, and at least one concerned with political news. National Geographic was highly esteemed, and we saved all the issues for years.

My own subscriptions began with Jack and Jill and Scholastic, and when I was in my teens, my friends and I devoured our issues of Seventeen, which ushered in a subscription habit that has only increased.

Flipping through the pages, my eye is frequently caught by something that I might not have considered of particular interest. It may, in fact, be a page facing an article I intend to read that intrigues me and puts my creative thinking into drive gear. In fact, it is often the topics in which I don’t have a specific interest that end up being most valuable.

The Devil Is In The Details

by Mary Ann Liebert (President and CEO, Mary Ann Liebert, Inc., publishers, 140 Huguenot Street, New Rochelle, NY 10801; Phone: 914-740-2122) <mliebert@liebertpub.com> www.liebertpub.com www.genengnews.com www.westchesterwag.com

I spend a great deal of my time online, looking at specific sites for specific information. Once I have hit upon a comprehensive site, I am then frequently seduced by the links — I liken it to the Yellow-Brick Road, and, like a robot, off I go. Too frequently, this journey loads my brain with much more than I want to know and certainly much more than I may need to know about the subject at hand. The Web’s search capabilities are addictive.

When it comes to reading, give me a book or magazine.

My bedside table is piled with novels, biographies, mysteries, and some how-to books. Some books soothe the soul, other fire my imagination.

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