

mysteries of Greece to the morality of Isadora Duncan's dancing, he discovers impulses behind actions, ideas behind facts. There is a rush, an eagerness of mental vitality in his book, and it is not an eagerness to prove a point, but to go on to the next one.

I suppose that accounts for the difficulties of the style. Here is a sentence about Philip of Macedon:

When such a man is also good-humored, with the temperament of a mountain and the health of a rock, infectiously gay at a party, keen as a schoolboy in sport, vain with the exuberant half-seriousness of a man more pleased at heart with life than with himself, with the grin as well as the game always on his side, he more than conquers, he oppresses.

This begins brilliantly and fades before the final words where the accent should fall and Bolitho will at times write a five-line parenthesis between two half-lines of a simple declarative. It is not an affected style; it conforms properly to Bolitho's mind, which cannot isolate, but which can connect and re-create.

GILBERT SELDES

FROM SANDY HOOK TO 62°: *being some Account of the Adventures, Exploits, and Services of the old New York Pilot Boats* by Charles Edward Russell (CENTURY. \$3.50)

MR. RUSSELL has assembled this chapter of American nautical history from the records of the United New York and New Jersey Sandy Hook Pilots' Association; and he has supplemented and enlivened it with contemporary newspaper records, with some of his own experiences as a journalist, and with recollections of many of the oldest pilot members of the Association. Attempting no systematic chronological history of pilotage in and about the port of New York, he nevertheless succeeds admirably in conveying the tradition and spirit of the guild of pilots from

about 1812 to the close of the competitive era, at the end of the last century. He performs his task chiefly by the sound method of narrating *in extenso* the most stirring and typical episodes in the history of pilotage, and by giving detailed portraits of some arresting characters.

During this long competitive era, before the pilots collectively owned the present efficient steam craft or had begun to serve incoming vessels in a fixed rotation, they cruised far to eastward or southward in small, swift schooners, in the effort to outdistance each other to the chances on which their livelihood depended. Mr. Russell narrates one instance in which a pilot travelled fourteen-hundred miles, all told, that he might pilot an incoming steamship twenty-three. From 1838 to 1895 fifty-six pilot boats were totally lost, other than the many wrecked or sunk by collision; and nearly a hundred pilots perished at sea. It was a wasteful system, bound to pass. But while it endured it was crowded with the sternly romantic drama of man's struggle against overpowering natural forces and of determined and resourceful men's attempts to outdo one another. This drama, presented as simply as possible and left to speak for itself, is the substance of Mr. Russell's nineteen chapters. Despite some padding here and there, they make superb reading and a claim upon the excited gratitude of every reader whose pulse has ever quickened to the heroic tradition of sail.

WILSON FOLLETT

GOD HAVE MERCY ON US by William T. Scanlon (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN. \$2.50)

IT'S A GREAT WAR by Mary Lee (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN. \$3.00)

THE PRIZE of \$25,000, offered by the Houghton Mifflin Company and the *American Legion Monthly* for a novel of the World War, has been divided between William T. Scanlon and Mary Lee. The justice of the division

is apparent; for the two novels, both excellent in their kind, are so dissimilar in content that comparison is next to impossible. Each of these novels presents a highly realistic and disillusioned picture of the war, each adds something different and essential to our impressions of the vast chaos of conflict. But their points of view are poles apart. Mary Lee has drawn her material from the welter of wartime activity behind the front, from the offices, hospitals, barracks and canteens. Her characters are the nurses, clerical workers, secretaries, and entertainers who composed the great non-combatant army of modern warfare. In a staccato and rather confused style Miss Lee has managed to convey something of the gigantic bewilderment of those days in France, the seamy and sordid and disillusioning side of war, the bitterness and waste of life. She relies for her effect upon the diligent piling up of instantaneous and detached impressions. It is almost as if she had attempted a literal rendition of those vivid and disordered days. *It's a Great War* is a powerful book, but it is too amorphous to be accounted a literary masterpiece.

William T. Scanlon, on the other hand, has written a terse and orderly narrative which makes no pretense of being fiction. It is an unassuming account of his experiences in the Marine Corps, and particularly of the months he spent fighting at the front, at Verdun, at Château-Thierry and Soissons, and in the Meuse-Argonne. Mr. Scanlon's tale is at once thrilling and horrible, as any true story of the war inevitably must be, but it is neither neurotic nor insensitive. Mr. Scanlon pictures the war as it must have seemed to a thorough and efficient Sergeant of Marines—a good soldier who, without inquiring into the major causes and actions of the war, knew pretty well what was happening on his minute section of the Western front. Mr. Scanlon's is as valuable and informative a record of the World War as has yet been produced by an American participant.

MARGARET WALLACE

DIME NOVELS by *Edmund Pearson*
(LITTLE, BROWN. \$3.00)

WHEN a librarian turns to vice the outcome is as exciting as it is unusual. Mr. Pearson, after dallying with old murders, has turned his attention to the dime novel from its rise to the last dregs we see at the newsstands today. He insists, and proves, that the books read in the hay-loft by excited boys, and in places even more private by their sympathetic fathers, were very much maligned.

In their beginnings, the dime novels were conventional beyond words and written in excellent, though stilted, English. The heroes were brave and true and the heroines were pure and beautiful. It was the rapid competition that cheapened the standard. And even at their worst they merely equalled the "one-a-week" we buy in binding today. Literary hacks combined under pseudonyms and wrote series running into hundreds of titles. These were printed by the car-load by Beadle and his associates and read throughout the country.

Those of us to whom the Old Sleuth, Nick Carter and Deadwood Dick are mere names can understand the enthusiasm of our fathers when we read the exciting excerpts Mr. Pearson lards the book with so liberally. The books were miracles in the literature of escape and should have produced a nation of idealists. Even today, when we regard such books as quaint, we find that they have not lost their old vigor. In fact, the first dime novel, *Malteska*, has just been re-issued.

To preserve some decorum, Mr. Pearson is very thorough. He gives the social and political background of the times in the Mark Sullivan manner and he devotes a chapter to present-day notables who read dime novels in their youth and were whipped for it. But his zest and the numerous illustrations defeat his purpose. For the book is a thriller. In fact, it might be called, in the good old manner, "The Thriller's Revenge; or, From Haymow to Exhibition Case".