

moving experience Miss Lane has added form, and as a result her novel does not merely shamle on. In addition, a succession of memorable pictures rises out of the book: Mrs. Svenson, the Swedish neighbour who cannot speak English, showing Caroline her wedding dress and Swedish Bible; Caroline reading Tennyson's poetry (their only book besides a Bible) to Charles on Sundays; and one larger picture, underlying all the rest, of two people on the prairie and under the great sky intent upon a home in the "West with its outpouring abundance of joy, of freedom".

KATHARINE SHATTUCK

AWAKE by Susan Prior (BALLOU. \$1.50)

THE publication of *Awake* introduces a new writer of charming prose and a delicate talent for portraiture. It is the portrait of a young English girl rather excessively in love with a young American—by which I mean that her feelings are rather in excess of the circumstance and very much in excess of the response by the American; but that is no doubt the way with young girls. The introspective progress of her emotions and their disappointment completes the portrait. The background is a pleasant vicarage in an agreeable English countryside. Into this John the American hardly fits. Nothing much goes wrong, of course, and there is no particular *contretemps* except once when John spat while walking with her (and what was worse, defended the spitting). But little things, like his plus-fours (too bright) and his taste for Edna St. Vincent Millay (too sentimental) and his view of life (too positive) give away the fatal fact that he is not English. What is much more fatal, however, is the fact that John is not at all in love with her, perhaps will never be in love with any-

one but himself. With this revelation, pride and determination collapse and the girl (whose name, I think, is not mentioned in the book), after much poetry and self-pity, goes back to potatoes without bothering any more about her figure. The pages in which she pilfers from the ice-box are quite delicious.

Awake could hardly have escaped the influence of Rosamond Lehmann, but the talent, if slight, is authentic and will develop. The girl is something of a prig and sometimes a rather tiresome anthology of quotations, and she is very naïve in her judgments of herself and her American; but Miss Prior saves her with a spice of humour and a charming style, and ends by making a most attractive book of her.

P. M. JACK

YE DRUNKEN DAMOZEL by Simon Jesty (SMITH & HAAS. \$2.00)

YE DRUNKEN DAMOZEL, the name of a Popular public-house, is an early notification of the fantastic and mostly fake style with which Mr. Jesty decorates his story. Jonah is born into the novel with the hullabaloo of Tristram Shandy, gilded and refined. His father, "bluff and stern like a weather-beaten figure-head . . . empties a stoup of Hollands . . . with his deep-sea hearties"—as deep-sea hearties have done in many novels from Smollett to Dickens. His mother babbles of Tarshish and Nineveh and Helen of Tyre and Jahveh and Aphrodite. Mr. Jesty means that she is very religious and very sensual, and that her visions get the better of her. Jonah makes love to little Marion ("slim-legged Helen") of the public-house, to the accompaniment of the pipes of Pan, Dionysian revels, and other paraphernalia commonly used by Jack and Norman Lindsay. In no time Marion has

become a Zuleika Dobson (they are all implicated) playing Chopin—which is “the very dialect of the gods”—admired, adored, and followed from Poplar to Rio by Mazzendean who is a crooked politician, and Harrison who is “an anarchist below zero” with a “refrigerated brain”, and Jonah. In Rio she has already been rescued by a wealthy and tactful Señor with a wicked nephew. The Señor dies, the nephew is killed, Mazzendean and Harrison withdraw with a *beau geste*, and our Lady of the Green Hat (as she would be now) is free to marry Jonah and run off on their first night at home—something to do with Pan.

Or so one understands with some difficulty from Mr. Jesty’s playful use of language. It is a playfulness that is a little hard for the reader to live up to, as when Jonah smokes a cigar and (I quote precisely) “frivols with one of the fragrant vegetable cylinders”.

P. M. JACK

THE BOAT OF LONGING by O. E. Rølvaag (HARPERS. \$2.50)

O. E. RÖLVAAG, late Professor of Norwegian Literature at St. Olaf College in Minnesota, and several times mentioned for the Nobel Prize, first sprang into fame in 1927, when *Giants in the Earth*, the first volume of his trilogy on Norwegian-American pioneering life, was brought out in this country. He had written the book in Norwegian in 1923—his third novel. The phenomenal success of *Giants in the Earth* (it sold nearly a quarter of a million copies in this country) and the two novels which completed the trilogy—*Peder Victorious* and *Their Fathers’ God*—naturally aroused interest in Rølvaag’s two earlier books. The first of them, *Pure Gold*, was published in English in 1930. The second is the present volume, written in 1921 and the

last of the Rølvaag books to remain untranslated.

Since *The Boat of Longing* is the first but one of Rølvaag’s novels, the fact that it seems autobiographical is not surprising. Rølvaag was born in the same Arctic part of the old country as his hero, Nils Vaag, and like Nils lived there as a simple fisherman before emigrating to America. Moreover, the author radiates exactly the same love of virtue that is so prominent in Nils, and the reader feels sure that while Rølvaag may not have drawn literally upon his own life for the experiences of his character, he is most certainly identified with Nils in spirit.

It is rather difficult to judge *The Boat of Longing* critically; so many of its themes have just got under way when the book comes to an end. After closely following every step of his career from birth we are abruptly forced to take leave of Nils in the Great Northern Station at Minneapolis, with the bare assertion that he is going to a new job that will occupy him for the next two years. The scene then changes to Norway; we witness the amusing, pathetic, curtailed visit of Nils’s father to New York; and the story ends with the old man, back in the old country, rowing out to sea, under the spell of a mystic illusion, never to be seen again.

The Boat of Longing is most interesting for certain fragmentary incidents, such as the free meal obtained for Nils by a prostitute whom his innocence finally daunts. Rølvaag in this book seems willing to sacrifice the solid construction of a whole to the capricious insertion of vivid narrative snatches. All of these snatches are coloured by an emotion peculiarly Scandinavian (and decidedly exotic to us of the temperate zone); and some of them are excellent. As a piece of literature *The Boat of Longing* is noteworthy for its combination of two widely dissimilar