

Life and Adventure

GALLION'S REACH. By H. M. TOMLINSON.
New York: Harper & Bros. 1927. \$2.50.

Reviewed by HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

AFTER all it takes a good man to write good prose, and if he can do it, if he can get into phrase and rhythm those moments, those scenes, reflections that give the sense of living, if he can make his words transmute instantly into images or felt emotion, then he is a writer to be loved and respected without reference to current moods and modes. This is worth saying because, with our lively interest in all the new experiments in writing now under way in every great literary capital, there is a real danger that the reader as well as the critic will forget that novelty is not the best test of good writing and that if a sound writer does not experiment with broken scenes and clipped sentences it may be because he does not have to.

Tomlinson is certainly one of the best writers of narrative prose now practising in English. He is more uneven than C. E. Montague or Booth Tarkington, not so sure in his phrasing as Willa Cather, but in sheer beauty of imagery, in magic where magic belongs, and power where power is needed, he has no superior. He is not a young man, but one feels also that he is not mature, either. His great novel is still to come. His prose is not experimental but his stories are. His best books have been sketches or scenes interwoven. Even in "Gallion's Reach" he shows signs of strength unexpended in a great story powerfully conducted, which here flows into episodes and is dammed there. He still, like all writers of the sea in our time, is under the strong spell of Conrad. Not essentially like Conrad, he still chooses stories that Conrad might have written, lifts his characters into place as Conrad might have lifted them, although afterward they act upon their own.

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"Gallion's Reach" is none the worse for its Conradian flavor, now that we have no Conrad. It begins with a restless brooding mind such as Conrad loved, and there never fails in the story those quick contacts between soul and soul which transform a mere moment on a quiet ocean into something significant as life itself. But Conrad's men lived to brood and Tomlinson's brood to live. His hero is no wounded soul but a happy youngster whose only complaint is that the smug industrial world of London is drawing him away from life, is hiding the real, whatever the real may be. Longing to escape he does not know what escape can be, and so when almost casually he kills his employer by an indignant blow, he wanders toward the waterfront of London through a midnight as obscure and tortuous as his own craving, and comes at last to Gallion's Reach where the ships sail for the East.

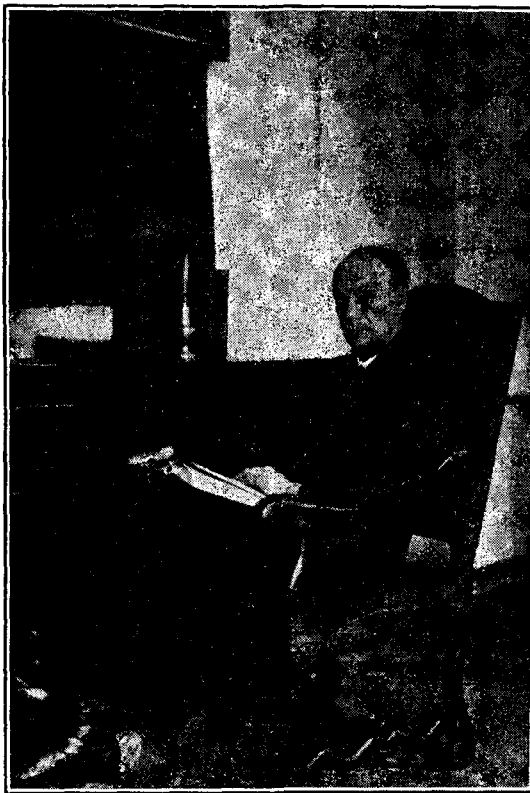
This killing breaks a man's life in two and sets a problem. It is the beginning of a novel which Tomlinson never ends. For to this author endings are not important: it is not what a man does, it is what he experiences that counts. Only the mechanically minded (so he might urge) will be interested in what an ex-clerk, ex-murderer will do when, having escaped from his old life, he returns to his old world to make a new one. It is the sudden release that is interesting, the vision of the reality of pain while he rocks in an open boat lost in the Indian Ocean, the fresh reality of the possessive instinct when in the wilderness of Malaysia his prospector friend makes an Odyssey of a search for tin, the reality of honor and the moral obligation to befriend the weak when he throws away wealth to save a helpless man, the sudden comprehension of a sensory fineness in a Chinese merchant which makes his own touch seem gross.

And so, to tell the story of "Gallion's Reach" is to tell of adventure the conclusion of which is spiritual, the conduct of which is irrelevant except to the psychology of one man. It is a book of scenes—the London night, a thrilling narrative with suspense in every sentence and a brooding meaning upon every word; the shipwreck, all done with bold single lines like an etching; the East, epitomized in phrases beautiful with an art that is never self-conscious; the haunted forest of Malaysia. If there is any dissatisfaction on the part of the reader, it is not with the adventures, nor the description, nor the characters, it is only that we are not content with revelation, we desire an end, a solution, a final resting place of the spirit, such as Conrad would

have given, not a stopping place when the hero has seen what he needs to save his soul.

And if Tomlinson has stopped, it is, partly, I think, that to have concluded the story he had chosen would have meant to have come closer to the manner of Conrad than his own independence permits.

Tomlinson is only beginning. His instrument of style is ready for great ends, which will not be, one suspects, the moods of psychological romance. "Gallion's Reach" is perhaps the last of his pre-war self that broke from London to adventure up the Amazon, that savored strange experience in beautiful places. This is very probably the last book of the school of Conrad which will be worthy of comparison with the stories of the master of the writers of that sea and that Orient which rose when Kipling's sank. We shall see what we shall see when Tomlinson writes of the War, whose psychological intensities he knew as did few others. There will be beauty there too and adventure, but no pausing at the final secret's rim.



H. M. TOMLINSON

A Tale of Australia

THE SOWER OF THE WIND. By RICHARD DEHAN. Boston: Little, Brown & Company. 1927. \$2.50.

Reviewed by ROBERT B. MACDOUGALL

RICHARD DEHAN is not an unfamiliar name; masking the identity of Clotilde Inez Mary Graves, it has, since 1910, been signed to many novels and collections of short stories. These productions have seldom been of permanent value, and most of them are by now hardly remembered. And yet in this new novel she turns out a preliminary exposition of seventy-odd pages that has fire and powerful imagination. Such writing, could it be sustained, would quickly assure fame. But (confound the eccentricities of the creative brain!) she soon goes into a highly flavored and thoroughly preposterous romance that knocks silly all pretensions of her novel to consistent excellence. There are reassuring flashes of force and high imagination throughout the rest of the story, but thereafter it never breaks its shackles of fundamental incredibility. Always she is inventive and refreshingly unsentimental, to be sure, with an eye for effective local color and a gratifying sense of individuality in character. If only there had not been the fatal blunder!

The story is of many-sided conflict in a pearl-fishers' settlement in remote Western Australia. We find the Roman Catholic mission that seeks salvation for the outlying savage tribes; the cruel trader and ex-chiropodist, Barboas, who makes enemies but ignores them in his successful commerce; the indefinite scum of the waterside, racially mongrel, unpleasant to the eye and nose; and lastly the servants of Barboas, faithful beyond reason. But the great error of the story, the blow that smashes the faith of the reader, is the introduction of Safra Ferguson, a pure aboriginal who, taken from her kindred by a female scientist, has been moulded and trained to conform with American civilization. We cannot

accept the character of this polished savage as Richard Dehan gives it to us. It is utterly incredible.

In spite of this essentially false note, "The Sower of the Wind" is an arresting novel. There are countless touches of color, many pages of adept narrative and boldly imaginative suggestions of exoticism. At times it seems as if the weight of excellence would overbalance the bulk of the meretricious. Perhaps it will do so for many readers. Surely the story is unusual, vivid, and often boldly conceived—no one can deny that. The pity is that it might so easily have approached within hailing distance of literary distinction.

Library Essays

A BOOK FOR BOOKMEN. By JOHN DRINKWATER. New York: George H. Doran. 1927. \$3.
Reviewed by JOHN MACY

ENGLAND is rich in literary men, major or minor—I do not know what the difference is—who know how to write charmingly about books. I could name twenty living connoisseurs who give distinction and flavor to the English reviews and, with the assistance of a few equally fine-grained Americans, to the American reviews. These library gentlemen may be very active creative artists, like Mr. Drinkwater, like Arnold Bennett when he was Jacob Tonson. They have scholarship and vast information without pedantry. They are industrious and inquisitive and get their day's work done, yet find time to loaf among books as if time did not exist, or as if every day could be stretched with comfortable indolence to at least twenty-five hours. When they are not browsing idly in bookshops or the British Museum they have endless hours to sit by the fireside with their feet on the fender, contemplating an acknowledged classic or a half forgotten poet, and they seem to have a necromantic power to summon to the easy chair a miraculous messenger with a mysterious volume. If they in the flesh haunt book-auctions, they are in the spirit haunted by the spirits of books. And they are high-spirited, gay, smiling about it all. My dear fellow, it is just like Kenneth Grahame's water-rat messing about in boats, messing about in books. Did you happen to know that Coleridge changed this line eighteen times, or it may have been nineteen? There is a chap over at Oxford who knows all about it. Isn't it jolly? Just messing about in books? I got this copy from Quarsmith. Only four and six. Worth more. Quarsmith knew it. But he knew I wanted it and rather took a fancy to my having it. Tight old fellow, half-Jew half-Scotch. But he does love books and is very generous, really very generous.

The sense of leisure, the sense that literature is to be enjoyed and not frowned over, the feeling that you can learn much by lying back and letting information come to you, that it is not the better part of wisdom to have the sweat of your brow dripping upon enchanted pages, spoiling both the paper and the thought—all this is the attitude, the soul of the bibliophile. Mr. Drinkwater has it perfectly. He quite calmly gets you excited about a third-rate poet who does not matter in the literature of the ages but may matter a great deal as a personal experience, if you happen to encounter him as Mr. Drinkwater did and as Mr. Drinkwater with naïve cunning, a child-like sophistication, coaxes you to reenounter him.

And then with a casual glance at some obscure thing he puts subtle poison into you and makes you mad to go out and buy all the rare books in the world, when you have only three dollars in your pocket and owe more than that to the grocer. A dangerous fellow, this Drinkwater, more threatening to the economic life of England than all the futile pother about Russian propaganda. (And America suffers intellectually with England.) He is trying to make us who are already broke go broker. And Mr. Keynes and the League of Nations and the International Convention of Bankers cannot help us.

Curses on such a fellow! It is he who sows the seeds of discontent in the very act of administering an opiate fireside tranquillity. (Mixed metaphors can be as mixed as they like, for that mixture is life and literature.) The moralists in Boston need waste no constabulary energy on silly modern novels. They should suppress Drinkwater. He may make somebody take a book out of the Athenaeum or provoke an addition to one of those rich private collections (I happen to know about two) which will

ultimately go to the Athenaeum or the Boston Public Library. And one that I have heard of destined to Harvard. The crafty Bolshevik! Let Drinkwater never come to this country again. He is a foxy spy, *agent-provocateur*. And I make a personal charge against him to be lodged with the British Government, the United States Customs Department, and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Books. He has ruined my library. Since I read his book I have looked over my poor confused, cheap, miscellaneous collection. But hold. Ha, ha! I have Cory's "Ionica," not of course the first but the reprint of 1891. And what is more I have read it. I read it as a boy before anybody heard of Drinkwater. Damn him!

The Grand Tour in 1435

PERO TAFUR: TRAVELS AND ADVENTURES. Translated and edited with an introduction by MALCOLM LETTS. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1927. \$5.

Reviewed by HELEN MCAFEE

WHAT inspired a publishing house in this year of 1927 to issue Pero Tafur's Travels in an English translation? The author, a well-to-do young Spaniard born in Cordova, who set out for Jerusalem in 1435 and took the occasion to see as much of the rest of the world as he could, was neither a rogue nor a gay dog nor a sophisticated amateur nor a sensation-monger nor yet a prematurely disillusioned youth seeking to win his soul back to civilization by the devious ways of the primitive. He visited Venice, which he describes in all its fifteenth-century magnificence, and Rome, which he describes in all its fifteenth-century squalor, and he saw a good deal of high life in Constantinople, Cairo, Brussels, Vienna, and other capitals, but if he paid visits to the brothels of these cities, he failed to immortalize them in this narrative. It has few lurid details to commend it to present taste.

And Tafur has no sense of publicity. He appears either unable or unwilling to impress the reader properly with the inconvenience and hazards of sight-seeing in the Near East before the day of the Orient Express, when a journey to Palestine, then under an aggressively hostile power, was in the nature of a severe, if exciting, penance. It is with a quite unsentimental impersonality that he tells how he risked his life several times (once it was to penetrate the forbidden Mosque of Omar in disguise, once to rescue Christian slaves at the Dardanelles); how his ship was pursued by Moorish corsairs off Rhodes and was wrecked by a storm off Chios; how he carried through a delicate diplomatic mission from the King of Cyprus to the Sultan of Egypt; how he made the terrible caravan journey across the desert to Mt. Sinai, and how he was kidnapped ("with great discourtesy") and imprisoned in a mountain castle near Mainz. He was well received by a number of potentates, in person, among them the Emperor of Trebizond, the Grand Turk Murad II—he seems just to have missed the Grand Khan of Tartary—Philip the Good, Filippo Maria Visconti, Albert of Hapsburg "King of the Romans," and his consort Elizabeth, who decorated him with the Order of the Dragon, Pope Eugenius, Sultan Malik al-Ashraf, and John VIII Palæologus, Emperor of Constantinople, whose figure as Tafur saw him is known to us in Benozzo Gozzoli's fresco, and who seems to have recognized the younger adventurer as a distant kinsman. Tafur was also rather lucky in turning up in the right place at the right moment. He was in Rome for Lent, got a special inside view of a military show in Cairo, and witnessed the ceremony of the Marriage of the Sea at Venice and the election of a Grand Master at Rhodes. But all this he takes in his stride, avoiding picturesque adjectives, constantly cautioning himself against exaggeration, seldom indulging in a burst of emotion except when he is moved by memories of the "bestiality" of Tartary or the incomparable splendor of Venice.

Finally, this account of life in 1435-1439, which was first printed from an eighteenth-century manuscript in Spanish fifty years ago, does not appear to be an historical hoax; the events and people mentioned by Tafur are all checked up with authentic sources in the ample notes. It is merely a true story of a normal, roving young extrovert of the fifteenth century with an especial interest in rulers and international trade—a type somewhat out of fashion at the moment, though another five hundred years

may bring it round again. In the meantime, there is pleasure in these bristling pages—offered in smooth translation and in good type—for those who like to fill out their outlines of history with social pictures as bright and sharp as the painted scenes on old Italian *cassoni*.

The Philosophy of Wells

H. G. WELLS, EDUCATIONIST. By F. H. DOUGHTY. New York: George H. Doran Company. 1927. \$2.

Reviewed by E. PRESTON DARGAN
University of Chicago

SINCE the publication of Van Wyck Brooks's "The World of H. G. Wells" (1915), there has probably been, in English, no better setting forth of the Wellsian scheme than the above volume. The title is slightly misleading. Only one-third of the book is concerned with education in the scholastic sense; but the greater part of it deals with the formation of the ideal citizen's mind and with the "mind of the race." Wells himself has been interested in education mainly in so far as it prepares the adolescent brain for the conception of the World State.

As regards training, he has some right to speak of himself as an "old and seasoned educationist." He went through the scientific mill at London University and in the laboratories of South Kensington—an experience in which several of his heroes followed him. He achieved degrees, honors, a teaching scholarship. He informs us that he actually "taught biology for two or three years." And he wrote frequent contributions for the professional journals of the time.

"Once a pedagogue, always a pedagogue," says Mr. Connes in his "Etude sur la Pensée de Wells." The schoolmaster has lost no opportunity for hammering in his own doctrine. But he has distrusted other schoolmasters, from Woodrow Wilson to Walpole Stent. Some fifty of them, according to Mr. Doughty's list, appear in the collected works, and they are increasingly prominent in the last decade of Wells's productivity. The majority of them are futile personages; the only good ones are the genuine elementary "teachers," rather than upper-class school-masters. Little in the British system of instruction finds favor in Wells's purview. First of all he condemns the vacuums and morasses associated with the teaching of "Education" as a subject. Then he gives fresh directions for the bringing up of small children. Then he indicts the private school for youngsters, especially as conducted by such impostors as the lethargic and symbolic Mr. Sandsome. Then he criticizes the "public schools," because they turn out athletic, carefully polished, classically drilled, and essentially empty-minded products. The same reproaches attach to Oxford and Cambridge and to their American counterparts. As devices for standardizing pleasant clubmen, such super-factories may have their merits. But what do they inculcate concerning the urgent needs of the world we live in? In short, the Age of Confusion is worse confounded by its "dons" and their methods.

A man who has risen from the lower middle class, whose mind has progressed from biology, through socialism, to world-politics, will naturally be impatient of the public-school *cachet*. A man trained under Huxley will not reverence Jowett. The study of crystals has displaced the correction of quantities. Wells's ideal as a teacher was Sanderson of Oundle, an educational "sport" who subordinated classes and courses, who sent his pupils forth to make first-hand contact with creative industries and agriculture—and who was generally damned for his pains. Clissold's ideal University is a collection of Institutes for Research, with little formal lecturing, but with earnest conferences of the zealots in each field. And teachers of this type, broad-minded "experts," shall become the leaders of mankind.

In preparation for this ideal, Wells's favored elementary curriculum included (in 1903) the three R's, English culturally taught, drawing and painting, some foreign languages, knowledge of contemporary life; but in 1921 mathematics are to be pushed much farther, at least three modern languages are to be thoroughly taught, history and geography are given a prominent place—and the sciences are subsumed. Such is the effect of the World War upon his scheme. The relation of Wells's thought

to biology, the new psychology, and ethics, is worked out by Mr. Doughty. Wells "believes in the future of mankind." He believes also that this future is largely in the hands of the teachers of the rising generation. As an intellectual midwife, the teacher should assist in the birth of ideas; but they must be legitimate ideas, engendered in lawful wedlock by the promoters of the World State.

Now Mr. Doughty demonstrates that the Wellsian educational scheme has changed in accordance with a deep change in his own nature dating from even before the World War. The essential duality in Wells is that of the artist and the preacher. The former dominated at least through "Tono-Bungay;" he was interested in individual quirks, in light and shade, in humor and passion. The latter loses his artistry and his humor and seeks to convert us to the idea of a new and necessary order. Mr. Doughty maintains that as long as education *per se* received Wells's attention, he had in the main a true vision; that "Mankind in the Making," for example, is a "solid, reasoned, and reasonable contribution to the theory of education;" but that when terrestrial affairs impressed Wells as a "race between education and catastrophe," the former was then thwarted and twisted from its proper functioning—the development of children—and made merely an element in the propaganda for the World State. And Mr. Doughty further doubts whether the Wellsian theory of progress is sufficiently assured for us to group social institutions around it.

From the strictly educational standpoint, these doubts are probably well-founded. The real issue, however, lies deeper. For one thing, the question of the necessity of Progress may well be separated from the question of its development, historically considered. It is a matter of urgency. If Wells is laboring under a "Messianic delusion," as Mr. Mencken insists, if no catastrophe is imminent, or if there is no drift towards an organized comity in world-affairs, then every "educationist" had as well continue simply to cultivate his garden. But if, as many thoughtful people assure us, the lessons of the Great War still need to be driven home, there is room for every brain in the effort. Order and cumulative direction and even Good Will may now exist to such an extent that they may and must be fostered. "To such a task," said Wilson ten years ago, "we can dedicate our lives and fortunes."

Wells at any rate has chosen for this dedication. In him the "white passion of politics" is still working as fiercely as in his hero, Remington. If we can only forget a little his impatient girdings at his fellow-reconstructionists, his views on sex, and his distortions of history, we may accept him in his true rôle as a social prophet of force and vision. A fine novelist has been lost in the process. But perhaps that too was a necessary evolution.

Writing in *John O'London's Weekly*, "Colophon" says, "that the recent case of M. Paul Valéry is not the first time that the ordinance which requires each new member of the French Academy to pronounce an oration upon the previous holder of his seat has confronted a new member with the painful necessity of delivering a public eulogy upon a man he detests. M. Paul Valéry, a poet in the severely classic tradition, did not like Anatole France, the previous tenant of the seat M. Valéry now occupies, and, although the custom of the Academy made it impossible to be openly derogatory, his oration was full of hardly-veiled sarcasm. Here is one of the things he said about Anatole France: 'My illustrious predecessor would not have been possible or even tolerable in any other country but France, from whom he took his name—a name extremely difficult to carry and which it took great hopes to assume.'"

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