

are interconnected, the author has necessarily given free rein to imagination." That means that he supposes that history consists in taking some skeleton of facts and imagining therefrom what a man's inner life has been. Interesting enough, but sheer romance. What Mr. Ludwig has really done is to tell what Mr. Ludwig would have felt if he had been in Christ's place. There can be no objection to this; but to call it historical presentation is nonsense.

In brief, the author thinks Christ's life had two periods: one, when he was a simple, idealistic, humble preacher of Cheerfulness; the other, when he was horribly deceived into thinking Himself Messiah. In short, when it is all boiled down, Jesus emerges as the tragic victim of a Messianic obsession. This interpretation is not a new one. It has not in the past seemed to be adequate. Too much of the Gospel account must be ignored to make it plausible. Jesus may not have been all that the Church has at times maintained, One without human limitation, but He certainly was more than he pitiable victim of a delusion.

Mr. Ludwig says he hopes that the book will upset no one's faith. It will not, chiefly because it is such very, very dull reading that few will bother to finish it. Its turgidity of style has been enhanced by what appears to be a wretched piece of translation.

Unknown-Island Romance

THE ISLAND OF CAPTAIN SPARROW.
By S. FOWLER WRIGHT. New York: Cosmopolitan Book Company. 1928. \$2.

Reviewed by ELMER DAVIS

MR. FOWLER WRIGHT is in revolt, to some extent against contemporary civilization and still more against contemporary literature. For the modern hero and heroine who curl up and quit he has little use, nor for the habit of mind that sees in curling up and quitting civilized man's only proper gesture in the face of the universe. It does not appear that Mr. Wright thinks very highly of the universe; but he feels that more pleasure and possibly more profit can be attained by fighting it as long as you can stand up than by lying down and letting it roll over you. He is bored by the complexities and intricate trivialities of civilization and what is (rather questionably) known as sophisticated fiction. He goes back to the elementals: How did this man save his life? How did he get enough to eat? How did he get a woman? How did he keep her, when hard persons tried to take her away from him? All of which is most easily asked and answered in a somewhat ruder and more primitive setting than that most familiar to his readers.

His first book (the first published in America, at least) went back about as far as possible. "Deluge" was a story of a world cataclysm, a readjustment of the sea level which swamped all civilized countries except a part of the English midlands, on which a strange assortment of refugees survived—survived only so long as they could fight successfully for survival. It had power and ingenuity and an underlying thoughtfulness; an imperfect but immensely interesting book, which deserved its success, and more. "The Island of Captain Sparrow" is of less importance; indeed it looks like barrel stuff. It is set on an unknown Pacific island; and for all Mr. Wright's ingenuity, it is not much more than another unknown-Pacific-Island story.

The unknown-Pacific-island story is, of course, one of the staples of the fiction trade—no more to be despised, when you happen to feel like it, than a hot-dog sandwich. But there are tricks in all trades, even the manufacture of a hot-dog sandwich or a Pacific-island story. Mr. Wright, in a laudable desire to get away from the conventional, has peopled his island with monstrous man-eating birds, and with real satyrs; apparently in the conviction that people who read South Seas fiction will believe anything. I suspect he is mistaken; the conventions of South Seas fiction admit considerable improbabilities, but not of his zoological sort. And beneath the garnishings the contents are the familiar hot dog. The hero is the conventional neurasthenic gentleman who recovers a taste for life when he has to fight for it; the heroine is the usual girl castaway of irreproachable breeding and engaging nudity. They do well enough, but nobody in the book approaches the magnificent Claire Arling-

ton of "Deluge," a woman worth a thousand of the inviscerate pushovers who pass for heroines in "modern" fiction.

One hears that Mr. Wright is working on a sequel to "Deluge." He resolved a minor complication in the plot of that book most admirably, without recourse to the half dozen cheap solutions that offered themselves; but he passed over, perhaps he even failed to notice, a major difficulty of his own story. "Deluge" stopped just in time; in about one page more his hero would have been lynched and his heroine raped. One waits with curiosity to see how he gets them out of the hole into which his logic tumbled them.

Spring Pilgrimage & Return

THE HAPPY MOUNTAIN. By MARISTAN CHAPMAN. New York: The Viking Press. 1928. \$2.50.

Reviewed by HERSCHEL BRICKELL

LEAVING out of consideration the fact that this first novel by a Southern writer has already received the accolade of the Literary Guild and is therefore assured a place upon numerous library tables and some bookshelves throughout this long and broad land, what does it seem to offer as fulfillment and as promise?

First of all, Mrs. Chapman's work displays an original style. She has taken the mountain-talk for her own, and woven its odd words, some of them seventeenth English, some of them Scotch, and some "homemade," into her writing, giving it a peculiar quality. Added to the use of these unusual words, there lingers through the writing an unmistakable flavor of King James Version and balladry, which goes even further to give it complete individuality and to make it fascinating *per se*.

"The Happy Mountain" has one of the oldest of all plots. It relates the wanderings of a mountain boy, who feeling the stir of spring clean to the bone, gives way to it and goes off, leaving his true love behind him. In his pilgrimage he works on a farm and lives for a little time in a city; his stay in the great world without is cut short by the changing seasons and, more immediately, by the news that back home his Dena is flirting with a red-haired member of the despised Bracy family.

This Wait-Still-on-the-Lord Lowe is by way of being a poet in his feeling for nature and more particularly in his feeling for music, as manifested in his passionate affection for a fiddle, bought with many days of hard work. He and some of his companions talk poetry, and at times I wondered how accurate Miss Chapman meant the conversations to be—that is, I felt that her mountaineers were talking like Irish peasants of the stage—but this criticism is sheer effrontery, since I have not heard Tennessee mountaineers talk on their native heath, and Mrs. Chapman has.

But if the language is poetical, there is no lack of action in the story. Waits himself is a first-class fighting man, and not one to run after a long-barreled rifle, either, when offended, but willing to use fists. The story goes quietly along to a dramatic climax, the scene in the cabin of Dena's father when out of a storm the red-headed Bracy appears looking for trouble and is well accommodated by Waits. Bracy's end seemed a little "contrived" to me, but the rascal was of no earthly use to any one and novelists have the right to kill off their villains no matter how tenacious of life the breed may be in reality.

In addition to her originality of style, Mrs. Chapman discloses a gift for looking at things through the eyes of her mountain-folk, as in her description of Waits in the city. And Waits, Dena, Bessie, Dena's sister, and the other characters of any consequence are sharply enough individualized, even if they are all of a breed. By inference I suggested that there appears to be about as much talent in "The Happy Mountain" as one has the right to look for in a first novel. I have tried to emphasize its accomplishment; since Mrs. Chapman is beginning, it is worth while to give a word or so to her promise.

Because she shows close, intelligent observation of her material and the ability to make her people real, and because her first novel is not in the remotest degree autobiographical—we have to be a little uneasy about the future of young novelists who begin by turning their eyes inward—it seems to me her promise is a large and important one.

She has said herself that her mountain people have a simple strength, self-reliance, and no self-pity; that they have fun, and are not much upset by such natural occurrences as birth, death, and the like, and I believe she has got these qualities into the characters of "The Happy Mountain." I suspect that the South has added another to its quite handsome and imposing list of interpreters of life just the other side of their front door-steps.

A British Family

FAREWELL TO YOUTH. By STORM JAMESON. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1928. \$2.50.

Reviewed by ROBERT W. MARKS

THE love-life has strange associations with honor, fidelity, and success; and in interpreting normal existence through its rosy and defractive medium one must be wary of a contorted picture. In this last and excessively English book, Miss Jameson has effected a saga of modern British family relationships, in which the pivotal point is a certain lithe, handsome, and overhonor-able boy, around whose adolescent stage her characters weave their unconscious passions into a network of sentimentality.

The dramatic action is far from complex. Nat Grimshaw, whose sotto voice painfully mouths the hero's syllables, is a slenderly-attractive, good boy—nice, quiet, unobtrusive, and normally graced with a "charming smile." When a sophisticated and sparkingly coquettish girl asks him to fall in love with her, he does. When his country tells him to go to war, he goes. When conflicting opinions of his young bride and his forlorn, stupid, and suffering mother, dictate that he "go through hell," he bites his manly young lip and goes through hell.

An idealistic, absent-minded father who, as Prime Minister, is disgracefully recalled from office for unpatriotic pacificism, and who loves his country home and abstract thoughts more than he loves his poverty-ravished wife and son,—he and a hardened, cynical, popular, and wealthy uncle who becomes jingoistic Prime Minister in the father's place, set the essential background for Miss Jameson's story.

The story is an old one: hero, loving love through party of the first, loves sympathy through party of the second; Pandemon gives way to Uranie, and sensitive youth, bruised in Life's perennial *mêlée*, buries his throbbing head in the bosoming symbol of Mother Earth.

Unfortunately, in her development of her characters' moments of ecstasy, their intimate expressions of adoration, their tortured emotions, Miss Jameson let herself drift far out into the torrent of romanticism. Apart from their erotic and psychopathic moments, these characters seem to lead a charmed existence. Old Daniel Grimshaw, Nat's uncle, in some miraculous way held England's destiny in his grip. And because of his tawdry sentiments he deliberately led England into war. At first, Nat spurns his uncle's money because of old Daniel's lack of scruples and "gentleman's honor." Nevertheless, without visible work or occupation other than a vague "scientific interest," he manages to subsist and support a wife.

What the asexual life of Nat was . . . what his father or uncle did other than control the destiny of England . . . what Nat thought or did other than make noble gestures over his monetary and genetic persecution, is the reader's mystery.

In short, Miss Jameson has produced one more book abounding in delicate psychopathic reveries and irrelevant conversation, but one in which the art of selection approaches too closely an almost-intentional vagueness.

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A True Seafarer Speaks

THE GREAT DAYS OF SAIL. Some Reminiscences of a Tea-Clipper Captain. By ANDREW SHEWAN, late Master of the *Norman Court*. Edited by REX CLEMENTS. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1927. \$3.50.

Reviewed by CAPTAIN DAVID W. BONE

THIS is distinctly a book to be acquired and carefully treasured by all lovers of the sea and, in particular, by those interested in that period of seafaring, 1840 to 1880, so aptly named by Captain Shewan as "the great days of sail." The book is so good that it is difficult to write calmly of its merits. Many books dealing with the sea and with the life of the sailorman have appeared of late. It is plain that there is a reading public interested in them. But how few of such books reflect the true sea and the living seaman. The unbelievable ship, the mock-heroic shipmaster, the "bucko" mate, the shipowner—comical or cowardly—all aimed and headed for the films, multiply like the leaves of Vallambrosa until serious and understanding readers flee from them in despair.

In "The Great Days of Sail," Captain Shewan, a true seafarer himself, carries the interest of his readers by his obvious sincerity and restraint. A Nestor of the sea, the "Old Man" sits comfortably in his chair ashore, recalling in tranquillity the triumphs, fears, dangers, and achievements of a long and distinguished career at sea.

And what a thrilling tale he makes of it all! Early days. He calls the reader to stand with him, an urchin with the sea-fever burning within, on Blackwall Pier when heaven-sent westerlies prevail and homeward-bound tea-clippers are reported from the Downs. You cannot but point and beckon with him at the sight of a square-rigger towing up from the lower reaches, and rouse a cheer to match his own as the hard-pressed winner of a great tea race rounds-to abreast the dock.

Great days, great ships, and great the men who sailed them. Was ever any competition, short of battle, longer or more keenly sustained than the long sea race from Foochow to London Docks? What manner of men were they who withstood the constant strain of a hundred or more days of sea passage with courage enough to luff a cloud of canvas into the wind at the first ominous whistle of a tearing squall? Shewan knows, and reading the life of this quiet spoken mariner, one can vision the iron heart that made it possible. Chiefly, I admire his restraint. No self obtrudes upon the reader, although the subject matter is autobiography.

✱ ✱ ✱

The author learns the old trade under command of his father, a tea-clipper captain of fine repute. (And I know the Peterhead breed he would be kept hard at it.) Appointed to command of the *Norman Court* at the early age of twenty-three, young Shewan lays bare his anxieties as he watches the tug that has towed him out heading back towards the land, and he realizes for the first time his great responsibilities.

It was, I remember it well, February 28th, 1873, with night closing in and the ship standing out of Start Bay on the starboard tack, that I found myself for the first time in full charge of as fine a ship as ever sailed out of the port of London. . . . There was every prospect of a dirty night, and, as soon as we emerged from the shelter of the headland, we met a heavy sea rolling up Channel and it settled down to blow. For the next forty-eight hours I kept the deck, the glass painfully low and the wind a "dead muzzler." It enabled me to realize at the outset that a master's berth was not the bed of roses my youthful fancy had painted it.

No cinematographic "sea-dog" this. There are no "purple patches," no "blood and thunder," no "action" that would interest a movie magnate. He realizes his responsibilities and puts out—untried—into the gale with a foul glass lowering and doubtless the seamen eyeing him dubiously as he cons the tea-clipper "more heavily sparred than heavily manned" in the pitch of the Channel. How easy, in fiction, it would have been to have made a "dering-do" of it, with a jealously envious chief mate to foil and confound! But Captain Shewan has thrills enough: he can make at least this reader feel with him as he bends to meet the swift heel of his clipper in a sudden squall.

The squall struck the ship with the suddenness and intensity almost of a solid object, caught her flat aback, and threw her almost on her beam ends. . . . The topgallant halyards had been let fly and the yards were on the cap. They were

volleying like great guns, but the mainsail and crossjack, which the men were in the act of hauling up, did more. They went to ribbons and when we swung the crossjack yard to help the ship to turn on her heel, the empty bolt rope of the sail got over the main yardarm. The ship was then lying over to such an extent it was impossible to clear it. A passenger who was below assured me he found himself lying on the vessel's side, staring down through the glass of his porthole into black depths of water as though he were at the bottom, in a diving bell.

One has to examine a fairly extensive sea library in search of a book or books comparable with this. Fiction ruled out, there remain but few intimate records such as Captain Shewan's. Compared with Dana, the gallant tea-clipper captain measures somewhat less than the foremast hand. There is the same sincerity in their records, but the command of words and terse simplicity of expression that makes "Two Years before the Mast" a classic of the sea is hardly approached in "The Great Days of Sail." Lubbock's fine book, "The China Clippers," is perhaps overly statistical. Captain Clark's "The Clipper Ship Era" may be taken as the best comparison, and, in this test, Shewan suffers no discredit. Sailorlike, he distrusts specific claims—supported as they may be by log-book evidence—to extraordinary speeds of clipper ships at sea. Knowing how simple it was in a long ocean passage, with fine sailing days alternating with less favorable weather, to clip the tape as required to enhance the sailing reputation of the ship, Captain Shewan would let the passage alone speak for the ship. And, even at that, he has much to say of the character of the man in command. In the chapters "How it was not done" and "How it was," he shatters many myths of sailing prowess. Although admitting the *Cutty Sark* to have been an uncommonly fast ship, he doubts her ability to make such speeds as are credited to her. "I do not think," he says, "the *Cutty Sark* ever made a record passage, though her averages in the London-Sydney trade were equal if not better than those of any other ship."

For his adventure upon the seas of literature, Captain Shewan has chosen his pilot wisely. Mr. Rex Clements, who edits the volume, has already two good books of the sea to his credit, "A Gipsy of the Horn," and "A Stately Southerner." I envy him his contact with the "Old Man." There would be famous yarns. Perhaps another bookful.

Bits of Experience

MID-PACIFIC. By JAMES NORMAN HALL. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1928. \$3.

Reviewed by FREDERICK O'BRIEN

ONE of the finest writers about life in both common and strange places is James Norman Hall. He has chosen to live in Tahiti for some ten years past, but in that period has visited and written about such opposite poles as Iceland and Kansas. He has a vivid sense of the beautiful in nature, and in the spirit of man, and is especially sensitive to the secret excellences, the innate superiorities, and fascinating idiosyncrasies of certain uncultured people. He has a subtle humor, and an abiding sympathy that penetrate the hides of unusual folks, and relate their simple ways and naive modes of thought to those of the city and town masses, the herd of striving, flurried, afraid creatures of crowd habit and cheap convention who agitate trade, politics, and morals, and who read the false print of vast circulation.

In this book, "Mid-Pacific," his latest of a half dozen, Hall wanders in the South Seas, in middle America and under the arctic circle, and, too, in glamorous spots of some books he likes. He sums up the contents of "Mid-Pacific" in a dialogue:

Mr. Wormley: Now my choice would be an island in the mid-Pacific. What a delightful place that would be for reading and writing!

Mr. Throckmorton: No doubt. But my dear Wormley, do you write?

Mr. Wormley: At times—at times—mere trifles.

Mr. Throckmorton: Of what sort, may I ask?

Mr. Wormley: Oh, of any sort: fancies, little fragments of experience and what not.

These essay stories are bits of experience, panes of glass let into the souls of all sorts of people, pocket-mirrors reflecting the exotic loveliness of silver beaches under the Southern Cross; pieces about wrecked ships and marooned men; and also, shrewd, humorous sights on our own home humanity. Throughout, there is acute understanding, toler-

ance, and comparison. The truth, as Hall sees it, is revealed artistically, with fidelity to incident and character, and yet with a wit and irony exceptional in these days.

I am often reminded by Hall of English writers of some time ago,—men who arrived at a delightful goal over a pleasant path, lit by no verbal bombs, nor made exciting by plot caltrops. His style is serene, sure, leisurely, yet with ample incident, with a full color palette, and with the poignancy inherent in the disclosure of real emotions.

And for those to whom the South Seas, the lone tropic of atoll and isle, with odd castaways and gentle, doomed natives has a particular appeal, there are, in "Mid-Pacific" pictures of surfs and sands, of reefs and palms, that are skilfully etched, so faithfully done that I, a long deserter from such scenes, saw again the exquisite valley of Typee, and heard the booming of the waves on my own beach of Atuona in the far Marquesas.



Christ in China: a Fragment

By WITTER BYNNER

THESE hands that seem mine are of wood,
with painted holes in them,

These eyes are brush-strokes, and these ribs
are a lie

Used to deceive bodies with pitying souls in them.
This is some later carpenter, not I.

Let me ask you quickly, young convert, let me ask
you now

At this altar where you bow,
Where you listen to something carved from a tree
As many have listened to my images, never to me—
Will you hear, at last, me, through all these things,
Through all these wings,
Through all this blood and wine,
Through the hills of lightning and the crosses of
thunder,

Through every other wonder
But mine?

My name was Jesus, but they call me Christ;
I sang at my carpentry, but not of pain.

My death undid me, my life had not sufficed,
I had known too little of the sun and rain.

Can a leaf grow from this crucifix long since dead—
And I be born again to a green birth?

Oh, pity me, pity me, lift my forlorn head
Up from your broken earth,

Cry to my lips with yours, lighten my eyes with
yours,

Crown me with open faith, tear down my cross,
Attack and toss

Alive these limbs with wars
Against me, against all that my rotten body means

Where it leans
Dead.

With your paper prayers and incense sticks
Burn me on my crucifix.

Make songs above me with your temple gongs.

Let long processions tread me into the dust that fills
The stairways up your holy hills.

Let nothing be left of me for thought
On high T'ai-shan

Where quietly Confucius wrought
Wisdom out of watching the far sea

And man,

Let nothing be left of my intent,

Where Lao-tzu went—

Oh, tear me limb from limb

And make of me a sacrifice to him

Who knew

That a morning dew

Moves from the east over the west

To be entire wonder in some breast.

Bar me from China, me and my wounded hands

Till they have healed, and my thorns till they blossom. Let the sands

Of your desert add to my tears till there shall stand
no bitter trees.

Undo

This Christ till there shall be nothing left of him
but you.

And then—

Jesus begs you on his knees—

Make of me a man again!