

The Saturday Review

of LITERATURE

EDITED BY HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

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Prize Novels

IT was not Barnum who invented the prize novel; he missed that great opportunity. There have been great novels that won prizes, and large prizes that have gone to worthy novelists; there have been one or two excellent books with "Prize Winner" stamped on their slip covers published in the last year or two; but the business of prize giving has been commercialized, and it is becoming a menace both to good reading and good art.

The flat truth is that prize competitions as a rule call out very little good material. Practised novelists—and good novels usually come from practised novelists—are, with almost no exceptions, tied up by contracts for the publication of one, two, or three novels in advance. They cannot enter a competition unless it is conducted by their own publishing house, for it would be impossible for them to accept the terms of the usual competitive award which provides that So and So and Co., who give the prize, must publish the novel under the usual royalty agreement, and frequently with an option upon later novels attached. Hence a prize competition is not, under existing circumstances, a free field for merit, it is an opportunity for newcomers and the unattached. If, as is fondly supposed by the uninitiate, there were hundreds of masterpieces vainly seeking a publisher, this system would have its merits—and indeed in the fortunate (and rare) event of the discovery of a new name, it is abundantly justified. But in actuality the publisher's world is afloat with hundreds and thousands of novels of a most striking mediocrity, which drift in shoals toward every prize. And the actual competition is not among these thousands—which should never be published—but among the ten or a dozen which by solicitation, arrangement, or good luck, have been brought into the competition.

* * *

If one of these is a fine novel, no one perhaps suffers—but if, as by the law of probabilities will increasingly happen as the number of such competitions increase, it is only a pretty good story, there is that same inflation of mediocrity, that same pushing of the commonplace, and that inevitable over-emphasis which gives a bad distinction to so much American advertising. The prize novel must be exploited like a standardized cigarette. The more that is invested in a manuscript, the louder the book must be touted as the best. Prize novels must be thought great novels or someone will lose.

The second bald truth is that prize giving under existing circumstances has become just a new means of advertisement. The American reading public, larger and larger every year, and hence almost by necessity in the mass less and less discriminating, craves guidance among the thousands of published books. They can read reviews if they are critical as most are not; they can take advice if they wish to go to the trouble; they can read advertisements if they believe them. But the publisher can neither write reviews, nor give advice except by advertising. And to advertise for the hundreds of thousands of his possible public is an expensive business. Far more expensive than to paste a label on a book which reads in bright red letters "This novel took a \$17,000 prize." If it won \$17,000 it must be a good novel, says the public, and buys ten copies where it would have bought one or none. The temptation to the hard-pressed publisher has been irresistible. How shall he spend money on his proposed new book. So much on advertising, and sell, say, 10,000 copies; or twice as much on a prize, plus advertising, and

The Hour of Moths.

By ROBERT P. TRISTRAM COFFIN

THE little moths with eyes like pearls
Gaze at me through my pane.
This holy night so full of wings
Will not be mine again.

The earth is turning towards the dawn,
The stars go ever west,
An early bird still half in sleep
Twitters on the nest.

So few the moments left to be
Alone with silent mirth,
A sole and single candle flame,
Peace, and the turning earth.

So still it is that one could think
His body were a tree
Or lacework of a moth's white wing
Whose every rib can see.

Or any lovely thing whose skin
Drinks the holy night
And knows its beauty by a sense
More delicate than sight.

The trees in worship fill the world
With prayers benign and wise,
On all the altars of the night
Burn the moths' cool eyes.

Hardy at Max Gate

By H. M. TOMLINSON

IT was January 12, 1928, and a winter sunrise that gave our empty suburban street an unrecognizable look of splendor. I think the chimneys of our houses were of gold, and the walls and roofs of jasper and amethyst, which is nothing like them. That glowing and unfamiliar vista was as if I had surprised a secret celebration of the earth and sky; we were not supposed to see it; it was to fade into our own place before we were about. As I looked out on my changed street I was repeating the haunting thought of the night: "Hardy is dead." But the knowledge that our own light had gone out accorded with the colors of that high dawn. Naturally we associate a thought of Hardy with the aspect of the earth and sky. The heavens and the earth were always the chief characters in the dramas of that poet; over mere mortals presided the eternal sky and the shadowy presence of the earth. So it seemed right for the street to be empty, and to be strange with a transfiguring glow. Hardy had gone.

Within an hour, as the sunrise foretold, came the wind and rain. Roofs and sky turned to lead. The spurts of rain thickened the glass of the windows. There was going to be plenty of time indoors to think about Hardy, yet to think to little purpose; not really to think, but to stare unseeing at the sullen clouds and the rain; for beyond them was a dream country more vivid and stable than the elements, a visionary land in which one had moved imaginatively in the reading of nearly forty years, and had watched there the tragic drama of men and women who were more significant than one's neighbors; and to remember the venerable little man, whose magic had conjured that sublimation of the real and changing world, as we saw him at Max Gate on the day before his fatal illness began, sitting with the flames of a log-fire reflecting in his quick eyes while he talked blithely of poetry, speculated on the prehistoric earthworks to be seen from his house, and smiled at the gossip of the town.

But though there was all day to think about him there was no likelihood of making a contribution to wisdom, no chance of a critical adjustment which would help to place the poet's urn with precision. We cannot be dispassionate now. We cannot stand apart from our personal feelings, and so we cannot be critics; for in criticism, as we know, we ought to do what no one has ever done, and consider the work of a poet apart from mutable human opinions, and simply as an isolated and bereaved work of art. Luckily for Hardy's contemporaries they are not called upon to be critics who will be strictly just to him by all the fundamental laws of art which somehow include at our desire any curious deviation from precedent. It is not for us to attempt impartial justice, but only to exalt him, or otherwise—explain his sublimity, or his want of taste—as the moods take us, and this or that is consonant or not with the way we ourselves would have handled the matter; though certainly, as to one characteristic of the poet, most of us will agree. We cannot but mark, and with profound surprise, Hardy's pervasive sorrow. We have to question that perplexity. How could so great a mind, in the face of our beneficent progress, look sadly upon the happiness of our state? But it is not our business now to prove the poet's life-long error by pointing to those late agreeable steps heavenward in the history of humanity which joyfully mock the pessimist.

Today we must have diverse views of Hardy, but

This Week

"Voices of the Stones."

Reviewed by *Herbert Gorman.*

"The Foreshore of England."

Reviewed by *Capt. David Bone.*

"The Catholic Spirit in America."

Reviewed by *Theodore Maynard.*

"Splendor."

Reviewed by *Allan Nevins.*

"The Old Dark House."

Reviewed by *Henry S. Canby.*

Mr. Moon's Notebook.

By *William Rose Benét.*

"Strange Interlude" and "Marco Millions."

Reviewed by *Oliver M. Sayler.*

Mlle. de Sombreuil II.

By *Christopher Morley.*

Next Week, or Later

Disraeli.

By *Osbert Sitwell.*

sell 50,000? There is only one answer, unless his public wake up.

We do not attack prizes as such. We do not maintain that poor books have consistently been given great awards. Yet no one in his senses could maintain that more than one or two of the ten last American novels that have won prizes in the kind of competitions described, could by any possibility be listed among the ten best American novels of the period. Hence—caveat emptor!

it cannot be helped. Instinctively we shall attempt to separate—for we know what we want—the beauty of his work, which we desire, from the truth in it. Hardy cannot succeed where Jesus of Nazareth failed. That truth and beauty are mystically one need not concern those who prefer the simple method of separating what is comforting in a book from what is challenging and disturbing. We find it difficult to confess that a poet's thought may be beautiful in its contrast with the darkness of our perversity; for that would mean that beauty convicted us. It is not the province of poetry to do that. Poetry is an irrelevant solace at leisure, which is pleasant, as in wine, after the dustiness of a harsh and insistent world. Besides, its thoughts may be contrary to revealed religion, and a poet is not a prophet. We do not expect of him revelations. So it need not surprise us that one of our younger and brighter essayists—to whom good and evil are no longer difficulties, but are easily definable because his Church provides him with an infallible test—when his opinion was sought by a journalist on the news of the death of the poet, said of the author of "The Dynasts" that "he was a nice, courteous gentleman, rather simple minded." Which is quite right, as far as it goes, and shows less religious intolerance than describing Hardy as "the village atheist mourning over the village idiot," though the testimonial is applicable to so many men, fortunately, that it seems hardly worth the time of a journalist to record virtues so usual.



Then again, the London daily papers, by their various placards on the morning after Thomas Hardy's death, betrayed the fact that not every one of them was prepared on the instant to estimate the weight of the news. Some of them did not consider his passing to be more important than some other subjects of interest, subjects which I was compelled by surprise to note. One paper was anxious that we should "Read our new serial: 'Frail Wives'." Another asked: "Who will give Jix £100,000?" The contents bill of another famous London daily paper bore simply the cryptic numerals "1857428," though whether those figures referred to a successful feat of circulation, or were indeed a cabalistic advertisement of a fatal conjunction of numbers which made inevitable the passing of a great man, it was impossible for a non-reader to guess. Yet another of our daily papers placarded an outburst entitled: "Ambassadors Cars." That may have been a special edition devoted to automobiles of luxury, but I cannot say, for I did not buy the paper. And later in the day one afternoon paper of the capital of the British Commonwealth, a paper once famous for its liberal outlook on the world, gave a bare half-column to the news that the greatest figure in European literature, who happened also to be English, had gone, apparently because its editorial staff was too astonished by Mrs. Snyder's New Lease of Life. There were other periodicals, however, which did make the appropriate comment, and whose estimates of the significance of the principal news of the day were serious; yet these little aberrations show us that the stress of the exciting nature of the living day, its fears, dog-fights, rumors, executions, crime, and market prices, tend to confuse our sense of the value of what is lovely and of good report. It is not easy to turn from the attraction of what takes our notice to the estimate of the worth of a creator of beauty. Beauty, if it be there, will last longer than the distractions about us, but that does not mean much to those who cannot see it. Said a London councillor once, in the peroration of his speech which demanded the destruction of London's finest bridge, "as for its beauty, I have never seen it." Yes, but he failed to see also that the very horses which plod over it daily are in the same cart with him.



Some of us are old enough to remember the violence of the attacks on Hardy and his morality when his last novels appeared. And besides immorality, he made plain his vulgarity; his taste was liable to deplorable lapses. But though that reception of his later novels decided him against writing any more prose for us, yet when I met him first, and this was referred to, he was reluctant to look back at it, but presently, finding that I could recall the controversies in some detail, he did begin to gossip of that phase of his past, but in so low and tolerant a tone that you might have thought he never had any feeling about it. Once I began to move

uneasily at his recital of the course of one outrageous attack, but Hardy's face did not lose its good-humor, nor his voice its gentleness. He was only talking of men in the abstract, and this was part of the evidence. I should doubt that Hardy was ever made angry, except by cruelty to the lowly and unimportant.



He was a great man, if a sign of that is simplicity and modesty so surprising that they might be innocence. It was a shock to talented visitors, to find, when they met him, that the man who wrote "The Woodlanders" and "The Return of the Native" seemed not so clever as they. A meeting with Hardy was comforting to self-esteem. He was venerable, he was indeed already a legend; his great epic which placed him next to Shakespeare was published over twenty years ago; yet it all seemed rather odd, for the little old man himself, as he entertained us, might have been the youngest and most innocent of us all. He appeared content to talk of the habits of owls, and of the signs of the weather, of local inns and crusted characters, and of hearing in Dorchester by wireless the dancers' feet when an orchestra was playing at a London festival. Trivial life interested him. Little things amused him. Little things, you could see, often had for him a significance which a clever listener failed to grasp. Hardy was a simple man. A meeting with Hardy made it possible to understand why those very clever men about Shakespeare left for us such scant testimony of the fellow who wrote "Macbeth." The poet who wrote the sonnets was a smiling and good-natured man, we must suppose, who was so simple there was little to say about him. He never made epigrams, he never quarreled, and he never got excited, even when the Armada was scattered. Now and then perhaps, he would drop an odd remark which made a listener stare, and wonder what he meant. There seemed nothing but queeriness in it, until later the phrase was remembered, because of an awkward coincidence in life, and then it became explicable, in a new light. Mere chance, that thought. It was the experience which brought the light. Shakespeare had spoken more wisely than he knew.

Hardy, too, had so innocent a divination into people and their motives that sometimes when talking to him you felt this child was as old as humanity and knew all about us, but that he did not attach importance to his knowledge because he did not know he had it. Just by chance, in the drift of the talk, there would be a word by Hardy, not only wide of the mark but apparently not directed to it. Nothing seemed to have suggested it. Why did he say it? Going home, or some weeks later, his comment would come back, with that revealing light on it.



Max Gate is a walled little island of trees on the road to Egdon Heath, just outside Dorchester. No house can be seen from the road. I fancy Hardy himself planted most of that screen of leaves. It suggests the hiding place of a recluse. There is an approach across the fields from the town, and in summer that was the way to go, with Came Hill lifting darkly beyond a sea of corn, and the isolated promontory sculptured by men long before the Romans landed, now called Maiden Castle, in the distance. The square tower of Dorchester Church and the chimneys of the town floated near on the tree-tops of a hollow; you felt sure you would find Hardy in that country, even though the footpath was uncertain. But it was evening in sharp winter weather when we were there last. The house then was only a lantern in a dim porch. A spray of cotoneaster had left the mass of shadow to get into the light of the lantern; it was the only sign of a wall.

Mrs. Hardy always knew how to keep out intrusions such as easterly winds. Her house was as warm and comforting that evening as a quiet heart. The old man, brisk and youthful, showed us where we should sit to get the benefit of the fire. There was a lazy smoke-colored Persian cat—appropriately, Cobweb—who stretched and yawned, and was an assurance of the ease and rightness of the time and place. It was certainly the fireside to get to the heart of a matter, though leisurely. If our talk gave out, then in the interval the reflections of the lively fire played on the face of the old poet, who contemplated the bright logs, his eyebrows raised, his legs stretched out, his hands between his knees. That seamed face lost sight of the visitors for a

while, and its nervous interest in the gossip changed to the compassionate look of a man who had brooded for long on the world, but was not sure he had made out what it all meant, or could do it the good he desired for it.

It may be true that as a man thinks so is he, and that may be why Hardy's head was satisfying with expected beauty. Some who met him say that you would not have known Hardy for a poet. Perhaps that is because the younger poets frequent the town, and are so often seen and heard. We get to think that a poet should resemble the pattern of a poet. Hardy did not. He resembled in no particular any other poet you may have met. He might have been a retired solicitor of the country town, pursuing keenly in his leisure several hobbies, finding cheerful entertainment in the fact that his house was on the site of a patrician graveyard of the Romans, and that when gardening he sometimes turned up relics. He would describe the signs which hinted that men unknown had a grove to their god near his garden long before Caesar landed. He would startle you with the remark that Robert Louis Stevenson, when he saw him last, was sitting in your chair. He would admit, and it seemed strange for a man of his years, that he read poetry nowadays and very little prose, but that he enjoyed the styles of Sir Thomas Browne and Lamb, and preferred Sterne to Swift. It would not be odd, but quite in keeping, that a retired solicitor should have a shrewder knowledge of men and women than a fashionable novelist. His interests turned quickly with any change of the conversation. He would give you a rum story of a dog, and you had to admit it was stranger than your own anecdote; so very strange indeed that you fell silent, wondering what the clue to the mystery could be.



Yet when Hardy was in repose his face was that of a seer. There was no doubt then, no need to wonder what special privilege had admitted him to so intimate a knowledge of his fellows. That little man, with wisps of faded sandy hair on the back of the collar of his tweed jacket, blue-eyed, with a masterful nose that turned slightly from the straight, whose raised and questioning eyebrows pushed furrows up his forehead to his bald and globular cranium, had with his life-work taken the place in English literature next to Shakespeare; and it was always easy for me to feel that there was the very man. What those people were told who asked for signs and wonders we know. There the wonder was. There sat the author of "The Dynasts." He looked like it. And here, while we are at Max Gate, is where we should acknowledge the debt we owe to Mrs. Hardy, for she ordained that he should be with us longer than his frailty otherwise would have allowed.

While Hardy was with us he lent dignity to our day. His presence honored the temple of Athene. He was English; but because he was the embodiment of qualities which were essentially of the tradition, and because he belonged to the land as much as the heath and hawthorns of Egdon, and the dateless barrows on the hill tops about his home, and the stones of his village church, he represented us in a way that Parliament cannot, and so he belongs to those in every country who judge their neighbors by the best their neighbors have done. There is more of the salt of English life in the talk of the characters who move in Hardy's novels, and more of the English land in his scenes, than in all Hansard, and in all the controversies and guide-books. If strangers wish to know us let them read Hardy; but then, they will see only themselves in his poems and stories. Hodge over his beer in a Dorset inn, even when his drink has been doctored by politicians and the press, sometimes drops a word which is more convincing than the upshot of a Parliamentary debate. It is not recorded, except in Hardy; and yet perhaps it may be the last word on the subject, though it may take a century for it to be repeated with sufficient emphasis. Such words are like the flints in the soil; they belong to it, and are sure to show when the earth is moved.

Hardy himself never understood—or so it seemed to me, and in any case I suppose so simple a man would not find it easy to believe it—that the people of his tales and the scenes in which they move are part of the unconscious life of the present English world; that the light from the country of his dreams falls across reality, and makes significant and so more easily endurable its garishness. We have forgotten Hardy as a great writer; he is already

part of traditional landscape. We are to believe, on the best authority, that we betray our provincialism if, when speaking of novels and novelists, we permit the mention of the best of the English writers until after a long list of Russians have been named. There is, says the voice of authority, a virtue called characterization, and the Russian novels have it, but the English in but an inferior way. Very well. Yet suddenly we remember there is more characterization in the last popular novel by a candid young lady than in all Greek drama. Where are we now? There is more characterization in Proust than in all Shakespeare. So what of it? Modern novels are full of characterization, good and bad, but good and bad together they all soon die. There is a chance, as "Macbeth" still lives on, that we may be mistaken in supposing that characterization is as important as we have been told. We may as well be called provincial as anything else if we decline to displace the author of the Wessex tales. For it may still be true that the earth and the sky and the force we call life transcend in their mystery any character, however heroic or pitiable. The earth itself is the oldest of characters; it was here when the earliest of us arrived. What word was given to it? We cannot learn that; but if you read again the first chapter of "The Return of the Native," or watch at night with Gabriel Oak on the summit of Norcombe Hill, with its "ancient and decaying plantation of beeches," while he revives a new-born lamb by a fire in his hut and looks to the stars to see where the earth has got to in the heavens, then the shadow of Something which is greater than mortal life begins to fall upon your reading. There is an undertone to Hardy's great passages which is like the murmur of an unseen ocean. We have a conviction of continuity then, though the stars are passing Norcombe Hill, which is, perhaps, only an illusion. But we need not trouble to prove our conviction. A poet has evoked beauty, which cannot be proved. Yet it is there, even if it is undescribable. For a bare instant we feel the riddle can be solved. A light from nowhere transfigured, for a moment, our gray and accustomed levels, and though the light is withdrawn its revelation is remembered.

An Irish Mystic

VOICES OF THE STONES. By A. E. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1927.

Reviewed by HERBERT GORMAN

A. E. BELONGS to that older Irish group that is disassociated from such men as James Joyce, Brinsley Macnamara, and Forrest Reid. The difference is mainly one of literary approach if we ignore the obvious fact that the older man writes both poetry and prose, while the second group confines itself entirely to prose. The very fact that A. E. feels the constant necessity of self-expression in sheer poetical forms is a pertinent clue to the deep-seated differences between him and the younger prosateurs. For him life is still to be approximated and touched in sublimated forms. He is a mystic venturing upon the secrecies of the soul with symbols and faint rhythms and subtle words. Standing apart, as he does, from those younger men who are, first of all, analysts and dissectors of consciousness and sub-consciousness, he may be affirmed as a traveler of the superconscious. A. E., of course, is a patent mystic, and "Voices of the Stones" offers again that lovely and aloof pilgrimage through the high twilight world of symbols, nuances, and overtones. In his "boat of soul" he once more travels by magic mountains whereon the gods walk, speaking softly to one another.

"Voices of the Stones" is a small book, yet in it A. E. has packed illimitable suggestiveness. With delicate rhythms and other worldly imagery he pictures states of the soul and flings across his world the impalpable mantle of his mystic thought. In the lamentable night that surrounds the soul he dreams on the ancient gods and a worthier existence and he grasps at the humble stones that have still retained "their morning star of purity immutable."

The desire to enlarge on A. E.'s genius (for manifest genius it is) is importunate but the difficulties of comment render it almost impossible in a few paragraphs. What is one to say about this high mysticism that constantly touches life with its pale wizard wand and translates it into strange

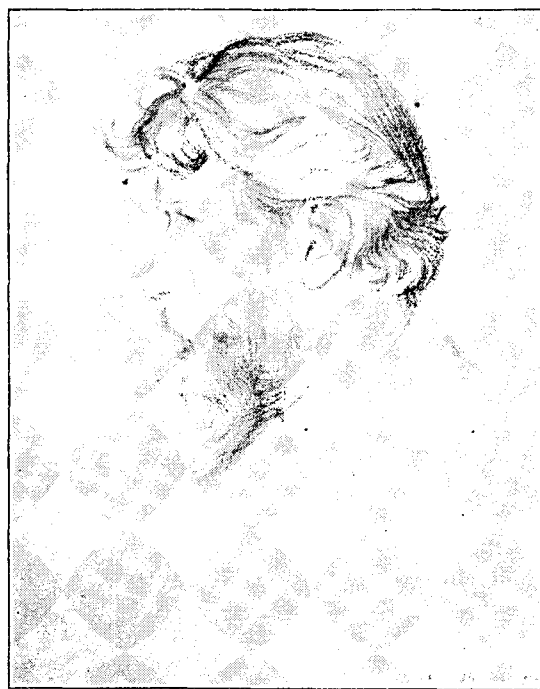
glooms and glows? The celestial presences are always about him and although he may swear that he is no more than a brother to the stones he is eternally conscious of a world to which this earth is no more than a shadow. He feels the urge in the mountain wind.

The cold limbs of the air
Brush by me on the hill,
Climb to the utmost crag,
Leap out, then all is still.

Ah, but what high intent
In the cold will of wind;
What sceptre would it grasp
To leave these dreams behind!

Trail of celestial things:
White centaurs, winged in flight,
Through the fired heart sweep on,
A hurricane of light.

I have no plumes for air:
Earth hugs it to my bones.
Leave me, O sky-born powers,
Brother to grass and stones.



GEORGE RUSSELL (A. E.)

From "Twenty-four Portraits," by William Rothenstein, (Harcourt, Brace).

Idle Tonnage

THE FORESHORE OF ENGLAND, or Under the Red Ensign. By H. M. TOMLINSON. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1927.

Reviewed by CAPTAIN DAVID W. BONE

IT is of the flag of Britain's Mercantile Sea Service that Mr. Tomlinson writes; in particular, of shipping moods and movements during the industrial depression of 1925. A sober theme enough and one calling for vision and insight on the part of the author else the reader could draw no more from it than from a Governmental Blue Book.

Mr. Tomlinson visited the seaports of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in the winter of 1925 to gain first hand impressions of the state of shipping affairs. "The Foreshore of England" embodies his conclusions. The book is, necessarily, planned upon the lines of journalism, and if ever proof were needed that the gap between journalism and imaginative literary work is small and negotiable, it lies between these covers. Very few writers, however, could invest the stark and sober details of such a survey with the dignity and glamour that Mr. Tomlinson imparts. Quite long ago I read, in some newspaper, an epic of the sea: the story of seamen's efforts to bring their ship to port against all that the twin demons of fire and tempest could resolve. Tomlinson wrote it as later I learned. Then came "The Sea and the Jungle," with which there is little comparable save Conrad at his best. This author's literary history since then is well known: "Gallions Reach" establishes him in a position that few writers could attain.

Much of Mr. Tomlinson's writing has been of sea life, and it is therefore an appropriate circumstance that he should come to survey the ships and

the seamen (that he so obviously regards with affection) during the time of their travail, when sailormen were tramping the dockside streets in need of employ, when fine ships lay idle for want of cargo, when shipwright and engine-fitter stared blankly at the closed work-gates of the shipyards, the cunning of their handwork diminishing day by day for want of grip upon their familiar tools.

What, in other hands, would be but a gloomy recital of plants of industrial stagnation in the seaports, is by him rendered strangely arresting. His facts and figures can be read in objective description of dockside street and palatial shipping offices, of poverty and squalor in Welsh mining villages and "vanity bags" behind the plate glass windows of Queen Street in Cardiff.

And Mr. Tomlinson admits the weakness of even personal investigation into the distress that, in 1925, reached inland—well beyond the docks and the seaports. "You may get any opinion you desire by choosing your man," he writes: and those questioned by this author were rarely other than the manual workers, the sufferers—as always—in any industrial depression. It is perhaps, on this account, understandable that he casts doubt upon the opinions of the shipowners, but, even in the expression of his dubiety, the artistry of the writer is evident. He weaves a warp of far voyaging into the prosaic pattern of a slump in freights. Writing of Liverpool and the Mersey shipowners:

Their city, however, does not itself reflect their misfortunes. The business premises of those magnates by the Mersey would make the stately pleasure-dome which Kubla Khan decreed by the river Alph seem a mere bungalow after all. It is not easy to suppose that these offices and warehouses register but progressive failure. Indeed the Mersey with its towers and shipping is so impetuous and tonic in its effect upon a visitor that he is fairly sure that important shipowners, who would persuade us to prepare for the towing to her last resting-place of a stately liner now past her day, and in the melancholy splendor of a nation-wide sunset, would look comic if their dark bark turned out after all to be the latest Cunarder on the morning tide.

Such writing comes as a glint of sunlight upon a dark horizon, and it is of sombre sea lines that Mr. Tomlinson writes in this book. Throughout his lengthy tour he found the shipping industry in a very bad way. The sudden volcanic boom that followed upon the close of the great war had subsided in dust and ashes. The ashes fell heavily upon the seamen and the workers, but some of the dust—or so Mr. Tomlinson maintains—was gold dust for the whilom owners who sold out at the peak of the boom.

... They were halcyon days. Shipowners who had bought their ships at the bottom of the market, who reaped all the advantage of the years of the fabulous freight rates, then in 1920, floated companies, made themselves directors at fixed fees, and bought their ships from themselves, on the higher scale, with the money the public had provided. It looks, on the face of it, like anarchy. It seems, in a real sense, treachery to the men who perished. But no: it was, of course, the outcome of sound economic laws, to question which would be Bolshevism. We should like to question them, though we dare not. We should like to know what these sound laws have done with the money since then. Where is it? Is it like the lovely golden clouds of Hans Breitmann's party? All we know for certain about it is that it numbs, like a dead hand, the efforts to revive trade and to make our ships pay in their competition with increasing foreign tonnage. It checks shipbuilding and depresses the standard of living for seamen and shipwrights. It is largely the cause of the gloomy views of our future we see so frequently reported.

In his mood (always his mood) of intense sympathy with the manual worker, Mr. Tomlinson is somewhat heated in his attitude toward the shipping employer. He makes no mention of the National Maritime Board, a "Board" that has been instrumental in maintaining seamen's wages and service conditions at a level with which few industrial occupations ashore could compare. One is not convinced that the industry suffers in more than a temporary and casual degree from the action of certain shipowners who sold out at the height of the boom in 1919-20 and retired to country estates to batten upon War Loan Fives. Investments at that rate of interest would have little appeal to them. The melting pot of an industry with which they have small acquaintance, but great hopes of aggrandizement, has probably absorbed a portion of their gains. In turn, the cinematograph men (let us say) may look to shipping to retrieve a loss. Sea transport is a vital necessity.