

Trader Horn in Viking-Land

HAROLD THE WEBBED, or THE YOUNG VIKINGS. Being volume two of the Life and Works of Trader Horn. Edited by ETHELREDA LEWIS. New York: Simon & Schuster. 1928. \$3.50.

Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS

IN his first book Trader Horn appeared in the rôle of romantic autobiographer. He seasoned his reminiscences of Africa in the "earlies" with a dash of fiction. In this second volume he is a romancer who now and then diverges into autobiography. He seasons his fiction with a dash of reminiscence. This change of emphasis is decidedly a change for the worse. What was weak, thin, and unconvincing in the first Trader Horn book was precisely the Rider Haggard element, the story of the beautiful white maiden who became an African queen. Fortunately for that book, it was a slender element, and obtruded itself only at the end. The lions, the elephants, the tribal medicine men, the Congo traders, the missionaries, Livingston, Cecil Rhodes, the Boers, and all the rest of his authentic memories made up five-sixths of the volume. But now Trader Horn has taken it into his head that a tale woven about "Bold Rodger the Vyking with his fleet of forty sail rovers" would please the American public, and has given us a book that is a sort of hodgepodge of Rider Haggard's "Eric Brighteyes" and the Norse sagas and school-day fragments of Cæsar's invasion of Britain; its chapters all garnished and filled out, fortunately, with Mrs. Lewis's interviews with the inimitable old pioneer.

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"Harold the Webbed" is sometimes unconsciously amusing, sometimes impressive in its revelation of the streak of poetry in Trader Horn, and sometimes, alas, heavily boring. Its very basis is a strange anachronism. It shows us a conflict between Cæsar, or "Saesar," and a Viking overlord of the sort who raided the English coast some seven or eight hundred years after Cæsar's day. In the end the Viking triumphantly holds up the Roman fleet for a rich tribute. When we add that Bill O'Gaunt, of the very same family, apparently, as John of Gaunt, plays a valorous part in the narrative, it will be seen that when history gets in Trader Horn's way, history suffers. Chief Fingall comes in with some wild Irish henchmen; we have glimpses of the Saxons, now peopling the English shores; and to add color to the background, there are some Phœnician traders with black Nubian slaves. The author, it seems, had a canny eye, in composing his romance, for its cinema possibilities. At one point his Norsemen "passed acliffe upon which were long-haired and bearded men who were ranged around a large stone on the top of which there was a fire burning with bright flames and the fair lady seeing this called to her husband and sons and all bowed their heads as an old man who in the fire circle held his hands aloft and in his right hand held a knife reddened on the blade. These holy men were holding sacrifice and the old man with his hands held high was steering a spirit back into its god." It is the Druids! In the very next chapter Cæsar is seen, theatrically posed on the large poop of his "mighty ship," as he "held up a parchment and pointed towards the British coast." He passes unscathed through a storm of arrows, and when the Vikings cheer him, Cæsar, "being a gentleman warrior and sport," bows in acknowledgment. It is regrettable that Trader Horn broke off his narrative before he had time to bring in St. Augustine, and to show William the Conqueror shaking hands with Cæsar and Hengist.

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What gives body and value to the book is really Trader Horn's conversations with his editor. Mrs. Lewis reports his observations upon a hundred topics, great and small, and they always have a double interest in their own salt tang and in their revelation of a robust individuality. Now it is the "demimonde" of Trader Horn's lodging house in Johannesburg, where he brushes elbows with drunkards, swindlers, wastrels, and prostitutes, and where, as he says after his money begins to pour in, "there's great status in having my own stove in my room; hospitality gives a man self-respect." Now it is his old days in New Orleans that he recalls; "pretty place, New Orleans; the old French market provides the best cup of coffee in the world." Again and again he returns to his boyhood years in Lan-

cashire. He would have us know that his family was good and hunted with the gentry. "One run we had when I was with me Uncle Ralph one time. That was a proper chief of his clan, that fox. Enjoyed the game like a man. Got away all right, too; towards Lancaster!" He knew Phil May in London, dissipated, idle, but a genius. "Very friendly with the coster girls." Again and again he wanders back to some such figure as his Great-uncle Horn. Over ninety and needn't a' died then if he hadn't asked to ride on a hay load.

Always had a longing for the smell of hay. But one day when they were leading and they got to the last cock, he begged to be put atop o' the hay wagon. Perhaps he had a natural suspicion that the next haymaking would proceed without him. So they lifted him up and Greatuncle Horn sank into the nice nest they'd made top o' the load. They heard him laugh to himself. 'Twas the last they heard of old man Horn's voice. Going over a bad bit o' the field, the wagon rocked, and the old man fell off. Broke his back. When you're blind the sense of balance suffers.

Garrulous, inaccurate, wandering, but a lover of life and an observer whose experience has given him many a sage bit of wisdom, Trader Horn is almost constantly amusing so long as he is Trader Horn. When he essays literature—when he rewrites Rider Haggard in his own illiterate way—he is rather tiresome. Mrs. Lewis promises us a third volume. Let us hope that it will deal with Trader Horn's own experience and not his imaginings. He has seen an immense deal of the world. Never three or four years in one place, he has wandered over Africa from the Congo and Abyssinia to the Cape; he has helped make moonshine in Kentucky; he has ridden the freight trains of our South and West; he has loafed on the Savannah waterfront and gathered phosphates in Florida; and he has known the brighter side of Lancashire and the darker side of London. If Mrs. Lewis can keep him on these subjects, and away from the realms of third-hand romance, the third volume will be far better worth reading than the second.

Bitter Bondage

WE ARE INCREDIBLE. By MARGERY LATIMER. New York: J. H. Sears & Co. 1928. \$2. Reviewed by GLADYS GRAHAM

MARGERY LATIMER has written a tale of bitter bondage. That the bondage is spiritual and emotional rather than physical, and that it is entered into voluntarily, only increases its potency for disintegration. Young limbs, however willing, tightly bound will atrophy. "We Are Incredible" is a line drawing of an influence, with three panels necessary to the presentation of the complete idea. These three panels represent: a woman in middle life passionately dedicated to a sterile ideal, a young man resentful of the impotence thrust upon him by this ideal, but vitiated through it beyond escape, and a very young girl only half-drugged with this opiate negation of the flesh, flinging almost free at moments and then inevitably drawn back. There are other figures in the book, shadowy young people broken upon the wheel of an externally imposed asceticism. The men and women of "We Are Incredible" live in the chilling shadow of an inverted ego, captives all.

Miss Latimer, in showing equally with the effects the source of an influence, has given herself a double-edged problem which she keeps shining before the reader throughout the book. The warping effects of an alien criterion for action have often been the concern of fiction, but the criterion has been enforced upon the individual by a society or a period; here it is narrowed down to the impinging of personality on personality. Hester Linden convinces herself and convinces her satellites that their allegiance is to be to truth and to beauty; but in reality it is to her conception of truth and beauty under careful supervision. She never succeeds in implanting in her followers a true desire for the things she desires, only a desire to please her. To be like Hester Linden rather than to realize themselves is their goal, and their tragedy. It would be her tragedy also were she more than an insatiable egoist.

The dominating figure of the book, Hester Linden, is presented obliquely. In the first two sections of the novel we approach Hester through the consciousness of Stephen Mitchell and Dora Weck whose abortive and tragic *rapprochement* forms the peg on which the story is hung. As long as she is thus indirectly portrayed her spiritual dominance is convincing and she exercises over the reader something of the compelling mystery felt by Miss Latimer's characters. But in the third section of the

book where she is met face to face she loses much of her force and inclines towards the stereotyped. She shows too little fascination, sinister or otherwise, to account for the gathering around her of all the attractive youth in her vicinity. It is essential for the author's position to have Hester Linden the hard, narrow creature she is, but it is equally essential to show something of the appeal that draws her disciples under her spell. The puppets that dance to Hester's piping defeat her in being more real than she is. The psychological implications of the novel might be dwelt on indefinitely, and amateur psychoanalysts should find pleasant controversial pastures here since Miss Latimer has been content to give her story and withhold her theories.

In a book as subjective as "We Are Incredible" there is always danger of the author's going under with her characters. Margery Latimer splendidly avoids this. The novel is as impersonal as an adventure story. Detachment and freedom from sentimentality keep the story in perspective and clear it of the painful autobiographic atmosphere which pervades so many first novels. Miss Latimer has obviously selected and created her material and has not merely pillaged her own past. Besides its intrinsic virtue, this argues well for novels to come. We shall be waiting for them.

The Dawn Man

CARNACK, THE LIFE-BRINGER. By OLIVER MARBLE GALE. New York: Wm. H. Wise & Co. 1928.

Reviewed by MARY AUSTIN

THAT society is aware of its present need of reconceiving the Dawn stages of man's history as a possible key to much that we seem to have missed of the latter phases, is witnessed by the number of books appearing on the subject. It is doubtful, however, if "Carnack, The Life-Bringer," will do much to clear off the fog of misapprehension with which that period is shrouded in the popular mind. To the informed observer the illustrations are sufficiently damning. There are two sets of them, the one purporting to be reproductions of rock etchings, pictoliths is the technical term, made after a manner unknown to primitive before or since the Dawn age, and other set of cleverly drawn and brilliantly colored compositions of alleged Cave men as smooth as the strigill could leave them, and built like the modern College athlete. But a foreword by A. V. Kidder gives the reader pause. Dr. Kidder is one of those who know American primitives and the rising indignation with which he records reading the first part of the narrative of Carnack is easily shared; likewise the regret that the author did not locate his tale in some place where it could with more likelihood have happened, rather than in a hypothetical valley in Utah, U. S. A.

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If it were not that your reviewer is called upon to judge the book as a whole, one might share Dr. Kidder's conviction that otherwise the activities and interests of the Dawn period are fairly represented. But the incredible illustrations, the poorly sustained effort, tediously pursued by the author to give credibility to the pretense of archeological finds, that were in any case unnecessary to a work of fiction, and certain recurrent references to Hebrew folk lore in which Adam and Eve appeared to be taken factually, though their relation to the Dawn man is never explained, suggest that the author of "Carnack" still has much to learn of the Dawn age, which by the way is usually placed much further back than twenty-five thousand years ago. Another device employed by Mr. Gale, although it is one which has often been allowed in dealing with remote pasts, never seems to your reviewer justified. Carnack, the Dawn hero is a prodigy, credited with having invented rock etching, perspective, landscape drawing, and figure composition about on a level with the prevalent comic strip, with having discovered fire, invented the bow, tamed the dog, and arrived at romantic love. And still the author leaves him a comparatively young man. This, I admit, is a conventional device often employed; but would you find it credible applied to a later period;—say that there was a man named Henry Ford living in the Electric age who invented the screw, discovered gunpowder, popularized vaccination, flew through the air, and promulgated the doctrine of birth control? No, it does not seem likely that we have yet been presented with the perfect classic of the Dawn Age!

The House of Dooner

MEMORY plays an odd trick upon me at this moment when I call upon it for the mortal image of Ed Dooner. Although he was my constant friend and frequent playmate for more than a quarter of a century, and he has been in his grave but three short weeks, all of his physical aspect that comes back clear to me now is the look in his soft blue eyes, "each about to have a tear." Yet I can, at will, summon into the porches of my ear every intonation of his voice, speaking or singing. Perhaps the explanation lies in the changeless, habitual gentleness of this first-born son of a strong and stormy sire; or perhaps it is—and this seems more likely—that my mind's eye holds only those mortal parts of my friend in which his spirit was visible and eloquent.

The Dooners, father and son—sons, I should say, for there are Frank and Will—were publicans; and in their time this country, I think, held no others like them. The house the elder Dooner established, and which the sons inherited and carried on, was an authentic institution. It is gone, these four years now, and yet my every working day brings me a reminder of it. On my way to and from my office, I pass an imposing structure of marble and granite. It is a tomblike edifice; in very truth, a marble mausoleum, for it covers exactly and completely the site where the living House of Dooner long stood.

This grand new building is as unlike its predecessor as can be. Its front of cold, white stone has no hospitable door at all; and the windows, beginning far above the pavement, are not only iron-barred but also fitted with the added protection of heavy wire mesh. It invites you—not to come in, but to stay out. This, too, in its own way is an honorable institution—the annex of the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia—which attends strictly to its own business, the conservation and distribution of worldly wealth. It represents the prosperity of the country, which—they tell us—was never so great as now. To the counters behind those stone walls and strong iron bars come the accumulated gains—honest and otherwise—of our most avid acquirers.

So, to those who remember, this magnificent mausoleum is no memorial of the house that once stood there. Not that Dooner's was not also a commercial house; it was, and it prospered in its day, a day when it was possible for a God-fearing man to ply the trade of the publican and still be honest and respected. But, because there is a movement afoot to bracket the old-time innkeepers with the modern bootleggers. Volstead's vintners! (with apologies to Fitzgerald's "Omar"—"I often wonder what the vintners buy one-half so precious as the stuff they sell"); and because organized and entrenched hypocrisy seeks to make our children and our children's children believe that their convivial fathers were criminals, there must be another monument to Dooner's, something that bodies forth the true spirit of that banished institution.

How and where can such a monument be erected? In no better way—in no way at all, perhaps—than in the grateful and loving testimony of its bereaved beneficiaries—*hinc illa verba*.

It was the Grand Centennial Exposition of 1876 that brought Dooner's into being. Peter Samuel Dooner, foreman of the pressroom of the Philadelphia *Times*, conceived the idea—probably on a night when the devil was loose in those dingy depths—that it would be more pleasant and profitable to provide food and other refreshments for the expected multitudes of visitors to the Centennial, than to go on forever feeding rolls of white paper into grimy presses. So he jumped—first his job and then—directly into the benevolent business of the boniface, for which he had had no previous training whatever. But he had something better, a positive genius for the giving of joy; and this was all the better for coming fresh to its trial unhampered by the muscle-binding *clichés* which have been known to afflict and impoverish other arts than his—for let no one suppose that professional hospitality is not an art. If it were not, and if P. S. D. was not a great exponent of it, there would be no excuse

for this writing. This is an apotheosis, or it is nothing.

The outward appearance of Dooner's was never anything to brag about. The necessary haste of its construction cannot be advanced as an alibi for this. The edifice was the ordinary product of its time, a time when American architecture was having an epidemic of the Mansard disease, not to mention a combination of other ailments. The house was four-square and solid, but it was not beautiful; homely, perhaps is the happiest word for it. But what matter how the outside looked to those who were privileged to know how the inside felt? What matter, indeed, how the inside looked?

Tradition has it that, save for the elderly housekeeper and her equally elderly chambermaids, no woman ever set foot above the ground floor of Dooner's. But this is not quite correct. Once, many years ago, a transient guest, a lovelorn youth from a distant city, shot himself in one of those upper rooms. Laggard in marksmanship, too, he was not seriously hurt. But they removed him to a neighboring hospital and his mother was notified. She, accompanied by his sweetheart, arrived at the hotel late upon a bitter winter night. It would have been cruel to turn those two women out into the storm, so the good host, pledging the night clerk to secrecy, broke the rule of the house for once, and gave them shelter above-stairs.

Except for this one lapse—an accidental accolade upon the house—Dooner's was always, in Kit Morley's phrase, "as masculine as firemen's suspenders." It was so even before Kit himself knew the meaning of galluses at all, for Dooner's was at its thriving best early in the gay '90's. In those quaint days of the white high hat, and the seersucker sack suit, those who stepped in at the main entrance invariably turned at once to the left where, naturally enough, the warm, throbbing heart of Dooner's functioned normally.

The Bar? Of course, what else? (The bar sinister, a vinegary wife once called it.) "Wine Room" ran the legend frosted upon the plain glass transom over the door that led into it from the lobby, but no one ever called it anything but the bar. Its nature was dual, for there was a drinking and an eating bar, presided over by artists whose service had begun with the house itself, and one of whom was to be still in harness at the end. Three fourths of this domain was the province of Adrien Folcher, kindly and capable chef, whose neat tables—perhaps a dozen of them—were set along the north wall, down the full length of this narrow room. The administration there was in the hands of well-trained negro waiters—the best of servants, as why should they not be? these raw humans whose preoccupations seldom stray far from the important elementary business of maintaining life at its button-bursting best. They knew and loved good food themselves, and they served it with reverent gusto.

Indeed, there was a "dim, religious" air about the place—neither pagan nor Christian, but savoring of both; a sort of human-natural religion—particularly on Sunday mornings when foot-loose bachelors foregathered there for a late breakfast. This I know only from hearsay, the testimony of such solid citizens as Hawley McLanahan, who—not then the famous architect and man of affairs, but a lonely country youth—was accustomed to go there for the sausage and buckwheat cakes which, in all the city, were nearest like those at home in the Pennsylvania mountains. And, the coffee! Among the reliques of the house, which are jealously cherished by Frank Dooner, the last proprietor, is this brief note written more than a quarter of a century ago:

Ah! le bon café que m'a offert Monsieur Dooner!
Sarah Bernhardt.

When the divine Sarah played at the neighboring Chestnut Street Opera House, she was wont to have this coffee served to her regularly in her dressing room.

One needs no great imagination to picture the

Sunday morning peace and comfort of that breakfast-room in Dooner's. The house lacked but one thing to make it the perfect old inn—a fireplace. But all else it had. Even on weekdays, its island position, with little-traveled by-streets on two sides, gave it a certain remoteness in the midst of turmoil. The windows and two wide doorways of the long tavern-room looked across the narrow chasm of Chant Street to the side-wall of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, whose chimes, calling to Sabbath service, in no wise disturbed the comfortable complacency of the breakfasting bachelors.

But it was at noon-time of weekdays, when the world, the flesh, and the devil were loose again, that this heart of Dooner's pulsed and throbbed with life at the flood. For there and then

Old wishes, ghosts of broken plans,
And phantom hopes assemble;
And that child's heart within the man's
Begins to move and tremble.

No "plump headwaiter at The Cock" was ever more worthy of celebration in verse than either of the two worthies who presided over their respective departments in that long room,—Chef Folcher, in full canonicals, carving and dispensing his rich roasts and chops, and Joe Purfield among his glasses and tankards behind the polished mahogany. Of Joe, Tennyson himself might have said, as he did of that headwaiter whom he immortalized:

He looks not like the common breed
That with the napkin dally.
I think he came like Ganymede,
From some delightful valley.

It was the invariable custom of Host Dooner, shortly before the noon hour, to take his stand unobtrusively in the lobby, where, seeming to see nothing, he saw everything. He was no greeter, no glad-hander. Most of those who came in he knew, but he spoke to none, seldom even to his very intimates, unless spoken to—and even then he maintained a certain grave aloofness. The motto—indeed, the secret of the success—of Dooner's was "mind your own business"; and the house was a restful, well-mannered club for those who were likeminded. Occasionally, someone—more often than not a transient—plied too sedulously the moment's business of "the pursuit of happiness," and then. . . . I recall the case of "Buck" (let us say) Lochinvar, a cowboy showman, a whale of a man, but peaceable usually, who, oppressed by the combined heat of his cups and the summer day, braced himself in the lobby doorway, and defied the other businessmen, or any menial, to eject him. But he had left his rear unprotected, and he had forgotten the lion in the lobby. In the time it took to do a hop, skip, and jump, there was a strong hand at his collar and another at the slack of his riding habit, and the big man went back into the room (temporarily) and down the full length of the bar to the swinging doors, through which he was catapulted into the outer sunshine.

Many years before this—it may, indeed, have been in Dooner's very first season—he had startled the town by driving with whips of scorn from the ladies' dining-room a notorious woman whom he found there placidly enjoying the good fare with one of her many admirers. "Get out!" said Dooner, "and don't come back. We don't want your kind here." It was a daring thing to do, but it was effective; for her "kind," hearing of it, made it a point thereafter to give Dooner's a wide berth. In his early efforts to establish the respectability of his house Dooner sometimes went to extremes. There is the well authenticated story of his summary treatment of the eminently worthy college president whom he had observed tossing a coin at table in the bar. This little play, of course, was merely to determine whether he (the dignified schoolman) or his equally respectable companion should have the privilege of buying the good-night glass. Gambling, Dooner called it, and he would listen to no argument. The schoolman went out in high dudgeon—in fact, he was invited to go—and for two years he stayed away, but then he swallowed his pride and came back. . . .