

## Men With the Bark On

HOMER IN THE SAGE-BRUSH. By JAMES STEVENS. New York: Knopf. 1928. \$2.50.

MR. STEVENS has returned—for his last book was a satirical story of soldiers—overseas—to the people and country he knows best, and with the happiest results. The thirteen tales of this book are divided into three groups: tales of the forest country of western Washington and Oregon, tales of the sage-brush land of eastern Oregon and Idaho, and "idylls of western youth." Mr. Stevens writes of the roughest of Far Western workers; of lumberjacks, bullpunchers, stevedores, freighters, river-cooks, saloonkeepers, and miners. He knows their work, their amusements, their lingo, and their minds. His book is full of the raw stuff of the West, presented in stark, unadorned, unrefined fashion.

The strength of the collection is the strength of close observation and unflinching verity; the weakness is the lack of structure and finish. The tales—Mr. Stevens himself seems to prefer the word "sagas"—are for the most part crudely formed and some are frankly inchoate. Sometimes the author seems to be attempting a genuine short-story, and does not achieve it. But there is a certain fitness in this roughness, for he is writing of men with the bark on, of life that is lousy, dirty, lewd, profane, and toilsome, and of scenes that are utterly primitive. He furnishes us chunks or transcripts from the hard workaday existence of the Northwest, and the book owes something of its effect to its very lack of narrative art. Greater than art is truth. There is truth in the description of a reeking bunkhouse; of two thousand lumbermen hitting it up at Christmas in dance-hall, saloon, and sporting-house; of lines of freighters lurching and stalling in the rain-soaked Shaniko Flat. In his speeches he gives us the very flavor of the Westerner, now simple, now boastful, now ribald. Witness his river cook awakening the galley to action for a boatload of hungry passengers:

"Make way!" roared Spud Hawley. "Make way for the mightiest hot cakes and gravy cook that ever was! Come on, ye hellions, and swab the galley floor! Roll the coal into the range, my hearty second man! You, Arthur, lift the lids and lay the griddles! You, Joe, roll out a fresh barrel of flour! You, Mike, getch the round brown gravy bowls and the long-handle' ladles! I want cans of sweet milk, pitchers of sweet cream, I want shakers of pepper and salt, I want cases of eggs fer richness and a jar of pork-juice fer shortenin'! Grease the griddles, git the gravy kittle to smokin'! Heat up the chiny platters fer stacks of the brownest, crispiest, lightest, flakiest, tastiest hot cakes ever was! Heat up the round brown bowls fer the drippin'est, bubbliest, pepper-specked gravy that ever made a hot-cake lover roll his eyes with joy as he wallered fine breakfast flavors around in his mouth until they descended fer his innards' comfort and peace! Come on, you men! Let the range fires roar. Spud Hawley's makin' the reppitation of his life today.

Or, in the quieter, but equally humorous vein, take the irrigation-ditch tender revealing to a sympathetic audience his religious scruples:

You take the Mormons, now, down here in Bannock County. I run water fer them as far back as the seventies, and they treated me fine. Both the Utah and Idyho Mormons is real people, and I been tempted time and again to take three or four wives for myself and settle down among them as a sugar-beet rancher. What has always galled me, though, is tithin'. I'm a free and liberal man and it'd gall me to be tithed as though I couldn't be trusted to be free and liberal. Now, take the Presbyterians. Once I was tempted to settle down in a Pecon Valley Presbyterian settlement, and raise alfalfa and run sheep. But infant damnation stuck in my craw. So I couldn't stand the Presbyterians, though they were fine, fine as they make 'em, outside of infant damnation. Take the Methodists. You don't find 'em any finer than the Methodists. I was 'empted many a time in the early days to join the Yuma, Arizoner, Methodist settlement. But I absolutely kicked at the doctrine of sanctification. Take the Christian Advents. . . . All fine people, mighty fine; but I could never swaller the doctrine that the sperrit is the breath.

Mr. Stevens's report of a half dozen other figures is equally striking and fresh: of the French-Canadian trapper, Johnny Flemmand; of the broken-down old saloonkeeper of Cœur d'Alene, A. P. Carver, whose collection of grisly relics of shootings and lynchings has ceased to draw men to his bar; of the hardshell Baptist elder who sinned and confessed to his congregation; of the gambler Poker Tom Davis, who knew his Homer. When his tales fall into exaggeration, as they sometimes do, Mr. Stevens's effects are weakened. When he draws out the sentimental stops, as in one story of an old head-sawyer in a lumber mill who fought to have his job given to his son, he is weaker still. But for the most part he is restrained and hard-boiled. Even his "idylls" have a stern ironic quality.

The best of them, and one of the best stories in the book, shows the mistress of a "parlor-house" telling a naive youngster how she fell in Paris, where (so she romanced) she had been known as the "Queen of the Ate-leears." Mr. Stevens has given us a book full of vivid and unhackneyed reality; he may yet learn to throw his admirable material into an artistic form that will lift his tales indubitably and impressively into the realm of literature.



The bookplate reproduced was made by Dürer for his friend and patron, Willibald Pirckheimer, and is from the Pirckheimer copy of Aldus's first dated book which is now in the Pynson Printers' Library.

## A Posthumous Novel

DESTINY BAY. By DONN BYRNE. Boston: Little, Brown & Company. 1928. \$2.50.

Reviewed by THURSTON MACAULEY

DONN BYRNE, even to himself, was something of a legendary figure. In a foreword to "Hangman's House"—one of his poorest efforts, by the way—he characterized himself as "the last traditional Irish novelist," to whom had fallen the task of writing the last traditional Irish novel. "So the school of Goldsmith and Sterne will pass," he continued—and, perhaps added under his breath, "with myself." However, in the dedication of "The Wind Bloweth"—this, of all his books, is the one I like best to remember him by—he made a better plea when he wrote "whilst doing this, it seemed to me that I was capturing for an instant a beauty that was dying slowly, imperceptibly, but would soon be gone. . . . It is a very pathetic thing to see a literature and a romance die."

With those who have accused Donn Byrne of being a synthetic Irishman I do not agree; that he did his best to keep hidden the fact that he happened to be born in Brooklyn seems evidence enough that he was Irish to the core. (In the British "Who's Who" he is described as an "Irish writer" and no birthplace is given.) In "Messer Marco Polo" he wrote: "Antrim will ever color my own writing. My Fifth Avenue will have something in it of the heather glen. My people will always have a phrase, a thought, a flash of Scots-Irish mysticism. . . ." And a great point in his favor was his utter disregard of politics. For the purpose of avoiding political matters he took for the time of nearly all his Irish tales some generation long past. In "Destiny Bay," his first posthumous book, he expressed his attitude thus: "He has never yet seen a government that brought heavier apples to the trees or heavier salmon in the rivers or a more purple heather, and for this reason politics mean nothing to him."

Between the covers of this book are some nine stories of varying lengths about the people of Destiny Bay, an unfrequented spot on the north coast of Ireland. With but several exceptions, these tales are already known to periodical readers, having appeared in either *The Saturday Evening Post* or *Pictorial Review*, during the past several years. Whether or not they were written with the idea of some day being published together I do not know, but there is a unity about the book which would make this seem probable. Some of Donn Byrne's finest work has been done for the popular magazines, and it is fortunate, indeed, that they should

have been thus rescued from a too early oblivion. In "Destiny Bay" we see Donn Byrne at his best, writing about the things he loved most of all: horse races, prize fights, and, above all, graceful courtships between gallant gentlemen and lovely ladies.

## A Civil War Novel

WITH MALICE TOWARD NONE. By HONORÉ WILLIS MORROW. New York: Morrow. 1928. \$2.50.

MRS. MORROW'S second novel upon Lincoln in Washington opens at the beginning of 1863, and closes with the triumphant return of the President from City Point after the fall of Richmond. In these crucial two years the same natural theme serves history and historical fiction: the clash between the President's conservative group and the radicals of Congress and Cabinet. The future of the nation seemed at times to hang on this clash. Determining great events as it did, it also filled the President's household and his private life; for his intimate friend Sumner, a man whom he respected and almost loved, was a convinced radical, and others whom he met on close terms took sides vehemently. Mrs. Morrow, in fact, makes Charles Sumner almost as important a figure in the story as Lincoln himself. Somewhat exaggerating, perhaps, the assiduity with which he made himself at home in the White House, she revolves her tremendous panorama about his and Lincoln's private friendship and public antagonism.

In her brisk, realistic way, with a constant play of incident, with nearly every page full of colloquial speech, and with great characters introduced in their informal and sometimes ungirt aspect, Mrs. Morrow ably presents a surface impression of truth. As a surface impression, it may even be called admirable. The general reader will find the Washington of 1863-64 brought more vividly before his eye than in almost any history or biography. The special student will find his imagination stimulated, and in addition, some important facts brought home to his consciousness—for Mrs. Morrow has given devoted study to an enormous amount of Lincoln literature. Much of the effect is gained, and legitimately, from that mixture of the important and the trivial which made up life even for President Lincoln, and which we fail to find in histories which strain out the unimportant. On one page is Lincoln reading to a crowd in Lafayette Square the news of Lee's retreat after Gettysburg; on the next is Lincoln bantering John Hay upon the failure of his attempted flirtation with Kate Chase. Here is Tad weeping over some sudden reminder of his dead brother Willie; here are Lincoln, Hannibal Hamlin, and Frederick Douglass talking over the results of emancipation. One chapter shows Sumner at fifty paying court to Alice Hooper; another Ben Wade telling Sumner of Trumbull's desertion of the radicals' cause to support the President. Lizzie Keckley, Mrs. Lincoln's confidential maid, figures as prominently at one point as Andrew Johnson, drunk while reciting his inaugural address, does at another.

It is an effective and vigorous book; more effective than its predecessor, "Forever Free," because the plot is more simple and natural throughout. It helps to humanize a great era of American history. But it is not unfair, since the boldness of the theme challenges comparison with the really great historical novels, to say that it lacks the profounder elements of truth. Mrs. Morrow's Lincoln is a natural and human man, but he is even a bit too natural and understandable. There is a want of psychological subtlety, of which he had a great deal; there is no depth of novelty of interpretation. The same may be said of the portraits of some of the other great figures, notably Stanton and Sumner. In rendering an impression of the war, of Congress, of public opinion, and of the vast complex of forces which we think of in connection of the period, Mrs. Morrow oversimplifies. Everything is in the foreground, and little is suggested of the vast lowering background. The book, in short, is excellent in two dimensions, slights the third dimension somewhat, and has none at all of that fourth dimension which a genius would somehow give to his creation of time, place, and human beings. But it is warranted praise to say that it is a book which every American who desires an accurate, spirited, and stimulating picture of the outward aspects of the Civil War, will find interesting and enlightening.



## The BOWLING GREEN

### Etiquette\*

SCENE: *The shore of a tropical island. Jungle behind. Glimpse of sea at L. Leading Lady and 1st Heavy, both in shreds of tattered clothing, are stretched on the sand. Heavy has a flying helmet, both wear life-preserver jackets such as you find in the staterooms of ocean liners. We are to imagine they are the sole survivors of an airplane disaster and have floated ashore. Leading Lady is supposed to be the author of a famous work on Etiquette.*

HEAVY (*comes to, sits up, looks about blankly*) Well, we got ashore anyhow. Only two of us. (*Approaches her prostrate form*) Oh my God, it's Mrs. Rolls. What a situation for the author of the Dictionary of Etiquette. She'd be happier dead.—Maybe she is dead? (*Hesitates bashfully whether to touch the lady*) I suppose I could feel her pulse? You don't like to take liberties with these Park Avenue people. (*Gingerly feels her ankle*) No sign of life there. (*Chafes her feet*) Her extremities are cold. I'd better try farther up town. (*Takes her hands and claps them together*) No, that seems too much like applause. (*Tries to put his hand on her heart to see if it's beating.*)

(*She sits up*)

L. L. Here, what are you doing?

HEAVY (*takes off his helmet politely*) I was rubbing your extremities—

L. L. Those aren't my extremities.

HEAVY. Are you all right?

L. L. All right? Don't be absurd. I shall never get the salt out of my hair. (*Looks about*) Good heavens, where are we? Bronx Park?

HEAVY. I'm sorry, Mrs. Rolls, I don't know exactly. The plane went smash and we had to float ashore. Somewhere in the South Pacific.

L. L. I knew if the travel bureaus ran these round-the-world flights with such mixed company, something would happen. Gracious, what a looking country. I fancy there's not a serviette in the place.

HEAVY. I don't even know if it's inhabited.

L. L. (*looking out to sea*) How very lugubrious. All that water and no bath crystals.

HEAVY. I have a notion it may be one of the Society Islands.

L. L. Oh well then, it can't be so bad. See if you can find my bag anywhere. I had it with me in the water.

(*He slips off his life-jacket, which she puts over her bare knees. She watches him while he looks about*)

I remember him now. A nice man but a terrible dancer. If I had to be lost on a desert island why couldn't it be with Arthur Murray?

*He discovers her small dressing case behind a rock on the beach; it has a tiny life-preserver round it. She takes out of it an apparently endless assortment of objects—lipstick, compact, mirror, hair-brush, perfume spray, patent lighter, cigarette case, engagement book, fountain pen, flask, etc.)*

HEAVY. Gosh, that's a swell camping kit you've got.

L. L. Well, you never know what'll happen. Everyone has to go below 14th Street once in a while.

(*She begins ordering her toilet*)

I don't believe in women offering men drinks in public places, but I'll put the flask down here and if you want a Robinson Crusoe cocktail, help yourself. It's very important for a gentlewoman to keep up all the little formalities.

(*Heavy takes a drink, rummages in his pocket for cigarettes, finds them all wet. She silently puts cigarette case within his reach, he takes one, and then takes the lighter which she also pushes toward him. It does not work. He gazes disconsolately at the unlit fag.*)

Wonderful things, those lighters. They're as good as fire insurance.

HEAVY (*suddenly, with an intent look past her*) Sit still! Don't move!

(*He seizes a stick of wood and aims a fierce blow just behind her; then picks up a large beautifully mottled snake.*)

Gosh, another second he'd have bitten you.

L. L. (*quite unterrified*) Nonsense I've seen lots of people in night clubs who were much more dangerous than that. What a gorgeous pair of slippers he'll make. By the way (*looks at her engagement book*) you know I've absolutely got to be back on Long Island by the 18th. The Prince of Wales is coming over again and I've promised to help entertain him. Those dear people will be in a dreadful stew if I'm not there to tell them how to set the table. You know, the last time the Prince was over, they served corn on the cob, the Prince didn't know how to eat it, no one dared tell him, and the butler swooned with excitement. He was found dead in bed with Angina Pectoris.

HEAVY. Good Lord, what a scandal. How did Angina get into a house like that?

L. L. I don't suppose you have any sunburn cream with you? I'm afraid this exposure is going to be very deleterious for the skin.

HEAVY. There's some useful-looking foliage up there, perhaps that'll help.

(*He goes upstage and picks some fronds of palms, ferns and other vegetation*)

L. L. (*continuing her toilet*) The powder seems to be all right, but the lipstick's a bit jammy. (*Takes out a packet of double envelopes containing engraved cards, which are evidently invitations*) These things simply must be answered. I suppose I shall have to regret—Are you good at taking dictation? I'm quite helpless without my secretary. I dare say she's perished, poor thing.

(*He comes down with foliage*)

Here, that flat stone will do nicely as an escritoire.

(*She hands him notepaper and fountain pen*)

HEAVY. But Mrs. Rolls, you don't seem to understand. We're on a desert island, there's no way of mailing letters.

L. L. My dear man, a social obligation is imperative. Doesn't matter if we can't mail them, I shall feel better when they're answered.

(*While she arranges foliage about herself, she dictates*)

Mrs. Camille Rolls regrets . . .

HEAVY. How do you spell Camille?

L. L. The usual way. I was Camille Faut before my marriage. . . . Mrs. Camille Rolls regrets that unavoidable absence from town prevents her accepting Mrs. Sherry Netherland's kind invitation (*breaks off*) . . . Is it my imagination, or do I hear voices?

HEAVY (*springs to his feet*) Cheese it! I believe—(*looks off through the jungle*)

L. L. It's very odd. A sort of reiterated chirping and babbling and giggling—I've heard just the same kind of thing at the Junior League.

HEAVY. You're right! Ssssh! It's a lot of girls . . . they're having some sort of ceremony—

(*A sound of feminine voices off, and distant drums*)

For God's sake, keep out of sight. There are men too, they may be savages.

L. L. Nonsense! I'm not afraid of men. You does my dress look? Can you see through it?

(*As you can hardly do anything else, the question is rather comic. She gathers together her odds and ends and stands waiting with the air of a gracious hostess presiding at a reception. The feminine voices and sound of drums come nearer. Enter up R a band of gorgeous brown-skinned damsels dressed in scant grass kilts, escorting one of their number who is evidently the center of interest for she is wreathed and garlanded in flowers. They are all chattering and laughing together, but scream and halt in amazed silence when they see the strangers. Two of them are carrying a bowl or censer in which a fire is burning.*)

Mrs. Rolls, with her well-known social tact, immediately takes charge of the situation.)

L. L. How do you do, my dears! So sweet of you to come.

HEAVY (*making a low bow*) Do you speak English?

1ST GIRL. (*in a soft Polynesian accent*) Ver' small. Mission man tell us Engrish palaver.

2ND GIRL. Mission man come here to make us wear cloze. We kill him.

(*They all laugh gaily*)

HEAVY. Well, I wouldn't make you do anything as

silly as that. I think you're pretty nice the way you are.

(*With great satisfaction he lights his cigarette at their bowl of fire*)

3RD GIRL. Whom are you?

L. L. Not whom, my dear, who. It's just those little slips that give one away.

4TH GIRL. You here for wedding?

L. L. What, a wedding? This is wonderful.

1ST GIRL. (*pointing to girl in center*) See eager bride!

BRIDE. You ask my father, he tell you. (*points off*)

HEAVY. I'll go and try to square ourselves with the men. (*exit up R*)

L. L. Well girls, this is delightful. I always say that a gentlewoman can make herself respected no matter in what surroundings.

(*The girls sit down around her, giggling, and poking her with curiosity. They are particularly interested in the padded life-preserver, which they consider to be part of her person.*)

2ND GIRL. You nice and soft. Shape like my mother.

3RD GIRL. Before wedding, girls always come away by selves for private chatter.

L. L. Quite correct. The bridesmaids' lunch party.

BRIDE. Bridegroom he give party too for his friends. All drunk.

L. L. Why really, I had no idea you were so civilized.

4TH GIRL. Some of us married already, tell her after she married everything easy—

5TH GIRL. By time she learn different, too late to say hell.

1ST GIRL. So she tell same story to other girls.

(*They all giggle joyously*)

L. L. Well I don't believe I can teach you children much. But you know, darling (*to the bride*) I don't think it's wise to be married like that. I think you ought to have more clothes. You mustn't invest all your capital at once.

2ND GIRL. This cold weather, we got all our winter cloze on.

BRIDE. (*Admiring the life-preserver jacket.*) I like wear bosom like yours.

L. L. Good idea. (*Takes Heavy's life-jacket and puts it on her, all the others applaud.*) Now I want to see this wedding go off without a hitch. Are your announcements all ready to send out?

3RD GIRL. Her father give big feast.

4TH GIRL. Always something very good to eat.

(*They look at each other knowingly and giggle*)

L. L. Yes, a formal dinner. Of course you ought to have flat silver for that. I hope I'm invited, I'm fearfully hungry. Now I think we must have a veil—

(*She manages to detach something from her own raiment and affixes it to the bride's head to serve as a veil, together with the flying helmet*)

These skirts would seem a bit short at St. Thomas's, but I suppose in this climate—Now is your trousseau all ready?

(*They look inquiringly at her*)

What you wear on your honeymoon.

(*Still they don't understand*)

Well, what do you do after you're married?

1ST GIRL (*with a bright gaze of intelligence*) All go in swimming, each woman chase some other woman's husband.

L. L. Why these people are absolutely contemporary. But I mean your lingerie, your underthings—

2ND GIRL. Underthings?

L. L. Things you wear underneath.

3RD GIRL. Underneath what?

4TH GIRL (*displaying her skirt*) Underneath this, just Me.

L. L. I see, a kind of singlette. Well, what do you wear at night?

1ST GIRL (*proudly*) Oh, we got lots of those. (*They open a basket of woven grass and display several small nosegays of flowers.*) Wear one on each ear.

L. L. I should be afraid they'd fall off.

(*They have been looking curiously at the toilet articles in the dressing case*)

BRIDE. Funny things.

L. L. I'll show you (*shoots spray of perfume from atomizer, they all squeal and applaud.* L. L. powders the bride's nose, applies lipstick and rouge and otherwise adorns her while the girls dance

(*Continued on next page*)