

nowadays. "S. S. San Pedro" is a strong, starkly designed book, full of elemental vigor, and almost free from that spurious sentimentality which afflicts so many sea writers.

Caught in the Toils

THE FIREMAKERS. By ROLLO WALTER BROWN. New York: Coward-McCann. 1931.

Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS

THIS is the story of The Man Who Could Not Get Out. American letters abound in biographies, novels, and success-stories of men who did get out—who escaped from the log cabin, the forge, the tow-path, or the fish-market to become Presidents, generals, and financiers. Some naive people accept it as a truism that any American with brains, health, and ambition can struggle up from youthful penury and toil; forgetting that it was never easy in artistic or professional fields, that it is not so easy anywhere as it once was, and that luck or at least an even chance is, also needed. The very vogue of the success magazines is evidence that the percentage of failures is increasingly high, and every realistic observer of American life knows that failure is often far indeed from being merited. Hardening class lines, wages without a margin, and hard luck may account for many a Jude the Obscure on our own soil. The Indian fighter might once follow a straight line to the Presidency. But where is the straight line that the illiterate manual worker of today can follow to the position of a highly trained surgeon, attorney, or engineer?

Mr. Brown's "firemakers" are Ohio coalminers, of whom he writes with the close fidelity of a man who knows their life at first hand and by years of contact. Luke, the aspiring miner who could not get out, is reared in Company Row in the 'eighties, starts work at fourteen as a trap-boy, and at sixteen is cutting coal beside his father. Everyone knows that the mines furnish a hopeless lot. The men about him are aware that they offer nothing but poverty, toil, and constant danger. Some, with the tradition of rural life close behind, go west to take up farms. But Luke has an artistic impulse which renders Kansas as unattractive to him as the Ohio collieries, and makes up his mind to be a pottery-maker. For this he needs a little capital, and—if he is really to make vases, dishes, and figures of enduring beauty—some expert training in ceramics. This is the story of how he strove to attain both; almost succeeded, slipped back and struggled on again; and finally gave up for himself, but not for his growing boy.

The story is told simply, honestly, without sentimentalization, and without any attempt to wring out of it a "poignancy" which is not there, as it is seldom in any of the everyday facts of similar failure all about us. Luke is not ill-content to take his second-best lot, which is that of an unusually prosperous and intelligent miner owning his own home and happily married. The simple veracity of his individual story is matched by the picture of the mining community in general. These are American miners, before the days of Slav and Italian; a yeoman stock diverted from the farms. They are vulgar, uneducated, undistinguished, self-respecting, brave in emergencies, and rather placid in their endurance of ordinary hardships. Once when a succession of accidents awakens them to the fact that their mine is unnecessarily dangerous they revolt, and Mr. Brown's most interesting pages—humorous rather than melodramatic—are those which describe the strike and the incursion of the militia. The author knows not only the colliery and the miners, but the farming life which lies all about; bits of the lore of woods and fields are constantly thrown into the story. Two or three of the minor characters are, if not "creations," at least sketched carefully from life; and Nathan, the old soldier who had fought at Gettysburg and carried the spirit of his campaigns into his daily work, is particularly memorable. His leadership in the terrible week when he and his comrades were imprisoned in the bowels of the mine, and the water from the creek above seeped down to fill it up, is admirably described. Altogether, this is an unusual novel. While not unambitious, it does not aim too high, and it succeeds perfectly in hitting the mark at which it does aim.

The death is announced, at the age of sixty-three, of Mrs. Falconer Jameson, the English novelist who wrote under the name "J. E. Buckrose." She was the author of several popular North Country novels, among them "Down Our Street" and "The Gossip Shop." Her latest book, "Out All Night," was published only recently.



Michael's Mount

THE south east corner of the Gulf of St. Malo runs into a long bay dividing Brittany from Normandy. Three rivers and the sliding tides have filled it in with flat miles of sand. At times the tides flow over the flat miles, at times the twisting rivers shift their beds and the old beds become quicksands. In the midst of wet plain or glinting water stand two precipitous hills, one of them called Tombelaine; the other was once called Mount Tumbe, but it has long been dedicated to an archangel, more distinguished because more accessible. Tombelaine is two miles further out on the amphibious plain, but as late as the twelfth century Mount Tumbe seems to have been less on the sands than in the woods: "entor le mont el bois follu."

Strictly as hills they are ordinary granite faced hills, about two hundred feet high, but oddly circumstanced. It was oddity that has set history swirling around Mount Tumbe like its swirling tides. Promontory or island or hill on the sand, it always looked curious, suggestive, uncanny. Hence the druid went there with his gory ritual, and the two hermits in due time to cleanse the hill with their prayers from polluting memories, druidic or satanic. When a Christian altar succeeds a pagan, analogy points to the warrior angel and his conquest over the hosts of hell. Hence the visions of Aubert and Norgod (of the seventh and eleventh centuries respectively, bishops of the town and diocese of Avranches), the archangelic admonition, the abbatial church on the hill top, uplifted, winged, triumphant. Hence Mount Tumbe new named and holy; hence rumors of miracles and floods of pilgrims. Norse pirates came sailing up all promising inlets and the sacred fisher folk found the Mount a practicable refuge; hence the fortress, and the long story of its wars began. It is all reasonable and consecutive. The same oddity of situation made it a shrine, a stronghold, a prison, and finally a spectacle; raised its consecrated spire, girdled it with clambering walls, and hollowed out its cells, penal and penitential. You may shorten its human story to a thousand years, or lengthen it vaguely to two thousand. From the druid to the traditional omelets of the Hotel Poulard, it swarms with a motley of ghosts. M. Etienne Dupont has written nine volumes about it—one of them a bibliography of twelve hundred titles—and seven more volumes on subjects connected with it. The poets write verses in praise of the omelets and in execration of the Causeway. Hugo made remarks on the Mount sufficiently Olympian, but only one satisfactory bit of literature, the initials of Juliette Drouet scratched on a column in the cloister. Flaubert thought it looked like a great crab crawling over a proportionate beach, and that too is Flaubertianly successful.

Speaking as a meditant out in the twilight on the eastward levels—while the moon rises over Normandy "round as a Goth god's shield," and the sunset frames the Mount in a red aureole—it looks to me more like Michael's helmet half sunk in the sand, encrusted with baroque ornament and spiked at the crest. The river Coesnon crawls round like a fallen demon turned serpent. Truly human life has been grim enough at times. But now and again it is soft as footsteps in the sand, and the soul is steeped in twilight; the Goth god's shield gives its luminous benediction to Normandy; Michael's helmet lies beside the creeping serpents; the hosts of hell are quiet, bewitched with meditation; and both the wicked and the good have ceased from troubling.

The cult of Saint Michael had a touch of the sun god about it. The sun mounts triumphant over the sullen night; the gleaming warrior stamps on the black dragon, Fafnir or Beelzebub. Henry Adams found the thirteenth century cult of the Madonna more suggestive and nearer to his own mentality than the older cult of the archangel. His "Mont Saint-Michel and Chartres" is much about Chartres and very little about Mont Saint-Michel. The portals and rose windows of Chartres hang together, but they are not simple minded. Adams was dissatisfied, not because he was complex, but because he did not to his own conception hang together. He thought the disintegration was both his own and his era's, and possibly neither was as disconnected as he thought. Norman arches are as unperplexed and plain minded

as the Old Brick Row, or the Song of Roland, or Taillefer the minstrel who sang it at Hastings. To ride out between the watching armies, singing of Roland and tossing one's sword; to strike the first blow in the great fight and die under the Saxon spears; that was glory, that was the way to live and die! And what then? Why, then suddenly the choking throat and the spears in the chest were gone, and one passed under the portcullis of the goodly walled city of God, liegeman to Michael himself, and ho! what plumed wars to follow, what driving of red demons down the slopes of the sky, Lord Michael to the front with his crest of gold!

One grows stale with history in print; its facts are dry and its generalizations pallid. These long dead generations, we know something of what they did and what they said, but we would like to feel how they felt. And the past is a palimpsest. There is script below script. There are rivers running underground. That is why historians like Henry Adams turn from documents to sculptured stones, which speak a different language of strangely vivid idioms. Mont Saint-Michel says something about the Normans that Freeman does not, and the Bayeux tapestry (which is not tapestry but needle work) says something unsaid by either. The women who embroidered the long cloth saw slim young heroes, gallant and daring; the four pillars of the transept in the abbatial church were built by men of solid habits and thick bone. Their grim duke was a dangerous man; "stark," quoth the Saxon Chronicle, silent, ruthless in his wrath. No doubt. And one of the fattest kings on record, whatever he was earlier in the eyes of Norman ladies. A hard headed, grip-handed people; like certain American types, neither mentally nor emotionally subtle, but full of vim. Michael was the glittering patron of victory, and his cult drew out of the long heathen wars. How did Saint George get possession of Michael's dragon and slip away with his glory? George of Cappadocia was a poor sort of person of no valor at all, and his apotheosis is a palimpsest too obscure to be read.

In the year 1692, "and the 31st of May, helter skelter through the blue, came crowding ship on ship to St. Malo on the Rance, with the English fleet in view"; and a Breton sailor saved this fleeing fleet of France by piloting it into harbor, in and about through the rocks and hidden channels of St. Malo. In March of the year 1871 a robustious English poet declared that Hervé Riel had never had the celebrity he was entitled to, and rather successfully conferred upon him that celebrity. It appears that Hervé Riel did not see any difference between the glorious and the customary, or how he was entitled to celebrity, or what was the good of it if he were, or that there was anything remarkable about steering a ship by daylight to a harbor into which he had often picked his way by night and knew there was water enough. But if the gentlemen thought otherwise, they might give him a holiday to go see his wife.

On one of those rocks that shelter and make perilous the approach to St. Malo, in the year 1848, was buried, by request of the deceased and consent of authorities, Francois René, Vicomte de Chateaubriand, who thought—if any integral belief can be found among his draperies—that not to be in the spotlight was not to be anywhere. The artistry of the selection is admirable. The gesture is technically, perhaps, as good, as Byron's dying for the liberties of Greece in the wake of Leonidas. The stranger in St. Malo or Dinard is shown the black rock among the sliding tides, the lone burial place of René, and has his chance to be touched with the right emotion, if he is not so sophisticated the sophistication moves him to irony. But alas! that is what we are. If anyone in a black cloak on a prominent promontory bids "Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean," it "doesn't do a thing" to us. Deep, dark rolling is an oceanic habit, not a beau geste. We are graduates in the technique of publicity, grown morbidly conscious of "bunk." The *beau geste* of Taillefer was gallant, and almost as plain-minded as Hervé Riel and his holiday. A *beau geste* is engaging if it is gay, and if it is honest there is no irony in its wake. The phenomenon of Henry Adams, from the "Education" to the monument in Rock Creek Cemetery, is complex and modern, but it hangs together as integrally as Chartres cathedral. Its tragedy is not a masque, nor its attitude a pose.

Michael's Mount has been a long time in the spotlight, and grown animated with its celebrity and social experience, while Tombelaine has lain outside in the shadow, absorbed in the simple minded business of being an island, or a hill.

ARTHUR COLTON.

The BOWLING GREEN

Notes on Bermuda, II.

SHAKESPEARE used Bermuda as a symbol of the artist's isolation. It was a little difficult for the casual visitor to preserve that illusion while the *Veendam*, the *Franconia*, and the *Pan-America* were bringing down about 1,500 trippers a week. How long the islands can endure so lively an influx without tarnishing their charm will be a delicate problem. The appearance of a few speed-boats is rather ominous. I advise the Bermuda Chamber of Commerce to limit them strictly, as they have the automobile. The harbors should be preserved for sail and the slow chug-chug as the roads have been for bicycle and horse.

But Prospero's magic is still strong. There is not so much physical solitude, but all its intellectual materials are there. Far out, on the barrier reefs, you see the surf exploding just as letters and telephone calls crumble against the periphery of the mind. Within, the busy interne, the coral animal of self, is at his pensive edification. He seems perhaps in a mere swoon, but he finds afterward that in the caverns of his skull queer stalactites have been growing. It is odd that the commonest formations of coral are shaped like the brain and like a fan. Keep cool and use your mind, the polyp seems to be suggesting. Those stony shores are strewn with the driftwood of all sorts of fables. When some old French buccaneers were wrecked there in the 16th century they had to build a pinnacle for escape. Lacking pitch, they tightened their seams with a mucilage of "lime mixed with the oil of tortoises." It is a good formula for philosophers. A caustic stone, well pulverized, and a fatty oil, sluggish or leisurely. Santayana and Don Marquis have both used it.

Just by chance I met on the street yesterday the editor of a famous magazine. He was about to sail for Bermuda, he said, for three weeks' vacation. But the infection of New York was still in his veins, for he remarked that he was taking MSS with him and expected to do some work down there. I know better. The oil of tortoises will mollify him. In the little garden behind Inverurie, presided over by that snow-white statue of the "noble English mastiff," he will sit, as I did, book in hand, transpiring into swoon. Do you remember how in *The Tempest* the characters are continually falling asleep? Miranda can't keep her eyes open during her father's autobiography. Ferdinand is "charmed from moving." Caliban gapes at the clouds and drops off again. So will the Editor. That passage where Caliban speaks of the clouds—"Methought the clouds would open and show riches"—is one of Shakespeare's shrewdest memoranda. For I had never dreamed of such skyscapes as one sees from sailboats in the lanes of Hamilton Harbor. What silver corsages of heaven, reminding one of Waldo Pierce's regrettable poem. And almost daily, as some puff of shower floats high, tepid and sweet as ginger beer and too faint to reach earth, a little rainbow is pinned to the bosom of a cloud. Or at night our Editor will sit on the terrace, perhaps with an Aquarium cocktail, to watch Ferdinand and Miranda dancing. They move not vis-à-vis but at an angle, and Miranda leans in a somewhat kangaroo posture. They are very young, remember, and feel it is necessary at all costs to be different. An orchestra of genial blacks in very wide white trousers fusillades the mild evening with Roxy folk-ditties; a spotlight revolves primary colors upon the oscillating pairs. And behind, a perfect stage-set, move the ghostly sails of small yachts that slide silently along the balustrade, hover like pale moths, vanish again into the darkness. With precise art the native skippers of the *Vagabond*, the *Sweet Honey*, the *Uncle Sam*, and other pretty sloops luff them alongside the terrace and flutter softly in hope of custom. In the moonlight you may see a gray triangle of canvas coming down-wind, a picnic supper-party homeward bound from Ports Island where the ghosts of the Boer prisoners still inhabit the grove. And the wheeling beam of Gibbs's Hill lighthouse startles the spook-hunter with sudden blinks of white. It is there that sandwiches laid on the grass are carried off by sinewy cockroaches of unusual stature. Mr. Marquis's archy, I dare say, came from Bermuda. At night, in that dark, warm water, bare bodies are said to swim in pleasing swirls of phos-

phorus, but boatmen, as obliging as Boswell's chairman Cameron, tell no tales. (The reference is to volume 12 of the *Boswell Papers*.) Those who live by wind and weather learn a large wisdom. I liked the comment of one colored skipper when we were speaking of the grandiloquent name of a liner being built for the luxury trade. "That's not a good name for a ship," he said. "It sounds like they thought she was unsinkable." There was much wisdom in that. Those who know the sea prefer ships to have less provocative baptism. I do not forget the tin-colored face of one water-logged zealot whom several of us pulled in through the surf at Elbow Beach. He evidently had thought himself more than a match for the Atlantic Ocean.

I suppose Will Beebe is Bermuda's nearest approach to Prospero just at present. Nonsuch Island is one of the string of rocky crags that cross the southern side of Castle Harbor, where ruined forts and sea-washed caves suggest doubloons and buccaneers. Here the Bermuda government has lent him the old quarantine station for research laboratory. A foundered hull, awash in the cove, serves as breakwater for his landing. A pet monkey, ancient tortoises strolling about, a band of assistant students, and a shelf of detective stories for relaxation make this a scientific Eden. From here his steam tug goes trawling daily—not exactly "deeper than e'er plummet sounded," but at least a mile down. We were lucky enough to see the day's haul come in and watch the Ariels and Calibans rush the glass jars up the rocky scarp and under the microscopes. That is the big moment of the day. This lean, bronzed Prospero (in bathing jersey and khaki shorts) and his young enthusiasts gathered eagerly round the white trays of fresh ocean combings. It was a lesson in the joys of scientific curiosity. What ecstasy when something specially fine appears: that scarlet deep-sea shrimp which was instantly put under a violet ray to measure the luminescence of its swimmerets; or the fish that was cheerfully digesting another one larger than himself; or the iridescent eye of a squid. In their unfaded colors, some still briskly active, these unexpected visitors give one something of an embarrassment. It is like peeping into Nature's dressing-room; you are seeing what was scarcely intended to be seen. Deep-sea life, Beebe is fond of saying, can match all the marvels of the fairy tales. Creatures who light up their mouths (so that they can see what they are eating?) are surely an adequate analogy for the flame-breathing dragon.

When Will Beebe drops the ladder over the launch's side and puts a diver's helmet on you, his only instruction is, "Keep your head upright." He adds casually, "Oh, the sharks round here won't bother you." It suddenly occurs to you that there are several questions you want to ask, but now the helmet is on and it is too heavy to lift off yourself. They are leaning over the boat's side and practically shoving you down. You descend, surprised at yourself; the weight of the helmet on your shoulders vanishes like magic. Through the glass window you see the dark bottom of the launch poised above you in a great glow of pale water. This new world is so fascinating there isn't the slightest sense of anxiety. But you are under water and unconsciously you are holding your breath. You hear the pump clicking evenly and suddenly you realize the air in the helmet is getting tight. So you take your breath in sudden gulps and swallows, when you happen to remember it. Each time you exhale there is a delicious gargling sound, and you feel a big clot of air slide over your shoulder and go bubbling upward. It is somehow reassuring.

Now you are on the clean sandy floor. The little striped fish they call sergeant-majors are shoaling about; you see the black line of your air-pipe reaching up to the ceiling of this great cloudy hall. And the immediate surprise is that you cannot move. In that warm, heavy element you are like a fly in syrup. Your feet seem glued to the bottom. At first you proceed by swimming motions with the arms. Then, gradually you learn the trick of bending forward until the weight of the helmet overbalances you and your feet follow. So you walk as though leaning against heavy wind.

The launch is moored to the projecting sternpost of an old sunken wreck. Her hull is crusted thick with corals and waving growths, all in a shimmer of amber and pale lime-green. Fish twirl about you like birds; clumsily you try to catch one in your hand, they vanish and return again. Above you a jellyfish is floating, and inside his transparent cavity a small fish is luxuriously loitering, like a goldfish in a private travelling bowl. At your feet a magenta fan-coral

sways softly in the tide. You stoop to pick it: the helmets tilt on your shoulders and a rush of water pours in around your face. This is the end, you think; but even as you think it you have straightened up again and the water recedes. The armored head-piece is not sealed around your shoulders: only the air pressure keeps the water out. Groping in the tangle of stony growths on the wreck, little hands and twigs of brown coral, you realize with amazement that you are perfectly comfortable. You would gladly spend an hour. But another guest is also waiting for his first descent. Reluctantly you follow your hose back to the ladder. Most pleasing of all is to walk about on that white floor in a glimmer of sandy and pearly colors—very like the lighting effect of a New York railway station at night—and see overhead the dark shape of the boat, like a small whale.

Even more thrilling, now that the first trial had enlarged confidence, was to go down again at the Bermuda Aquarium, by the kindness of Louis Mowbray, most hospitable of curators. Just behind the Aquarium you climb down some steps cut in the rocky shore of Harrington Sound, they put the helmet on you, and you submerge like a veteran. Here the rocks slope inward under water, there is a coral cavern of jagged ledges and crevices and a whole jungle of marine underbrush. When you gain the shadow of the cave the sunlight outside is like a golden curtain wavering in the glassy flow. Colors and graces the eye almost refuses to credit are thick about you: anemones and lichens, queer flowers of rubbery substance, some as blue as bunches of violets. It is like a liquid greenhouse of plants cut out of sponge and spaghetti. Pink, orange, salmon, lilac, they sway in the eddy; when you touch them, a whole foliage of tubes and blossoms suddenly retracts or snaps shut. These flowers are alert with crude and stinging life. A passion of unbelief fills the immigrant behind his glass window: he wants to reach and touch, sprawls on his knees over misjudged ledges, knives his fingers breaking off twigs and fringes of coral. The cavern, looming up like a rock-garden, deepens into dark liquid fissures of terrifying loveliness. In one crevice lurks a big angel fish, spangled blue and opal. You grope at him and he flickers far in; in a moment fans himself out again backward, as curious as yourself. The long antennæ of a 12-inch lobster are near your hand. Gingerly you grasp one—he flicks back out of sight before the nerve impression of having touched him registers on your brain. If you did not remember that Mr. Mowbray is out on the rocky shore generously pumping for you in the midday sun, you might stay down all morning.

There is no thrill like it, and it is completely indescribable. Mr. Mowbray has had a little bathhouse built behind the Aquarium; there you may put on your bathing suit which is all the equipment you need (though it is well to add an old pair of gloves. He will lend you rubber boots so your feet won't be cut.) I believe that by allowing a reasonable number of visitors to go below the water for a modest fee the Aquarium plans to supplement its funds for research. It is the greatest adventure Bermuda offers: an entrée to the most authentic Garden of Eden any of us is likely to see—the binomial equation in prime factors, as it was in the beginning.

(To be continued)

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

"The school examinations season," says the *Manchester Guardian*, "has yielded its usual crop of 'howlers,' some of them carrying their own explanation of the process which produced them. It is easy to understand the youthful confusion of mind which results in some of these gems; for instance, in such statements as that Shakespeare wrote the 'Merry Widow,' and that his work included tragedies, comedies, and errors, and that Coleridge was a retired mariner who took to verse—or that most of Pope's work was written in heroic cutlets, and that Plato was the god of the Underground. It is less easy to account for the extraordinary statement that a coroner is one of the King's men who accompanies the yeomanry or that he is an under officer who must obey his higher subjects. We cannot but admire the resource of the pupil who wrote down 'On their heads' in answer to a question as to where the kinds of England were crowned, and a similarly naïve reply was given by another student in response to the question 'Explain what happens when there is an eclipse of the sun' when he answered, truthfully enough, 'A great many people go out to see it.'