

## In the War of 1812

**CAPTAIN CAUTION.** A Chronicle of Arundel. By Kenneth Roberts. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1934. \$2.50.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

HERE is a good historical novel for your money. Kenneth Roberts has now written the fourth of the Chronicles of Arundel, a town in the province of Maine that he first described in the novel "Arundel," which told of a secret expedition during Revolutionary days, led by Colonel Benedict Arnold against Quebec. Then, in "The Lively Lady," he gave us a yarn of the War of 1812, and followed it with "Rabble in Arms," his best to date, again a story with the background of the War for American Independence and the figure of Benedict Arnold looming large in it. Now again, in "Captain Caution," we are on the high seas during the War of 1812, and visit, incidentally, both France and England.

This is fine, full-blooded stuff, this book, even though there is no character in it quite as good as Cap Huff in former pages. But there is the most individual Lucien Argandeau, the French privateer captain, with his boasting both about seamanship and about women, the gorilla-looking man who is yet intensely engaging. A mariner from Arundel, one Daniel Marvin, is "Captain Caution," the hero of the story. He has the Yankee trait of caution which proves to be anything but incompatible with daring and successful fighting. At the book's beginning we are in an abortive sea-fight in which Captain Dorman of the American merchant barque, *Olive Branch*, is killed. Marvin surrenders the craft to the British, and thereby incurs the scorn and rage of the captain's seafaring daughter, Corunna—a hostile attitude on her part which properly lasts through the book to furnish conflict in the soul of Daniel who really loves her. After capture by the British, Marvin meets Argandeau the Frenchman, in the filthy hold of the British gun brig, and also Lurman Slade, captain of an American slave-brig, both captives, the latter becoming soon the real villain of the story. Then comes the battle to retake the British brig, during an attack by a schooner flying the American ensign; and after that the action of the story moves rapidly on with a wealth of incident.

It would be a disservice to probable readers, of whom I sincerely hope for their own sakes there will be a great many, to recount more of the plot of this novel, save to say that in my opinion the description of the British hulks, the prison-ships, in the Medway, of the hero's pugilistic encounter aboard one, and of the escape over mud-banks by several of the prisoners, is as good writing in the field of the romantic historical novel as Mr. Roberts has led us to expect from him, and that is saying a great deal. There is plenty of ingenious episode thereafter; and the book has a hero, a heroine, a plausible villain, and several characters furnishing excellent comic relief. Then too, there is the prime invention of the Gangway Pendulum, together with that of a pretty good system for gambling at roulette; there is the appearance of no less a figure than Talleyrand himself; and there is always that combination of graphic narration with historical accuracy for which Mr. Roberts has by now become so well known.

If one compares "Captain Caution" with "Rabble in Arms" it is, frankly, far less

\* Reproduced from James Truslow Adams' "History of the United States" (Scribners).

important; though it does present to us aspects of the strife of nations in the early nineteenth century which are less-well-known and show the age very much as it actually must have been with a good deal of the gilt off the gingerbread. But there is small reason for setting it above a really good Sabatini, of which there are quite a number, taking into consideration the handling of different periods and backgrounds. As usual the critics have gone off the deep end about Mr. Roberts's work, and my own enthusiasm for "Rabble in Arms" was genuine, but in "Captain Caution" he has written a new novel neither of the scope of the former extremely powerful book nor of its depth and richness. Still I think the description of the British hulks and the prisoners and their escape will stand up with some of the best passages in historical fiction. One is inclined to compare it with certain of Dickens's best descriptions also, for its human qualities. That is a good deal to say, I know; but it is such powerful writing that sets Mr. Roberts's work apart from that of most historical novelists of our time.

## The Earlier Work of D. H. Lawrence

**A MODERN LOVER.** By D. H. Lawrence. New York: The Viking Press. 1934. \$2.

Reviewed by CURRIE CABOT

THE stories in this volume are gleanings swept up after the main harvest of Lawrence's work, but what a marvellous yield they make, what a store of vitality lies between the covers of this book. It would be interesting to know at just what date each one was written. Very early, one would judge most of them to be, for they have the loose, rich texture of the first novels. Certainly "The Witch à la Mode" must antedate "The Trespasser," Lawrence's second novel, it must, indeed, be "The Trespasser" in its first, rudimentary form, for its characters and its situation are, more briefly and simply, those of the novel and it has something of the book's heavily electric atmosphere, which Lawrence himself pronounced too "charged." Again, in these stories one finds the early Lawrence still faintly showing traces of his reading, of Hardy, for instance, of Lawrence preoccupied with "culture," and with people who care for music and poetry and art. His characters move in the atmosphere peculiar to his early work, an atmosphere heavy with

beauty, where all movement is slowed and charged with meaning, all talk fraught with symbolism.

They are stories that are in the line of Lawrence's development, they point the way to his explorations of deep, unconscious motives. But "Mr. Noon," the first book of an unfinished novel, reveals a Lawrence who might have been, if he had so chosen, a dryly humorous, inimicable observer of surfaces of those flaws and trivialities of human nature which are the stuff of which "characters" are composed.

For all its deft satire, it is easy to see why Lawrence abandoned it and its vein. The fascination of the other way of writing must have been too profound.

There is no story in this collection that touches Lawrence at his absolute best, but all of them reveal rare possibilities of power. Most particularly memorable is the title story, "A Modern Lover," from which a sensitive reader might have fore-shadowed much of Lawrence's greatness. Here is reality caught in its moments of poetic tension. Sometimes Lawrence's prose is as powerful as music.

## A Historical Novel of Modern America

**THE EXECUTIONER WAITS.** By Josephine Herbst. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1934. \$2.50.

Reviewed by SELDEN RODMAN

THIS story runs rapidly, powerfully, and faithfully through the wartime and postwar lives of several inter-related Middle Western families. The older generation are a group of American Forstyes, cruder, not so well-established, with a less dignified tradition to fall back on in times of stress. Aaron Trexler, of pioneer stock, is the classic Babbitt—a driving, self-made man, stingy to his poorer relatives, bullying the lives of his children into nothingness. His only romance is a never



JOSEPHINE HERBST

Photo by Manuel Alvarez Bravo

fulfilled love for his wife's younger sister. He supports her for years only to have her elope with a harmless little clerk. As the book draws to an end, Aaron is becoming nostalgic, confused, sentimental about the past. He is last seen standing in a cemetery, very angry at the speaker at a striker's funeral who is saying, "Don't mourn, organize."

Aaron's sister, Anne Wendel, is more gently drawn. Her husband, Amos, has lost his independent business and works for wages. Anne spends her life trying to pay for their house, making pretty things for her four daughters, daydreaming about what she could do for them all with a little money. Two of the four Wendel daughters emerge from their harassed childhood with vision and independence of spirit. The central story of "The Executioner Waits" concerns the struggle of these girls to get out from under the weight of their background, find good work to do in the world, "meet interesting people," and give their lives significance. At the end, they renounce the precious literary life and find the way out by helping the farmers round about to organize and resist evictions.

The stories of these people are shot through with exciting flashes of external events, an I. W. W. convention, the draft, Liberty Bond parties, farm strikes in Iowa, industrial strikes in Pennsylvania, Seattle, and Oxtail, Iowa, literary causeries in New York and Detroit. The people in the book talk over the events of the day, each through his own interests. They read newspapers and books. They are not moving in a void but through a desperate meaningful society. "The Executioner Waits" is a historic document of great value; what men and women from every walk of life said and thought between 1918 and 1929 is accurately recorded. It is also a sociological document. The author reveals middle class family life as a sordid, possessive business. Here and there it is redeemed by love and sacrifice. For the most part, as the families gain wealth, their human relations are distorted by the will to power and property.

Miss Herbst's style is refreshingly un-literary; one can forget all about it in the sweep of her story-telling, but the novel as a whole suffers from lack of any structure. The separate scenes are told as a good story-teller would tell them but not

as an artist anxious to reproduce shades of color and undertones of feeling. Miss Herbst has an exceptionally vivid memory and an exceptional skill for narration, but she does not create character. She records what she has known. For this reason, the older people seem always to be seen from outside, by someone younger, whereas the young people are seen as friends.

The flaws, however, are second thoughts; first one is gripped by a marvellously well-told tale, integrated not by detailed craftsmanship but by the social vision which the author shares with her young friends.

## The New Realism

**FEBRUARY HILL.** By Victoria Lincoln. New York: Farrar & Rinehart. 1934. \$2.50.

Reviewed by H. W. BOYNTON

HERE is a tale of a new or an unsung New England. The setting, to be sure, lies in a sort of borderland, at the very point where grim Massachusetts eases off into happy-go-lucky Rhode Island. February Hill stands on the outskirts of unromantic Fall River; but a few miles to westward is the playground of Providence where Ma (Minna) Harris finds joy and profit, and a little to the southwest range the islands of the great Bay where young Jenny is drawn to her adventure. The Harrises are shanty people, disreputable and complacent. Their place and their life content them well enough. They have their pride and their code, and ask nothing of anybody. What they need they take, and they have the habit of getting away with things in more senses than one. It isn't the law they fear, but respectability and its fruits.

Respectability bred the father of the flock, the drunken weakling who lives as an alien among these people, stunted offspring of puritan hypocrisy. One of his daughters inherits the vices of puritanism and exiles herself among the respectable and damned. His son falls a hapless victim of tangled heredity. But his wife Minna, her mother, and the two younger daughters are birds of a feather. Minna is of the profession from which Grandma has been retired by age. Amy, the baby of the family, is predestined to carry on the line. And Jenny, though she has a responsiveness to beauty and a yearning for happiness beyond the apprehension of the others, belongs to them and knows it. With them she resents any encroachment by the forces of respectability and codified morality. They must be left alone to be merry and loving in their own fashion: that is all the Harrises ask of society.

It is Jenny's book, for Minna is a known quantity from the beginning while to Jenny, at seventeen, life offers an uncertain adventure we are to share. Setting off with her at dawn on that winter ramble toward the river, toward Swansea and fate, we partake of her simplicity, her ardor, her essential innocence. We are relieved when she is set free by the hard-eyed gypsy man who might so easily have tarnished her youth, and we hope the best from her swift rapprochement with the young Islander Berkley Howard. A native of the best Island stock, named for the great Bishop of long ago; rum runner and puritan, destined for early death. Jenny's brief months of marriage pass like a dream. The blow falls and proves to be, after all, not fatal. Berkley was not Jenny's kind, his was not the code of February Hill. To Grandma, to Minna, to Amy, all so much of a piece, so wanton, so friendly, so free, she returns with resignation and something like relief. Still there are the hill, the shanty, and these three: and, somewhere not far beyond, the dim figure of that gypsy man, her natural mate perhaps, who, parting casually that day, had bidden her ask for him, Lee, "when she came back."

It is a book of the new realism, not "grim" like the realism of yesterday, but cordially and even blithely acceptant of life in any of its vital manifestations. And it is also a book of extraordinary fidelity to the chosen scene, conveying for a dweller in the neighborhood like the present reviewer, that almost intolerably poignant sense of reality with which the creative hand is wont to endow whatever is most instant and familiar.



THE IMPRESSMENT OF AMERICAN SEAMEN IN THE WAR OF 1812

From the painting by Stanley M. Arthurs\*



# Epitome of an Era

DIAMOND JIM. By Parker Morell. New York: Simon & Schuster. 1934. \$3.

Reviewed by RUSSEL CROUSE

RARELY may it be said of any individual that his life reflects his times. "Diamond Jim" Brady is the personification of the era in which he lived—a character whom any playwright, writing in allegory the fantastic story of an amazing phase of American history, might lift from life without changing so much as a comma or a shirt stud.

Thus Parker Morell's study of the man becomes at once a document. As such it is not only valuable but interesting. Its effectiveness is dimmed only occasionally when Mr. Morell attempts to give it drama. Drama was not of "Diamond Jim's" time. His immediate predecessor, "Jubilee Jim" Fisk, played his brief scene in an age of dramaturgy. His immediate successors, the bootleg barons, found the audience ready for a revival of blood-and-thunder histrionics. But the era that "Diamond Jim" spanned with a fantastic life was nothing more than a gaudy charade.

Both James Buchanan Brady and his era had humble beginnings. America itself was almost as drab as the little room over Dan Brady's saloon in New York's lowest west side where he was born in 1856. By the time one had reached manhood so had the other. America was rubbing its eyes with bewilderment at the great economic structure just beginning to take form in a new industrial world when young Jim Brady was gazing in awe at the superficial splendor of the hotel in which he found his first employment as a bellboy.

Once its eyes were opened America plunged into the mad rush for money and emerged a power. So did Jim Brady. A kindly fate and an influential benefactor gave him his opportunity in the railroad business shortly after the Iron Horse had won its first race. He was a growing young man. America was a growing young country. They grew together. They became rich together. And each reached the goal a little plump about the midriff.

Jim Brady had no more idea of what to do with his wealth than had America. So together they enacted a grotesque fairy tale. Jim Brady kept pace with his age. He bedecked himself with diamonds from his teeth to his garters. He ate his beefsteaks three at a time. When he served wine ships could have floated in it. When he talked money nothing less than a million dollars deserved more than a whisper.

And when Jim Brady died his era died with him. There was never to be another "Diamond Jim" Brady after 1917. There was to be a new America, of course, but in the age that followed he would have had no place. And that was that. A vulgar, tawdry, blatant, pretentious world had come to an end along with a man whose life best portrayed it.

Jim Brady and his times are so much a part of each other that it is difficult to estimate the man. Perhaps the simplest procedure would be to enumerate a few of his endowments and accomplishments: he was the first super-salesman; his stomach was six times normal size; his breakfast consisted of beefsteak, chops, eggs, pancakes, fried potatoes, hominy, corn bread; his luncheon of oysters, lobster, roast beef, salad, and pie; his dinner, of more oysters, more lobsters, more steaks smothered in chops, five or six vegetables, more salad and dessert; his midnight snack of two or three warm birds; he never drank intoxicating

liquors, substituting instead orange juice which he consumed by the quart; he drove the first "horseless carriage" seen in New York and stopped traffic for two hours; he loved Lillian Russell but didn't dare let himself realize it; he knew everybody that was worth knowing.

Of the diamonds from which he took his name Mr. Morell writes in detail, for he springs from a family of jewelers and was first attracted to his subject by the glow of a shirt-front. He had them, there is no doubt of that. He bought his first diamond ring for \$90 when he started out as a salesman and found that it dazzled hotel clerks into deference. When he died he had \$2,000,000 worth—a set for every day of the month—and had dazzled a whole nation.

Of course, he couldn't take them with him when he died. Not that he didn't try, however. He took his best set into his coffin with him. But what was more important he took the era that spawned him into the same coffin.

## Cromwell the Opportunist

(Continued from first page)

ferent case. In these months, passionately desirous of peace, he tried tool after tool, all of which broke in his hands. His sluggish, conservative mind was forced by the unfamiliar tortures of thought, and slowly, by a process of trial and error, he was driven to conclusions against which all his instincts revolted, but which were hammered into his soul by the inexorable pressure of facts.

Oliver met the King at Caversham and was touched by the sad graciousness of the man. The Heads of the Proposals, in the main Ireton's work, were presented to the King at the end of July 1647, and that document in Buchan's opinion was the Revolution settlement on broader and wiser lines. Not so Belloc, who in his emphatic way says it was all "moonshine because it was a paper fabric." But Buchan believes that it anticipated the Toleration Act of 1689, cabinet responsibility, and the whole future constitutional monarchy, and that it would have secured the good will of the mass of English. It must not be forgotten that Charles under its terms could have had the episcopacy, had he only consented to complete toleration. He was trying to keep the various parties at sixes and sevens. "If your Majesty has a game to play," remarked Ireton, "you must also give us leave to play ours." Cromwell continued to strive for an arrangement with the King. "In the government of nations that which is to be looked after is the affections of the people, and that I find which satisfies my science in the present thing," he said, and he meant, in monarchy. But when a new war broke out and when he became at long length convinced that Charles meant to keep no promises, he decided only a few weeks before the fatal 30th of January 1649 that Charles must die, that while he lived there would be no peace in England. "Like all Oliver's changes," says Buchan, "it was slow in coming, but was decisive when it came."

For the past year he had steered a difficult course, which to most men seemed a miracle of inconstancy. He had been first for parliament against the army, and then for the army against parliament. He had gone to the utmost lengths to obtain an agreement with Charles. . . He had won for himself the unhesitating distrust of royalists, Presbyterians, and republicans. . . His trouble was that

he no longer had a fixed purpose. All the marks by which he had steered had been destroyed. He certainly had not the pole-star of personal ambition.

The King could never understand that Cromwell wanted nothing for himself.

Buchan's account of the campaign that led up to Worcester, his story of the battle of Dunbar, are the work of one whose hobby is military campaigns and who has a gift of making them clear. When Cromwell is finished with battles Buchan becomes a shade less interesting. His account of the Protectorate and of Cromwell's policies is considered and sometimes thoughtful, but seems to lack the spirit of the earlier pages and has less of that inter-



OLIVER CROMWELL

pretation that comes from being at home in a period. Few people are ever at home in that homeless time, that strange interlude of new men, experiments, and a government of force. Yet it is to be said for Buchan in these last chapters that he has been able to give us a picture of the living and moving Cromwell, of those about him, his friends and kin, a picture that we would not miss.

Buchan does not emphasize, probably because it has been done before, the fact that Cromwell's career is an exception among careers of men of the first rank. At the age of forty-one he was an obscure county squire, at fifty-eight he was an outstanding figure of his century in Britain and one of the great of Europe. Buchan would explain that, I think, by Cromwell's military genius and by his real skill in affairs of state. Yet Belloc is right when he says that Cromwell did not "inform" the state, "still less mould it as he had so magnificently informed and moulded his troop, his regiment, his cavalry, and at last his whole army." His Government in some way, however, gained for England a position that had not been hers since the time of Elizabeth, if then. Cromwell was well served by men such as Ireton and Thurloe and many others. There was power and some efficiency in Whitehall. Once the Essexes and Manchesters, the somewhat futile nobles, were out of the way as leaders, once time had allowed the natural leaders of a revolutionary movement to emerge, not only was war conducted with a new efficiency but affairs of state were managed with an honesty and a practical skill that had rarely been equalled before. The Court must have been a powerful handicap to good government. There was still intrigue of course, but the old crowd of courtiers, who hoped by catching the fancy of the sovereign to win position and wealth, and often succeeded, was gone, and their absence must have given new vigor to government. This idea will be disputed at once by many in our day who have come to long for monarchy, but they are generally not too familiar with the actual workings of public life under the old Court and Courtier system.

Buchan has a good deal to say about characters other than Cromwell. Pym was the true pilot of the storm, who must rank as one of the foremost of all parliamentarians because he not only saved the liberties of parliament but gave it sovereignty. Ireton would have been a great man in history had he not been lieutenant to a greater. He had a quick, logical mind and could move among those constitutional tangles which to Oliver were puzzling and repellent. He was supremely explicit, he had a reason for everything he

did, and he had the pen of a ready writer. Laud was an able and honest man set in a place where his ability and honesty were the undoing of himself and his master. "He applied the brains of a college pedant to the spacious life of England."

Belloc's book needs little comment. He is writing, he tells us, not a biography but a character sketch. There are dozens too many lives already, "the earlier batch a mass of slander, the later a mass of panegyric—all of them myth." This is a promising start. We are on our way for the first time to find out about the real Cromwell. It is moral judgments with which Belloc seems concerned, and judgments based to some degree not upon the codes of our time or of Cromwell's, but upon Belloc's own codes. He says, however, many true things about Cromwell and many Bellocian things. All the old emotions and notions are here. Belloc hates Elizabeth, he hates the land-owning class that sprang from the spoiling of the monks. We learn once more how the monarchy was standing for the people against a rapacious lot of country gentlemen. Belloc has a way of hitting upon theories already not unknown and of pushing them far. He is not given to overcareful statement. That wonderful knack of exposition that has been his is still evident, but for some time now he has been taking little pains with his writing. The book will be interesting to those concerned with the history of Mr. Belloc, an interesting man.

## Poetry of Power

POEMS. By Stephen Spender. New York: Random House. 1934. \$1.50.

POEMS. By W. H. Auden. New York: Random House. 1934. \$2.50.

Reviewed by LOUIS INTERMEYER

OF the younger English poets—a more or less affiliated group which includes Cecil Day Lewis, John Lehmann, A. J. Tessimond, William Plomer, and a half-dozen others—by far the most distinctive are W. H. Auden and Stephen Spender. Spender is twenty-five; Auden is somewhat older. Both attended Oxford together, both loomed on the literary horizon in England at about the same time, winning the acclaim of critics as different in their esthetic and philosophic outlook as T. S. Eliot and Hugh Walpole. Of the two, Spender's rise was the more spectacular, and the appraisers hailed his "Poems," published in England a year ago when Spender was scarcely twenty-four, as the most significant "first book" of the generation.

As a matter of fact, it was not Spender's first book; it was his third. I doubt if his first book is procurable. That little green paper pamphlet, entitled "Nine Experiments," was set up by Spender and printed on a little hand-press in a suburb of London early in 1928. While the belated Georgians were still invoking literary laverocks, lonely lambs, and traditionally deathless nightingales, Spender was hailing the advent of another order and writing such poems as "Come, let us praise the Gasworks."

The note was intensified in "Twenty Poems," published two years later, while Spender was at Oxford. There is a not unnatural uncertainty here, a turning-in upon himself with alternating doubt and defiance; but the "Marston" verses sound a depth untouched by any of the younger Englishmen, and grimness is given a new dignity in the lines written along the Rhine beginning, "A whim of time, the general arbiter."

There is nothing hesitant or tentative in the more recent "Poems"; the fusion is complete, the maturity manifest in every verse. The American edition is not only a handsomer volume than the English book, but more inclusive since it contains nine new poems, one of which is the moving "Van der Lubbe," written shortly after the Reichstag fire. Spender's subject matter is arresting—unfortunately, I think—for it directs too much attention on externals and leads to controversy about that which matters least in poetry. Spender himself is a little too conscious, even too belligerent, about his properties. Riding in a train, watching the world hasten away "like the quick pool of a film," he sees the



JAMES BUCHANAN BRADY