

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 intoxi-

cating 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



STEPHEN SPENDER

grass, the cottage by the lake, the familiar symbols, "vivid but unreal."

Real were iron lines, and, smashing the
grass
The cars in which we ride, and real our
compelled time:
Painted on enamel beneath the moving
glass
Unreal were cows, the wave-winged
storks, the lime:
These burned in a clear world from
which we pass
Like rose and love in a forgotten rhyme.

Such expressions, reaching a kind of climax in "The Funeral," "The Prisoners," and the concluding poem, "Not palaces, an era's crown," have been pointed out as the first full utterance in English poetry of the communist attitude—the attitude that the self is important only in so far as it contributes to the general welfare. It is a perfectly logical attitude, but it is not the philosophy which makes Spender's work so vigorous and exciting. It is the power of his feeling, the disdain of emotional as well as verbal clichés, the nobility of his impulse, the sheer thrust of his phrases, naked, direct, and yet lyrical.

Auden's "Poems" are also the expressions of a communist poet and an equally powerful one. Auden is both a more prolific and a more uneven writer than Spender. He is sometimes so obscure as to be almost unintelligible, sometimes as sharp as the concise inscription to Christopher Isherwood, to whom Spender's volume is likewise dedicated:

Let us honour if we can
The vertical man
Though we value none
But the horizontal one.

Yet even when he is most difficult of comprehension, forsaking abstractions he no longer trusts to embrace symbols with which he is not yet at ease, there is an eloquence which convinces beyond the material. "Paid on Both Sides" is a thirty-page charade which, in its confusion of purpose and effects, will baffle intelligences higher than the average. Yet every individual scene is dynamic, and there are brilliant passages throughout, such as the monologue of the Man-Woman as prisoner of war, and the chorus which begins:

To throw away the key and walk away.

Both these passages call attention to Auden's technical gifts. Surpassing Spender in his use of shifting rhyme and other devices of sound, he is the most daring and successful experimenter (with the exception of MacLeish) since Wilfred Owen. A single reading will barely suggest the skill of Auden's metric and the integrity of his idiom, maintained through all the varying forms. He employs suspensions and "analyzed" rhyme with great freedom; mingles assonance with perfect rhyme; and explores the limbo between prose and verse, between music and mathematics.

Some readers will be won by the more forthright declarations of Spender; others will prefer the richer, if more recondite, rhetoric of Auden. Auden's swift play of drama, irony, and bitter burlesque is heightened by a restless imagination; Spender's lack of humor is more than compensated by his intensity—a characteristic which has caused some critics to compare him to Shelley. But whichever the reader may choose—if a choice is necessary—the result will be something significant and stirring. Spender and Auden are the two most original new poets who have appeared in England since the Great War and the Greater Disintegration.

The BOWLING GREEN

Interpolation

I'M supposed to be writing about South America; but you must allow an interpolation. It's hard to keep my mind on South America as I sit here at the window of one of my favorite hotels, the sweet-smelling old Congress in Chicago, and see Lake Michigan fading into the dusk. And yet when I had my first view of Chicago from the lake, the other afternoon, her tall skyline in sunset light reminded me of the Andes. Chicago's peaks are more evenly disposed than Manhattan's, not clumped in separate bristles; and the wide perspective of the lake allows them to be seen in broad range. New York, the narrow city, is usually seen obliquely. As I said to a reporter who insisted upon comment, New York's angle of vision is more acute; Chicago's more obtuse. The remark was perhaps not well chosen.

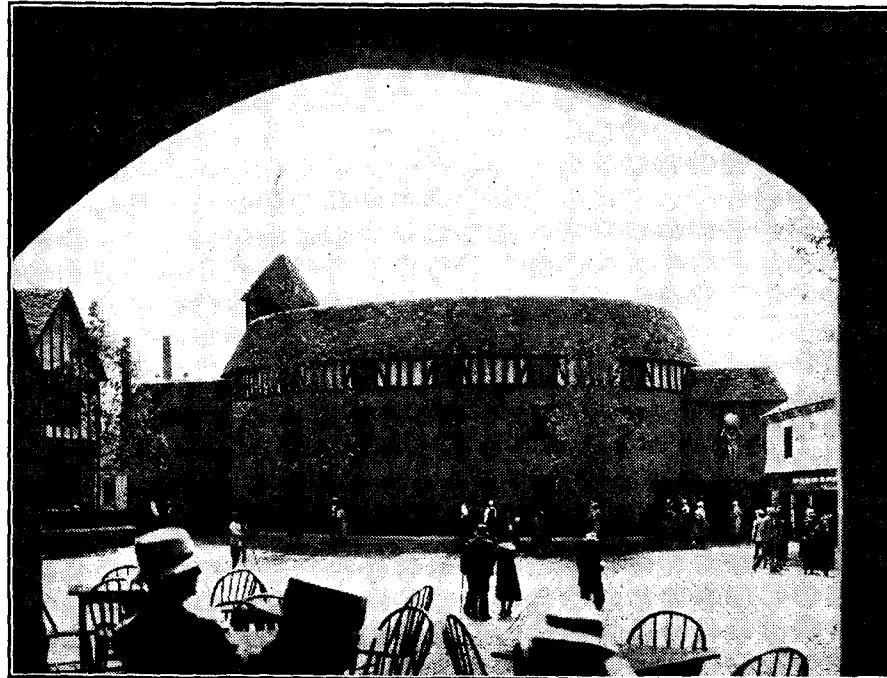
By the kindness of a friend I had a brief voyage in a big Diesel yacht, the *Mizpah*, before Commander McDonald rang "Finished with Engines" for the season. Big as a small liner she lay rolling in the long freshwater swells. It was odd and thrilling to stand up on her bridge in that keen air, feel a plunging sway as authentic as any our *Santa Maria* tilted off the coast of Peru, and realize that this was an ocean inland. Chicago has always given me the enchantment of incessant paradox. Our commander and his yachtsman friend on the bridge wore the caps of the Imperial Yacht Club of Kiel, yet they are not Germans. The breakwaters were whitened by thousands of perching gulls, yet it was not salt water. Those islets are not (as they would be in Peru) fortresses for political prisoners but intakes to provide the city with drink and laundry. Far in the distance were the towers and odd shapes of the great World's Fair—a modernistic enterprise where the most successful venture has been an imitation of an old English village and a thrilling Elizabethan production of Shakespeare and Marlowe.

Chicago always gives one much to think about; thoughts difficult to pursue to conclusion. I was anxious for reasons of my own to get some information about the geography of Iowa and asked the telephone operator if she could tell me. She was uncertain, but said she could put me on to a gentleman who would know. I supposed perhaps it was some good-natured Iowan staying in the hotel; he told me what I needed, even referring to a catalogue of the University of Iowa for some point of detail; then was quietly gone off the wire before I could properly thank him. So I explained to the operator that I hadn't meant to bother some stranger. "Oh that was no stranger," she said, "that was the Chicago Tribune. Anything you want to know you can always find out from them."

If that were only so! Can they tell me why the miracle of Chicago always stirs and troubles me so strangely? The beauty of its wide lakeshore plazas—so little used except by rubber tires—and a few blocks away those dark congested streets and gloaming alleys. Its sudden juxtapositions of splendor and squalor always seem more like London than any other city I know. I've always noticed an odd tinge of cockney in its temperament: its love of Old English Chop Houses must have sharpened the appetite for the remarkable success of "Merrie England," the only part of the great Fair which I had opportunity to see. There, at the "Red Lion" or the "Cheshire Cheese" (if you could pry your way in) you could find grilled sausage and mashed, or boiled fish and chips, or steak and kidney pie, or beef and Yorkshire pudding and horseradish, such plenitude of brussels sprouts, pickled walnuts, Banbury cakes and toasted cheese as were necessary on an autumn evening as cold

and moist as Fleet Street itself. They tell the story of a Chicago journalist in London who had been forced hundreds of times to take American visitors to the original Cheshire Cheese, until he wearied to death of that tourist-ridden inn. His paper finally recalled him to Chicago; he was loth to leave London but at least, he thought, he was quit of the Cheese for good. He returned home; and the first night here his friends said "Now we'll take you to a place you'll really enjoy and understand—the Cheshire Cheese."

Perhaps it is the Elizabethan gift of gusto that made the Shakespearean performances so admirable at the Chicago Fair. In counterfeit presentment of the old Globe Theatre (so far as we know that theatre's construction—except only that the top was open to an imitation sky, not the real one) Mr. Thomas Wood Stevens's excellent company performed a repertory of seven Shakespeare plays and Dr. Faustus. Three or four plays were given every afternoon and evening; each one cut down to a running time of about forty-five minutes. Naturally under such vigorous cut-



THE OLD GLOBE THEATRE
As reproduced in Chicago, 1934.

ting there were scenes and passages forfeited; but the physical arrangement of the old innyard stage lends itself to extraordinary speed, and the pattern, tempo and brilliant continuity of these tabloid pieces were beyond praise. What Mr. Stevens has done is to streamline Shakespeare; and one could learn more of the dramatist's brilliant sense of flow and movement than in many months of library study. When the doors of the theatre were opened, each hour, it was good to see the waiting audience rush in and seize places on the benches. In the mood and surroundings of the Fair something was lost of that frosty sense that they were seeing something literary; I can well imagine that the plays might have been witnessed by those who never even heard of Shakespeare and their comment would be that it was a good show. The pace and verve of the playing were as lively as first-class vaudeville or burlesque (the branches of the stage which kept alive the sense of speed through generations of schoolmarm theatre) and in the case of Dr. Faustus there was a real evocation of horror. I was only able to see one evening's bill (*Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Faustus*, *Taming of the Shrew*) but it brought the stage back to my business and bosom more than anything in years. They told me that in the closing days of the Fair they had had to turn away customers in thousands. And you can hardly blame me for being pleased when a lady, at the performance of Dr. Faustus, heard my name and said

"Isn't it nice he could be here for the production of his own play?"

There was an anecdote in one of the Chicago newspapers the other day, describing a young woman riding on a street-car with a book open on her lap. It was a textbook on psychology and lay open at the chapter on "Attention," while the student "gazed idly out of the window for blocks and blocks." Miss June Provines, alert columnist of the Chicago Tribune, found this amusing; as of course it is. But the faculty of Attention is very subtle and variable; it cannot always be methodically directed. We may even suppose ourselves to be thinking about something quite different from what is really in the central stream of the mind; it's quite possible that what the day-dreaming young student was thinking about was more important than the lessons of the textbook. The whole effort of imaginative literature today, it seems to me, is to control and insulate Attention, not unlike the attempt of the mechanical engineers to reduce unnecessary wind resistance, friction wastage. The streamline treatment given Shakespeare's plays by Mr. Stevens and his company made them pierce through the outer fuzz of distraction or disregard, and plunge at once into the quick of the audience's apprehension. It was a fascinating achievement.

In Chicago more than anywhere I realize how I have gone bad as a journalist; for though I see many interesting things I always wish to postpone writing about them until I've thought them over. It re-

minds me of the curious case printed in the newspapers about a year ago. A rancher in the State of Washington was found to offer so powerful a bodily resistance to radio waves that he stored up electricity in himself to a painful degree. Occasionally this surcharge dissipated itself in convulsive shocks that caused him great suffering; if a radio was turned on anywhere near him he suffered torments. He had been ingenious enough to carry a cane wrapped with wire, which grounded this random voltage and gave him some relief; but the occasion of the news item was that an electrical engineer had designed for him a condensing device to go up his arms and inside his coat; an aperitive for these invisible fevers.

I may have the technical details rather shaky, but the analogy has often occurred to me. The practising journalist must offer no resistance to the general literary electricity that surrounds him. It must flow through him easily and swiftly, and not accumulate in painful tensions or be stepped up to higher amperage by any desire to interpret. So I will not try to find any special symbolism in Chicago's wistfulness these recent days, regretting that her great Century of Progress was about to close. On a wet autumn morning she tied open every whistle valve for five minutes and sent her roar of valediction to the rainy sky. I won't say—as probably every editorialist will—that even Nature wept.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.