

# Ships, Men, and Whales

*REVOLT AT SEA.* By Irvin Anthony.  
New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1937.  
\$3.

*DOWN TO THE SEA.* By George Blake.  
Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.  
1937. \$3.50.

*THE WHALERS.* By Dr. Felix Maynard  
and Alexandre Dumas. Translated by  
F. W. Reed. New York: Hillman-Curl,  
Inc. 1937. \$3.

Reviewed by ALEXANDER LAING

THE first of these books assembles twenty-six accounts of mutiny: ten famous cases, several known to all qualified armchair seamen, and a few dug up from present obscurity. Mr. Anthony begins with Magellan and ends with the outbreak in the *Zeven Provinciën* of the Netherlands East Indies squadron in 1933. His bibliography of some sixty titles shows an effort to get at original sources. His style is full of abruptness, suiting the character of the tale except when it degenerates into "fine writing" at some climaxes. But the book's structure—a stringing-together of narratives unrelated except in their repetition of one basic plot—presents problems which the author has ignored. After working up a few stories, he became wary of repetition of the recurrent essentials, with the result that some of the episodes seem very sketchy indeed. In any story of mutiny one job is basic: to make the reader feel the intolerable circumstances which make men willing to risk their lives for a doubtful and probably brief recapture of command over their own destinies. Mr. Anthony tries this a few times. Elsewhere he narrates the outward facts, which by themselves usually make no sense.

In "Down to the Sea," George Blake furthers his already decisive claim to be called the Barrie of the waterfront. Beyond that, we have here history of the "one fancies" and "it might be worth while looking up" variety. Anyone not exasperated by such evasions can read in this book a great deal about ships and personalities concerned with the development of the Clyde. To do so, however, it is necessary to cope with a lumberingly playful style that often has the appearance of self-parody.

Dr. Maynard's book is of a different order. The doctor served in whaling ships that did most of their fishing in New Zealand waters in the latter 1830s and 40s. He had the inquiring mind so typical of ships' surgeons in that period, and some errors of natural history noted by the re-editor and the translator of his book may be the work in part of the original editor, Alexandre Dumas (the father). It is not difficult to detect the passages that were brightened up by Dumas. Johannes C.

Andersen, who contributes a foreword and many useful notes, points to the likelihood that Dumas, always a frantically busy man, found little to change in the original account and gave it the benefit of his patronage rather more than that of his pen.

The book first appeared in 1858 under a title which has been literally Englished: "Les Baleiniers." Its interest is equally divided between the technique of the chase at sea and contacts with the Maori ashore. In the latter respect it "tells us new things about those old days which some of us

fancy we know from dawn to dusk." This tribute means something: Mr. Anderson, who writes it in his preface, is one of the few thorough scholars in the culture of old New Zealand. The whaling episodes are equally trustworthy, and are remarkable in their representation of the whale's point of view. The animal's sufferings are conveyed more pointedly than even by Melville. Altogether, this is one of the more notable reprints of recent years. Technically it is more than that. It is the first appearance of the book in English. The translation, except for the fact that the translator enjoys dangling his participles, is adequate.

Alexander Laing is the author of "The Sea Witch."

## Poor House to White House

*SOME FOR THE GLORY.* By Louis Zara.  
Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co. 1937.  
\$2.75.

Reviewed by JOSEPH F. DINNEEN

IF Louis Zara presents his story of William Hawks as satire it misses fire badly, and if he is trying to show that a poor but honest lad can go from the poor house to the White House backed by crooks, thieves, pimps, and grafters, he does not succeed and sacrifices both his story and his characters in the effort. I don't know whether the reader is expected to admire William Hawks or feel sympathy for him, but after reviewing his career through Zara's eyes, I find William Hawks to be a prime sap in his political and family life. I don't know of a city where a man like him could be elected keeper of the pound. I could neither like him, hate him, nor feel sorry for him.

The only tough breaks Hawks ever got were his birth and his childhood. He was farmed out of an orphanage to a tinsmith and, while he was still a child, fell from a roof while repairing a gutter. He broke his arm and the tinsmith set it improperly so that it was crooked for life. The tinsmith died and William Hawks went back to the orphanage to be farmed out to a printer. From that time forward the world is William Hawks's oyster. He solves all problems as simply as snapping his fingers and his rise in politics is inexplicable and meteoric. Nothing stops him. He goes from political street captain to precinct lieutenant, to district leader, Board of Aldermen, the Mayor's chair, becomes Governor, U. S. Senator, and on to the Presidency. It is true that he is not elected President, but the reader

is left with the idea that four years hence he will be.

He marries the perfect wife, a seamstress who snuggles up close to him in bed, saves his money, agrees with him completely, and once there is a vague hint that she might be two-timing him by running about with the city's leading retail merchant. Whether she did or did not the record fails to show. If she did I couldn't blame her because Hawks was pretty much of a bore. Bawdy houses financed Hawks's campaigns, and yet Hawks protests that his hands are clean because he doesn't collect the money. His campaign committee collects it and spends it. When he gets \$10,000 in graft, he endows a hospital bed with it.

He lives during the period between the gay nineties and the beginning of radio in politics, and I am afraid that Zara, only twenty-seven years old according to the jacket of the book, has difficulty projecting himself back into that period because his characters behave like today's politicians. The city he writes about is not named and his politician is neither a Cermack, a Curley, a Walker, nor a LaGuardia. There is nothing like him in American politics and I don't think there ever will be. His political disclosures are not new and his scandals can be found in the current daily papers of any city or in newspaper morgues.

If I had been reading manuscript on this, I would have voted no and recommended that it go back to the author for revision. Hawks and his wife ought to be humanized and the story could stand a good deal of pruning and tightening up.

Joseph F. Dinneen, who is on the staff of the Boston Globe, is the author of "Ward Eight," a political novel.



Jacket of "Some for the Glory."

# The BOWLING GREEN by Christopher Morley

## "No Crabb No Christmas"

WHAT is so exciting, after the discovery of a joint enthusiasm, as the interchange of equivalent ignorances? We had revelled in our mutual passion for John Aubrey, then my hostess spoke of the *Creevey Papers*. Of Creevey (1768-1838) I knew nothing, but I countered with my own favorite of that period, Henry Crabb Robinson (1775-1867). We agreed each to explore the other's, and now I hear from my host that he is hunting Crabb Robinson for his lady's Christmas. This is a little memo for him to slip into her stocking with the book.

A note on good old H.C.R. is appropriate at this season. It was he who always sent Charles Lamb a turkey for his Christmas dinner—"what a genuine old Bachelor's action!" wrote C. L. to Wordsworth. Another kindly thought of this good soul was to give Mary Lamb a long-handled scoop to save her back when bending to the coal-scuttle. Look up, if you care to, Lamb's message of thanks, p. 210 in the third volume of Mr. Lucas's great *Letters*. (Published by the Yale University Press and not even the Yale Bowl could be more filled with humanity). I was always shocked to notice Mr. Arthur Ponsonby, in his interesting book on *English Diaries*, rather condescending toward Crabb Robinson. Ponsonby thinks he "lacked the finer perceptions" and may have been "an awful bore." I doubt it. Bores did not win and keep the friendship of Lamb, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Blake (to mention only a few of that astonishing muster of affection), nor win such a welcome from Goethe. A bore would scarcely have been invited to tour the Continent with the Wordsworths, nor would a man without fine feeling have refrained from asking Charles about Mary when he knew that she was in one of her spells. His annual visit to Rydal at Christmas time was as much a part of the festival as the holly, so wrote Quillinan, Wordsworth's son-in-law—"No Crabb, no Christmas!" And Mary Lamb cried out affectionately (and a little madly) when he went to see her after Charles's death: "Here's Crabby, come to see me in my affliction." O, if for nothing else I should cherish our Crabb for his note about Lamb's library. "He has the finest collection of shabby books I ever saw; such a number of first-rate works in very bad condition is nowhere to be found." But somehow, as he says that, don't you feel some of the handsome expensive collections fading and shrinking and looking embarrassed?

There's nothing especially witty or sub-

tle about old Crabb: his quality is good Suffolk candor and conscience. "My family is as insignificant as can be imagined." He liked to take the part of the underdog in his work as barrister. He was grieved when he found (it's a startling episode in the Diary) a publisher in the pillory for having printed Paine's *Age of Reason*. (This was in 1812). He was much gratified to be one of the earliest members of the Athenæum—"a genteel establishment" he accurately calls it. He thought Dr. Dibdin, the famous bibliographer, was "too boyish in his laugh for a D.D." At his famous breakfast parties he made use of a tooth from the battlefield of Waterloo. This was put into his mouth in January 1816 by a Jewish dentist who assured him it would outlast twelve artificial teeth. He attended the famous lectures by Hazlitt and Coleridge, and tells us how terrible Hazlitt was at first. "He seems to have no conception of the difference between a lecture and a book. What he said was sensible and excellent, but he delivered himself in a low monotonous voice, with his eyes fixed on his MS., not once daring to look at his audience." We are glad to learn that Hazlitt "vastly improved" later. He was a great attender at lectures: many years later (1848) he notes of Emerson's talk on "The Laws of Thought" that it was "a rhapsodical exercise, leaving a dreamy sense of pleasure not easy to analyze." And of a subsequent lecture by Emerson, "I dare say the most liberal ever heard in Exeter Hall." He

was always much interested in America, and a great admirer of Abraham Lincoln.

But this is only a note for the toe of a stocking: we can't possibly cover the whole career. For my own amusement I looked through his Diary to see how he spent his Christmases. You must remember that this was a hard-working and self-made man who had been a travelling correspondent for the *Times*, a barrister on circuit, and later a founder and constant adviser of University College, London; a practical benevolent, the perfect type of Bachelor Uncle and no mere dilettante.

Christmas 1815 he was studying Paley's *Evidences* and resolving to consider religion more thoroughly.

Christmas 1819, having moved to new chambers (in The Temple, I think), he spent in arranging his books. "Putting in order is a delightful occupation."

In December 1820 he was particularly interested in Keats. He read aloud some of *Hyperion* to friends, and noted "there are a force, wildness, and originality in the works of this young poet which, if his perilous journey to Italy does not destroy him, promise to place him at the head of the next generation of poets." The day after Christmas—after a hospitable dinner—he read the *Eve of St. Agnes*, and reproaches himself for feeling drowsy. "Early decay of my faculties," he says mournfully: it is amusing to remark that he lived vigorously over 46 years longer.

In 1824 he had Christmas dinner with Captain (later Sir John) Franklin, the



WHITE HORSE TAVERN IN DOVER STREET: Where Crabb Robinson often took coach. Painting by Edward Halliday. (From The Studio).