

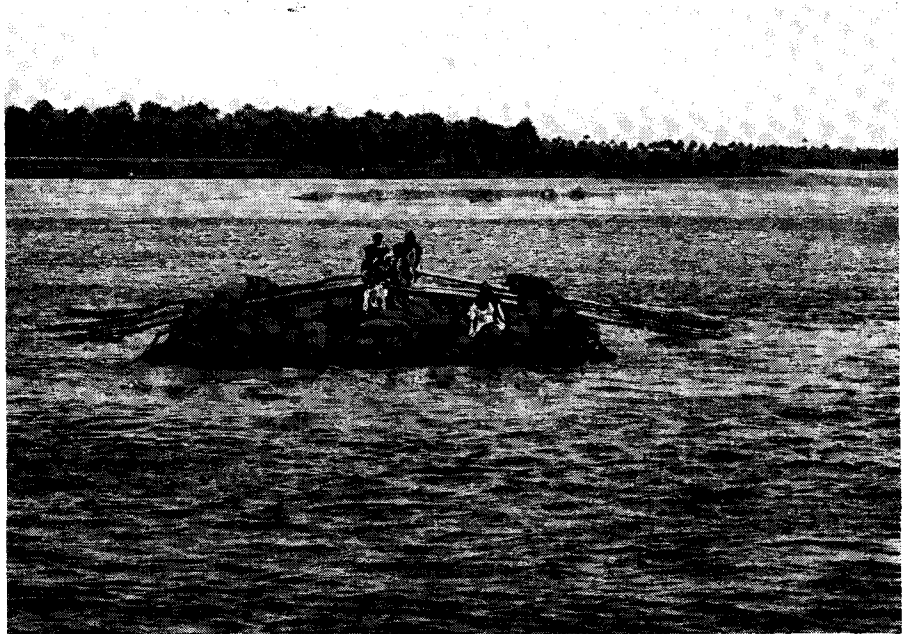
American Empire

BLACK FOREST. By Meade Minnigerode. New York: Farrar & Rinehart. 1937. \$2.50.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

MR. MINNIGERODE'S new book is a rapidly-paced novel, divided into three parts and bracketed between the dates 1754 and 1788. The plot of the volume ends in a burst of pure melodrama; the story is always exciting and, sometimes, truly poignant. What is most interesting is the historical background, the atmosphere of the period. Mr. Minnigerode is not an American historical novelist of the calibre of, say, Kenneth Roberts, but his research revivifies an important chapter of the American chronicle. You are immediately introduced to the struggles of the French and the English for footholds in an Indian-infested region, to the early traders of George Croghan's time and the early Western movement, when "West" meant West of the Ohio. You have the fur trade and the French War and "Virginia's perpetual dog fight with Pennsylvania." When you come to the American Revolution, in the second part, it is seen from the standpoint of Land Company shareholders in Pittsburgh—the whole Land Company "racket" of the period being thoroughly described. When Croghan (who is, of course, an actual historical character) tries to define what kind of American patriot he is, he remarks, "I stand to lose a fortune if an American Congress steps in and starts nullifying English Acts or decisions," but he adds, "I still affect to believe that our charters to colonize the West will come from England. But that is no longer true. England has determined to prevent any American expansion. . . And the day that I saw that, I became a patriot." His dream is of "an American Empire of the West."

Mr. Minnigerode has read his history unsentimentally. He has not, however, written his novel unsentimentally; and he has made full use of the long arm of coincidence. That he has taken minor liberties with history is of no importance. This he acknowledges, and it is perfectly allowable in a work of fiction. But though his cast of characters is for the most part composed of people who live and breathe, his creation of at least two quite appalling villains strains one's credulity. The author writes rhythmically, sometimes with too staccato a cadence, and sometimes with too much mannerism and device—italicized repetition of phrase, impressionism, and overstress. But he knows how to pitch the French temperament against the Anglo-Saxon, and he shows quite significantly the fierce aboriginal pride working in the mixed blood of a French-Indian like Andrew Montour. At the beginning of the book, the bridal journey of Angus and Solange and its climax at Croghan's is a blend of ro-



KALEK (INFLATED GOATSKIN RAFT) ON THE EUPHRATES
From "Many Rivers."

mance, human nature, and gusty humor that one should applaud. There are high points all through.

Mr. Minnigerode has the faculty for giving us scene, speech, and the heroic flavor of early America, and he spans two eighteenth-century generations. Neatly as he articulates his plot, however, one can only hope that next time he may shade the violent black and white of his fictional characters and dish out less melodrama without sacrificing drama. For this book contains rich material for those who like to get at the truth of American history.

See page 18 for biographical note on Meade Minnigerode.

Adventures Afloat

MANY RIVERS. By Lewis R. Freeman. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company. 1937. \$3.

Reviewed by CLARK B. FIRESTONE

RIVERS are scenic backdrops for the adventures of this author in widely scattered regions of the earth. If not entirely an explorer—save in the final chapter, in which he is seen handling a boat for the Geological Survey through the Grand Canyon—Mr. Freeman is by no means a tranquil traveler. During three decades of adventurous wandering, he went in for rough stuff.

It all began when a Yukon prospector said to him: "Rivers are your friends. They take you where you want to go." To such as he, a natural oarsman with fingers that could tear a pack of cards in twain, they proved to be friends. But not always to his companions. For example, the subhead of Chapter VIII: "The Bush Papuans killed my guide and friend, but in escaping down river in one of their canoes I unwittingly kidnapped

a village belle." In another river adventure, laid in the high Andes, three cowboys of the author's party were drowned in a whirlpool.

The usual travel writer's claim, that his wanderings were "off the beaten track," goes for this book four times over. Voyaging down the Yellowstone, Mr. Freeman comes across the one and only "Calamity Jane," middle-aged and half-seas over. In the Colorado delta, he shoots wild pigs, deer, and coyotes, and mistakes the water tumult made at night by the wings of innumerable pelicans for a tidal bore from the nearby Pacific. In Tahiti he follows a "River of Rhythm" back to a woodland where seductive brown maidens dance the hula. In Tibet he follows the run-off of the roof of the world to a region where they play a wild sort of polo and the women have three husbands apiece. In a well-named chapter, "By the Rivers of Babylon," there is an all-too-brief account of short jaunts in a circular goatskin craft on the Euphrates. There is even a nocturnal journey in a Caribbean land down a river which the author ventures to call the Styx.

The bravura note is sounded, almost inevitably, in parts of this narrative. Sometimes the streams are so far away from the story that their music is unheard. Yet the author is by no means unconscious of what more tranquil travel writers would call their "spell"; passages of vivid description illumine his well-told narrative. His own photographs accompany the text. For the reader, the final picture is of rivers that go about their several missions in the far corners of the earth, and, as the author tells you, "take you where you want to go."

Clark Firestone, who is on the staff of the Cincinnati Times-Star, is the author of "Sycamore Shores," an account of the rivers of the Middle West.

The BOWLING GREEN by Christopher Morley

The Trojan Horse

XVII. (Continued)

I COULDN'T have stood much more of that, Troilus begins harshly. Don't say anything, she whispers. For a little while. Let me find me. . . . And, after a silence: Now say it.

What.

You know. Our talisman.

Beauty never guessed before . . .

(She shivers a little in his arms).

TROILUS—This is the dress you wore at Sarpedoni's.

CRESSIDA—You know them now by heart.

TROILUS—Like a tree of fruit in April gear

You cloud your firmness and your branchy limbs

In gauze and silver bloom. But underneath

Yourself is whiter still.

CRESSIDA—You said white wasn't a good word.

TROILUS—Tonight we will not stay to choose our words.

There will be time in surplus, nights to come.

CRESSIDA—No . . . no!—Then came our summer wind

And stripped me of my petals and pretence.

TROILUS—That night you danced with Paris; and I thought:

Even her body, under all that lustre, Is scarcely dark.

CRESSIDA—My mind is dark enough.

How black the thought must be, inside the brain.

TROILUS—Yes, black indeed. I was awake last night.

You know that gap half way across the dark

Where stars fall in, sleep founders, and the mind,

A frightened swimmer, elbows for the shore.

Then common things, acceptable by day, Turn haggard; life is filthy on the tongue;

Faces that you love are old and sorry . . .

O fill my eyes with whiteness

To help me through the dark; and smooth my fingers

On luxuries of touch

To keep a memory for empty hands.

CRESSIDA—Here is one face that is not old—nor sorry.

TROILUS—And if long looking push the dark away

Then ears grow keen to horror:

The furious insect-chorus of the fields Goes mockery-whistling on. The grassy troops

Are mobilized in all their murder-kit For some last senseless onset of despair.

So are we all. Cassandra's right. We're done.

See this? A pretty symbol! Voice and face.

Your insect cavalier; the praying mantis

Or prophet-beetle!

(He blows his trench-whistle, and whips out his gas mask and holds it to his face; which does indeed make him resemble some monstrous insect. Cressida gently puts it aside).

CRESSIDA—Let's sit down and have a smoke.—Will you pour me a drink?

TROILUS—Does every other feel my private pang.

The little secret stabs of circumstance, The comic molecules that make me, me?

CRESSIDA—Yes, all; and all are cunning to conceal.

Of every midnight twinge that cramps the heart,

Bethink you, Cressida has known it too.

TROILUS—I remember, when I was a child

I used to take a boat, down at the shore,

And drift about on sleepy afternoons Between the wrinkled windrows of the sea.

The sunshine veined the wave with seams of light

But there with naked summer on my back

I knew it was too happy to endure:

I knew that I was damned.

CRESSIDA—Some day I'll tell you about my private horrors. I've got some beauties.

(But the liquor, blessed anodyne, is changing the rhythm). What do I care for Troy fallen, or risen either, he cries; or any other thing, now you're here; you tangible. Let's go away together; now, tonight. Pan says we can take his car.

No, darling; it just won't work. It'd be a washout. You must have something to be faithful to; that's the kind you are.

I can be faithful to you.

I'm not big enough.

TROILUS—O, for a few unblemished blessed weeks

I knew things at their worth, and loved the world—

My horse, my dog, my sword, my everything—

The better for my ecstasy of you.

Laugh at me if you will:

Even in my wardrobe I would say:

I wore this when I last knew Cressida.

CRESSIDA—And after all this rich discovery.

We now recant? So sorry for ourselves?

TROILUS—Forgive me. I guess I'm gibbering.

CRESSIDA—My blessed, when you know a woman's heart

So easy to be wrung, you will not wring it.

They take a mutually propitiating drink. Here's to us!

CRESSIDA—Silly as it sounds, I've got my little job to do also. I don't know whether Daddy is really sick or not, but I've got to find out; and maybe I can learn something about the Greek plans. The Horse, for instance.

TROILUS—How long will you be gone?

CRESSIDA—Ten days, I should think. I can't possibly stay longer than that, I haven't got clothes.

TROILUS—Well that's good to know.

CRESSIDA—Think how glad you'll be to see Antenor.

TROILUS—Sure; and every time I see his homely pan I'll think of the one who ransomed him. There's lots of you I haven't given names to yet. Here's something I never saw before: this little flattened hollow in your upper lip. Something ought to be done about that.

CRESSIDA—We could get over some of the ground now . . . and then we'd still have something to look forward to when I get back.

TROILUS—Since I'm responsible for delivering you, I'll take charge of the return trip too. Ten days' leave of absence, that's all you get. Understand?

CRESSIDA—Darling, you know I'll do my best.

TROILUS—I've brought you something as a pledge and a luck-piece.

He gives her a little ornament in gold and blue enamel.

O Troilus, it's your squadron-pin. I know how much that means to you.

It means Ten Days' Leave. You swear? I swear.

You can count them every day when you put it on. And if the Greeks make any difficulty about coming back, Zeus-almighty, I'll bring over the whole regiment and take you by force.

But tonight, she whispers, force won't be necessary.

XVIII. Too Bright for My Eyes

There's still heavy morning shadow inside the deep tunnelled gateway. Sentries on duty stand rigorously to attention as the taxicab rolls slowly in over the ancient cobbles. She is jolted against him.

Even the rough stones of the world, he

(Continued on page 14)