

Elizabethan Seafarers

THE AGE OF DRAKE. By James A. Williamson. New York: The Macmillan Co. (London: Black.) 1938. \$5.

Reviewed by CRANE BRINTON

LIKE the other volumes of the "Pioneer Histories" of which it is a part, Mr. Williamson's "The Age of Drake" is an authoritative scholarly summary of our present knowledge of the subject. The editors announce as their aim "readable narratives which are neither pedantic nor journalistic" and though both these last adjectives are somewhat imprecise—neither pedants nor journalists are likely to see themselves as others see them—we may grant that in this volume the editorial aim has been reasonably well achieved. The Elizabethan sea-dogs have tempted others than Froude to rhetoric. Mr. Williamson writes soberly and clearly, in the useful tradition of modern professional historical scholarship.

Yet the scholar as well as the general reader may well feel just a bit cheated in this book. Mr. Williamson was no doubt wise in avoiding attempts at fire and color. There is no lack of either in many writings about the Elizabethan period. But he may have let his fear of being thought journalistic shut him off from matters well worth the attention of the soberest historian. His narrative is too close to the bare skeleton of political history to be as interesting as it might be. He summarizes admirably the voyages and fights of Hawkins, for instance. But he does not try to tell us how Hawkins got his cargoes of blacks, how a slave ship looked, how the slaves were disposed of in the New World. At any rate he gives but the barest indications on these matters. He lists the partners in many of these sea ventures, but he does not go into the relations between capitalists in London and Bristol and captains and men on the sea. Yet economic historians have dug up a good deal about these things, and their findings belong in just such a survey as this.

One further grief, old though it is, must come out. Englishmen are at their most persistently English when they are writing about Elizabethan seafarers. There is no great harm in this, but when they are as insistent as Mr. Williamson is on the writing of history undistorted by propaganda the American reviewer can hardly be blamed for falling into old habits, and noting with glee that the British lion is still a lion, and not a subtler animal. The French in the Caribbean are to Mr. Williamson plain pirates, but he insists that Hawkins was at the worst an "interloper" in Spanish dominions closed to foreign traders. Well, Hawkins took Rio de la Hacha on the Spanish Main after a formal attack and burned part of the town, which seems pretty violent interloping. Mr. Williamson, who describes this incident carefully, writes that "Hawkins's handling of the situation is a rich example of practical psychology." He is even better on Drake, who, he writes, "was levying war in the character of a privateer, and was morally not a pirate." This refers to Drake's raids on the gold

trains across the Isthmus of Panama in 1571, at a time when the English and the Spanish were not at war. The Japanese certainly have learned a lot from us Westerners.

Crane Brinton is a member of the history department of Harvard University.

Familiar Lines

POETRY AND ITS FORMS. By Mason Long. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1938. \$2.75.

Reviewed by LOUIS UNTERMAYER

AS the author of one book on the subject and as the co-author of another which attempts to plow new furrows in the same dragged-over field, this reviewer must (to change the agrarian metaphor midstream) steer a course between generosity and justice. Generosity prompts him to say that Professor Long has arranged his book under sixteen attractive headings; justice makes him conclude that the book says little, if anything, new about poetry, its forms, devices, aims, variations, history, values, and effects. It is built solidly, even stolidly, on favorite familiar lines, and the choice of illustrative poems exhibits lines which are even more familiar. Professor Long's approach is the "genial academic" one; it is a purposeful mixture of the scholarly and the popular, a mixture that never quite blends.

Considering that the objective of this volume is stimulation and the quickening of the reader's responses, one might imagine that considerable emphasis would be placed upon modern poetry. On the contrary, the attention to the contemporary scene is casual and misleading. There is no consideration of the Imagists and their influence upon rhetoric; no mention of the new tone effected by Archibald MacLeish, Ezra Pound, and T. S. Eliot; nothing concerning the newer experiments in form by Auden, Spender, and Muriel Rukeyser; the index does not even list such important and representative names as Walter de la Mare, Edgar Lee Masters, Wilfred Owen, Gerard Manley Hopkins,

William Rose Benét, and Elinor Wylie. There is a chapter devoted to Light Verse, but Ogden Nash, Newman Levy, Phyllis McGinley, Arthur Guiterman, Samuel Hoffenstein, and Dorothy Parker are not to be found in it. A concluding chapter entitled Poetic Drama ends with Browning; Yeats is mentioned parenthetically, but not Synge, and recent American poetic dramatists, with the exception of Percy Mackaye, are not even suggested.

But it is the style which erects the greatest barrier between Professor Long's material and the reader's appreciation.

Nevertheless—even though it is a belated "nevertheless"—the book might well be added to the publisher's other elementary handbooks, such as his "Ready Speech-Maker," "Minute-a-Day English," and "Minute-a-Day Phrasemaker." It, too, is informative, simple, and free of the strain of novelty.

Louis Untermeyer is one of the best known poets and anthologists of the country. His "Modern British Poetry" and "Modern American Poetry" are standard works.

The English Scene

MAN'S ESTATE. By M. E. Ince. New York: Stackpole Sons. 1938. \$2.50.

THIS is another story of a young Englishman's love for the English land and a fine English girl. Barring the heroine's name, which is Meg, and the romance, which is incredible, the book is pretty smoothly done, and everything ties up nicely at the end.

A couple of weeks ago the Editor of The Saturday Review was writing about C-Plus fiction. This is it. Mr. Ince writes facetiously, he has a good sense of scene and incident, and the story is "pleasantly helped out with some humor here and some genuine pathos there." Yet one feels that he has tried to do more than that; that he has tried to write at least a straight B novel. Now that kind of novel requires that its thematic material be both vital and credible. The thematic material in "Man's Estate" is neither, and the story becomes, therefore, just another story. It lacks literary guts.

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
SALUTE BLUE MASK! Anthony Morton (Lippincott: \$2.)	"The Baron" temporarily retired to humdrum life resumes daring career to clear youngster accused of murder and theft.	Dodges of Baron to keep identity secret, avoid police, and quell criminals involve satisfying amount of der-ring-do.	Lively
MURDER IN SUFFOLK A. E. Fielding (Kinsey: \$2.)	Violent deaths of Scotland Yard operative and Arab in sandy wastes of Suffolk solved by Hugh Duncan, private investigator.	Slightly muddled but richly adventurous yarn of fabulous treasure and final discomfiture of desprit adventurer in search of it.	So-so
DEATH RIDES THE FOREST Rupert Grayson (Dutton: \$2.)	"Gun" Cotton, in Ruritanian surroundings to rescue friend, runs entire gamut of adventure.	Cloak and sword yarn with modern trimmings and an epic duel as wind-up.	Diverting

The New Books

Biography

TIME GATHERED. By W. B. Maxwell. Appleton-Century. 1938. \$3.50.

William Babington Maxwell who died last week, was a well-known English novelist, conservative, stalwart, and with a kindly nature. He has written not brilliantly but well, and has a shelf of books to his credit. He has enjoyed life and known a great many different kinds of people, as his present autobiography shows. Son of the famous Mary Elizabeth Braddon, whose "Lady Audley's Secret" impressed the Victorian era, he pays his remarkable mother fitting tribute in one chapter. His sketch of his Irish father is richly human. His memories of Oscar Wilde as a family friend, and of other literary personalities and interesting people, titled and untitled, are engaging.

As a young man, Mr. Maxwell loved the theater, liked the acquaintance of actresses, and enjoyed being a young-man-about-town. But he also suffered from melancholia and insomnia, and some of his earlier writing served as an antidote to these. After he had done a number of stories and articles, the publisher, Grant Richards, almost bulldozed him into signing up for a novel. His first was called "The Ragged Messenger" and achieved quite a success. Later on this author "did his bit" with considerable enthusiasm in the late Great War, though well into middle-age. He emerges in this sometimes vivid, sometimes dullish volume as a very friendly and human Englishman, who has had a happy family life and, on the whole, a happy life in his work. He ends, characteristically enough, with this injunction: "Kindness. Be kind to people. And then, when you have been as kind as you possibly can, be a little kinder still."

W. R. B.

Fiction

MEN ARE NOT STARS. By C. A. Mills-paugh. Doubleday, Doran. 1938. \$2.50.

According to the late Professor Irving Babbitt, the idea of the genius as a man apart from and above his fellows is less than a couple of hundred years old. During that time, in fiction, and in literary criticism the aspects of genius have been exhaustively considered, and a great many men of modest talent have become, through reading Nietzsche, quite confident of their exceptional destiny. We have never happened upon a book before "Men Are Not Stars" which was seriously concerned with this misapprehension, and it is an excellent subject for a novel.

Mr. Mills-paugh's hero, Daniel O'Riordan, had the good fortune to look exactly like a genius. He was large and striking in appearance, his vitality was almost unlimited, and he was invariably enthusiastic in speech and action. Nevertheless, he accomplished nothing that a mature mind could possibly admire. At a time when other American painters were beginning to look toward France, toward the Impressionists and the modern French

painters for their artistic guidance, he continued to turn out grandiose canvases, often twelve feet high and twenty feet wide, depicting Ulysses and the Sirens, or Solomon and Sheba, or Napoleon in Egypt. And each time that his masterpiece was ignored by the art critics, he turned pathetically to his family and his small circle of friends, who had to reassure him, to convey by word or look that they thought he was as great a painter as he believed himself to be.

Mr. Mills-paugh has chosen the right person to tell Daniel O'Riordan's story—his sensitive, adolescent son Jim—but the events are not presented as the boy saw them. Instead the reader has them recalled, examined, and sometimes too patiently explained to him by the author. And one finishes the book with dissatisfaction and even a certain amount of annoyance that, with an entirely sound idea, Mr. Mills-paugh should have got no farther, really, than the man he chose to write about.

W. M.

FROM THE ENDS OF THE EARTH. By Lambert Williams. Appleton-Century. 1938. \$2.

Olivia at sixty was left an immense fortune by a man whom she had loved but denied because she was already married; she summoned home her children "from the ends of the earth" to hear the news; and the suspense of the book is in the fact that they do not realize how vast the fortune is. The author means us to speculate on the effect that the money will have on all of them; what changes it will bring about, what hidden weaknesses expose, what surprising energies unleash. But it is clear that the turning point in all their lives has already been reached when first we see them. The whole interest of the novel is in the exposition of their lives prior to what should have been the dramatic moment; and their subsequent actions are so scantily developed and so obvious that they come as an anticlimax.

The influence which has changed them is their marriage; which Mr. Williams sees as usually a kind of cannibalism, in which the stronger devours the weaker partner, slowly and secretly through the years in the dreadful defenselessness of intimacy. Thus Olivia's superior energy and instinct for success had been fatal to her shy and introverted husband, since it made unmistakable and unendurable his own failure. Similarly, all her children had been made or marred by their marriages; and the only one not to marry, Probyn, had chosen, even more fatally, a companion of his own sex. Olivia's fabulous fortune, therefore, serves only to push over the brink those couples (including Probyn) who had already neared it; and to strengthen those marriages which had attained a strength of their own.

If Mr. Williams's drama does not quite come off, his characters are always interesting and credible; and if none of them lingers in the reader's mind long after

the book has been finished, there does linger the impression of a group of living people from whom the society of their time has somewhat withdrawn, leaving them still in the attitudes of an earlier and very different day.


K. S.

THE DEVIL IN SATIN. By Dornford Yates. Doubleday, Doran. 1938. \$2.

"The devil," says Hamlet, "hath power to assume a pleasing shape," and according to Mr. Yates, that shape may be a woman's. But even granting this assumption (a most ungallant one for such a gentleman of the old school as Mr. Yates is in his standards and affections), it never quite becomes apparent that Rowena Bohun is anything so arch as the devil. And failing conviction on this point, the story of her machinations against an innocent and stupid husband becomes nothing more than melodrama of the Hoboken school.

The opening pages of the novel promise better than that. Lord Elvin, feeling death in his bones, imposes a secret trust upon his friend and lawyer John Forsyth, the responsibility of hunting down the beau-

(Continued on next page)



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