

# The New Books

## Fiction

**TO THE END OF THE WORLD.** By Helen C. White. Macmillan. 1939. 675 pp. \$2.50.

Although Michel de la Tour d'Auvergne was a young man of the ancient nobility with an uncle who was a cardinal, although all round him France was heaving with the excitement of impending revolution, he chose to enter the abbey of Cluny, where he dreamed of reviving the simple faith of the eleventh century amidst the skepticism of the eighteenth. Before he finished his novitiate the revolution tossed him out into the world, and when he returned to Cluny ten years later as parish priest of the town, he had learned that it was not within cloisters that the Church of France could be rebuilt. Meanwhile he had been curé of a Vendean parish, one of the "priests of the guillotine," gone on a mission to the pope, and borne his full share of the dangers and hardships which befell the non-juring clergy who remained in France throughout the Terror.

Michel is not enough of a sinner or an intellectual (perhaps they are the same) to make a fascinating hero. His fundamental faith is never shaken, and the issues which forced so many earnest men to choose between

the Church and the Revolution never sharpen themselves in him to a crisis. He solves the contradiction by ignoring it, by believing at once in original sin and in natural virtue and the rights of man, a comfortable *via media*, ideal for archbishops in democratic states. But if Michel was of the stuff of constitutional archbishops, he was also of the stuff of martyrs; he was capable of inflexibility as well as of compromise, and this sympathetic portrayal of his character and that of his leaders and collaborators helps explain the survival of the Church of France in the hour of its severest trial. This is a studious and thoughtful book, soberly, tenderly, sometimes beautifully written, dealing faithfully with an important and interesting aspect of the French revolution, and one usually neglected by historical novelists.

G. M.

**ILLUSION IN JAVA.** By Gene Fowler. Random House. 1939. 303 pp. \$2.50.

The island of Krakatoa lies just to the west of Java and it was there, we are told, that the loudest noise ever heard had its origin, in a volcanic explosion some fifty years ago. From this same far-off region comes Gene Fowler's latest book, and to those who anticipate a noise second only to that of Krakatoa (an expectation wholly within reason), it will be a disappointment. There is nothing of the first Fowler novels, the gusty biographies, or of "Salute to Yesterday" in its pages.

"Illusion in Java" is, in fact, a romantic elaboration of a Javanese folk tale built around the early exploits of Ajoks, master musician of the natives. Publication day of this book was October 30 and on that evening an American audience, in Manhattan's Guild Theater, was listening for the first time to the music of a Javanese orchestra, or gamelan. Ajoks played the bonan with the long hammers in a gamelan.

The youth Ajoks loved a girl of the village and was loved by her, though their union was forbidden. He was a stout-bodied village youth, reared beneath the cone of an evil volcano and beneath a tower of superstition. He was different from his fellows in that he owned a great genius for music, and a crooked bull that knelt in prayer and had a tree growing from its back.

The crooked bull served as the instrument to take Ajoks away from his village, to send him on the long journey to the sea and the city. His adventures on the road and at the palace of the mighty Su and in his meetings with the master musician of the time—these served to purge him of his great illusion. He came home to Rindi with less in his hands than he had when he strode hopefully toward the

bamboo bridge that was the gateway to the world. But he was cleansed, and fitted to teach his children and the children of others "to sing true songs of their own home-earth."

It is difficult to avoid comparing this novel to "The Good Earth," just as it is difficult to read and forget that Gene Fowler has labored long in the script-rooms of Hollywood. Ajoks in his village, Ajoks on the road with his crooked bull, Ajoks ringing the great bell of Senang, Ajoks in the palace of Su . . . these evoke a picture of . . . well, Paul Muni, get ready.

H. A. S.

**SAVE ME THE SUN.** By Hassoldt Davis. Holt. 1939. 322 pp. \$2.50.

Mr. Davis knows as well as loves his South Sea islands; but unfortunately, when he writes about them, he makes them resemble the Latin Quarter. His white characters show the same despair, the same cynicism, the same adolescent hope that people in novels used to have in the 20s. Similarly, they believe that the only way to do "creative writing" is to escape the crass United States. Thus Michael and Judy, who still love each other, but whose marriage has unaccountably gone sour, escape the tumults of their inner as well as their outer lives by fleeing to a tiny South Pacific island. In San Francisco, Michael's novels and Judy's babies alike had been still-born; on Tapu, they produce their children with hardly any difficulty. It all seems a shade too easy, especially for Judy.

As the plot epitomizes the novel of the twenties, so Michael is the hero of the twenties. He thinks of himself as "the eternal Pan upon the pillow" and as "the expert satyr," but he is as worried as Iris March was about "purity," though it is not one of his words. The tiny Judy, half Norwegian, half gipsy, is fresher and more up-to-date, with her history of hav-

★ ★

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ing betrayed a man who loved her because he wanted to be dictator.

White characters and brown alike have a certain hollowness, as if the author were more interested in the looks of people than in their habitual gestures and cadences. Certainly his book does not bear out Michael's conviction that writing in exotic places is necessarily more creative or even more exotic than what can be done in drab old San Francisco.

K. S.

AGAIN THE RIVER. By Stella E. Morgan. 1939. 306 pp. \$2.50.

Those of us whose experience with floods has been limited to what we have seen in the newsreels may have wondered just why the victims of these recurrent disasters should tempt fate by returning to the same low land from which they have just been driven. In this novel Mrs. Morgan suggests that the reason is not always simply economic. To Jasper Morton, whose farm lay in dangerous bottomland in West Virginia, "river" was almost a personal enemy from whose challenge it would be mere cowardice to shrink. He loved his land and he intended to remain there come hell or high water. House after house, each built more securely than the last, might be swept away. The river might rise up to claim first his wife, then his daughter. Yet Jasper would not budge. He would simply turn to the Bible for counsel on the construction of an ark, then proceed to rebuild on the exact same spot.

Mrs. Morgan conveys the spirit of

these stubborn, indomitable people. But the story moves with monotonous regularity from flood to flood, the dialogue leaves something to be desired, and a certain crudity in the writing is emphasized by a melodramatic, spuriously apostrophic ending.

J. S. M.

International

THE BRITISH WAR BLUE BOOK. Documents Concerning German-Polish Relations and the Outbreak of Hostilities Between Great Britain and Germany on September 3, 1939. Farrar & Rinehart. 1939. 251 pp. \$1.50.

It is most unusual, perhaps unprecedented, for a British state paper to be published commercially in the United States. The importance of this document, containing the diplomatic correspondence and outstanding speeches that resulted in war, makes publication desirable, even necessary. From the German-Polish agreement of 1934 to Mr. Chamberlain's appeal to the German people on September 3 of this year, we can watch the ever-widening breach between Berlin and London, as well as the earnest but futile efforts of other countries to intervene. The most interesting documents, of course, are the telegrams exchanged by Lord Halifax and the British Ambassadors in Germany and Poland. Sir Neville Henderson works night and day to convince the Nazis that Britain wants a settlement but will fight in defense of Poland. Herr Hitler, whose changes in mood are

faithfully reported to London, constantly expresses Germany's fear of encirclement, demand for a free hand in the East, and desire for friendship with Britain. By the end of August, it is clear that their aims are completely irreconcilable.

An elaborate table of contents and brief summary of the documents enhance the value of this book as a reference work. Sir Neville Henderson's final report on his labor, later published as a white paper, will be included in later editions, and is available separately to purchasers of the early editions which did not contain it. The volume embraces almost every diplomatic item that is available at present.

J. F. G.



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Title and Author	Crime, Place, Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
NO WIND OF BLAME Georgette Heyer (Crime Club: \$2.)	Wastrel husband of rich and flighty Englishwoman pinked in neighbors' garden. Insp. Hemingway, despite lunatic interruptions, solves it.	Method of murder ingenious—if not quite believable. Priceless characters and spate of cock-eyed conversation make chapters hum.	Highly enjoyable
SEVEN DEAD Jefferson Farjeon (Bobbs Merrill: \$2.)	Septuple slaying in English coast town takes Insp. Kendall and journalist helper to France where 8th killing and solution follow.	From super-grisly beginning, through Buchananish goings-on in Boulogne, to amazing and unexpected finish, an outstanding job.	First class
THE FIRST SAINT OMNIBUS Leslie Charteris (Crime Club: \$2.50)	Creator of "Saint" traces his career from beginning by means of baker's dozen of bang-up stories.	Unalloyed thrills, in novelettes and short stories—to be taken in homeopathic doses for proper appreciation.	Spine-tingler
8 FACES AT 3 Craig Rice (Simon and Schuster: \$2.)	Pretty girl in very tough spot saved from murder charge by dance-band press-agent and licker-loving blonde.	Some puzzling business with clocks, hair-raising auto rides, slick legal sleuthing, and climax with a punch.	Good
GUNSTON COTTON: SECRET AIRMAN Rupert Grayson (Dutton: \$2.)	Redoubtable secret agent circumvents gang of international thugs who would smash various European capitals from air.	Thrills in the air, on land, and in concrete dug-outs, with "Gun" Cotton and beauteous Coral out-shooting all comers.	Time-killer

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