

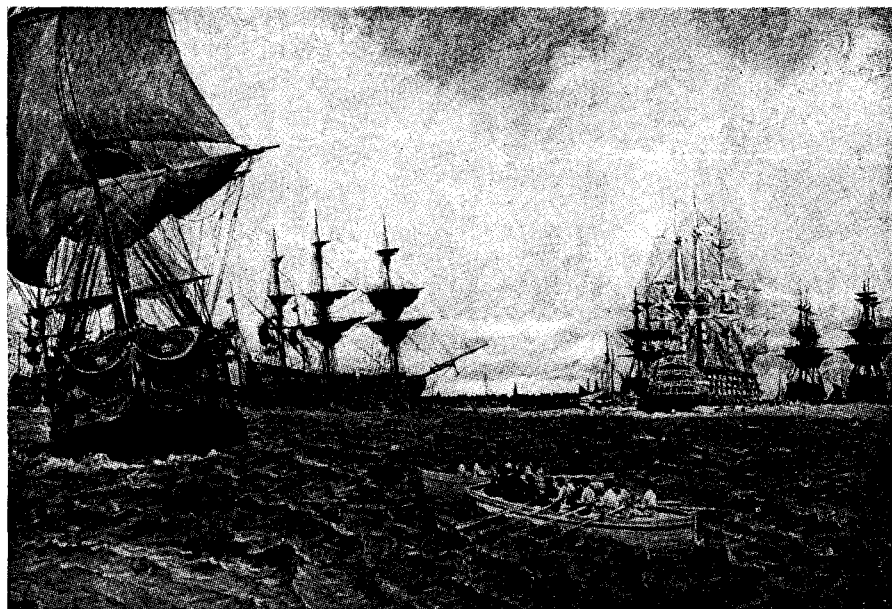
ments anywhere will wish to miss the charm and exasperation of the search for living quarters in a Polish city. In the first visited, "the vast sitting room was filled with gilt chairs and stiffly brocaded curtains hung from the tall windows, but in one corner stood a wide brass bed. In the bath room, which had no window, a folding bed had been arranged over the tub." The Princess did not take that apartment.

For six years, from 1933 to 1939, this life went on. Children were born to the Princess and even with the travelling and occasional moves there was a quiet permanence underlying all. A seeming permanence. For suddenly in the summer of '39 the storm broke. Terror was everywhere. Rumor and fact vied with each in horror. Days passed when the radio and telephone were silent. Stories came of what had happened: contradictions followed only to be overtaken by new contradictions. The Princess with her children was forced to flee the country while the bombers, roaring above, threatened their departure. The five days of waiting and flight with the Germans taking over, form the dramatic climax of the book. This part is charged and tense with feeling and brings sharply to the reader all the special fears and agencies that go into the personal experience of the major and general tragedy of such times.

"Polish Profile" is a moving memoir of the period it covers. It is filled with the detailed and particular descriptions that give a sense of reality to a way of life with which we are unfamiliar. These Polish people, the titled, the working men and women, and the peasants, come clearly before one in their daily living.



Princess Paul Sapieha,
née Virgillia Peterson.



© Chas. Scribner's Sons. "The Evacuation of the Charleston by the British," a painting by Howard Pyle.

Historical Thriller

STARS ON THE SEA. By F. Van Wyck Mason. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company. 1940. 720 pp. \$2.75.

Reviewed by HOLMES ALEXANDER

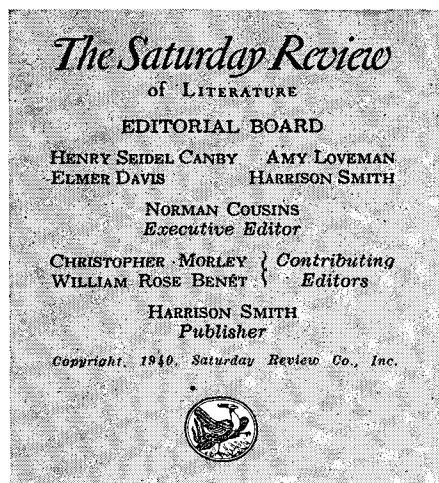
SOME three or four years ago Van Wyck Mason turned from successful mystery writing and set his eye on a higher target. He blocked out for himself a four-book saga on the American Revolution. It was a bold and admirable plan, and Mr. Mason has advanced thus far with flying colors. "Stars on the Sea" is a 700-page thriller; a blood-and-cannon romance which (to use a sway-back phrase) is not without historical significance.

The main plot is carried by the love of Tim and Lucy whose stars are crossed first by an interfering parent and later by the vassals of King George. Tim deserts the army shortly after Bunker Hill and returns to Rhode Island where he learns that the British blockade not only threatens his father's shipping business but the whole issue of the war. At this point Mr. Mason makes his bid for some historical implications—that is, America's need and right to command her freedom of the seas. Tim, having shipped to the West Indies, goes into privateering only to discover the short-sightedness of supposing that a maritime people can exist without a strong navy. "Private armed vessels will never win freedom for this country," he tells Lucy on the last page; and goes off to enlist on a frigate.

It must not be imagined that this message (more explicitly stated in the author's foreword) is anything more

than a byproduct of the story. The author's chief concern is with the high adventuring of his characters whom the tempests of war carry from New England to Saint Domingo; from South Carolina across the mountains to Kentucky. At times the minor characters steal the show from Tim and Lucy. There is Tim's sister, Desire Harmony, whose tragic love-affair with a British officer drives her to harlotry and a vagabond existence which is terminated under an Indian's scalping knife. Two of her lovers, a Pennsylvania frontiersman and a Yankee aristocrat, claim much of the reader's attention. Mr. Mason has a great gusto for people and places. There is no skimping of details when he presents his many scenes—army encampments, island ports, ships at sea, growing cities, and pioneer settlements. But the best moment always arrives when he collects his forces for a military engagement. The Battle of Charleston is the high spot of the book.

It remains to be said, however, that this vigorous novel stops somewhere short of the borderline between good craftsmanship and art. Mr. Mason is a shrewd literary alchemist. His produce is not pure gold, but it is excellent alloy. Plot and action are his first and great commandment. This method has its obvious disabilities. There is no room for subtle shadings of style or character. Not once or twice, but many times, the heavy hand of circumstance and false motivation intervenes so that the show may go on. Yet what a show it is! For vim and sustained interest, for scope and excitement this book is one of the best.



THE LANGUAGE WE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND

THE Library of Louvain has joined the University of Warsaw. Once again Louvain has been destroyed by the same men—or their sons. Seven hundred thousand books have followed the other books—the books burnt in the German market places to make a holiday of learning for the people of the Reich.

Books do not burn easily. They have to be primed with gasoline or bombed with incendiary bombs. Seven hundred thousand Books is a great number of Books. The Books were not cheap books. They were great books. They were bought by the pennies of the children in the United States. The German children put their pennies into the building of a Pocket Battleship. Perhaps the German children were wise in this, their generation. Perhaps, after all, books are nothing . . . abstract thought nothing . . . beauty nothing.

What good are books to the illiterate, and who now, will have time to read? Books make people think, and who now, dares think? And this is not the end. More libraries, more museums, more universities will go up in flames. To implant the new culture the old must be destroyed. While books live and men have access to books the human spirit cannot die. When we can read what those who preceded us suffered we are ourselves able to suffer. When we can read what they hoped we ourselves can hope.

The Library of Louvain was no accident. There was nothing fortuitous about it. It is part of a plan that has been considered to the last item, to the last nail that Herr Hitler is trying to drive into the coffin of civilization.

How did this all come about—Hitler, the war, the sudden, widespread destruction? It has come about because we have confused the inconceivable with the impossible. We have

thought in terms of faith and morality and good will, assuming these to be natural, instead of considering mechanics alone. We have, because of our upbringing, refused to face the power of power alone, of evil, consolidated by the might of a great state and co-ordinated by a genius. We have said this could not be done merely because we ourselves could not do it and then it was done. There was never anything except a moral inhibition which prevented it being done and will prevent new things being done. We have looked back at history and said that no one has ever conquered the world, therefore it will never be conquered. This is wishful thinking. Aircraft, employed as they are, have made anything possible. They have changed the map of the world. England is no longer an island. It has become a peninsula, joined to France and the Low Countries. Both the Suez and Panama Canals have, for practical purposes, ceased to exist.

We have said that no dictator has ever been able to pass on his power. But National Socialism is not a dictatorship. It is a religion vested in a corporation. It is, in spite of what is written and said about it, structurally sound, eugenically sound, and politically sound. It has reduced a nation to a state of farm yard efficiency. By sterilization and elimination, it aims to produce the super man and the worker—a brave new world indeed and, whatever we choose to think, a possibility.

We have said that no nation can be held in subjection forever or even for a long period but this again is wishful thinking. Why can it not be if sufficiently brutal methods are used? What is there mechanically impossible about putting every man and woman with a university education or who pays income tax against a wall and shooting them? How many are there for instance in England? A million at the most. That would leave a leaderless and intimidated proletariat of thirty-nine millions to work for their own masters. The intellectual, that is to say the educated man, is alone able by virtue of his education, to organize or lead. Eliminate him as a class and there is no hope for the rest.

It has been said that the will of the masses must prevail by sheer weight of numbers but this again is false. The masses, even if organized, cannot with scythes and axes defy a minority armed with quick firing weapons of precision. In looking back to history for our examples we have forgotten to look forward. That history repeats itself is true but it only repeats itself approximately. The form changes, and the form today is governed by volume of fire capable of such rapid movement that all resistance becomes fu-

tile. Nor is it certain that the distant future will bring about revolutions in conquered countries. Young children will be educated and conditioned to the new regime. Adolf Hitler, the corporal, the painter, has extracted parts of every creed, of every political system, of every psychological theory and has welded them into a national religion. He has dug up the old Teuton Gods from their forest graves, he has seen visions like the Maid of Orleans. He has gone into the wilderness and wrestled with devils. The sexuality of Freud, Malthus's theory of population and the mathematical certainty of Euclid have all been used. He has studied Machiavelli in his intrigues, Napoleon in his campaigns, American advertising in his propaganda, Al Capone in his methods of gang warfare, Torquemada in his inquisition, Fouché in his secret service, Greek mythology in his Trojan horse methods, the Jesuits in his training of children, Mendel in his breeding of storm troopers, Charles Darwin in his belief in the survival of the fittest.

Uninterested in our political systems we have lived and trusted our rulers. The common man, the man in the street, only wants to live his life. He is a man of good will. By means of taxes, he employs the police to take care of him at home, and his government, with its army and navy, to take care of him abroad. His views are parochial, his hopes center on his home, his children, and his neighbors; and because of this, because of his tolerance and good will he falls an easy prey. His upbringing and education have led him away from fact, have made him hide his eyes from the unpleasant, have made him believe, without logical reason, that in the end things will come right and that evolution must necessarily be progress. What is happening today is the result of defective thinking, itself the result of defective academic education, which has aimed at producing practical men—business men. No one has listened to the dreamers. No one has listened to H. G. Wells, to Sinclair Lewis, to Hendrik van Loon, to Jack London, to Conan Doyle, to Ernest Hemingway, to Aldous Huxley, to Jules Verne. No one believe, once they got over their scare, that the Orson Welles program where the United States was attacked by men from Mars would be duplicated so terribly, so accurately, or so soon in Holland. Why should they have listened? These men were novelists, actors, writers of fiction, and practical men do not read fiction or go the theatre. They listen to no voice crying in the wilderness. Their aim is to produce and to produce without thought. To produce and to sell to any

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