

# Tweaking the Lion's Tail

**MEN OF MARQUE:** *Baltimore Privateers in the War of 1812.* By John Philips Cranwell and William B. Crane. New York: W. W. Norton & Co. 1940. 426 pp., with index. \$3.75.

Reviewed by ROGER SHAW

**B**ETWEEN 1812 and 1815 the little coastal United States, then resembling something like South American Chile, fought a sea war with the British Empire. The number of British warships at that time—ships o' the line, frigates, gunboats—was astronomical. In addition, British armaments had just been reinforced by two new inventions: the Congreve rocket and the Shrapnel shell. Behind the navy of the late lamented Nelson stood a solid tradition; that of Trafalgar, Copenhagen, and the Nile.

To face this formidable maritime array, the United States had a small, new regular navy. It consisted, largely, of heavily over-gunned frigates, which could outshoot His Majesty's frigates, on the one hand, and run away from His Majesty's ships o' the line, on the other. These Yankee frigates were the German pocket-battleships of their epoch, and employed the same tactical principles. The Lords of the Admiralty considered

them grossly unsporting, and said so. Theodore Roosevelt's "Naval War of 1812" presents a fair and detailed series of pictures, relative to these "regular" American warships, under construction, at sea, and in action.

But the other side of the picture was—the American privateers. Each of these commerce raiders was a privately, or jointly, owned capitalistic investment, intended to pay dividends in cold, hard prize-money. They came from all the ports of our lengthy Atlantic seaboard, but Baltimore was a favorite fitting-out spot. These so-called Baltimore clippers raised havoc, and forced His Majesty's commerce into a convoy system that reminds one of 1940. By mid-August, 1812, some fifty-six American privateers stood at sea: Baltimore thirteen, Salem nine, New York nine, Boston four, Philadelphia four, Maine-to-New Orleans thirteen. In the course of the war, Baltimore sent out no less than 126 private armed vessels—"never surpassed in point of numbers, and seldom equaled in the damage done."

Radical Baltimore City was an especial thorn in the Lion's tail. New England was anglophile in 1812-15, but Maryland was thoroughly anglophobe in feeling. The British were particularly assiduous in their blockade of Chesapeake Bay, and it was their unsuccessful siege of Baltimore that produced the "Star-Spangled Banner."

The bigshots of the Baltimore privateersmen—some privateered in Latin America afterwards—were Boyle, Almeda, Barney, Southcomb, Veasey, Moon, Grant, and Murphy. Their craft generally were 200 tonners, a hundred

feet long. Messrs. Cranwell and Crane are to be congratulated. Their work is authoritative, easy to read, and accompanied by remarkable statistical appendices, based on original sources. Like Mars himself, they have the souls not of romantics, but of sensible business men. And business—big business, indeed—was the founting inspiration of Baltimore clipperdom.

Roger Shaw is the author of "Fifty American Battles."

## Art and Beauty

**A HISTORY OF ESTHETICS.** By Katherine Everett Gilbert and Helmut Kuhn. Macmillan. 1939. 582 pp., with index. \$4.25.

**P**ROFESSORS Gilbert and Kuhn offer us a comprehensive and detailed account of what art and beauty have meant in the past as seen through the eyes of the outstanding philosophers and critics of Western culture. Their story, told with masterly economy yet without sacrifice of important details, begins with the theories of the Greeks and ends with a brief survey of contemporary opinion. Especially full and excellent summaries are given of the thought of Plato and Aristotle, and of the ponderous, systematic contributions of the Classic German writers. Their catholicity of interest in all manners of approach to esthetics and art enable the authors to include such diverse matters as Helmholtz's investigations into the physiological basis of music. The material provided through their painstaking scholarship and sensitive historical devotion will serve as a genuinely valuable source and guide.

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## PILGRIMS ON THE EARTH

The new novel by

**MARGARET MARCHAND**

THOMAS Y. CROWELL CO. N.Y.

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## The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place and Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
HEAD OVER HEELS IN MURDER <i>Ione Sandberg Shriber</i> (Farrar & Rinehart: \$2.)	Rich and nasty young widow fatally conked after up-state N. Y. dance. Sisters, cousins, and aunts quizzed by Lieut. Grady.	One of those dreary, bid-dreary family affairs, better done than most, and reminiscent of many—with neat trick at finish.	Entertaining
THE SNATCH <i>R. L. Goldman</i> (Coward, McCann: \$2.)	Movie idol returns to home town as publicity stunt, is "kidnapped" and killed. Keen eyed reporter excels as sleuth.	Refreshing dialogue and veracious characterizations joined to puzzle that has tense moments and startling solution.	Above average
GIVE THANKS TO DEATH <i>Hilea Bailey</i> (Crime Club: \$2.)	Arthritic mid-Western investigator, aided by agile and nimble-witted daughter, punctures plans of killer to decimate fated family.	Drammer laid on with trowel but not so thick that it fogs sound plot and some ultra-smart deducing.	Worthwhile
DEATH IN THE SUN <i>Charles Saxby</i> (Dutton: \$2.)	Members of ultra-modernistic dance-opera troupe in Cal. desert resort get terribly tangled in double killing with mid-air finish.	Brilliant atmosphere, tortuous plot, outlandish characters, wry comedy, and denouement that doesn't get anywhere but is entirely jake.	Good

The Saturday Review

# THE NEW BOOKS

## Art

**PERSIAN PAINTING FROM MINIATURES XIII-XVI CENTURIES.** Twelve color plates, with an introduction by Basil Gray. Oxford University Press. 1940. \$2.75.

This latest of the "Iris Books" offers a dozen faithful reproductions after superb Persian miniatures of the fully developed style. There is an enlightening introduction by Mr. Basil Gray of the British Museum, and sufficient commentary on the plates. Within its modest scope it is hard to imagine anything more acceptable to an art-lover whose purse is leaner than his taste. Persian is interpreted strictly, to the exclusion of those superb early miniatures which are rather Arabic. Again an austere definition of painting eliminates, perhaps regretably, the exquisite linear type of miniature with which the art closes.

F. J. M., Jr.

## Fiction

**WILD GEESE CALLING.** By Stewart Edward White. Doubleday, Doran. 1940. 577 pp. \$2.75.

The best feature of this novel is its description of life in the American backwoods. Stewart Edward White knows the forests of the Pacific Northwest and he knows the fastnesses of Alaska. He captures the spirit and atmosphere of those places in his story of a lumberjack and his wife who niche a home in the wilderness. In some respects the book is reminiscent of passages from Katherine Pinker-

ton's "Wilderness Wife." Sally Murdock struggles against hardships and loneliness; but in the end she is glad when her husband decides to stay in the wilderness instead of setting off in quest of new adventures. Pride of ownership makes Sally forget the vicissitudes of backwoods life.

Mr. White's accounts of logging operations are vivid and exciting. The great fir and pine groves are familiar scenes to him. One suspects that the fascination which lumbering has for John Murdock is in reality a fascination it has for Stewart Edward White. And when logging and stump-ranching prove more of a lure to John than the gold of the Klondike, Mr. White seems to share in the triumph.

This novel takes its title from the wild geese flapping northward, which John and Sally follow from the Columbia River and Puget Sound regions to the gaunt coast of Alaska. "Wild geese! Wild geese! Going north! We've got to go!" exclaims Sally. "It's in my blood! Wild geese calling!"

This is the theme of the book, and at the last the Murdocks are able to conquer the impulse which keeps drawing them toward the Arctic. The story of their grapple with the fastnesses, the accounts of their voyages on the Alaskan inlets in their boat *Tillicum*—all this Mr. White tells with moving simplicity. His words build up skillful pictures of towering uplands, dense forests, and white-capped waters.

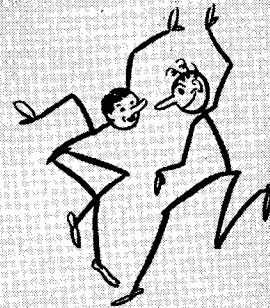
The wilderness is the principal factor in the book. Because of the reality and color of Mr. White's descriptions of the wilderness, the pioneer wife, Sally Murdock, becomes a heroic and brave character. In her the author summarizes his admiration for the women who created homes in a region not yet invaded by civilization.

R. L. N.

**A PASSION FOR PRIVACY.** By Louis Paul. Knopf. 1940. 260 pp. \$2.

Those who are in the habit of dancing in the streets to welcome each new Wodehouse ought now to perform at least one public rhumba, for we seem to be well on the way toward possessing a Wodehouse of our own. Mr. Paul has turned out a daffy tale not unworthy of the great master himself. There is that sprightly charm, that non-sequitur course of events, and above all that light, lethal touch, committing gentle mayhem upon the idle rich. This side of the Atlantic we have our Monty instead of Bertie, more interested in dashing about upon polo horses and more aggressive in the male pursuit than the cautious, somnolent Bertie. But in their common possession of light-headedness, inarticulate good intentions, devastating aunts, entanglements, and that

**Remember  
the Dancing Men?**



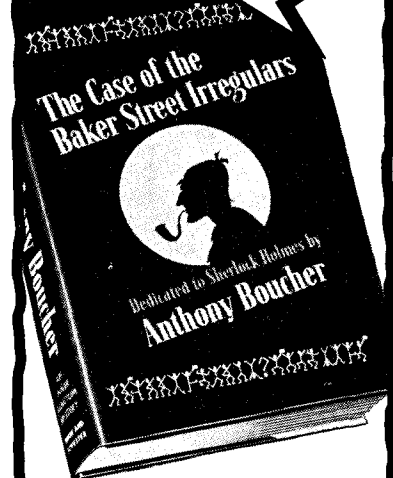
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