

Strange as Fiction

SIR RICHARD BURTON'S WIFE. By Jean Burton. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1941. 378 pp., with index. \$3.

Reviewed by R. ELLIS ROBERTS

MUCH humbug has been written about Richard Burton: far too much attention has been paid to his interest in the obscene, the abnormal, and the shocking. Or rather, the wrong kind of attention, for, as Miss Burton points out, Sir Richard Burton was unlucky in having not only the gift of an improper curiosity but also a genuine scientific interest before there was even the hint of a scientific method in the study of sexual behavior. This unfortunate attraction has obscured the true romance, the triumph and the tragedy of Burton's life. He has been too often estimated as an author, not as an explorer, an adventurer, and a man most unjustly treated who made the most of every grievance he enjoyed. The truth is Burton was only an amateur of letters, but a great man: and his love-story, in spite of certain ridiculous features, is one of the great love-stories of our time.

It is this story which Miss Burton tells in her life of that amazing, self-confident, devoted woman Isabel Arundell, who fell in love (she was nineteen years old) with Burton the first time she saw him in Boulogne, and married him ten years later, and henceforth sheltered, defended, praised, and pushed her great man on all possible and impossible occasions. Isabel was born in 1831. She came of a family which adhered to the "old religion": that is, she lived in a world which only in her girlhood (Catholic Emancipation came in 1829) began to touch the ordinary world of English society. A knowledge of that close, stiff, resolute, rather prim and vehemently self-assured group of old Roman Catholic families is needed to understand at once the realism and the fantasy of Isabel's character. She was devout, superstitious, confident: her mental background was of the seventeenth century rather than Victorian. Here immediately was a link with Burton who could have been at ease with Raleigh and Grenville, with Kenel Digby or Charles II or Rochester, but in his own day found few who could tolerate him, fewer whom he could tolerate. When Isabel first met him, he was back from the Indian Army, and under a cloud. Charles Napier had asked him to make an investigation into the sexual abnormalities of the people of Scinde; Burton had performed the task with so devastating a thoroughness that his



Lady Burton

—From the book.

report (Napier had left and other authorities received it) scandalized his superiors who concluded that a man who would do such work, and find out so much of vice, must himself be vicious. From this suspicion Burton never freed himself: and smarting under the injustice he took a grim pleasure in heightening the picture of his wickedness by fantastic invention.

Isabel was the first, and indeed the only person who treated him as a hero, a philosopher, and the greatest man alive: if she had been a fool, that would have been no good. But she was no fool, and no man can read without emotion the way in which she worked to get justice for her husband. She bullied the army, the foreign

office, the Prime Minister: she attacked learned societies; at long last she got a knighthood for Richard, and in the desperate illness of his last years she, already smitten by cancer, nursed him without ever letting him know how fatally ill she was.

Their happiest years were, perhaps, those when Richard was consul at Trieste: Burton's idea of a consulate was a job that gave him an income to travel on while his assistant did the work. Isabel heartily agreed with this view, and so he wandered the world, sometimes alone, more often with her. She managed his business affairs, she copied his manuscripts, she saw his books through the press; and all her life she tried to bring him to the true faith, only to have to rest content with the fact that Richard enjoyed the society of priests, especially of Jesuits, and said more than once that, if he ever adhered to a church, it would be the Church of Rome.

Miss Burton's book is painstaking if rather uninspired. It is not free from mistakes. Miss Burton, for instance, quotes Frank Harris's essay on Burton in apparent ignorance of the unreliability of its facts. Still these are slight flaws in a book which pays belated tribute to a woman who, in spite of all difficulties, of the insane jealousy and hatred felt for her by Burton's family, did her utmost to help the life-work and serve the reputation of the man she had married.

Your Literary I. Q.

By Howard Collins

UNUSUAL MIDDLE NAMES

Out-of-the-ordinary middle names may not be essential to successful authorship, but it is astonishing how many writers have them. Can you supply the first and last names of the forty authors whose middle names are given here? Allowing 2½ points for each one correctly identified, a score of 70 is par, 80 is good, and 90 or better is excellent. Answers are on page 12.

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|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Arlington | 21. Love |
| 2. Babington | 22. Lutwidge |
| 3. Bailey | 23. Makepeace |
| 4. Barr | 24. Orne |
| 5. Bernard | 25. Payson |
| 6. Branch | 26. Pierce |
| 7. Brinsley | 27. Rann |
| 8. Buchanan | 28. Russell |
| 9. Bysshe | 29. Scawen |
| 10. Chandler | 30. Schwenck |
| 11. Conan | 31. Seidel |
| 12. Cullen | 32. Shrewsbury |
| 13. Cuyler | 33. St. Vincent |
| 14. Everett | 34. Taylor |
| 15. Fenimore | 35. Vaughn |
| 16. Gabriel | 36. Wadsworth |
| 17. Greenleaf | 37. Waldo |
| 18. Jacques | 38. Wendell |
| 19. Keith | 39. Wing |
| 20. Langhorne | 40. Whitcomb |

Brazilian Chronicles

AMAZON THRONE. By Bertita Harding. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co. 1941. 353 pp., with index. \$3.50.

Reviewed by GARRETT MATTINGLY

HERE in the United States we are so ignorant of the history of our neighbors to the south that most of us would be merely puzzled by any reference to the emperors of Brazil, although for more than eighty years of the nineteenth century Rio de Janeiro was the capital of a Braganza dynasty and for sixty-seven of an independent, democratic American empire, a fact of primary significance in the history of nearly half the South American continent. Any book which helps remedy our ignorance of the fascinating story of the greatest of our sister republics ought to be welcome.

The settlement of the royal family of Portugal in Brazil after they had fled across the Atlantic to escape Napoleon's "new order," not only provided the unique spectacle of the transfer of a legitimate reigning dynasty from the Old World to the New, and of a mother country being governed for more than a decade thereafter from one of its colonies, but greatly accelerated the economic and cultural development of the greater Portugal overseas. The ports of Brazil were opened for the first time to the commerce of the world, and Rio became a vigorous center of intellectual activity and administrative reform. When King John VI returned, not without reluctance, to Lisbon in 1821 he left his eldest son as Regent of the Kingdom of Brazil, and a little more than a year later that kingdom, in order to protect its constitutional reforms, separated from the mother country with a remarkable avoidance of bitterness and bloodshed, and proclaimed the regent Emperor of Brazil. Though the new emperor, Dom Pedro I, proved something of a disappointment to his subjects they remained loyal to the house of Braganza, and the amazing progress of the nation during the next half century was due in no small measure to the wisdom, tact, and moderation of his son, Dom Pedro II, one of the greatest statesmen of the nineteenth century, and one of the most admirable and attractive royal figures in history. In his resolute pacificism, his genuine democracy, his broad tolerance, his passionate interest in education Dom Pedro II was a true representative of the best characteristics of his people who not only prospered materially under his enlightened guidance but moved intelligently and hu-

manely towards the solution of political and social problems graver in appearance than those which confronted any other Western nation, problems which they solved nevertheless, even the terrible problem of slavery, without any of the bloodshed and disorder which accompanied their solution elsewhere.

This family history of the Brazilian Braganzas gives Pedro II its last eighty pages, but mentions his umbrella more often than his statesmanship, and emphasizes his middle class manners rather than his liberal ideas. Many people tend to find a hardworking, serious minded, respectable sovereign dull and slightly comic. They will approve Mrs. Harding's decision to give the longer treatment to the short reign of Pedro I, who managed to pack into ten years enough aimless and disastrous militarism, backstairs intrigue, extravagance, and adultery to ruin most monarchies for a century, and those who enjoy Pedro I will be glad that in the first part of this study attention is fixed not on the reforms of John VI but on his grotesque marital infelicities. In spite of its formidable bibliography this book, as its proportions confess, is not a serious history of the Brazilian Empire, but a selection among the spicier pages of its court chronicles. Of its kind it is first rate. Its anecdotes, picturesque, titillating, or ridiculous are shrewdly chosen and set down in a tripping prose as easy to read as a daily gossip column. It is meant to be scanned not by scholars in a library but by matrons in comfortable deck chairs while the great white cruise ship goes rolling down to Rio.



—From the book.

Dom Pedro II

Career Woman

NO MEASURE DANCED. By Harry Lee. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1941. 466 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by RICHARD A. CORDELL

THIS grim story of a successful woman executive is not likely to be chosen by the Business and Professional Women's Clubs as their book of the month. Although the picture of Lily Stagg is unpretty and untouched, the novelist does not preach and generalize; he does not imply that all women who reject the conventional pattern of a woman's life—husband, home, children—for certain economic security, even affluence, and a tidy bachelor apartment are unhappy and unconsolated by a sterile sort of independence. "No Measure Danced" is the familiar story of the aggressive, ambitious person who gets what he wants from life, but discovers too late that the price exacted is too high. It is a story worth telling and retelling, and in this second novel by the young Atlanta painter Harry Lee it is told remarkably well.

The early part of the novel is almost pure Dreiser with its naturalistic descriptions, its passive characters at the mercy of forces they do not understand, its hopeless classification of human beings as weak or strong, not good or bad. But Lily is not destined to remain a Sister Carrie or a Jennie Gerhardt, and she deserts the ranks of the weak for the strong. Discarding such encumbrances as child and husband and keeping her eye always on the main chance, she climbs steadily to her "success," only to find it empty and meaningless. The story is consistently Lily's, and is always in focus. In her battle she becomes not only unsympathetic, callous, and unscrupulous, but dishonest with herself. Her final tragedy is Hedda Gabler's: she is unable to love, and her liaisons and unecstatic affairs with men only emphasize her aloneness.

"No Measure Danced" is a superior novel not only for its sharp portraiture but also for a fascinating picture of a great department store. With the loving care of an Arnold Bennett the author gives us details of its mechanism, its high pressure drive, its human tragedies. We read with horrified interest—does big business begrime all who are connected with it? Are Hitlerian opportunism and ruthlessness basic in our commerce and industry? "If business is battle, name it so: War-crimes less will shame it so." It would be interesting to have honest reviews of this novel by a manager of a large department store and by a wrapping clerk.