

Atlantica

THE ATLANTIC SYSTEM. By Forrest Davis. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock. 1941. 363 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by EDWARD MEAD EARLE

FROM Pole to Pole the waves of the Atlantic break on American shores. Its waters wash the coastline of Europe from Norway to Spain, and the African Continent from Casablanca to Cape Town. The Atlantic basin is, in fact, the center of gravity of world power. As compared with the Pacific, it is relatively narrow. Nevertheless, by some curious and not altogether explicable reasoning, millions of Americans consider transatlantic happenings—particularly wars—as “foreign” to our interests and concerns. Not even the rapidly extending range of bombing planes has altogether dispelled this dangerous illusion; hence the strident debate which now rages concerning the stake of the United States in the war.

Mr. Davis has made a notable contribution to an understanding of American policy in this dynamic world. His book is something of a *tour de force* because, although he is a journalist addressing himself to a journalist's audience, he has based his volume upon

the sources to which ordinarily only a scholar would repair. (His admirable bibliography, with some notable omissions, contains the pertinent titles and is in itself a useful work of reference.)

Specialists will find little which is new in Mr. Davis's thesis, which is briefly as follows: that after the peaceful solution of the Venezuelan Crisis of 1895-1896, the chances of an Anglo-American war have been virtually nil; that, on the contrary, there has been an increasing coincidence of interests between the United States and Great Britain not merely in the Atlantic but in the Pacific as well; that the writings of Admiral Mahan (whose influence, according to Mr. Davis, was greater before 1914 than that of any publicist other than Karl Marx) emphasized a British-American community of strategic objectives; that antipathy and suspicion of Germany grew simultaneously and almost equally in London and Washington, as the correspondence of Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge would seem to confirm; that the fundamental reason for American intervention in the First World War was an understanding on the part of Woodrow Wilson that the American stake was as great as that of the British in defense of “the Atlantic world.” In view of all this, Mr. Davis comes to the conclusion, which will be supported by most experts, that the diplomacy of Franklin D. Roosevelt is concerned only incidentally with Britain for her own sake, but preponderantly with our own strategic and political interests. In a revealing passage, Mr. Davis describes the

enormous economic, political, and military potential of the Atlantic system, particularly in combination with the British Empire as a whole. It is one of the outstanding merits of this volume, however, that it is not written by a specialist for specialists. As Mr. Davis explains, he wanted to understand how it has come about that today, as in 1917, the United States is drawn irresistibly to the side of Britain in a great war. He has found the answer, at least in its essentials, and has presented his conclusions in terms which, it is hoped, will be as convincing in Peoria and Denver as in New York and Washington.

In 1900 Brooks Adams spoke of the British Isles as a “fortified outpost” of the United States in the Atlantic, similar to Hawaii in the Far East. Not very much later Sir Cecil Spring-Rice spoke of the United States as the “stronghold of the English-speaking race.” This would seem in general terms to describe the situation in which we now find ourselves. It is doubtful if the British Isles ever again will be the metropolitan center of the world, if for no other reason than that the home base of the British fleet will no longer be altogether safe from submarine and air attack and England no longer invulnerable to blockade. Whether Americans like it or not, the scepter of power in the Atlantic will pass into our hands unless Germany wins the war. As in 1917 we are slowly becoming aware that all hope of a peaceful settlement after the war depends upon an Anglo-American rather than a Nazi control of the vast resources of the Atlantic area. The mills of the Gods may grind slowly but they are grinding, nevertheless.



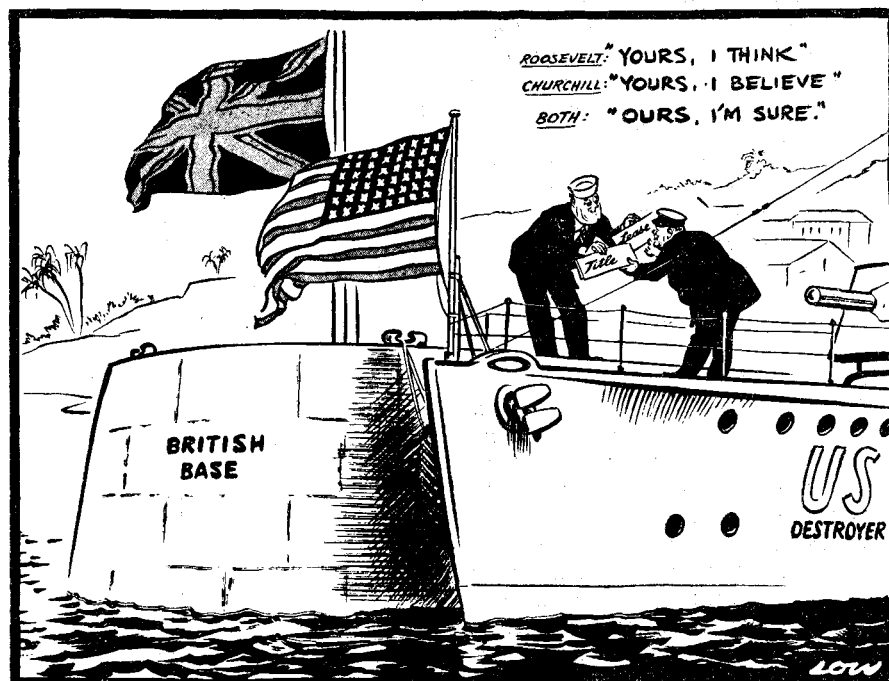
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WAS "REBECCA" PLAGIARIZED?

(Continued from page 4)

as far as I know, in Brazil, have certain rules or habits, if you don't want to call them codes of honor. They will never steal from each other if it is useless to do so. Nor have I ever known publishers to crib ideas from submitted manuscripts and turn them over to their own authors. They live in enough fear of being sued for plagiarism because of sheer coincidences without having to invite it. Anyway, any "first-rate" novelist who has to depend on her publishers for plots is not a first-rate novelist. The important novelists—and Miss Du Maurier is an important novelist—have all they can do to keep pace with their own ideas and give them expression, without rummaging around for the ideas of others.

Coming back to the book itself, it could be said that Miss Du Maurier's novel begins where the Brazilian novel ends. The girl's marriage, her discoveries in Manderley, are merely a preface to the dramatic last chapters. Her dead rival is no saint whose hold over her can be destroyed by a biological accident, the victory of her pregnancy over the other woman's sterility. Rebecca is a female devil who has carried her diabolic power beyond the grave, for she has forced her husband to murder her and so has put his life forever in pawn to the future. To an American reader this difference between the two novels seems profound, as it does with "Jane Eyre," where the female devil remained alive and raging under the roof, until fire destroyed her, just as it finally destroyed Manderley in "Rebecca."

There seems to be illustrated here in this literary contest the Latin and the Anglo-Saxon conception of a drama involving a woman as the chief protagonist. A French critic can call the last part of "Rebecca" a transformation into an "*Aventure policière*," the vulgar pursuit of a criminal, who is either caught, or not caught. An American critic can see in this pursuit and escape of the hero the essential resolution of the novel. If the heroine can finally join her lover and live happily forever after, as she does in "Rebecca," the American and the Englishman can smile and go happily to sleep. The Frenchman and all Latin critics must inevitably prick beneath this surface, and gifted with a deep racial knowledge, or an incorrigible passion for reality, must say that it solves nothing, that the last part of "Rebecca" is indeed an "*Aventure policière*." What will presumably put an American pleasantly to sleep, will keep

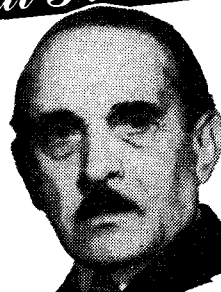
a French critic awake and staring. What? Escaped from a murder charge and Manderley burned, and no happiness! Of course, happiness for a moment, the happiness of relief, but the burning of houses and the escape from the police solves nothing, as everyone knows. The man is the same; his great love is the same; his crime has not changed. He remains himself and we all know it; except that for us, in our pleasant literature, human rules are violated: we read to keep ourselves awake for a time so that all the more securely we may go to sleep. And so the contest between a Brazilian novel written six years ago and "Rebecca"—and the antagonisms that have been aroused by it—has a deep significance. Two books, one brief, with a conclusive biologic end; the other, romantic, involving the chase and escape of

a criminal and the forever happy ending for two lovers. Is it any wonder that in a political world these two conceptions are at war?

But if you are one of the many people who read the *New York Times* two weeks ago you have perhaps already made up your mind about Miss Du Maurier's guilt. And so far in this article I have presented no evidence, only surmises. Well, here are the facts. Daphne Du Maurier had conceived of the idea of "Rebecca" a long time before she started to write it; she began to write in the Fall of 1938 and completed the novel late in the Spring. This statement is on the authority of Mr. Alan Collins, her literary agent, and it contradicts a quotation from a letter to Miss Nabuco from a friend in England in which it was stated that Miss Du Maurier wrote "Rebecca" in ninety days. Mr. Malcolm Johnson of Doubleday, Doran agrees that the novel was at least as long in preparation as Mr. Collins states. There is a suggestion in *The Times* quotation of

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guilty haste, as if, had the novel been written in ninety days, it would somehow have proved something detrimental to Miss Du Maurier. Several people who have read the *Times* article too hastily have made this strange deduction. And Miss Grant has permitted nothing in favor of Miss Du Maurier to enter her picture.

I write this because I feel profoundly indignant—not at the *New York Times Book Review*, which has simply recorded a literary scandal that has been growing for at least two years—but at the ease and impunity with which an author can be traduced. While many people have been aware of this accusation for a long time, the *Times* has at last brought it out into the open, where it can be attacked, as

I have tried to attack it. I have said it is unlikely that Miss Du Maurier could have stolen the plot and the character of "Rebecca"; and that it was almost impossible that she could have had the opportunity to do so.

But there is another surface to this incredible accusation. I will state it briefly. The Nabuco family, as the *New York Times* has stated, is one of the greatest in Brazil, so important that it has considered it beneath its dignity to sue the author of "Rebecca." But Brazil has an old literary culture and a new literature of which it is proud and of which we unhappily know almost nothing. The daughter of one of its greatest families has written a successful and moving novel. Brazilian critics and the Brazilian literary world believe that the internationally famous book and film, "Rebecca," was stolen from Miss Nabuco and are outraged by it. The author's famous family are known to be pro-American, pro-English, anti-Axis in sentiment. It would be a triumph to the Nazi influence in that nation if Brazilian critics and writers, and an ardent and patriotic literary public should continue to believe that the "Gringos," not from the "Colossus of the North," but from across the Atlantic, had stolen the literary rewards of an international fame from Miss Nabuco.

Moreover, it is regrettable that Miss Du Maurier cannot speak in her own defense. Another novelist, an American woman, also believes that Miss Du Maurier used her story for "Rebecca," and, unlike Miss Nabuco, is suing her for plagiarism. And again there will appear the same parallels, the simple girl, the great house, the butler, the angry housekeeper, the portrait on the wall, the husband's friend and relatives, and the precious objects loved and touched by dead hands.



Daphne Du Maurier

Catskills Dwarfs

STRANGERS IN THE VLY. By Edmund Gilligan. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941. 261 pp. \$2.

Reviewed by PAUL STRONG

THIS is a charming book with a Chesterton theme and Christopher Morley handling. The story content is slight; it is the virtuosity which makes the book moving.

"The Vly" is a small village and region in the Catskill Mountain. The tale starts with the arrival of three Italian dwarfs, late favorites of the court of Napoleon III., and still favorites for hanging because of their attempt on the Emperor's life. They are rich, braggart poseurs and celebrate their arrival at the village inn by an unsuccessful assault on the landlord's lovely daughter. Long researches have failed to discover a landlord's homely daughter, incidentally.

The sponsor of these little monsters is the sober, impecunious son of a big Boston shipping family, who has brought them to this place to conceal them from the French and to try to educate them to some sense of morality. The tale takes on a semi-mystic, semi-fairy tale quality as he succeeds and secret, magnificent works of benevolence move The Vly to wonder. The climax comes in a beautiful and moving Christmas scene when the dwarfs manage the greatest kindness of all they have accomplished.

This is obvious for a Christmas gift book and recommended for people who read even on the Fourth of July.

ANSWERS TO LITERARY QUIZ

1. Tom Sawyer and Alfred Temple, in "Tom Sawyer," by Mark Twain.
2. Tom Brown and Slogger Williams, in "Tom Brown's School Days," by Thomas Hughes.
3. Tom Tulliver and Bob Jakin, in "The Mill on the Floss," by George Eliot.
4. William Dobbin and Reginald Cuff, in "Vanity Fair," by William Makepeace Thackeray.
5. Dan and Emil, in "Little Men," by Louisa M. Alcott.
6. Tom Bailey and Bill Conway, in "The Story of a Bad Boy," by Thomas Bailey Aldrich.
7. Penrod Schofield vs. Marjorie Jones, Mitchy-Mitch, Georgie Bassett, Sam Williams, Maurice Levy, and Roderick Bitts, in "Penrod," by Booth Tarkington.
8. Richard Feverel and Ripton Thompson, in "The Ordeal of Richard Feverel," by George Meredith.
9. Tom Jones and Master Blifil, in "Tom Jones," by Henry Fielding.
10. Francis Chisholm and Willie Tulloch, in "The Keys of the Kingdom," by A. J. Cronin.

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