

**CESAR** escorted the two publishers to their favorite table in the Plaza Oak Room, took their order, and withdrew. After a quick survey of the room, to check on who was lunching with whom, the great men of the literary mart launched upon the following conversation:

"This new paper cut is a blockbuster, isn't it? That fellow West didn't leave out anything this time! What did you think of him the other day, Joe?"

"West doesn't know his—from his—; that's what I think of him. Every one of those blank bureaucrats down in Washington has about twenty lawyers working for him. No wonder they don't leave out anything!"

"Alfred says he's going right ahead with his normal publishing program. If he runs out of paper in August, he says he'll close up shop and take a vacation for the rest of the year."

"He's just sounding off as usual. Dudley is the guy who ought to worry. Unless Yardley can pull another rabbit out of a hat for him. He's been doing it for twenty years."

"No soap, Joe. This new order is airtight. No more using other imprints with a 'distributed by' underneath! I wonder what that text book outfit will do with all its paper this year. Have you ever thought of buying up another company, Joe, to get the use of their quota?"

"Walter, you are a genius. Will you excuse me for a moment while I rush down and buy out Macmillan?"

"Well, there's no use getting huffy, Joe. I'm just exploring every possibility. Maybe things will ease up when that Russian and Swedish pulp starts arriving. Maybe we should be patriotic and take our medicine like men!"

"That's the ticket, Walter. Meanwhile, I'm going down to Washington Wednesday and try to pull a few strings. Not that I expect anything from those blank bureaucrats. Newspaper and magazine publishers get extra paper when they need it, you bet. The lugs we send down there to look after our interests don't seem to know the right people."

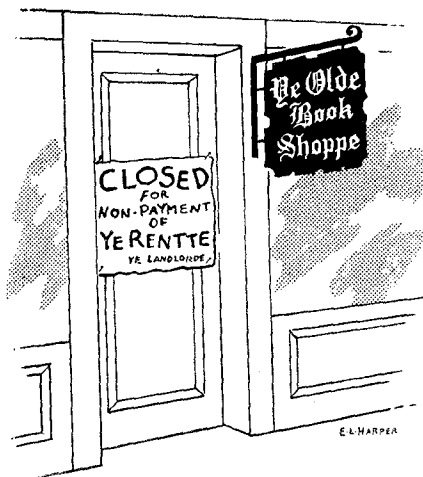
"Would you go on the Washington committee if they asked you, Joe?"

"Who, me? I should say not. I can't get my work done as it is now. This morning they put my head accountant in 1-A. That was all I needed!"

By this time both publishers had ruined their appetites. They dolefully reached for their cocktails and changed the subject to the Lonergan trial. . .

**A GRAPHIC** paragraph from Hallett Abend's new book, "My Life in China": "The worst part of a bombing experience is that period of utter paralysis which follows the concussion. For as much as four minutes, if the bomb is a big one, nothing moves except swirling smoke and thick dust, and there is no sound except the continued tinkle of falling broken glass and the rumble of crumbling masonry. After about four minutes the wounded begin to moan and shriek and try to drag themselves away; then come sounds of sirens and ambulances and fire engines; and then the tempo of shocked life picks up with terrifying rapidity." . . . Louis Sobol's London report: Barrett Street runs into Wimpole Street; the city editor of a London paper is the gent who handles the financial page; a little cinema on Baker Street specializes in American-made Sherlock Holmes pictures—for the laughs! . . . Putnam's will publish Robert Wilder's new novel in April. The title is "Mr. G Strings Along." . . . A weird new edition of Hudson's "Far Away and Long Ago" is bound in the unshorn skin of some repellent South American animal. A recipient complained: "I'm not sure whether I'm supposed to read this book or wear it!" . . .

**ROY CHAPMAN ANDREWS** provided a group of friends recently with a succulent feast of canvasback duck and wild rice. Neil MacNeil, of *The Times*, felt called upon to explain how wild rice was first introduced into America. It seems that the grain was developed accidentally in the Pontine marshes in Italy; when the local authorities became aware of its delicious taste and nutritive value, they slapped a complete embargo on its exportation. Thomas Jefferson was our Minister to France at the time. He was taken on a tour of the Italian marsh region,



and, as he ambled along, cannily plucked off heads of the grain and pocketed them. Back in America, he pondered on the best place to plant his prized grains, and settled on the marshy shoreline of the Carolinas. The wild rice flourished there, and was the original lure for the myriad of wild duck and other fowl that have migrated to those parts ever since. A Manhattan jurist remarked that this was just one more blessing we could credit to the Democrats. . . . I was dining with Max Schuster one evening when he broke a tooth on a grain of wild rice. His rueful comment was, "I've seen wild rice in my time, but this is certainly the wildest yet!" . . .

**BROADWAY'S** newest smash hit, "Mexican Hayride," is a perfect example of both the virtues and the weaknesses of the typical lavish musical extravaganza of our time. The virtues include riotously colorful costumes, a slick, smooth production, beautiful girls, and a huge cast of attractive performers, headed by my nomination for the funniest man in America, Bobby Clark. Clark has a ten-minute interlude as a wandering Mexican flute player that had a sophisticated first-night audience holding its sides with laughter. The weaknesses are an almost unbelievable lack of originality and imagination in both the book and the score. "Mexican Hayride" obviously was not written; it was constructed to order, and built on a well-tested plan. The producer of a big musical today does not wait until some likely property—or even the germ of an idea—is offered to him. He amasses his bankroll ("Hayride" is reputed to have cost \$225,000) and actually signs up principals before he knows what his show is going to be about. Then he persuades some outstandingly successful writers, gagmen, and tunesters to closet themselves in a hotel suite somewhere and patch something together on which he can hang the talent and specialties he has assembled.

The book of "Mexican Hayride" is witless and inane, with whole pieces of business lifted from "Fifty Million Frenchmen" and the old Columbia burlesque wheel. Cole Porter, also obviously writing to order, contributed a pedestrian, uninspired score—a palpable rewrite of tunes and lyrics that he did infinitely better in years gone by. His "Abracadabra" number stems directly from "My Heart Belongs to Daddy"; "Count Your Blessings" is an unblushing blueprint of similar numbers in "Panama Hattie" and "Something for the Boys"; the hit song, "I Love You," is so similar to a half dozen earlier Porter mel-



"It's that trio—they want to be billed as 'John Charles Thomas.'"

odies that one could believe he was deliberately parodying himself. One lyric about "a boy whale and a girl whale" is really embarrassing. Rodgers, Kern, and Berlin get better and better, but Lordy, what has happened to Cole Porter! . . . The critics have become so accustomed to inane librettos in the big musicals that they now accept them as a matter of course. As for the public—try and get tickets for any of the current musical comedy exhibits! The best orchestra seats for "Mexican Hayride" have been marked up to \$5.50, but even that price doesn't mean a thing. Speculators are getting up to ten and twelve dollars a seat for this show, "Oklahoma," "Carmen Jones," and "One Touch of Venus." . . . Jack Kapp, canny head of Decca Records, notes a definite trend away from the highly sophisticated, double-entendish lyrics of the Cole Porter-Lorenz Hart vintage toward the simpler, more universal rhymes that are typified by Oscar Hammerstein's lyrics for "Oklahoma." Kapp says Broadway producers will find this out as soon as the current bonanza spends itself. While it's on, literally anything goes. The current phenomenon in sheet-music circles, for instance, is that Wordsworthian ballad, "Mairzy Doats and Dozy Doats." It has sold something like 600,000 copies in three weeks, and is heard oftener on the radio than static. . . .

**HAMMERSTEIN**, who authored "Carmen Jones" as well as "Oklahoma," is enjoying the greatest season he ever has known. In his "ad" for the anniversary number of *Variety*, however, he playfully listed five colossal

flops for which he had written the book and lyrics, with a tag at the bottom reading, "I've done it before and I can do it again!" Oscar forgot to mention his very first play, a little number called "The Light." He was a senior at Columbia at the time. Our fraternity was very proud of him, and dispatched a scout to New Haven to report on the tryout. His telegram arrived about midnight. It read, "The Light" will never illuminate Broadway." He was right, too. . . . "Oklahoma" will be published next month in book form. So will "The Voice of the Turtle" and "Over Twenty-One." . . .

**VAN CARTMELL**, associate editor of Doubleday, Doran and editor-in-chief of the Garden City reprint line, will spend two months of the year in the Pacific Coast area hereafter, lining up likely properties for the Doubleday line. He is in San Francisco now, and will be in Hollywood on March 6. Cartmell has been with Doubleday for ten years, during which time he has compiled an enviable record as editor, anthologist, and diplomat. No mean actor into the bargain, Van will fit into the Hollywood scene like Humphrey Bogart, whom he vaguely resembles. . . . Which brings to mind a story about a housewife who asked a little grocery boy his name. "Humphrey," answered the boy, and added that the last name was Bogart. "Humphrey Bogart, eh?" said the housewife. "That's a pretty well known name." "It darn well ought to be," the boy agreed. "I've been delivering groceries in this neighborhood for four years!"

BENNETT CERF.

NORTH		Can you make a contract of 3 No Trump with these cards?
♠	10 8 7 2	
♥	Q J 10 9 3	
♦	3	
SOUTH		
♠	K Q J	
♥	A 4	
♦	A Q 7 6 5	
♣	A Q 9	

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*Saturday Review of Literature.*

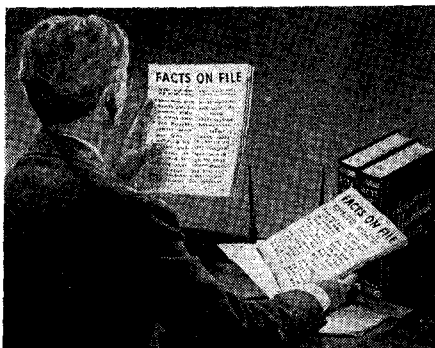
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# The Story of Matthew Flinders

MY LOVE MUST WAIT. By Ernestine Hill. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1944. 410 pp. \$2.75.

Reviewed by C. HARTLEY GRATTAN

MRS. HILL'S book is a life of Matthew Flinders, the English explorer who did more than any other individual to trace and chart the coast line of Australia, in the form of a novel. Flinders died in 1814 at the age of forty, but his short life was crowded with adventure and spiced by romance. He sailed with William Bligh on his second and successful voyage to carry the breadfruit tree from Tahiti to the West Indies, he went out to Australia with Captain Hunter, the second governor, fought the French off Brest, returned to Australia to carry out his major explorations, spent over six years a captive of the French at Isle de France (Mauritius we call it today) and, when released, spent his few remaining years in poverty in London writing his classic report, "A Voyage to Terra Australis," the first bound copy of which reached his home the day before he died, but being already unconscious, he did not see it. Between his first and second trips to Australia he married, but was separated from his wife far longer than he was with her. She lived on until 1852. His only child, Ann, born in 1812, married William Petrie and became the mother of W. M. Flinders Petrie, the famous Egyptologist.

A straight biography of Flinders makes a great and thrilling story. It is a "life" that really needs no bush. But Mrs. Hill has cast her study as a novel, and so it must be judged.

In the February *Atlantic* Hervey Allen has an ingenious and, in general, sound apology and rationale for the historical novel which I hope is widely read in these days when the genre is flourishing. But in my opinion Mr. Allen's reasoning does not apply to a fictionalized biography which, I am afraid, appeals to me as almost exactly what Mr. Allen says the historical novel is not: "A kind of mule-like animal begotten by the ass of fiction of the brood mare of fact, and hence a sterile monster." For by choosing an actual figure of the past, about whom the essential facts can be ascertained fairly readily, the novelist cramps himself in just the fashion that Mr. Allen argues he should not. Mrs. Hill asserts in a Foreword prepared especially for the American edition—the book first appeared in Australia in 1941—"In no case have I played with history." I have not

checked the book in exhaustive detail—that would take too much time—but I know that Mrs. Hill should have qualified her assertion to cover deviations from fact like the first meeting of Flinders and Sir Joseph Banks, the relations between Flinders and Bass before their voyage to Australia together, the circumstances surrounding the finding of the strayed cattle, the so-called Barrington Prologue, and so on, not to mention the allegedly verbatim reports of conversations and the equally constant ascriptions of emotional reactions and mental processes. I suspect that Mrs. Hill was constantly torn between a desire to report the facts scrupulously and an equally powerful desire to write a good novel, to the disadvantage of the finished job.

Yet the trick she essayed can be successfully turned. There lately came from Australia a novel which admirably illustrates how well it can be done, Eleanor Dark's "The Timeless Land." Compare the two books, and ponder why one succeeds and the other is only so-so, and you will, I think, come up with the conclusion that success is granted to the novelist who sees life through a complex temperament and who therefore imparts to his work the very qualities Mr. Allen insists are basic to first-rate historical novels, while yet not distorting the facts to any crippling extent. Mrs. Hill doesn't particularly distort her facts—her lapses from strict historical grace are more annoying than fatal—but she definitely performs on a lower interpretative level than Mrs. Dark.

I'm afraid I'm making Mrs. Hill's book carry a heavy freight of comment, but running through it two years after my first reading, at a time when Mr. Allen's essay was fresh in mind, is my provocation. Perhaps I should ask Mrs. Hill's pardon for heaping this burden on her book and tell the reader the reaction of an Australian lady of taste. "I thoroughly enjoyed the book," she said. "In school Flinders was merely a name in a dull history book and the country he saw a succession of meaningless place-names. Now he is a living man and the country real." But I still think a good straight biography would have accomplished the same end and have been vastly preferable, even if it was merely a modernization of Sir Ernest Scott's monumental "Life of Matthew Flinders" (1914), which Mrs. Hill truly calls "a storehouse of information."

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*The Saturday Review*