

thor seems to be devoted to his subject, not for the purpose of extracting everything there is in it by any means, but for an affectionate display of it. He portrays his heroes as great men indeed, and after completing the final tragic act in their careers, he says with true feeling: "Results must be assessed when weighing the worth even of great gallantry."

Caucasian Slaves

COLONISTS IN BONDAGE: *White Servitude and Convict Labor in America, 1607-1776.* By Abbot Emerson Smith. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 1947. 435 pp. \$5.

Reviewed by RAYMOND WALTERS, JR.

EUROPEANS of the seventeenth century, Dr. Smith points out, had at least one advantage over those of the present day; room and opportunity awaited them in the New World. But to pay the cost of their trans-Atlantic passage—never more than £6—most of them were bound for four years of virtual slavery in America, usually as farm hands. Dr. Smith estimates that more than one-half of the white people coming to the British-American colonies south of New England and a "fair proportion" of those settling in New England migrated under such conditions. They were a motley lot: English and Scottish Royalists taken prisoner by Oliver Cromwell, impoverished European farmers, and criminals of every type. Only about one in ten achieved economic independence following his term of servitude; another one in ten became an overseer or an artisan; the remaining eight either died during their bondage or became poor whites.

Dr. Smith pieced together this detailed analysis from twelve years of study of legislative and court records, diaries, and letters in Great Britain and America. He devotes much of his attention to the methods by which the highly profitable and nefarious trade in servants was conducted, to the belated efforts of the British Government to control it, and to the government's practice of disposing of its criminals and political prisoners in the New World. His account of how the chattels lived after they reached America is somewhat disappointing for its brevity and its heavy emphasis on legalistic aspects. The main outlines of this story have been known to historians for some time, but Dr. Smith's inquiry serves to illuminate them and to underscore the role of white servitude in the settlement of America.

APRIL 10, 1948

Fiction. *Two distinguished novels are presented this week which explore ideas that rose to the surface in wartime Europe. Percy Winner's third book in one year, "The Mote and the Beam," is an extension of the theme of his first, Fascist mentality and behavior in France and Italy before and during the war. The second, "The Marble Cliffs," is a translation of the latest work of a powerful German writer, Ernst Juenger, who changed his tune after the Nazis' arrival, and was one of the principal exponents of nihilistic heroism and the glory of the battlefield. To escape the concentration camp the author has embedded his anti-Nazi opinions in an apparently innocent allegorical fantasy. Albert Idell's "The Great Blizzard" combines the charm of "Life With Father" with the excitement of the famous storm of '88. For adventure and thrills read Hammond Innes's "Gale Warning."*

Blood-Stained Pilgrimage

THE MOTE AND THE BEAM. By Percy Winner. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1948. 366 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by HARRISON SMITH

PERCY WINNER'S "Dario," published last year, commanded the attention of the critics for the clarity with which it dissected the Fascist mentality of Europe before the war. Few other American writers have proved to be so able to penetrate the fog of evil that blotted out the ordinary signs by which men and politics can be recognized for what they are. There followed in a few months an adventure tale, "Scene in the Ice-Blue Eyes," in which the author used his knowledge of spying and murder

during the war to keep the reader in the ultimate suspense of rarely knowing exactly what was going on or who was who, and why. His most ambitious work, "The Mote and the Beam," has followed rapidly on the heels of the second. At its best it is a brilliant accomplishment; at its worst, the reader may feel that for most of the long journey he is far out at sea without compass or sextant.

Mr. Winner is obviously writing fiction for a purpose. He believes that humanity is engaged in a war between good and evil, and is seeking the emergence of the moral man and the moral ideas which he believes must bring victory. He believes that political forms and ideas mean little, since evil can assume the cloak of virtue and the devil can hide his tail and horns under priestly garments. There are qualities inherent in man that can be labeled humanity, spirituality, and morality. Today they are submerged in what Mr. Winner calls the community of corruption, the mad drive for power among the great nations of the earth. Mr. Winner has no more respect for Communism as a police state than he has for Fascism. Though traitorous rats in his book are all Fascists at heart, they could turn to Communism as a refuge with the greatest of ease. Toward the end of the novel he writes:

France might have destroyed herself had it not been for the help of America. America was stronger than ever, but her strength wasn't beyond impairment through the corrupting influence of moral opportunism and the suicidal recklessness of trying to outplay the immoral strong at their own game.

"The Mote and the Beam" begins in 1938 when his hero, an American



named Finn, was writing a book to be called "The Sick Soul of Europe." He flees from an indescribable orgy in the Paris house of a rich and evil Spaniard, only to discover a remorselessly sexual woman, one of the leaders of a gang of powerful Fascists. Recognizing Finn's value to them as a man of principle, the gang starts an insidious battle for his soul and body. A patriotic and aristocratic Frenchman, masquerading as a panderer to the vices of the wealthy, becomes Finn's friend and mentor. This man's philosophy is strange enough: France herself is as corrupt as any prostitute; therefore to know and to save her he must also become corrupt.

This is only one of the many psychological complications of the novel. At one time Finn had engaged in carnal sin with the daughter of a professor and had taken her to Rome. Since his sense of guilt had unmanned him, to spite him she had resorted to whoredom. By chance, Finn is present at her deathbed in a foul tenement in Rome. He becomes obsessed with the notion that he is responsible for her death.

Nor is this the limit of the novel's complexities. Dorina Alden, the frightening Fascist leader, is in love with Sebastian, the rich Spaniard who is masked as a Catholic devotee, and because of a vague resemblance she regards Finn as his alter ego. Throughout the book Finn is tortured by this identification with the saintly Spanish devil.

Toward the end of the novel the fog begins to clear. By this time war is approaching its end, and Finn has sufficiently conquered the nightmares that haunt him to allow himself to join the Resistance movement and carry on the fight against the Ger-



—Arnt.

Man's inherent morality is submerged in what Percy Winner calls "the community of corruption among the great nations."

mans in Italy and France. He is at last able to understand himself, to see the two crosses on which he has been nailed. The need to expiate a crime committed in fantasy had made him humanly impotent; unable to face the results, self-abasement and self-punishment had led him to the brink of suicide. To escape that he found himself on the verge of repeating in fact an old murder of fantasy. He had also been faithless to himself and to his birthright. Only when he saw men and women living on the sufferings of others could he emancipate himself from his false suffering.

This, in a parody of the author's own words, is the eventual solution of the novel, or at least of the hero's part in it. It does not convey a hint of the frightful scenes, the revelations of human folly and wickedness that lead to the saving of Finn's soul. The two countries in which this drama of blood and terror takes place are portrayed as infernos of confusion and wickedness. The question the reader would like to ask of Mr. Winner is this: With all his knowledge of the background of war and defeat does he believe that Europe is now cleansed so that it can resolve its difficulties without another war? Can mankind, rent by false illusions and mental disease, save itself? "The Mote and the Beam" was not written to entertain an audience. Mr. Winner wants his readers to understand the struggle of man against the force of evil outside and inside himself, and to see the dilemma of the world as he sees it. But if we are able to follow him, what other answer can there be but resignation to a black and blood-stained future?

Piracy-Murder Yarn

GALE WARNING. By Hammond Innes. New York: Harper & Bros. 1948. 272 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by WILLIAM WEBER

A **S**IZABLE piece of the mantle of John Buchanan has fallen on the shoulders of Hammond Innes, who made his American bow last year with the highly praised "Fire in the Snow," and whose new novel is similarly fashioned from fabric richly threaded with adventure, piracy, murder, treasure-trove, and romance.

For the principal background of "Gale Warning" Mr. Innes has chosen Maddons Rock: a barren, precipitous slab of granite in the Barents Sea south of Spitzbergen. In the boiling surf around Maddons Rock is fought the final battle between young British Army NCO Jim Vardy and bearded, Shakespeare-spouting Captain Halsey. Halsey, "a rantin', ravin' lunatic but a fine sailor," was the skipper of the freighter *Trikkala*, officially listed as mined and sunk in March 1945, but destined to make a miraculous emergence more than a year later.

Corporal Vardy was detailed to guard the cargo of the *Trikkala* when she sailed, in 1945, from Murmansk to a Scottish port, with her holds full of iron ore. She also carried a special cargo marked "Hurricane Engines for Replacement"—but far more precious than "dud aero parts." It was this special cargo that led to the cold-blooded murder of twenty-three men, to Jim Vardy's conviction and imprisonment for mutiny, to his escape from Dartmoor, and to the final race for Maddons Rock and the treasure on its storm-lashed beach. And with Vardy at the finish was the young Scottish girl who was going home to Oban on the *Trikkala* after three years in a Nazi concentration camp.

Viewed either by land or by sea "Gale Warning" (it was serialized as "Maddons Rock") is a first-class suspense-adventure yarn. Vardy's escape from Dartmoor and his adventures in England and Scotland before he embarks for Maddons Rock, are, so far as terra firma is concerned, a novel in themselves; while the seascapes of the voyage to the rock, and the happenings there, are brilliantly handled. The herculean exploits of four men and a girl on a beached steamship seem almost incredible to this complete landlubber, but Mr. Innes's publishers say that "he hunts up the material backgrounds of his stories in every case." At any rate, in a story so lavishly stocked with action, bloodshed, and well-rounded characters it may not be cricket to fuss about technicalities.

The Saturday Review

FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT: No. 251

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 251 will be found in the next issue.

FHIQFYFKJ XO WJ YFKJ;

QAIAHFYFKJ XO LVFIQAH

WLV'O YFKJ.—S. SLHTBHIFV.

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 250

Some circumstantial evidence is very strong, as when you find a trout in the milk.

THOREAU