

## CSS Shenandoah

**DIXIE RAIDER.** By Murray Morgan.  
New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1948.  
336 pp. \$4.

Reviewed by FLETCHER PRATT

IN 1862 a Canadian geologist discovered how to distil kerosene, and whaling was doomed as a big-time industry. The actual end came not by the slow erosion which usually attacks a dying business, but swiftly and amid dramatic circumstances. It was the work of a single ship, CSS *Shenandoah*, which quite literally burned the American whaling fleet out of existence in the Bering Sea in 1865. She was the last ship to fly the Confederate flag, hers was the last mast from which it floated anywhere save as a sentimental memory. She circumnavigated the globe, visited Australia and the more romantic South Sea Islands, finished her warlike career by turning herself over to the British authorities at Liverpool without ever being sighted by an enemy cruiser, and was the subject of a famous controversy. Her ultimate destination was to become the yacht of the Sultan of Zanzibar, and that of her captain to chase oyster pirates up Chesapeake Bay in a police boat with a howitzer.

Several of her officers wrote memoirs, and in recent years the story of the ship has been told in a decent if pedestrian study and a very bad romantic novel. All the information is here brought together for the first time and set forth in an easy and satisfying manner. To be sure there is not much one can do to ruin such a tale, but Mr. Morgan deserves a special medal for having enhanced it, in a perfectly legitimate way.

When he began his research he found practically every point in the narrative illuminated from at least two directions—the reports of *Shenandoah's* officers and those of the ships she captured, or of the shoregoing people who were in contact with her for one reason or another. This has enabled the author to make free use of the only literary device in which fiction can normally exceed history—direct quotation, with the sense of people moving around and doing the things living people do. Mr. Morgan does use this device continually and with effect; the anger and despair of the Yankee shipowners, the bad tempers of the voyage home when it was certain that the Confederacy was gone, stand right out of the page. Above all, there was the haunting fear that they would be hanged as pirates, for several of the whalers were burned when the cruiser flew the flag of a government that no longer existed, and there was no facing down the fact that Captain Waddell had learned of Lee's surrender through captured newspapers before these acts of destruction, but chose to consider it unimportant.

Well, they did not hang. Nobody even tried very hard. They only made Her Majesty's Government foot the bill for damages on the quite reasonable ground that *Shenandoah* had gone into the port of Melbourne after she was armed and equipped as a cruiser, spent a long time there, and was allowed to provision herself and recruit men without very much hindrance. The story comes out all right in all directions except for the captains and owners of the whaling ships. One wonders if they ever got anything back from anybody after their ships and profession were gone. But that is part of another story, not this one, which is a good story, well told.

## Americana Notes

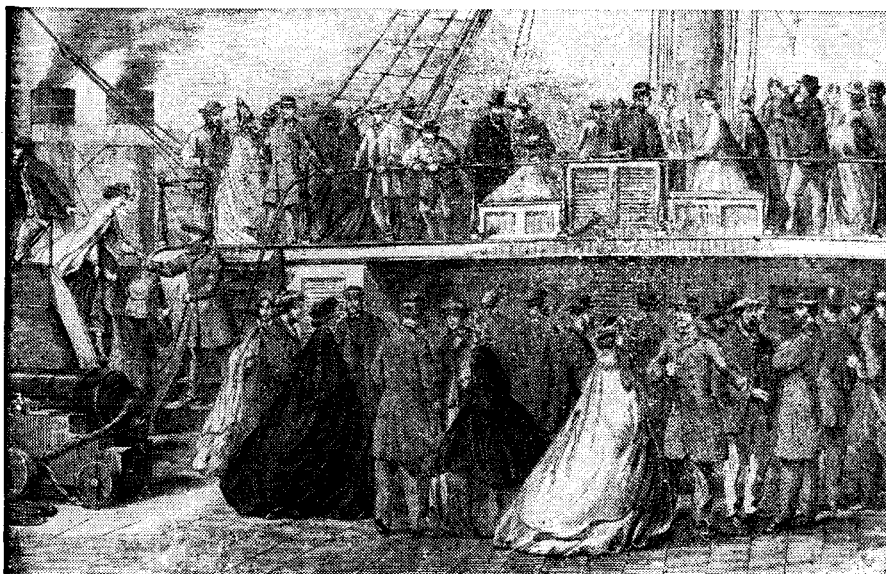
ALL wars are great periods of enforced travel, and never did so many observant men roam through the South as in the years 1861-65. Many of them, whether Union or Confederate soldiers, war correspondents, nurses, spies, prisoners, or foreign observers, sooner or later set down some record of what they saw. This was not necessarily in a formal book of travel or reminiscence. Many regimental histories North and South, for example, contain extensive passages of travel description. This great mass of material has now been fully explored, mapped, and critically appraised by Dr. E. M. Coulter in "Travels in the Confederate States: A Bibliography" (University of Oklahoma Press, \$7.50). Henceforth this reference work, embodying Professor Coulter's well-known expertness and skill, will be indispensable to students of the period. But more must be said of it than that. Such is the graphic quality of the brief summaries and characterizations of the six or seven hundred volumes here listed that the work has interest for the casual reader. It will rescue from oblivion many an old book now forgotten—for example, Tunnard's "Southern Record," and Kate Cumming's "Journal of Hospital Life in the Confederate Army," and George H. Gordon's "War Diary," all warmly commended.

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To the shelf of oldtime plantation chronicles Pierce Butler, dean-emeritus of Newcomb College, has added a slender and leisurely volume giving chapters from the written and traditional records of Laurel Hill, just outside Natchez ("The Unhurried Years," Louisiana State University Press, \$3). The history of this large cotton holding runs back to the 1770's, when a Virginian named Ellis obtained a grant in the area from the Spanish crown. Since then the plantation, with the old house on a hill of magnolias, has been continuously in the hands of the Ellis-Mercer-Butler family. Dean Butler uses old letters, accounts, and diaries to give interesting glimpses of ante-bellum prosperity and Civil War and post-bellum hardships, but the best chapter is that which embodies his own memories of old colored friends in the Natchez community.

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A versatile young English minister, educator, and agriculturist, Harry Toulmin, went to Kentucky in 1793, soon becoming a teacher in Transylvania Seminary at Lexington. Both Jefferson and Madison knew him and commended him to their friends. In due time he became lawyer, secretary



Visitors board the *Shenandoah*.

—From "Dixie Raider."

of state, and judge. During his initial journeyings in Virginia and Kentucky he kept a careful journal, while he set down much material on the farming, manufacturing, and commerce of the two states. All this has now been published from the original manuscripts by Marion Tinling and Godfrey Davies as "The Western Country in 1793" (The Huntington Library, \$3.75). It is especially illuminating as to the profits of tobacco and hemp culture in early Kentucky, and as to birth of manufacturing there. But it also contains a good many social and political observations, ranging from the love of ice water to Southern jealousy of the monied interests in the North.

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In 1839, when the United States had only seventeen million people, the West had special attractions for thousands suffering from the hard times that followed the recent panic. An energetic promoter, John Plumbe, interested in both land and railroads, embodied the observations of three years in a volume, "Sketches of Iowa and Wisconsin," intended to encourage hesitant emigrants. Along with plenty of booster material, his hundred pages contained much authentic information. A rare book, it has been reprinted in facsimile by the State Historical Society of Iowa, with an introduction by the superintendent, William J. Petersen. ALLAN NEVINS.

**Critic-at-Large** *The first flower of a country's writing lies in its essayists—or, more aptly, its critics-at-large. It is comparatively easy to become a foreign correspondent, an historian, or an Elizabethan scholar, where industry or knowledge can substitute for talent. But there are few whose reputations are built on the discovery that in writing of ideas and the world the light touch carries more weight than the body blow. The sharpness of James Thurber's critical rapier is demonstrated anew in the collection reviewed below. But, as James Gray indicates in reviewing John Mason Brown's latest book here, many of our best critic-essayists have started as drama critics. To his list we might add Brooks Atkinson, Louis Kronenberger, and GBS himself.*

## Touché

**THE BEAST IN ME AND OTHER ANIMALS.** By James Thurber. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1948. 340 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by BERGEN EVANS

THOSE who delight in good writing will hardly have allowed these essays and sketches to go unread until now, but they will be glad, all the same, to have them collected in book form.

For Thurber stands rereading. In going over his things one is continually struck by nice touches that had escaped attention in the joy of the

first reading. The cricket "playing his bright arrangement of foreboding," boisterous, uninvited guests who "tumbled in without knocking, like a pair of comics taking an encore," the tribulations of soap opera, pressing upon the harried heroines with "the immediacy of a toothache and the urgency of a telegram"—these things are very fine and, what's more, plentiful. For sheer virtuosity "A Call on Mrs. Forrester" deserves to stand beside Max Beerbohm's "A Christmas Garland," though one really has to turn back to "A Lost Lady" and "The Ambassadors" to see how brilliantly Thurber has executed his double parody. "The Beast in the Dingle" is not quite so good; it captures the master's tedium all too well but otherwise falls short.

The volume is divided into five sections. Section I comprises seventeen essays and stories. Sections II and IV are made up chiefly of drawings. Section III contains *The New Yorker* articles on radio serials, and Section V reproduces twenty-eight items which Mr. Thurber contributed to "The Talk of the Town" from 1928 to 1936.

A liking for Mr. Thurber's drawings is a matter of taste. In some the whimsicality of thought and line fuse very happily. But there are others, particularly among the animal drawings, that, in one opinion at least, fall decidedly flat. In attempting to delineate those elusive creatures "that haunt the moonlight margins of the mind" there is always the danger of getting too much moonshine into the picture.

In "The Lady on the Bookcase," one of the essays, the author gives an account of the genesis of some of his drawings. Some, he says, originated in a "Stream of Nervousness"; i.e., doodling. Some were determined by accident. The seal at the head of the bed is an example of this: he meant, he says, to draw a seal on a rock, but

## Your Literary I.Q.

By Howard Collins

NAME THE AUTHOR

Something different in the way of a literary quiz has been cooked up by Mrs. Donald Stulken and Mrs. Fred Zimmerman, of Viroqua, Wis. In the blank spaces between the forty pairs of names below, you are to supply a name that will be the last name of the first named author and also the first name of the last named author. Allowing two and one-half points for each correct answer, a score of sixty is par, seventy is very good, and eighty or better is excellent. Answers are on page 57.

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|--------------------|-----------|-----------------------|------------|
| 1. Henry .....     | Stephens  | 21. Alighieri .....   | Rossetti   |
| 2. Samuel .....    | Defoe     | 22. Thomas .....      | Shelley    |
| 3. Philip .....    | Lanier    | 23. John .....        | Caldwell   |
| 4. George .....    | Wells     | 24. Pat .....         | Stockton   |
| 5. Emil .....      | Bemelmans | 25. Joseph .....      | Aiken      |
| 6. Ralph .....     | Partridge | 26. William .....     | Chesterton |
| 7. James .....     | Kilmer    | 27. Henry .....       | Collins    |
| 8. Matthew .....   | Bennett   | 28. John .....        | Cerf       |
| 9. May .....       | Lewis     | 29. John .....        | Ford       |
| 10. Will .....     | Barrie    | 30. Wilfred .....     | Wister     |
| 11. Wyndham .....  | Carroll   | 31. Cecil .....       | Pope       |
| 12. John .....     | Waugh     | 32. Agnes .....       | Dodd       |
| 13. Edwin .....    | Jeffers   | 33. Leonard .....     | Lockridge  |
| 14. Thomas .....   | Broun     | 34. William .....     | Anderson   |
| 15. Paris .....    | Prior     | 35. Christopher ..... | Callaghan  |
| 16. James .....    | Allen     | 36. James .....       | Caldwell   |
| 17. Benjamin ..... | Adams     | 37. William .....     | Bishop     |
| 18. James .....    | Thomas    | 38. Stephen .....     | Brooks     |
| 19. Robert .....   | Ervine    | 39. O. ....           | Bellaman   |
| 20. Bertrand ..... | Crouse    | 40. John .....        | Bates      |