

Adventures and Perils.
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ADVENTURES AND PERILS

SHIP ASHORE. By DESMOND YOUNG. With an Introduction by ADMIRAL of the FLEET EARL JELlicoe. (Jonathan Cape. 10s. 6d. net.)

WHEN SHIPS GO DOWN. More Wonders of Salvage. By DAVID MASTERS. (Eyre and Spottiswoode. 8s. 6d. net.)

SURVIVORS' TALES OF FAMOUS SHIPWRECKS. By WALTER WOOD. (Geoffrey Bles. 8s. 6d. net.)

The adage concerning the ill-wind that blows nobody good may be applied in its most literal sense to-day, just as in the days of the Barbary corsairs, to those "adventures and perils" of the sea so picturesquely set forth in marine insurance policies. But time has brought about a great change in the spirit if not in the degree of its aptness. The term "wrecker" still survives: but whereas those to whom it applied in its now happily obsolete sense were rightly looked upon as the enemies of humanity, the men who nowadays, often at the imminent risk of life and limb, snatch its prey from the very jaws of the devouring sea perform in doing so a solid service to the community as well as to themselves.

Mr. Desmond Young may claim to be a "wrecker" born, though not in the precise sense of the Cornish infant whose lips framed the petition he quotes, "God bless father and mother and send a ship ashore before morning!" That artless plea, it may be remarked in passing, was no more peculiar to Cornwall, if popular tradition is to be believed, than the wrecker's calling generally, for it is quite as frequently ascribed to the 'longshore young of the North-East Coast of Falconer's day:—

Where the grim hell hounds prowling round the shore
With foul intent the stranded bark explore—
and Mr. Young once heard an old West Indian negress remark: "Now I go make 'obi' send another big ship ashore soon!"

Lord Jellicoe in his introduction refers to the "great salvage work" done by Mr. Young's father, Commodore Sir Frederick Young, during the War, in retrieving not only naval vessels, but the mercantile tonnage which at the height of the U-boat peril was perhaps even more essential to the national existence. In pre-War days Commodore Young's "cases" took him far afield. "Once it was Desolation Island in the Straits of Magellan, once Sierra Leone, once the most remote of Japanese islands whose name, with the name of the ship, I have long since forgotten." Mr. Young as a boy frequently accompanied his father on these excursions; he was an intimate friend of the whole ship's company of the salvage vessel *Ranger*, and gives an entertaining account of the various Liverpool "characters" it included—by no means, as he puts it, "a race of Sam Smalls and Peter Russets," but as distinct a type in their way, and as racy of their calling, as the London bargemen. A characteristic incident is that of the Yorkshire carpenter "Jonty," or Jonathan, who, when at work on the wreck of H.M.S. *Montagu* on Lundy Island, hailed a busy commander with the words, "Well, friend, how goes it?" "I'm not your friend," snapped the commander. "Yes, you are," said Jonathan, "I've taken a liking to you."

Commodore Young carried into his War service the seaman's ingrained dislike of red tape. "This officer's resignation should be accepted with cheerful alacrity," he once wrote on an Admiralty docket, "for he has been nothing but a damned nuisance since he entered the Service." In Lord Fisher he found a man after his own heart. The "hole in the wall" at Portland wanted closing. Captain Young asked for an old battleship. "Right," said Lord Fisher, "you can have the Hood." "You won't mind," said Captain Young, "if I sink her bottom up." "Bottom up or any b-y how," said Lord Fisher, and the interview closed. The second part of the book deals with Mr. Young's own post-War "cases," the first of which was a tramp steamer sunk in the White Sea in 1916. Mr. Young went out with the North Russian Relief Force, and has a good deal to say on the theme of that (in his opinion) ill-advised venture. A keen observer, with a free and pleasant style and a lively sense of humour, he has made a noteworthy success of a far from easy task—namely, a book on a highly technical subject which is calculated to be not merely comprehensible, but attractive, to the lay mind.

A good deal of Mr. David Masters's volume on a similar topic comes under the category of competent, but somewhat uninspired, book-making. The *Tobermory* galleon, for instance, is an old story nowadays, and Mr. Masters has nothing new to tell about it; while Mr. David Scott's two books on the "Egypt" venture render his chapter on that subject a trifle unnecessary. He devotes a lengthy chapter to the elaboration of a theory, for which, incidentally, there seems to be no concrete evidence whatever, showing that certain names on the Merchant Service memorial in Trinity Square have no business to be there. Why, he asks, should it be thought that the crew of five men missing from a vessel abandoned in the Channel in 1917 were "war losses"? Yet he himself produces and ignores one of the most obvious reasons for so thinking. "One Q ship at least," he says, "was exactly like the *Zebrina*" (the ship in question); and that fact suggests inevitably why the *Zebrina*'s crew might meet with short shrift in enemy hands. The theory he puts forward, that the whole crew were "swept into eternity by a giant wave," is more

than a little farfetched. Such occurrences are very rare indeed; and the "waves 8ft. to 12ft. high" of which he speaks, alarming though they may sound to a landsman, are such as are successfully weathered time and again by hundreds of craft not a quarter of the *Zebrina*'s tonnage. Mr. Masters's best chapters are those in which he is able to describe at first hand the salvage operations on the ships of the German Fleet at Scapa Flow, a proposition which, it is interesting to note, Mr. Young discussed with his father, and decided that it was not worth the candle.

Mr. Young and Mr. Masters deal with the aftermath of disaster, Mr. Wood with disaster itself. Most of the stories he tells are of very well-known marine catastrophes—the loss of the *Birkenhead*, the *London*, and the *Princess Alice* among others—and, while he has not much to add to what is already common knowledge, they are on the whole well worth retelling. Moreover, not all the narratives refer, strictly speaking, to wrecks. A few are of torpedoed ships, several relate to fire at sea, and in two cases the ships were not lost at all. The first person method is employed throughout; but Mr. Wood's preface, as well as the rather stilted verbiage in which some of the tales are cast, seems to indicate that they have been considerably edited, "so as to stand for what the possessor of the material would have said if the needful power of expression had been available." A point which cannot but impress itself on anyone reading such a collection as this is that in the greater number of cases the loss of life did not result from any shortage of boat accommodation. The conclusion to be drawn was expressed by a distinguished officer of the Mercantile Marine in a recent letter to *The Times*, who emphasized the importance of adequate discipline, both as regards passengers and crew, in readiness for any such emergencies.

HUNTIN' AND RACIN'

TANTIVY TOWERS: A LIGHT OPERA IN THREE ACTS. DERBY DAY: A COMIC OPERA IN THREE ACTS. By A. P. HERBERT. (Methuen. 5s. net.)

Well printed, cheerfully bound and decorated with witty little drawings by Lady Violet Baring, this book is cheap at its price and will make a very welcome Christmas present. To have heard Mr. Herbert's two operas performed is to enjoy reading them all the more, because the verse of the one, the mingled verse and prose of the other, make a complete unit of each, independent of such embellishment as the music could give. Mr. Herbert never merely leads up to a song, and never puts in a song only because it seems about time to have one; and both his plots develop as if naturally by the development of the idea. Of the two, *Tantivy Towers* is much the stronger. Contrasting Chelsea and the County, it contrasts two ideals of life; and Mr. Herbert's little attack on "blood sports" is only an episode in a much wider theme. *Derby Day* is capital fun; but there is no fundamental opposition in its forces, and so the fun is not much more than jolly fooling.

Clearly, it does Mr. Herbert's muse good to be compressed within the limits of the dramatic form. For all his metrical skill, some of his independent poems go on too long. In the operas there is not a word too much. Once, and once only, he is merely facetious: it is in Captain Bereback's address to Hugh Heather:—

May I add, this spacious mansion
Might receive a large expansion
But would still too tiny be
To contain both you and me?

But it is hardly fair to bring that up against the poet who wrote the eight lines for the Flunkies, beginning:—

There are some things which are not done:
To shoot a fox, of course, is one;

or Jenny's verse (as if she had remembered it out of "Love in the Valley"):—

On the sunny hillside the old house dreaming,
Bees in the borders and swallows in the eaves,
Down through the tree-tops the silver river gleaming
Drowsily the tiny boats drift like fallen leaves.

In *Derby Day* there is no less accomplished. Indeed the introduction of what Lady Waters considered the "human weeds," publican, barmaid, tipster, jockeys and the rest, gives it a wider range and a more bustling action than there are in *Tantivy Towers*. But Mr. Herbert's gift for song-writing is subdued to the complexity of his scheme as a whole; and Rose's address to the "pretty, pretty horse," for instance—a little gem of artful artlessness—must take its place in the rattling whole. It is not safe to mention Gilbert even in relation to such an artist in metre and rhythm as Mr. Herbert; but it is not likely that Gilbert would have much fault to find with Nick's patter-song describing the race, or with Rose's song about her education.

An important thing in the book is the long "Preface" to *Derby Day* in heroic verse. It is all about racing, and it moralizes without reaching, or preaching, the moral—that betting is a mug's game. But there is no denying that it is very readable:—

All day across the ledger and the loom,
Across the coal-face and the engine-room,
Dances distractingly a horse (or mare?)
Filly (or colt?)—we neither know nor care:
We never saw it and we never shall,
It is a name and not an animal.
It is an instrument by God designed
To redistribute wealth among mankind:
It is the thing that links us with the lord,
It is the only dream we can afford.

A series of satirical drawings in the vein of Hogarth, entitled "Charlotte's Progress," by Vera Cunningham, will be published by Wishart on the 29th, with a commentary by Douglas Garman. A foreword has been contributed by Ashley Dukes.