

## The Misadventures of Young Lovers

DEFY THE FOUL FIEND, Or the Misadventures of a Heart. By John Collier. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1934. \$2.50.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

HERE are two books for which everyone should evermore praise John Collier. One is the novel, "His Monkey Wife," which appeared a few years ago, and the second his editing of what he has called "The Scandal and Credulities of John Aubrey." In their several ways I do not know which I like better; but I do know that I like both passing well.

Therefore when I opened a new novel by him with such a grand title as "Defy the Foul Fiend," and such an appealing introductory quotation from Shakespeare as "Keep thy foot out of brothels, thy hand out of plackets, thy pen from lenders' books, and defy the foul fiend," I thought that my soul must rejoice in the contents thereof. Well, my soul has not precisely rejoiced. A trivial circumstance that has nothing to do with the merit or demerit of Mr. Collier's writing first contributed to this feeling. I was compelled to skip from pages 13 to 41, with no knowledge of what had gone between, because by accident I was sent a defective copy of the book for review. Therefore I shall never know just what occurred to Willoughby during a certain brief period of his youth—for I do not think I shall reread the book. That is really the crux of my criticism. I shall reread "His Monkey Wife" and the "Credulities," I hope till I am evilly old and grey. But in "Defy the Foul Fiend" I had a deathly feeling at first that Mr. Collier had decided to go "smart young Englishman" on his devoted audience. True, this fear was soon dissipated, save that from a page or so a very occasional aroma would rise like a quick whiff of coal-gas; but when the author hit his stride, he was clean of wind and limb, and moreover kept his story going at a brisk pace. The only trouble is that, from the days of H. G. Wells, there have been a large number of quite passable young-love stories written; and suave and intelligent as is Mr. Collier, and amusing as he can be, albeit upon too rare occasions in this book, all that does not seem enough.

Perhaps it lies with the jaded reviewer. I know that this novel is a more sapient and accomplished novel than a great many you will be reading, Dear Average Reader. Mr. Collier says certain things that delight me, such as:

Revolt was in the air in those years. Customs to which no cultivated person had ever adhered, books none such had ever read, pictures never looked at except by short-lived duty, poor old men at whom even their contemporaries had laughed, even the wretched aspidistra, were dragged up to be rebelled against.

And the spirited conversation Willoughby addresses to the Black Stock person in the Whistlerian house in Chelsea, is prime. But where did Mr. Collier pick up his peculiar version of Swinburne, "The hounds of Spring are free of the leashes," and why did he write on and on in this book, and so very, very much of it? The fine and fornicating Frances toward the end is scarcely worth so much space, beautiful as she may have been. There is a great deal of the story that one takes with a hop-skip-and-jump, positive that nothing serious can have happened that it would be a pity to miss. And when one returns, shamefacedly to see whether one's prognostication was true, one is amazed to find how true it was!

No, this is a novel that the writer enjoyed as he enjoys settling himself in an easy armchair; and easy writing proverbially makes hard reading. Mr. Collier is never slovenly. His English is always impeccable, his sly witticisms occasionally glint like diamonds, he is always an authoritative gentleman-of-letters; but in this book he evinces very little sense of drama, and tries hardly at all to keep the reader interested. Because of an atmosphere deeply relished and fully conveyed, the scenes at Willoughby's uncle's in the country—and Willoughby, upon the death

of his uncle, quite sensibly, ends up in the country, with Lucy—are the best. We have had so much of London in novels, and of down-at-heel London too, that even the appealing character of the old man who addressed envelopes no longer prevails upon us. This book is a queer mixture of simple, delightful, almost naïve pleasure in life, in really pretty and adorable girls, fine weather, and fresh air; and a sophistication that almost breaks into a giggle whenever it touches upon the unmysterious mysteries of sex,—a desire to titillate.

As for Willoughby, he was an illegitimate child who had to learn everything for himself. Fundamentally a very decent sort, he encounters life with some hilarity and a great deal of innocent surprise. His misadventures would constitute a good novel by anyone else; but unfortunately for Mr. Collier we have learned to expect from him nothing less than a *nonpareil*!

## Nazis in a Novel

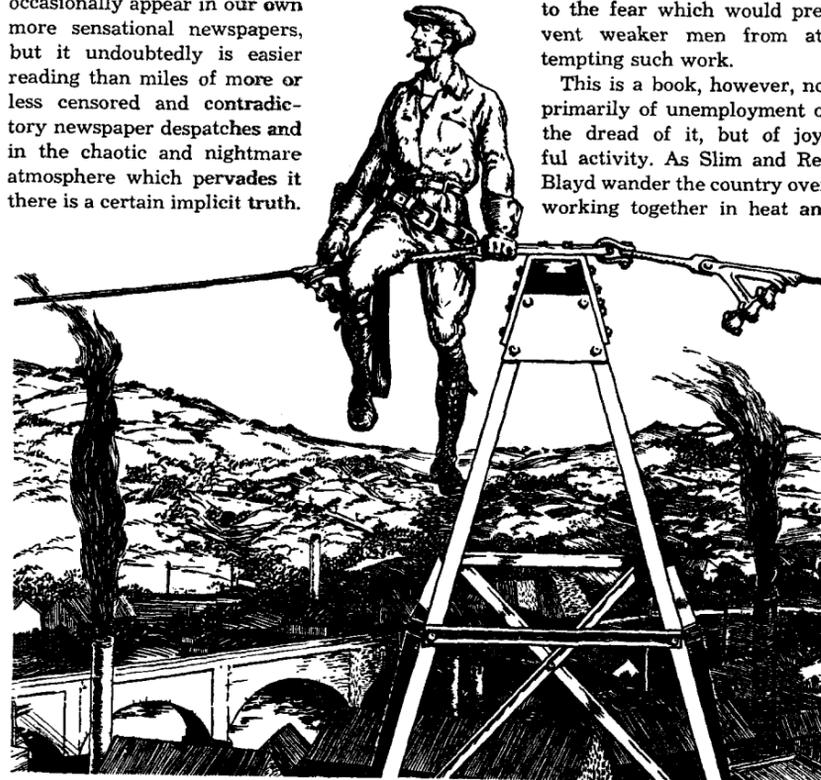
BLOOD AND TEARS. By Balder Olden. New York: The Appleton-Century Co. 1934. \$2.

THIS German novel is one of a number, doubtless, which have been rushed into translation, not because they are works of art, but because they put into fictional and easily readable form, hot off the griddle, something more or less illuminating about the ghastly riddle of present-day Germany.

"Blood and Tears" follows actual events from shortly before Hitler's appointment as Chancellor, through the Reichstag fire, and down to the Leader's theatrical May Day speech at Tempelhof. Hitler, Von Schleicher, Von Papen, and various others appear "in person" and under their own names. A wholly cynical, mocking, club-footed little devil of a man, who serves as the "brains" behind the Leader's speeches but believes neither in Hitler nor in anybody else, is known as Dr. Schnierwind in the book and is evidently intended as a caricature of Goebbels.

Against a nightmare, dog-kill-dog background, is set the unhappy love story of Hans Rümelin, former Reichswehr officer and worshipper of Hitler, and Gerda von Reischach, daughter of a fire-eating old German Nationalist. Both young folks are passionate devotees of the Nazi movement as the story begins and both are bitterly disillusioned before its close.

The author bestows a little lip-service on the Nazi movement by way of giving himself footing, so to speak, but promptly embarks on what is, in effect, a furious lambasting of the Nazis and all their works. His material and point of view are similar to those of "The Brown Book of the Hitler Terror," "The Berlin Diaries," and "Hitler Over Europe." Neither as history nor as fiction can the novel be regarded much more seriously than the fictionalized treatments of actual events which occasionally appear in our own more sensational newspapers, but it undoubtedly is easier reading than miles of more or less censored and contradictory newspaper despatches and in the chaotic and nightmare atmosphere which pervades it there is a certain implicit truth.



FROM THE JACKET DESIGN OF "SLIM"

## The Fraternity of Linemen

SLIM. By William Wister Haines. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1934. \$2.50.

Reviewed by WILLIAM DOERFLINGER

TO experience, imaginatively, scenes which go to make up the life of any colorful body of toilers is one of the best privileges of the reader. Work is a deeply fascinating thing, and in what job is there not true excitement, at least for the newcomer? In the proud fraternity of the power linemen, Mr. Haines has found a fresh and gripping subject well suited to his robust skill, clear eye, and mastery of accurate detail.

"Slim" is a fine product of the fictional method which builds its effect on thorough understanding of realistic details of background, which it depicts without further comment so vividly that the illusion of life is complete. The author who follows this plan effaces himself even from his style, leaving the glass clear to reality. Though the current of emotion induced in the reader by the book so wrought may have less intensity of amperage than the galvanic impulses imparted by the professors of certain older schools, its voltage is greater. It carries a steadier "load" and is likely to provide truer illumination.

Not until one reaches the last chapters of "Slim" does one fully realize the potency of the "load" which has been built up. Then it strikes with a jolt. When bad times darken the story, forcing good linemen to haul in their belts and smoke sparingly as they wait outside the yard gates for a chance which never comes, the reader suddenly appreciates, with the same shock which is theirs, what unemployment means to these men. He is able to do so because in the former chapters he has had so intimate an experience of their work.

The loss of their work, he now sees, entails a far more serious deprivation for them than lack of money. Wages have never been a really primary consideration with the linemen, though they have always taken care to have enough ready cash for poker and girls and for migration to more distant hills where towers are to be erected and wires strung. Nor is their loss that of comfort or security. What has been taken away is their place in the scheme of things. Their pride in the work which justifies their existence is shaken. They are deprived of the right to spud home their wrench into the shifting bolt holes of a new strut atop a pinnacle of steel, to nick off the last bolt at the finish of the job, and to pause before climbing down the spidery tower to earth again to gaze away over the countryside toward the procession of great shining structures which have been raised by the line gang's strength and skill. Those towers represent their triumph over inanimate matter and the elements, their superiority to the fear which would prevent weaker men from attempting such work.

This is a book, however, not primarily of unemployment or the dread of it, but of joyful activity. As Slim and Red Blayd wander the country over, working together in heat and

in blizzards, on wooden poles and steel, among dead wire and "hot," it is good to be with them in their perilous light-hearted achievement. And in later chapters comes a picture of railroading life so vivid and powerful that no one who feels the spell of the switching yard can afford to miss it.



EDWARD SHANKS  
Drawing by Francisca Bolles

## Fatal Weakness

TOM TIDDLER'S GROUND. By Edward Shanks. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co. 1934. \$2.50.

Reviewed by STANLEY WENT

HERE is a massive, slow-moving story that starts at the beginning of the century and ends approximately thirty years later. Thus Mr. Shanks joins the ranks of ambitious artists who are satisfied with nothing less than the broad sweep of a generation for their canvas. This novel, however, is a good deal more than just another of those rather loosely knit affairs that start nostalgically with a halcyon England of pre-war days, reflect, as no competent writer could fail to do, the tense drama which has opened twenty years ago, and proceed majestically through the case may be, through the years of war to the general topsi-turviness of the 'twenties. We have had all too much of that sort of fictionalized history, and the novelist today who selects the first quarter of the present century for his *mise en scène* can justify the selection only by the intrinsic merits of the story he has to tell. He can profit by the drama inherent in the period with which he deals, but his own play's the thing.

The author of "Queer Street" is too much of the artist, not to say the practised technician, to be a mere recorder of events woven around a thin thread of plot. In "Tom Tiddler's Ground" the characters are never overshadowed by events, though they may be the victims of them. Indeed, it is astonishing in so long a book what rigid economy the author exercises in the description of mere events. The 550 pages that make the volume are taken up with the development of his characters and with the working out, quite in the Greek manner, of the inexorable decrees of fate, for Mr. Shanks's theme is that of the Greek dramatists—the one fatal weakness that lures a man to destruction.

Tom Florey, the son of a humble innkeeper in a moribund Cornish town, manages to "break his birth's invidious bar" despite the refusal of a pig-headed father to allow him to compete for a scholarship at Oxford. Through the good offices of a schoolmaster he goes to Germany as tutor to the son of the great Dr. Roebel, poet, playwright, and Nobel prize winner. Thereafter he serves as secretary to an English politician, and during the war rises to a high position in the civil service created by the emergency, a heart ailment making him ineligible for the army. With his war record he might have continued a brilliant career in the civil service or graduated into politics, but he succumbs to the temptation of the apparently easy pickings of various grandiose schemes—the "Tom Tiddler's Ground" of the post-war years.

Around this thread of plot the author weaves a richly patterned story. We have said that it is slow-moving, but this is by no means to say that it is sluggish. On the contrary, the action moves rapidly enough when need be, as in the deliciously tragi-

comic dénouement of the German episode, when Tom, having just engaged himself, with almost austere devotion, to the fair-haired Undine, yields to the seductions of the doctor's brunette secretary—and is betrayed by a black hairpin. It is very amusing, but seriousness underlies it, for the episode serves to introduce and typify the clash between flesh and spirit which plagues Tom for the rest of his days. Mr. Shanks showed us in "Queer Street" and "The Enchanted Village" that he understands human nature and that no one knows better how to make lovers make love. The same qualities lend charm to this more ambitious volume. Where there is so much to praise it may seem a little petty to question whether the character of Undine, who serves as a *leit motif* throughout the story, is not a little too indistinct, and whether Mr. Shanks has not been guilty of an "improbable possibility" in the episode in which Isabel poses in the nude for her lover with Tom as an audience. Whatever demands this episode may make on our credulity, however, are compensated for by its delicate handling and its subtle revelations of Tom's character. "Tom Tiddler's Ground" will enhance the author's already enviable reputation.

## The Most Ancient of Governments

THE VATICAN: YESTERDAY, TODAY, TOMORROW. By George Seldes. New York: Harper & Bros. 1934. \$3.75.

Reviewed by CARLTON J. H. HAYES

THIS book is noteworthy in three respects. First, it treats of a general subject and of particular topics concerning which popular ignorance is surpassed only by popular curiosity. An extraordinarily large number of persons have a curiosity, as natural as it is lively, about the central administration of the Catholic Church, about the papacy not only as the most ancient of all human governments but also as the contemporary power which influences, directly or indirectly, the lives of three hundred million human beings and plays as important—some think as decisive—a role in the world of technology and fascism as it played fifteen hundred years ago in a world of barbarism and feudalism—a power exercised by an elderly clergyman in a huge "palace" in an infinitesimal "state," with a medieval court and an up-to-date radio, without much taxable wealth or any force of arms. How this elderly clergyman is chosen, how he lives and governs, how he directs his "state," his "palace," his "congregations," his "foreign affairs," his relations with "modern politics" and "modern society," and how he dies and is succeeded by another—all this Mr. Seldes explains.

Secondly, the book is written in the familiar and frequently breezy style of the professional journalist, a style which, if irritating at times to the pundits, makes easy and attractive reading for the populace. It must be added that Mr. Seldes is a superior kind of journalist and that he has given us an example of the reportorial art at its best.

Finally, the book is remarkably judicious in tone and fairly accurate in detail. It is neither pro-papal nor anti-papal. It does not discuss, let alone pass judgment on, the strictly religious and dogmatic position of the papacy. It describes the papacy as a contemporary organism, as a going concern, and for the author's occasional historical excursions reliance is put on respectable secondary authorities. There are a few slips in factual statement, and there are some interpretations from which, naturally, various readers will dissent. Non-Catholics may think Mr. Seldes too optimistic about the role of the papacy in the present age, and about its continuing vitality in the future. Catholics, on the other hand, may think that he has unduly magnified the significance of "Americanism" and has been led by purely journalistic considerations to give disproportionate prominence to the barkings of Mr. Charles Marshall and the boogings of Mr. Alfred Smith. Which is another way of saying that this entertaining book on an important subject can profitably be read by all sorts of people.

## Mr. Herbert's Divorce Satire

(Continued from first page)

this public hypocrisy are driven. But Shaw was really writing about marriage, not divorce, and he left plenty of room for what Mr. Herbert has to say in "Holy Deadlock."

First of all, however, "Holy Deadlock" is a novel. Unlike most stories of unhappy marriages, this one does not simply ask you to take the marriage for granted, leaving you to wonder how so unfortunate a *fait* could ever have become *accompli*. Mr. Herbert shows how natural and human it was for John Adam and Mary Eve to fall in love and marry; gradually to develop different interests and antipodal tastes when Mary went on the stage; eventually to find themselves in incompatible milieux, in worlds that did not touch. As Mr. Herbert puts it, to John and Mary, as to most people, what they do in the daytime is in the last analysis more important than what they do at night. Marriage for them is a more complex and a more civilized relationship than is understood either by British legislators or by the followers of D. H. Lawrence.

It was precisely because John and Mary were civilized people (in the complimentary sense of the phrase) that after seven years, having inevitably developed separately, they had no choice but divorce. Both wanted to be remarried, Mary to an employee of the B.B.C., John to a school-teacher; a scandal would have cost these two their jobs. So John had to take an unknown lady on a business trip to Brighton. He and Mary expected, from the advice of friends and lawyers, that divorce would be only a tedious formality. But they failed to foresee the obstacles: a judge disgusted with a flagrant succession of society divorces, who took it out on them; a jealous woman who disliked Mary and wrote an anonymous letter to the king's proctor; this same proctor, who wearily loathed the idea of interfering, and therefore thought it his duty to do so; a second judge, so sympathetic that he misled Mary into a calamitous indiscretion.

In short, they had hard luck. It might even be said that Mr. Herbert stacks the cards against them. But it is fair to stack the cards when it is done above the table, and when the purpose is admittedly to show a raw deal. The thesis never runs away with the people. From every scene the author draws a precise dramatic irony, illuminating at once the plot and the characters. The effect is cumulative; the action exciting; and the characters increasingly sympathetic and real as the system they are up against forces them more and more out of character. Mary's essential truthfulness is never clearer than when she is obliged to prevaricate; John's stolid straightforwardness is brightly illuminated in the delicious, devious scene where he engages a "confidential personal secretary" for the trip to Brighton, and in the scenes following when he doesn't know what to do with her. It would be funny if it weren't so tragic; it would be tragic if it weren't so funny.

The two major characters are excellent, and so are the lawyers, judges, and most of the minor characters. The only unsuccessful portrait is that of Martin Seal, the B.B.C. announcer who wants to marry Mary; he is, by comparison with the others, somewhat wooden and mechanical. There are a few more criticisms that might be made: one would like to have

seen at least one official who was not always smugly doing his duty from the best of motives; one would like to have seen more of John and Mary's married life. But this last means only that one would like the book to be even longer.

Mr. Herbert has addressed a note to American readers, in which he says that "Holy Deadlock" gives us a chance to laugh at the British for a change. Whether it's a change or not, we do laugh. We are not likely to get so stirred up over the British divorce laws as Mr. Herbert's native audience; "Holy Deadlock" will be read here because it is a very good novel. Even so, it does bring out all the Anglophobe in an American reader—until he realizes that part of the charm of "Holy Deadlock" is its London setting, and its principal attractions those characters who would be unimaginable elsewhere than in England.

## Memories of An Unabashed Victorian

OUT AND ABOUT. Random Reminiscences. By Archibald Marshall. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1934. \$3.75.

Reviewed by TEMPLE SCOTT

THOSE who have read Mr. Marshall's delightful novels of English country life, and especially the tetralogy of the Clinton family, will welcome this volume of random reminiscences. It is a very companionable book, written in a style to hold their interest and to charm them by its distinguished urbanity. Mr. Marshall proclaims himself an "unabashed Victorian" although he began his journalistic career in the first years of the twentieth century. But he received his Cambridge education in the last years of the Victorian age and before the coming of the intelligentsia from their Pisgah height of the New Economics, which may account for his loyalty to old world traditions. Cambridge left a deep impress on him and in this, his latest book, he shows himself a worthy son of that noble school of learning and manners. The chapters he devotes to his undergraduate days at Trinity College are redolent of the enthusiasm which the life there aroused in him, and of the friendships he formed with such men as R. C. Lehmann, R. Carr Bosanquet, Erskine Childers, Maurice Baring, Gerard Cobb, C. V. Stanford, Quiller-Couch, G. C. Cockerell, and others of a like quality of mind and heart. He left Cambridge intending to enter the career of journalism, for he had already practised his pen in the pages of the *Cambridge Granta*, the college magazine which had given not a few men to that special field of literary expression who had acquitted themselves with distinction in it. But Marshall had to wait some time before the door was opened for his admission, and when it was opened it was by his friend "Rudie" Lehmann, the famous rowing coach, who when he was appointed editor of the *London Daily News* took Marshall on as his secretary and special writer.

Here he met Herbert Paul, H. W. Massingham, Hilaire Belloc, E. C. Bentley, and G. K. Chesterton. His appreciations of these men make delightful interludes in this drama of his early experiences as a journalist. When the *Daily News*, through the tricky "smartness" of its managing editor, was sold to George Cadbury, "Rudie" Lehmann resigned, and Marshall, though he stayed on for a time, found the new atmos-



ARCHIBALD MARSHALL WITH HIS DAUGHTER

phere of the office distasteful and also left, retiring to his home at Beaulieu on Lord Montagu's estate. It was through Lord Montagu that he met Alfred Harmsworth, later Lord Northcliffe, and this meeting led to his employment on the *Daily Mail* as special writer and Special Correspondent. But before he joined the *Daily Mail* staff he took a plunge into publishing by becoming a partner in the new firm of Alston Rivers. The publishing venture did not turn out to be a success, but it was during its brief life that he became acquainted with Mr. Ford Madox Hueffer who had been introduced to the firm by Marshall's literary agent, Mr. J. B. Pinker. The firm published several of Mr. Hueffer's books, but made no money out of any of them. Later Marshall and Hueffer were neighbors in Rye and their acquaintance grew closer. At Rye Marshall formed lasting friendships with Henry James and Joseph Conrad as well as with John Galsworthy.

Marshall joined the staff of the *Daily Mail* to edit a literary supplement in rivalry to that issued by the *London Times*, but as Northcliffe wanted a more resounding name in connection with the new venture, Edmund Gosse was engaged as "Director" of *Books*, as the supplement was called, with Marshall as assistant. Later he became its director. The supplement, however, never made the appeal that Northcliffe had expected of it and it dwindled in the end to a mere column. Marshall, however, remained on as a special writer of column-length serials with several chapters to each column. He was also employed as a special correspondent, and among the various assignments he was given, the one which took him to Australia was evidently the happiest, for the chapters dealing with this visit to the Southern Commonwealth are, perhaps, the most engaging in the book. He must have had a splendid time during the six months he spent there, for he writes of it with catching enthusiasm.

Without a doubt Mr. Marshall's book of random reminiscences is well worth reading, at any time in any quiet place. It is written by a gentleman and it can be heartily recommended to other gentle folk of both sexes who enjoy listening to good stories well told.



## Little Rabbits

By RUTH LAMBERT JONES

LITTLE rabbits are about, Hopping nimbly in and out Of country roads within the span Of the motors' caravan. They do not pause to contemplate The fate of rabbits who leapt too late, They do not pause to ponder why Their own sleek bodies do not lie Beneath the grim, Gargantuan wheel Of every passing automobile. Little rabbits are abroad, Leaving such affairs to God.



A. P. HERBERT

Photograph by Maurice Beck

When the *Daily News*, through the tricky "smartness" of its managing editor, was sold to George Cadbury, "Rudie" Lehmann resigned, and Marshall, though he stayed on for a time, found the new atmos-