

sightseeing is rescued from tedium by her tenderness for the past, which gives us bright pictures of the Baltimore she grew up in, and of her relations, and a haunting acquaintance with the gentle Mr. Simpson. She is without pretence or censure; everyone comes rather well out of her good-humoured treatment. Character, it is implied, is one's own responsibility. Life is what one makes of what happens. Losers don't pity themselves, and winners don't pity losers.

A *King's Story* ended on the day after the abdication. The best writing, and the saddest reading, in the Duchess's book concern the next period, where the Duke is shown discovering his exile to be more thorough than he had prepared for. Her chapters on the crisis avoid the provocativeness of her husband's story, but well convey the confusion of the final weeks, and the degree to which they both hoped that their resolve to marry would somehow or other not cost them the throne.

To understand their hopes, we have to recall the Prince of Wales's long popularity; and the mental climate of the 1930's when anything new seemed possible, at least to our generation. And in the weeks when the British public said nothing, because it was told nothing, the two principals were reading the romantic speculations of overseas papers.



The Duchess of Windsor

Those American writers who cast their compatriot as chatelaine of Buckingham Palace can surely not have asked themselves whether they would allow her the comparable position in White House. The Duchess of Windsor strikes one as belonging in spirit to no democracy; her ideas of privilege are antique.

A nation that shuns formula may need the occasional events that force a definition, as the abdication forced us to define the monarchy. This book will have a fixed place in the record. It may find a place, also, among those perceptive studies of Britain by outside writers who admit themselves baffled.

—Dorothea Turner

MINOR AND MAJOR

THE SMALL WORLD, by John W. Morgan; Victor Gollancz, English price 12/6. *A ROOM IN PARIS*, by Peggy Mann; Longmans, English price 15/-. *MY OLD MAN'S A DUSTMAN*, by Wolf Mankowitz; Deutsch, English price 10/6. *BAND OF ANGELS*, by Robert Penn Warren; Eyre and Spottiswoode, English price 18/-.
 "VERY funny" splurged twice across the dust-cover of a novel is enough to give any reviewer a sinking feeling, but it wasn't this alone that stopped my finding anything really amusing in John Morgan's *The Small World*. Mr. Morgan's Bernard, whose career at a small Welsh University is the reason for the novel, is, alas, not so much a character as a hysterical catalogue of all the under-graduate antics Mr. Morgan has ever thought of. In addition to this, the pale shadow of Mr. Kingsley Amis lies across each page, and there are occasional minor manifestations of the deities of the Welsh Comic Revival.

"My old man's a dustman, he fought in the Battle of Mons," is the Old Cock's battlercy as he rides out to defend his rubbish dump against the world, the flesh and the City Council. This Cockney Quixote, with poor bomb-blasted Arp (so named because of the

letters on his jacket), playing a rubbish-picking Panza, are probably the most outrageous pair in all the Londons of Wolf Mankowitz's invention. Too outrageous, perhaps, but then this is a bravura performance by a true comic artist.

Peggy Mann's *A Room in Paris* is a carefully regulated story about a G.I. would-be artist, his girl, and life on the Left Bank. Miss Mann is a script writer, and I should imagine a competent one, but it's a pity her competence in radio has carried over into her novel a certain slickness, a tendency to present people and events as though they were packaged in cellophane.

In *Band of Angels* Robert Penn Warren has gone back to the problem of human freedom and its attainment, and has failed by a small margin to say exactly what he wants to say. He has recreated the period of the American Civil War on a terrifying scale, and has set down in it Amantha Starr, the daughter of a Northern land and slave owner, who is herself sold as a slave on her father's death.

Here is the source of all the conflicts Penn Warren deals with, and the source of the flaw which keeps the book from fully expressing the ideas which obsess him. He wants to discuss a human problem, but his tragedies are built on a classical scale; good and bad remain immutable. He has no time for the small inconsistencies in human conduct, the touches which, in fact, make conduct human.

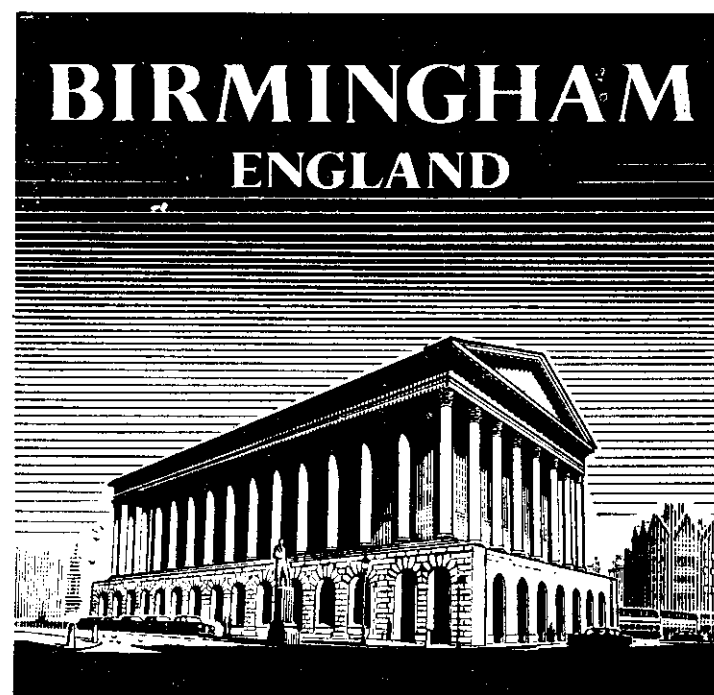
—Peter Cape

THE VILLAGER

GILBERT WHITE IN HIS VILLAGE, by Cecil S. Emden; Oxford University Press, English price 15/-.
 THE purpose of this elegant little book, so neatly bound, so perfectly printed, is to reveal the man Gilbert White behind the naturalist. It has clearly been a labour of love, a worshipper's act of devotion, a task for which there can have been no demand in advance, but for which, now that it is done, there will certainly be a public. Gilbert White, as everybody knows, spent most of his 73 years in or about Selborne in Hampshire. There under a modest headstone he still lies, and with pilgrims coming and going for 164 years it might have been supposed that the world knows everything about him that it wants to know. But Mr. Emden wants it to know more, as much, in fact, as White's neighbours and contemporaries knew, and in these 140 pages we probably have as accurate a picture of White the villager as it is now possible to present.

Of Gilbert White the curate there is only a perfunctory resurrection, but White the good neighbour, White the countryman and farmer, White the easy mixer, White the listener and questioner, is here in his own setting, his comfortable house, his formal garden, his zig-zag, his hermitage, his hanger, and ha-ha, with London only 30 miles away, but almost as remote from Gilbert White the parson, John Burbey the grocer, Richard Butler the butcher, John Hale the farmer, George Tanner the shoemaker, Thomas Hoar, White's gardener, and Sarah Dewey his maid, as if their village had been on an island in the Outer Hebrides. If Mr. Emden has not brought them all to life, he has done far more than compile a guide book to the village whose history, for generations yet, will be the story of one man.

—O.D.



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