

BOOK RECORD

There Can Be Snobbishness In Writing Just As In Life

Written For The "Record" By Eric Bradwell

A FAULT I find with many modern novels is an attempt to give their story an air of sophistication by indulging in a particular form of literary and artistic snobbishness which is as irritating as it is insincere.

I am not altogether accusing Marion Ward of this, but it appears to me there are moments in "Banco" when she strives a little too blatantly for effect, and in so doing loses her way.

The reactions of a spirited young girl whose whole life has been spent in the cloistered security of Aunt Caroline, and who suddenly breaks into a somewhat motley stratum of Parisian society, offer scope for some interesting writing that does not materialise.

As an analytical study, "Banco" is not entirely successful; as a superficial story about superficial people it is bright and inconsequential, and can be relied upon to entertain.

I forget how many men Sylvia Sherwood bedded with during the

course of her initiation in the difficult art of successful living, but she snaps her fingers at most of them and calls Banco—if sometimes a trifle unconvincingly.

Miss Ward never really gets beneath the skin of her characters sufficiently well to make them live, and I had a sense of unreality about the peculiar little coterie of people Sylvia Sherwood was thrown among.

Real Insight

There are one or two exceptions, however, and here and there you will find some delightful little cameos, etched in with a sure touch. There is a hard-boiled American journalist you are sure to like, in spite of his crudeness—or maybe because of it. "Banco" is a story that is full of incident, and contains occasional flashes of real insight.

In quite a different category is G. E. Trevelyan's "Theme With Variations." Here is a real and sincere attempt to portray the ordinary emotions of ordinary people, an attempt that succeeds admirably.

Miss Trevelyan brings a depth of experience and a rich understanding of human nature into this vivid and arresting study. "Theme With Variations" is not a book with much plot, and if you like a full-blooded story, packed with incident, I do not for a moment recommend this story—it is quiet, subtle and delicate.

Miss Trevelyan takes as her theme a dissatisfied state of mind, and proceeds to develop it, with variations, through three completely independent groups of characters.

There is something very true about the way these people behave—Sam Smith, the furniture remover, who likes his pint on a Saturday night; Evelyn Dyart Robinson, the schoolgirl who must always remember that she is a Dyart before she is a Robinson; and Frances Jones, who married an elderly dentist and spends her days reading passionate novelettes.

Polished

There is nothing ragged or untidy about the way Miss Trevelyan handles her theme; it is neat, staccato and polished.



When Man Still Walked

IN THE AUSTRALIAN BUSH.—C. Price Comgrove, author of "Walk About," used his legs.

HOW, as a young man full of the love of adventure and science, C. Price Comgrove conducted in the early 90's an exploring and scientific party through the then completely unknown territory between Kimberly and Wyndham, North Western Australia, is told in the volume, "Walk About," the Australian Aboriginal term for wandering at will.

The book is divided into three main sections. The first and best portion deals with the early days in the North West. This is of real value and human interest.

The second section covers rambles in Papua and the third deals with a hectic motor trip round the coast of Australia by a motorcar expedition under the command of Wizard Smith, when planning a possible round-Australia race in connection with the Centennial celebrations in 1937.

All lovers of Australia will appreciate the first part, recalling the peaceful days of the past when a man walked on his own two legs where he wished to go.

The atmosphere of these pages is in amazing contrast with the apparent futility of burning up the roads in a car racing against time.

As a triumph of man and machine, this hectic rush is just fine, but for readability and charm and real atmosphere of life, one prefers the old days.

Well known as a writer and explorer, Mr. Comgrove chats naturally and the volume will take its proper place as a contribution to Australian bibliography.—A.J.H.

"Walk About," by C. Price Comgrove. Our copy from the Publishers, Dents, London.

More Than Story Of Stamps

Lively Romance In History Of Growth Of The Post

WHO would have realised that it was the introduction of postal services that brought about the improvement in the roads of the world?

In "Haste, Post, Hastel" George Walker sets about proving this statement. He proves it in such an interesting manner that what at first appeared to be a "heavy historical publication" soon took hold of my interest and I followed the "Post" down the Dover Road, shared the excitements met on that lonely stretch—a stretch where it was necessary, by law, to remove trees, or hedges, from within 20 feet of the highway, and so stop highwaymen from waylaying the "Post" in the dark stretches.

Mr. Walker shows that foreign merchants had established a regular dispatch of letters in 1496, and by 1514 merchants of London—the strangers, chiefly Flemings—had set up a post to the Continent!

1½d A Mile

The "Post" was officially established on January 14, 1583, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and part of the proclamation read that: "The post shall receive the sum of three-halfpence per mile when riding on her Majesty's service, and twopence per mile when otherwise engaged";

and "no man riding in post shall ride without a guide, which shall blow his horn as oft as he meeteth company, or passeth through a town, or at the least thrice every mile."

His Plan

Before 1680 anyone who desired to send a letter into the country was compelled either to take it, or send it, to the Post Office, which was then in Lombard Street.

One, William Dockwra, planned to bring Lombard Street near to every part of London, and thus increase the number of letters to be carried.

He had a genius for organisation, and opened up offices where letters might be left and also called for. At the summit of his organisation he had no fewer than 450 places at which letters might be received.

His next innovation was to make a fixed charge, and to make it so reasonable that the post would be widely used.

He took a penny as the normal fee, and thus established a penny post for London—more than 250 years ago!—W.I.

"Haste, Post, Hastel" by George Walker. George Harrap and Co. Ltd., London. Our copy from the publishers.

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MISS G. E. TREVELYAN
... Author of "Theme with Variations."

As a quiet little poke at human nature, "Theme With Variations" is rollicking fun, in spite of its underlying vein of tragedy. And it will startle you with its truth.

"Banco," by Marion Ward.
"Theme with Variations," by G. E. Trevelyan. Gollancz, London. Our copies from the publisher.

Reggie Fortune On The Job Again

THERE is a tide in the affairs of most detection-story readers that leads them inevitably to Mr. Fortune. . . That highly-popular, very self-assured, "g"-dropping Scotland Yard medico—a sort of fictional Bernard Spilsbury—is as good as ever in the latest record of his achievements, "This is Mr. Fortune."

His creator, prolific H. C. Bailey, unlike many of his kind, loses nothing of his power and his logical ingenuity when he forsakes the full-length novel for the short detective story; in fact, he is possibly the best of the bunch in this respect.

In "This Is Mr. Fortune," Mr. Bailey gives us six intriguing mysteries, each solved in Reggie Fortune's own disarming but strictly scientific fashion.—A.R.M.

"This is Mr. Fortune," by H. C. Bailey. Victor Gollancz Ltd., London. Our copy from the publishers.