The Stubborn Virgin

ENGLAND'S ELIZABETH. By Milton Waldman. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1933. $3.50.

Reviewed by William Huse Dunham, Jr.

"ELIZABETH'S England" might better describe this story of the last Tudor's public career, for Mr. Waldman has been able to make interesting that political history recently so unfashionable. Adhering closely to Tudor political theory, that the prince is the brain of the body politic, the author presents in an intelligible pattern English and foreign politics as they were designed by the "Stubborn Virgin." The political and diplomatic intrigues of her reign, which once provoked Froude's melodramatic chapters, have again led an enthusiastic writer to contribute a lucid presentation of a complicated narrative. Mr. Waldman has reconstructed from the printed records of the period a readable study of *la haute politique*. But he has done still more, he has added a refreshingly modern point of view to his discussions of Elizabeth's professional life.

QUEEN ELIZABETH
From a painting by Gheeraerts the Younger at Longford Castle

While avoiding psychological language, this biographer has none the less attempted to explain the motives of his characters. After a straightforward explanation of the factors involved in a given situation, he then demonstrates how they were appraised by Elizabeth and determined her consequent action, or how she modified the to-be-expected course of their influence. The problem of the "Unwelcome Guest" (Mary Stuart) created one of the two most tense of the situations confronting the Queen of England. Here Mr. Waldman has written a chapter marked by vitality and a restrained, hence effective, use of the dramatic. His subtle elucidation of Elizabeth's neat politics in her dealings with the parliament of 1566-1567 is typical. She forsook an untenable position created by her wrongful interference with parliament's freedom of speech in return for the Commons' withdrawal of their less just, but more dangerous, demand that she marry. Such situations afford Mr. Waldman opportunities to philosophize upon history and the human nature of his characters.

And yet his philosophizing does not draw Mr. Waldman beyond those limits of prudence into the personal whimsies which have produced that school of unsubstantial biography already on the decline. His serious efforts have provided us with the background of continental affairs and personalities necessary to understand the tortuous manœuvers of Elizabethan statecraft. Such a logical and clear narrative of the major personality of an age when politics were plots and plots politics is not likely to fade.

This appraisal of Elizabeth as a ruling queen may make her personality less vivid, but it preserves the author from the banalities of the intimate biographer. He properly despatches as unsolvable guesswork the rumors by "tavern pathologists" of his heroine's "physical abnormality." He fears not to call spades spades, nor does his admiration for the queen deter him from criticism of her mistakes and shortcomings. But might he not have been more cautious in endorsing the view that her "Lord Robert" Dudley enjoyed English majesty as "his mistress"? To establish the perfectly valid point that Elizabeth supplied the *élan vital* to English government, Mr. Waldman has, perhaps, tended to minimize the capacities and effectiveness of her foremost ministers. Perhaps, too, he has overestimated Elizabeth's prescience when he attributes to her Machiavellian subtlety the successful turn for English affairs of the Darnley marriage. But the emphasis he places upon character and his theme that Elizabeth's success was the fulfilment of a destiny determined by character provide a refreshing contrast to the recent psychopathic interpretations of heroic careers. To accentuate this point he deflates the sentimental romances woven about Mary Stuart and lays her misfortunes to her lack of moral principle and purpose. Elizabeth's steadfastness to the welfare of the common weal and to England's national cause, often at personal cost, carried her (according to this view) through the dreary days and devious politics immediately preceding the Armada crisis of 1588.

But why does Mr. Waldman conclude the great queen's national services with the thirtieth anniversary of her accession? He would hardly contend that her destiny had been fulfilled when she still had fifteen years to govern. And these were not years dull or neglible. The Spanish menace had not wholly disappeared with Drake's volleys and God's breeze. Puritanism was giving a revolutionary tone to domestic affairs which demanded as complete an application of her political talents as the events of the first two-thirds of her reign.

W. H. Dunham, Jr., is a member of the history department of Yale University.

For the Defense

NOT GUILTY! The Story of Samuel S. Leibowitz. By Fred D. Pasley. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1933. $2.50.

Reviewed by William Jay Hoff

MR. PASLEY has written a book that is more than the story of Samuel Leibowitz. In a colorful and dramatic manner he has put our jury system itself on trial. Leibowitz, it appears, obtained a verdict of "Not Guilty" in eighty-five consecutive first degree murder trials. The author, largely through reporting excerpts from the testimony in various cases, gives us a glimpse of the technique that aided in establishing this astounding record.

Sketches of the attorney's life are interwoven with the account of his career. We are led in some detail through several trials, including those of Harry Hoffman, Vivian Gordon, the Scottsboro case, and other famous murder trials. Interspersed with these more important cases are many short anecdotes, all filling in the general picture of the Leibowitz technique.

Often the facts and the verdict would seem irreconcilable unless we were piloted through the presentation of some of the salient testimony. Mr. Pasley gives us some insight into the methods that Leibowitz uses, the manner in which he attracts the attention and sympathy of the jury, the way in which he leads up to and then brings out a damaging piece of evidence. It is not the individual incidents that are important, but they leave us with a picture of Leibowitz's genius for dramatization and his unerring instinct for psychological effects.

Although the author does not fully analyze the technique of Leibowitz, he does give us some idea of the method by which he tries a case. Moreover, this is done in a dramatic and intensely interesting manner. Mr. Pasley conveys the impression that perhaps trial by jury is largely a skirmish between lawyers. Conscious of the effect created by the skill and technique of counsel we cannot help but have some misgivings as to a procedure under which it is possible to obtain eighty-five consecutive verdicts of "Not Guilty." This becomes the more poignant when we are led through the second Scottsboro trial at Decatur, Alabama. There, emotions and prejudices, far more fundamental than any the attorney can instil in the jurors, appear to play their parts in the resultant verdict of "Guilty." It is pointed out that this verdict was set aside by the trial judge because, " 'The testimony of the prosecutrix in the case is not only uncorroborated, but it also bears on its face indications of improbability and is contradicted by other evidence, and in addition thereto the evidence greatly preponderates in favor of the defendant.' " Without questioning the verdict in any of Leibowitz's cases, it cannot be overlooked that in many instances where a verdict of "Not Guilty" was returned the evidence against the defendant appeared very much more damaging than in the Scottsboro case.

This book is neither an indictment nor an endorsement. It is a brief reportorial account of our criminal courts in action. It should be of interest not only to those concerned with criminal law procedure, but to all who are interested in drama and justice.

Epic of the Railroads

STEEL TRAILS. By Martin D. Stevers. New York: Minton, Balch & Co. 1933. $3.75.

WE have had excellent histories of individual railroads such as those of the New York Central, the Baltimore and Ohio, the Delaware and Hudson, etc. "Trains, Tracks, and Travel," written by an engineer for his son, is nevertheless the best book for adults, from this standpoint, which has appeared. The Baltimore and Ohio has issued a large folder which gives in considerable detail various mechanical operations, accounting and auditing. Yet it has remained for the author of "Steel Trails," after evidently extensive research and collation, to present the best general résumé of the early history of the locomotive, the political and economic considerations which led to the inception, development, and operation of the railroads in this country.

The style of writing suffers somewhat from obvious lightening of the material with colloquialism, for the broad conception and nicely worked out scheme of the entire book is of ample worth to have carried along without such aid. However this need not cause one to digress and surely high praise must be accorded a most complete and conclusive work.

A Magic Book

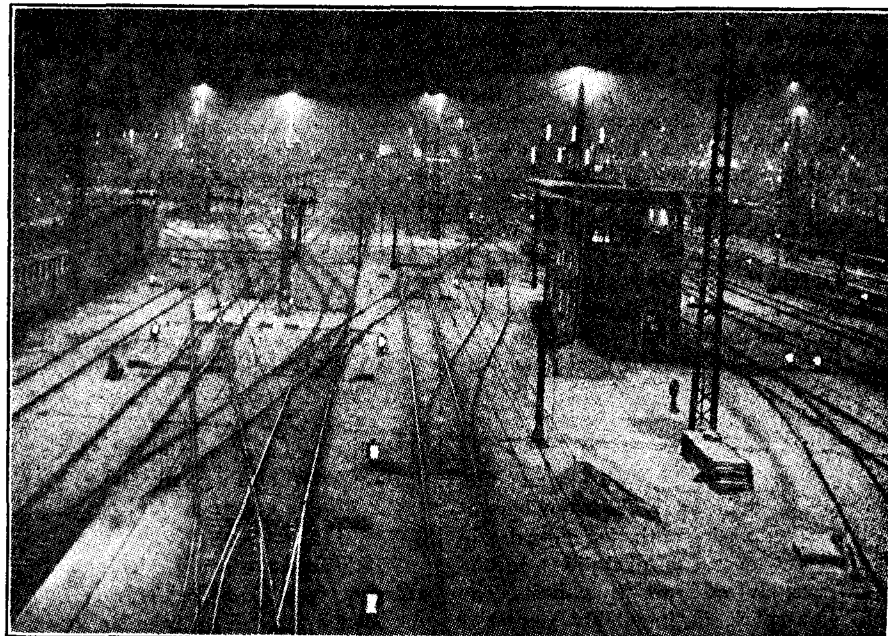
THE CURSE OF THE WISE WOMAN. By Lord Dunsany. New York: Longmans, Green & Co. 1933. $2.

Reviewed by Basil Davenport

AT the beginning of one of his books of fantastic romance, Lord Dunsany once promised his readers that if they were weary of London, he had new worlds for them there, and in fulfilment of his promise, took them to lands east of the sun and west of the moon. But London, whatever Dr. Johnson may have thought, is not all there is even of this world; and though Lord Dunsany still offers new worlds to those tired of cities, he does not, in the first part of this new book, have to go farther than the Irish country. His hero is the son of an Anglo-Irish squire who at the beginning of the book is forced, by his interference between some of the peasants and their murdered man, to fly the country, and his son grows up in the manor-house, alone, able to escape from more schooling, and spending all his time with the country folk, hunting, shooting, fishing, and ranging the marshes. The Irish appear even more than the English to perpetuate the paradox of primitive peoples, that wild animals are both killed and adored by them, so that Æschylus can invoke the huntress Artemis as "she that delights in the lion's cubs and every suckling thing in the woods." The boy's days are passed in killing woodland creatures, and in feeling a deep kinship with them. There are many pages, but not too many, devoted to his lessons in sport, pages that are worthy to stand by Mr. Siegfried Sassoon's "Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man" for conveying the intoxicating joy of the neophyte, which is so rarely expressed.

But though Ireland is itself far enough from London, it is shot through with a world farther and stranger still, the Land of the Young, that you can see from the marshes sometimes when the light is right. One of the country boys knows that he will never go to heaven, because h[illegible] not desire it so much as he desir[illegible] visions of Tir-Nan-Og, and he tel[illegible] hero about them. Halfway through, this magic Ireland that lies in Ireland is threatened with civilization and progress; a company comes to drain the marsh. But the old "wise woman"—witch, that is—calls down a curse upon them, and the unearthly marsh and the Land of the Young are left.

This story shows Lord Dunsany at his best. His imagination, and his mellifluous prose, are to be found in it; but more than most of his books it keeps its feet upon earth, in the humors of Ireland where a Fenian may tell a boy how to shoot a wild goose while he is seeking the life of the boy's father, and in the excitement of a hunt where one may come a cropper on real hard earth; and it is none the worse for that. And this tale of a vanishing gentry and an unattainable paradise is told by an old man looking back, with tender *desiderium*, upon his youth; it is far away and long ago; it has the singular, melancholy charm of something solid and yet hazy, like the woods in autumn.



THE MAIN RAILROAD STATION AT MUNICH
A night view, from "Das Deutsche Lichtbild."

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More Dreams

BY STELLA BENSON

MY dreams now come to me more and more often in a traditional crystal-gazing form, and I suppose if they occurred to any one ready to believe that proof of anything is available, they would be held to prove that something or other exists — though exactly what, it would be hard to say. At any rate, these dreams of mine have every mark of authenticity—except the fact of being true. They do not, as far as I know, represent anything—indeed why should they? But they are extremely vivid and accurate—much more vivid and accurate than, say, my usual memory of yesterday. They are impersonal (there is no *me* in them)—and within their own limits they are consistent. And, to me most curious of all, each dream is, literally, a clear moving picture framed in a circle, hazy at the edges like the field of view of a telescope—I imagine very much like the settling of a vision in a crystal.

Sometimes these dreams are so short and pointless as to constitute simply a glimpse, as one might see a completely unexplained though perhaps memorable grouping of persons on a road as one drove by. Such stories in real life or in dream can never be finished and are scarcely begun; the pictures they leave on the retina are scarcely problem pictures since no problem is stated. Whenever I see a dog leaning out of a rushing car, I imagine what a babel of half-perceived smells must be pouring into its nose—all unidentifiable—all unexplainable—all, by their very variety, frustrating the dog's natural instinct to follow things up—dig mice out—lick dirt—force birds to take to flight. . . . To the dog this torrent of unimpressed impressions must be significant in the same way as a half-senseless composite word like Lovechristmasstrawberrygloryperilousseasforlornholyholyprinceofwalesasparagustipsrapture—might seem to us significant—but the composite smell would be much more exciting than any word, since the dog's nose transmits a directer ecstasy, I am sure, to the dog's brain than our everyday perceptions do to ours. But my dreams are not everyday things, and they have just such an exquisite urgency as I remember a child's experiences had, and as I imagine a dog's have. They come out of nowhere and go into nowhere; they seem to matter most intensely—but they probably don't matter at all. Perhaps the dog in the car may smell just a flick of a smell that he never dreamed of before—a smell the suggestive mystery of which might bring tears to his eyes. He can never stop and go back, but he may think, "Oh, this quick life is but death—Oh, if I could only stop and follow and live for ever with that smell. . . ." But if he could have his wish, it might prove to be only "a rotting cactus or a kerosene-soaked rag or burning dung. . . ."

The ordinary every night dream quite frankly and shamelessly leads nowhere at all. It is an explosion of the fancy—a dazzle of inconsistencies, improbabilities, inconsequences, and oddities of emphasis. The inspiring spark is inevitably *oneself*—one's sensible or senseless self—and all the light on the scene of a common dream shines—however crazily—from this self which circumstances too often dim or extinguish in waking life. But these other rarer dreams which visit me from time to time are, from the first blink of their opening, wholly and unmistakably different from common, erratic, personal dreams. Not only do circumstantial and perfectly homogeneous details abound — not only does the action seem oddly to outrun my own presence of mind, so that unexpected events take me by surprise, events which only afterwards are seen to be accountable and in logical sequence—but the air of these dreams is a remote and utterly different air from that wind that blows hot and cold through a common dream—the light is an indirect and moon-clear light — the light of no-identity. And each time one of these dreams comes, I have the sense of re-acquiring by accident an inexplicable knack that I had temporarily lost. I remember a story by George Macdonald about a door in a great castle—a door to curious and consoling adventures. The princess can never find the door deliberately; only occasionally, by mistake she finds its familiar threshold before her feet, and, every time this happens, she marvels at the ease with which she has reached it, and tries to commit to memory the trick of finding it at will. But she found—and I find—the hunting of visions an impossibly elusive sport. The necessary preliminary—the complete shedding of personality—cannot be carried out as a deliberate exercise, I believe. Yet to find such a door—such a dream—is a most intoxicating delight, however trivial and purposeless may be the adventure behind the door—behind the dream.

STELLA BENSON AND HER DOG, OSTAPENKO

A photograph taken at Miss Benson's home in China

I have had two of these dreams lately, on two consecutive nights. The first of these was a scene in some hotel "winter garden" or smoking room, a place of deep, leather-covered chairs, palms, solid, manly ashtrays, refined spittoons, and throaty, gentlemanly cries of *Waiter*. Facing the lens of my spyglass, as it were, was an innocent stout man like a Rotarian, bald, smoothfaced, complacent, cleansed of thought,—the kind of man on whose lips the word *I* sounds an anomaly, because he is so conspicuously an *us*. This man was leaning forward from a very deep armchair. He was amused by a joke he was making. Some one my lens could not see was evidently amused too. The joke was not very funny—indeed it was only mildly giggleworthy, even to its maker. I have forgotten the kernel of it, but in general the monologue was to the effect that honesty really was the best policy—"I've tried both and I know"—and it contrasted his own rich, easy, tweedy, golfy, gin-and-bitters life—with the life of a certain doubtful character — "A millionaire, it's true,—but what I want to know is, What does he dream of at night?" There was little point in all this; only the giggle and the speaker's eagerness and cheerfulness gave it the status of a joke.

The speaker continued to talk about this unarrested criminal millionaire, and mentioned that "everything he does is on paper in a pigeonhole as soon as he's done it;—now look at me, I can start off in the morning, walk half a mile, remember I've forgotten something and walk the whole way back and fetch it—and nobody interested enough to wonder what I think I'm doing—I can go and see a little lady I know, and nobody on God's earth knows where I am. And yesterday is as dead as a doornail to me—it'll never come to life again because it's nobody's business to look it up. But look at him, poor devil—if he forgot something and walked back the way he'd come—some sleuth would be on to it in a minute—why he did it—where he turned—what he saw that made him turn . . . whatever he does, somebody's taking notes, making guesses, noting the names of his girls and his tailor and the people he telegraphs to—fitting it all together like a jigsaw puzzle. Why he can't even get a haircut without making a little bit of history in somebody's notebook. Well, that's the way an honest man scores; what's done is done, with him. Why if I went and blew my nose fifteen times running on the steps of the National Gallery—nobody would mistake it for a criminal signal . . ." etc., etc.

While he spoke and laughed, he leaned further and further forward so that there was a wide space between his back and the back of the chair. Next to him, but facing the opposite way—that is, with its back to my lens—was another very deep chair. It had been impossible to see whether this chair were occupied or not until abruptly a man rose out of it and stood up. His arms and legs were very long, but his face was blurred so black against the bright window that my lens could not register his features. He leaned across the space between the talkative man's spine and the chair back, apparently to help himself to a box of matches on a little table just within a stretched reach. As this tall man—part of his body hidden from my spy-glass by the nearer leaning of the talker—grasped the box of matches and straightened himself, the talker's aspect underwent a sudden and frightful change. An appalled expression filled his naive face; his words and laughter died suddenly away; he bent tensely further and further forward—not eagerly now but with a cramped and crooked despair; his attention—so completely concentrated on his own wit but an instant before—was obviously quite remote now; no cry, no question could have reached it. The doors of his body had slammed upon him. His gradual canting-forward movement lasted such a long time that I, impersonally looking at the picture through my spyglass from another world, had time to think stupidly, "But what can have happened? Has he suddenly realized what a fool he is? What can have wiped out the joke so suddenly?"—before his slow collapse ended; his face came to rest upon his knees. And then I could see the knife sticking up to the hilt in his back. There was no sound or movement from the next chair; the tall man had disappeared. This climax was unexpected enough to wrench me into a rather sickened awakening. "Poor garrulous old ass," I thought, feeling that I had travelled away leaving a silly but harmless passing acquaintance in trouble.

The second dream, which my spyglass focussed on the very next night, seemed to me more remote in its beginning and its ending. Set in my haze-encircled field of view, in this instance, was a scene in a wood. The trees, beeches and hazels, were of small size, though through openings—like Gothic windows—in the foliage one could see distant large trees—pines—on a red bracken slope. In the foreground of my picture lay a woman on the ground. She was covered by a sheet of silk material, the pattern of which is most firmly fixed in my memory. It was a rather sparse design; bright red and rather poisonous green on a very white ground; the design represented cherries and cherry leaves, but very primitively. The cherries were mere blobs of red—the leaves in thick, careless outline only, like croquet-hoops of green, yet the effect was certainly a cherry-tree effect—very vivid and clean looking. Waking, I have never seen this design as far as I know. The woman lay on her back with her head turned towards her left shoulder, and behind her head flowed in a thick, rippled stream her hair—bright yellow-brown hair. A yard or two away from her right shoulder a man crouched or squatted on the ground, most assiduously brushing the woman's hair—obviously to soothe her, for she was ill. He brushed firmly and regularly, but his eyes strayed, and somehow I perceived his thought—"When she dies, all these woods are mine." As he thought this, the sun, which had been dimmed, suddenly came out, and the whole scene seemed to contract in a spasm of excitement.

The young woods, which had seemed rather trivial and sad, glittered with the most exact life; there were patterns and traceries of little leaves that I could draw accurately at this moment; the twigs with the bright light behind them were piped with blinding silver, those on which the sun shone direct were grained and coiled like agate necklaces; some of the leaves were so glittering that nothing could be seen but blurred spangles, others drew color from the peacock-colored shade. The beech tree trunks, lately wet, seemed washed in an opal and jade bath. Between the near boughs, the distant bracken slope glowed ruddy as a well-baked cake, and the pines had a sheen and a toss like a cock's tail feathers. The man, still tirelessly brushing the woman's hair, looked at this transformation with great joy. But presently he looked down at the hair and saw that it did not share this general quickening of color; it absorbed none of the sunlight. It was a tawny sword sheathed in a shadow. If it had been a flower one would have thought it killed suddenly by a finger of frost, though not yet faded. By this, without looking at the woman's face, the man knew that she was dead.

Both these dreams, I believe, could be made into stories. But it seemed to me worth while to record them as they came to me—unfinished, unbegun, fragments of nothing projected on to nothingness. They had no importance, but they had to me the intense significance of insignificant things seen in childhood. Never again, waking, shall we accept so single-heartedly the common or rare images that in our childhood were printed on the sunlight before our unquestioning eyes. Such images are things in themselves; they call for no explanation. And I believe my impersonal middle-aged bones build up these dreams to protect themselves from the endless weariness of identity and personal experience.

Stella Benson

"THE endless weariness of identity" — with those strange words closes the last essay Stella Benson will send us with her own hand. Dispatches tell us that she died of pneumonia in Hongan, China, on December 6, aged 41. At first sight those words seem unexpected from one who entered into the passion and excitement of living with such manifold zest. Yet they were very characteristic. Frail and shy as she was, no one ever showed a more various indomitable curiosity about all phases of being. The physical restrictions of one human personality could not possibly enclose or satisfy such enormous vitality. Her glittering speculation did not stop with men and their pathetic absurdities. She saw with extraordinary intuition the feelings and gestures of animals, trees, flowers, landscapes; even automobiles and buildings.

Lazy and contented people will never read Stella's exquisite books. Some of us, now for fifteen years, have looked to her as we did to only three or four others, for the cobweb strictures of perfection. There was great happiness in finding that *The Far-Away Bride*, that extraordinary humoresque of Manchurian life, had really reached something of a larger public. But, to be sure of a wide audience, she would have had to write for a world of unspoiled intelligence. A reading public of dogs or of old rowdies like the Count de Savine (in her *Pull Devil, Pull Baker*)—readers of fortune—people with pure ecstatic nostrils and lungs capable of screaming laughter—would have been just right for her. Her infinitely observant humor, self-and-everything-mocking, and reaching deep into dream and sorrow, was one of the purest faculties that dipped ink in these years.

C. M.

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