

## As It Was

COMPANY K. By WILLIAM MARCH. New York: Harrison Smith and Robert Haas. 1933. \$2.

Reviewed by ARTHUR RUHL

MR. MARCH, himself a veteran who served with distinction overseas, has hit on the effective idea of writing his war "novel" in a series of very brief sketches, each of the 113 of which carries the name of one of the members of "Company K." Each tells his experience in the first person, character is implicit in dialogue and action, and occasional cross-lights are cast by having the same episode viewed by contrasting characters in succession. There is no further direct continuity between the various episodes, but there is a rough sequence of time, and the tabloid dramas, most of them little more than a page in length and some even shorter than that, follow the rising and descending curve of emotion from the American training-camp through the months of active fighting and back home again.

The outstanding virtues of Mr. March's work are those of complete absence of sentimentality and routine romanticism, of a dramatic gift constantly heightened and sharpened by the eloquence of understatement. Your first impression is that of the ultimate "low-down." Here is the thing as it was, as the man in the ranks saw it, modern war and the dumb cattle sucked into its vortex, without a touch of prettifying or falsity.

One can't help speculating on the sensation this book would have made had it appeared in the early '20's, before "What Price Glory," "All Quiet," and all the rest of the anti-war literature and drama. It is easier now to write such a book. The public mind has been prepared, is ready to meet it more than half way. The author is under no necessity to overcome initial prejudice, to waste steam on non-essentials. He can throw away all impedimenta and drive straight for his objective—that of making modern war seem utterly bestial and futile. Granting this atmospheric change and its implications, Mr. March has nevertheless written an extraordinarily moving and an important book—one that deserves a place with the best of its kind.

A second, less favorable, impression follows, not unnaturally, from the very advantages just mentioned. The author's freedom, that is to say, to pile horror on horror, cynicism on cynicism, ends by leaving one with a sense of that "too much" which defeats itself. Of routine romanticism there is, indeed, no trace; but the continuous heaping up of bitterness and irony without any of the compensatory elements which were there, also, in life results in a sort of reverse-romanticism, so to say, in an overemphasis which is also false.

One could point out specific instances as well as the general tendency. That story of the American runner who killed a lone German in the wood, shot him twice, ran his bayonet up under the chin, through the roof of the man's mouth and into his brain, and then couldn't pull his bayonet out, even after he put his hob-nailed boot on the dead man's face, and tugged and stamped, gouging some of the man's face away, is an example. The hob-nails, coming on page 249, after all that has gone before, are just the straw too much. We feel that the author is "riding" us a bit, just as that infuriating Captain Matlock ("Fishmouth Terry") "rode" his long-suffering men.

The author's occasional practice of permitting characters to describe the events leading up to their own deaths, even including the final shot itself, seems of

doubtful technique, and there is one curious instance of a character being killed, apparently, on page 157, only to turn up big as life again after the war toward the end of the book. But such technical slips, if they are slips, are trifling in the presence of so much that is fresh, authentic, and absolutely the real, right thing. The more horrible episodes, including that of the shooting of the prisoners, had best be left to be read, but one can't forbear quoting that curiously characteristic bit of "dumb" humor from the trenches before Verdun.

The sector was so quiet that you wouldn't have known there was anybody out ahead at all. Only a rocket and the sputter of a machine-gun, now and then, and after a while, further down the trench, another rocket and a dozen more machine-gun bullets to go with it.

The boys made up a story that there wasn't anybody in front of us except an old man, who rode a bicycle, and his wooden-legged wife. The man would ride down the duckboards, with his wife running behind him carrying the machine-gun. Then the man would stop and send up a rocket, while the old woman fired the gun. After that they started all over, and kept it up all night.

The boys talked about the old German, and his wife with the wooden leg, until, after a while, everybody began to believe they were actually there.

"It's just like a German to make his wife run behind him and carry the heavy gun," said Emile Ayres one night. "They beat their wives, too, I've heard it said."

"That's a lie!" said Jackie Brauer, whose mother and father were both

at me with fixed bayonet. I tried to get my revolver out of its holster but couldn't, and for the life of me didn't know why. I was on my feet again watching the Turk and the bayonet, stepping very carefully, spitting out sand, and trying to see. He drove at my stomach. I got it in the leg by turning the point down. Then I saw my hand, or what was left of it—odd, what thoughts crop up in the mind at such a moment. I remembered in a flash what old Jimmy Braid had said to me one day, "Laddie, ye'd make a braw guid golfer, if ye did na' use your right hand so muckle!"

The Turk tried to throttle Sutton, and the wounded Tommy heaved a rock at him, but hit the British officer. Sutton now bit off the Turk's ear, found a discarded knife in the trench, jammed it in his enemy's windpipe, and "very quietly, with a certain dignity and leisure, the Turk rolled off me and lay on his back on the sand."

Sutton was awarded a Military Cross for this encounter, and was afterwards employed in the Ministry of Munitions, first in England, and then in Philadelphia, manufacturing trench mortars for the American Government. When the war ended, he determined to make his fortune as a gold prospector and merchant prince. He bought a dredger and took it to Siberia, together with much oddly assorted merchandise, such as a hundred tons of nails, ten thousand pairs of shoes, thousands of yards of cloth, fifty tons of horseshoes; in all forty carloads of goods.

He established very cordial relations



AMERICAN FRONT, 1918. BY GEORGE PICKEN. From the Catalogue of the Whitney Museum of American Art.

born in Germany. "Germans are as good to their wives as Americans, or anybody else!"

"Then why don't he carry the gun sometime?" Emile asked; "why don't he carry the gun and let the old woman ride on the bicycle?"

## A Modern Munchausen

ONE ARM SUTTON. By MAJOR GENERAL F. A. SUTTON. New York: The Viking Press. 1933. \$2.50.

Reviewed by F. YEATS-BROWN

WHEN General Sutton was travelling on the trans-Siberian railway, he found his cook quarrelling with another servant; so he grabbed a log of wood and hit him a crack on the back of the head. "The train was lumbering along at five miles an hour," he writes in his casual way, "I dragged the limp Chinaman to the door and threw him out, pitching his box after him. He would waken in a strange country, a long way from Vladivostok. . . . So there we were cookless."

All his amazing adventures are told in this remorseless style. Not Casanova nor indeed Munchausen can hold a candle to this one-armed General in dramatic escapes, surprising intrigues, and vivid narrative. Moreover, there is no doubt that his book is a substantially true record of things seen and endured: it is probably a sense of humor that makes the author claim only ninety-five per cent of veracity for his experiences. Sutton lost his right hand in the Dardanelles, having had it blown off at the wrist while he was fielding a hand grenade. The Indian troops in his trench retired, leaving him alone with a wounded British soldier. Then

a big Turk, a regular whale of a Turk, tall as I am, and as broad, with clenched teeth and fierce eyebrows, came across

with the Bolsheviks in those early days of the revolution. In Blago he kept open house and greased every official palm to such an extent that he not only sold all his merchandise at a large profit, but was in a fair way to become a millionaire by contracting to supply a dozen gold dredgers to the Siberian Republic. This deal fell through, however, owing to the arrival of Commissars from Moscow who considered that the gold still remaining in the Blago banks would be of more use to the Red cause in the safe-deposit vaults of the capital rather than in the pockets of General Sutton. Nevertheless, the General got away with more than \$300,000, which he soon lost by speculating in Shanghai.

Nothing daunted, he set out to make another fortune as Armorer in Chief to a Chinese General who had established himself upon the Yang-tse River. An unfortunate dispute between rival warlords, during which Sutton killed one of them as he sat in his tent, brought this part of his career to a sudden close. For his subsequent (and according to popular report even more startling) adventures we must be content to await the sequel to the present book. We know that Sutton took service under the famous Chang-tso-lin, and was the technical brain behind the Manchurian dictator's advance from petty banditry to the conquest of half China. Sutton's part in these affairs, if he can and will tell it, should be of more than passing interest and importance, for it is bound up with a dark page in the history of the Far East. At present, he is supposed to be selling coffins to the Chinese, combined with an insurance policy and a lottery ticket. No doubt he is amassing another fortune, but it is to be hoped that the pursuit of riches will not stop his writing. The world has plenty of millionaires, even today, but too few men of the stamp of Sutton.

## A Portrait of Cranmer

THE THREE PELICANS: Archbishop Cranmer and the Tudor Juggernaut. By ARTHUR STYRON. New York: Harrison Smith & Robert Haas. 1932. \$4.

Reviewed by GARRETT MATTINGLY

THE line that divides history from fiction is hardest to define in biography. "The best of the historian," said Sir Philip Sidney wisely, "is subject to the poet." For without that intuition which we call "historical insight," but which is really a specially controlled exercise of the creative imagination, most of the past can never come alive at all, can never enter the mind as imaginatively realized experience, cannot be said to exist as history but only as the unorganized material from which history can be evoked. And in the field of biography, since its concern is with the mysteries of individual human action, the insight, the controlled imagination, of the historian must have freest play; only by going beyond the documents to an imaginative recreation of the whole figure of his subject can he satisfy our desire to understand this part of history. "What kind of a person was Caesar or Bismarck or Queen Elizabeth?" we want to know. And for this question the records rarely hold a complete answer. Yet sympathy and interpretative tact may discover an answer that is at least suggestive. And the question, although ignorantly put, is a real and vital one for everyone who regards history

as more than a scholar's empty game. As scientific history becomes more and more rigorous in its exclusion of the unprovable, interpretive (and therefore, necessarily, fictionalized) biography may become one of the most important parts of popular history.

To the practitioner of this kind of biography Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, offers a provocative challenge. He received his

great office from the Pope with the object of striking a fatal blow at papal authority. Himself a married man in violation of the canon law, his first act in office was to grant on the ground of canon law a divorce to Henry VIII. He helped send to the stake ignorant fanatics whose views on religion were not divided by a hair from those he himself afterwards avowed. Again and again in an age of violent intrigue and revolution he saved himself by his slippery political agility; he saw Anne Boleyn, Thomas Cromwell, and the Protector Somerset go to their ruin, and acquiesced or aided in the destruction of the allies by whom he had risen. And in the end, after the last throw of the reformers had failed, and after Latimer and Ridley, his associates, had perished in the fire for their faith, he signed five recantations with the sole hope of saving his life by the disavowal of all those protestant opinions with which it had been publicly identified. But for every damning stroke in the picture there is an offset. When all is said, Cranmer was the first ecclesiastical statesman of the English reformation, and one of the first great masters of English prose. It is difficult to see how any Tudor politician could have followed tactics other than time-serving with success; and Cranmer's subservience to Henry VIII may have been dictated less by fear than by sound judgment and personal and patriotic loyalty. Indeed he often pursued a line of policy different from the king's, and the close study of his views reveals a consistent and logical development. He abandoned his friends with reluctance and fought his enemies without rancor. He was personally free from the vices of his age, courteous, merciful, and with a kind of saintly humility. And if for a moment he weakened in his final trial, he went to the stake with the resolution of a martyr and held the hand that

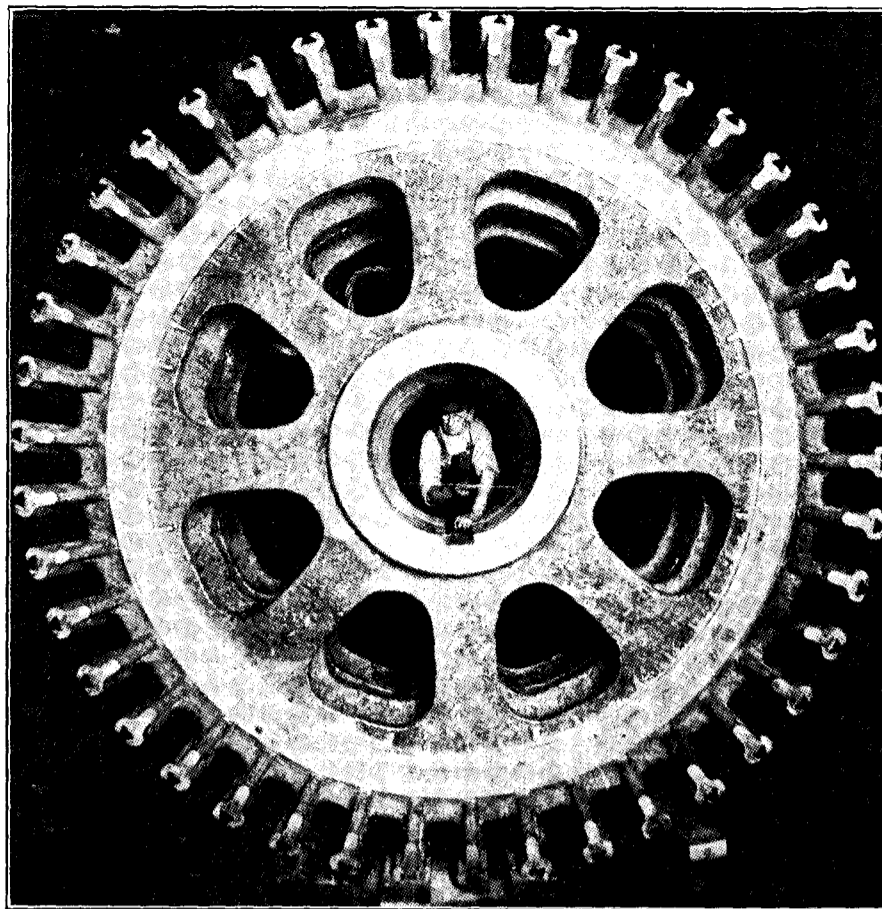


signed his recantations in the flames with the cry, "This hand offended!" None of his biographers, of whom A. F. Pollard, the most scholarly, is too concise and too evasive, and Hilaire Belloc, the most recent, and perhaps the most gifted, is too burdened with his thesis to be fair, has ever produced a picture of Cranmer which explains the contradictions in his career and satisfies at once the imagination and the facts.

Mr. Stryon's full length study of Cranmer, then, is a welcome attempt. To his task he brings a wide reading in the literature of the period, particularly, as is appropriate, in the writings of Cranmer himself, and a gift for vivid and stirring narrative. His account of the consecration of Cranmer as Archbishop, for instance, is a glowing bit of a medieval pageantry, and his excerpts from contemporary letters and pamphlets, though sometimes presented rather awkwardly as conversations, are shrewdly chosen. And his adoption of a quasi-fictional approach should leave him the freer to achieve a well-rounded interpretation. It is therefore disappointing that the Cranmer who emerges from Mr. Stryon's pages is a fainter, more nebulous, and much less convincing figure than the Cranmer of Pollard, of Belloc, or even of Froude.

Partly, of course, this comes from stating the difficulties in understanding Cranmer instead of evading them, but chiefly it comes, I think, from Mr. Stryon's failure to pursue firmly the method of personal, fictional, character study with which he set out. He is constantly diverted towards the larger issues of Reformation history, so that more than half his book is devoted to an exposition of that complicated half century and of Mr. Stryon's personal views about it. It does not matter much that in venturing into this wider field Mr. Stryon has been entangled in occasional minor errors of fact, errors multiplied apparently by careless proofreading. Cornelius Agrippa, for instance, was not imprisoned in Brussels in 1531 for favoring Henry's divorce. He did not favor the divorce (see *Agrippa, Epist. Lib. VI Ep. 20*) and his imprisonment was for debt. The "Chantries Act" (37 Hen VIII cap 10) was six years after the Act of the Six Articles, not before, as is implied, and most of the chantries were not actually dissolved until the reign of Edward VI. The account of Edward VI's illness and death is largely unhistorical, and the statement that he and the duke of Richmond "inherited tuberculosis" from their father Henry VIII verges on nonsense. The astounding remark that Erasmus was "a Polish priest" is probably a mere slip of the pen.

What is of more consequence than these incidental errors is that Mr. Stryon has evolved a theory, or perhaps a group of theories, about the forces and tendencies at work during the Reformation which strain the structure of his book in their efforts at expression, damaging it, and damaging themselves. Bundles of tendencies are loosely labelled "Puritan," for instance, or "sentimental," and these labels are pasted on the characters in lieu of explanation. It does not make for clarity nor aid the sympathetic imagination to be told that Cranmer acted thus and so because he was a "Puritan," particularly when we have just learned that Henry VIII was also a "Puritan," and that St. Thomas Aquinas was a "Puritan," and that the primitive church was puritanic. Mr. Stryon's publishers have paid him no compliment in comparing his work with that of Merezhkovsky, but they have put their fingers on his weakest spot, his tendency to take refuge from the rigors of exact analysis in a vaguely exalted mysticism and behind nebulous and shifting terms. In spite of many inspiring passages on the way, one comes to the end of "The Three Pelicans" with a feeling of disappointment. It really ought to be two books: an essay on the spirit of the Reformation, and—under separate cover—a fictionalized biography of the man Cranmer. And one's disappointment is only deepened by the suspicion that Mr. Stryon, under severer self-discipline and with a fuller realization of the limitations imposed upon a writer by the form which he accepts, would be quite capable of writing both of them.



FROM "MEN AT WORK," BY LEWIS W. HINE (MACMILLAN).

## Technocracy Speaks

INTRODUCTION TO TECHNOCRACY.

By HOWARD SCOTT. New York: The John Day Company. 1933. 90 cents.

Reviewed by ARCHIBALD MACLEISH

PERSONAL attacks upon Mr. Howard Scott have reached their last and most logical idiocy in the complaint of some novelist or other that Mr. Scott cannot be a man of culture because he drank five glasses of water during a nation-wide radio broadcast. But the impersonal attack upon the technocratic position continues and gives every evidence of continuing to continue for some time to come. The Technocrats themselves see to that. The first of January marked the publication in *Harper's Magazine* of an article with the somewhat pompous byline: "prepared under the supervision of Howard Scott," and the first week of the month saw the publication by the same publisher of the same article (somewhat expanded) in book form under the title: "The A B C of Technocracy." This last publication I undertook to examine at the request of the Editor of this *Review*. Since it contained no facts not available to the most ordinary journalist I concluded that, whatever might be said of the technocratic theory of the obsolescence of the price system (a theory in which I personally believe), there was very little evidence that the Technocrats had performed the original engineering research upon which their personal authority, as distinguished from the authority of their cause, must rest. Subsequently, however, and after my review of the book was in print, and after I had left the city, the Editor of the *Review* was served with formal notice over Mr. Scott's name that the "A B C of Technocracy" was not an "official" publication. How the piece could be authentic in *Harper's Magazine* and spurious in *Harper's* book-covers no one has yet been able to explain, but the Editor, being a gentleman of conscience, made such changes as he thought proper in my text and requested me to review the "Introduction to Technocracy," a subsequent (ten days subsequent) pamphlet bearing in red lettering on gray boards the following words: "By Howard Scott and others." It seemed to him as it seems to me, that one might properly rely upon that statement if not upon the superimposed scare line: "The Only Authorized Presentation."

The whole affair is oddly reminiscent of the Authentic Will which used to be produced in the last act to the embarrassment of the villain and the final and enduring happiness of the pretty little gal with the corn-colored hair. The only trouble is that the Document in this case is a pretty seedy script and one calcu-

lated to discourage some at least of Mr. Scott's most hopeful admirers. It is, needless to say, much more impressive than the "A B C." That is, there are fewer side-show statistics to make the rustics gape. The 400,000 bricks per day per man of earlier articles has dropped to 300,000 bricks per day per twenty men. And Mr. Ackerman's chapter called "The Technologist Looks at the Depression" is effective both factually and as counter-capitalistic dialectic. But as a constructive proposal the booklet is utterly unconvincing. And since it is only by constructive proposal that the Technocrats can now make good their pretensions the failure goes pretty deep. The discovery that technological advance has bankrupted the price system is not a novel discovery nor is it a new idea (outside Wall Street) that Mr. Morgan and the turbine belong to different eras. The assertion may be worth numerous repetitions in view of the high level of human stupidity. But Technocracy cannot become the power it obviously proposes to become by reiterating facts which were widely known before it gave them voice.

The Technocrats themselves are aware of this situation. There was, originally, an attitude of Olympian aloofness: the present volume still carries Mr. Scott's statement in *The Living Age* of last December that "Technocracy proposes no solution, it merely poses the problem. . . ." But the aloofness has worn thin. The towers of a Utopia begin to lift under the scientific abstraction. The Technocratic world takes shape.

And it is a sad, sad world. For it is nothing more adult or more intelligent than a world of technological determinism. The infantile cowardice of our time which demands an external pattern, a non-human authority, has manufactured a new nurse. And that nurse is the Laws of Physics. One mechanistic nipple replaces another. The economic determinism of Marx gives way to the scientific imperative of Mr. Scott. Instead of believing with the German that all social phenomena are dictated by economic forces, we are now to believe with the American that "the outstanding feature" of the record of social life in this world "is the controlling nature (sic.) of the prevailing technology at any given time . . . upon social change." Instead of re-creating the world in the image of the price of wheat, we are to admit that "all social activity . . . must obey the laws of physics." Instead of classifying human beings according to their jobs, we are to classify all life upon a basis of energy determinants. And shortly we shall be talking of the Second Law of Thermodynamics as Trotsky talks of History and as the Todas talk of the Sacred Cow.

The two isms are too close to tell apart. Communism went evangelizing with the newly discovered dogmas of economics when economics were fashionable and Technocracy goes evangelizing with the now fashionable dogmas of physics. But both schools have the same fundamental infantilism. Both are responses to the desire of our contemporaries to hide their heads, to relieve themselves of all personal responsibility, moral as well as intellectual, to return, and to return together, to the dark and comfortable and blessed womb. All that is required of man in the Technocratic world is to submit to the laws of physics, measure all life by the common denominator of physical energy, discard all activities which are not susceptible of physical mensuration, and wait for the "next most probable energy state"—the millenium. It is a picture shrewdly painted to appeal to American babbitts with its childish longing to believe in Science and Scientific Truths and Scientific Thinkers. But it is about as attractive to a man of human appetites as a patent antiseptic gargle.

And about as nourishing. We admit, or we will admit shortly, the fact of the technological revolution. But that revolution is not an end. It is a beginning. It is the beginning of an age in which the whole threadbare morality of Work will be overthrown, an age in which men will have the leisure to live. We will neither forego that hope in deference to the money system which now blocks our way nor will we surrender it to the academic syllogisms of a society of pedantic engineers. We will find a way to live in our own behalf and for our own ends.

## Etruscan Places

ETRUSCAN PLACES. By D. H. LAWRENCE. New York: The Viking Press. 1932. \$3.75.

Reviewed by HETTY GOLDMAN

THIS record of casual wanderings among the tombs of the Etruscans and the modern towns whose museums house their relics, is a delightful piece of writing. Here is no archaeology in the strict sense of the word; indeed much of it is unacceptable as archaeology. We are given in its place the reactions of a highly gifted and sensitive artist to the beauty and vivacity of Etruscan art in drawing and painting and to the hidden symbolism upon which it is based, a symbolism whose meaning was, in many instances, already lost at the time when the tombs were decorated. There is no attempt to "do" all the sites, but a great attempt to penetrate, to feel, and to understand. It is achieved in flashes of insight and sometimes with real profundity as in the analysis of the diviner's art and augur's art and the meaning of "an act of pure attention." There are passages of extraordinary beauty. How exhilarating to read these statements! By repetition and slow amplification they seem to gather weight like oncoming waves which burst in foam and glory.

The book is full of Lawrence's peculiar philosophy of the "dark strain," and while it is frequently illuminating, there are moments when one wonders whether his vision was not at times as much obscured by his theory of the "phallic consciousness" as that of any Teutonic professor by his more ponderous ratiocinations.

## The Saturday Review of LITERATURE

HENRY SEIDEL CANBY . . . . . Editor  
NOBLE A. CATHCART . . . . . Publisher  
AMY LOVEMAN . . . . . Managing Editor  
WILLIAM ROSE BENET } Contributing  
CHRISTOPHER MORLEY } Editors

Published weekly by The Saturday Review Co., Inc., 25 W. 45th St., New York, N. Y. Noble A. Cathcart, President and Treasurer; Henry Seidel Canby, Vice-President and Chairman; Amy Loveman, Secretary.

Subscription rates per year, postpaid in the U. S. and Pan-American Postal Union, \$3.50; in Canada, \$5; in Great Britain, 18 shillings; elsewhere \$4.50. Entered as second class matter at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 1, 1879. Vol. 9, No. 28.

THE SATURDAY REVIEW is indexed in the "Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature." Copyright, 1932, Saturday Review Co., Inc.