

Traveling Authors and other Traffic in Words

Saturday Review News Pictures of the Month by Robert Disraeli



The cameraman gets three shots at Richard Aldington, en route from Trinidad to New England . . .



. . . where the author of "Death of a Hero," "All Men Are Enemies," etc., is at work on a new novel.



(Above) Thomas Mann, back in New York at a publisher's tea, after receiving an honorary degree at Harvard . . . (Below) Audrey Wurdemann, Pulitzer Prize winner for poetry, with her husband, Joseph Auslander. A novel by Miss Wurdemann has been announced for publication next year.



(Above) Sir William A. Craigie, joint editor of the Oxford English Dictionary, at the SRL offices . . . (Left) Doubleday's Mr. Finneran shows an original, \$20,000 "Seven Pillars of Wisdom" to Miss Riley, Brentano's buyer, and Arthur Brentano.

How Primitive Society Works

LAW AND ORDER IN POLYNESIA. By H. Ian Hogbin. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company. \$3.50.

Reviewed by MARGARET MEAD

THE kernel of this book contains the most vivid and valuable description which has yet been published of how the coöperative mechanism of a simple society works. The reader, in order to enjoy the kernel, will find it necessary to disregard the shell, a brief theoretical introduction which does not adequately prepare one to expect the wealth of acute detail which is to come later, and the concluding chapters in which a few statements about Polynesian Islands other than Ontong Java are half-heartedly assembled. These can be omitted without doing violence to the virtues of the study.

There remains Dr. Hogbin's study, which he made while still an undergraduate, of the functioning of life on the South Sea island of Ontong Java. He tells us, not only that the people coöperate, but how they coöperate, in this island society, where the joint family in which the men own and operate the fishing gear and the women own and manage the house, is the unit of social life. He tells us what happens to the lazy man, what his wife said to him when he didn't bring home any fish, how his fishing partners treated him. He describes what happens when the head of one of the large joint families dies, the play of personalities in the struggle for the succession, the way in which all but the two contestants will stand aside to see who will win. He relates not only the inception of a quarrel but its outcome, and searches out where a man may go when he is driven out of his home.

This concrete answer to the questions of "But how does it work?" is presented

with enough, and not too much, detail about native custom, about clothing and dancing, love ritual and religious ceremony. There is just enough of such description to make the reader see the people whom Dr. Hogbin describes, and occasionally almost to smell the great taro puddings, many feet in girth which are presented at feasts. For the general reader these details will give the book an especial charm, but the student of social forms, and especially the student of law will find enough to rejoice his heart, in having such well documented cases presented to him, in place of the vaguer generalizations of so many earlier students of primitive society.

One of the most striking results of Dr. Hogbin's findings in Ontong Java he has not emphasized sufficiently. The Ontong Javanese are a simple Polynesian people without the elaborate paraphernalia of rank and status characteristic of most Polynesian peoples. They present the picture which would be found in other islands if the chiefs were all killed and the commoners, untutored in formal lore, were left to run the society. And yet, lacking all of the intermediate steps of ranks and precedence upon the basis of which it is so easy to understand the institution of a kingship, the Ontong Javanese, about eight generations ago, according to Dr. Hogbin, invented the idea of a kingship and maintained the institution thereafter. The conception that certain cultural forms contain within them potential institutions which will recur time and time again, in different localities, each one independently of the other, is one of the most fruitful conceptions of modern social anthropology. Dr. Hogbin's description of the Ontong Javanese development of the kingship is perhaps the most striking illustration of this principle which has yet been found.

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A CANOE IN THE LAGOON AT ONTONG JAVA
From "Law and Order in Polynesia"



JOHN DE MEYER

Seamy Side of Maine

BAILEY'S DAUGHTERS. By John de Meyer. New York: Harrison Smith & Robert Haas. 1935. \$2.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

THE novel under examination is of the sub-machine-gun type, save that intermittently with its hard-boiledness it becomes sentimental in a fashion that lays it open to parody. "Pop," the old fisherman, and father of the two Bailey daughters—at least, father of one of them and stepfather of the other—rather wears on the nerves with his ruminant philosophizing. Meanwhile son-in-law and stepdaughter indulge in a little mayhem (being creatures of impulse) and there is a certain amount of rape.

The household of a Maine fisherman is distinctly not as the summer visitors see it. Which is probably true. "Butch," the principal male character of the story—hardly, in any sense the hero—is a far-wanderer whose chief trouble is women. As for violent deaths, there are two, under sufficiently exciting circumstances. The style of writing is laconic and blunt. Mr. Hemingway fished that murex up. The story is as readable as a well-written newspaper account of local tragedy. Yet somehow, though I grant a certain forcefulness to Mr. DeMeyer, I find his characters pretty much shadows. Maybe this is merely because they are so limited in intellect that a little reading about them goes a long way. Such folk are in the fashion today as fictional material. Yet when you set up a recent hard-boiled novel like "The Postman Always Rings Twice" for comparison—and I think the comparison is fair—the "Postman" seems by far the better book.

To me there is no particular Maine atmosphere in "Bailey's Daughters." But the author has a sense of drama and a gift for condensation. His dialogue, for the most part, is real enough. Of its kind (not a very distinguished kind) this is only a fairly good book. That's its rating, at least, with one reviewer.