

Heroism Without Heroics

THE CRUISE OF THE BREADWINNER. By H. E. Bates. Boston: Little, Brown & Company. 1947. 112 pp. \$1.50.

Reviewed by ROBERT A. ALLEN

IF you're looking for a short, delightfully written novel that will give you an hour or more of real pleasure, read this yarn of a day's cruise aboard a patrol boat off the English Coast. While "The Cruise of the Breadwinner" must be identified with the war books, it is this reviewer's hope that such labeling will not deter anyone from reading it. War or no war, Mr. Bates knows how to tell a story.

The reader expecting the usual war novel reflecting the disillusionment of its author will be disappointed. There are no passages on the plight of mankind, the futility of war, or the author's own philosophical dissertations on this unhappy age. Mr. Bates has told his story only in the simple words and courageous actions of his handful of characters caught in the holocaust of war. These men speak and act as men did when death and despair struck in combat. Here there is no room for eloquent discourse or profound reflection, and aboard the *Breadwinner* there is none.

The *Breadwinner*, a converted coastal fishing boat giving the appearance of a "discarded and battered toy," was the charge of Captain Gregson, a seafaring man of enormous physical proportions with an almost insatiable thirst for a cup of hot tea. The craft's sole armament was a Lewis gun, unused since World War I, mounted aft of the wheel house, itself little larger than a dog-kennel.

Skipper Gregson's crew of two consisted of Snowy, a sixteen-year-old lad eager for his first action, and Jimmy, engineer-gunner, with a wife and three children to think about and, more important for the *Breadwinner*, an habitual dislike for everything aboard and special contempt for the eighteen-horse engine which was forever breaking down. Snowy's main job was to prepare his master's hot tea, but the skipper's respect for the boy was based more on his uncanny

aircraft recognition—by sound alone—than by the concoction he made up in the galley.

Within a few hours this strange team of warriors found excitement and tragedy and the youthful cabin boy saw a British pilot, wounded on deck after rescue by the *Breadwinner*, face death with compassion for the enemy. Snowy learned, too, that the same pilot, down at sea for the third time, looked on combat flying as he might look on Saturday's cricket match.

Mr. Bates has fashioned his story with great care to avoid over-sentimentality. At the same time he has described his characters with deep feeling and understanding for the emotions of men under severe strain. One will not easily forget the men of the *Breadwinner*—these are the little men who fought the war for freedom all over the world.

Amnesiac's Tale

THIS WORLD IS MINE. By Luigi Creatore. New York: Rinehart & Co. 1947. 245 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by BERTRAM D. LEWIN

THE author of this first novel, according to the publisher's statement, while serving in the Navy suddenly found himself in San Francisco without any memory for who he was or how he got there. The novel is said basically to be derived from this experience: the protagonist finds himself lost on a San Francisco street in the uniform of a pharmacist's mate and with a letter addressed to him by someone whom he cannot recall. He goes to the Navy hospital, and is placed in the psychiatric ward.

From here on, presumably, fiction enters. The novel becomes a series of good stories. There are mysterious dealings with doctors and their efforts to hypnotize him, to use drug psychotherapies, and to just plain bully him out of his amnesia; there are stories of what went on in the ward, told in an entertaining and skilful manner; his attempt to remember the past brings up the gripping tale of a pharmacist mate on duty during the attack on Pearl Harbor. All the stories are good, and the publishers are quite correct when they praise the author's "grace," "brilliance of style and method," and express their surprise that so skilful a book should be a first novel. The case history value of the book, however, is minimal; fiction completely obscures whatever clinical interest the true story might have had.

