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# Book Here for Mandoa!



The author of "Mandoa, Mandoa!"  
—Miss Winifred Holtby

MISS WINIFRED HOLTBY has written a stimulating and amusing book in "Mandoa, Mandoa!" which is a sort of satirical-romantic-comic novel without a hero.

The story begins with the General Election of 1931—one of those events which have, Miss Holtby declares ironically in her foreword, occurred in the world of fact—and ends in the latter part of 1933, during which time an enterprising travel agency attempts to advertise the remote principality of Mandoa as a holiday resort.

The natives of Mandoa have previously had some taste of civilisation through the Reverend Robert Overdon, M.A., a white missionary teacher, with "the oddest mixture of innocence and knowledge," and an American film company "making a talking film called *The Siren of the Swamp*, in the South-East Sudan," who had been stranded by floods and brought as prisoners to Lolajoba, the Mandoan capital. The results are delicious:

"A religious procession passed along the street, the nodding statues of saints and virgins followed by acolytes who beat drums and sang an old Mandoan hymn to a tune from the great all-singing, all-talking film, 'College Girls Must Love'."

"Oh, Dinah!  
Enid, the belle of Carolina!  
There's not a girl that's finer!  
Sure thing."

Among other fantastic things, the Mandoans have learned to swear, not only "by the Holy Saints, by the Gods of old Mandoa," but also "by the Sisters Gish and Mary Pickford."

At the same time, in England, the youngest director of Princes' Tours, Limited, is having his hour and his triumph as the successful Conservative candidate just before midnight on October 27, 1931. It seems probable that Miss Holtby was about that night with pencil and notebook, taking down verbatim the speech of the first successful National candidate she could find. The speech at any rate has about it the old, familiar stirring ring that we all recognise:

"The electors of North Donington were faced by a choice between a united nation and a party; between the spirit of Imperial unity and a class-war; between the freedom of a great democracy and the dictation of a Trade Union caucus. They have chosen, as all over this country of ours to-night other constituencies are choosing—they have chosen to vote for freedom, unity and Empire. They have

dared to answer the success of the anti-patriotic intellectuals, the cynical defeatists, the humanitarians who bribe their way to office, the dreamers who promise what no statesman could perform. They have dared to be realists, to be patriots, to be British. We are, I believe, on the eve of a great National revival."

And part of that great National revival—sweet, comforting words!—is to be the exploitation of Mandoa as a super holiday resort with super air-port,

## By H. E. Bates

super hotels, and super profits. And since the concern is British, the capital British, the profits British, there must be a little honourable graft, so that the disreputable Socialist brother of the successful Imperialistic candidate may be given the job of spying out the land. Delicious ironics!

But the fun is too good to spoil by a mere prosaic summary of the book. Miss Holtby knows the Imperialist mind and method upside-down and inside-out, and she dissects them mercilessly and with refreshing wit, but without ever being cruel or heavy.

It is conceivable that the Imperialist, chancing upon the book, might read it with profound enjoyment as a harmless romantic comedy of British adventurers among the dark peoples. But the fault would hardly be Miss Holtby's. Such are, it seems, the ways of Imperialists. At any rate, "Mandoa, Mandoa!" is to be warmly recommended, whether you chose to vote for "freedom, unity and Empire" or not.

Literary prophecy is perhaps an even more dangerous and futile game than political. "We are, I believe, on the eve of a great national revival." The fact that the eve is a little long in itself does not deter me, however, from suggesting that we are indeed on the eve of a revival in the short-story. We are confronted with the refreshing spectacle of seeing short stories of literary merit appear in the daily newspaper, and with the still more refreshing sight of an occasional book of the calibre of "Vagabond Flag."

Since the death of Katherine Mansfield more and more women writers have been attracted by the short story, and it has been the fate of more than half of them to be compared, very often unjustly, with her.

There are strong indications that Essex Brooke is a woman, but the neutrality of the name may deprive the more obtuse critic of the opportunity of making the old easy comparison. In this case there would be less truth in it than usual, for the stories in "Vagabond Flag" are sharper and harder than the stories in, for instance, "The Garden Party." There is, in fact, something bleak and wintry about them that takes us back to the work of Mrs. Malachi Whitaker. They deal, too, with the same inarticulate, frustrated lives, and have the same unforced gravity and simplicity of style, touching but unsentimental, detached but never aloof.

When the revival of the short story is fully realised, Essex Brooke will certainly have played some part in helping to bring it about.

### BOOKS REVIEWED

"Mandoa, Mandoa!" By Winifred Holtby. (Collins, 7s. 6d. net.)

"Vagabond Flag." By Essex Brooke. (Cape, 7s. 6d. net.)

"We call  
**Germolene**  
Brand OINTMENT  
the **MAGIC**  
Ointment"



—writes Mrs. Hughes,  
"for ITCHING,  
SORES, BAD FOOT,  
and ALL SKIN  
TROUBLES."

"Soothes at  
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