

Reproduced by kind permission of Evensford Productions Limited and Pollinger Limited. Copyright c Evensford Productions Limited, 1935.

Mr. O'Brien has been likened to an armament manufacturer, to one who endeavours to ginger up the rival camps to greater belligerency, his arms being the short story and his camps England and America. For many years he has been urging his own countrymen to throw away the obsolete weapons bequeathed to them by the manufacturers of magazines, and today, whether because of him or not, the American short story bristles with many new and flashing swords. Now it is the turn of the country of his adoption. The neat pistol of Katherine Mansfield is no longer good enough for us as a model, nor the Lawrentian bomb. We stand in fact very much underarmed, avoiding the issue, or, in Mr. O'Brien's words, "the English short story is dozing in pleasant backwaters and has abandoned the main stream". There is some truth in this, but when Mr. O'Brien goes on to say that "he (the Englishman) somehow fears that life, if lived fully, is in bad taste" one can only retort that the American, in turn, has a corresponding fear that life, unless it is violent, is not life at all. Too often is the American equation tough guy + tough idiom = great story, which is as much my eye as the English equation—rightly attacked by Mr. O'Brien—in which technical competence + nothing = great story. And on these grounds there would be no great story at all in the whole of Mr. O'Brien's forty-four. There are, in fact, no very great stories here, though Mr. Alan Seager's, *This Town and Salamanca*, conforming to no rules and no equations, comes very near it, a nervous piece of work in fresh idiom and fascinating cross-sectional method. It is equalled by nothing in the English side except Mr. Calder-Marshall's highly amusing *Terminus*, which sparkles with delicious and subtle humour in almost every one of its ironic lines. Humour, in fact, plays a small part in the American equation, though Miss Dorothy MacCleary has an equation all her own by which she produces a grand if not great story in *Sunday Morning*. It is interesting to reflect here that Mr. Calder-Marshall's style derives from America and Miss MacCleary's from England, both retaining an intense individuality at the same time, a fact which gives nice point to Mr. O'Brien's hope that the strong American influence will not be long in having a fertilizing effect here.

For the rest the honours seem to me very nearly equal, in spite of Mr. O'Brien's staunch championing of his own countrymen. The stories on the English side of Douglas Boyd, Leslie Halward, Elizaveta Fen, Eileen Verrinder and Joan Jukes easily equal the work of Benjamin Appel, Louis Mamet, Harry Sylvester and Madeline Cole on the American. Technical competence, rather deplored by Mr. O'Brien as common denominator on the English side, is just as highly developed by the best American writers, whose interpretation of life is not much richer or subtler or more powerful and more beautiful than that of the best of their English contemporaries. Where the American does score, or is lucky, is in the prodigious mass of wholly fresh and attractive material which the American civilization offers him. The Englishman, with every single corner of his literary field ploughed and cropped almost to the limit, can only envy him there and take it as being very much to his credit that his own products are as good as they are.

Christopher Columbus. H. H. Houben. Translated from the German by John Linton. (Routledge. 12s. 6d.)

It would take a very bad book to kill all the interest intrinsic in this subject, and because Mr. Houben's book is not very bad but merely, in some places, rather inefficient, I take the liberty of recommending it to all who may be interested in life and human beings and yet know little or nothing detailed about Columbus. The beginning is the worst. Little or nothing is known of the explorer's early life, and Mr. Houben has seen fit to give us some imaginary scenes complete with such aids to verisimilitude as may be found in those historical novels which do not get published. But the worst is soon over, and, once the narrative gets fairly started and guess-work is abandoned for known facts, the reader is soon too deeply engrossed in the matter to cavil overmuch at the manner. Even this improves as time goes on, and for one thing Mr. Houben deserves our thanks; he steadfastly avoids all psychological excesses. Most suitably, and most unusually in this kind of biography, the narrative is mainly limited to what Columbus did and to what we know he thought.

Forgetting, then, the manner, the matter is tremendous; and Mr. Houben to the non-specialist eye seems to have it at his finger-ends. At any rate he has read any number of documents and papers and is wise enough to give us a frequent look over his shoulder. Columbus's own descriptions of his voyages, put down for the enlightenment and entertainment of his patron Queen, are a thousand times more actual and enthralling than a third-party rendering of these scenes by any but a master-hand. The book is worth reading alone for his descriptions and comments on the idyllic inhabitants of certain islands of the Indies. Men who write thus of coloured races in this day, men separated from Columbus by a millenium of progress, receive little longer shrift than he. Few even of these, moreover, can lay claim to the nobility of gesture and dignity of bearing maintained by this medieval sailor of Genoa in face of the unfamiliar and the apparently inferior. But even Columbus himself had at times to harden his heart in the interests of the Catholic Church.

The story is the thing, however, though the moralist will find plenty to amuse him . . . the story of an obscure seaman who haunted the Courts of Portugal and Spain for years, breaking down by the force of his personality infinite barricades of prejudice, stupidity and envy, hammering away in isolation at an idea which was a dogmatic conviction, promising converts to priests and queens, gold to kings and politicians—hammering away until he finally won and achieved his purpose—all on the strength of an idea which proved false. And then the first voyage, most circumstantially described, with its familiar attendant horrors; the founding of the first West Indian colony; the second expedition heading straight for anarchy and carnage. And then, in an interminable series, difficulties, humiliations, degradations, mutinies, and intrigues unceasing and numberless; the struggle of enlightenment against barbarity; the supersession of the great discoverer by a party tool; the bitterness and the heartbreak caused by his own appalling treatment and by the sight of those peaceful lands ravished by the men he had led to their shores. Such was the later life, leading through multi-handed treachery, disgrace, and reserved rehabilitation . . .

what to
Pr
Protes
evidenc
Commiss
few days
he consid
ways in w
Finance
objects of
to have a
he wish to
Mr. Postg
with a pur
and puts t
the latter
of the nin
expenditur
The Corp
say, a railw
State supp
salaries or
holders. B
body. Ots
he claims, t
whether ar
wasted on u
paid at full
sufficient o
He is ab
these count
meeting all
the present
the greater
He sees a
benevolent,
the B.B.C.
private lives
reasons not
His critic
of its positio
modation s
allowance fo
such an exp
maximum
half of the
In dealing
lack of true
lack which
to the inc
indigenous
on the exist
well-know
dispute the
series ther
What to d
book, its cr
common se
judice