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Books reviewed: ARNOLD HASKELL'S *Waltzing Matilda*, a deluxe tour *Velvet Voyaging* by EDWARD WASSERMANN, *The Wandering Years* by WESTON MARTYR, *The Sea, Our Heritage* by J. G. LOCKHART and *Caribbean Treasure* by IVAN T. SANDERSON

TRAVEL ADVENTURE

BY H. E. BATES

TOO many authors take as their guiding principle "this, whether you like it or not, is *what I think*." In contrast, Mr. Arnold Haskell's principle is "Here is what I have seen and felt about certain things and places. I may be wrong. But I should like you to listen to what I have to say." Result: a very nice book, *Waltzing Matilda* (Black, 12s. 6d. net)—rich with charm, reason and intelligence, unhampered by prejudice, a well-documented and personal introduction to Australia. After being "completely, even aggressively uninterested in that particular continent," Mr. Haskell has become an enthusiastic devotee of all its charms from Adelaide to the "long shady avenues of jacaranda, poinciana, poinsettia, cascara, and bougainvillea" that are Brisbane's link with the East. Though I escape for family reasons Mr. Haskell's criticism that all the Englishman knows of Australia is sheep, Sydney Bridge, and Bradman, I should ask for no better introduction to the scenery, culture, history, and significance of that continent than this moderate but most persuasive book.

Though his book is not an historical document, Mr. Haskell (whose principal

interest anyway is ballet) has some respect for accuracy of fact. Not so Mr. Edward Wassermann, who in *Velvet Voyaging* (Bodley Head, 12s. 6d. net) lets Cooks take care of the itinerary and the facts take care of themselves. There is a species of author, I believe, which composes books of travel-adventure by the simple process of reading the *Encyclopædia Britannica* and stopping at home. Mr. Wassermann goes one better by ordering velvet cushions from Cooks. "I travelled as expensively as I could, and had every luxury available wherever I went. . . . There are few exact descriptions of any place . . . and frequently, no doubt, I have been guilty of mistakes in spelling and geography." This is so ripe that it is not surprising that the subsequent history of Mr. Wassermann's journey to Java, Borneo, Celebes, Bali, Siam, Indo-China, and China itself fails to give the impression of reliability. But if the point is overlooked the book suddenly teems with smart, voluble charm, distinguished people, grand hotels, and intermittent comment on the operation of lavatories. As a sound record of adventurous travel the book gets no marks, but is rather to be recommended as a tonic effervescent after German measles.

Mr. Weston Martyr gives some altogether tougher stuff in *The Wandering Years* (Blackwood, 7s. 6d. net). With what I first suspected to be a rolling up of the sleeves, Mr. Martyr set out "to tell the truth in this chronicle, and nothing but the truth." Son of a master mariner of the old school, Mr. Martyr sketches in the foundations for a tough life: going to sea at fifteen, the war, the sea again, some very hard gold-mining in the neighbourhood of Johannesburg. He records the usual batch of narrow escapes: falling off the main-mast,

victimization by Chinese mine-workers carried to a point of murder attempted individually and then collectively, a small adventure of blowing up a boiler. He confesses to having told some of these yarns before, embellishing them a little for the sake of fictional interest, a point which takes some of the shine off his original vow to record "nothing but the truth." Later the adventures become less physical, the record rather scratched by some complex touch of nerves, the legacy of war. Marriage follows war, and then a struggle to align living and happiness. The ultimate settling down to the only life worth living, in a cottage in East Anglia, puts the finishing touch to the portrait of a likeable, friendly, rather bewildered person who began as a sailor and ends more or less accidentally as a writer. And the book, as it should, fits the man.

I expected *The Sea, Our Heritage*, by J. G. Lockhart (Bles, 6s. net), to be pompously prefaced by passages from Newbolt, pompously written, and the whole patriotic bundle neatly tied with red, white, and blue. The book is in reality as unpretentious as a ship's log, as full of factual meat and as exciting. The author's good sense is further confirmed by the inclusion of five small but adequate maps. It was well also to confine the book's size to that of a schooner rather than launch an omnibus dreadnought containing everything from

Drake's Drum to the *Altmark*, and at the same time out-doing the B.O.P. Of the sixteen short narratives, almost all are naval occasions, but among the exceptions Shackleton's great antarctic boat journey and the companion epic of *Trevesa*, in which two ships' boats made 1,700 miles of heroic passage across the Indian Ocean, are pieces of memorable navigation which make some of the naval affairs, notably Jutland, look mostly blood and blunder. Written with reticence, without flourishes or play-acting, this is the right book of its kind.

On the principle that the finest wine should conclude the meal I have left *Caribbean Treasure*, by Ivan T. Sanderson (Hamish Hamilton, 12s. 6d. net), until last. This admirable book, for me, is in the very highest class of travel-adventure. It records with enthusiasm, colour, wit, and an enviable backing of scientific fact an expedition which began as a holiday in Trinidad and went on through the jungle of that island to the pine forest of Haiti and the rivers and savannahs of Surinam. Its characters are centipedes and snakes, frogs, anteaters, monkeys, spiders, butterflies, tree-toads, and the rest of a six-column index. Not content with writing of all these and the magical Caribbean scene in excellent fashion, the author contributes thirty-two illustrations which are, if anything, a shade finer than the writing.

PAPER SHORTAGE

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