

Within The Fourth Estate

By William H. Harrison

IN the unabridged Webster's, journalism is defined as "the collection and periodical publication of current news; the business of managing, editing, or writing for journals or newspapers; also, journals or newspapers collectively."

As for the people who make a living in this business, they are of course called "journalists," and Webster's—in an uppity manner—says that their writing style is "characterized by evidences of haste, superficiality of thought, inaccuracies of detail, colloquialisms, and sensationalism."

Say what the dictionary will, however, the fact is that it is not always easy to tell where journalism ends and something more literary or more authoritative begins. Things like "superficiality of thought," "inaccuracies of detail" and "sensationalism" are by no means peculiar to the newspaper and magazine crowd. Novelists are guilty of them, too. So are poets, historians, sociologists, philosophers and any number of others who cannot restrain themselves from putting their thoughts into books.

Raw Material For Specialists

Actually, in a world full of highly articulate but not necessarily sound writers and thinkers, journalists—as far as style and subject matter are concerned—do not need to feel, as so few of them really seem to do, any great sense of inferiority. They may write in haste and are often far from profound, but still, not infrequently, their brainchildren are noteworthy either as indispensable raw material for specialists or as contributions distinguished enough in themselves to be much better than mere flashes in the publishing pan.

During the past year, not many books were written about journalism per se, but dozens were written by journalists about themselves and/or their times. The output as a whole was neither all good nor all bad. Some of it was sheer waste, some of it was merely so-so, and some of it—to paraphrase the claim of a certain brew—was of a type that could hold its head high in any company. It is with the latter that

this review is concerned, though here and there a so-so item may creep in, while elsewhere a superior work inadvertently may be omitted.

A good beginning for the list is Morris Ernst's "The First Freedom," an excellently written, thoughtful and provocative study of the problem of fewer and fewer men coming into control of more and more outlets of opinion. Mr. Ernst regards this as an alarming tendency injurious to our democracy. His thesis is debatable,



The late Adolph Ochs, former publisher of the New York Times.

—AP Photo.

but it is so ably presented that the adjective "important" properly may be stressed here.

Cities With Only One Newspaper

One of the developments Mr. Ernst heartily dislikes—mergers leaving large cities with only one newspaper—unquestionably would startle many of our journalistic pioneers were they alive today to see it. This point can be read between the lines of almost every other page in "Horace Greeley" by Henry Luther Stoddard. Mr. Stoddard, who retains a boyhood recollection of the great self-made founder and editor of the New York Tribune (since merged with the Herald), has written a fine biography of a man who was himself a national ferment in an

age of American ferment.

Other first-class books of the year about journalistic giants include the "Autobiography of William Allen White," a revealing self-portrait of the Emporia, Kans., editor whose fame and influence went far beyond his own home town; "An Honorable Titan," by Gerald W. Johnson, the story of Adolf Ochs and the New York Times, and "Mr. Lincoln's Camera Man," by Roy Meredith, a handsome volume about Mathew B. Brady, a pioneer in pictorial journalism, whose Civil War work equals the best, even of this day.

Journalistic Experiences

At this point, while on the subject of biography and autobiography, special note must be made of all those living journalists who have made books during the past year out of their own experiences and the views they have shaped on the basis of those experiences. These books are in a class by themselves. Most of them have rather poetic titles, and they are all solemn—some with hope, some with pessimism—about the future of the world. They really do not answer anything, but if one has the time to spare for them, one could do a lot worse than read the following: "This House Against This House," by Vincent Sheehan; "The Education of a Correspondent," by Herbert L. Matthews; "Reconquest: Its Results and Responsibilities," by Hallett Abend; "The Great Challenge," by Louis Fischer; "Not So Wild a Dream," by Eric Sevareid; "While Time Remains," by Leland Stowe, and "Our Share of Night," by Drew Middleton.

Then there is that other group of journalists whose books this year have been confined to problems somewhat smaller than the overall problem of the world. Free from autobiographical musings, these involve a large element of controversy, so that the reader, if he agrees, is likely to agree militantly, whereas if he disagrees, he may do so fiercely enough to want to horsewhip the author. A notable example is Ralph Ingersoll's lively "Top Secret," wittingly or unwittingly a boon to Anglophobes. Another is "Thunder Out of China," by Theodore H. White and Annalee Jacoby, an impressive critique of Chiang Kai-shek, the Kuomintang and American policy. Other controversial titles include "Wrath in Burma," by Fred Eldridge and "To Whom Palestine?" by Frank Gervasi.

Journalism

And the Atom

The atom, naturally, was not neglected by our journalists. An excellent easy-to-understand account of the preternatural new power can be found in "Dawn Over Zero," by William L. Lawrence of the New York Times and a somewhat more technical one in "Almighty Atom," by John J. O'Neill of the Herald Tribune. In addition, there is "Hiroshima," by John Hershey, a penetrating

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—From a cartoon by Clifford K. Berryman.

WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE,

Publisher of the Emporia Gazette.

"... He had nothing but a country newspaper to serve him, but he was known by every one and consulted respectfully by the great and powerful." From The Sunday Star, March 10—M. C. R.

study of the reactions of six human beings who survived the explosion. First published as a kind of journalistic tour de force by the New Yorker magazine, which devoted an entire issue to it, it now can be had in book form—an important addition to our atomic literature, though it has been praised rather extravagantly and ought to be read with a measure of reserve. Finally, some note should be made of the fact that Pat Frank, a former Washington newspaperman, wrote "Mr. Adam," a seriocomic novel about nuclear fission and sex—not deep, but definitely interesting.

Recommended

- AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE. (McMillan; \$3.75.)
- HORACE GREELEY, by Henry Luther Stoddard. (Putnam; \$3.50.)
- AN HONORABLE TITAN, by Gerald W. Johnson, (Harper & Bros; \$3.50.)
- THE FIRST FREEDOM, by Morris Ernst, (Macmillan; \$3.00.)
- MR. LINCOLN'S CAMERA-MAN, by Roy Meredith, (Scribner's; \$7.50.)

Journalistic Miscellany

IT REMAINS now to lump together, under the general heading of worthwhile journalistic miscellany, the following items: "Last Chapter," a collection of the fine Pacific columns written by Ernie Pyle before a Japanese bullet ended his bright career; "Thank You, Mr. President," Merriman Smith's very good story of the press and the White House during the war years; "Detroit Is My Home Town," a sprightly, anecdotal but not particularly instructive volume of memoirs by Malcolm Bingay of the Free Press; "The Happy Profession," ditto, by Eillery Sedgwick of the Atlantic Monthly; "A Book About a Thousand Things," a collection of odd and fascinating facts by George Stimpson, that indefatigable collector of delightful trivia; "Economics in One Lesson," a somewhat dogmatic but informative discourse on a dull but important subject by Henry Hazlitt; and "The Froth Estate," a compendium of zany stories put together

for those who like that sort of thing by Joseph Mackey, the so-called "nut editor" of the New York Sun. Also "It Happened in 1945," a lively and profusely illustrated review by the International News Service of the most eventful year in history, and "The Associated Press News Annual of 1945," the first volume, a handsome one, in what the AP apparently hopes to make a yearly publishing event—an idea full of great potentialities.

Thus, the output in 1946 about journalism and by journalists about themselves and/or their times. Few if any of the books here noted give off an aura of immortality, but many of them, besides being fine current reading, will almost certainly be a rich mine attracting specialist-researchers for many years to come. Not so deep as the ocean perhaps, but 'tis enough, 'twill do, and Americans will be serving themselves if they make room for at least part of it on their library shelves.

History

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hand news endures for it is the stuff of which history is made."

In a previous volume, "The Fruits of Fascism," Mr. Matthews told the amazing story of how the people were misled by cheap mountebanks. Now, in the five hundred pages of this volume (not one could be omitted!) he describes the recent tragic struggle which became almost universal and all but wrecked civilization.

I think his attitude toward the prickly Russian situation, so disturbing to the Western democracies, exceedingly sound. He insists "when Russia is doing what is right, as she did in Spain and in Munich she deserves applause. When she does what we consider wrong she deserves condemnation. Above all he deplores the categorical attitude which so many assume when confronted by this problem and he concludes with this thoughtful appreciation of a perilous situation. "It would be hard to say which class of well-meaning Americans is more dangerous to the future peace of the world, the Red-baiters or the doctory champions of the Soviet Union." This is a sentiment to which those who are conversant with the situation will give prayerful assent.

Capitalism Versus The Democracies

In his thought-provoking book entitled "By Vote of the People," Willis J. Ballinger, who served for years as a highly valued adviser to the Federal Trade Commission, describes the long and as yet indecisive struggles that have been waged for so many centuries between capitalism and the democracies.

He is explicit in his analysis of American capitalism, a vital problem which should no longer be treated by generalities more or less glittering, and he thinks, always deceptive and misleading. His is a thesis that will provoke discussion and may become an issue at the polls when the next spending program is launched.

"The Epic of Latin America" by John A. Crow of the University of California supplies most adequately the long-felt need of a political and cultural history of the countries to the South which are drawing even nearer.

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