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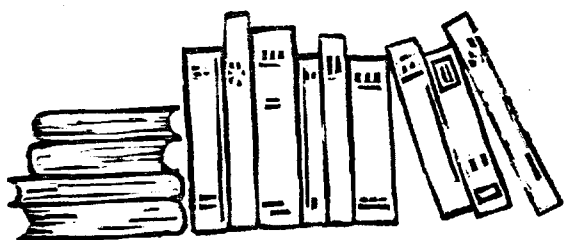
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The Engineers' Bookshelf

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From a welter of student papers on my desk at the end of the Autumn Quarter, I found two book reviews that I think are highly readable. Both concern books that I myself would like to have reviewed had time and space permitted; therefore, I am handing them along to the readers of this page. "Two Survived" by Guy Pearce Jones (Random House \$2) was published last July; it is a terrible tale of high-jacking on the high seas, and in his review of the story, David Hoffman retains much of the flavor of the book.

The other review, written by Frank T. Weber, although brief, is a splendid reaction to the short novellette, "Up At the Villa," by W. Somerset Maugham (Doubleday Doran \$1.75). It is generally believed that Mr. Maugham had this manuscript in his brief case when he arrived in this country by Clipper after the fall of France; although the book cannot be counted among his best works, it makes entertaining reading, as Mr. Weber suggests. Both Mr. Weber and Mr. Huffman were members of my English 413 class, Autumn Quarter, and these criticisms are the results of class assignments.

TWO SURVIVED

[Reviewed by David Huffman, Engr. 1]

In October 1940, from the smoke-screen laid down upon the many tragic and dramatic events of the terrible battle of the Atlantic by the war censors, emerged two castaway seamen with a story so astounding as to be well nigh unbelievable. The realism of their tale has been retained by the author of *Two Survived* with such remarkable insight and narrative power, that we cannot but believe the incidents which he relates. Guy Pearce Jones has told this story of hardship and horror in the vivid, abrupt style of the news writer. He has effectively introduced excitement, monotony, horror, pathos, suspense, yet refusing to sensationalize a tale which in itself is utterly sensational. The author must be congratulated on his simplicity and restraint.

After describing the superstition, the remoteness, and the dreaminess of Eleuthera, an almost unknown island of the Bahamas, and after revealing something of its history, the author pictures the finding of the two exhausted sailors who lay on the beach. One of

these English sailors was identified as Robert George Tapscott, aged nineteen, a son and grandson of sailors, mild-tempered, a veteran of several years at sea. The other, Wilbert Roy Widdicombe, aged twenty-one, we find to be impetuous, stubborn, and emotional.

After their ship, the Anglo-Saxon, a British tramp steamer, was shelled and sunk by a German raider in mid-Atlantic, these two boys had found themselves, along with five other sailors, afloat in an open jolly boat. *Two Survived* tells the harrowing tale of their experiences in the ten long weeks during which they traveled nearly three thousand miles to Eleuthera before they fell exhausted on its beach.

Probably this book has its place as propaganda, but the author has endeavored to write truthfully. He has not placed excessive blame on the raider. He has not tried to make the men appear either better or worse than they were. He has not glossed over their shortcomings nor neglected their virtues. The unpleasantness and the disgusting realities of the journey have not been covered with the stereotyped glamor of sea romance. Tapscott has been shown as too intelligent to complain or to use his energy needlessly, yet he was sometimes resentful when he felt that Widdicombe was taking advantage of him by pretending to be sicker than he was. They both yielded to outbursts of temper. They both resolved to commit suicide. They both drank themselves into unconsciousness.

Some episodes in the book stand out with special clearness. First of all there is the terror of the bombardment of the Anglo-Saxon by the raider. This is a scene of bloody confusion. The "metal storm" of incendiary bullets splatters everywhere. Injured crew lie in all parts of the ship. Seven men, three of them severely wounded, manage to launch a jolly boat, and to row away from the enemy raider in the midst of the shells and tracers stabbing from its guns.

The mate, Mr. Denny, took command, rationed the food and water that were part of the jolly boat's equipment, tended the men's wounds, started a log of the trip, set their course by the stars, and worked to increase their morale, bearing out in capable fashion the best traditions of seamanship. The first to go, Pilcher, the second mate, died in delirium after days of intense pain, having made no murmur of complaint.

rather having apologized for giving the rest so much trouble, and refusing his share of water at the last so that his shipmates might have more. The next to die was Penny, the gunner, who slipped over the side of the boat and floated away face down while the others looked on thoughtfully. This was his way out of the suffering occasioned by his wounds. The remaining five began to lose the hope of rescue that had upheld them until this time. They could see nothing ahead but "prolonged torture, madness, and inevitable death", for by this time the water was entirely gone. The Mate had become too ill to encourage the rest as he had at first. Before many days he and Mr. Hawkes, the third engineer, stood up, and having divided some of their belongings among the others, joked a little, shook hands, jumped overboard, and floated away in each other's arms.

And so there were left only the cook, who was none too bright, and Tapscott and Widdicombe. All three showed the strain of their ordeal. Tapscott quietly bore whatever came; Widdicombe was alternately aroused into hope and action and overcome with despair. Morgan raved, moaned, and sang. When he fell overboard, Tapscott swam after him and brought him back into the boat. But soon Morgan went completely mad and walked into the sea, while the other two looked on too weak and dazed to move.

It was after this that the two remaining seamen decided to give up. They went over the side, but Widdicombe's stubborn determination to live reasserted itself and they climbed back into the boat refreshed by the dip in the ocean. Then, having divided the alcohol in the compass between them, they fell into a drunken sleep.

Just as in fiction, when things appear most hopeless, relief came. There was rain. The cloudburst furnished them water for a few days. But fate had destined that the small boat, with its pathetic cargo of human skeletons, was to be pitched about by days of violent storm, and scorched by a relentless sun for seven weeks more.

The account of those seven weeks takes little time, but the monotony and unending misery of that time are terrible to contemplate. Strained to the breaking point, the men became resentful toward each other. A fight developed. But both were too weak and dependent upon each other to continue it long. The relation of the happenings of those fifty days needs to be read in full, for therein is contained the very essence of the story—the mental conflict of two men forced to exist with one another or not at all. Nevertheless, the two did not survive by any calculation, but rather by physical and mental endurance and by the grace of God.

The last pages furnish a tragic anti-climax. No fiction could provide a more dramatic ending than

the fate of Widdicombe. The irony of his loss at sea on his journey home from the Bahamas after all the horror of those seventy days in an open boat, after rescue and recuperation, causes the reader to pause and consider the futility of men's struggles. How small and useless are their efforts after all.

UP AT THE VILLA

[Reviewed by Frank T. Weber, Engr. 1]

This laconic, moving novel, by the author of *Of Human Bondage*, W. Somerset Maugham, tells the story of Mary Panton, a widow at thirty, whose undirected actions encourage proposals for marriage from three desperate men. Edgar, twenty-four years her senior, has loved Mary since she was in her teens; he is austere, decorous, British, and commendably established in the Indian Civil Service. Rowley is a pleasure-seeking profligate, eager for adventure and sexual conquests. Karl, an Austrian, is an indigent and esthetic youth who studied art in Vienna prior to his flight from the Anschluss.

With this incongruous gathering of characters, Mr. Maugham skillfully unwinds his plot around a villa in Florence, where Mary is resting. Edgar is first to ask for Mary's hand. Not surprised, she asks to give Edgar her answer immediately after his return from the official business which calls him to France for a few days. Edgar, bubbling with expectancy, beams his consent and exits to catch a plane for France. In the interim Mary refuses a proposal from Rowley, and has an affair with Karl, which culminates with his suicide in her boudoir. Frantic, Mary contacts Rowley, and both dispose of the body. From here Maugham knots the frayed ends of his story into a plausible conclusion.

Maugham's account of the emotional turmoil Mary suffers is brilliantly written with a cogency of style that is unique. His crisp, staccatic sentences enhance the reader's interest to a point of feverish anticipation. Though the book is not the author's best work, it is definitely Somerset Maugham. The story may not be remembered, but it is highly entertaining to say the least. It is well worth the reading time for sheer amusement.

EDITORIAL NOTE

Due to the editorial-like nature of the articles by Professor Morris and Dr. Stevenson it was decided to permit these to carry the burden of the editorials of this issue.

They illustrate points of vital importance to every engineer especially in the present time of national emergency.