

Robert Trumbull. *The Raft* New York Henry Holt & Company, 1942. pp. 204.

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"The Raft" is the true story of the trials that befell three people when they were thrown on their own in the middle of the ocean. The people in this situation were three navy fliers who lost contact with their carrier. As a result, they were forced to retire to a small rubber raft. Had there been just one person in this conveyance he might have been able to stretch out, but since there were three, you may use your imagination as to the cramped quarters.

The men had no food and no means of obtaining any unless a bird came flying by close enough for them to shoot it. The bombardier loved cheese so the other two had to put up with enormous imaginary menus loaded with cheese.

They were in the middle of the Pacific Ocean and could expect no earthly help, since it was enemy territory. The oldest of the three, Dixon, did a noble job of keeping their minds off this fact and soothed them each night by relating a Bible story. They realized that the only thing they could rely on was God's help, so they prayed each night, although they had not thought much about religion before.

"Then the prayer for rain having worked so well, we decided to ask for food, and, incidentally, a little more rain. After our prayer meeting we felt much better, and we talked until well into the night."

Their skins were burnt to crisps, and their complete fare consisted of about two fish and two birds. Their only water was the rain, which forced them to shed their clothes in order to bale out the raft. Despite this they never gave up hope that they would eventually reach safety.

This story is told in such a simple, direct way that it could almost be called an understatement. The facts are put before you with no emotional

pull, and yet by the time you've lived through the 34th day with them, you feel that the American has what it takes when it comes to real tests of fortitude.

These three men, being practically washed ashore over a coral reef and coming out alive, standing up straight at that, was perhaps the greatest miracle of all. They decided that they would stand up if it killed them in case there were any Japanese around the island. The tiny island in the Pacific happened to be American-owned and possessed at the time, however, and they were cared for and later sent to Honolulu.

In Honolulu, Robert Trumbull, city editor of the *Honolulu Advertiser*, heard their story, particularly Dixon's interpretation, which was related during the course of several nights. On these facts, as the leader of the little band related them, "The Raft" was written. Trumbull's fine job of writing was recognized by the book's being accepted by *The Book of the Month Club* as one of their issues.

George Moore's "Heloise and Abelard"

By LOUISE LASSETER
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The English novelist, George Moore, who was born in the middle of the nineteenth century, and died only a decade ago, added, in "Heloise and Abelard," to English literature one of the most artistic and noble pieces of all time. His basic material for the main characters and the plot is historically true. A great and brilliant disputant and lecturer Pierre Abelard lived from 1079 to 1142 and preached Roscelyn's heretic doctrine of nominalism to a widespread following of worshipful students in the Parisien schools of St. Genevieve and Notre Dame. This actual figure in history was the founder of scholastic theology and much persecuted, particularly by St. Bernard for alleged heresy. He was engaged by the canon of Notre Dame, Fulbert, as tutor to his

niece, Heloise. Subsequently, just as in the novel, they fell in love and fled from the wrath of Fulbert, to be, later, finally separated. Heloise died in 1163 and was buried in the same tomb with her lover. Pope's poem, inspired by the same story, *Eloise to Abelard*, is much celebrated.

Moore studied art as his first interest. Although he was not destined to become an artist, this training is evident in his prose and poetry. His "artistic consciousness" makes his work spoken of by a scholar in the *Britannica* as possessing "copper certainty of an etching."

Moore felt that in his work done after a stay in Paris, he had brought the French philosophical novel back to England. It was after a trip to Palestine that he composed the two novels usually considered his masterpieces *The Brook Kerith* and *Heloise and Abelard*.

The period with which the novel is related occurs two centuries or so before Chaucer's time. The historical background so intimately and finely pictured is described at length in the gradual unweaving of the story. At the first we find Fulbert, the scholarly, wealthy old ecclesiastic in his home in the Rue des Chantres. His servant, Madelon, a Briton, her relations to the canon, and the sumptuousness of the meals she prepares, and abundances of wine, along with the ever-increasing luxuriousness of the canon himself, give a clear, if not too happy picture of the stalwarts of the church. The great power of the church over the lives of its people permeates the whole novel, though we see the first signs of weakening of this power with the opposition set forth by the scholars in their rationalizing. The fervor and intense religion of the Crusades is felt behind the action of the plot at the beginning of the novel. Philippe, Heloise's father, has been killed in the latest attempt to restore relics to Christian hands. It is only through a disguise as a friar and two nuns that Abelard, Heloise, and Madelon can escape to Briton. The commoners' re-