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## HERVEY ALLEN

A Modern Fenimore Cooper and Dr. Johnson

RONALD J. WILLIAMS

Introduction by CARLTON G. KETCHUM

### *By Way of Introduction*

HERVEY ALLEN, unquestionably the most versatile and the most highly acclaimed of all the writers originating in Pittsburgh, died suddenly in the last week of 1949 at his home in Coral Gables, Florida. His fame lives on in his novels, poems, histories, and the one great biography which were the fruit of his professional career.

I believe that the older readers of this magazine, some of whom knew Hervey Allen, will be interested in the graphic account of his life and work written by Ronald John Williams, editor of *The Bermudian*, and that younger members, who have read with pleasure Allen's *Anthony Adverse*, the three volumes of "The Disinherited" published before his untimely death, his several books of poems, his life of Edgar Allan Poe, his graphic account of his own battle experiences in 1918 and of a Civil War campaign and battle, will enjoy making his acquaintance through the excellent account written by Mr. Williams and approved by its subject very shortly before Allen's death.

A couple of years after his death all the manuscripts of his writings, including the revisions of each from their first draft to final approval, came to the University of Pittsburgh library through a gen-

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Mr. Williams, an inhabitant of Bermuda, has been the editor of *The Bermudian* magazine for many years.

Mr. Ketchum, chairman of the board of Ketchum, Inc., the well-known firm of fund-raisers, recently visited with Mr. Williams and shared many memories of their mutual friend—Hervey Allen.—Editor

erous gift of the Buhl Foundation, of which Charles F. Lewis was then the executive and the moving force. With Allen's working papers came first editions of all his books; his correspondence files, meticulously kept and containing fascinating correspondence with many of the other most distinguished writers of his day; and his library. Kept now in the Special Collections Division of the Hillman Library, University of Pittsburgh, they are a gold mine for those who want to learn to write and for others interested actively in Pennsylvania, in Pittsburgh, or in the colonial and postrevolutionary days of this country.

I was about to "do" a story on Allen when I discovered in the Hillman Library collection the article by Mr. Williams, as he had finished it just before Allen's death. Realization was instant that neither I nor anyone else could now make a more interesting story of a fascinating life and brilliant performance than Mr. Williams had done. He graciously authorized us to use the manuscript. The sequence of the article is all that of Mr. Williams. The footnotes, intended to bring the readers a little closer to the Hervey Allen of his Pittsburgh days, are those of this writer.

Member of an old and distinguished Pittsburgh family, growing up in the East End not far from the Historical Society building and the University of Pittsburgh which became his alma mater, a soldier in the Twenty-eighth Division, William Hervey Allen, to include the first name which he dropped when he became a professional writer, saw, knew, and understood the surroundings and the atmosphere familiar to so many who read this magazine. The writer of this introduction was his friend and classmate. The writer of the short biography, Mr. Williams, was his friend throughout the Allens' five-year stay in Bermuda while *Anthony Adverse* was being written. Mr. and Mrs. Williams remained among the close friends of the Allens thereafter.

Allen was a fourth generation Pittsburgher, the grandson of one of our Civil War leaders. He ranked first in his class in the School of Economics, now Business Administration. While an undergraduate he took part in much of what was moving on an active, enthusiastic campus and perhaps had as much fun and made as much for others as anyone there. In his adult years, he never wavered in his loyalty to his native city or to his university. Those who treasure Pittsburgh's fame and honor, those who most contributed to its successes, rank William Hervey Allen high among our notables.

Bill Allen the college student looked, in the classroom and in the registrar's records, like a young man who might be going places. On

the campus and in the fraternity house he was a famous wisecracker, practical joker, reciter — and sometimes composer — of ribald limericks. His company was sought because he was more interesting and more fun than almost anyone then at Pitt. He had some mysterious access to tickets at the Gayety Theatre, at that time the home of burlesque in Pittsburgh, and usually contributed them to his fellow Sigma Chis, to the probable detriment of their morals and manners. Perhaps, when he himself attended he picked up some of the funny sayings for which he became noted in the corridors and on the steps of Thaw and State halls.

Sometimes I walked home from Pitt with Bill Allen, the latter dropping off at his home on Fifth Avenue just short of Shady, I going farther. He was hard to walk with, having a very long stride and a gait conditioned by his knee which was stiffened with arthritis as the result of a childhood injury, but he was lots of fun to talk with, full of wit and imagination. Occasionally I went into his house with him, where he might exhibit his grandfather's Civil War sword, a great treasure which came to him as the eldest grandchild, and other interesting family possessions. One of his charms was his exceptional candor; he wouldn't evade. His interests were many and varied.

In the days before the United States became a participant in World War I, Allen and I were the leaders of the pro-Ally, or pro-British, faction on campus. There was a substantial minority of German sympathizers, who were supported and coached by the local unit of the Bund (which was put out of action promptly when America entered the war). One spring day they scheduled a campus speaker, a vociferous advocate of neutrality since pro-Germanism was not possible of attainment, and the anti-Teutonic faction took counsel as to the sterilization of the effort.

The two-story high, wide steps of Thaw Hall, where outdoor speeches were delivered, had under them a storage room. As the German orator got into his fourth or fifth sentence to the seventy-five to a hundred students gathered to listen, a roar from underneath the landing was followed by clouds of smoke pouring out over the steps. Speaker and crowd took to their heels, and the speech never was delivered. When the authorities investigated and found a small cannon, easily traced to the Eighteenth Regiment Armory across the street, curiosity was evoked as to the means by which the old saluting gun reached the storage room. That Bill was a sergeant in that regiment and free to use the armory was noted by several, but again no one ap-

peared who could shed light on the affair. Bill and his friends, when questioned, attributed it to brownies, who as an English phenomenon, would obviously be anti-German.

To any of you who did not have the privilege of knowing personally this most vivid, interesting, and gifted son of Pittsburgh, it is a great pleasure for me to introduce you to Bill Allen.

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At "The Glades," Hervey Allen's friendly estate near Coral Gables, Florida, the welcome was wonderful. There you met Marcia, the older daughter of the Allens, studying at Bryn Mawr, and Mary Ann who was at Radcliffe. Then there was Richard, a bright, studious boy in his fourteenth year.<sup>1</sup> Hervey's wife Ann, who was the mistress of the Allen household, seemed very youthful to be the mother of those two girls who towered above her. Ann has been aptly described as "a warm, vibrant, gracious lady" and "the perfect author's wife." She enjoyed tennis, sailing, and bridge. But Hervey, the host, whose gait still showed the effect of the wound received in World War I, showed less interest in such games. For his scholar's brow, long sensitive fingers, mild blue eyes, immense composure, slow smile, and the deliberate pace of his talk, all combined to give an impression of an easy-going man enjoying infinite leisure. The fact is, of course, he was one of the most energetic of men, with a capacity for work that never ceased to astound. A skillful cabinetmaker, an able farmer, a gardener with "green fingers," and whatever he was working at, be it a personal letter, a biography, a novel, or the cultivation of exotic plants in his tropical garden — all these things he did wholeheartedly.

Physically, as well as intellectually, Hervey Allen was outsize, standing a massive six feet four inches, but he could move swiftly when necessary, as on the occasion when his gardener was attacked by a crazy man armed with a long knife. Brought to the scene by the gardener's yells of terror, Hervey grabbed the first weapon at hand, which happened to be an axe, and knocked the madman cold. At that he was sufficiently cool to use the flat of the axe.

Though he was no glass of fashion, Hervey's towering, bulky figure was usually garbed for comfort rather than style, although there

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Ann, her husband, and four children are currently on sabbatical in New Zealand; Marcia and her husband, who is Hervey's first cousin, and her four children live in Ann Arbor, Michigan; and Richard is a professor at the University of Oregon. He and his wife have two children, one named Hervey. (C.G.K.)

was nothing eccentric about his dress. He was addicted to chain smoking and big breakfasts, liked good wines and beer, and to be sociable took cocktails, but he was not what is called a "drinking" man. Politically, he called himself a Jeffersonian democrat "with a small d." Soon after Mr. Truman became president, Hervey, asked what he thought of FDR's successor, replied dryly: "Well, it's nice to have the republic restored." When this evoked a chuckle he at once admitted that the remark was not original but borrowed from Clemenceau who had said something of the sort after the political collapse of Woodrow Wilson.

The late Steve Benét, Hervey's friend and brother poet, once wrote:

Hervey has certain gifts which come only to those who know how to be quiet with the earth and the turn of the seasons. In all of his work, and particularly in his poetry, there is that deep feeling for the earth and the things of the earth which cannot be imitated or acquired, even by the clever. It must come as a birthright, if it is to be genuine, and it is genuine with him. And it sets him apart, a little, from a great many of his contemporaries. . . . He happens to be that rather unusual combination — an imaginative writer who has done, in his own person, a good many of the things that most writers merely imagine. . . . You will not find him on any soap-box for any party that I know of, or sugar-coating any sort of propaganda to catch any current fashion. But, behind all his work, there is a very definite philosophy, more clearly stated, perhaps, in *Anthony Adverse* than in anything he has written before. And, with him it is a practice as well as a theory.

For it was shortly before the 1929 crash, that a forty-year-old Pittsburgher down in Bermuda started to work on a first novel. An inspiration had come to this first novelist named Hervey Allen during an illness that followed a very serious operation. During his recovery, the story of *Anthony Adverse*, which had been taking form in his mind for a long time, suddenly became clear; he began actually to write it in May 1929.

For the next four years this unknown man, Allen, worked like the possessed and, although his publishers had enough faith to advance him \$4,500, his bank account was soon empty long before his novel was finished, and he had to come back home to a United States still mired in the depths of its Great Depression. With difficulty, Allen finished his novel in Syracuse, New York, after months of concentration which left him nearly exhausted.<sup>2</sup> Then there followed those awful weeks in

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<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Allen told me that, "Hervey's travels for *Anthony Adverse* material are indicative of his whole way of life, which was mental rather than physical. The only places he actually saw were in France, near where he was hospitalized in World War I, and the El Paso area when he served on the Mexican border. He read omnivorously and had a photographic memory, or created all the scenes from his imagination, maps, and literary reports.

New York while he and his publishers sweated out the last details. By March 1933 (about the time Mr. Roosevelt was closing the banks throughout the country), *Anthony Adverse* was out of the author's hands and ready to be offered to a singularly uninterested public. At that time any novel selling five thousand copies was a candidate for the best-selling list. Most people were counting their pennies and few were spending them on books. The future of *Anthony*, like that of the author, was indeed ill-augured. For the publishers the financing of the 1,224-page book seemed only a bold gamble. Even Allen was afraid he had already spent all he was likely ever to earn from it. Completely disheartened, Hervey took his wife, his children, and his dogs to live with his wife's parents, in Cazenovia, near Syracuse. Presently he wrote his friend and editor, John Farrar:

Oh God, what a relief! The first two or three days after I got back from New York I all but had the jerks. I can't write for half an hour without feeling sick. We are anxious, of course, to hear how *Anthony* carries himself. We have high hopes but we count not upon them in these parlous times beyond the natural longing of the heart.

In Cazenovia Hervey worked in the open air on his in-laws' farm. His spirits slowly seemed to revive; soon he was writing his publisher in an earthy, Rabelaisian vein:

My bitch Molly is in heat . . . we are surrounded by soulful-voiced lovers whose olfactory sense of romance I am trying to discourage by means of kerosene and red pepper. One sniff and you sneeze at love. . . . There is a large lewd foxhound though, that breathes in my paprika like orange blossoms — and means business.

About a month before *Anthony* was published in June 1933, Hervey wrote his publishers in much higher spirits, saying that no matter how the public received *Anthony*, he wanted to thank his faithful friends, John Farrar and Stanley Rinehart, and to express to them his real satisfaction in the way they had handled his creation "even if only three old ladies buy the book and two of them are shocked."

To their mutual surprise, after *Anthony Adverse* appeared in May 1933 it became a Book-of-the-Month selection and an immediate smash hit; such phrases rang as "the best historical novel that this country has ever produced," and "We should not be surprised if . . . *Anthony Adverse* became the best-loved book of our time."

Well! Naturally, *Anthony* climbed to the top of the best-selling

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After his death I spent some time in Cuba, visited the *Anthony* scenes, and marvelled at his re-creation not only of the places but of the atmosphere." (C.G.K.)

lists and, what was better, stayed there for two years. In the first six months 275,000 copies were sold. This alone made it one of the fastest-selling novels in publishing history.

Published during the doldrums, it had apparently coincided with popular taste. It was the first of the half-million word and million-sale novels to appear, and it really started a new vogue for the historical romance. And it gave a healthy fillip to an ailing book business not only in the United States but in every country where books are published. Foreign editions appeared in twelve languages. In Germany alone more than six hundred thousand copies were sold.

In conceiving *Anthony Adverse* while lying in his hospital bed in Bermuda, Hervey Allen had resolved to leave behind him, if it lay within his powers, a book that would contain "some of the richness and beauty, the enormous complexity, and yet something of the great and simple principles upon which I conceived life to be conducted," and he had said, "Above all I desired to reassert some of the prime values which I had found in life." For years he had steeped himself in the feel of the times and places covered by the story. With the general scheme clear in his mind, he conceived three main themes running through it. So he planned the work on the basis of what he called "three times three." There would be three novels, three books in each, and three themes pervading the whole. The development of the three themes he presented in three separate bits of imagery at crucial points in Anthony's life, which enabled him to treat each theme with a beginning, a climax, and an end. Allen expressed it this way: "The various themes . . . I called: *The Vision of Light*; the religious, or theical, or philosophical theme, mystical if you will, shadowed forth by the Madonna; the Dionysian theme of the eating and drinking, the lusting and loving and hating, which in contrast to the Madonna or spiritual theme, represented the things of the flesh and the lure of the world. . . ."

He found that the story evolved itself almost magically into a classical rather than romantic narrative in that it subordinated the individual to the whole. The book was a protest against the futility of materialistic civilization. Anthony's own revolt against it occurs when he contemplates with horror the crucified Brother Francois in the African jungle and feels almost as if he were in the presence of Christ himself. Later Anthony is impelled to attempt to live literally in imitation of Christ.

While most critics and readers considered *Anthony Adverse* a

# The Christmas Herald

AN INTELLIGENCER OF GOOD WISHES

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## Editorial

**A**ll well wishes and the heartiest of greetings to you and yours for the merriest of the seasons--this is my sincere message on Christmas day.

*Bill Allen*  


 FOLLOWS AN HUMBLE RIME ENTITLED  
"CHRISTMAS COLOURE"

Christmas Card from "Bill" Hervey Allen to Carlton G. Ketchum.



## Christmas Colours

**N**OW is the time when rowdy little boys,  
Who at all other seasons revel in vile noise.  
Are suddenly struck dumb  
Before some toyman's window where  
The ferocious general (in lead)  
Rides a-cock-horse,  
And the mechanic antic whams his painted drum  
With rigid military stare.

**N**OT broom-horsed witches ever cast a spell.  
Nor surly master, with his ready cane.  
So strong as holds these elbows on the window sill  
And small, red noses to the window pane  
And see! Is that a train  
That belches cotton smoke back from its funnel;  
That seems to chase its tail about an oval track;  
That stops--and then comes back—  
Holy St. Nicholas! Is that a tunnel?

**N**O, this is not a window on a city street;  
This is a glass that gives on fairy-land,  
Through which a flock of dreams may pass  
To utter carols  
About the youth-charmed threshold of young ears.  
Mummers of fantasy, from lands  
Where men of ginger-bred shed raisin tears,  
Where dollies dance in smallest buckle shoes  
And painted Noah with his wooden sons  
Receives his cracker passengers by twos.

**N**OW is the gentlest time of times,  
When stories are retold,  
When revelers startle at the best saint's chimes  
And on the snow-damped roofs  
Small sleepy ears hear little reindeer hoofs,  
While young mites shiver—not with cold.  
This is God's birthday when the worst coin buys,  
In shops that hate wide heaven and the moon,  
Starlight for children's eyes.

picaresque romantic novel, there were plenty who recognized its deeper message. In Ireland the book was both banned and praised by the Jesuits at the same time. During the Nazi aerial blitz of England in 1940, seven years after the book appeared, Hervey Allen received about four hundred letters from readers there who thanked him for the spiritual uplift *Anthony* had given them. And quite recently, Scotch Presbyterian ministers in New Zealand pulpits were discoursing upon the book's spiritual and philosophical implications.

Fresh editions of *Anthony Adverse* continue to be published, and thirteen years after its first appearance in print Nash K. Burger in the *New York Times* had this to say about it:

*Anthony Adverse* . . . is Modern Man, with all the restlessness, the uncertainty, the longing for security that mark our time. . . . He is seeking, as he says, "something beyond us and yet in us and with us." And the episodes of the novel are selected to present experiences of perennial concern. It is one of the few modern novels that improve with re-reading.

Actually, long before his first novel won fame Hervey Allen's literary reputation was soundly established. Yet, as might be expected from his family history, his early life was one of action rather than meditation.

Of predominantly Anglo-Saxon stock, William Hervey Allen was born on December 8, 1889, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the first of the five children of William H. and Helen Eby (nee Myers) Allen.<sup>3</sup> One of his American ancestors was born in 1763 at Fort Pitt, the frontier post described in Allen's work "The Disinherited"; another was a river steamboat captain and a bibliophile. From the latter's library and carefully-kept logbooks, Mr. Allen gleaned a lot of background material for *Anthony Adverse*. More direct influence over the future man of letters was exercised by his grandfather, Col. Edward Jay Allen who, full of resource and unrest, journeyed to the Northwest by the historic Oregon Trail, took up a land claim on Puget Sound, helped construct the first emigrant road across the Cascades barrier, and returned via the Panama Isthmus to Pittsburgh. There, as an active Abolitionist, he operated an "underground" station for slaves fleeing north across the Virginia border, then not so far from Pittsburgh. During the Civil War he fought with the regiment he had raised until he was seriously wounded at Gettysburg. Forced by his lameness to

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3 His brothers and sisters: Winthrop Myers Allen of Louisville, Ky.; Edward Jay Allen II of New York City; Mrs. Bishop Hunt of Hanover, Mass.; and Mrs. Walter R. Baylies of Taunton, Mass. (R.J.W.)  
They are now all deceased. (C.G.K.)

lead a sedentary life thereafter, Colonel Allen became president of the Atlantic and Pacific Telephone Co. in Pittsburgh and by introducing a flat rate for ten words contributed a good deal to popularizing use of the telegraph. His chief hobby was the magnificent library he developed at Edgehill, his Pittsburgh home. His son William H., Hervey Allen's father, while working at the Homestead Steel Works in Pittsburgh, invented the automatic stoker for blast furnaces which greatly increased the speed of steel production.

Hervey's earliest memories are of the horsecars in the city streets and of four generations living in the Allen household. The matriarch was his great-great-grandmother, Anna Gill, blind for forty years. She fascinated him with stanzas of remembered poetry and tales of earlier days. Hervey attended kindergarten, private, and public schools in Pittsburgh and spent boyhood summers at Bedford, Pennsylvania (of which he would one day write a historical novel), where his favorite recreation was fishing in the Juniata River. The fishing was of the illegal variety known as "looping," which involved snaring suckers with a thin wire noose. Illegal or not, Hervey said that the skill and patience required to slip that wire loop over the tail or fins of a sucker were at least equal to those which make an expert fly-fisherman.

A great patch of scar tissue down his left side was a memento of a boyhood summer at Bedford and of an accident that nearly cost Hervey his life. After July 4 celebrations he and his kid brother were tussling in a surrey drawn up in a driveway. In Hervey's pants pocket was a handful of tenpenny nails and several percussion caps. During the struggle the caps exploded with a blast that fearfully burned him and made the horse bolt. For months afterward the boy was confined to bed while his burns healed, but during that enforced idleness he learned how to concentrate and contemplate.

In Pittsburgh, detesting the grime and bustle after the pastoral charms of Bedford, young Hervey sought distraction in the fine library of his grandfather at Edgehill. He read everything with an insatiable appetite, including a multivolumned set of the English poets. Secretly he began composing verse of his own. When Colonel Allen, in the summer of 1898 took his family to Newport, the young Hervey was enthralled by the sight of the frigate *Constellation*, then in use as a training ship, and of other naval vessels returning from the Spanish War zone. He read the lives of Decatur and other naval heroes and determined to be a naval officer himself. After graduating from Shady Side Academy in Pittsburgh he went to Werntz's, a cramming school

in Annapolis, which prepared candidates for the Naval Academy. In competitive examinations he won entrance to the Academy with the class of 1913, the last to receive full instruction in "square-rig" seamanship.

In track he showed marked ability as a miler. But the chief consequence of this was the biggest disappointment of his life. Overstrain brought on a nervous stomach disorder which was treated, mistakenly, as gastric ulcers. After months in a naval hospital he was granted sick leave to go under a specialist's care, returning to the Academy in 1911 to become a "four-striper" and cadet commander of the plebe battalion. Shortly afterwards, he was shaken by tragedy when two classmates and a girl were drowned in a sailing accident. In charge of the search party, Hervey Allen found the girl's body, "her hair floating on the surface like a golden veil."

The stomach trouble kept on, and when he was found to be fifteen pounds underweight he was honorably discharged. This was a cruel blow, only slightly mitigated by the superintendent's letter praising his officer-like qualities. Home in Pittsburgh he went to work for the Bell Telephone Company and joined the Highland Cadets organization. Later he became editor of the *Telephone News* and saw some of his verse appear in the cadets' magazine. Then he entered the University of Pittsburgh, School of Economics, took a course in constitutional law, joined the Sigma Chi fraternity, and, over family protests, the local detachment of the National Guard, the Eighteenth Pennsylvania Infantry.<sup>4</sup> In 1915, he graduated *cum laude* with a bachelor of science degree and resumed work with the telephone company, handling publicity and editorial chores. Presently his regiment was called into service to control labor riots in the city, which was an important munitions center. Promoted to sergeant in August 1916 he accompanied his regiment to the Mexican border where Pancho Villa was disturbing the peace. There he was elected second lieutenant of his company.

While on the border, a collection of his poems, written somewhat in the style of Masfield, was printed in pamphlet form by the McGrath Printing Company of El Paso, Texas, with the title *Ballads of the*

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4 Unlike so many ostrich-blind peace lovers, who think war can be avoided by pretending it isn't there, Allen recognized that freedom is inseparable from the power and the willingness to defend it, and that so long as there are in the world selfish, ruthless tyrants of the Kaiser Wilhelm and Hitler stripe, it is arrant folly to assume that war can be avoided unilaterally. And, since he was a man of honor with a high sense of duty, peace-loving Bill Allen assumed his responsibilities to his country willingly and without complaint. (C.G.K.)

*Border*. The principal poem was called "The Weakling," a tale of border mobilization and of a young soldier who broke down from homesickness. The pamphlet sold in astonishing numbers in the camps along the border. This gave the young poet self-confidence. Today the pamphlet is a collector's item.

Early in 1917, his regiment was ordered home and almost at once called into active service. For a time Hervey Allen was stationed at Saltsburg in Western Pennsylvania (a chapter in *Bedford Village*, "Death at the Salt Kettles," describes this area) and then moved to Camp Hancock, Augusta, Georgia, where his regiment trained for the combat area. In the winter of 1917, he took the musketry course at the School of Arms, Fort Sill, Oklahoma. That winter his mother died, and the Pittsburgh home was broken up.

The regiment sailed for France in the spring of 1918, Hervey preceding it with an advanced detachment to take a special course in grenades and machine guns at the Langres School of Arms.<sup>5</sup> He rejoined his company just before it went into violent action in the Chateau-Thierry region. He was now senior first lieutenant in his company. In July and August he was involved in heavy fighting between the Marne and the Vesle, and when his captain was killed during the terrific action at Fismette, Allen became company commander. Soon afterward, while trapped by an artillery barrage in a ruined house, a French mortar shell landed in the building and wiped out most of the occupants. One of the few survivors was Allen, who was wounded in the right knee. In addition, he was badly burned by mustard gas.<sup>6</sup> He

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5 Soon after his arrival in Europe in early 1918, Lieutenant Allen was sent up to the front — the trenches stretching from the German border to the sea in Belgium. His job — to learn from the tested veterans in the British ground forces. After the war he told of meeting a grizzled major, the sole commissioned survivor of the famous battle when the first Portuguese troops to be put into the line between British and French units were attacked by Germans, and the Portuguese with one accord threw down their weapons and ran. One battalion of Highlanders was for a time the only unit near enough to attempt to stem the onrushing tide of Germans. They did it so well that beside the twelve-times wounded major only about a dozen enlisted men survived, but they held on until reinforcements came and restored the battlefield. Bill said that when he queried the Scotsman about the incident, the old soldier said, "Aweel, we foond oorsels wi' Gairmans in front of us, on both sides of us and ahint us, and all shootin' at us. It was a poseetion of peculiar deeficulty." Bill's admiration for the British troops with whom he came in contact was unbounded. (C.G.K.)

6 One of the earliest uses of the flamethrower occurred as the Germans were completing the capture of Fismette in *Toward the Flame*. Allen closes his story with this paragraph:

Suddenly along the top of the hill there was a puff, a rolling cloud of smoke, and then a great burst of dirty, yellow flame. By its glare I

spent some weeks in a base hospital with his leg in a cast but by September persuaded army surgeons that he was fit for combat once more. He rejoined his company, still very lame from his wound, and so badly shaken up that his superiors soon realized he was unfit for active duty. After another dose of gas at the front, he was sent to a hospital at Royan in Auvergne. While convalescing he wrote his famous poem "The Blindman," his first completely successful composition.

He sent "The Blindman" to the *Atlantic Monthly*, which praised the poem but did not publish it. Instead, Amy Lowell saw it and, after remarking that the *Atlantic* didn't know a poem from a potato, she arranged for its appearance in the *North American Review*. It received prompt and enthusiastic recognition from such critics as Amy Lowell herself, William Lyon Phelps, and John Drinkwater. Padraic Colum wrote, "I shall never be able to forget [it]."

Up until this time he had always signed his name, "William H. Allen," but now, with another Lt. Wm. H. Allen in his regiment and consequent confusion in mail deliveries, he decided to drop the "William" permanently.<sup>7</sup> From time to time he sent poems home, some of which appeared in the old *Life* magazine.

Then he was attached to the French Army as an instructor in English to the French Military Mission at Faverges, but with the Armistice imminent his French superiors urged him to take a long vacation and gave him a pass on all French railroads. He had a wonderful time touring France and was in Paris when the Armistice was signed. Early in 1919, he returned to the United States, still lame and bothered by the effects of gas poisoning. After two months at Fort Dix he was honorably discharged after nearly four years of active service.

### *Poet and Biographer*

Out of the army, Hervey found a job as an English teacher at the Porter Military Academy in Charleston, South Carolina. The pay was only \$1,200, but by wearing his army uniforms he was able to save

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could see Gerald standing halfway up the hill with his pistol drawn. It was the "Flammenwerfer," the flame throwers; the men along the crest curled up like leaves to save themselves as the flame and smoke rolled clear over them. There was another flash between the houses. One of the men stood up, turning around outlined against the flame — "Oh! my God!" he cried, "Oh! God!" (C.G.K.)

7 Some of us believe his friend and publisher Stanley Rinehart responsible for the excision of "William" — telling him that William H. Allen was too common a name but that Hervey Allen would be remembered. (C.G.K.)

money on clothing. After so much military life, the atmosphere of somnolent Charleston was a delight. There he met John Bennett, author of *Master Skylark*, and through him, DuBose Heyward, with whom he presently collaborated on a book of poems, *Carolina Chansons*, which not only pleased the critics but, for poetry, sold well. This volume, and Heyward's novel *Porgy*, were the first indications that the South might be emerging from its intellectual and artistic inertia for the first time since the Civil War.

A group of writers, including Messrs. Allen and Heyward, founded the Poetry Society of South Carolina. This movement gathered momentum. Soon similar groups were formed in other Southern cities, heralding that renaissance of Southern letters which began around 1921. In that year appeared Hervey Allen's first published book, *Wampum and Old Gold*, and his fine poem, "The Blindman," was commemorated by the Poetry Society. Their annual award of \$250 was known as "The Blindman Prize." On the committee making the awards were Amy Lowell, Padraic Colum, and Edwin Arlington Robinson.

Another influential friend Hervey Allen made at this time was William Van Whitall, who was wealthy and had a taste for literature. Whitall admired the poetry of Allen and Heyward and, with John Bennett, arranged for the two poets to spend a summer at the famed MacDowell colony at Peterboro, New Hampshire. During a post-graduate course at Harvard in the summer of 1921, Hervey met such literary lights as Archibald MacLeish, Amy Lowell, Sidney Howard (then editor of the old *Life*), Henry Seidel Canby, and publisher John Farrar, and he was invited to become one of the first reviewers of the *Saturday Review of Literature*. In 1925, at the invitation of John Erskine, he joined the English faculty of Columbia University. His next book of verse, *Earth Moods*, was published by Harper's.

About this time war memories began troubling him, so he tried writing about them objectively; the result was *Toward the Flame*. This war diary, considered one of the finest personal American records of World War I, elicited from *The Bookman*: "A stirring narrative of an army on the march and under battle fire . . . unforgettable and beautiful. . . . It has the marks of a classic."

While in Charleston he met a colorful character from New Zealand who had been a ship captain, a beachcomber in the South Seas, and an adventurer in the South African Rand. At the moment he was running a secondhand bookshop. With him, in 1926, Hervey Allen

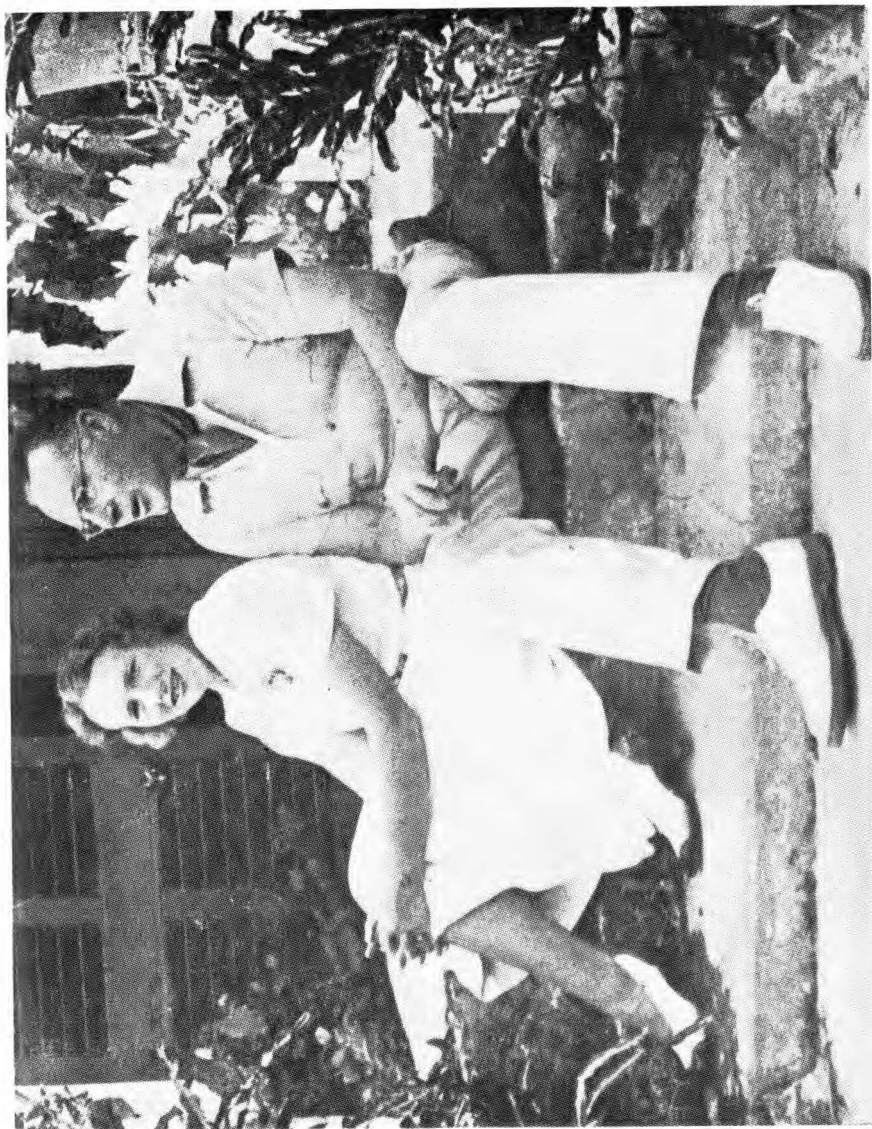
sailed among the Bahamas in an old sponging schooner seeking a small island where he might live cheaply and devote all his time to writing. Off the island of Eleuthera they were caught in a hurricane but managed to beach the schooner and reach a native hut. The storm ripped off the roof, imperilling their lives, and the two men crawled into an abandoned well, where they stayed till the gale slackened off.

Later, back in New York, Hervey Allen met the man again. This time the fellow was holding down a job as a janitor. Then, a bizarre experience occurred which haunted Hervey for many a year. His former shipmate pressed upon him a massive manuscript, ostensibly the memoirs of his roving career written in longhand, which he wanted put into printable and marketable form. Reluctantly Hervey consented to read it, but somewhere and somehow the manuscript vanished, perhaps left in a bus or subway train. Although Hervey advertised for its return, it never turned up. The tough old man was frantic and furious. He accused Allen of stealing the story for his own future use and in obscene and abusive letters swore that he had been robbed of his life's work. Hervey offered desperately to write the story out again from dictation, but this suggestion was angrily spurned. At one stage, the man's wife warned Hervey Allen to stay away because her husband was dangerous. For years scurrilous letters continued to harass the young poet. Later Hervey happened across the man's story, ghost-written in serialized form, in a popular magazine. At that point he sighed deeply and made a vow that he never broke. Since that time, whenever unsolicited manuscripts came to him from aspiring authors he grudgingly turned the unopened package over to a lawyer to be returned intact to the sender.

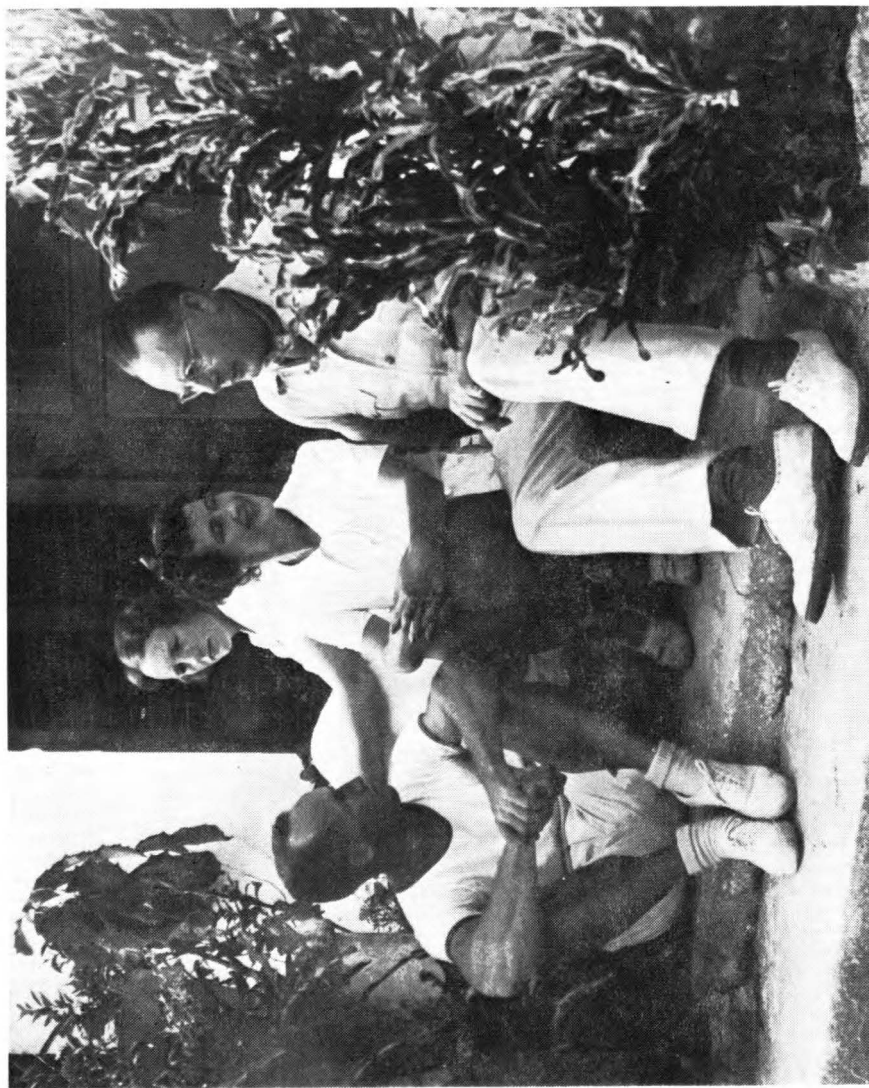
Back in New York he quickly joined in the literary life of the city, seeing a good deal of Eleanor Wylie and the two Benét brothers. And when John Erskine took a sabbatical year, Hervey took over the latter's poetry classes at Columbia. He had become intensely interested in the career of Edgar Allan Poe while in Charleston, and now his friend, John Farrar, urged him to write a biography. It was his first major literary effort and turned out to be a tremendous task. In order to devote more time to the work he cut his schedule in half.

Through Mr. William Stannard of Richmond, Virginia, he gained access to hitherto unpublished material on Poe. Now came another unhappy experience. Another Poe admirer gave Hervey Allen permission to use certain material which he had uncovered, but when the book was on the presses of Doubleday, Doran and Co. (now Doubleday





Hervey and Ann Allen during a visit to their former home, Felicity Hall, Somerset, Bermuda, in 1938.



At Felicity Hall (left to right), Ronald John Williams, Mrs. Hervey Allen, Mrs. Williams, and Hervey Allen.

& Co.), permission was withdrawn. Plates and type had to be pulled down and reset, an operation that cost around sixteen thousand dollars. George Doran generously assumed half of this loss, the remainder being deducted from the author's royalties. The catastrophic result was that although *Israfel: The Life and Times of Edgar Allan Poe* was published in two volumes at ten dollars a set, and sold ninety-five hundred copies, Hervey Allen netted only one thousand dollars. It was a signal success with the critics. In England George Saintsbury wrote, "Probably it will become the standard life of Poe."

Gamaliel Bradford paid tribute in the *Atlantic Monthly*: "Mr. Allen applies all his delicate skill of analysis, all the resources of modern psychology. Surely no one has yet supplied, or probably ever will supply, richer material for such search than Mr. Allen."

Correspondence about the book was enormous. It was revised and republished in 1934 and again in 1949. An interesting sidelight on *Israfel* from a bibliophile's viewpoint is that the first edition contained a portrait of Longfellow with a wineglass beside his hand. In later printings for some reason the wineglass was painted out, so that collectors refer to the first printing as the "wineglass edition."

In the fall of 1926, Allen was invited to lecture at Vassar on American history and literature. Among his pupils was a sunny-haired girl named Ann Hyde Andrews of Syracuse. Ann Andrews would have preferred one of the better-known teachers on the campus, but being only a sophomore she had no choice. In Hervey Allen's class, however, she apparently was pleased with her teacher, because she and Hervey were engaged by December 1926. Hervey Allen's first gift to this dazzling young lady was a new-born lamb. Buying the little creature at a nearby farm, he bathed it, gilded its hoofs, adorned its neck with a large bow, a suitable label, and had it deposited in her room. The lamb remained on the premises, even the professors helping to feed it with the aid of a baby's bottle. Next year Hervey married the lamb's mistress and took her off to Bermuda.

When Hervey left for Bermuda he had contracts with Doubleday to write a life of Robert E. Lee, a book of poetry, a life of Edwin Arlington Robinson, and a novel. The book of poems appeared with the title *New Legends* and included the exquisite "Sarah Simon," a long narrative poem based on the personality and spiritual power of an ancient Bermuda Negress. About this poem the *Atlantic Monthly* said, "*Sarah Simon* reveals him as a thoroughly accomplished poet, thoroughly mature in his mastery of poetic style, varied rhythms, rich-

ness of verbal texture, fine command of imaginative figures.”

Then Doubleday released him from his other contracts at Hervey's own request.

### *Bermuda Idyll*

In 1932, a New York newspaper reported that “the Hervey Allens had just returned from their Bermuda honeymoon with two children and several dogs.” This item, a trifle startling to some people, came closer to the truth than the ship reporter realized, for the five years in the mid-ocean islands were idyllic for both Ann and Hervey — a rich and fruitful period filled with the joys of mutual discovery, high hopes, and happiness. They rented Felicity Hall, an ancient plantation on the shore of sleepy Sandys Parish.

In the graveyard of the Sandys Parish church, not far from the house they occupied, there is a bronze tablet on which is engraved:

*How idle the thought that proud names will be known  
By the depth of hard lines they leave chiselled in stone,  
When the weather itself that of granite disposes  
Takes heed of the gardener who wrote his in roses.*

Hervey had added the lines to an epitaph, written for an old friend, in which he had said, “Jacob Sealy was a wonderful gardener. Years ago he came to dwell in a place that was pleasant, but he left it wildly beautiful.” With equal validity, the tribute could have been applied to Hervey himself. When he went to live in Felicity Hall, which had been built by English colonists in the seventeenth century, the place was seedy and run-down, the grounds unkempt and overrun with weeds, the gardens neglected. But before he left, those gardens were lovely and productive; fruits, flowers, and graceful shrubs flourished where they had not appeared before. He tended the old buildings and the lawns and planted trees which now towered above his own huge frame. He flagstoned the patio and the garden walks, laid concrete in the ancient cellars, built elaborate chicken houses, rabbit hutches, and dovecotes, and from the fragrant native cedar fashioned an exquisite harp gate that is coveted by all who see it. In the old slave quarters, which he used as a study, are still pieces of furniture carved with his own deft hands, including a big sewing chair which he made for Ann. (For years after *Anthony Adverse* was published handsome offers were made to the owners of the house for the harp gate and the sewing chair, but when Hervey left them behind, it was with the stipulation

that they remain on the place.) He enhanced both the value and beauty of Felicity Hall, although he was merely leasing it. Since he left Bermuda, Felicity Hall has never looked the same. The orange, lime, and lemon trees he cultivated with such care, and the fruitful papayas which lined the back driveway have withered and died without care.<sup>8</sup>

Like most really busy men Hervey always managed to find the time and energy to do something more than the expected. Stephen Vincent Benét recalled:

It was once suggested that we collaborate in editing a certain anthology. He [Hervey Allen] suggested that we meet and talk it over. I brought to the meeting a few vague and unformed ideas that would naturally occur to a person of normal sloth. He brought, not only a complete and carefully worked-out syllabus of the anthology itself, but an equally comprehensive and interesting scheme for a book of critical comment to be published at the same time. I have always felt sorry that the project fell through in the end for reasons beyond our control. He was probably busier than I at the time, but he would have done all the work, and I might be drawing royalties on it still.

Then again Hervey and his family were anything but prosperous at that time, yet when a new magazine was launched in Bermuda, Hervey readily agreed to help out with some writing, although the editor could not pay for contributions. Dropping everything, Hervey wrote in longhand (later revising and dictating to a typist engaged at his own expense) the best short story about Bermuda I have ever seen, entitled "Felicity Haul," an enthralling mixture of fact and fiction about the old house in which he was living.

While Hervey worked on his first novel, Ann, who once nursed literary ambitions herself, wrote an occasional book review, and besides attending to her domestic duties, typed her husband's manuscript from his small, cramped longhand (about the only small thing about the man). In fact, as Hervey revised, she typed the story of Anthony three separate and distinct times, a total of about 1.5 million words. "Hervey certainly loves life," Ann said. And while his novel was growing, life was indeed burgeoning astonishingly at Felicity Hall. Something was always being born — calves, goats, litters of dogs and cats, chickens, pigeons, not to mention two flaxen-haired daughters.

The friends entertained by Ann and Hervey are not likely to forget the Sunday morning breakfasts at Felicity Hall, with southern-fried chicken, beer, and hot punch. Their visitors included such diverse personalities as the late Dr. Henry van Dyke, Louis Unter-

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<sup>8</sup> Readers may be pleased to know that once again Felicity Hall's gardens are "lovely and productive; fruits, flowers, and graceful shrubs" flourish, under the care of today's gracious and tasteful occupants. (C.G.K.)

meyer, Joel Sayre, Royal Navy officers, and British colonial officials. One of these last, Sir Herbert Henniker-Heaton, then colonial secretary in Bermuda, became a close friend. In later years when British children were menaced by Nazi bombs, the Allens brought Christopher, Sir Herbert's son, over from England. They cared for him and his education through the war years.

Leaving Felicity Hall was one of Hervey's and Ann's saddest memories. Had they been able, they would have bought the old place, but, as it was, they could not longer afford even to rent it. About a year after their departure Felicity Hall became a literary shrine for hundreds of visiting Americans, as many as thirty and forty a day turning up to see the place where *Anthony Adverse* was written. The impression grew that Felicity Hall was a public exhibit. For instance, one day a woman trailed by four bantlings toured the grounds, peering in through windows, and finally entered the house where she demanded the use of the bathroom for her brood. As she was leaving she handed the owner's wife a shilling, which the latter, taken aback, accepted meekly.

There was rarely a guest at Felicity Hall, after Hervey left, who was not impressed by the literary history of the old house. Hervey's prodigious labors over the years left about the place an intangible sense of achievement, and the sensitive visitor could actually feel the ancient house becoming part of the legend of *Anthony Adverse*.

Not the least impressed was James Thurber, who with his wife spent a couple of weeks at Felicity Hall. He was pleased that Hervey had done his writing on a simple, rough kitchen table against a wall in the old slave quarters, where the light came from an open door on the left. It was with fingers trembling even more than usual that Mr. Thurber set about what he called "plying my tiny trade" with pencil and paper at this same table. During the war, on one of several original manuscripts which Mr. Thurber donated to various bond drives, he wrote proudly across the top — "Written on Hervey Allen's table at Felicity Hall."

During James Thurber's sojourn in the house, he would patiently and eagerly show visitors around if they turned out to be, in his estimation, serious admirers of Allen and his work. One afternoon, *The New Yorker* author was having some difficulty shaping a sentence to his satisfaction on the old table when he was suddenly aware of the presence of strange women. (Mr. Thurber claimed, that while he was not always aware of the presence of men he never failed to sense the

presence of women.) He looked up to behold two aggressive middle-aged ladies from the States whose accents, when they spoke, betrayed them as Middle Westerners like himself.

"Is this the place where that book was written?" one demanded. Mr. Thurber realized that these were mere sightseers, not genuine devotees. "What book?" Thurber asked coldly. Turning to her companion the woman asked, "What did the man say the name of that book was, Clara?" For answer Clara turned to Mr. Thurber. "Don't you know what the book was?" At this, Myrtle (for it was she) suddenly cried, "I got it! *Anthony Allen*." Mr. Thurber sniffed. "Oh, that," he said contemptuously. "You mean the novel by Hervey Adverse. But that was nothing."

"How can you say that?" squealed Myrtle. "The man said it took five years to write." The tall, thin author gave this a moment's frowning thought. "That's because he started at the beginning," he said, "I am writing *Anthony Allen* backwards and I expect to finish it in two weeks." The two women backed slowly away from the open door, then turned abruptly and ran.

On another occasion, after Mr. Thurber had shown a Columbia professor and his wife through the house he was relaxing in a chair on the front lawn when a man's voice behind him made him jump. The man had a camera and said, "Do you mind if I take a picture of this house? But first, do you mind telling me what it is famous for?" "This," said Mr. Thurber solemnly, "was the ancestral home of Carveth Wells." The man stared blankly for a moment, then lowered his camera. "Thanks," he said and turned away. "Not at all," said Mr. Thurber. "Not at all." And he sat down again and resumed his reading of *Anthony Adverse*.

### *After Anthony*

After *Anthony Adverse* brought the golden shower, one of Hervey's first actions was to buy Bonfield Manor, a beautiful estate lying between two rivers on a cove of Maryland's Eastern Shore. He improved the buildings, cultivated the land, and developed its productive capacity until, for a few years at least, it was as self-sustaining an establishment as is attainable in our times. The bread the Allen family ate was made from wheat grown and milled on the estate; livestock furnished milk, butter, and red meat; chickens, eggs and white meat. From his own grapes Hervey made wines, and his fields and gardens produced more fruit and vegetables than the household could consume.

The sea at his borders provided unlimited oysters, crabs, and fresh fish. He installed a special power plant for use in an emergency, and in his machine shop were stored duplicate parts for all the cars and machinery on the place. In brief, he spent a large fortune on Bonfield and lived like a country squire. Ann recalls this period as a "fabulous existence."

Following *Anthony's* publication it was a long time before Hervey went to work on another book. Tens of thousands of letters about his novel poured in from all parts of the world. With the aid of a secretary and sometimes extra help the author attempted to answer them all. Many readers believed the book to be actual history and biography and would write in to get further information on some shadowy ancestor identified, mistakenly, in the story. Finally, in self-defense, Hervey was driven to write an article for the *Saturday Review of Literature* titled "The Sources of *Anthony Adverse*." This was later issued in an illustrated pamphlet, since become a collector's item. In it the author explained that the tale had taken shape in his imagination as the result of a lifetime of reading and personal experience; that there was not a great deal of formal research involved; that he had desired to amuse and began by amusing himself; that much of the narrative was born of events, people, places, and other books which he could no longer trace himself. Then he listed the various works he had consulted while writing the novel.

Meanwhile, Warner Brothers bought the movie rights to *Anthony*. Up to that time it was undoubtedly Hollywood's most ambitious undertaking. At first, three interlocking movies were contemplated, but finally one film was made in which no less than 131 different sets were used. In it 1,600 actors took part, 98 with speaking roles. Warners took four years to make the picture.<sup>9</sup>

The original holograph of *Anthony Adverse*, 1,698 pages of manuscript weighing nineteen pounds, was given by the author to Mrs. Ellen Stevens Whitall of Pelham Manor, New York, a friend from Charleston days. It is handsomely bound in half-calf, in three volumes, each lettered in gold, "The Original Manuscript of *Anthony Adverse* by Hervey Allen." Mrs. Whitall permitted its exhibition at the Chicago World's Fair in 1933, and later it was placed on display under glass at Brentano's in New York. On neither occasion was the manuscript entrusted to the mails or common carrier; it was only allowed to be carried here and there by automobile either by Mrs. Whitall herself

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9 Allen made no secret to close friends of his distaste for the picture. (C.G.K.)



or by Allen's publishers. As it has never been offered for sale it would be difficult to guess its present value on the collector's market. However, copies of the original limited edition of *Anthony* are now worth about two hundred fifty dollars.

For many months Hervey's time was occupied in personal appearances at book fairs, autographing parties and similar functions, consultations with movie people, and the numerous details connected with the domestic and foreign editions of *Anthony*. At one time he was paying income tax in no less than twenty-one countries. He was showered with offers of various kinds, including a steamship voyage through the Caribbean and a flight around the world in return for which he would be expected to write: (1) the epic of bananas, and (2) a book glorifying an airline. Advertising men sought his endorsement for merchandise; a girls' college asked him to select the prettiest girl from photographs of the junior class; national magazines offered him high prices for stories or articles. Once he wrote to his publishers: "I think I might do the article on American literature for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. It would be fun and might change the color of the urine of a whole lot of my critical friends. That would be having quite an effect on American literature."

Hervey now decided to buy a large estate in Florida, and for the next few years he and his family (now augmented by a son) followed the sun north and south between Miami; Oxford, Maryland; and Cazenovia, New York. For Hervey said that never again did he want to remain where water froze naturally. He and Ann took a trip to Europe and, accompanied by some English friends, had a glorious junket in Hitler's Germany trying to spend a fortune in royalties which had accumulated there but which could not be taken out of the country. It pleased Hervey immensely to spend this money instead of leaving it for the Nazis. Actually, some years later, Hervey did receive part of his German royalties when, by arrangement with the American publishers of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, several thousands of dollars were paid out of Hitler's royalties to the author of *Anthony*.

When Allen's next novel appeared in 1938 it was predestined for a huge sale on account of its predecessor. Unlike the vast canvas on which the saga of *Anthony* is depicted and diffused, *Action at Aquila* is as compact and clear-cut as a cameo. A story of the Civil War, almost every incident concerning the battle it describes was adapted from reminiscences of Civil War veterans, both Union and Confederate. While the bulk of critical opinion was favorable, some re-

viewers felt that the book did not represent the author's best abilities. When one called it "the North's answer to *Gone With the Wind*," another retorted, "If so, then it looks as if the South has won another battle." Actually, *Action at Aquila* exalts neither North nor South. Its author had another purpose in mind, having once written:

War has always been the most fascinating of all pastimes. Its fascination is bound up with fear, because humans, particularly male, are most keenly alive in moments of intense fear. All perceptions are sharper then. Hunting provides something of the same experience before it reaches its highest point in the greatest hunt of all — War.

And so, in *Action at Aquila* Hervey Allen attempted to show how men felt in battle.

When, in the following year, war erupted in Europe, Hervey hammered further on this theme with two stories which appeared in the book entitled *It Was Like This*. His stories were based on his own battle experiences in World War I. The first, called "Blood Lust," attempted to answer fairly specifically a question so often asked of soldiers, "How does it feel to kill a man?" It is told from the outlook of an enlisted man. The second, "Report to Major Roberts," deals with an officer's reactions under fire and the stress of extreme fatigue, manifestations of what today would be called war neurosis.

In July 1939, with other leading American authors, Hervey visited Washington to discuss the book postage bill with the president, and he took the opportunity to congratulate Mr. Roosevelt on his appointment of Archibald MacLeish. He recalls that FDR's face lit up as he talked about Mr. MacLeish for ten or fifteen minutes. By May 1941, Hervey was helping rally United States aid to Britain and organizing a flood of telegrams to the White House urging American convoying of supplies to that embattled country. Finally, with a presidential appointment, he worked for two years with the War Manpower Commission and was in charge of public relations over territory covering six southeastern states. During this period he witnessed what he felt amounted to the industrial revolution of the South.

By this time he had already conceived his mighty project for a historical novel that would cover the dramatic growth of American civilization from the frontier forts in the primeval forest to the dawn of the industrial era. The ultimate length of this work, entitled "The Disinherited," was uncertain, but it would be much longer than *Anthony Adverse*. Unlike *Anthony* the entire story takes place in North America. When his publishers in Hitler's Reich began clamoring for this work, Hervey quipped, "Apparently they have no idea what

the real situation is. None of them seem to understand that the book is going to be pretty strong American meat."

### *The Disinherited*

The title of Hervey Allen's work derived from its main theme: that the early settlers who founded a new nation in the North American wilderness repudiated the past almost completely, or in other words, they disinherited themselves from European civilization and fashioned the foundations for a new civilization in the New World. Minor themes are the deep-rooted isolationism and antimilitarism in American thought, the potent influence on the national character of the North American Indian, and the postulate that the chief struggle in American history has been to reconcile the spirit of individual freedom and license with necessary authority. Other subthemes concern the deeds of savagery that may arise from childish compulsions, the evil consequences of revenge adopted as a racial policy, and the sentimental tradition that the Americans are a kindly and merciful people. Underlying all these is the basic idea that the first white Americans were neither revolutionaries nor reformers; they were disinherited, and for the first time in remembered history men were free to act entirely upon their own responsibility.

"The Disinherited" was to be published in five parts, although each was a complete novel in itself. Three eventually appeared: *The Forest and the Fort* in 1943, *Bedford Village* in 1944, and *Toward the Morning*<sup>10</sup> which was heralded by a million letters sent out by the Literary Guild announcing its selection for September 1948. These three were to be combined in one volume entitled *Sylvania*. The remaining two were *The City in the Dawn* and *Richfield Springs*, also to be combined later in one volume. Finally, this prodigious work was to be presented in a single tome as *The Disinherited*.

The period covered is from 1699 to 1840, embracing the years of what the author called the "old Republic." It is not a saga of one family covering several generations; it is like a vast web spun from the crisscrossed threads of the life stories of people, for the most part of humble station, who are unaware of what is happening to them. The interplay of these stories makes a literary pattern which is, in turn, integral to the fabric of their time. The two main characters, Salathiel Albine and Edward Yates, are not conventional "heroes" but merely

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<sup>10</sup> The unfinished portion was incorporated into the omnibus volume, entitled *The City in the Dawn*, containing the three completed novels. (C.G.K.)

serve as focus for points of view. Also the plot is unconventional, being neither romantic nor dramatic, and is, in some respects like Tolstoy's *War and Peace*.

Hervey considered that the function of the historical novel is to present "an imaginary history of what happened, truthfully told," and that its aim is to "give pleasure through enlarging the experience of the reader by escape from his present into a period of past time." In "The Disinherited" his method and style do give the reader the illusion of actually living with the characters, but it is important to remember that the main "sources" of the plot are themselves creations of the author's imagination.

"The Disinherited" is, of course, not history; it is historical fiction, and nearly all of the big cast of characters, minor events, and some of the places are wholly imaginary. Yet the story presents with meticulous care and infinite detail the natural and cultural environment of early America. The author takes the reader into the rude forts, little stores, church services, and lodge meetings of colonial America, and shows him with all fidelity what everyday life was like when the thought and nature of this nation were taking form. The exposition of American origins alone is a vitally important and interesting historical feature of the work. Allen makes it clear that many "old Americans" are descended not from the "knee-breeked" gentry class but from the hosts of indentured servants, English, Irish, Welsh, Scottish, and German, and from transported felons sold in this country as bond slaves. While there were undoubtedly religious refugees among the early settlers, they were but a small minority, and he disposes, rather effectually, of the myth that America was founded by people who came here to worship God in their own way.

To attempt here a synopsis of events in the three books of "The Disinherited" would convey little of the sense or impact of the story because so much depends upon "atmosphere" created by the author as he attempts to pass on to the reader a "sensory" recall of the sinister gloom of the forests, the elemental beauty of the wilderness, and their immense influence upon his characters. At the beginning of each book comes a prelude that sets the mood like a magnificent overture.

In the last two books of "The Disinherited," the author was to show that for most Americans the Revolution was no high-minded pursuit of noble ideals, but that, generally, they were irresistibly impelled to join either Loyalists or Patriots by sheer force of circumstances.

The *New York Times Book Review* likened Hervey Allen to Fenimore Cooper writing in the twentieth century with all the advantages of the present-day sense of the Indian, psychological analysis, and actual research in historical background. And the *Atlantic Monthly* hailed him as "the Doctor Johnson of our novelists, with his 18th century flavor, his appetite for words, his love of talk and movement, and the masculine humor to give bite to his pages."

### *Action and Contemplation*

In 1945, Hervey's publishers invited him to become editor of "The Rivers of America" series, of which some thirty-eight titles appeared. As usual, Hervey could always find reserve energy for extra work. So he tackled this job with a thoroughness that would probably occupy the full working hours of a lesser man. More than one author of a "Rivers" book had been startled to discover that Hervey Allen had as profound a knowledge of the subject as the historian himself.

Any "Rivers" manuscript going to Allen for appraisal got meticulous study and a detailed commentary running perhaps to a dozen or more single-spaced typewritten pages. Some of these letters, containing searching treatment of complex subjects, are themselves minor masterpieces. The matter might be religion, the geology of some great valley, or the ramifications of English common law, and sometimes, such was Hervey's zest, one felt he would cheerfully go ahead and write a book about it himself, like Bernard Shaw who (asked by his sister to jot down a few pointers on socialism to help her give a lecture to a woman's club) began a letter that grew into his brilliant book, *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism*.

In one of the "Rivers" manuscripts a reference to Calvinism brought the author a five-thousand-word letter. Another "Rivers" author he advised as follows:

Do not miss the point of accepting at full value the terrific depressing effect of the primeval forests. The mass of testimony to this, to the loneliness, the silence, and the horrible gloom of the northern forests is overwhelming through Colonial times. I think it is true that much of the hysterical carryings-on of people in religious revivals can be traced back to the natural desire to make a human noise when once they got together in a crowd. I think this is one of the controlling factors in the formation of the native American character.

Lest a sensitive author chafe at these lengthy homilies, the letters usually closed with a graceful tribute to the author, or such a phrase as, "I hope some of this is helpful; if not forgive me. If my comments seem stupid, probably they are." However, it is likely that most of the

recipients of Hervey's erudite dissertations appreciated the benefit of his learning and his obvious desire to be helpful rather than critical.

During World War II the labor shortage, among other factors, compelled Allen to close down his big Maryland establishment. "Besides," he said, "milking cows at \$8 a day per farm laborer made the cream too expensive to drink without curdling." When Bonfield Manor threatened to become a white elephant, he sold it, and after his release from the War Manpower Commission he settled down in Florida to write and to develop "The Glades," his estate near Coral Gables. Set amid tropical plantings, "The Glades" consisted of a main house and five smaller dwellings, three of which were usually reserved for the use of the children. One cottage served as Hervey's literary workshop, and another was generally occupied by relations or friends. Above the doorway of the main house hung an ancient musket which might have been carried by Salathiel Albine himself. Actually, it once belonged to Daniel Boone.

Hervey's sense of family and the continuity of family life had always been acute. Said Hervey, "I want to play out my life as a family man. I feel sorry for the lonely egotist who bucks the biological scheme." He had a strong feeling for the land, and most of his novels begin with a description of some piece of country he had fallen in love with. For years he sought the place where his roots would take fast hold, and in "The Glades" apparently he had found it. Loyal he championed the Florida climate and swore that the only time he suffered savagely from the heat was when he had to visit New York in the summer. Nevertheless, after the war he usually managed to spend the summers at the "Dower House" in Cazenovia, a gift to the Allens from Ann's parents. He was a trustee of the University of Miami, of the Cazenovia Seminary, and a governing board member of St. John's College at Annapolis.

Hervey felt he derived more than did his pupils from his years of teaching history and literature. He seldom read a modern novel, and his own writing was influenced chiefly by Milton, Coleridge, Gibbon, Shakespeare, Matthew Arnold, and the Bible. The latter he studied from the historical as well as the literary viewpoint. Incidentally, he was often asked which psalm was it that Anthony utters while in the prison of St. Lazarus in Mexico. The "psalm" is, of course, his own composition. When writing about any region he first read all the standard histories and any old newspapers, records, private journals, and letters available. He did not make immediate use of this material

but allowed it to lie in his mind until, after a year or two, it took on the color of his own thought. He had not abandoned poetry as a form of expression; indeed, he expected to publish another volume of verse.

Most of his reading and creative writing was done at night and in bed, because in the daytime there was too much noise. He read with complete absorption, often finishing two long books in a single night. Morning, he said, always comes as a surprise. He disliked typewriters and telephones, so he wrote in longhand in pencil and out of reach of the telephone whenever possible.

When his ideas for a novel were clear in his mind he drew up a systematic plan of work, dividing the story into "panels of action." Then he concentrated on the rounding-out of each as a separate unit. The first draft was used as a guide while he dictated his narrative to a secretary, for as a poet he liked to savor the sound as well as the sense of his words. Often while this was going on, his wife offered criticism and suggestions which, he said, were always helpful. The typed manuscript, which he called his "first yellow" was then revised, cut, or amplified. Then his secretary typed the "second yellow," which also was subjected to merciless revision. When he was satisfied, the final draft was typed for the publishers.

With reluctance, and somewhat haltingly, he revealed how he courted inspiration in the quiet of the night, first achieving a sort of mental stillness. Then, as the experiences and memories of a full life and the fruits of his omnivorous reading began to quicken, he seemed to "remember" what men and their thoughts and motivations were like in the period and place of which he was writing. He called it "a sort of imaginative reporting," and when he was unable to "remember" he couldn't write. When the process was working, his characters seemed to come to life before him, and he studied their gestures, dress, speech, and their reactions to other personalities and events of the times. In *Anthony Adverse* he actually described this process in a manner somewhat mystical but quite appropriate to its place in the story. But of all the multitudes who have read the book apparently only a fellow poet, Robert Frost (a neighbor of the Allens at Coral Gables), understood this. The passage, in scripture-like prose, occurs in Chapter 46 and purports to be an excerpt from *The Divine Looking Glass*, the hypothetical bible of an actual but long extinct religious sect known as the Muggletonians. It is, however, a rather unique piece of Allen's own creative writing.

The Madonna theme running through *Anthony Adverse* made

many readers believe that Hervey Allen was a Catholic. He was not. But he was convinced that without a spiritual life the fruits of toil and the triumphs of achievement must turn to ashes. Similarly, because Freemasonry was an important element in "The Disinherited," it was often assumed that he must be a Mason. He was not but, being aware of the significant influence Freemasonry has exercised upon western civilization, in "The Disinherited" he showed its need, place, and effect in early American communities.

In any gathering Hervey was a focal point for entertaining talk and the stimulating flow of ideas. He conversed with almost as much skill and relish as he wrote. Practically everything that exists interested him, and he was a sympathetic debater, meaning that while he obviously enjoyed talking himself he was always ready to listen to the other fellow. Moreover, you got the impression that he was willing to be converted to your point of view if you had what it takes. Characteristically, he would react promptly to any challenge, but if with a sly humor he sometimes pricked another's affectations it was done without malice, for there was none in him. Like his own Anthony, the riddle of life kept Hervey Allen constantly questing, and it left him very human, gentle, and tolerant, with an enormous capacity for friendship.

As all his novels have been historical, naturally he liked to discuss that type of fiction. He considered that much nonsense is written about "escape literature," for to his mind every work of art constituted, to some extent, an escape from actual life into imaginary experience, values inhering in the kind and degree of experience the work of art can bestow. Most Americans, he felt, were only beginning to realize that the nation had a past, and that, facing a problematical future, they needed to know more than ever before who they are and whence they came. As he put it, without a basis in past experience it is not easy to plan a future.

Gifted with what Mr. Winston Churchill calls "a sense of history," Hervey Allen undeniably made a great contribution to the American's awareness of his own origins and his country's glamorous past.