

They Write of High Adventure while living "Away from It All"

THE World War was dragging along through its bloody middle years. Two young Americans, flyers in the famous Lafayette Escadrille, decided—like some hundreds of thousands of other fighting men—that they could do with a large slice of peace and quiet, once the war should be over.

So they made an agreement, these two, that if and when the war ended—if both of them survived—they would cut loose from civilization, go to the quietest and remotest spot they could find, and devote their lives to writing.

The war ground its way along and finally came to its end. The two young flyers, somewhat to their surprise, were still alive. They collaborated on one writing job and found it good. They recalled their old war-time compact. And eventually, along in 1920, they pulled up stakes and went to Tahiti.

Years passed. The two friends, writing separately, produced several books and magazine articles. As writers go they were moderately successful. They never hit the best-seller lists, although their work enjoyed decent sales; and they never applied themselves to "serious" fiction, although the critics recognized them as sound craftsmen.

Then, in the fall of 1932, the Atlantic Monthly Press received from the two friends a new manuscript—an historical novel, based on a famous incident in the British navy. The book was published, as all Atlantic books are, by Little, Brown and Company, and the public snapped it up. Within a few months it was one of the most talked-of books of the day and its authors were famous.

The book was "Mutiny on the Bounty." The authors were James Norman Hall and Charles Nordhoff.

THESE two men are today considered the most remarkable writing team in existence. Beginning with "Mutiny

It was the famous mutiny on H. M. S. Bounty that provided Hall and Nordhoff with the plot for their first best seller.



The men who write best sellers of literary merit—James Norman Hall, (left) and Charles Nordhoff.

decided to join forces more or less permanently.

It seemed important to them to get away from the falsities and conventionalities of modern civilization. They were ardent admirers of Stevenson and Melville, who had written glowingly of life on Tahiti; and when they visited Boston, Mr. Sedgwick strongly urged that they follow their already-formed hunch and go to Tahiti themselves.

NOW that island is full of young white men who go there to "get away from it all," succumb to the island's easy life, and never thereafter do anything worth mentioning. But Hall and Nordhoff were different. They went to the mid-Pacific to work, not to loaf, and work they did—diligently and to some consequence.

A great deal of research was necessary for their book on the Bounty. For a time Hall thought he would have to go all the way to England to examine the files of the British Admiralty—for only there could he read the records of the mutineers' trials, the statements of Captain Bligh and other officers, and other essential documents. But he wrote to admiralty officials first—and found them so generous of their time that the trip to London was unnecessary.

Photostatic copies were made of the mutineers' trial and other important papers. A British naval officer sent plans of the ship's deck and rigging, copied her log, and even made a detailed scale model of the ship, and sent the photographs along.

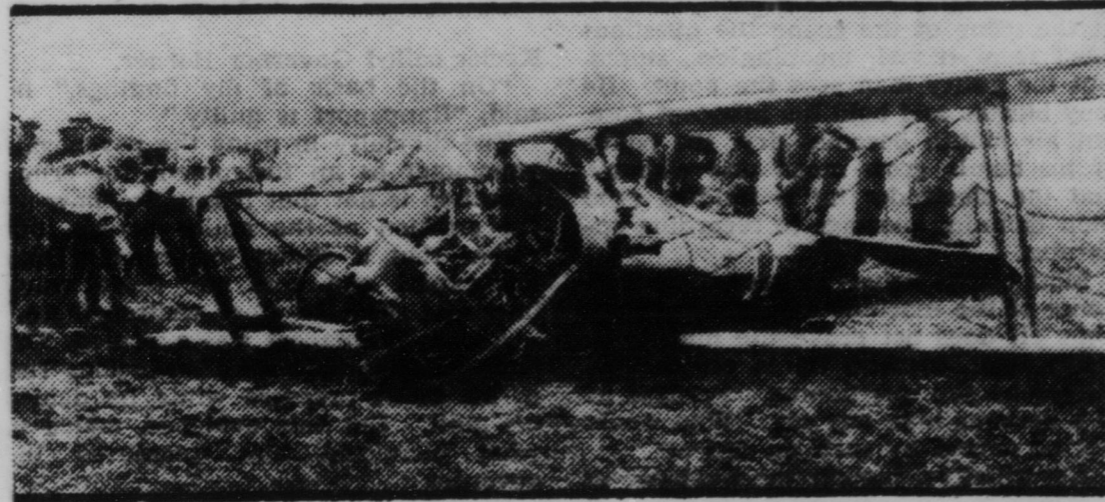
Armed with all of the facts, the two authors started then the method of collaboration which they have used ever since.

First they spend hours talking the story over until they have the characters and the plot thoroughly in mind. Then they divide the prospective book into chapters and decide what action shall take place in each chapter. That done, they go through the list and each man picks the ones he would especially like to handle. When both pick the same chapter, they toss a coin to see who gets it.

Then the actual writing begins. As each one completes a chapter he hands it to the other, who reads it carefully, suggests revision where he thinks it advisable, and hands it back. It is in this way that they make their books read like the work of one man, eliminating individualities of style.

Working in this way, "Mutiny on the Bounty" was at last completed. Its success with the reading public, was immediate and sustained. Hall and Nordhoff at once turned to the task of continuing the story of the famous mutiny, and two years later brought out "Men Against the Sea," telling of Captain Bligh's trans-Pacific voyage in an open boat. A year later they finished the tale with "Pitcairn's Island." And in 1935 came "The Hurricane."

Both Hall and Nordhoff have married since going to Tahiti. Hall was married in 1925, to Sarah Winchester, and lives with his wife and their son and daughter in a fairly new and (for Tahiti) up-to-date house. Nordhoff married Pepe Tearai of Tahiti in 1920, and now has three daughters and a son.



Hall's plane just after it had crashed behind the German lines during the war. Above, a photograph snapped 15 minutes later, showing Hall, bandaged, a prisoner of war.

on the Bounty" they have written four successive best-sellers—which have the peculiar property of continuing to sell year after year.

Today all four of these books are in wide demand. In addition to "Mutiny on the Bounty," they are "Men Against the Sea," "Pitcairn's Island," and "The Hurricane"—which last sold more than 22,000 copies before publication.

Altogether, more than 200,000 copies of the "Bounty" books have been sold. A moving picture made from the first book has been shown all over the world. The two authors have become famous and wealthy.

But the desire for peace and solitude, born of the war, is still with them. They continue to live in Tahiti. Their photographs are rarely seen; interviews with them are never published. Instead of returning to America to bask in the public attention which goes to literary lions, they stay on their island, attend

strictly to their work, and shun the publicity and adulation which could be theirs for the asking.

Wouldn't you expect two such men to be unusual individuals, with unusual records? Well, you'd be quite right if you did. They are unusual—particularly so in the way in which they are able to unite their separate talents in one literary personality, working together so skillfully that the most careful critics have never been able to tell which part of which book was done by which author.

BORN in Colfax, Iowa, in 1887, Hall was educated at Grinnell College, also in Iowa, receiving a Ph. D. degree in 1910. In 1914, at the outbreak of the war, he enlisted in the British army and went to France with Kitchener's famous "first hundred thousand," serving as a machine gunner in the 9th Royal Fusiliers. In the fall of 1916 he trans-

ferred to the famous Lafayette Escadrille and became a pursuit pilot in Groupe de Combat 13.

It was there that he met Nordhoff.

Nordhoff was born of American parents in London in 1887. He grew up on his father's ranch in Lower California, Mexico, was graduated from Harvard in 1909, and raised sugar cane in Mexico until the revolution of 1911 interfered. He went into business in California, and in 1916 went to France as an ambulance driver with the American Field Service. Then he joined the French Foreign Legion, went to two schools of military aviation, and transferred to the Lafayette Escadrille.

He and Hall became fast friends at once. When the United States entered the war they transferred, together, to the U. S. army flying corps.

In May, 1918, Hall crashed behind the German lines and was carried off to a German prison camp, where he remained until the spring of 1919. He escaped and rejoined Nordhoff in Paris. Both men were decorated for gallantry by this time; Nordhoff won a Croix de Guerre, and Hall a Medaille Militaire (awarded twice), a Croix de Guerre and an American Distinguished Service Cross.

The literary partnership between the two men began there in Paris, when they were commissioned to write the story of the Lafayette Escadrille. Hall had already won his spurs as a writer, having published a series of papers on "High Adventure" in the Atlantic Monthly and having interested the editor of that magazine, Ellery Sedgwick, in his work. And then, the history of the Escadrille out of the way, the two