

Ernest William Swanton, *As I Said at the Time - A Lifetime of Cricket*. Collins, London, 1983. Illus., pp. xvii + 542. \$29.95.

When E.W. (Jim) Swanton retired in 1975 after nearly 30 years as cricket correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, Robin Marlar entitled an article 'The Passing of the Emperor'. Swanton's unprecedented career as a sports journalist, cricket author and historian had, in fact, commenced in 1924 and encompassed 18 books, 30 cricket tours, 270 test matches and, an estimated, 3,000,000 words of cricket reports. Patrician in appearance, an oracle of awesome resonance', to use his description of Archie MacLaren, he well merited the title 'Emperor'.

This book is an anthology of his reports, mostly from the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Cricketer*. It is not fully representative of his entire output as only a few items date from before 1939. The anthology consists of 260 items arranged in 15 chapters which include 'Household Names', 'Tests to Remember', 'Some Old Masters', 'County Days Remembered' and 'Crossed Swords' - the latter recalling the D'Oliveira and Packer affairs - 'intimidatory bowling' and 'throwing'.

This large collection of Swanton's reports reveals his enduring and scholarly love of the game. Much of the writing must have been done under pressure from deadlines and the need to resist the attractions of cricket's traditional close of play conviviality. His writing is very much in the old English Public School humanist tradition and has had its critics. John Warr, a notable cricket humorist and less notable England fast bowler, has likened it to 'somewhere between Enid Blyton and the Ten Commandments'!

Of all the chapters, I enjoyed most those containing warm tributes to the great figures of the game. Swanton, who was born in 1907, enjoyed, in their latter years, the friendship of many of the 'greats' of the Golden Age - MacLaren, Fry, Warner, Rhodes, Armstrong. The cricketing generations are compressed when he wrote

that Bishan Bedi 'is a direct descendant of the archetypal classical left hander, Wilfred Rhodes' (87). Swanton saw them both and who else could readily link the dour Yorkshireman to the deft Sikh?

Swanton was not a bland reporter. He was forthright when he wrote of the 'Packer intrusion and 'Packerism' or when he described Ian Chappell as 'temperamentally a born Packerite' (20). He did not admire Illingworth's captaincy in Australia in 1970/71 and his reporting of England's magnificent victory, against the odds, in the final Test of that series is strangely muted (241-3). In his review of the series he decided that 'the season has not thrown up any new players who one day will be carrying the Australian standard with distinction in the decade ahead' (242). This prediction may have been reasonable at the time, but Greg Chappell, Lillie, Marsh!

Swanton has been more than a competent and prolific sporting journalist. This fine anthology, unique in its sweep, will find an honoured place on our bookshelves.

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