

Books in Brief

By Jasper R. Lewis

"LET US NOW PRAISE FAMOUS MEN"

THE war is definitely over; we have reached the stage of dissection of our military leaders, their qualifications and their weaknesses and errors. *Top Secret*, by Ralph Ingersoll (Harcourt, Brace, \$3.00), is the kind of book one expects from Ingersoll: whatever his opinion, he states it plainly and backs it up as well as he can. For that reason those who dislike everything English will relish *Top Secret*, and those who favor Britannia will burn under the collar.

Ingersoll was a staff captain in our army and should have been in a position to see much and hear some of the near-top-level discussion. Undoubtedly, there is much truth in his criticisms of General Montgomery, Winston Churchill and others. There is no reason to doubt his version of political maneuvering to promote British ambitions in glory and the strategy that would serve to aid the postwar empire. It is no secret that many here suspected through the war years that cooperation between Britain and the United States was not what it should have been.

It is of less importance that to Ingersoll, Omar Bradley was the real hero of the war, than that Bradley and others believed a whole year of warfare could have been avoided had it not been for British control

of plans and campaigning. This volume makes Bradley the Number One planner, with Patton and Hodges the brilliant action leaders, and Eisenhower a nice fellow, diplomatic, but carefully set up by Churchill to be a figurehead while British officers called the tune. Some parts of these charges must be true; here and there in the record will be found admissions or attempted explanations.

Whether you like Ingersoll's views or not, he has performed a service in recounting these things, to be remembered if future need arises, or to be refuted if possible by those interested. However, for a brilliant picture of D Day and its aftermath, told in terms of individuals and small groups, *Top Secret* is a thrilling, action story, with a touch of humor, an undercurrent of the sadness of pain and death, and a vivid account of just how the Americans did their job. It carries right through to Germany's collapse, (the reader understands the possible fault of the Bulge), or goes across Europe with Patton's men in wild dashes, to turn up at the most unexpected places.

In short, *Top Secret* is a necessary book about our army. It may be a good idea for some allied military men, and some diplomats, to read it

now and realize that motives cannot always be covered.

My Three Years With Eisenhower, by Captain Harry C. Butcher, U.S.N.R. (Simon & Schuster, \$5.00), is a whale of a book—in size, scope and contents. There are 900 pages of intimate notes, comments and observations, chiefly on the General of the Army, although frequently on lesser lights. Butcher has a sense of humor, a sense of loyalty (not only to the General but to the C.B.S.), and with his privileged post of official notetaker, had the inside track to more high level secrets which can now be spilled. Naturally most of these secrets are pretty well known now, but here they can be told in their proper sequence and background.

Why the general had a naval aide is simple: as an old friend Butcher was wanted by Eisenhower as an aide, and Butcher happened to be in the Naval Reserve. Butcher's task was to keep a daily record of events, conversations, etc., which is standard executive practice. Out of these confidential notes comes this cheerful, brilliantly written diary. For historical purposes it is excellent. Butcher disclaims expert military strategy, but he relates the opinions of others—the brass—sometimes foreshadowing events, sometimes explaining them, or trying to do so.

Eisenhower, of course, is Butcher's hero, but a pleasant hero, not insisting on worship from his subordinates and not a seeker after the high places. In fact, he appears to be a very decent middle-of-the-road human being, one who did not reach for the stars, but had them offered to him.

As for the political and military facts, reading between the lines, one may feel the truth of some of the charges made elsewhere regarding Eisenhower's troubles with Montgomery and other British generals and the meddling of Mr. Churchill in military affairs. Where Ingersoll makes direct accusations of these things, Butcher merely mentions divided opinions or disagreements which can be diplomatic language for the same thing.

Butcher's volume will prove a mine of information for those who like to dig and discuss; a mine, not of secrets but of recorded facts and opinions. It is fascinating and full of lively comment, but it has several faults. One is that the whole show is given the atmosphere of an English tea party, with the right people running it; the second is that the G.I.—or anyone under the rank of colonel—apparently comes under the heading of props for the military theatre. One might almost say the run of the mill soldier just didn't exist. A third weakness, to my mind, is that any possible errors of judgment, like the Bulge, are lightly touched upon, which is natural in a biographical record of this kind, but detracts from the critical value of the book.

General Wainwright's Story, Edited by Robert Considine, (Doubleday, \$3.00), is a story of the humiliation, captivity and suffering of an American general. It is recent enough for everyone to remember—MacArthur's ordered escape, the selection of Jonathan M. Wainwright to take over for as long as might be. It was a definite assignment to defeat and surrender.

Wainwright tells his story humbly, with due thought for the hardships of his fellow officers, relating without false pride the indignities and beatings which all of them endured, including Wainwright himself. He need have no unwritten fears that his readers will wonder at his surrender or later acceptance of the cruelties of his Japanese captors. His very modest telling of it establishes him as a humane leader of men, taking his share of the punishment.

It is not often that a war book tells a story such as this of battle, imprisonment and eventual freedom.

Wainwright's active part in the war was brief; he is grateful for but disclaims earning his four stars. On this he should have no hesitancy; for the part he played in demonstrating the patience and fortitude of Americans, he earned his promotion the hard way. Here is the story of the Japanese war camps and their bestial keepers: the fraternal spirit shown by the prisoners, in some cases cutting across ranks, is noteworthy. Only one wee note might have been omitted—the occasional backslapping of political figures in American life—possibly for the good of the service.

BRIEFER COMMENT

CURRENT AFFAIRS

A closeup of German psychology is given in *Experiment in Germany*, The Story of an American Intelligence Officer, by Saul K. Padover (Duell, Sloan & Pearce, \$3.75). The author served in the Psychological Warfare Division of the United States Army, and, out of the endless investigations and reports that were doubtless made to our General Staff, he has fashioned a continuous narrative of experiences and findings. Many of the incidents concerned ordinary people and their private lives but reflected the results of Nazi indoctrination. It is not a war book; later on, it might well serve the Germans of the future as a reminder of what they did.

A "kriegee" is a slang for *Kriegsgefangener*—a prisoner of war. *Diary of a Krieger* by Edward W. Beattie, Jr. (Crowell, \$3.00), is reporting the hard way. Beattie,

United States Press correspondent, was taken prisoner in September, 1944, and was an involuntary guest at Limburg, Berlin and finally Luckenwalde, until the bitter end. His story of Germany from the inside is different in that he was fairly well treated, saw little of the worst brutalities and is mostly concerned with reporting personal impressions, his own and those of others. The most surprising feature of it is the evidently high morale of the author throughout his experience; it sounds too genuine to have been artificially added. Beattie seems to have had the time of his life.

Detailed stories of work and struggles among the guerrillas in the Philippines under Japanese occupation make sometimes exciting and sometime maddening reading. *Guerrilla Padre in Mindanao*, by Edward Haggerty (Longmans, Green, \$2.75), is the record of Father Hag-

gerty's efforts in the hills, helping the natives and doing what he could to carry on the fight. It is the story of a good man.

BIOGRAPHY

The story of the founding of Islam is the biography of the Prophet of Allah. *The Messenger*, *The Life of Mohammed*, by R.V.C. Bodley, (Doubleday, \$3.00), is easy reading, full of action, and very plainly told mundane considerations. Bodley has no illusions about the practical side of religions, Christian, Jewish or Islamic and even in wholesale "liquidations" finds historical precedents. It is history and adventure, to say nothing of love interest, in which Mohammed maintained his end.

Howard Spring, surveying the world through two wars, finds our much vaunted Christian civilization not much ahead of where it was 2,000 years ago. *And Another Thing*, (Harper's, \$2.50), is biographical in that it reflects Spring's religious meditations and his philosophy for the world at large in its present predicament. His conviction is that "you will never get rid of war by declaring in an international congress that it is 'outlawed'". It requires what might be called a universe-rocking conversion to brotherly love. Spring doesn't say return to Christ's preachings: he apparently agrees with the statement that "Christianity hasn't failed, it has never been tried." He makes no plea; he tells in simple language what his own thoughts are on the religious aspects of our time. His book is beautifully written, and his musings, free from creed and

cant, are as near inspiration as anything recently printed.

Down at the other extreme, if you remember *Ballyhoo* of 15 years ago, you will enjoy *How to Grow Old Disgracefully*, or Anthony's Adversities, by Norman Anthony (Duell, Sloan & Pearce, \$2.75). In this, Anthony, who fathered and mothered the comic of the 1930's, tells all, about himself, his associates and how they lived, worked and played. The "fresh magazine—kept fresh by cellophane" is no more, but, while it lived its lusty, ribald life, it was the funniest "funny" of its time, and its time was the era of that wonderful nonsense following 1929. The book is good for laughs, too, and some of the favorite cartoons are included. What Anthony did with his own life is his business, but what he tells you about it can be your entertainment.

FARMING

So much is being heard of the return to the farm that a book that goes into the subject in a practical way is not amiss. *Success on the Small Farm*, by Haydn S. Pearson (Whittlesey House, \$2.50), first shocks the dreamer of the one-acre farm by cautioning that ten acres should be the minimum for a paying venture. He is enthusiastic, but he is also very business-like; equipment costs real money. It is a machine age, and the small farm must be efficient to produce. If you have the yen for a farm, Pearson's book will either cure you or help you.

FICTION

The Intruders, by Robert Bright,

(Doubleday, \$2.50), is a powerful piece of fiction based on racial intolerance, not so much in the little southern town in which the action is set, as between classes: In addition to the white versus black problem, there is a half-Jewish girl refugee from the storms of Europe. The lesson is clear; the pace of the story is swift and the conclusion, unavoidable.

A story of China in the present generation, *The Golden Coin*, by Lin Taiyi (John Day, \$2.75), takes in a little of the war (at least the results of bombing) but only in passing. The novel deals with a young girl married to an ulcered older teacher, and her thwarted desire for life and living. Being by a Chinese and about Chinese, it needs no made atmosphere, as it carries its own, pungent and yet melancholy.

Another tale out of China, but not by a Chinese, is *Peony*, by Keith West, (Macmillan, \$2.00). It is quite different from its predecessor, *Winter Cherry*, but you will enjoy Peony's mental rebellion against woman's place in her world, and her acceptance of life's decisions—when she helped make them.

Theodore Dreiser's last work before his death, *The Bulwark*,

(Doubleday, \$2.75), is based on the lives of Quakers in twentieth century Philadelphia, with the older generation troubled by and unable to understand the younger. Although it is Dreiser's first novel in 20 years, and he had passed three score and ten, there can be no doubt that he understood the present generation, including campus life and humanity in general. Serious readers will like it.

Isabel Dick, whose *Wild Orchard* made excellent reading, has another delightfully different novel in *Country Heart*, (Crowell, \$2.75). Again, it is a story of her home country, Tasmania, with her characters drawn from that garden spot. While there is no great excitement, anyone who likes close-to-the-soil living and the simpler side of life can get away from the 1940's for awhile.

Tempered Blade, by Monte Barrett (Bobbs-Merrill, \$2.75), is the story of Jim Bowie, celebrated Indian fighter, backwoodsman and almost legendary figure of his time. Here is the story of Texas and the frontier of a hundred years ago and more: excitement, war, Santa Anna and the Alamo, with love interest to boot. It's exciting reading.

● On many Pacific islands it is the custom for a man to shake hands with himself when he meets his wife's relatives. Here he shakes hands with himself when he doesn't.

—*Passing Variety*

● A man from Aberdeen asked a grocer in Glasgow for a penny-worth of cheese.

"We don't sell penny-worths", the storekeeper replied.

"Well, show me two penny-worth", the Scot replied.

As soon as the grocer put the cheese on the counter, the Scot whipped out his pocketknife, cut the cheese in two, put down his penny and, pocketing his purchase, said: "Trouble with you is—you're lazy."

The Theatre Arts

By John Gassner

ON the professional stage the reign of musical comedies continues without abatement. Two new musicals, *St. Louis Woman* and *Call Me Mister*, have established themselves on Broadway, while other cities on the seaboard have been receiving the new Irving Berlin show, *Annie Get Your Gun*, which seems headed for phenomenal success, and *Shootin' Star*, another Billy the Kid saga which has some remarkable music but is sending out distress signals.

St. Louis Woman is the result of a distinguished collaboration. It is based on the novel, "God Sends Sunday," by Arna Boutemps. The musical book was written by Boutemps and the late Countee Cullen, one of our ablest Negro poets. The lyrics are written by Johnny Mercer, who is well known to the trade for such hit tunes as *Lazybones* and *Atcheson*, *Topeka* and *Santa Fe*. The music is by Harold Arlen, who provided the score for *Bloomer Girl*, *Hooray for What* and *The Wizard of Oz*. The settings and costumes are by Lemuel Ayres, the designer of *Oklahoma* and *Bloomer Girl*. The new show is directed by none other than Rouben Mamoulian, famed for *Oklahoma*, *Carousel*, *Porgy and Bess* and many other stage and screen successes. The cast includes the miniscule but in-

vincible Nicholas Brothers, Rex Ingram, who played De Lawd in the screen version of *Green Pastures*, Juanita Hall, Ruby Hill, who is probably the most beautiful newcomer to the stage in many a year and another newcomer, Pearl Bailey, whose massive build and flat voice, combined with an excellent sense of timing, make her a remarkable comedienne.

Something noteworthy could be expected from such pooling of talents, and enough emanates from it to attract the customers. The story, set in the St. Louis of 1898, revolves around the fabulously lucky jockey, Little Augie, who wins every race and throws money around lavishly until he takes up with Della. Taking her away from the burly saloon-keeper, Bigelow, is quite a feat for the pint-sized Augie, and his raptures are well deserved. He pours all his love on her, and, when pressed by a puritanical sister, he even proposes marriage — albeit reluctantly, not quite seeing the necessity for it. But his luck changes and he even goes to jail for the murder of Bigelow, who is shot by a discarded mistress. He is acquitted after a confession is wrung from the woman in an effective funeral scene. But by now, Della, who has a sinful past, is convinced that she is responsible for his bad luck. She leaves