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freedom. And it is good, also, to see schemers like Charles Lee or Major Wilkinson depicted unforgettably as traitors, so that this lesson too will burn its way through to our own war.

THESE figures and events are treated not only with wonderful understanding but with great art. The story has a rich texture, a sure consistency. There are, fortunately, no false notes here, no prefabricated love interest, no melodrama. "There are no fictional characters in this story," writes Howard Fast in an afterword; "for each name, a man lived, playing his part much as detailed here. But I wanted them to come alive, feeling that

at such a time as this there is need for those half-forgotten men to live again and do their deeds once more, and join in the battle of all men of good will against the forces of evil. And therefore I put thoughts into their minds and let them speak words of which there is no record." The thoughts are just and the words are just. For the spirit of reverence is not forced or stilted. The spirit of reverence is reflected in the precision with which episodes have been selected; the economy of style; the sustained animation of the narrative. The past merges with the present in this distinguished novel by a young American writer.

SAMUEL SILLEN.

BOOKS IN REVIEW

THE FOREIGNERS, by Preston Schoyer. Dodd, Mead. \$2.75.

PRESTON SCHOYER'S novel studies the life of a foreign community, Shawei, within a Chinese provincial capital from about 1935 to 1938. Shawei comprised the usual assortment of special interests, divided among a variety of creeds and nationalities. Mr. Schoyer is particularly interested in the men and women who work in the religious institutions largely maintained by foreign endowments. Thus, the central figure of the novel is a young man who has come out to teach English in the Shawei Boys' School; two important characters are doctors in the hospital of the mission foundation; and the history of the most influential mission of Shawei is revealed through Dr. Sowerby, the last representative of this mission dynasty.

Mr. Schoyer wants, first of all, to show just what living in China means to these members of the foreign community. In the first half of the novel the community appears as an island in the disturbed cross-currents of Chinese life. The irony of this alienation is illuminated by Mr. Schoyer in many ways. For there is not only the isolation which comes from a privileged and special position. There are forces of disintegration at work within the community—doubt, frustration, the blindness of self-righteous convictions—furthered by the disruptive policies of the missionary Sowerby, a "spiritual" leader guided by the threadbare white myth that the Chinese are depraved and childish heathen.

Sowerby exerts an influence which is hostile to the developing political needs of the Chinese. The mission foundation, an oil company, has a "stake" in China; in Sowerby the fanaticism of the first generation missionaries has thinned out into an obsession for the glorification of their works. Just as the commercial representatives smugly regard the gunboat in the river as the ultimate protector of their privileges, so Sowerby looks forward to a "stable" regime in China for the perpetuation

of his mission dynasty. He believes the Japanese invasion promises this long-desired stability.

In the leisurely pace of this half of the novel, Mr. Schoyer has realistically presented a group of uneasy, unhappy human beings, restlessly drawing upon each other's resources, baffled by their isolation. Most of them have given up the effort to "understand" China; they do their work tirelessly, from conscience or pride, but the ideas of duty, of a destiny to be fulfilled, of an earlier day, have no meaning for them. Almost all of them have a feeling of futility, and a fear of examining the future.

The teacher Peter Achilles is set apart from his fellow Westerners by his capacity for absorbing new experience and his desire to learn something from China. The slow process of his learning is the positive, compelling purpose in the novel.

Yet Peter Achilles' first contact with China terminates in a sense of personal defeat, and he returns to America. His despair has been sharpened by the rejection of the girl he has loved. The brief American interlude somewhat restores his perspective; he begins to see the political forces that are shaping events in China in relation to world-wide developments. About a half year after the Japanese invasion of the mainland, he is again in Shawei.

The second half of the novel describes the physical disintegration of the foreign community and Peter's experiences there in the war. Driving an ambulance, helping refugees, and assisting at the hospital, Peter Achilles sees Chinese life at close range. Through the grim facts of war he sees a China in which the artificial barriers of the foreign community have crumbled to pieces, along with the bricks and mortar of the mission walls shattered by Japanese bombs. Only reactionaries like Sowerby are unaware that the anomaly has ceased to exist.

The conditions of wartime also bring Peter the love of a Chinese girl, Li Meilan. This kind of experience before had seemed

to him reserved for the rare individuals like Mr. Donovan who had long ago surrendered their Western identity. The death of Li Meilan in an air raid serves to bring to a crisis the long standing conflict within Peter. The old feelings of "futility and deadness" return, intensified by the accumulated weight of his weariness with his unorganized activity, and, as once before, he thinks the time has come for a retreat to America. "He wanted to teach again, to teach in peace. But he could feel it creeping to America, and then as here he would have to put his books away."

So Peter Achilles stays on in China. At the end of the novel, when he is once more reconciled to carrying on in his small way for the cause of China, we feel that he has at last overcome his passivity. Through his senses he has absorbed the China which eluded his understanding.

As a first novel, *The Foreigners* is a distinct achievement. Though Mr. Schoyer's realistic examination of the life of the Shawei community has an obvious psychological interest, he has not been satisfied with a mere amplification of the Grand Hotel formula to his restricted social group. In the novels of Pearl Buck and Lin Yutang we have seen that the physical impact of the war in China on individual lives has been a theme of multiple attraction. Preston Schoyer has responded to this attraction, and the significance of this theme has not escaped him. Though his writing is uneven in its powers of representation, and though he must learn to organize his materials less with an eye for amplitude of detail and more for sharpness of effect, he has written a mature and noteworthy novel.

ALAN BENOIT.

A Copperhead Book

LINCOLN AND THE RADICALS, by T. Harry Williams. University of Wisconsin Press. \$3.

IN THE delicate language of Mr. Williams, the Radicals during the Civil War, i.e., those who wanted an all-out war for the destruction of the slave system, were fanatical, impractical, envious, raffish, frenzied, gloating, mendacious inquisitors, conspirators, Judases. A writer essaying the tremendous task of delineating the most critical years in the life of Abraham Lincoln who never uses the basic studies of his subject—the works of Herndon, Weik, Barton, Charnwood, Hertz, and Sandburg. No wonder he emerges with a "wily," "scared," "harried," "chess-piece." The immortal Lincoln a "chess-piece"!

Are there, then, no heroes? Yes, at least two—George B. McClellan who, "if the politicians had let him alone might have won the Civil War," and Robert E. Lee, the "great" and "redoubtable" one. Does Mr. Williams have other spasms of tenderness? Yes. When the filthy New York Herald in December 1861 drips treason in such sentences as: "If the factious abolition leaders do not speedily draw in their horns, they may find in General McClellan such a tartar as the Lord Parlia-

ment found in Cromwell, and the Council of Five Hundred in Napoleon Bonaparte," this is lightly dismissed as "an injudicious threat." And a letter written by a Wall Street gold speculator and McClellan's political manager, Samuel L. Barlow, in January 1862, proposing capitulation to the demands of the Confederacy, is also characterized as merely "injudicious."

The choice and use of sources are indicative of the author's values. To sum up an evaluation of Benjamin Wade, one of the most interesting and neglected figures in American life, he quotes seventy words of a pen portrait appearing in the New York Herald mentioned above, while his character sketch of Zachariah Chandler includes a slanderous piece from a leading western Copperhead organ. The same non-partisan source is quoted to round out the picture of Gen. David Hunter, an Abolitionist, to the effect that he was a "hanger-on at Washington, doing dirty jobs for the War Department"—the same man to whom Lincoln occasionally turned for particularly important work since, as he wrote, Hunter was "a man of large experience."


Occasionally Mr. Williams throws in a slander of his own without the show of detachment which a footnote offers, as when he broadly hints that Stevens was a drunkard. This is particularly unhappy since during most of his adult life Thaddeus Stevens was a total abstainer, and believed, as he put it, that there was "no hope for one who even tastes strong drink." Other snide remarks about the gullibility or cowardice of Negroes are more serious and have as little relationship to the truth. The above are offered as but a few examples of Mr. Williams' misuse or misinterpretation of sources, which is, indeed, characteristic of the entire work.

As with sources, so with motives. Mr. Williams experiences no difficulty and exercises no hesitation in tackling the historian's most complex task—the unearthing of individual motivation. With no documentation, but rather and repeatedly by mere assertion, the author makes sordid and reprehensible, crass and vulgar, the motives of every Radical, or the temporary, converted type like Hooker and Grant.

At no point does the author make clear the meaning of the Civil War, and the mortal character of the battle. At no point does he show how serious was the treason in the North, and how closely affiliated therewith was the Democratic Party. Since this is so, the deadly earnestness of the Radicals seems fantastic or stupid or affected, and their policies appear iniquitous and cruel.

Finally, Mr. Williams persists in dealing with the demands of the Radical Republicans, on the same level as the demands of the Copperheads, and slaveholders. That, I suppose, is academic objectivity—refusing to take sides. Of course it is nothing of the kind, for by dealing with the Radicals on the same level as with the reactionary elements of society one demeans the former to the position of the latter.

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