

Books of Special Interest

Grant the General
THE GENERALSHIP OF ULYSSES S. GRANT. By COLONEL J. F. C. FULLER.
 New York: Dodd, Mead & Company.
 1930. \$5.

Reviewed by A. HOWARD MENEELY
 Dartmouth College

IT is an interesting fact that several of the best books on the military leaders of the Civil War have been written by English soldiers. Conspicuous among these are Henderson's "Jackson," Maurice's "Lee," and Liddell-Hart's recently published "Sherman." Colonel Fuller's study deserves to be listed with them. As the title indicates, his work is not biographical: it is chiefly an analysis of Grant's military activities as a commander in the Union army. About one third of the book is given to Grant's services as a subordinate general and nearly half to his work as general-in-chief. The remaining portions are devoted largely to a preliminary discussion of the strategy and tactics of the war and a concluding section on "The Generalship of Peace," a sort of philosophical discussion of war and its relation to peace.

It is not likely that the general reader will find the book of engaging interest, but students of military history are almost certain to enjoy it and profit by it, even though they may not agree with some of Colonel Fuller's judgments and conclusions. He has not delved as widely into the source materials of the period as has Liddell-Hart, but he has made generous use of the most important sources, notably the "Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies." Such a book is not the result of a few months' investigation: it is the fruit of years of study, observation, and experience.

Colonel Fuller has critically analyzed each step in Grant's progress through the war, sometimes following him from day to day, as in the famous Wilderness campaign of 1864. Grant himself is occasionally almost obscured from view in the maze of strategy, tactics, marches, flank movements and attacks. This is one of the deficiencies of the book. It would have lightened the narrative considerably, and in no wise have detracted from it, had the author now and again injected a graphic and intimate

picture of Grant in camp or in the field. Liddell-Hart has done so with telling effect in his treatment of Sherman.

Colonel Fuller contends very emphatically that great injustice has been done Grant in setting him down as a cold-blooded butcher who stubbornly and needlessly sacrificed thousands of men to gain his objectives. The Northern press originated the charges in 1864 and the historians have reiterated them, but the author's own inquiries have convinced him that not only were Grant's losses smaller proportionately to the size of his army than were those of Lee in the Wilderness, but they stand favorable comparison with those of many other prominent Northern and Southern generals. "If anything," he says, "Lee rather than Grant, deserves to be accused of sacrificing his men." Instead of being a mere line-plunger, Fuller declares that Grant was "the greatest strategist of his age, of the war, and, consequently, its greatest general," that he was the only Northern general who had a comprehension of grand strategy, that is, the relationship between policy and war, and that he never overlooked the political situation and the necessity of conforming to it. He was not bound by military conventions and book strategy, or obsessed by real or imaginary difficulties: he was always ready to act. He conceived a grand plan and then step by step executed it.

From Paducah to Appomattox . . . Grant's strategical plan, upon which all actions were to pivot, was maintained in spite of all difficulties; this in itself constitutes one of the most remarkable cases of concentration of purpose and maintenance of direction to be found in the history of war.

Many of the author's assessments of the generals of the Civil War are of especial interest. In some instances he reaches new and surprising conclusions; in others he agrees with the judgments already rendered but sharpens the criticism. To Halleck, Thomas, and William F. Smith he is merciless. Buel, he believes, was "a far abler soldier than McClellan," Meade "an indifferent tactician," many of whose blunders have been unloaded on Grant. Sherman is credited with being an able general, but decidedly inferior to Grant. In Colonel Ful-

ler's opinion he was unpardonably destructive; Sherman's own dispatches are used to damn him. Liddell-Hart, on the other hand, has offered Sherman quotations, drawn from the same source, which tend materially to soften the usual criticisms of the general's actions. It is certainly true that interpretation is largely a matter of selection of materials. When the experts and critics disagree, the reader must judge for himself. In this reviewer's opinion, Colonel Fuller underestimates and is at times unfair to Sherman.

Albert Sidney Johnston and Lee also suffer considerably in the author's assessments and again not always justly. The former is set down as "a very common type of brave but stupid soldier." Lee is admitted to be a great general, but found deficient as a general-in-chief. His strategy, says Colonel Fuller, often led to brilliant tactical successes, but it was not of a type to win the war. "Lee's one and only chance was to imitate the great Fabius, and plot to win the war, even if in the winning of it he lost every battle he fought." But how long might Lee have held his command, or how long might the Davis government have been sustained, had he adopted such a policy at the outset? Were not victories essential to keep up Southern morale, obtain state aid, and win the much-sought-for European support? Has not the author here overlooked the political factor which he insists is necessary to great generalship? Surely it is not necessary to indulge in rash statements, as Colonel Fuller occasionally does, in order to emphasize the excellence of Grant's generalship as compared with some of his compatriots and opponents.

Leacockisms

THE IRON MAN AND THE TIN WOMAN, With Other Such Futurities.
 By STEPHEN LEACOCK. New York:
 Dodd, Mead & Co. 1929. \$2.

Reviewed by ROBERT CORTES HOLLIDAY

THE publication of the new collection of Leacockisms may jog a mind here and there into a somewhat troubled state as to something askew somewhere. What is the source of this undefined worrit?

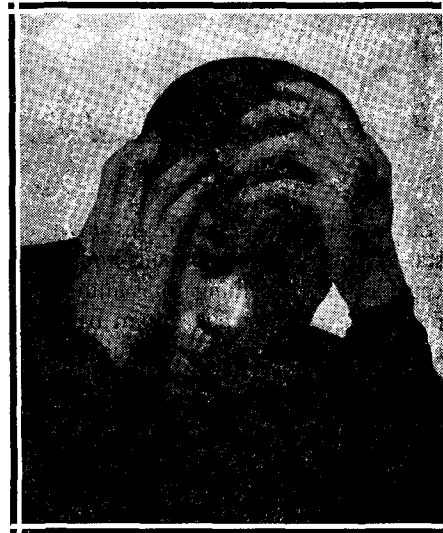
We know a young woman who lately got married. When it developed that certain of her habits produced some disharmony in her new relationship she observed wonderingly, "Why, I've done that for years"—it not occurring to her that in an altered order of things there might be occasion for some change in her perspective. Mr. Leacock, evidently curiously innocent of any suspicion as to the perpetual jollity of it all, has been doing his steady brand of humorisms for now nineteen years.

During those two portentous decades just past an altogether unprecedented amount of water has gone down the literary mill. And, in particular, much that in its season was screamingly humorous has been sadly blown upon. The point of these unstartling observations is the emerging fact that the pristine spectacle of Mr. Leacock, incredibly blithe and inexplicably unhurt, presents a conundrum. Veteran headliner of a vastly more yokel day, twirling his original slapstick, his box office pull, including the orchestra circle, is a social phenomenon that solicits interrogation. Leacockitis seems to be a curiously tenacious bug. The other day, however, a confessedly confirmed Leacockian, confronted by "The Iron Man and the Tin Woman," diffidently admitted, between the lines, that the later Leacockiana was a falling off. Somebody is likely pretty soon to fail to take Stephen Leacock for granted, and to note that he is a strange case of mistaken identity—in short, not the humorist described in the invoice.

The volume in hand grasps at extreme contemporaneity by such labels as "Futurities" and "Little Sketches of Today and Tomorrow," and by the device of treating of robots and such. The tone, cast into jazz tempo, is the guffaw tone of the barbershop reading of the boom days of natural gas. Mr. Leacock took up, not exactly the clumsy mantle of Artemus Ward, but something like the alpaca coat of Robert J. Burdette. In a biographical utterance attached to the present volume he writes:

Apart from my college work, I have written eighteen books. . . . Any of them can be obtained, absurd though it sounds, for the mere sum of two dollars. Yet these works are of so humorous a character that, for many years, it was found impossible to print them. The compositors fell back from their task suffocated with laughter and gasping for air. Nothing but the invention of the linotype machine—or rather, of the kind of men who operate it—made it possible to print these books. Even now, people have to be very careful in circulating them, and the books should never be put into the hands of persons not in robust health.

That would have been good Bill Nye. In this our time I fear it is no laughing matter.

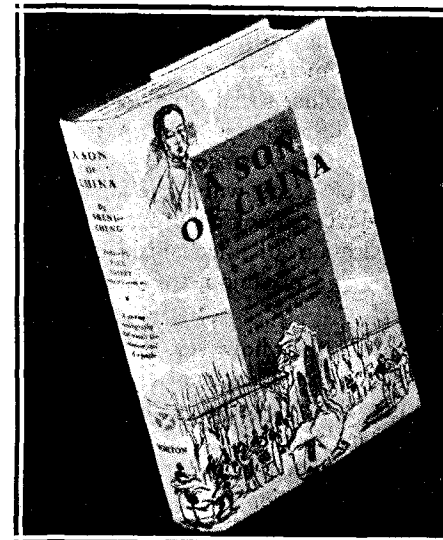


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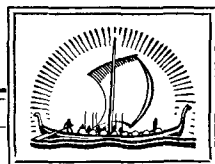
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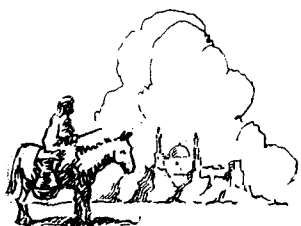
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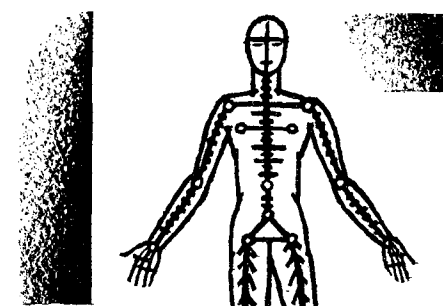


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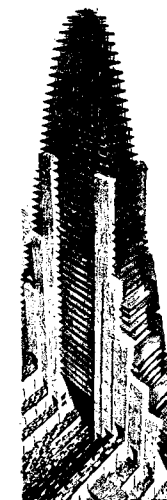
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