

India Changes

LANCER AT LARGE. By Francis Yeats-Brown. New York: The Viking Press. 1937. \$2.75.

Reviewed by LEONARD BACON

THE Lancer has returned from India with a very good book. It is almost immoderately informing. It is thoroughly entertaining. It is full of meaty commentary. And it combines expert thoroughness with attractive amateur nonchalance. I know no better guide for the beautiful, terrible, and superlatively comic world which is India than Major Yeats-Brown. First-rate powers of observation, sympathetic understanding, and a fine sense of the ironic have helped him to achieve what is pretty close to a masterpiece. This reviewer is impressed.

Since Pythagoras the word India has been loaded with imaginative ore for the Occident. The soldiers of Alexander, who chanted the oldest song in the world in the Hindu Kush passes, came back to Europe with yarns like those of more modern travelers. And we have been fascinated at all times by the same strange drama, the drama of a world of meditation exploited and conquered by a world of action—in vain. India has always specialized in high-grade conquerors who generally got nowhere. Alexander, Mahmoud of Ghazni, Timur, Babu, Albuquerque, Clive—through the wintry three-mile-high passes or over the summer ocean they came, put their mark momentarily on the land, yet left it in the same changeless contemplation of matters which their intemperate activity could not alter one jot. And the Occident still remains astonished and curious before religions exalted beyond Western comprehension or debased beneath Western endurance, before literature at least the equal of anything achieved by man's spirit, before art that carries the graceful or the obscene to the furthest limit, before science that was the mother of all

mathematics, and before a special understanding of man's inner life that transcends all that Europe has known or thought in that connection.

Nevertheless there is something new under her vertical sun. The world of meditation has looked at length in bewilderment at the world of action. Thoughtful Hindus are troubled by our view of the world as we are troubled by theirs. They feel themselves in the grip of Kali Yuga, the new time (see Major Yeats-Brown's glossary), and they are not at all sure that this means improvement. Thousands of voices debate the question for every sect and caste and race in all the hundred and forty tongues of the peninsula, and in defiance of the laws of Manu "pish and tush" is said to many a Brahmin these days. In short India is in the state of uneasiness which precedes mighty workings.

Through an India thus troubled, an India profoundly different from the India of his previous book, Major Yeats-Brown has traveled far, wide, and wisely. From Peshawar to Cape Comorin, from Calcutta to Bombay, in the heat of Travancore or the cool shadow of the great Hills, he has talked with all manner of men. Gandhi, Sir Anand Sarup, Sir Rabindranath Tagore, the Black Blanket Father, dervishes, harlots, Brahmins, Mahomedans, caste and outcast, out of every one of them he gets something. His friendly curiosity opens all doors without offence. And there is a gust of authenticity about his every report. Incidentally his commentary is delightful. I for one was amused by his observation on a story told him by Gandhi. Gandhi had been brutally attacked by a partisan. True to his tenets the Mahatma did not resist the blows and the assailant was immediately arrested by the police. Subsequently the criminal repented and apologized. "This," said Gandhi, "illustrates the efficacy of non-resistance." Yeats-Brown thinks that on the contrary it illustrates the useful-

ness of police. It seems to be a matter of emphasis.

But in some ways even more exciting than his pictures of changing India is the account of his private adventures with his gurus and his yogis. So much balderdash has been written about Hindu mysticism that it is a relief to encounter a thoroughly objective man who hunts facts and finds them. Yoga without the profit motive is a very different affair from the article that gets sold to "psychic" Park Avenue hostesses. There is little doubt that these strange practices have a factual basis in spite of Omnipotent Ooms and phoney mahatmas. The man with whom Yeats-Brown talked at Cape Comorin is certainly a magnificent creature. One would like to know him, as, for different reasons, one would like to know Erasmus or St. Thomas Aquinas. Men like that remarkable Swami have for centuries known and correlated phenomena which we have only begun to investigate, and it may well be, as Major Yeats-Brown says, that the twentieth century's great contribution to science will be the systematic study of such matters.

In short this is a remarkable and suggestive book. It has its lapses. But in the main it is full of interest and excitement. And every sort of compliment is due to a man who can take a newspaper assignment and produce a work full of poetry and insight. One closes it with regret, though happily aware that it always is possible to dip again into pages full of charm, vigor, and unpretentious wisdom.

Character Is Destiny

ROSE DEEPROSE. By Sheila Kaye-Smith. New York: Harper & Bros. 1937. \$2.50.

Reviewed by BASIL DAVENPORT

IN this story Miss Kaye-Smith has returned from her studies in the complex psychology of the seventeenth century to the English South Country and the Hardy-esque manner of her earlier novels. Rose is the daughter of a Kentish farmer; when we first see her, she is a warm-hearted, impulsive girl, and we watch her life deepen into womanhood through a series of complexities and tragedies, any one of which would have served a writer of less skill as the material for an entire book, and which are all linked together in a remorselessly logical sequence. For Rose is one of those characters whom the President of the Immortals chooses always to put in situations where, as in the ideal Aristotelian tragedy, their peculiar weakness is fatal. She has a deep capacity for tenderness, which, when we first see her, is concentrated upon her mother, and which leads her, as a schoolgirl, to a corresponding hardness against her father, a drunken ne'er-do-well. That tenderness remains with



FRONTIER TYPES IN SWAT. From "Lancer at Large."



SHEILA KAYE-SMITH

her all her life, but, because it is literally a tenderness, like the tenderness of the quick of the nail, it always makes her bitter when it is hurt, as she was bitter toward her father; and it, and her impulsiveness, which seems at first the charming weakness of an immature girl, lead her to rush blindly by the nearest way out of situations that could only have been cured by patience and taking thought. So, in trying to protect her mother from her father, she causes her mother's death; and so, since she will offer no consolation to her father or herself, he tries to remake his home by making her best friend her stepmother; so she escapes into marriage with a man she does not love; so the triangles form and reform, always more hopelessly, in this singularly rich book.

At first it appears that the book might have been written to illustrate the popular idea "Character is destiny"; and in reading it with that in mind, one is bound to miss, not from the narrative, but in some indefinable way from the style, the pure rigor of Hardy. Such a train of tragic circumstances, we feel, can be convincing only if a writer can make us feel for the time, because he feels, that there is an ironic Fate to which we are as flies to wanton boys; and that ultimate conviction is lacking here. But as one reads on one perceives why. For Miss Kaye-Smith has found (it is not too much to suggest that she learned it in her study of the contorted but always religious mind of the seventeenth century) the true meaning of "Character is destiny"; and it is not "Character is predestined." Character is free-will; Rose Deeprope, like a mouse in a psychologist's maze, may bruise herself against many blind alleys, but she finds the way out at last. It is a fit ending to a fine and moving book.

Waging Neutrality

WHY WE WENT TO WAR. By Newton D. Baker. New York: Harper & Bros. 1936. \$1.50.

Reviewed by RAYMOND J. SONTAG

WHY we went to war has ceased to be a question to be settled by historians in the light of the evidence. Despite the fact that no two historical situations are ever even approximately identical, men hope, by avoiding the mistakes which took us into the First World War, to keep us out of the apparently impending Second World War. There is little agreement on the nature of the mistakes, but until recently those who argued that we got into the war through mistakes, or even conspiracies, had the field pretty much to themselves. The counter-attack is now on in full force. Mr. Newton D. Baker's book, a reprint of an article which appeared originally in *Foreign Affairs*, is a most effective addition to the counter-attack, not only because of the prestige of the author's name, but because of the persuasive charm and force with which he presents his argument.

Despite its brevity, the book is hard to evaluate. As a description of the impact of events on a distinguished participant who was representative of a large segment of educated American opinion, it is altogether admirable. Here, in colors undimmed by age, we see the war in Europe as a conflict between two views of life, one altogether good, one altogether vicious. Here we see America as a nation set apart by Providence for the task of bringing a healing peace to the world, a peace which would overthrow the German will to world conquest and bring to fruition the ideals for which the Allies, although half-blinded by the agony of war, were really contending. Finally, we see the determination of America to reserve her energies for the task of establishing a just peace thwarted by the decision of Germany's rulers to embark on the unrestricted submarine campaign.

Confronted with this challenge, America could make but one reply. Until January, 1917, America had faithfully fulfilled her duties as a neutral, and had firmly insisted on her rights as a neutral. Where American property rights had been illegally impaired, protests and claims for compensation had been made. Compensation for the loss of life was impossible. So long as they could believe that the taking of American lives was not a necessary result of German policy, Americans had been patient. Only when informed that the German government had indeed made unrestricted submarine warfare a part of their "military adventure," did Americans resolve on war. No

other course was open to their government.

No government which conceded that some other government might kill its citizens in response to some exigency of its own, with no more serious consequence than a postponed attempt to secure a money compensation, would be intrinsically respectable or able to hold the confidence of its own people.

Not economics, not the propaganda of domestic or foreign interests, explained either American neutrality or the decision for war, but ideals, emotions if you will. This was the settled conviction of Mr. Baker at the time, and it continues to be his conviction. Men writing today may not hold these ideals or feel these emotions, but he argues that if scholars are honest they must not do violence to the facts, and in fact the men of 1914-1917 had ideals and acted on emotions.

So far, one can only rejoice that this book was written. Too often, recent studies of the war period have been marred by the unconscious refusal of their authors to admit that the intellectual climate of those years ever really existed. Would that the works of all historians could be put under the scrutiny of men who had lived through, felt through, the events described! Unfortunately, however, Mr. Baker is not content with the role of witness, and insists that his is also an historical study based on a study of the sources. In preparing for his work, he deliberately refrained from consulting his own papers. Instead, he spent "practically all the leisure of the last year" examining the historical evidence which has been made available to students since the war. He asks that his book be accepted as a detached and informed historical explanation of why we went to war.

Judged as a historical work, the book can only be described as inadequate. The historian would think his task only begun when he had described the dominant view of life among educated Americans. That very description raises two questions: How did they get that way? and How representative were these people of the whole American people? Mr. Baker apparently failed to realize even the necessity of asking these questions around which so much fruitful American scholarship has centered. Again, it is the obvious task of the historian, after describing the policy to which statesmen adhered, as Mr. Baker does, to proceed to an analysis of the skill or incompetence shown in executing the policy, as Mr. Baker does not do. Judgment, not intention, is the test of statesmanship. Specifically, is there any connection between the way America "waged neutrality" and the decision of the German government to resort to unrestricted submarine war-