Photographer Plus

I WITNESS. By Norman Alley. New York: Wilfred Funk. 370 pp. \$2.75.

Reviewed by LINTON WELLS

HIRTY years ago, Norman Alley went to work for the Chicago Tribune as a copy boy. His ambition was to become a reporter. Then he decided that "a picture is worth 10,000 words" and became a photographer. His autobiographical "I Witness" seems to justify the shift. Alley has demonstrated his right to an honored niche in the newsreel photographer's hall of fame. "I Witness" is good writing but poor reporting, even of his own courageous exploits.

Norman Alley's first newsreel feat was to photograph the Eastland steamship disaster in Chicago in July, 1915. His last (recorded) was to depict on celluloid the German army's invasion of the Low Countries and France.

In between these assignments, Alley was under fire with Pershing's Mexican expedition and a member of the Army Signal Corps, chronicling AEF activities in France. For 13 years thereafter, he covered football games, prize fights, prohibition raids, and gangster activities, and September, 1932, found him marooned on the coast of Greenland, after an ill-fated attempt to fly the Atlantic.

Several "prosaic years" of picture chasing followed this adventure, then, in 1937, Universal Newsreel jumped Alley to China and fame. He was aboard the United States Yangtsze River Gunboat Panay when it was bombed by Japanese airplanes and his exclusive cinematographic record of this inexcusable act of aggression enabled the United States Government to force an apology and indemnity from Japan. Alley's "I Witness" account of his splashing through the blood which flowed in the wake of Japanese aggression against China is the most interesting part of his autobiography and covers almost one-third of its contents.

After the *Panay* incident, Alley returned to more peaceful photographic pursuits in Los Angeles. Then came the war and Hearst's Newsreel sent him to Berlin. This part of "I Witness" is little short of dull, even though Alley was in Holland when the Nazis invaded the Low Countries. He went through the bombings of Holland and bicycled through Belgium and part of France in the wake of the German army, but about all you learn is that German successes were achieved through "foul trickery."

After the collapse of France, Alley went back to Berlin, then came home to America, bringing with him the

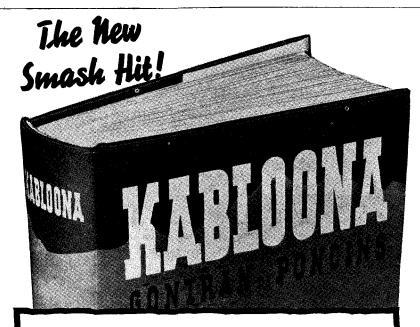
conviction that the German people are behind Hitler because they feel they have everything to gain and nothing to lose; that the subjugated nations will overthrow their present masters; and that democracy will triumph.

The impression left with the reader is that Mr. Alley was bored with his own life before and after the *Panay* adventure.

It is unfortunate that the publishers did not illustrate "I Witness" with some of the author's notable photographs.

It is also unfortunate that the author chose "I Witness" as a title, because it definitely conflicts with a recently published volume titled "Eye Witness," written by members of the Overseas Press Club.

Linton Wells is a news commentator for the Columbia Broadcasting System.



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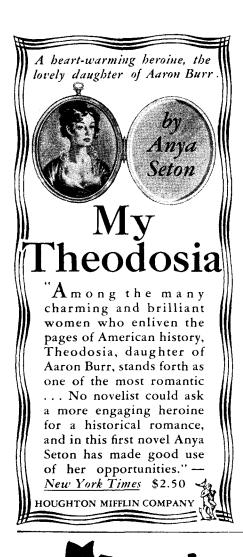
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Science and the Future

THE SOCIAL RELATIONS OF SCI-ENCE. By J. G. Crowther. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1941 665 pp.

Reviewed by CLIFFORD C. FURNAS

N two of his previous books, "Men of Science" and "Famous American Men of Science," Mr. Crowther presented outstanding accounts of the men, and their works, who were the principal figures in scientific development in the English speaking world. Those two books were not only good writing-they were good reading.

In "The Social Relations of Science" the historic approach still holds. The author takes up the history of significant ideas in science, and of important advances in experimental science and technology. He shows how they affected the social pattern and how the social pattern in turn affected the course of science. There are some slightly acrid effusions put in for the purpose of smoking the isolated academic purist out of his ivory tower. Then there are statements which attempt to outline what should be done. This attempt is disappointing—at least to the reviewer.

The author's political leanings are certainly not toward the conservative side, or he would never have written this book. From his introductory material one would gather that he believes that the future must bring some sort of advanced socialism which will really work. Although a quotation out of context is often unfair, it is probably safe to assume that the following paragraphs indicate his idea of the proper shape of things to come:

What will bring a return to increasing freedom? A method of establishing it by habit and law might be discovered in which all capital and big machinery is owned by the state, but the state itself is gov-erned by a purely political organiza-tion. No concrete counters for freedom would be employed. Contemporary events show the difficulty of governing this sort of state without a powerful police.

On the one side there is private ownership, spiritual vulgarity, and some independence; on the other there is communal ownership, moral dignity, and police supervision.

A review which deals only with the tone to the exclusion of the content of a book is certainly inadequate. So be it known that there are eightythree short chapters between the covers. The first is "Why Science Exists," the last "The Social Responsibilities of Scientists." Sampling at random in between one finds, Magic, Origin of Greek Theoretical Speculations, The Decline of Science at Alexandria, Rotary Power Machines, The International Collapse of a Social Order Based on Slavery, The Shape of Western Civilization Is Forged, Roger Bacon and Medieval Experimental Science, Clocks and Mills, Metal Mining, The Growth of Universities, Science and Freedom, The New Slave, The Raw Material of Everything. You can see that the volume covers a great deal, and (confidentially) it covers it well, it reads easily, and there are no prerequisites of credits in science courses. A great deal of scientific, technical, and historical information is presented and the author's interpretation of the interconnections is worth grasping. There is a well-selected bibliography at the end of each chapter, and a good index.

Everyone who has the slightest interest in the world as it is and will be, should have a shelf of books covering science and its social relations and impacts. This shelf would contain only the really significant books that have appeared in recent years, so it shouldn't be five feet long yet; only about eighteen inches. He should push the earlier volumes over to make room for Crowther's "The Social Relations of Science."

Clifford C. Furnas is associate professor of chemistry at Yale University.

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