

men, had less than fifty effectives after three months of uninterrupted marching and fighting. The 96th Chinese Division of 12,000 men lost 9,000 in three weeks. The 22nd Division lost half its strength in a month, and after the fall of Mandalay the 55th Division no longer existed at all.

By the end of April, 1942, Belden says that most of the towns of Burma had literally been burned off the face of the earth. Village, town, city, and jungle conflagrations were incessant accompaniments of the long retreat. Japanese incendiary bombs started the fires, and then Burmese looters, arsonists, thieves, and fifth columnists com-

pleted the destruction. Mandalay burned for twenty-seven days and nights, and at the end was merely a huge field of broken tiles and bricks and charcoal.

The story of events like these would be incredible if poorly told. Jack Belden has told it surpassingly well. In his hands it becomes high tragedy; it becomes a soul purge of pity and anger and terror; it even becomes a tale of shocking beauty coupled with bitter disillusionment.

And after the book has been read and closed, inevitably there comes the staggering question:—"What will happen if the Japanese thrust into India?"

they came closest to revealing the diabolical New Order which was to transform Africa into the political big-game haunt of the blue-eyed superman.

They had a fertile field for their activities because the Union of South Africa is addicted to the idea of white supremacy at the expense of the black majority. No amount of good will on the part of Smuts and the small band of enlightened workers in a noble cause could alter the ruling policy toward the natives.

South Africa's political life has been dominated by the Boers [writes Mr. James.] Because of them the blacks are forced to live under Hitler-like legislation. Their lot is far worse than the Negro's in the American South, where there are constitutional guarantees, if only in theory. From what I have been able to observe of the South African Bantu native and the way he is oppressed, I can state flatly that Hitler himself could not do a worse job.

The Boer point of view is that of the "master-race," which contends that might is the only answer to right. For every white person in the Union there are three colored people. The whites' way of solving this problem is to keep the natives in virtual slavery, stripped of the means to think and act, forced to live a life of dazed ignorance, at the mercy of their ruthless persecutors.

Moving beyond the confines of the South African Union, Mr. James introduces Portuguese Mozambique. He deals with Madagascar at some length, calls it the back door of Africa, explains why the British had to take it over from the Vichy-French. He tells the exciting story of the Belgian Congo in which the monstrous King Leopold II made the white man's name thrice accursed and where now the Belgian government in London performs one of the most blessed acts of enlightened colonial administration.

Mr. James then touches lightly on the problems of the Tanganyika Mandate. In his last chapter he summarizes the most important points of an intelligent policy for the future. He holds, naturally, that the black are not inferior to the whites, and that great deeds could be performed by introducing reforms. The natives' standards must be raised, they must be saved from the ravages of tropical diseases and of ignorance. The colonizing powers' objective must be to train the blacks for self-government.

Not only does this book contain a wealth of interesting and useful information but it is also very readable. Now that we are plunged into a global war, we might as well realize the fact that global ignorance is no virtue. America is in Africa for the duration and the vast region south of the Congo is a vital part of Africa.

## Plot and Counterplot in the Congo

*SOUTH OF THE CONGO.* By Selwyn James. New York: Random House. 1943. 347 pp. With map and illustrations. \$3.

Reviewed by EMIL LENGYEL

**E**VEN the "well-informed" could not stand their grounds in an Information Please program about that great *terra incognita* of South Africa. Some vague ideas about Prime Minister Smuts and Kimberley, the Afrikaaner and Witwatersrand are floating around on the crest of superficial knowledge, but only a very few people are familiar with the South African way of life, the domestic problems of that member of the British Commonwealth of Nations, and its key position in this war. It is one of the heaviest traveled wartime shipping routes that skirts the Cape. Hope for the United States and Britain's ability to supply the Middle East and southern Russia with the wherewithals of war would be slim, indeed, if the Union of South Africa were in hostile hands.

For these reasons alone Selwyn James's "South of the Congo" should have a warm welcome. He opens up a world which deserves far more than the nodding acquaintance we have with it. Selwyn James has seen a lot of that distant world, even though he is only in his twenties. One of those Englishman who know not merely how to travel but also how to see, he paid a visit to South Africa some years ago, found a job there as a journalist and commentator, and constituted himself a one-man Bureau of Investigation and Exploration. He traveled extensively south of the Congo, interviewing honest folks and Fascists, Premiers and native Kings. Intimate knowledge of the region is revealed on every page.

The principal theme of James's book is the Union of South Africa. Many of its soldiers are in the front lines

of fight against the Axis in North Africa. They come from a country in which the Fifth Column is on a rampage. That Fifth Column is a projection into the open of the latent antagonism of the Boer toward the British. It nearly succeeded in placing the South African Union in the strait-jacket of neutrality. In the South African parliament there is a large and very vocal Fascist group.

It was Prime Minister Jan Christiaan Smuts, one of the constructive statesmen of the age, who has forced the opposition to retreat from the front lines of the political battlefield into the rear lines of sullen reserve. He still has an extremely hard fight on his hands, since the Africa Firsters are well versed in the nefarious ways of selling their country short.

Mr. James traces the treasonable activities of the local totalitarians to the masterminds of the Nazis. He takes great pains to disentangle the skein of treasonable plots in which wild-eyed Nazi schemers indulged in the Southwest African mandate, which belonged to the Germans before the First World War. It was there that



Selwyn James

# The Art of Writing a Will

*"I Hereby Give, Devise, and Bequeath"*

MELVILLE CANE

CLEMSON SPARKS, inhabitant Connecticut, was a man of thrift and industry. Managing his small hardware business along prudential lines, he left an estate of \$13,000 when he died. He had an invalid wife, the sole object of his consideration, and also a prosperous grown son, who was estranged from his parents. Clemson intended, of course, to leave everything to his wife—but he just never got around to making a will.

His tombstone recites that he was a dutiful and affectionate husband, but the sad truth is that his wife received only one-third of his estate—about \$4,000 when incidental charges and legal fees were deducted—a sum quite insufficient for her needs. The unfilial son, meanwhile, came in for the other two-thirds—a windfall he didn't need and which his father never dreamed of bequeathing to him.

If you die without leaving a will ("intestate," as the lawyers call it) it often happens that your worldly goods will be distributed in ways quite foreign to your intentions, and possibly hurtful to your rightful heirs. Yet most inconsiderately *six out of every ten* property-holding individuals die without leaving explicit legal directions for disposal of their property.

Here's a "no will" mishap that occurs everyday. A man dies intestate leaving a widow and two infant children. Oh yes, he *meant* to give everything to his wife. But since there's no will, the widow gets only a third and each child receives a similar share. By law they *can't* give it to their mother; it can be disbursed only by court order until they are 21, and then only in small amounts for support and education. To heap up embarrassments, the mother must satisfy the court that her expenditures are for the best interests of her children. For these complications, don't blame the law. Put the blame where it belongs—on your own carelessness!

Consider the needless red tape of having the court appoint an administrator for your estate—which is what happens when you die without leaving a will. The administrator may be just the relative you yourself would *not* have chosen to look after your affairs. To guarantee that this administrator will not make away with your assets, the law requires that he put up a bond, which usually means paying a surety company an annual bond pre-

mium; this cost is defrayed by your estate. The surety company may insist on signing every check to be paid out for debts; funeral expenses, legacies, and the like—an annoying requirement. All this means more work and perhaps larger fees for the lawyer. And it's all quite unnecessary. Many a widow and orphan have been obliged to undergo such inconvenience, and, what's more, to suffer serious financial loss and injustice merely because a "last will and testament" wasn't made.

Husbands and fathers aren't the only ones who should make wills. Every wife should make a will of her own; should she fail to do so, her worldly goods may ultimately land in places far from her choice. If Mrs. Jones dies childless and without a will, Mr. Jones may find himself battling her relatives over home and savings which he originally gave to his wife, but which her relatives now automatically share. Such scenes are all too common in propertied families where the wife leaves no will.

In making your will, by all means consult a lawyer. For a simple will, the charge ranges between \$10 and \$25; some lawyers will even do the job for nothing as a gesture of good will toward their regular clients. The fee increases, of course, in proportion to the problems involved and to the size of the prospective estate. Beware of entrusting this all-important business to a notary public. He lacks the necessary legal knowledge of those menacing rules of procedure—differing from state to state—which, unless carefully observed, may render a will invalid. Furthermore, don't think you

yourself know the law and can save a few dollars by nailing together a homemade will. Don't get a "standard" form from a stationer and think you're safe in filling out the blank spaces. In a recent case in the Surrogate's court of New York County, a will was thrown out because a woman used a printed form on which the place for the witnesses' signatures was indicated on the wrong part of the page!

A will in most states must be signed by the person making it, whose signature must be witnessed by at least two persons who write their name *not* only in the presence of the testator, but in the presence of each other. A California will was broken because the witnesses left the room of the dying testator to find a pen; they found a pen in the next room and signed the will there. The court ruled the will invalid because they were not actually in the testator's presence as required by law.

(In a few states, however, no witnesses are necessary when a will is prepared entirely in your own handwriting and duly signed and dated. A Texas will which merely said: "I want my wife to have everything" stood up as staunchly as if it had been filled with legal flourishes.)

Some states require three witnesses. Two may be enough if at the time of making your will you live in a two-witness state. But if you should die as resident of a state that demands three signatories, your will may run into complications. So to be on the safe side, get three witnesses. In choosing witnesses, it is better to select persons younger and more likely to outlive you, for before your will can take effect these witnesses must appear in court and swear under oath that *they* saw it signed by you—and that each in turn saw the other witnesses sign. It is best also to select witnesses of some standing and permanence in the community; many a will has been held up while the hunt for fly-by-night witnesses went on. Be careful not to have as witnesses any person whom you are benefiting by a legacy; such a person may have to give up his legacy in order to qualify as a witness.

After you've made a will, it is advisable to leave the original with your lawyer and take home a carbon copy. Show it to your wife, parent, or friend so that they may know your wishes and thus be prepared to be guided by them. If this procedure is observed, seemingly strange provisions or odd bequests will not come as a shock to your bereaved ones when your will is read. From time to time both husband and wife should reexamine their wills to take care of changed conditions

(Continued on page 21)

