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The Making of an Exact Science

THE LIFE AND WORKS OF THE
HONORABLE ROBERT BOYLE. By
Louis Trenchard More. New York:
Oxford University Press. 1944. 313
pp. \$4.50.

Reviewed by WALDEMAR KAEMPFERT

ROBERT BOYLE was a scientist who led alchemy out of the marsh of mysticism and helped to make it an exact science. A cavalier landowner who ruled benignly over immense estates, he had the means to travel, study, acquire the accomplishments of a nobleman, and to experiment. Like Newton he was as much devoted to religion as to science, but made no impression on theology of importance, and like Newton he was one of the more distinguished members of the Royal Society and its president for a time. Though he was not free from the credulousness of his time (he believed in the spurious cures of Greatraks the "stroker") he was one of the leaders in the revolt against scientific dogmatism. He ranged over the whole field of science. With him originated the conception of an element, and it was he who introduced the tests for acidity and alkalinity. He devised a method of preparing phosphorous independently of Brandt, prepared hydrogen but failed to distinguish it from what he called "air generated *de novo*," discovered the law of gaseous elasticity, invented a compressed air pump, constructed the first hermetically sealed thermometers in England, first used freezing mixtures, observed the effect of pressure on boiling, dabbled in electricity

and magnetism, determined the specific gravities and refractive powers of various substances, and attempted to weigh light. It was as an exponent of the experimental method that Boyle shone.

Dr. More reviews Boyle's accomplishments and place in science in a biography which is intended for scholars who are interested in the history of science, but which can be read with profit by any one. He places Boyle where he belongs as a skeptical scientist who must rank with Newton, Kepler, and Galileo even though he made no discovery of the Newton or Galileo magnitude and served primarily in guiding science, especially chemistry, into the channels that it has followed for the last three centuries. Dr. More is much more than a chronicler. He is both a critic and interpreter. Yet this reviewer wishes that a more modern approach had been made. No scientist makes discoveries as if he were not influenced by the social atmosphere in which he lives. Dr. More knows it but treats these social influences much too casually. Yet this is a book which stands out as a well written and conscientious account of a great scientist's life and works and which deserves a much better index than the one provided.

ANSWERS TO LITERARY QUIZ

1. "Don Quixote," by Cervantes.
2. "Pinocchio," by Carlos Collodi.
3. "The Three Musketeers," by Alexandre Dumas.
4. "The Hunchback of Notre Dame," by Victor Hugo.
5. "Treasure Island," by Robert Louis Stevenson.
6. "Bob Son of Battle," by Alfred Ollivant.
7. "Vanity Fair," by William Makepeace Thackeray.
8. "Martin Chuzzlewit," by Charles Dickens.
9. "Through the Looking Glass," by Lewis Carroll.
10. "David Copperfield," by Charles Dickens.
11. "The Sign of the Four," by Conan Doyle.
12. "Beautiful Joe," by Marshall Saunders.
13. "Adam Bede," by George Eliot.
14. "Penrod," by Booth Tarkington.
15. "Far From the Madding Crowd," by Thomas Hardy.
16. "Captain Blood," by Rafael Sabatini.
17. "Topper," by Thorne Smith.
18. "Beau Geste," by P. C. Wren.
19. "So Little Time," by John Marquand.
20. "Anthony Adverse," by Hervey Allen.

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MAY 20, 1944

American "Loyalists"

TREASON. By Robert Gessner. New York: Charles Scribner's & Sons. 1944. 383 pp. \$2.75.

Reviewed by RICHARD A. CORDELL

"TREASON" is possibly the most cynical novel yet written about the American Revolution, cynical not because the author is skeptical about causes and objectives of the audacious move to secede from the mighty empire, but because he frankly treats the war primarily as a civil conflict with not many more than half the colonists desiring independence, and with the native opponents of self-government more ob-

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structive and insidious than the British themselves. The title of the novel refers to the defection of Benedict Arnold, who passed from the Revolution's most spectacular and perhaps most successful general to our first notable quisling. The novel adequately traces the roots of his discontent, and without condoning his betrayal makes it at least in part understandable. The story might have been even more powerful if Arnold were the central character, but the novelist chooses to make one of the general's young aides the chief adventurer in this somewhat cynical romance.

The most striking feature of "Treason" is its topicality. Perhaps the author stresses too hard the parallelism between the 1770's and our day, but the likenesses are startling and depressing. The property-minded wanted not a better world but a more profitable one. Colonial fascists feared mobocracy and any change that would affect business. When the right to exploit and profiteer was challenged, the familiar cry about "good old free American enterprise" was raised. The petty struggles between individual colonies and the Congress over "rights" blocked the prosecution of the war and hamstringed Washington. Other parallels are even more pointed: Jew-baiting, use of the phrase "new order," the scorched-earth policy, the brass-hat generals (with General Gates the brassiest hat of them all), the gathering of Tories at "Cliveden," the great country house at Germantown, etc. The contemporaneity may be overdone a bit for some readers, but it is, on the whole, effective. There is a persistent modernity about the characters and their thinking; and although one is conscious of 18th century manners, furniture, dress, etc., one is grateful to the novelist for not pushing that century down our throats.

Much of the story takes place in Philadelphia, the most notorious Loyalist center. In Boston and New York practically all the upper class opposed the war, but in Pennsylvania the majority of people of all classes from the beginning to the end of the struggle opposed independence. Toward the end of the book the scene shifts to West Point, from which in an exciting climax Arnold escapes to the British lines. The story does not deal with his tragic after-years. The Hemingway-like romance between Arnold's young aide and the rebel daughter of a Loyalist merchant gives a conventional framework to the novel, but our sharpest interest is in Arnold and his Tory wife, the "perennial college senior" Hamilton, the foppish André, the rigid, upright Washington, and other historical figures who come to life in the pages of this vigorous novel.

M. Cot's Reply

TRIUMPH OF TREASON. By Pierre Cot. Chicago: Ziff-Davis Publishing Co. 1943. 432 pp. \$3.50.

Reviewed by FREDERICK GRUIN

TEN years ago Pierre Cot was one of the bright young men of French politics. A small, intense, dapper Savoyard, he came of devout Catholic, *petit bourgeois* stock. Only thirty-seven, he had served through World War I, had been a professor of law, had learned practical politics as the mayor of his mountain village and as a Radical Socialist Deputy in the Chamber at Paris. Then, between 1933 and 1938, the traditional struggle of Right and Left reached a peak of bitterness. Few Frenchmen fought more ardently for the Popular Front than Pierre Cot; few were more savagely smeared by the reactionary opposition. During his tenure as Popular Front Aviation Minister he was called a tool of Moscow, an administrative bungler, the wrecker of French aviation. When the men of Vichy took power, they deprived Pierre Cot of his citizenship, made him along with Leon Blum and Edouard Daladier a scapegoat of French defeat, pilloried him in absentia at the notorious, abortive Riom Trial of 1941.

"Triumph of Treason" is Pierre Cot's reply to his calumniators. It is also a powerful, dignified defense of the Popular Front and a stinging, mordant attack on the Vichyites. M. Cot wrote his work while in exile in the United States, put into it all his legal and scholastic skill, designed it as an exhaustive analysis of the true causes of French defeat. In this book those who believe that Washington's appeasement of Vichy and the vestiges of Vichy in North Africa stands as one of the sorriest blunders of American foreign policy will find ample argument for their point of view.

M. Cot argues as a confirmed Leftist, as a self-styled democrat who would never trust French or European democracy in the hands of the Right. He says: "I believe that a synthesis, uniting the spirit of the French and Russian Revolutions, can give Europe the formula capable of renewing its political ideology and rejuvenating its democracies." He quotes Clemenceau's remark: "The men of the Right . . . are not only stupid but the wickedest." He asserts that "the state of mind of the French Fascists, for a democrat, is as difficult to understand as it is for a civilized man to understand the state of mind of the Hottentot." On the men of the Right he puts the blame for French misfortune.

The essential causes of his country's