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Army Nurse  
in Action  
at the Front



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## The Medicos Have Their Say

*DOCTORS AT WAR. Edited by Morris Fishbein. New York: E. P. Dutton & Company. 1945: 418 pp. \$5.*

Reviewed by  
WALDEMAR KAEMPFERT

IT was a happy idea to ask the physicians who organized and directed the gigantic medical effort of this war to tell the story of their accomplishments. The work to which they have contributed and which Dr. Fishbein has edited is the best comprehensive survey of its subject that we are likely to have until the Division of Medical Sciences of the National Research Council publishes its promised report in fourteen monumental volumes.

When we find that the death rate in wounded was 8.1 per cent in World War I, but only 3.3 per cent in World War II, that the annual death rate per 1,000 for all diseases in the Army, excluding surgical conditions, was 15.6 per cent in World War I but only 0.6 per cent in World War II, it is evident that the medical record of the Army and Navy in this war is impressive. Drugs such as the sulfonamides, penicillin, gramacidin, tyrothricin, and DDT powder, methods of drying and shipping blood plasma to the front, the progress made in surgery, especially in nerve and orthopedic surgery, only partially explain why so many of the wounded and the diseased were saved. The country's medical resources had to be mobilized and organized, and it is with this colossal task of mobilization and organization that "Doctors at War" largely deals.

As might be expected successes are glorified, as they deserve to be, but failures are either minimized or entirely ignored. These failures affected

the civilian population—chiefly the workers in industry. When they write on medicine and surgery in war the contributors to this volume are at their best, but when they write on the social aspects of medicine they are at their worst.

Colonel Leonard G. Rowntree, chief of the Medical Division of the Selective Service System, and Dr. Harold S. Diehl, of the Procurement and Assignment Service, are the principal soft-pedallers. The Procurement and Assignment Service was charged by Executive Order with the responsibility of distributing physicians, dentists, and veterinarians to meet not only the needs of the Army, but also of the civilian population. It succeeded so far as the first task was concerned; it failed in performing the second. The reasons are two. One is the control over the Service exercised by the American Medical Association, and the second is a lack of authority.

Though industry had to give up "business as usual" and submit to drastic regulation of production and control of prices, organized medicine insisted on free enterprise and "practice as usual." An effort was made to shift physicians about so that the needs of the "boom towns," which had mushroomed in a few months from villages into industrial centers, could be met. The failure was deplorable, even if we allow for the Procurement and Assignment Service's lack of authority. Colonel Rowntree does his best to polish up the showing, but the surveys of the U. S. Public Health Service speak for themselves. Dr. Diehl goes so far as to misrepresent grossly on page 87 an editorial writer who, according to him, proposed that physicians should seek appointments in the

## The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, and Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
BEDELIA <i>Vera Caspary</i> (Houghton Mifflin: \$2.50)	Appealing wife, pretty, wide-eyed, and fragile, turns out to be something else again—as husband discovers.	Forthright portrayal of lady with considerable past who finally gets her come-uppance. Plenty of suspense and abundant shivers.	Absorbing
THE CASE OF THE COPY HOOK KILLING <i>Royce Howes</i> (Dutton: \$2.)	Newspaper crank-appeaser bopped and stabbed. Capt. Ben Lucias finds the slayer.	Some veracious newspaper stuff, a second killing, a helpful city editor, and customary logical Lucias sleuthing.	Adequate
TIGHT ROPE <i>Allison L. Burks</i> (Duell, Sloan & Pearce: \$2.50)	Girl masquerading as dead grand-daughter of ailing California woman becomes involved in two murders. Local sheriff disentangles her.	Much harassed heroine, pleasant cast of subordinate characters, unobtrusive but effective sleuth—and an exceptionally well concealed criminal.	Very good!

Public Health Service, whereupon they would "be assigned to care for the civilian population in all areas in which shortages of physicians existed." The editorial writer in question proposed nothing of the kind. He did propose the drafting of all the physicians in private practice and their inclusion in the Public Health Service, so that they could be sent where they were needed. Congress actually considered such a plan but rejected it because of organized medicine's intransigent demand that physicians be allowed to practise as usual. The Public Health Service was itself in favor of the plan, but advanced it much too timidly. Dr. Diehl's statement that physicians could not have been shifted about under orders without a National Service Act is untrue. Additional legislation was not required. A public law on the books for over a generation gives the President the authority to act in a national emergency.

Closely connected with this failure of organized medicine to rise to the needs of civilians is the matter of the nation's health. Dr. Fishbein, Colonel Rowntree, indeed all the contributors to this volume who have occasion to refer to the subject, state that the nation's health was never better than during the war. This is true, but it is advanced as an argument that the civilian population has little reason to complain. The truth is that we have been coasting along—cashing in on the work done ten and more years ago. If the war were to last five years more the effect would be noticeable. As a matter of fact there has been an alarming rise in tuberculosis, which speaks for itself.

In the same spirit Dr. Fishbein, Colonel Rowntree, and others brush aside the draft boards' wholesale rejection of men in the flower of life. We do not expect every man to be an Ajax or every woman to be a Venus de Milo, but we do expect less malnutrition, fewer dental defects, a better control of the venereal diseases, a more frequent recourse to the physician in a country which claims to have the best medicine in the world. Colonel Rowntree has to admit that "not only do defects abound but the physical fitness of the youth of the nation is at a low ebb."

The most complete job of white-washing seems to have been done by Dr. Charles M. Griffith, Medical Director of the Veterans' Administration. In a contribution which sets forth what the Veterans' Administration offers to men who will return wounded or diseased he says nothing of the attacks to which his organization has been subjected. The soldiers distrust the Veterans' Administration. In the fiscal year 1944 over fifty per cent of those afflicted with tuberculosis left

the hospitals of the Veterans' Administration against medical advice or without permission. The situation is such that *The Journal of the American Medical Association* has demanded an investigation. But on all this Dr. Griffith is silent.

It is pleasant to turn from the social to the military and naval record. Here there is abundant evidence of high intelligence, organizing ability, devotion both to medicine and to the men at the front. No one can read what the Surgeon General of the Army and Navy have to say about doctors and surgeons in action without gratitude. And so with Brigadier General James S. Simmons on "Preventive Medicine in the Army," Major General Paul R. Hawley on "How Medicine in the European Theatre of Operations Pre-

pared for D. Day," Captain French R. Moore on "The Doctor at Guadalcanal and Tarawa," Major General David N. W. Grant on "The Medical Mission in the Army Air Forces." Surgeon General Parran of the Public Health Service leaves no doubt that his organization performed its task well under trying conditions. Particularly good is Dr. George B. Darling's account of the way in which the National Research Council planned and conducted medical research.

This volume is a compendium so valuable that it will long serve as a reference text to those whose duty it will be to comment on one scientific aspect of the war. And if the contributions read better than medical English usually does, the credit must go to Mr. John Tebbel.

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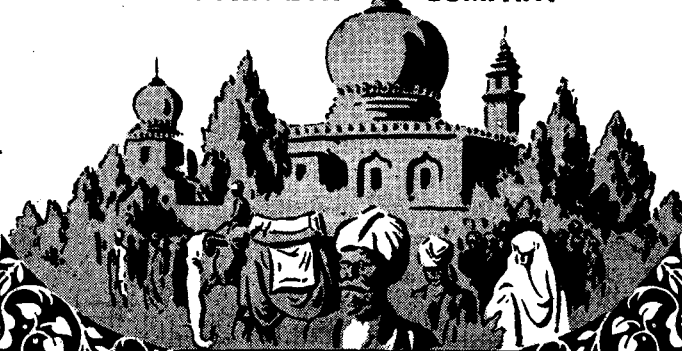
# MY INDIAN FAMILY

BY HILDA WERNHER

When her daughter married a Muslim, Hilda Wernher was welcomed into her son-in-law's family with genuine affection. Month after month their need for her intensified, until, following her daughter's death, she found herself expected to play the role of mother to the heart-broken widower—even to the point of finding him a new wife immediately. On the experiences that followed, she has based this rich and intimate portrait of Muslim family life and the strange customs of a colorful land.

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# the Phoenix Nest

**K**ATHARINE GARRISON CHAPIN, the distinguished poet and wife of former Attorney-General Francis Biddle, sends me the following poem written by her son, who is at present stationed with the Air Force in India:

## A LAST GLIMPSE

Here in this sheltered valley  
Drink in the warm white light.  
Taste once more the ripe fruit,  
The orange bursting with juice,  
The sweet clustered date,  
The twining grape  
Twisted on thick clumps of stalks.

This is your last glimpse, soldier.  
Fix in your eye the massive ridge  
Caught in pink and grey twilight.  
Store in your mind the mountain snow  
Cresting the wall against the wind.  
Hold this all and loll  
In the friendly morning sun.

You will remember this place  
When you are cold with loneliness;  
You will dream of palm and orange  
Looking at miles of blue water,  
Turning your collar against a chill  
wind.

When you feel the heave of wave  
That breaks far from shore,  
This nostalgic spark will warm you.  
So hold fast to this rich land  
In the face of oncoming storm.

PVT. RANDOLPH BIDDLE, A.A.C.S.

\* \* \*

And my friend down in Mexico, the poet Witter Bynner, sends me the following:

## THE SENTENCE

I cannot write prose, but I try  
And the rhythms will come by and by:  
I shall take to my bed  
And, to earn being dead,  
I shall finish one sentence and die.

That is about the way I feel at present, as I am toying with the idea of writing a novel.

\* \* \*

Earle Walbridge writes me:

Last summer we were speaking of Marjorie Bowen and her "Viper of Milan." (To paraphrase:

There lived a Viper in Milan  
Wrought for a madness unto  
Man. . . .)

Also of Joseph Shearing, who is also Marjorie Bowen (and in real life Mrs. Gabrielle Campbell Long). Now I point with pride to an inscribed copy of the latest Shearing novel, "The Abode of Love" (London: Hutchinson, 1944), which, contrary to custom, has no murder—only a barely averted crucifixion! Mrs. Long writes me that the book is taken from the lives of Henry Prince and Smyth Piggott, who ran an "abode of love" in Somerset for the last half of the last century. The Shearing cult would also be glad, I think, to add these origins to the discussion of Shearing plots in the *SRL* four years ago. "Aunt Beadie" is derived chiefly from an actual case in Gaston Lenôtre's "Vielles Maisons Vieux Papiers," which contains a portrait of that strange personage of the French Terror. The source for "The Spider in the Cup" (English title: "Album Leaf") was an odd book about crime, in French, which had neither author nor date nor title-page; it was found in the London Library and later lost there in a blitz. Joseph Shearing "used the governess in the chateau helping the heir-at-law to poison his relatives by means of anthrax venom and nothing else—the rest is my invention." Mrs. Long concluded her last letter, "I always enjoy writing both the [George] 'Preedy' (what a name!) and the Shearing novels."

\* \* \*

My old friend, "Jimmy" James—Professor E. O. James to you, now Professor Emeritus at Mills College, California, sent me the following back the end of January, saying it was grand not to have to teach, and that he had tossed off the poem instead. I hope with the proper accompaniment of Chian! He remarked "a poem should not mean but be wacky." I am glad to print it in the dog-days when only mad dogs and Englishmen, according to Noel Coward, go out in the mid-day sun. Professor James was an old friend of the late Vachel Lindsay.

**The Senile Professor Hangeth up his Echoing Lute—and All That.**

We drank the drink we ne'er had drunk  
and round and round we flew  
meandering mazelily toward  
lilacious Xanadu  
where Abyssinian maids tut-tutted

while lotus-lewd and black  
star-splintering Capricornus butted  
around the Zodiac  
caliphs of seven citron-appled  
kingdoms while seven times seven  
blessed and balmy damosels  
at the gold bar of heaven  
troubled the clove and crystal-lucent  
cisterns of Chian wine  
ran sibilant through many a woven  
acanthus wreath divine  
wetting a winsome plot. Cool grot.  
God wot. (We hope.) Withdrawn,  
palpable, mute as fruit, we waited  
the dawn.

\* \* \*

Agnes Armstrong of Fishermans Lane, South Portland, Maine, has asked me about a ballad I once had in *The New Yorker*. It was "Ballad of a Ballad Singer," and concerned the Negro champion of the twelve-string guitar, Leadbelly, discovered by John A. Lomax. She continues with the following items:

A small, no-pay magazine, published in Boston, during 1903, called *Wisdom*, subscription rates: twelve cents a year, two cents a copy. It touched on the current stage, had an article on Zola; but the chief contents were fiction stories, one of them being by Agnes Armstrong, then under the influence of Jerome K. Jerome, and using the penname of Agnes Jerome.—This was the first time I had appeared in print and I do not have to explain to you, an author, my reaction to this virgin ecstasy. Somewhat later, I managed to get a foothold in *Leslie's Weekly* (one cent-a-word). However, by that time, "The Thrill Had Gone." Item Number 2 is a love-ballad called "The Sailor's Lament," written by a certain traveling-balladist from New Hampshire, one Willy Wolfe, the year after the ending of our Civil War.—It came about in this way: two young Maine lads were staying overnight in the old Revere House, in Boston. Young Pat, he of the lamentations, had abandoned a beautiful, but faithless, young wife and was, being a sailor, on his way to foreign parts unknown. The lad accompanying Pat was a relative of my mother's and had gone as far as Boston to see the lover off and bid him a long farewell. However, the balladist, who did a brisk trade in love-worn ballads, had been listening in on the

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## SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 591)

KARL SHAPIRO:

*SUNDAY: NEW GUINEA*

The bugle sounds the measured  
call to prayers.

I long for our dishevelled Sun-  
days home,  
Breakfast, the comics, news of  
latest crimes,  
Talk without reference, and pal-  
indromes,  
Sleep, and the Philharmonic, and  
the ponderous *Times*.