

full-scale eruption of Vesuvius and the feeble efforts of man.

In Naples one must be prepared for the improbable and the fantastic. Thus when the British Navy went to take formal possession of the island of Capri various delegations were lined up on the quay to welcome them as liberators. But the last delegation — that of the military commandant — informed them that the island had been surrendered on the previous day to an American naval officer. And what was his name? Why, it was Lieutenant Commander Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. (It is barely conceivable that this historical event may have been recorded for posterity in motion pictures.) And what was the name of the Italian naval commander at Capri? It was, so help me, Michelangelo Buonarroti.

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CECIL ROBERTS is a cultivated and witty Englishman who recently revisited Rome after an interval of thirty years. He says that he felt it a piece of effrontery to add another book to the many thousands about the city but he need have no misgivings for his "And So to Rome" is one of the best of the lot. Rome is the most overwhelming of all cities and no one book can attempt to describe it. But Mr. Roberts has been singularly successful in capturing its flavor by selecting a few widely varied historical anecdotes and telling them in a vivid and polished style.

His best chapter gives the curious story of the twilight of the Stuarts. Bonnie Prince Charlie had become an elderly brutal sot, "drunk half the day and mad the other half," so that his "Queen," the beautiful Countess of Albany, whom in his mad fits of intoxication he beat and occasionally tried to choke, took as her lover the brilliant poet Count Alferi. Emperors, princes, popes, artists, and saints are vividly evoked. The excellent illustrations are not always chosen with discrimination. One would gladly exchange the exasperatingly familiar pictures of the Castel St. Angelo and the Roman forum for a portrait of Federigo Gonzaga or the elderly Charles Stuart. The fine portraits of the Countess of Albany and Thomas William Coke add such interest to their story that one wishes there were more like them.

In addition to the Stuarts, the author has selected many other English historical characters who have taken part in the Roman pageant, such as Cardinal Wolsey, who, magnificently as always, entertained sumptuously in the Palazzo Giraud. There are also descriptions of more recent

entertainments that struck a nostalgic chord for your reviewer, who luckily took part, on the eve of the First World War, in some of the last of these displays of another era.

The grandeur that was Rome was very grand indeed. The Doria palace covers nearly as much ground as the Coliseum; the "Salone d'Ecole" in the Farnese Palace was made the exact width of the nave of old St. Peter's so that its oak trusses dating from the time of Constantine could be used again. These trusses served their purpose for a thousand years but, alas, were cut up into firewood during the First World War.

Just as the Roman earth will yield antique fragments when its surface is disturbed, so one who spends some time in Rome is sure to find himself in some startling contact with the past. Thus when I was entering the Farnese Palace one day in 1914 the superb porter (who bore — legitimately or not — one of the great Roman princely names) drew me into his office. On a table under a black cloth two oblong shapes were discernible, grimly suggesting corpses. With a dramatic gesture he whipped off the cloth, saying "Michelangelo!" A gigantic pair of powerfully modeled marble legs lay exposed to my astonished eyes. He immediately produced a grimy copy of Vasari, pointing to a passage which told the story of the Farnese Hercules, somewhat as follows: When the statue was unearthed the legs from the knees to the ankles were lacking and the Pope commissioned Giacomo della Porta and Michelangelo to replace the missing parts. Some years later the original pieces were found and the restorations discarded.

The porter continued the story. When the French Government bought the palace for their Embassy these fragments, found in the attic, were given to him as a tip. So here before me were the pillars of Hercules from the hand of Michelangelo himself — and the same porter was offering them for a \$160! For various reasons — diplomatic as well as financial — I could not buy them and I nearly cried to miss such a bargain. The war came swiftly and I never learned what happened to them but there was a rumor that my superb porter — the doorman at the French Embassy — had been executed as a German spy.

During the last war Lawrence Grant White, who has translated "The Divine Comedy," served briefly as liaison officer on the staff of the British admiral commanding the Naples area. He also lived in Rome as secretary to the USA Ambassador.



Palazzo to Pizza

FOOTLOOSE IN ITALY. By Horace Sutton. New York: Rinehart & Co. 344 pp. \$4.

By BERNARD KALB

THE HOLY YEAR tourist heading for Italy this summer would do well to rush down to the store tonight and purchase a copy of this book. For Horace Sutton, operating as a one-man Cook's, has managed to cram the history, the spirit, the sights, the customs that are Italy's into 344 pages — and has done it in style. Readers of his travel columns in the *SRL* won't be surprised to find this book enthusiastic, well-paced, witty, yet studded with down-to-earth information needed to smooth the way from New York to the Uffizi Galleries in Florence.

Sutton is no Baedeker and, I suspect, the reader will be glad of it. He provides a sensible list of art treasures and ruins in Italy that must be seen but, as he says in the foreword, the book "is more occupied defining the difference between a *palazzo* and a *pizza*, telling you which you ought to visit and which you ought to eat." He has done an excellent job, too, of ushering the uninitiated from Northern Italy down to Sicily, pointing out the sights on the way. A capsule history of Rome, the Vatican, the Lakes, the Riviera, the South, and Sicily is provided but he has concentrated on the mood of Italy today. Scattered throughout the book are details such as the best hotels in most of the cities and the smartest shops for a Borsalino hat. Moreover, the book includes the best side trips, restaurants (with addresses), food specialties, and so on, all of which make the junket in Italy that much more pleasurable.

A handsome book, with photographs mostly by the author, "Footloose in Italy" is good reading for every variety of tourist — the armchair type, the sightseer in Italy, and the nostalgic ex-, conspiring for a return trip. It's my feeling that Sutton's book will send more people hustling to Italy than a handful of pictures of Capri's women in Bikini swimsuits.

Fiction. Two memorable novels and a fine murder story that is not a mystery lead the fiction reviews this week. Perry Wolff's first novel, "*The Friend*," is rated as one of the best novels of infantry combat since it has a professional quality, so that the reader is certain that this is what a battle is like and also the way men really act in combat. In her moving account of one day in the life of a group of simple people *Viña Delmar* writes about a stalwart woman and the lodgers sheltered under her roof. "*Fiddler's Green*," by Ernest K. Gann, an unusual tale of a murderer who is never caught, is set among deep-sea fishermen. It is primarily a study of the effect of murder on the characters and their changing relationship to each other. Grace Vishner Payne, the wife of a missionary, has gone to Iran for her novel, "*The Unveiling*," the story about a girl from a religious Mohammedan family who becomes a Christian convert.

War Experience, Second Level

THE FRIEND. By Perry Wolff. New York: Crown Publishers. 207 pp. \$2.75.

By ARTHUR C. FIELDS

THIS is one of the best novels of infantry combat that has been written to date. It is almost professional in its assumption of knowledge on the reader's part. If you do not know how a trip-wire connects with a mine one very exciting chapter will lose some of its flavor for you. If you cannot think in an infantryman's frame of thought you may fail to see the dramatic rebuttal in smashing a radio it has cost four men's lives to bring up to the lines. If overlays and the importance of message centers are not clear then the removal of a regimental commander from his post may be difficult for you to understand. This novel describes the way men really act in combat. Stoddard, cowering in the dirt "knew what should be done. . . . They should try a covering counter-attack with a small group of men. It would divert enough fire to permit the greater part of the trapped men to escape. . . . Anyone who suggested the plan would have to stay with the covering force. The idea would occur to another soldier; he would wait until it did."

This is the story of an attack on the Siegfried Line and the desperate attempts of an American battalion to reorganize itself after having been cut off in ambush. As a story of the mechanics of battle—the conferences, the personal animosities, the tactics of warfare—it is adequate; as a story of the battle itself—the fighting and fear ("His brains were jelly. A spider had entered his anus and was walk-

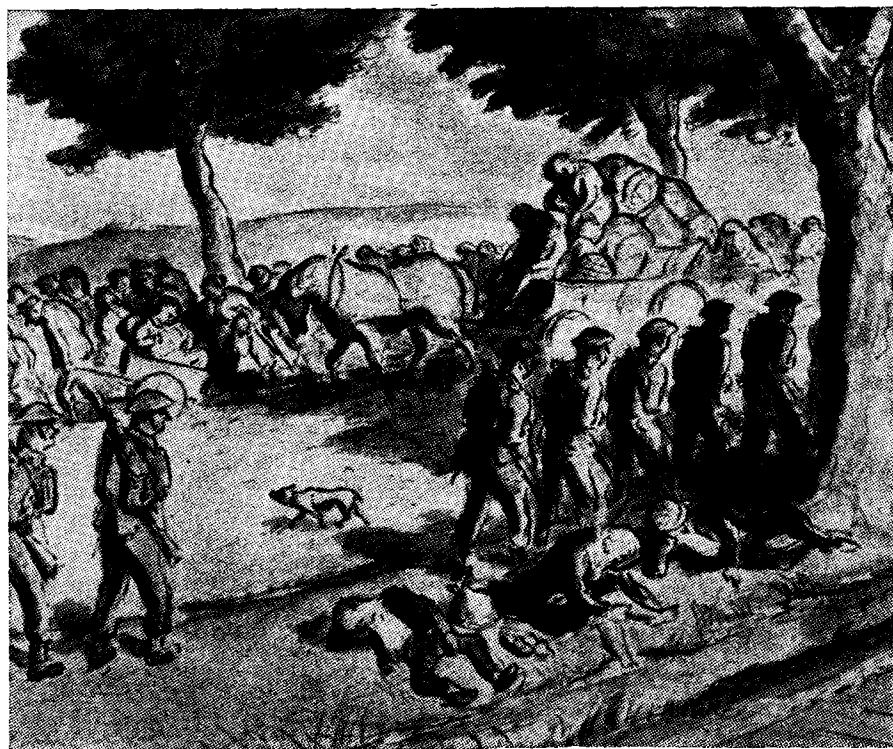
ing through the large intestine, brushing his hairy legs against the wall"), the anger and hollow exhaustion—it is superb. What remains for an unqualified recommendation? Unfortunately, the relationship between the main character, Harris, and Stoddard, his friend.

In a way, Mr. Wolff has stacked the cards against himself. He writes so well of war and its violent emotions that when he begins discussing friendship it sounds anticlimactic, if not banal. It is difficult enough writing about the bond that ties two men

together; but when that bond is set against the thunderous background of war it proves too slight and gives way under the strain. This friendship the author himself feels is never made real to the reader. Stoddard is acceptable enough as another character, even an important character, but when it comes to hanging the entire meaning of a thrashingly alive war novel on the worth of his friendship, he is not built up enough to stand firm under the load. The author makes his friendship dependent upon reaction to combat: he sees there are various faces to friendship and war brings most of them out; yet when he is through it is the war, not the friendship, that remains in the memory.

But that does not nullify the contribution of this book to the war literature of World War II. Tyde, the war correspondent, remarks: "A great book about the war would find the universal emotions of the men who are fighting it." Not the individual emotions, not the unique experiences and anecdotes, but the deep-down, honest-to-God feelings that were common to the Air Corps and the Marines. These are the core, these are the meaning, these are the province of the novels of the second level of war experience, of which Perry Wolff's "*The Friend*" is an excellent example.

Arthur C. Fields is author of the recently published war novel "*World Without Heroes*."



—From "War Pictures by British Artists."

"On the Road to Louvain," by Edward Ardizzone.