

A Mighty Blade

THE SCALPEL, THE SWORD. By Ted Allan and Sydney Gordon. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 336 pp. \$5.

By MARGUERITE CLARK

READING this absorbing account of Norman Bethune's experiences as surgeon, teacher, critic, and inventor of surgical devices, one is struck by the tremendous medical advances in the last twenty-five years. In 1927 Dr. Bethune was one of the first tuberculosis patients in North America to undergo surgical collapse of the lung in the treatment of his disease; now artificial pneumothorax is routine in almost any tuberculosis sanatorium. In Madrid in 1936 the Canadian doctor, who had joined the cause of the Spanish Loyalists, was the first to organize a successful blood transfusion unit on a battlefield. Today in Korea helicopters fly forward with whole blood to transfuse soldiers within an hour after they are wounded. In China in 1939 Bethune brought a small surgical unit to the front lines and operated under shell-fire. Now in Korea surgery at the front and at evacuation and field hospitals is handled so expertly that the mortality rate among the wounded has been cut to 2.3 per 100 men. (In the First World War it was eight per 100 men; in the Second World War, 4.5 per 100 men.)

Yet in spite of his pioneering zeal in his own science Bethune's death in 1939 came under the most primitive medical conditions. He died in Shansi Province, China, of septicemia, the result of operating on Chinese soldiers without rubber gloves and the lack of sulfa drugs for treatment. In a message to the people of Canada at that time Dr. Richard Brown of Toronto, a medical missionary on duty with Bethune, said, "Norman Bethune boasted that he was a Communist [the doctor had joined the Party in Canada in 1937]; I say he was a saint of God!"

At other times in his short career (he died at forty-nine) this extraordinary man had been called everything from an idealist to a demon. His biography, written with admirable warmth and scientific precision by two fellow Canadians, goes a long way toward explaining the paradox of a man who was at once misunderstood and worshipped.

A descendant of a long line of

Marguerite Clark is editor of the medicine department of Newsweek and author of "Medicine on the March."

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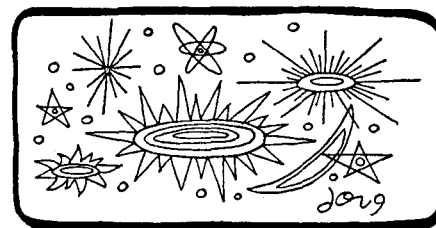
French Huguenots, Bethune, the non-conformist, was born in Gravenhurst, Ontario, in 1890. The year before he got his medical degree from the University of Toronto the First World War broke out, and he enlisted as a stretcher-bearer in the Canadian ambulance corps. Invalided home in 1915, he completed his course, re-enlisted in the Navy as a lieutenant-surgeon, and later was transferred to the Canadian Air Force, where he served as a medical officer.

When Germany surrendered, Bethune was twenty-eight, prematurely gray, baffled, and "looking for something new." He had himself demobilized in England, where he took post-graduate medical work, "accepting the certainty that he would become a great surgeon." In 1923 he married Frances Campbell Penney, daughter of a prominent Edinburgh family, and in the first turbulent years "drank hard, worked hard, lived hard," and eventually helped his wife to go through her inheritance. With their last two hundred pounds the Bethunes

settled in Detroit, Michigan, where a thriving surgical practice was interrupted by Bethune's severe lung infection. In despair, he forced Frances to get a divorce and return to Edinburgh, while he retired to the Trudeau Sanatorium at Saranac Lake, New York, to die of tuberculosis. Instead, the quick-minded invalid demanded the then little-known and drastic surgical treatment of his infected lung and recovered completely.

From then on Bethune's sole interest was in pulmonary tuberculosis. After three years of experiment as a thoracic surgeon he went to Montreal, where he became "a successful surgeon, a social lion, an available bachelor," and, according to one of his friends, "a terribly exhausting man to know." He persuaded his former wife to return to Canada and remarry him, but this union failed within a short time and was followed by divorce.

In 1935 Bethune went to Russia, ostensibly to attend a medical congress, actually to study at first-hand the Soviet experiment. Home again, he



became intensely interested in socialized medicine, and the plight of the underprivileged tuberculars in the Province of Quebec. But these activities palled, and at the age of forty-five he gave up his brilliant career and left for Spain to head a medical unit set up by the Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy. This part of Bethune's life as depicted by Ted Allan, who knew him intimately and shared with him the rigors of the Spanish war, is particularly dramatic and at the same time realistic. When Bethune's blood transfusion unit was working well he was sent back to North America to advocate Spain's cause. For seven months he shuttled to and fro between cities in Canada and the United States, "rousing the sleepers" and sparring with the hecklers who called him "a Moscow hireling."

After Spain, China was the next step. When Bethune read of the Japanese bombing of Chinese cities he launched his slogan, "Doctors! Go to the wounded. Don't wait for the wounded to come to you." In January 1938 he left for China under the auspices of the Canadian and American Leagues for Peace and Democracy. In the Yenan province he set up medical centers for wounded civilians and soldiers in cooperation with Chinese doctors of the Eighth Route Army. Of his brilliant medical talents "The Old Man," as he was known, gave freely, adjusting himself quickly to the incredibly poor facilities. "I can operate in a dirty Buddhist temple with a twenty-foot statue of an impassive-faced god staring over my shoulders as easily as in a modern operating room with running water, nice green-glazed walls . . . and a thousand other accessories," he wrote.

Bethune was planning a trip home to collect more funds for Chinese medical relief when an infected finger set off his fatal illness. As he lay dying he wrote to staff headquarters: "The last two years have been the most significant, the most meaningful of my life. I have been happy here . . ."

In the valley in East Shansi the grateful Chinese built a memorial to their intrepid comrade. "The new China will never forget Dr. Bethune," Madame Sun Yat-Sen writes in her touching preface to this biography. "He was one of those who helped us to become free."

ALTHOUGH the autumn flood of books is now ebbing, many more important books of general interest were published this week than we are able to review in this issue. Some outstanding titles are listed. In many cases they will be reviewed in later issues.

ANTOINE LAVOISIER. By Douglas McKie. New York: Henry Schuman. \$6. A careful biography of the French scientist, guillotined during the Reign of Terror, who has been called "the father of modern chemistry."

BERNARD SHAW AND MRS. PATRICK CAMPBELL: Their Correspondence. Edited by Alan Dent. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. \$5. The first publication of a famous interchange of letters that covered the years 1899 to 1939.

THE COURT OF LAST RESORT. By Erle Stanley Gardner. New York: William Sloane Assoc. \$3.50. A factual account of the work done by the Court of Last Resort, an organization of volunteers which investigates the cases of persons believed to have been wrongly convicted or imprisoned.

DEMOCRACY AT BAY: A Diagnosis and a Prognosis. By Felix Somary. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. \$2.50. An analysis of the crisis of Western democracy by a European economist and businessman.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT: The Apprenticeship. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. \$6. Roosevelt's life from his birth to his service as Assistant Secretary of the Navy. First of a projected six-volume series.

THE LAST RESORTS. By Cleveland Amory. New York: Harper & Bros. \$4. A witty and gossipy history of Newport, Bar Harbor, Palm Beach, and other playgrounds of the rich.

MADELEINE. By André Gide. Translated by Justin O'Brien. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. \$3. Gide's "letter" to his dead wife, explaining their relationship from childhood to her death. Published in France as "Et Nunc Manet in Te."

THE NEW BREED. By Andrew Geer. New York: Harper & Bros. \$3.50. The Marines' activities in Korea from the summer of 1950 through 1951 reported in corps history style.

PICTURE. By Lillian Ross. New York: Rinehart & Co. \$3.50. An account of the making of the film "The Red Badge of

Courage." Previously published, in a shorter form, in *The New Yorker*.

THE PLOT TO OVERTHROW CHRISTMAS. By Norman Corwin. New York: Henry Holt & Co. \$1.50. A playlet in rhyme published in a form suitable for inexpensive Christmas giving.

A RELUCTANT TRAVELER IN RUSSIA. By Tadeusz Wittlin. New York: Rinehart & Co. \$3. Life in a Siberian prison camp as experienced by a Polish novelist.

SECRET TIBET. By Fosco Maraini. New York: Viking Press. \$6.50. A travel book describing both the physical and spiritual features of the land.

SHAKESPEARE AND THE RIVAL TRADITIONS. By Alfred Harbage. New York: The Macmillan Co. \$6.50. An attempt to present a clear picture of the world—religious, ethical, social, and political—in which Shakespeare lived and worked.

STEPHEN CRANE: An Omnibus. Edited by Robert Wooster Stallman. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. \$5. Contains probably the best of Crane's prose plus a few poems. The critical commentary is illuminating.

SWORD AND SWASTIKA. By Telford Taylor. New York: Simon & Schuster. \$5. A history of the intrigue and politics of the German and Nazi high command between 1918 and 1940.

THIS IS CHICAGO. By Albert Halper. New York: Henry Holt & Co. \$5. A large and varied anthology of writing about Chicago.

UNITED NATIONS AND WORLD COMMUNITY. By A. H. Feller. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. \$2.50. An appraisal of the work and opportunities of the United Nations by the general counsel of the organization.

THE WAR OF THE REVOLUTION. By Christopher War. New York: The Macmillan Co. \$15. An extensive military history of our War of Independence.

THE YUGOSLAVS. By Z. Kostelski. New York: Philosophical Library. \$4.75. A discussion of Yugoslav history, religion, art, and society by a patriotic Yugoslav.

The Poetry of Science

CLAUDE BERNARD AND THE EXPERIMENTAL METHOD IN MEDICINE. By J. M. D. Olmstead and E. Harris Olmstead. New York: Henry Schuman. 277 pp. \$4.

By RALPH COLP, JR.

THIS is the most careful and detailed biography in English of Claude Bernard, whom the Encyclopædia Britannica calls "the greatest physiological experimenter that has ever lived." A nineteenth century French doctor, Bernard never practised medicine but spent his life working in a laboratory where he unraveled a series of body functions. Like a thread, one discovery led to another: he began by studying gastric juice and its role in digestion, then he studied other digestive juices showing that the pancreas aided in the digestion of fats. He was especially interested in sugar digestion and made the discovery that animals store sugar in the liver—not as sugar but as glycogen—and from there release it into the blood. Then he discovered that when an animal is injured in the medullary part of the brain it becomes diabetic, its system overloaded with sugar. This injury produced stimulation of the sympathetic nerves and from here Bernard went on to study the nervous control of the blood vessels.

What was the significance of these discoveries? Bernard wrote a book in which he discussed his method of working; scientific investigation, he said, was like hunting—the game was the observed phenomena—sometimes presenting itself when we are looking for it and sometimes when we are not or are looking for another sort of game. His was a mind ever on the alert to assess new facts, and eighty-five years later his book is still read as an exciting model of how discoveries are made. Not facts but the "idea connected with the fact is what really constitutes the discovery," said Bernard.

From these interconnected discoveries Bernard postulated an idea of the nature of life as a whole: the environment we all live in is not the air and water around us but the blood and fluid which bathes all parts of our body, what he called the "internal environment," the world in which all our life functions actually take place. The chief characteristic of this in-

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What Johnson was like—before Boswell took over

DR. JOHNSON'S Lichfield

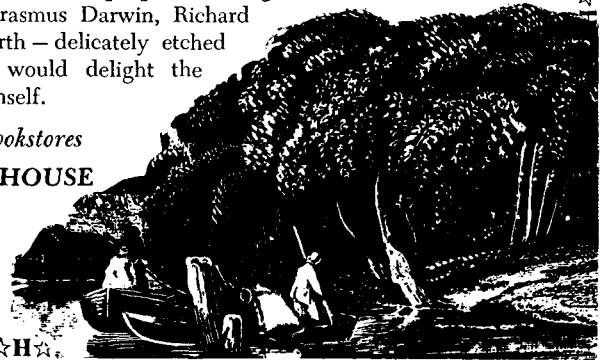
By MARY ALDEN HOPKINS, author of the popular Hannah More

A witty, ironic portrait of Johnson in the years untouched by Boswell—his poverty-stricken youth in the Cathedral town of Lichfield and the fascinating group that later surrounded him: "Tetty" Porter, whom Johnson married . . . two others with whom he carried on heated but platonic "affairs" . . . the clergy with their harrowing wife-troubles . . . Anna Seward, who was amorously entangled with a much-married choir-master, and other famous people including James Watt, Erasmus Darwin, Richard Lovell Edgeworth—delicately etched vignettes that would delight the good doctor himself.

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