

have made armies mobile could find little forage. When the forces of Macedonia overran the phalanx and with it the Greek city-state a decisive ingredient was cavalry. The cavalry of Philip and Alexander was formed by an elite class and perpetuated that class. It also reestablished generalship by supplying a basis for maneuver. Horses, particularly in combination with a more versatile infantry force, extended the scope of war by adapting armies to any kind of terrain and by permitting the pursuit and destruction of the beaten enemy.

So war on horseback broke out of its Western chrysalis, destroying one civilization, spreading another. But through a series of technical and social developments it would go back to something like its Greek childhood with the medieval knight and then again break free under the impetus of the longbow and citizen levies. If the authors of "Men in Arms" have a thesis—and theses are hard to find or maintain in a two-thousand-year history—it is the regular vacillation between limited and total war ending at last at the atomic brink, when for the first time the choice appears to be between deliberate forbearance among nations and chaos.

The portrait of civilization in arms does not give one much reason to hope. The happiest of man's years, when his wars were relatively infrequent and limited, were times for the most part when he lacked the technical means or social organization to kill more efficiently. On the other hand, of course, our present dilemma has never before been faced. One may, indeed, conclude from the summary of war in the Western world that no more lessons remain to be learned. War as a social institution, the normal expression of political man in his discontent, has finally become obsolete. That obsolescence, however, needs still to be recognized in time.

Military history is not likely to be much help. The impassioned pleas for understanding through knowledge with which "Men in Arms" begins and ends seem actually to have little relevance to the body of the book, which for all its interest is chaste and antiquarian. Perhaps the final irony is that the study of military history, neglected during the centuries when it might have furnished guideposts and warnings for peoples and their leaders, will come into its own only now when its chief usefulness is to fill out the unflattering portrait of our ancestors.

PERSONAL HISTORY

Noble Prince on a Dark Road

"The Man Who Lived Twice," by Eric Wollencott Barnes (Charles Scribner's Sons. 358 pp. \$5), is a biography of a successful American playwright who served as an inspiration for many writers and artists during the many years in which he was severely paralyzed. Margaret Webster, the stage director who reviews it here, was one who knew the warmth of his personality.

By Margaret Webster

EDWARD Sheldon was among the golden youth of the golden age before World War I, the last of the *preux chevaliers*. He had looks, charm, wealth, and enormous zest for life. In 1907, with a Harvard degree *magna cum laude* immediately behind him, his first play was accepted by the great Mrs. Fiske herself. "Salvation Nell" became a smash hit. Half a dozen others followed it, of varying merit but considerable good fortune; Ned lived his brilliant success generously and to the hilt. In 1913 he wrote the fabulous "Romance," which ran, broke records, toured, broke more records, was revived and re-revived in New York, London, Paris, and all over the world. He was then twenty-seven.

Before he had reached his thirty-fifth birthday he was completely paralyzed, stricken by a virulent and (then) incurable form of progressive arthritis. He was never able to move again. Ten years later he became totally blind. He lived for a further

fifteen years, threatened towards the end by the imminent loss of speech and hearing. Yet during these twenty-five years he became the listener-extraordinary, consultant-in-chief, and spiritual *accoucheur* to almost all the greatest figures of the American theatre; his influence on its development was tremendous. Much more important, he brought courage, understanding, and a vital creative stimulus into the lives of many hundreds of people. In them and through them he lived, and lives, not twice, but a thousand times.

The facts are epic, heroically impressive—and very simple. Sheldon himself, a skilled craftsman and acutely constructive critic, would have been the first to point out that the "plot-line" is very thin. His victory of the spirit over physical disaster does not result in a "story." Here is no Helen Keller, active and indomitable over the whole world; no legless Douglas Bader, flying his plane into battle at the head of the splendid young men. Here was a "sculptured Crusader," lying "like a living corpse on his catafalque"; he talked to the unseen visitors who sat beside him; he dictated letters and telegrams; above all, he listened. Eric Wollencott Barnes's book "The Man Who Lived Twice" is full of excerpts from what he said; it is full of the tributes of those to whom he wrote and spoke. As a memorial it is admirably comprehensive; as literary biography it does not escape the sedative properties of reiteration.

Many famous people step onto these pages from the penthouse apartment on 84th Street. Scarcely a great name in the American theatre is missing. There are English actors and writers too, celebrated doctors and scientists and poets and statesmen. Pictures of some of Sheldon's friends emerge vividly, revealed in a fresh light because of what he discerned in them. John Barrymore and Mrs. Pat Campbell cry out to him, Alec Woolcott laughs with him; there is a tiny, tragic, glimpse of Emily Stevens; and always the haunting, elusive ghost of Doris Kean. All of them loved and honored Ned. But the pattern involves the perils of repetition.

FOR all Mr. Barnes's fidelity there remain two unknown factors to which Sheldon alone held the key. Why was the writer so much lesser than the



Edward Sheldon—"victory of the spirit."

KEY AS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF: The idea of Walter Bedell Smith's lately published book. (Continued on page 40)

man? His early plays reflect the puppy-idealism and the naive love of theatrical cliché of the college boy. "Romance" is a superb tear-jerker, very much of its period and closely derivative from "Camille." Mr. Barnes dismisses "Camille" as a creaking old vehicle, which defied even Sheldon's efforts to readapt it. Nevertheless, it seems certain that Dumas, who threw in a death scene for good measure, will outlast Sheldon, even without Verdi's assistance. But what is—or seems nowadays—too sentimental to be said may still be turned into a musical; "Romance" in this form might continue indefinitely to "raise the waters."

HIS later plays, written in collaboration after he was paralyzed, do not change the formula. "Lulu Belle" and "Dishonored Lady" are still the successful, well-made play. They are curiously full of violence and theatrical "sex." His mother asks poignantly a puzzling question: "Why," she wrote, "do you put between yourself and the world (the needful world) these strange barriers . . . they are never you. . . . Those of us who love you the most disinterestedly feel and know that there are plays within you of a sincerity and loftiness you have hith-

erto only touched upon, because your soul is great."

But he never wrote them. Nor did he leave, in word or writing, any guide to the dark road his spirit must have traveled. He never spoke of his illness. There was no "I" in his vocabulary. He studied all the organized religions but belonged to none of them. The strength which was in him, and which he radiated always, was a love of human beings and a veneration for the holy gift of life. He was once told of a friend who had suffered such terrible injuries in a motor accident that he longed for death. "Sheldon cried out almost angrily, 'But my God, the man is ALIVE, isn't he? That's all that matters!'"

His own need was to give; and the quality of what he gave is amply demonstrated in this book. Perhaps the most remarkable tribute comes from a child who was taken to visit him for the first time. The boy was a little frightened at being left alone with the still, masked figure on the high bed. Then Ned began to talk. Presently the child's mother came to fetch him. On the way home he gave a glowing account of the visit. Suddenly he broke off to exclaim: "But, Mother, you never told me he was a noble prince!"

Life-in-Death Poet

"Jean Cocteau," by Margaret Crosland (Alfred A. Knopf, 238 pp. \$5), is a biography of one of the most influential French novelists, playwrights, and poets of our time.

By Evelyn Eaton

SOME men's names—Churchill, Einstein, Sartre—evoke empires, eras, movements. Jean Cocteau, for many of his contemporaries, evokes a subtle, pervasive, vital condition of being, reached and re-created at continuous high cost—*la difficulté d'être*, as he has described it. Cocteau renews, for himself and for other artists, especially those preoccupied with the visual arts, the essential "life" of the creative life, that concentrated other-world oxygen the creative artist must find in the atmosphere about him, must breathe freely, if he is to quicken the work it is his duty to undertake and, having undertaken, to carry to its conclusion "at the extremity of himself."

For Cocteau there is no separation between himself and his work; he is his work. In spite of the legend which has mushroomed around him and which he has tried, especially in the recent years of his retirement to Santo Sospir, to refute, he has taken his work and his life with serious respect, as the work and the life of a great perceptive poet, who is also playwright, novelist, choreographer, painter, film director, should be taken.

So many-sided a manifestation of the arts has been particularly misunderstood in this age of specialization. "Morbid" is a favorite adjective of the pigeonholers, yet it should be obvious that Cocteau's preoccupation with death as a subject in many of his works ("Le Sang du Poète," "Bacchus," "Orphée," etc.) is the outcome of his passionate commitment to life, and his hypersensitive response to the shadowy-regions between the two, which are now beginning to be explored and taken into account by others, even the scientists. Cocteau in this, as in everything, has been ahead of his time, "like the radar instrument, recording events which can only be felt by an intangible process."

"Cocteau," Margaret Crosland observes in her fascinating study of the *enfant terrible*, the *monstre sacré*, and the genius,

believes that events of poetic importance take place, not in the outside world, but in the world which exists within him, . . . the
(Continued on page 26)

Islanders

By Richard Emil Braun

THE natives here enjoy a delicate and tense society.
Their upper classes make an art of conversation

so refined that no Caucasian ever participates without making at least one outrageous faux pas.

Few Europeans, in fact, can manage even the rudiments of this language, which consists of vowels only,

and, although several grammars have been composed by reputable scholars, these disagree on every major point of syntax.

The chieftains are invariably stout: a proverb says "Fat men must be sure; doubt and misgivings need agility."

The special term for this is rendered as "complacency" in all the lexicons, but is in no wise derogatory.