



Pick of the Paperbacks



THE DIPLOMACY OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION. By Samuel Flagg Bemis. Indiana University Press. \$1.75. The classic account of how Benjamin Franklin negotiated and America gained its independence by Sterling Professor of Diplomatic History and Inter-American Relations at Yale.

THE EXAMINED LIFE. By Warner Fite. Indiana University Press. \$1.75. Man, morality, the art of living itself, are discussed in this Princeton philosopher's book.

THE INTELLECTUAL MILIEU OF JOHN DRYDEN. By Louis I. Bredvold. University of Michigan Press. \$1.25. The skepticism of John Dryden provides the starting point for a recreation of the seventeenth-century world of ideas in which he lived.

SOUTH WIND. By Norman Douglas. Universal. \$1.25. A witty novel about a Capri-like island called Nepenthe and its cosmopolitan inhabitants.

MOHAMMED AND CHARLEMAGNE. By Henri Pirenne. Translated by Bernard Miall. Meridian. \$1.35. This brilliant study of the twilight of classical civilization and the dawn of a new Europe was the final work of a distinguished French historian.

IRISH FOLK STORIES AND FAIRY TALES. Edited by William Butler Yeats. Universal. 95¢. All manner of sprite, from leprechaun to pooka, is to be found in this collection of folk tales, gathered together and introduced by Ireland's greatest poet.

SIGHTS AND SPECTACLES. By Mary McCarthy. Meridian. \$1.25. Observations of the American theatre from 1937 to 1956 by *Partisan Review's* onetime drama critic: astringent, relentless, often irritating.

THE SOCIAL SOURCES OF DENOMINATIONALISM. By H. Richard Niebuhr. Meridian. \$1.35. The emergence of denominationalism is traced by a Yale

theologian in a study of the various aspects of American society that contributed to denominational Christianity.

THE NÔ PLAYS OF JAPAN. Translated by Arthur Waley. Grove. \$1.75. Examples of the centuries-old ritual drama of Japan, which caught the imagination of Ezra Pound and W. B. Yeats, translated into prose and poetry by a noted Oriental scholar.

WHAT MEAN THESE STONES? By Millar Burrows. Meridian. \$1.35. The author of "The Dead Sea Scrolls" assesses the importance of modern archeological research in the Holy Land.

CORRECTION: SR's Picker of the Paperbacks regrets that in describing "Caste and Class in a Southern Town" in the March 16 issue he referred to the author, John Dollard, as "late." Mr. Dollard is very much alive, at Yale University, where he is professor of psychology.

er of the title story with his apathetic and untalented class of university students; the rootless expatriate of "The Walls of Avila" whose return home is somewhat less than triumphant.

In spite of Mr. Connell's indisputable talent and intelligence, I am forced to make the purely personal comment that I do not care for some of these perceptive and well-wrought

stories. I am confused by "The Trelis." I simply do not understand the dialogue between Inspector Polajenko and the talkative silversmith Tony Miula; perhaps there is some larger meaning here which I have failed to unearth. I think that the characters of "I Came from Yonder Mountain" are unconvincing, and that the story itself is contrived and unpleasantly arty. I am not sure whose leg Mr. Connell is pulling, for example, when he uses language like "barely parted and moist are the elfin lips" of the daughter in "Arcturus" nor do I understand the significance of the fact that the father in this story is "remotely descended" from Goethe. Frequently, in short, I am not quite sure where the author intends me to go. To whom does the artist owe the greater responsibility—to himself or to his audience? I am less sure of the answer to this question than I was a few years ago. Certain stories in "The Anatomy Lesson" cause me to reconsider this question and some of the issues which are connected with it.

—WILLIAM PEDEN.

the admiration. This is the first book of this Danish writer, published when he was twenty-three, and it reveals him as a true original. He has taken for his domain the world of fable, fairy tale, legend, and myth—the Nordic variants—and run them through his Kierkegaardian mind.

What emerges are some strange stories indeed. Example: the population of a town in Denmark finds its kitchens occupied by, of all things, tigers; and they won't leave until a young man goes to bed with one of them, learns their language (the tongue of primitive, elemental forces, alive, but yet buried within each of us, waiting to be called forth) and, for a time, frees the village of their unwelcome guests.

The title story, and the other six as well, are written with an ironic earnestness and a potent, topsy-turvy strain of logic that keeps the material ever revolving before your eyes. There is blood in these stories: they are never entirely divorced from life. This reader was relieved to put down the book, but this is only testimony to the success of Sorensen's method. It is the most hypnotically dreamlike of books and if you want to see how it is done, take a deep breath and throw yourself into it. You'll be different when you close the covers. The translation is by Maureen Neiiendam.

—GERALD WALKER.

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KIERKEGAARDIAN FABLES: Cross Kafka with Hans Christian Andersen, says Angus Wilson in his admiring introduction to "Tiger in the Kitchen" (Abelard-Schuman, \$3.50) and you have Villy Sorensen. One can only agree, both with the comparison and

World War II

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tough-minded, brilliantly informed English historian, H. R. Trevor-Roper, and the book sustains his judgment.

But the book is much more than a melodramatic tale of how a minute part of Hitler's victims could be snatched from the malignant chaos of the Third Reich; it provides an invaluable insight into Himmler's mind and fantasy. A few simple and unoriginal notions dominated his mind: that Jews corrupted and ruled the world, that Freemasonry and the Papacy constituted an equally ominous conspiracy, and that all civil servants, diplomats, doctors, and homosexuals were expendable. His one vision was the creation, by a variety of means, including compulsory bigamy, of a racially superior Germany that would protect Europe from Asia. From Kersten's account, Himmler emerges as a good husband, a sober citizen who resisted all temptations of enrichment and luxury, and a reluctant murderer: his own plan for the Jews would have involved their mass expulsion, not extermination. But he was the prisoner of his inherited ideas and of his loyalty to Hitler; he readily executed Hitler's grimmer program. Kersten's account of Himmler's hideous mind is a reminder that Nazi totalitarianism depended as much on an ideology as on terror and that its servants belonged to an hitherto unknown underworld of diseased, resentful misfits who transformed private grievance into collective misery.

—FRITZ STERN.

MEN BEHIND THE GUNS: As has often been pointed out, the Second World War involved greater advances in military technology than had previously occurred in the entire recorded history of mankind. More than 90 per cent of the weapons we were using at the end of World War II, it has been estimated, were qualitatively new, either in the sense that they had been created *de novo* since the start of the conflict (like the atomic bomb) or had been so vastly improved that they could properly be regarded as being new (like the jet fighter).

The duration of World War II, especially for the British, who entered it more than two years before we did, permitted new weapons to be conceived, developed, tested, manufactured, issued to the fighting forces, and used in combat—all within a span of time short compared with the length of the war. Such technical weapons-

development work was carried out by numerous technical establishments maintained either by the armed services or by such an *ad hoc* government agency as the U.S. Office of Scientific Research and Development.

Gerald Pawle's "*The Secret War, 1939-1945*" (Sloane, \$5) is the story of the work of one such group, told lovingly and with an enthusiasm that is undimmed by the years that have passed since 1946. It concerns the British Admiralty's Department of Miscellaneous Weapons Development, created in 1941 from the earlier Inspectorate of Anti-aircraft Weapons and Devices. Pawle makes it clear that the group had all the properties which characterized a successful weapons-development outfit in World War II, properties that included, among others, enormous group spirit and enthusiasm, here sustained by a nickname—"Wheezers and Dodgers"; extreme impatience with the stodgy ways of standard service officialdom; equal enthusiasm for all the technical efforts of the group, whether or not the development involved appeared in time to be useful in the war as it actually had to be fought; and appreciation of the practical importance of bringing new developments to the earliest possible attention of high government officials.

For the tens of thousands of British and Americans who actually took part in the technical effort of World War II, Pawle's book is a nostalgic reminder of the hectic work, occasional accomplishment, endemic frustration, and sober foolishness of those days. For the general reader, it is a fair and typical account of how things went on a war front not reported in the newspapers. For the historian, it is first hand source material on a side of warfare that probably will prove to have been unique to World War II. In another war, thanks to technology, the pace of events will almost surely be too rapid to permit the useful introduction of weapons whose development is undertaken only after the start of the war. The issue will probably be decided by weapons we have in hand when the conflict begins.

—LOUIS RIDENOUR.

REGIMENT OF FELONS: The man who has written his memoirs—"The Legion of the Damned" (translated by Maurice Michael; Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, \$3.75)—under the pseudonym of Sven Hassel is the son, we are told, of a Danish woman and an Austrian officer. He was brought up in Denmark, but when World War II broke out the Germans claimed him and put him in their army. When he deserted he was caught, slapped into concentration camp for a while, and then sent to

the front with a regiment specially made up of deserters and felons.

It is rather difficult for the mind of anyone to understand what a regiment of this sort could contribute to a nation's campaign for victory. What Sven Hassel has to say about the training and indoctrination of this curious collection of fighting men does not make its existence much more understandable. We are reluctant to believe that even the imaginative and inhuman brutality of Hitler's SS Corps could entirely cancel the spirit of a large group of obviously spirited men. That is probably because we who think of what Hassel has to say as a strange and distorted fantasy have had no experience with such degradation of humanity.

He tells us that his one desire is to make plain to the world that war is not merely senseless. He wants us to know that it is an evil flower, no matter what its aim, of the same branch that produced Hitler's foul world. Certainly in the picture which he presents there is little that is even bearable, much less noble. Yet strangely enough the gusto and enthusiasm with which this amazing man piles horror upon horror suggests that perhaps the worst evil in war results from man's ability to get used to it, to fall in with and take in his stride its fiercest bestialities. Sven Hassel's book is the portrait of a man and his companions doing exactly that.

Perhaps this is why the book seems more like fiction than fact. Perhaps it is why the American publisher presents it as fiction while repeating the author's claim that it is "ninety per cent fact." Whether you consider this brutal book as fact or as fiction it is made up of good, violent writing.

—RAYMOND HOLDEN.

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