

# Persuasionist for the Crown

**"Dust in the Lion's Paw: Autobiography 1939-1946," by Freya Stark** (Harcourt, Brace & World, 283 pp. \$6.75), contains excerpts from letters, speeches, and diaries written by the author during her wartime experiences with the British Colonial Office. Hal Lehrman, author, lecturer, and foreign correspondent, spent the war years as OWI chief in Turkey.

By HAL LEHRMAN

IF ONE was just a plain foreign correspondent or a routine word-slinger for this or that Allied propaganda agency, one will not find in one's attic a dusty knapsack like Freya Stark's, rich with yellowing letters to and from such great and almost-great friends as Field-Marshal Earl Wavell, Sir Harold Nicolson, Sir Kinahan Cornwallis, Brigadier Clayton (inventor of the Arab League), or even Isaiah Berlin and Mrs. Otto Kahn. This stuff of history, stitched together with other memorabilia from scraps of speeches or from diary excerpts first written in tranquil evenings after animated days in hot spots and all firmly connected by transitional passages of fresh text, makes an inimitable and invaluable volume.

It is sometimes too much the author's own, larded with Briticisms as obscure for most of us over here as those uproariously blank jokes in jolly old *Punch*, or with snippets of bureaucratic gossip meaningful only to office neighbors or to individual confidantes far away. Nevertheless, the book is worth an outsider's full attention. It has style. It has authority, nourished by personal attendance on the front lines no less than at garden parties. And, quite often, it has revelation, the inner view of a redoubtable observer.

Essentially, and so labeled, the book is autobiography, not so much of private experience as of ideas, visible adventures, and public appearances. It has very little narrative from Palestine, where Miss Stark in this period halted only occasionally and briefly. She was a top-drawer propagandist (or persuasionist, as she prefers to think of it). She was town-crier of news about the war effort to a daily assembly of turbans in a main Aden square. She cajoled the Imam's harem out of zeal for

Il Duce by flickering a cargo of British documentary films on Yemeni palace screens. She rooted thousands of pro-British (but now utterly extinct) "Brotherhood of Freedom" clubs the length of the Egyptian Nile. She transplanted the Brotherhood to Iraq in time to get holed up in the Embassy compound while Rashid Ali was abortively opting for the Third Reich and German planes strafed the RAF's runway at Habbaniya. She carried the good British word to Iran, to India, to Canada, even to us, all the way from Manhattan to San Francisco. When the war was barely done around her beloved hill-house in Asolo, they had her creating "reading centers" in northern Italy for British newspapers which her Ministry of Information habitually neglected to deliver for her avid clientele.

All this provides hearty though kaleidoscopic reading, on a global scale. But ever and anon, no matter where, the main theme recurs to make everything tidy: that Zionist "arrogance," plus the folly of British politicians, estranged

**"What's a Woman Doing Here?," by Dickey Chapelle** (Morrow, 285 pp. \$5), recalls the experiences of a female reporter-photographer whose destiny it was to seek out danger, the disapproval of old-fashioned generals notwithstanding. *Quentin Reynolds is a veteran of the journalistic scene at war and at peace.*

By QUENTIN REYNOLDS

PSYCHOLOGISTS often claim that women are the stronger sex. Doctors state that most women are able to bear pain better than men, and that they are less susceptible to fear. Those of us who were war correspondents (male) during World War II must, no matter how reluctantly, agree with the conclusions of these experts. We saw such correspondents (female) as Helen Kirkpatrick, Mary Welsh, Marguerite Higgins, Eve Curie, fabulous Maggie Bourke-White (just to

the Arabs, driving Britain pretty nearly out of the entire irate Moslem world.

Miss Stark is least edifying when she is recounting her triumphs over pro-Zionist hecklers. She seems somehow never to have lost a point or failed to demolish the enemy, while audiences cheered her, throughout the long American tour. (It is only fair to add that she allowed herself one quick salute to Palestinian Jewish achievement; she possessed and enjoyed some Jewish friends, inexorably identified as "moderates"; but she took a dim view in the main of the complete United States in all its parts.)

Miss Stark is at her best, on the other hand, when excoriating for its own sake (not Britain's) the grievance done the Arab population of a predominantly Arab land. She considers Jewish immigration into Palestine without Arab consent a violation of native sovereignty. She stresses the non-Zionist considerations in that monumental vagueness known as the Balfour Declaration.

But she does not mourn the tragedy of decimated European Jewry blockaded from its Palestine refuge, nor show awareness of the equally apparent pro-Zionist considerations in the Balfour paper, nor admit that an Ernest Bevin and his kind ever existed. She sees only one side of a case that notoriously has a dozen sides.

## She Shot the Gunfire

name a few) establish the tradition that anything we could do, they could do as well or better.

During the early years of the war they labored under a handicap we males didn't suffer; when any of them wrangled her way to a fighting front some general would be sure to roar, "What's a woman doing here?" Dickey Chapelle, one of the most capable of her breed, has used that apt phrase for the title of her autobiography. Dickey began her flirtation with danger at the age of eighteen, when she conned test pilot Earl T. Converse into taking her for a flight in his Grumman F-3, a two-seated biplane. He gave her the full treatment, which meant charging up to 12,000 feet and then slamming the aircraft into a straight down power dive. He hit terminal velocity almost immediately and then held it until he had to pull out at nine full Gs. Dickey wrote a story detailing the clinical effects of an overdose of G, and when she sold it to the *New York Times*, she knew her destiny. It was

to be in dangerous situations and not only write about them but photograph whatever was happening.

By 1941 she was married and doing fairly well as a free-lance writer-photographer. Her husband enlisted in the Navy immediately after Pearl Harbor and was sent to Coco Solo Naval Air Station in Panama. Dickey couldn't go along as a naval wife, but she talked *Look* magazine into assigning her to that area. She was accredited by the army to photograph the training exercises of the Fourteenth Infantry Regiment in the jungles of Panama. But she had to be okayed by Colonel Ernest R. Dupuy of Army Public Relations. She reports the interview:

"I presume you know, Mrs. Chapelle," he said sternly, "that troops in the field have no facilities for women."

"Colonel," I said earnestly, "I'm sure the Fourteenth Infantry has solved much tougher problems than that. They'll probably think of a way to lick this one too."

They did. So did the Marines at Iwo Jima, where Dickey landed on D-plus-two, and at Guam and Okinawa. Dickey saw a great many men killed in battle, and on beaches and hospital ships she talked to and photographed hundreds who were badly wounded. She had a ringside seat in the Pacific.

When it was all over, there was no reason why she couldn't stay home and take pictures away from the sound of gunfire. Instead, she followed her destiny. During the ensuing years she parachuted into Korea, covered the Algerian fighting, photographed Castro's troops in combat. Unable to get proper credentials at the time of the Hungarian uprising, she was smuggled into the satellite by two freedom fighters and was captured and held for eighty days by the secret police, mostly in solitary confinement.

Dickey Chapelle has led an exciting life in many lands where fighting was going on. It is unlikely that any general seeing her today would dare to roar, "What's a Woman Doing Here?"



Dickey Chapelle—"she knew her destiny."

SR/May 12, 1962

**DICKENSIAN SPIRIT:** In show business many are called but few are chosen. Emyln Williams is one of the few. He was destined to become one of the fine actors of our time and a successful playwright as well. In his case, since he grew up in Wales in circumstances of near-poverty, the call, when he heard it, was difficult to identify. The real suspense and chief fascination of **"George: An Early Autobiography"** (Random House, \$5.95) are contained in Williams's description of the slow and often painful process through which he recognized his destiny.

This is an unusual kind of success story in that the happy ending toward which it progresses is not merely that of applause and riches but the ultimate transformation of a lonely, imaginative child, who was not a rebel but an escapist, into a conscious artist able to make his way in a difficult world. The story ends as Williams enters the life of the professional theatre. Nevertheless, this is always a theatre person's book and must be one of the best autobiographies of its kind ever written. What makes it so is Williams's almost complete conquest of the dramatic temperament, which asserts itself where it will, against all odds, and often disastrously, but in him produced a man equal to its demands and capable of its rewards.

Williams has waited to recollect until he could do so in tranquillity. Thus, he is able to write about the George Williams who became Emyln Williams without prejudice, bitterness, or self-delusion, almost as if they were two different people. He understands his limited but sympathetic parents and writes about them with love, as he does about all the people who affected or influenced him at home in Wales, in France, where he went as a student, and at Oxford. He tells in full the story of Miss Cooke, the person who did most for him and to whom he paid tribute in his play "The Corn Is Green." There is no doubt that Miss Cooke, if she could read this book, would feel herself repaid.

One of Emyln Williams's greatest triumphs in the theatre was his portrayal of Charles Dickens reading from his works. This was no mere tour de force but a unique and moving experience. Williams's autobiography demonstrates that his extraordinary identification with Dickens is due to more than an actor's genius. He appears to have Dickens's nature and a good share of his talent as a writer. Time and again readers of this book—and they will be many—will recognize in its lively cleverness and genuine humor, in its elaborate but eloquent style, and, above all, in its tolerance and compassion the true Dickensian spirit.

—VICTOR CHAPIN.

"Poems that will haunt us as long as we have a language"\*



Photo by David Rineharter

## Robert Frost's IN THE CLEARING

**"It is a new Frost one finds in these poems. . . .** The bard has largely replaced the lyric poet. In so doing, he has given America a voice it has long needed."— JOHN CIARDI, *Saturday Review*

**"Age has not narrowed Robert Frost's range.** If anything, it has enlarged it. The joy of *IN THE CLEARING* is that it contains so many poems that should rank among Frost's best."— WALTER HARDING, *Chicago Tribune*

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\*GEORGE GARRETT, *Houston Post*

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