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Inside an Army Camp

FORWARD OBSERVER. By Edwin V. Westrate. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1944. 179 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by FLETCHER PRATT

SOMEbody should devote adept critical investigation to the process by which the movies are debauching a large part of what should be American fiction, splitting it into two well-defined sections, neither of which has much relation to life. In one division we get the predigested pap suitable for the fourteen-year-old mind that will get past the Hays office; in the other, compendia of everything the Hays office will not pass.

"Call House Madam" and "What Makes Sammy Run" are good examples of the latter; the volume before us here is a particularly irritating case of the former. For it is not cheap, it is not meretricious, except in the essentials. All the minor characters have three dimensions, and even the major ones exhibit that interesting characteristic up to the point where they change their frame of reference from 1944 to "The Idylls of the King." The supporting detail is presented with remarkable fidelity. It appears that the author had some experience as a forward observer in the last war, and he has certainly seen a good deal of the inside of an army camp in this one at the very least.

Even if the detail be autobiographical it is still excellent. It is assembled, selected, and set down with such skill that throughout the early chapters one is never quite sure whether this be not the genuine personal memoirs of an

observer quite as skilled in watching human beings as he is in spotting gunfire. The forward observer is an artilleryman who accompanies the infantry up to the front line and phones back instructions to his battery; and if we get so very much of the technique of this art that it tends to submerge the human element, it only so much the more completely produces the suspension of disbelief in preparation for the big moment.

Then comes that big moment, and it turns out to be the moment when the guillotine-knife falls. Our two heroes have gone from the Tunisian front to Algiers on a four-day leave. They meet a WAC, squire her together round the night spots, and all three realize that this is the love of their lives, only she can't make up her mind which. Back at the front one of the two men, the regular battery officer, swaps jobs with his friend, the forward observer, because the latter is worn out; gets far forward at the moment of a German tank attack; calls for a violent barrage on the exact spot where he is stationed. The friend has to order the firing; of course, it stops the tanks and kills the friendly rival, so the other two can be married in an atmosphere of goo and intense phoney tragedy.

The book should make a highly successful movie, particularly as the actress who is to play the lead is carefully indicated. But as a book it is a waste of talent and the reader's time, for even the love passages are carved from that shabbiest of all literary materials—holly-wood.

"These Poems I Have So Loved"

By Leonora Speyer

READING them over and over,
The books of deathless song
Scattered about my bed,
Each with its wide-stretched cover:
These are the friend, the lover.

Poems I have loved the best;
Holding their page to the light,
I read them, call them aloud,
Craving no deeper rest
Than an open book on my breast.

Thus at the end—and lying
As I lie now with their words,
These poems I have so loved,
Their voices, vast, undying,
And my small voice replying.

"A vivid fictional picture of China at war...
a brave and appealing love story."

—Philadelphia Inquirer

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TAIYI

"Miss Lin takes a Chinese middle-class family through two years of war... There is nothing romantic or melodramatic about her account. She has time not only for the big scenes and the main characters, but also for small moments of pathos and humor and minor pictures... As a novel, it is good reading, always warm, lively, sympathetic. As a testimony to the strength and courage of China, it is both moving and convincing. As a book by a seventeen-year-old, it is a remarkable achievement."—*Saturday Review of Literature*

"The stuff of the novelist is in her."—*New Yorker*

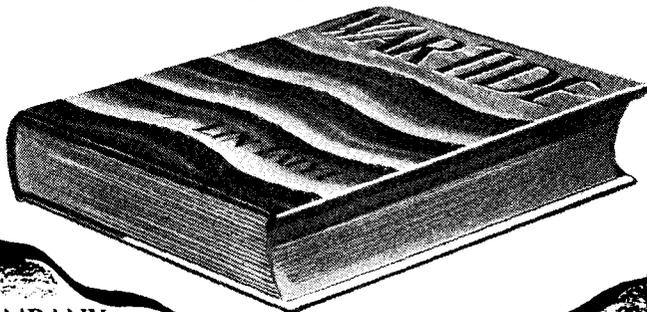
"Her writing has the freshness of youth, but a vigor and maturity beyond her years. She writes with breadth and concreteness, and, even more uncommonly, with humor, about events that are momentous for both the East and the West."—*N. Y. Herald Tribune Book Review*

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—*N. Y. Times Book Review*

"Stirringly dramatic... scenes vivid, powerful and gripping in their horror—and ringing terrifically true... interspersed with gay humor, deep philosophy, human emotions and buoyant courage... Lin Taiyi is destined to go far in the literary world if she continues to write novels of the fine caliber of *War Tide*."—*Springfield Union*



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The Making of an Exact Science

THE LIFE AND WORKS OF THE HONORABLE ROBERT BOYLE. By Louis Trenchard More. New York: Oxford University Press. 1944. 313 pp. \$4.50.

Reviewed by WALDEMAR KAEMPFERT

ROBERT BOYLE was a scientist who led alchemy out of the marsh of mysticism and helped to make it an exact science. A cavalier landowner who ruled benignly over immense estates, he had the means to travel, study, acquire the accomplishments of a nobleman, and to experiment. Like Newton he was as much devoted to religion as to science, but made no impression on theology of importance, and like Newton he was one of the more distinguished members of the Royal Society and its president for a time. Though he was not free from the credulousness of his time (he believed in the spurious cures of Greatraks the "stroker") he was one of the leaders in the revolt against scientific dogmatism. He ranged over the whole field of science. With him originated the conception of an element, and it was he who introduced the tests for acidity and alkalinity. He devised a method of preparing phosphorous independently of Brandt, prepared hydrogen but failed to distinguish it from what he called "air generated *de novo*," discovered the law of gaseous elasticity, invented a compressed air pump, constructed the first hermetically sealed thermometers in England, first used freezing mixtures, observed the effect of pressure on boiling, dabbled in electricity

and magnetism, determined the specific gravities and refractive powers of various substances, and attempted to weigh light. It was as an exponent of the experimental method that Boyle shone.

Dr. More reviews Boyle's accomplishments and place in science in a biography which is intended for scholars who are interested in the history of science, but which can be read with profit by any one. He places Boyle where he belongs as a skeptical scientist who must rank with Newton, Kepler, and Galileo even though he made no discovery of the Newton or Galileo magnitude and served primarily in guiding science, especially chemistry, into the channels that it has followed for the last three centuries. Dr. More is much more than a chronicler. He is both a critic and interpreter. Yet this reviewer wishes that a more modern approach had been made. No scientist makes discoveries as if he were not influenced by the social atmosphere in which he lives. Dr. More knows it but treats these social influences much too casually. Yet this is a book which stands out as a well written and conscientious account of a great scientist's life and works and which deserves a much better index than the one provided.

ANSWERS TO LITERARY QUIZ

1. "Don Quixote," by Cervantes.
2. "Pinocchio," by Carlos Collodi.
3. "The Three Musketeers," by Alexandre Dumas.
4. "The Hunchback of Notre Dame," by Victor Hugo.
5. "Treasure Island," by Robert Louis Stevenson.
6. "Bob Son of Battle," by Alfred Ollivant.
7. "Vanity Fair," by William Makepeace Thackeray.
8. "Martin Chuzzlewit," by Charles Dickens.
9. "Through the Looking Glass," by Lewis Carroll.
10. "David Copperfield," by Charles Dickens.
11. "The Sign of the Four," by Conan Doyle.
12. "Beautiful Joe," by Marshall Saunders.
13. "Adam Bede," by George Eliot.
14. "Penrod," by Booth Tarkington.
15. "Far From the Madding Crowd," by Thomas Hardy.
16. "Captain Blood," by Rafael Sabatini.
17. "Topper," by Thorne Smith.
18. "Beau Geste," by P. C. Wren.
19. "So Little Time," by John Marquand.
20. "Anthony Adverse," by Hervey Allen.