



ROYAL ACADEMY SUCCESS: "Off Limehouse," the work reproduced above, is one of three etchings sent to the Royal Academy by Dr. A. H. McIntock, of Dunedin, and all accepted. Only artists who are themselves Royal Academicians may send more than three entries to a Royal Academy exhibition, and it was an unusual distinction therefore that all of Dr. McIntock's entries should have been accepted. Of the other two, one was another Limehouse study and the other a New Zealand subject, "Spring Willows"

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fiction. It is most cleverly done; these worthless women and very peculiar men appear real enough. Most of us didn't meet them or perhaps were too simple to recognise them for what they were. What Davin sees he sees clearly and in relief. Some of these unpleasant folk and curious scenes are perfectly portrayed. Again it is most competently done, but Davin has more in him than merely to give us pictures of lounge lizards and prostitutes.

IT is when he goes to the field that I think he touches greatness; certainly I have never read a better war book. There is not a false note. The battle scenes are superbly done, 4th Brigade headquarters during the assault on Belhamed, the over-running of the 20th on that fatal hill and again on the evil day of Ruweisat; 26 Battalion in the El Mreir depression and poor Jan Peart's hard decision, the long fighting advance to Miteiriya Ridge, all are without fault. The batmen chat with one another beside the trucks as one used to hear them, the drivers are the authentic slaves and masters of their trucks and friends and critics of their officers that one remembers, the scraps of conversation are as one heard them long ago, there is no mistake or slip in idiom or fault in atmosphere. There is a perfect sketch of a Divisional Conference, though it slightly pains me to read that Brigadiers were "hard censorious men." I thought we were such nice good-natured chaps.

In a few words, Davin shows a deep understanding of what the burden of command and responsibility meant.

Most of the characters are recognisable, unmistakably so and miraculously right; even those with only a few words say the right ones, invariably. Finally, underlying all and often outspoken is the fierce, just pride in the Division, the splendid, undefeatable, matchless Division. There may have been other Divisions as good, but we didn't meet them and never had cause to think there were. A great deal could be forgiven the New Zealand writer who so fully recaptures and revives that pride.

WAS soldiers' talk as coarse as here appears? It was, lady, and more so. Our soldiers swore terribly in Flanders and they swore frequently in Libya, very frequently. Still there is an injustice in the implication that all went forthwith to the Berka on arrival in Cairo. This is no more true than the implication that all officers had mistresses or were *personae gratae* in bordellos. If the talk was so coarse, is it necessary to put it all in print? Well, if you want realism you must put up with realism; it isn't always nice. I'm not certain that I agree, being a little prudish and in favour of the reticences.

Despite his determined attitude of disillusion and scepticism I do not think Dan Davin is destined only to be a minor prophet of nihilism. A great deal can be expected of him and there is much that is great in this book.



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