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## BOOK REVIEWS (Cont'd.)

(continued from previous page)

by the ineptitude of the pre-war Government in England. He could not see much good in the officer caste in the British Army, and it is clear that he felt the "young gentlemen" to be out of place in the modern world. Throughout these pages the New Zealander emerges clearly and steadily; a man who likes to see things done quickly and without fuss, who respects tradition only while it does not impede action, who is willing to make allowance for mistakes and prejudices, but who believes that the individual must not be pushed about, or sacrificed to the interests of class or State.

There are passages in the book which describe action in the desert and resistance in the mountains of Greece. Some of Mulgan's best writing is in his account of experiences among the Greeks, although he has passed lightly over events in which he was deeply engaged as a soldier. It is not always easy to remember that he was parachuted into Greece to plan and carry out guerrilla operations by mixed forces against the Germans. Little is said of activities which, in the words of the citation for his Military Cross, made him an "inspiring example of courage, patience, and conscientious devotion to duty." In every chapter he remembers and judges simultaneously: the experience is distilled into opinion.

The opinions are more direct, and more firmly based, when he takes them from what he saw and heard among the realities of wartime situations. In England he was baffled by social complexity, and sometimes he judged too quickly, with a colonial impatience—though also with tolerant after-thoughts which illustrated his liberalism. But in Greece he saw life and death in a closer view; and danger and responsibility brought clarity to his thinking. Experience sharpened what was there to begin with: the character of the man found its ultimate strength and balance. It was a preparation for work which now, alas, cannot be done. Yet what was done was the work of a strong intellect and a mind enriched by living and thinking, and New Zealanders will find something of themselves and of their country in the clean and robust writing. *Report on Experience* may seem now to be only a fragment; but there is in it a goodness and truth and an artistic unity which may keep it alive when more ambitious books are forgotten.

### A SHOVELFUL OF FUN

DUM-DUM: HIS SELECTED VERSES. By John Kendall. Harap.

VERSES out of *Punch* do not readily commend themselves to those sour spirits (of whom I am one) who never read verses in *Punch*. "Dum-Dum" regales us in this volume with a selection from his humorous rhapsodisings of love, music, sport, and people. He writes gracefully in many metres and often brings off an apt echo of old and famous lines—

—and a casement closed at night  
To keep the warm air in.

—a neat trick if not overworked. Here and there a line chimes well: he likes the players in an orchestra with "their earnest faces,"

And the conductor too, I liked his back.

Perhaps "Dum-Dum" is at his best when he sings of games: there was the seventh holed in one and its ending—

Then to my foe, who stood with drooping head,

"That for a half," I said.

So much humour, so much arch wit, all in one dose is like a whole meal of meringues. Humorous verse in English has a long and respectable ancestry. Am I merely a tiresome praiser of times past if I do not find here the accomplishments of the *Ingoldsby Legends*, of Lewis Carroll, of Calverley, of our home-spun Whim-Wham? I am reduced to one adjective and that a period one: "Dum-Dum" is *killing*.

—David Hall

### SECOND FRONT STORY

FROM THE CITY, FROM THE PLOUGH. By Alexander Baron. Jonathan Cape, London.

THE men from city and plough form a typical cross-section of an infantry battalion in Britain's Second Front army, and this book recounts their experiences from January, 1944, when they first went into training, until the final break-through at Caumont after two tough months of beach-head fighting. The story is told through a series of loosely-linked impressions of the men in training and battle, and the effect of the narrative is exciting and often very powerful, though spoilt by occasional patches of fine writing and sentiment that will irritate anyone who has gone through similar experiences.

But apart from this tendency the book succeeds in presenting a highly dramatic and realistic picture of army life, with all its eddying emotional currents of comradeship, excitement, frustration, boredom, hatred, and fear. And although the author's wittily or tenderly described types never quite succeed in becoming living individuals, much of the humour and pathos of their lives is caught vividly in his concise, colourful style. The book shows what army life must have meant to these fresh young farm-hands and office workers, and how nobly they reacted to one of the most severe baptisms of fire of the war.

—P.J.W.

### ANTI-COMMUNIST

WHY I FIGHT COMMUNISM. By Bob Semple. Through Gordon & Gotch.

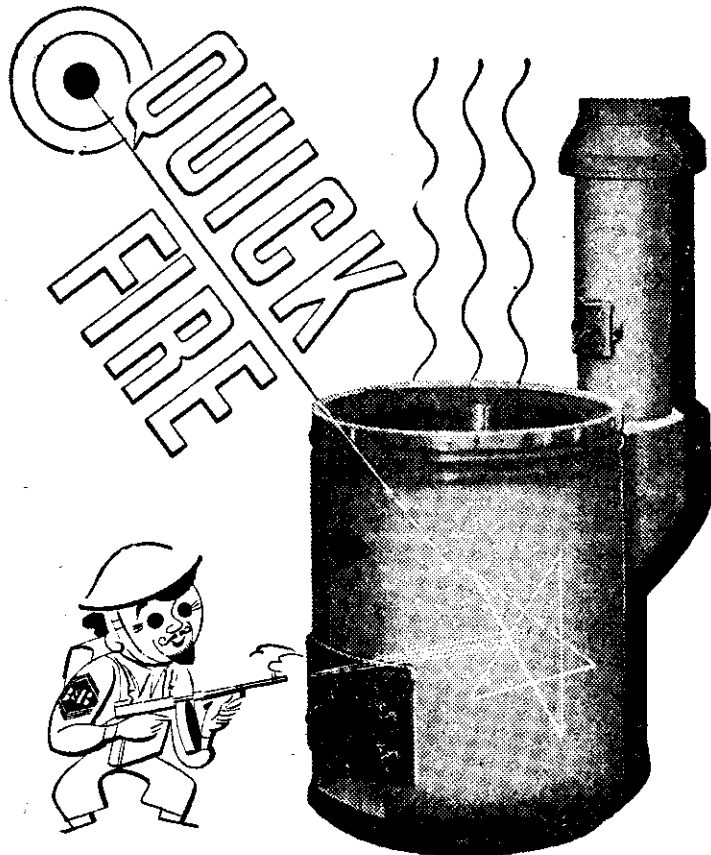
THIS is a vigorous piece of propaganda in a cause that most New Zealanders at present support. If most of his source books are also propagandist, it must not be assumed that he is only an echo of echoes. It is his personal experiences of Communism in action that give urgency to what he says, and if historians pass him by he is not much concerned with them in any case. His appeal is primarily to men and women in the big industrial unions, who talk his language, and have neither the time nor the inclination to ask whether his statements would all bear the dry light of research.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

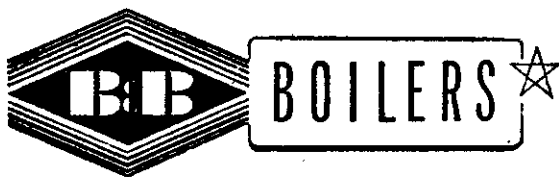
THE RIGHT MURDER. By Craig Rice. Eyre and Spottiswoode Ltd., London.

In *The Right Murder*, a millionaire (Chicagoan) laid a bet that she could commit a murder in broad daylight and get away with it. The millionairess succeeds; the author doesn't do quite so well.

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