

BOOK SHOP

IN the Book Shop session on Wednesday, August 22, Tom Hutchins, of Auckland, will talk about three books of photographs, "Family of Man," edited by Steichen, "The People of Moscow," by Cartier-Bresson, and "World Oilmen." Dr. Francis West, of Victoria University College, will discuss "The History of the English-Speaking Peoples," by Winston Churchill.

to pretend that he did not want the job and was taking it only because it would be graceless to refuse.

If this is not the story of a great President or a great man, it is the story of a strong President and of a solid American who rose to a great occasion. Nor is it the case that he has nothing new to say in his second volume. His three chapters about the Palestine problem, for example, will not satisfy non-American readers, but they explain with great clearness why America wanted to open Palestine to all the Jews who asked to go there and why this so annoyed Britain. But the most revealing of the international chapters are those dealing with China. If we still suppose that America was flat-footed in China, that Washington lost to Moscow through arrogance, ignorance, and inexperience, we may have a different notion when we have read the author's fifth and sixth chapters. And who but Harry Truman could have written the

astounding account of the Democratic Convention that accepted him in Philadelphia in 1948 after keeping him waiting in a dressing-room for four hours on a "hot, clammy night," while delegates argued and shouted on the floor above him, or would have filled those four hours with a 33-page meditation on the last 150 years of America's political life?

—O.D.

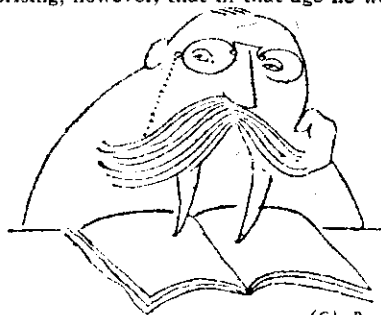
18TH CENTURY FAMILY

THE GAY DELAVALS, by Francis Askham; Jonathan Cape, English price 21.

LONG ago an imported English sire, Seaton Delaval, enriched New Zealand's racing blood; and, without following racing I wondered, as perhaps some punters did, where the curious name came from. Eventually I learned that the origin was Seaton Delaval Hall, one of England's great country houses, now half ruin and half museum, "isolated," so says a Northumberland guide-book, "in nightmare grandeur in the scarred coal country round Newcastle." The owners maintain it as a trust, and people pay to see Vanbrugh's mixture of architectural magnificence and domestic discomfort and the ghosts of a high-living past.

Out of some twenty thousand family documents rescued from the fire of 1822 and stowed away, Francis Askham has constructed with praiseworthy industry the story of the house's rise and fall. The Delaval who completed it about 1720 had six sons, but the last male died in 1814. This hundred-year record

has some value as a reflection of 18th century life, mostly the less pleasant sides. It ranges from the play-writing and scurrilities of Samuel Foote to miners digging coal for northern magnates by the light of naked candles. Unfortunately, the Delavals are not important or interesting enough to warrant such detailed reconstruction of their lives, and the style in which they are re-furbished is rather too pretentious and sentimental. John Delaval, who became their head, had some business capacity, and was raised to the peerage, but really was not of much account. His eldest brother Francis, who gets most attention, was a worthless blackguard. This pleasure-seeking spendthrift was excluded from management; seduced a young visitor; and married, for her money, a stupid woman about old enough to be his mother. The racing sire was the better man. It is not surprising, however, that in that age he was



(C) Punch

elected to Parliament. The Delaval gaiety included a passion for the theatre. At a cost of £1500 Francis played Othello at Drury Lane, assisted by two brothers and his mistress. Notoriety packed the house and later gave Francis more obituary space than was given Thomas Gray the poet. There is some history here and material for the historian.

—A.M.

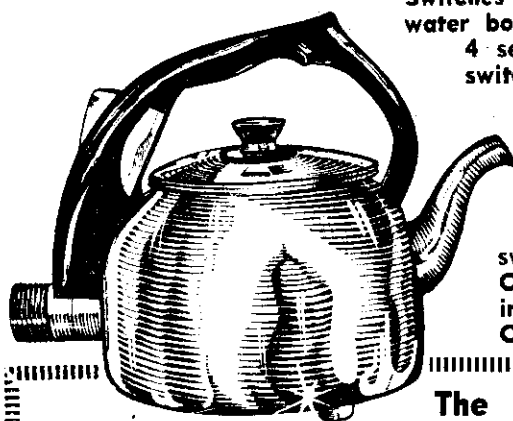
THE LONG BATTLE

THE SIEGE, a Story from Kohima, by Arthur Campbell; Allen and Unwin, English price 12 6.

THE story of the siege of Kohima in April, 1944, is one of unbelievable bravery against overwhelming odds, the odds becoming worse the longer the battle lasted. The town would have fallen, without a doubt, but for the stubborn courage of a battalion of the Royal West Kent Regiment, 500 strong, encircled at first by a regiment of 5000 Japanese and, a week later, by a division. After fourteen days of bitter fighting and short commons, two companies of Punjabi infantry reached the garrison to share its defence and open the road for the evacuation of its 600 wounded. Two days later the West Kent's survivors were relieved, but it was another four weeks before the Japanese were driven back from Kohima and the first major victory of the Burma campaign won.

Arthur Campbell tells the story of the siege as seen by the Royal West (continued on next page)

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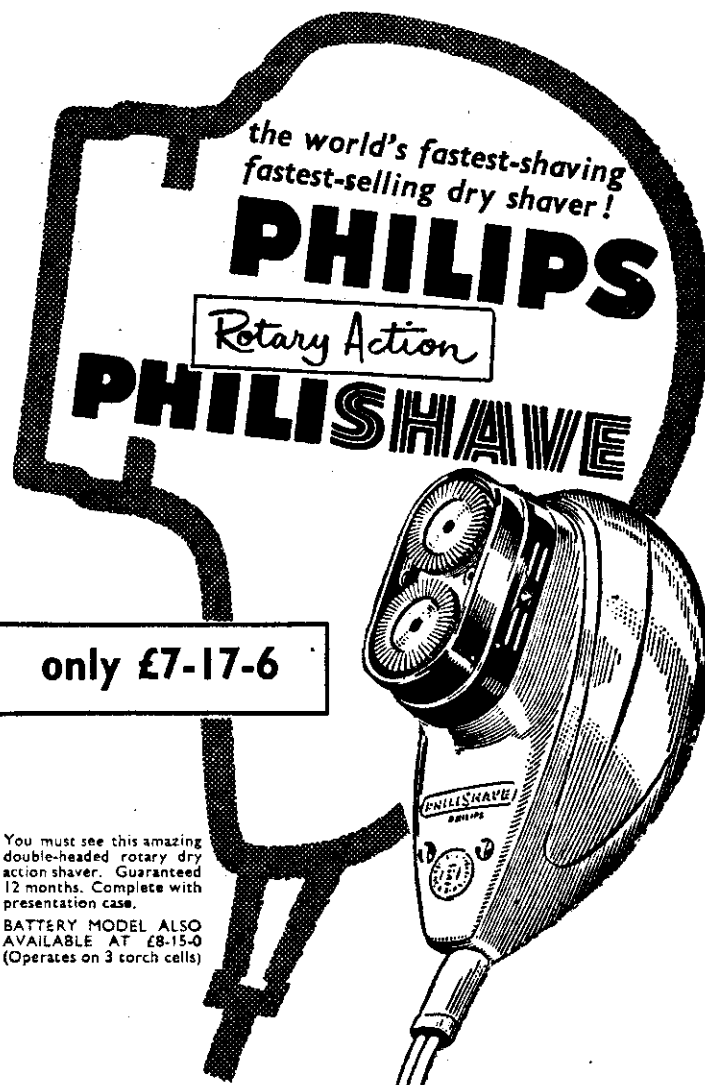
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