

FIGHTING FRENCHMAN

THE HISTORY OF THE FRENCH FIRST ARMY, by Marshal de Lattre de Tassigny, translated by Malcolm Barnes, Allen and Unwin, English price, 42s.

(Reviewed by W.A.G.)

GENERAL DE LATTRE had to fight almost as hard to win from the Allies recognition of French equality and independence as he had to drive the Germans from the forests and mountain passes of the Vosges. First of all, in North Africa, there was conflict between Allied method and French audacity. The French, with the courage and *elan* that have made France's soldiers famous, wanted to rush straight into the battle to liberate the Motherland; they had come to North Africa to fight, not to serve in base and service units. The Americans, on the other hand, relied on impeccable organisation and methodically used strength rather than boldness. But French dash, helped by local knowledge and the maquis, won spectacular success, and within 12 days after landing in Southern France they had captured Toulon and Marseilles, a month earlier than the Allies' cautious timetable.

In the advance north through France and into Germany, de Lattre on sev-

eral occasions interpreted the Allied plan to suit French ambitions. Extremely conscious of national prestige and anxious that his forces should be in the forefront of the battle, he exceeded his orders to ensure that the French shared fully in the honours.

To say the least, the Allied Command was sometimes hardly tactful. Ignoring French anxiety to avenge 1940 by invading Germany, it gave the French First Army a minor holding role in the crossing of the Rhine. Then there was some divergence of opinion about who was to garrison Stuttgart, captured by the French but in the American operational zone. And to cap it all, the French flag was not among those of the Allies at the signing of the German capitulation in Berlin. When de Lattre drew attention to the omission, the Russians hurriedly made one from a sheet, a Nazi banner, and an engineer's overalls.

Although much of this history is a tactical day-by-day account of the fighting in France and the advance into Germany, the charm of French prose persists in the translation. De Lattre's style is exclamatory, the pace is sometimes breathless, and he likes to ask rhetorical questions; occasionally a lively metaphor gives a sharp twist to his accounts of battle.



MARSHAL DE LATTRE
The Russians repaired an omission

CONNECTICUT IN ROME

ROME AND A VILLA, by Eleanor Clark; Michael Joseph, English price, 21s.

MY wonder grows that one small Connecticut head should carry all the knowledge of archaeology, history (all periods), architecture, painting, sculpture, belles lettres and human behaviour (Kinsey style) which must be inferred from the judgments so freely

given by Miss Clark. This is Rome treated in a modern Irwin Shaw manner—condensed, impressionistic, bawdy, epigrammatic, sprightly. The verdicts (mostly adverse) fall in pitiless and unceasing hail on the dome and square of St. Peter's, on the city and its ancient monuments, its sculptures, and its fountains.

It reminds me at times of Vulliamy's attempt on Dr. Johnson some years ago. Like it the Olympian manner is dropped quite often for an undisguised sneer. "The stairs have a good holy look of an impossible proposition." Like Vulliamy also is the high literary quality of the debunking, and it is often quite as comic. The city fares rather worse than the Vatican at Miss Clark's tapering fingers. Which reminds me that anything tapering has a positively distressing effect on Miss Clark's mind, and what she makes of the obelisks would cause Havelock Ellis, Freud and Frazer to wish they had thought of it first.

Right in the middle of the book is a sudden 35 pages on Salvatore Giuliano, a Sicilian bandit recently deceased, for whom the author has evidently an admiration. This interlude has nothing to do with Rome or anything in the book before or after it, but is quite interesting. There is also a long dissertation on Hadrian's Villa and a Roman poet.

On the whole, it's a luxuriant tangle of lightly baked erudition and artistic

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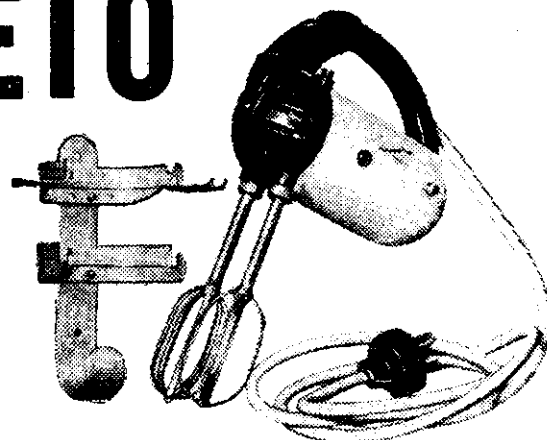
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