Biography
As the rear guard of winter books passes with the spring, it is officered, properly enough, by fighting men. Winston Churchill's Marlborough: His Life and Times (Scribners, 6 vols., $16.50) supplies a great captain. Completion of this work, one of the half-dozen most distinguished military biographies in English, was probably the most notable event of the literary season. Churchill writes even better than he speaks, and if he had not made politics his career, he might have been one of the most popular writers of his generation. He has that fine, infrequent combination of dramatic sense, historical judgment, and felicitous phrasing. As the good strategist a descendant of the Duke should be, he employs the offensive-defensive in his literary war on Marlborough'straducers, and when, as Henry Esmond would have insisted on saying, he leaves Milord to fame, dead in Windsor Lodge, he passes on to future biographers no larger labor than that of analyzing his treatment of the disputable chapters in the life of the most resourceful of British soldiers. Of fact, little more will be discovered; in broad portrayal of Marlborough, there is such scant prospect of excelling Churchill that none will essay the task. Scarcely less distinguished in craftsmanship and similarly pitched to arma virumque is Arthur Bryant's Samuel Pepys, the Saviour of the Navy (Macmillan, $3.75). The new, third volume of this fine work portrays a discerning and persistent administrator whom even those familiar with the paradoxes of England after the Restoration will have difficulty in identifying as the gossip and petulant diarist. A third military biography of special interest to Americans is Colonel Alfred H. Burne's Lee, Grant and Sherman (Scribners, $2), a study of leadership in the campaigns of 1864-65. Colonel Burne set out to appraise the judgment passed on these American soldiers by three British writers of recent years—General Maurice, General Fuller, and Captain Liddell Hart. He confirms General Maurice's
judgment of Lee, he punctures politely some of General Fuller's assumptions, and he gives to two much-criticized Confederates, Early and Hood, a higher place than heretofore has been assigned them.

Of autobiographies that are themselves material of history, the passing winter produced at least four of uncommon interest. First place must go to Arthur Train's My Day in Court (Scribners, $3.50), delightful and chatty reminiscences of a dual career as lawyer and writer—the sort of book to take up for a chuckle, to put down for further perusal, and to quote when the dinner party gets dull. The same thing may be said of Seventy Years Young, the memoirs of Elizabeth, Countess of Fingall (Dutton, $5). Her Irish stories are not such as would have made Sir Jonah Barrington's audience guffaw, nor are they quite so panoplied with splendor as Lord Frederick Hamilton's survey of a slightly earlier period, but they are altogether diverting. It is interesting to compare Lady Fingall's pictures of wartime with those presented in Days of Our Years (Hillman-Curl, $3.50), by Pierre van Paassen, a Hollander who ventured in the ministry, served with the Canadian Corps in the World War, and then endured some unhappy and disillusioning experiences before he became one of the most brilliant of roving newspaper correspondents. Philip Gibbs never wrote with more sustained vigor, nor did Erich Remarque ever display more flaming hatred of war. It is a long book, which comes down to the Czech crisis, but it burns on every page. An equally human document is Joseph A. Jerger's Here's Your Hat (Prentice-Hall, $2.75), a candid, amusing, and forthright account of the ups and downs of practice in Iowa and in Chicago. Its central figure, most affectionately portrayed as the author's ideal, is "Old Doc" Fullerton of Waterloo, Iowa. He seems to have been much the same type of self-effacing country doctor that Frazier Hunt presents in The Little Doc (Simon & Schuster, $2), a popular
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—DOUGLAS S. FREEMAN

**Foreign Affairs**

Despite the fuss and bother in the Mediterranean during the past months, books on foreign affairs for the most part still draw their inspiration from the German situation. This, I suppose, is a reflection of the general feeling that, in comparison with Hitler and Germany, the Duce and his new Italy are merely second-raters. Mussolini is an opportunist (proved to the hilt in Megaro's *Mussolini in the Making*); his movement was that of an aggressive minority; and his country is naturally poor and weak, "a great power only by courtesy" as Bismarck suggested years ago. Hitler, on the other hand, is a Messiah to a majority of his people, and his people is one of the most highly endowed, most virile and, shall we say, most mystical and therefore most dangerous in the world today. This is the line taken by Hendrik van Loon in his *Our Battle* (Simon & Schuster, $1), a concise and unvarnished broadside which deserves the numerous readers it is intended for. The only objection I have to Van Loon's book is to the title. It is not really an analysis of our struggle (and we certainly have a many-sided one), nor yet a counterblast to Hitler's effusion, but rather an expose of what has happened in Germany, what the Nazi system involves, what the Nazi aims and aspirations are, and what they imply for this and other democracies. As such it can be warmly recommended.

Taking a somewhat novel tack, Theodore Abel, in his *Why Hitler Came into Power* (Prentice-Hall, $2.75), has reopened the vexed question suggested by his title. Dissatisfied with the theorizing of men like Schumann and Strachey, he attempted to get at the facts by offering (in 1934) a prize for the best autobiographical essays written by Nazis or Nazi sympathizers. For a paltry 400 marks he secured upward of 600 confessions, which makes one boil at the thought that one or another of our foundations, for a few thousand dollars, might have accumulated a really impressive fund of material. Mr. Abel would be the last one to claim conclusiveness for the evidence, but the replies he elicited bear, for the most part, the marks of sincerity and artlessness. They enable him to retrace the story of Hitler's rise in very human terms and help to correct some current misconceptions. For example, among his respondents only 12 per cent were less than 26 years old in 1934, while 51 per cent were between 27 and 49 years of age and no less than 59 per cent were 40 to 59. Of those who joined the party between 1925 and 1927 almost half were workers and about the same number belonged to the lower middle class. The majority had only a public school education, 40 per cent were war veterans, but only 49 per cent were unemployed or in economic difficulties. While the replies produced no startling revelations, they indicate that resentment against the republican regime, the undemocratic character of other nationalist parties, the appeal of the Gemeinschaft idea, the magnetic quality of Hitler and his oratory, the clever management of the meetings, and the generally dynamic nature of the movement had most to do with Nazi success. I found this book most illuminating.

—WILLIAM L. LANGER

**Fiction**

If Don Marquis had lived to finish his *Sons of the Puritans* (Doubleday, Doran, $2.50), it would, I think, at once have found its place among the finest American novels. The unfinished book runs to more than 300 pages and carries its hero through a year at college and up to the time when he makes the break with his small town which will send him to new adventures in New York. But at the pace so far taken, and with the rich full course of the story, it must have needed still many pages—perhaps as many again—to do the theme justice. What Jack Stevens might finally have done or become can only be guessed at.

*Sons of the Puritans* is merely the story of a youth in a Midwestern village. That village, however, seems to me more accurately and wisely represented than any in American fiction.

Or rather, the people in the village. Don Marquis does not make an abstract entity of the village and personify it. This is simply Hazelton (Don Marquis's native Walnut), Illinois, just before and after 1900. The center of the town's life lies largely in its two churches, in part because Jack is the son of a minister and plans to become one, but for the most part because the churches furnished whatever center such towns had at that time. Here for once are congregations which, while truly presented, are not in the least caricatured. They are digested without knowing and cruel without intending it. As Don Marquis says of two of the best men in the book, "They both came of an earnest, not ungenerous, bargaining tribe, full of ingenuous sincerities and strange incongruities, a people whirling with moral-

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**THE PLAZA**

Subway at hotel direct to World's Fair

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