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Pain—and Courage

The Way of Recovery. By Squadron-Leader William Simpson, D.F.C. (Hamish Hamilton, 7s. 6d.)
By H. E. BATES

When Squadron-Leader Simpson came home to England after two years of hell in French hospitals under German occupation, the result of his being practically burnt alive in his aircraft in the first Battle of France, he got himself a dictaphone—since he had no use whatsoever in his hands—and put his experiences on paper. The result was a painful but unembittered book of lacerating vividness. "One of

Great Britis

British Maps and Mapmakers.
By COLONEL SIR C.

OLD maps have an interest for us, partly because they help us to follow the development of technicality which has become indispensable to civilisation, partly because they throw light on the past condition of the country, and partly because they have in them an element of art. All three aspects of the study of mapping are dealt with in Mr. Lynam's excellent little book which is a welcome addition to the literature of the subject. Mr. Lynam is himself the author of an Introduction to Saxton's



From "British Maps and Mapmakers."

Part of a Map by W. Mayo, 1722.

"Our Pilots Is Safe," which I described as "the best piece of writing produced by any operational pilot of the war," an opinion which nothing has so far made me change. I suggested, also, that "all of us should note it and be humble."

Those who are prepared to give the necessary courage to read the sequel to that book, "The Way of Recovery," in which French hospitals are replaced by English, an Amazonian terror of a French sister by a fresh and tenderly skilful English girl, and the primitive ruthlessness of French war-time medicine by some of the finest plastic surgery in the world, are warned to strengthen their humility. For it is practically a continuous picture of pain. The recurrent descriptions of intricate operations, of young men foully disfigured by war, of the slow and distressing processes of healing, above all of delicate delicacies of mind and spirit by which patients struggle to regain something like a composed alignment with normality: all these are not only highly painful in themselves, but must be, even to minds of the lowest sensibility, like bloody lashes on the soft skin of our composure.

In all this book, as in "One of Our Pilots Is Safe," there is not a single line of hatred, bitterness, or self-pity; there is nothing but thanks and praise for the skill of surgeons, the beautiful humanity of orderlies and nurses, the fact of life and the hope of living; there is nothing but cheerfulness and resolve to replant a life torn up by its living roots in its prime.

Yet if I read this book correctly, and reading it as I do with nausea and difficulty, it stands as a most damnable commentary on our time. It is for this reason that I invite the reader to come to it with redoubled humility. As the war comes to its end, as we magnify the nuisances of black-out, rationing, travelling, closed beaches, taxes, and all the rest of our petty emergency terrors, we should all of us take this book and make the discovery, even though at second-hand, of what, pain and terror really mean. We should lay our ungrafted hands on the green grass; we should turn our un-disfigured faces to the sun; and we should offer something more than a whisper of gratitude. For there is a danger—dare I suggest it?—that in the rowdy clamour of victory men like Simpson may be forgotten. And they ask passionately not to be forgotten. They cry out, with their lidless eyes, their handless arms, their burnt but unembittered lips, to be a living memorial in all our to-morrows. If you can grant them that, as Simpson says, "nothing is impossible to us," and nothing, perhaps, will have been in vain.

New

By RALI

AT a time when the general standard of new fiction is not noticeably high, boldly unconventional experiment like Joyce Cary's "The Horse's Mouth" (Michael Joseph 10s. 6d.) must be warmly welcomed. It is by no means a flawless production—there are characters as well as scenes which fail to carry conviction—but most commendably Mr. Cary (always an unpredictable but stimulating writer) has "gone all out" in an endeavour to achieve something new and big, and he has come very near to complete success.

The book is supposed to be the dictated memoirs of one Gulley Jimson, a 68-year-old Chelsea painter, a penniless near-genius whose earlier work is being collected, but now a sly, unbalanced crook who has twice been sent to prison. Yet for all his vague domesticities and vices and singular misfortunes, this witty ruffian retains a queer artistic integrity, and it is this which gives to the self-portrait its peculiar attractiveness. And even though there are episodes which come too near to farce, and one or two of the (more respectable) characters are little more than lay figures, a vivid personality is created, sadly warped, it may be, and at times rather larger than life, but forthright and credible and, at any rate to one reader, highly entertaining. To my mind, indeed, this garish picture of the artistic underworld must be numbered among the most notable novels of the year.

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Very different in every way is Ann Stafford's "I Want to be Happy" (Collins, 8s. 6d.), a rather charming variation on the old theme of Martha and Mary Alice, the elder sister is plain and hard-working and a little too apt to nurse her own grievances. Maureen, the younger, dreams of a "glamorous" good time, and is not too particular how she gets