

THE WAR IN SPAIN

Reviews by H. E. BATES

THERE must be many Englishmen to whom the ideals of both sides in Spain are equally repugnant. How many Spaniards cherish the same feelings we shall never know. Before the Civil War, **Señor Manuel Chaves Nogales** was editor of the Spanish paper *Ahora*; when the Madrid Government placed themselves in the hands of the extremists, Señor Nogales exercised his right to leave both paper and country, "being a hundred per cent. anti-Fascist and anti-revolutionist by temperament." Previously he had proved his faith to this ideal by going to Russia, to discover "that the Russian workers had a rough life under a dictatorship which they imagined they were controlling," and then to Rome, to see for himself "that Fascism had not been able to increase by one single ounce the bread ration of the Italians." Now he further proves his faith by a volume of stories, **And in the Distance a Light** (Heinemann, 7s. 6d.), which has the Spanish conflict as a common scene. You have only to read one of these stories, *Long Live Death*, to feel the concentrated expression of his faith strongly coming through what is, at best, only an adequate translation. In his account of the shooting of three Communist servant-girls all the stupid bloodiness and cruel folly of all militant political causes whatsoever is epitomized and expressed. This story, with its pictures of heroism and stupidity, political cowardice and human suffering, is typical of the book. If the book, in turn, is typical of Spain, God help Spain.

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I turn with relief to **Mr. Damon Runyon**. I was one of those who, before Runyon was splashed over the pages of the evening Press, gave a big hello to *More Than Some*.

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I am now ready to give similar big hellos to **Furthermore** (Constable, 7s. 6d.), for which Messrs. E. C. and Nicolas Bentley have again provided preface and pictures. In the meantime, I learn that certain superior Americans are inclined to regard with scorn the present large-hearted acceptance of the Runyon idiom here. So what? Mr. Runyon supplies a brand of commodity which the English can never produce. He is as American as sweet-corn and Babbitt, and the basic principles of his humour, with its solemn marriage of slang and the academic, are as sound as Euclid. As an inventor of names that laugh louder than life he has no equal since Dickens. Meet The Lemon Drop Kid, Good Time Charley, Hot Horse Herbie, Milk Ear Willie, with the assurance from me that these Broadway toughs, strutting and shooting their way through a world of dolls and rackets and little propositions and old equalizers, are as funny as they sound.

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The stories in **Northern Deeps**, by Mr. **Lawson Luard** (Collins, 7s. 6d.), belong to what I would call the "lighting our cigars" school of fiction. They are mainly concerned with the sea, and are written with a clumsy heartiness, a respect for plot, and an honest regard for the scenery that are admirable as far as they go. But Mr. Luard is a thousand leagues from being, as his publishers claim, a second Conrad.