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Against the Brutes

The White Rabbit. By Bruce Marshall. (Evans. 16s.)

By H. E. BATES

THE WHITE RABBIT" is the story, retold by Bruce Marshall, of Wing-Commander Yeo-Thomas, G.C., M.C., who began and ended the war as manager of the Molyneux dress establishment in Paris, a post that would hardly seem, at first sight, to be an auspicious training ground for a man who was to become much more than an ordinary spy.

Not only was Yeo-Thomas, in the course of his work as a liaison officer helping to organise French Resistance, captured by the Gestapo and maltreated by them with the grossest and most bestial tortures of which it has ever been my misfortune to read; he also performed an amazing feat of endurance and courage in escaping from them. Earlier than that he had achieved, in another direction, the almost equally distinguished personal triumph of short-circuiting everything and everybody in order to put before Winston Churchill his case for a more urgent and intensive arming of French Resistance, and finally of hearing

Churchill say: "You have chosen an unorthodox way of doing things . . . it might mean trouble for you, but I shall see that no such thing happens. I am going to increase substantially the number of aircraft doing parachute operations to the Resistance, and greater supplies and more armaments are going to be sent."

Soon after that Churchillian blessing—the Prime Minister had promised him an interview of five minutes and had finally given him two hours—Yeo-Thomas, or the White Rabbit, or Shelley, another of his pseudonyms, was betrayed by a matter of seconds, on the steps of Passy Metro Station in Paris and arrested by delirious Gestapo thugs screaming: "Wir haben Shelley. Englischer Offizier. Terroriste. Schweinhund. Scheisskerl." His tour as a parachute jumper hopping backwards and forwards from France to England on liaison missions was suddenly over; his dreadful life as a prisoner, first in Fresnes, then in Buchenwald, and finally in Gleinva and Rehmsdorf, had begun.

And it is here also, I think, that his story really begins. It is only when capture refines experience down to the narrowest personal dimensions, and when a white heat of hatred and courage is brought face to face with all that is most bestially despicable in the armoury of State persuasion, that Yeo-Thomas really finds himself.

Then the true, personal, enduring, magnificent resistance begins. And it becomes not merely Yeo-Thomas's own story; it flares up into something universal and symbolic, the pure, splendid, horrible triumph of flame over dirt. In this section of the book there are not only passages it is impossible to read without revulsion and anguish; there are passages of sheer fanatical endurance, particularly that describing Yeo-Thomas's final escape from the death-train after leaving Rehmsdorf, that at once humble and elevate the reader.

It is never easy, even for a writer of established skill, to re-tell another man's story in terms of complete conviction. Mr. Bruce Marshall, sharing Yeo-Thomas's love and lamentation for France and his hatred for Germany, has admirably succeeded in what must have been at once an inspiring and formidable task. He brings to the book the full belt of a strong and vivid indignation. He succeeds somehow in raising the tone of his objectivity with touches of irony and fury that invest the entire narrative with exactly the tempo you might have expected if Yeo-Thomas himself had written it. Nor is it ever easy to show, at second-hand, how glory flows out of the torture-chamber, the charnel house and the cesspool. But Mr Marshall has done that too; and has thus given us the study of an unforgettable and remarkable patriot.

THE ICE

mic Basis. By J. G. D. Clark.

TA HAWKES

whelmed when rising temperatures allowed the spread of forest across the old hunting grounds. For thousands of years after this vegetable aggression trees were to be men's most stubborn opponents, and Dr. Clark shows how in response the production of wood-cutting axes assumed an extraordinary importance. It led to the first deep mining, the first mass production and the first extensive trade.

"Prehistoric Europe" does full justice to these dominating economic events—the spread of forest, the introduction of Mediterranean agriculture, the development of metallurgy both in bronze and iron. But perhaps its most attractive pages are those which describe men's smaller achievements: seaworthy boats, nets, fish-hooks, basketry and pottery, woven linen and wool, wickerwork. Gradually the rich and varied cultures were built up which the Greeks and Romans encountered when they brought wine, trade and servitude to the European barbarians. Many of their elements still survive in the sub-arctic north, among the remoter peasantry of Europe and even among ourselves.

This book is an outstanding contribution to archaeology—original, authoritative and excellently presented. We have good reason to be proud that the first economic prehistory of Europe should be published in our island.