

**THEIR FINEST HOUR**, by Winston S. Churchill. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, U.S.A., Thomas Allen Ltd., Toronto, Canada. Pp. 751. \$6.

"Not only individual death, which is the universal experience, stood near, but incomparably more commanding, the life of Britain, her message and her glory." Thus does Churchill aptly describe the period of time covered by this, the second volume of his history of World War II.

As his story continues we read of the problems confronted by the author when he became head of the newly-formed National Coalition Government, and it is impossible not to admire the simplicity with which the small, select War Cabinet was formed and functioned without the taint of party politics. As a leader Mr. Churchill was firm. He never gave the members an opportunity to place the blame for Britain's precarious position on former ministers, but anticipated such a movement by telling the House, "If the present, tries to sit in judgment on the past, it will lose the future."

Mr. Churchill's account of the Battle of France is revealing. Here we see the betrayal of the supposedly most powerful military nation in the world, by its leaders. The tales of tragic heroism at Dunkirk and the RAF's victory over the Luftwaffe in the Battle of Britain, make thrilling reading. The suspense of those awful days following the fall of France will be revived for the reader who has too quickly forgotten that England alone stood between Hitler and complete domination of the Old World.

This was the situation when the Prime Minister made his memorable speech to the House of Commons on June 18, 1940—the day of the French capitulation. "If we can stand up to him (Hitler) all Europe may be free, and . . . so bear ourselves that if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will say: 'This was their finest hour'."

Included in this narrative of an eventful year of warfare is a description of the rebuilding of the British Army and the preparation for an enemy invasion; the Italian attack on Greece; the increasing menace of the U-boat campaign and the struggle to keep the ocean lanes free for supplies; and the triumphant campaign in



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This book is more than an account of the important events of the war. A firm believer in *The Written Word* in issuing orders, Mr. Churchill enlivens his text by a liberal sprinkling of telegrams and memoranda dispatched to the various leaders of the war effort and chiefs of state of foreign powers. These reveal the tremendous load of responsibility carried by the author as Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury, Minister of Defence and Leader of the House of Commons. They show too, that this doughty old warrior was happiest when he had a "finger in every pie", never sparing himself, but watching closely every detail of Britain's defensive and offensive strategy. His attention to these details paid dividends. The armed services grew strong under his unceasing demands for perfection. Under his guidance the tremendous resources of the Commonwealth were utilized and the Commonwealth itself became an arsenal for democracy, while his negotiations with the United States led to Lend-Lease and other assistance.

In spite of the burden of care that was