

standpoint of capitalist production. What is important is that unused capacity is an expression of the impossibility for capitalist production to use profitably all its productive forces. At the same time unused capacity, with its concomitant of relatively higher overhead costs, is bound up with the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. As capitalist production becomes increasingly large-scale and efficient, and the ratio of labor to capital becomes smaller, more of the proceeds of industry go to capital than to labor, thereby creating the conditions of an accumulating deficiency in mass purchasing power and consumption. Unused capacity tends to grow as the forces of production are developed more than the forces of consumption. The Brookings study concludes that, for the thirty years after 1900, there was no apparent tendency for unused capacity to increase. If, however, periods of depression, which show an increasing decline in production, are included, there is a marked tendency for unused capacity to increase. Moreover, even the Brookings figures indicate an increase, as they show that unused capacity was somewhat higher in 1925-29 than in 1909-13, an increase which becomes greater if allowance is made for the fact that the first was a period of depressed prosperity and the second one of unusual prosperity. Because of the conditions bound up with unused capacity, which are inherent in capitalist production, a situation arises where the rate of profit tends to fall disastrously. Capitalism meets the danger by restricting production and consumption, with resulting permanent unemployment and mass misery. For to absorb the unemployed and permit the masses to consume the abundance industry is capable of producing, it is necessary to raise wages and lower hours to an extent which would threaten the abolition of

profit. Thus it is fantastic to "reject all revolutionary suggestions," as do the Brookings economists, "and seek economic regeneration under an economic organization not basically different from that to which we have been accustomed in the United States." Where the rate of profit, the driving force of capitalist production, formerly promoted economic progress, it now increasingly stifles it. Only the abolition of capitalism can release the forces of economic (and cultural) progress.

LEWIS COREY

### *The Enigma of Miguel de Cervantes*

THE LIFE AND MISADVENTURES OF MIGUEL DE CERVANTES, by Mariano Tomas. \$3.00 5½ x 8½; 255 pp. Boston: The Houghton Mifflin Company.

FROM a biographer's point of view the life of Cervantes suffers from the same disadvantages as does that of his English brother in letters, William Shakespeare. The actual data are meager—a document here, a name there, and the rest mostly legend and hearsay. No biography of either man has yet been written that adds anything to the stature he assumes through his own works. The present book is pretty bad. It is a little sad and a little funny to watch Mariano Tomas, with lush adjectives and a gouty style, try to pat Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra on the head.

But there is more to the matter than scarcity of material or inadequacy of one biographer or a score of them. The fact is that where Cervantes went and what he did, whether he was the "hero of Lepanto" or just a man who came up on deck at the wrong moment and got his hand hurt, how long he lay in an Algerian prison, how badly he was neglected when he got out by the powers that then were—all those details, controversial or not, shrink

to insignificance beside the man's achievement. It is enough to know that he wrote that immortal tale of man's striving, which begins, "In a certain village of La Mancha, the name of which I do not choose to remember—." If one chooses to believe that the world he painted there was the world he lived in, well and good. But the important thing is the world he painted.

"Don Quixote" is not his only book. But the others, though they have been translated into every tongue, though, after three hundred years, they still sell, are, like the details of his career, relatively unimportant. It is "Don Quixote" that matters, Don Quixote and Sancho, Rosinante and the little ass, the helmet pieced with cardboard and tied with string, the vigil of arms in the courtyard of an inn while serving maids giggled, the passionate worship of that peerless person Dulcinea de Toboso who tended pigs.

An account of what that book has meant to the world would be a history of the changing attitude of man toward his destiny over the course of the last three centuries. Having been written as a satire on the then dying institution and literature of chivalry, it was, scholars say, regarded as uproarious humor in its own day, as slapstick comedy of the best articulate kind. It was translated into English almost immediately, and became as much of a success in England as in Europe and the newly settled Spanish America. Men read it and roared with laughter, as they later read and roared over Gargantua and Candide.

But bit by bit, as century gave way to century, as the Protestant Reformation was solidified and the authority of the Church to prescribe man's attitude toward his fate was weakened, as new countries were opened and life became at once easier

and harder, a different note crept into the laughter. Shadows gathered in the mirror. Where once the whole world had thought it funny when the Knight of the Rueful Countenance rode at full tilt to meet what were merely windmills, and got hurt, now only children laughed with unadulterated delight. The rest of mankind, reading, grew a little thoughtful and a bit sad. Each man began to see himself as the gaunt figure struggling against a Fate that always beat him, began at moments to see in his devotion to his beloved a hint of the doubtful glory that surrounded the loose-mouthed tender of pigs. The satire on chivalry had become a satire on the aspirations of mankind.

To the modern mind "Don Quixote" ranks as one of the greatest books in any language—a fact which might have made Mariano Tomas more hesitant in his familiarity had he appreciated all it meant. For the full flavor of it, it should be read in Spanish, for Cervantes did certain rolling and noble, wry and subtle things with the Castilian language which cannot be put into another tongue, and which become mere academic footnotes if explained. However, it was so well translated into the English of its period that there is no more of the archaic about it in that dress than in its original Spanish.

Indeed, it is in certain ways almost startling in its modernity. The novels of the late Nineteenth Century are as out of date as bustles, but "Don Quixote" delights fresh thousands of English readers every year.

The contrast between its style, and that in which Mariano Tomas talks about its author's life, is so hard on the latter that one wonders whether its translator and its publishers ever read the former.

MILDRED ADAMS

# THE AMERICAN MERCURY AUTHORS

GRACE ADAMS, PH.D. (Cornell), is a child psychologist and the author of two books, "Psychology: Science or Superstition?" and "Your Child Is Normal."

MILDRED ADAMS contributes frequently to the New York Times Magazine Section.

ERNEST SUTHERLAND BATES is an editor of the Modern Monthly, and a former professor of English at the Universities of Arizona and Oregon.

LEWIS COREY was assistant editor of the Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences. He is the author of "The House of Morgan" and "The Decline of American Capitalism."

SAMUEL GRAFTON is associate editor of the New York Post.

LUIS A. HUSTANA is a graduate of Leipzig Conservatory and has at different times been engaged by the Frankfort, Stuttgart and Chicago Symphony Orchestras.

EUGENE JOFFE is a graduate of Columbia University. He has contributed at times to the New Yorker, the New Republic, and Contact.

EUGENE A. KELLY is on the staff of the Washington Times.

BRUCE W. KNIGHT, PH.D., is a graduate of the University of Utah, was a student and professor at the Universities of Michigan and Wisconsin, and for the past ten years has been on the faculty of economics at Dartmouth. At present his chief interest is the subject of war, and especially its economic aspects.

MERIDEL LE SUEUR has worked on newspapers all over the country. At present she is living in Minnesota.

ALICE MULHERN (MRS. ALICE WADE ROBINSON) was born in Buffalo, New York, educated by the German Benedictines and the French Grey Nuns, and received her M.A. in comparative literature from Cornell.

THEODORE PRATT is the author of two novels, "Spring from Downward" and "Not Without the Wedding."

WALTER SCHOENSTEDT is the author of "Auf der Flucht Erschossen," which appeared in England as "Shot While Trying to Escape." It will soon be published in the United States. He escaped from Germany in October, 1934.

JONATHAN F. SCOTT, PH.D., is a professor of history at New York University, and the author of "The Menace of Nationalism in Education" and "The Surge of Public Opinion on the Eve of the Great War."

JAMES M. SHIELDS was supervising principal of elementary and junior high schools in Winston-Salem for thirteen years preceding the publication, last spring, of a revealing novel, "Just Plain Larnin'."

JAN SPIESS has studied at the Universities of California and Michigan.

THOMAS STEEP has done newspaper work in Mexico, Sweden, China, the Philippines, Indo-China, Burma, and India. He is the author of "Chinese Fantastics."

KENNETH STEWART is a newspaper man of wide experience both here and abroad. He is now on the staff of the Literary Digest.

CHARLES FITZHUGH TALMAN has been, since 1896, a staff meteorologist for the United States Weather Bureau.

JOSEPH N. ULMAN is associate judge of the Supreme Bench of Baltimore City. He is the author of "A Judge Takes the Stand."

OSWALD GARRISON VILLARD is the owner and contributing editor of the Nation. He is the author of several books.

WALTER WILSON was Southern secretary of the American Civil Liberties Union in 1930, and, in 1931, secretary of the National Committee for Defense of Political Prisoners. He is the author of "Forced Labor in the United States."