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## Books

make the sardonic counterpoint of the theme. When Herr Feuchtwanger has completed his saga, the figure of Justice lies crumpled, despoiled, and prostrate.

Martin Krüger, Director of the National Gallery, stands trial for having sworn, in connection with the suicide of a woman painter, that he did not have intimate relations with her. In point of fact, he had never slept with the woman, but the court proves the contrary to its own satisfaction and sentences Krüger to three years of prison. Like a stone hurled into the sea, this judgment upon Krüger ripples across the lives of the community in ever-widening circles to touch at last the remotest alien shores. Not only are the Minister of Justice, the jury, and the witnesses involved, but their lovers, their families, their economic situations, their government, and its position in the eyes of nations. The cry of this one false punishment, among so many, does not cease to detonate.

The young woman, Johanna Krain, who has been Krüger's mistress and who testifies, at his trial, that he was in her bed at the time when he is accused of having visited the painter, undertakes his vindication. At first she takes up his defense from sense of duty to a friend. Gradually, however, the proving of his innocence becomes, for her, a *raison d'être*. She bends the whole force of her will toward this one purpose. Yet she is constantly deflected, constantly thwarted. Martin Krüger's release, when it does come, is the result of an American business-king's passing whim for a certain popular song. Thus Herr Feuchtwanger rounds out his perfect irony.

*Success* does not sweep across its field like a hurricane, yet its wake is a trail of ruin. As an army, forward marching, crushes whatever stands to bar its way, the book, with heavy tread, progresses. Its gathered force outweighs your hopes and your illusions and chokes your tentative desires. Revolution is a farce; patriotism, as expressed by the majority, a superb vanity; human integrity, a tiny flame born to be quenched. "The commonest vices of the time," says the author, "were to drink without being thirsty, to write without inspiration, and to have sexual intercourse without affection." Even these most personal gestures, he grinds with the heel of analysis.

A book which so thoroughly penetrates motives and with an equal thoroughness lays bare their relative importance to a conception of the universe cannot give you the sudden, intimate shock which, as a catharsis, brings you emotional relief. Rather it charges you with a burden of conjecture, defying, by cumulative evidence, your private dreams. The author asserts that "whether a human fate was fruitful in art depended not on its great-

ness and significance, not even on the character who lives it, but only on the poet, the maker, who observed it." In a way, he condemns himself, for the fate of Martin Krüger is lost in its ocean of implications, "all pity choked with custom of fell deed." Philosophically, the protagonist of *Success* is a figurehead; artistically, he is only the wedge in a mighty speculation.

## Humanism Again

THE DILEMMA OF THE LIBERATED: *An Interpretation of Twentieth Century Humanism*, by Gorham Munson; Coward-McCann, \$3.00.

Reviewed by KENNETH WHITE.

WE HAVE had almost enough of Humanism. The word, now, is scarcely the fighting one it was in the first few months of last year, and a bald restatement of what the word signifies can meet with little response. Unfortunately, as an expositor of the subject of Humanism, Gorham Munson has little to offer that is either clarifying or stimulating. It seems a little useless to go on criticizing "the scientific attitude" as if the doctrines of Thomas Huxley and Herbert Spencer were the last admiration of the advanced. It seems equally useless to repeat the meanings of catch words, in general terms, when the time, if ever, has come to make specific the implications of those meanings. We have heard time and time again that the liberated are free from much and free for nothing. Now we should like to know what proposals can be made to fill the gap.

Some of these proposals Mr. Munson has tried to give; he has tried to work out some of their implications. The principal defects of his result can be traced to a rather vague historical sense and to a faulty criticism of the solutions offered by the Humanist. For Mr. Munson is not an orthodox Humanist, by any means. He was placed beyond the pale by Seward Collins, to whom the present book is dedicated. But, in his heterodoxy, he is able to examine with detachment the value of writers as diverse as Paul Elmer More and Georges Sorel, as Irving Babbitt and Friedrich Nietzsche. To his credit, the most effective portions of his book are contained in the criticisms of the politico-economic theory of the Humanists; and this criticism could come only from a detached observer.

It is, however, a little strange to find a passage from an article of Malcolm Cowley's held up to ridicule of a sort, when that passage asks, in effect, what relation Humanism has to the more than simple business of getting bread and butter. One certainly cannot be a Humanist, unless one has had enough to eat; one

## Books

cannot take account of the inner self when the outer world restricts the existence of any kind of self. If Humanism is the arraignment of the fundamental assumptions of this age then, as Mr. Munson so well realizes elsewhere, it must take account of all of them. One of the assumptions is the general attitude toward Justice; and it seems unfortunate that the Humanists take the Stoical solution rather than the Platonic.

The vague sense of history Mr. Munson has is most evident in his criticisms of the Humanists' doctrines of dualism and the Will. He says of their dualism that it is Cartesian, when, in truth, it is Kantian. Descartes' dualism was more metaphysical than ethical, while Kant's was both. Beyond the Humanist doctrine of the Will, Mr. Munson goes, in point of fact, but a little way. He emphasizes the potentiality, in contradistinction to the actuality, of the Will. Kant found, of course, a way to describe both its potentiality and actuality, and stated his problem in terms akin to the Humanist terms. He, too, distrusted the ability of reason to assert the existence or independence of the Will in a naturalistic world, and yet trusted the offices of the practical reason to provide for the necessity of a Will. His postulates, even, of freedom, and God, were a solution to the problem the Humanists find in grounding their conception in a more absolute reality. Because Mr. Munson does not recognize the resemblance, his objections to the Humanistic notion have little import, and seem rather picayune. Had he realized that the difficulty of stating the ethical question in terms of the natural versus the human world leads almost inevitably to a faulty solution more or less like Kant's, his own sympathetic criticisms of Humanism might have had more weight.

## Books in Brief

**THE WATER GIPSIES**, by A. P. Herbert; Doubleday, Doran, \$2.50.

THIS is the story of Jane, a slavey, how she loved a gentleman and married a Socialist teetotaler, how she found life different from "the pictures," and how she finally decided that constancy, even if it is offered only by a suitor who can neither read nor write, is easier to snare than charm. The success of Priestley's *Good Companions* and *Angel Pavement* has caused literary Babsons to predict a sharp rise in Victorian securities, and this novel by "Punch's darling" emphasizes that trend. Smoothly, humorously Mr. Herbert treats his characters as people rather than mental and (Oh too) physical mechanisms. It is very entertaining.

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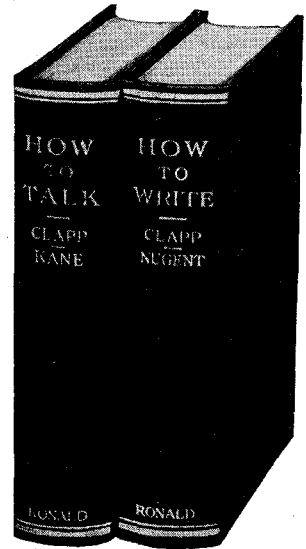


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