

## Russia's Foreign Relations

*The Foreign Policies of Soviet Russia.* By Alfred L. P. Dennis. E. P. Dutton and Company. \$5.

IT seems that in relating the story of the international relations of Soviet Russia Professor Dennis the scholar and historian had to endure a hard battle with Mr. Dennis the gentleman with certain inherent prejudices. Evidence of the clash may be found throughout his book, and this evidence, moreover, shows that the historian has all too often yielded to the gentleman. In spite of apparently laborious efforts to attain fairness and historical objectivity, he falls far short of these qualities. The story has not been much "relieved by the liberal use of quotations from notes, speeches, and articles by Soviet leaders and from the official Bolshevik press." These quotations have been used not so much to illustrate the story as to emphasize the thesis which the author set out to prove: that the foreign policies of Soviet Russia have been actuated by a determination to foment trouble in the interests of world revolution and that in furthering this end the Soviet Government has freely resorted to unscrupulous revolutionary propaganda in foreign countries. To prove this point, however, the author frequently finds himself obliged to resort with an equal freedom to questionable sources. While the notes accompanying each chapter show that the author has been swimming in a veritable sea of material, it seems, however, that he was not always certain of his strokes and in such emergencies grasped at anything that could hold him afloat. A book claiming for itself historical accuracy might be expected to base itself on absolutely reliable and tested documentary material. Instead, the author bases many of his opinions and conclusions on stories in newspapers and propaganda publications which have been notoriously unfair and biased in their treatment of all news concerning Soviet Russia. Consequently his opinions and conclusions are for the most part a mere repetition of the platitudes and inaccuracies with which the average editorials dealing with Soviet Russia in the conservative press of today are teeming.

The fundamental error of the author is his dealing with the foreign policies of Soviet Russia apart from internal conditions. Indeed Mr. Dennis gives due warning in his preface that "the internal conditions . . . have been intentionally neglected," for he does not "pretend to be an expert on Russia." This statement is well borne out by such gross mistakes as declaring "the Bolsheviks" to have been "the extreme left wing of the Social Revolutionary Party" and confusing the Social Revolutionary Party with the Left Social Revolutionists on the evidence of an alleged resolution which Mr. Dennis received from what he "believe[s] is adequate authority." While these mistakes are not extremely important in themselves, they reflect on the qualifications of the author for the task he has undertaken. Perhaps one need not be an expert on Russia, but certainly one must be thoroughly familiar with the recent history of Russia and with the social, political, and economic background against which the revolution was enacted before one can deal authoritatively with Russia's foreign relations. For in the case of Soviet Russia the foreign policies have been so closely knit up with internal conditions and changes as to present a practically inseparable entity. A proper treatment of the subject would follow the revolutionary development, marking among others these principal phases and turning-points: from November 7 to Brest-Litovsk, from Brest-Litovsk to the beginning of Allied intervention and the Czecho-Slovak revolt, the period of civil war and the so-called "military communism," and finally the liquidation of the civil war and the New Economic Policy. Only in the light of the conditions accompanying each of these phases could the foreign policies of Soviet Russia be intelligently discussed. As it is, Mr. Dennis chose to discuss the foreign relations of Soviet Russia with each country or group of countries separately and inde-

pendently of conditions at home. By this method Mr. Dennis perhaps succeeded in making clear his own point of view and that of the "foreign offices of several nations" in which he has been "afforded exceptional facilities . . . for the collection of the information on which this book is based." The Soviet point of view, however, either is sorely lacking or is overshadowed for the sake of proving the original thesis. As a result the author has produced a picture which is out of proportion and out of balance.

Moreover, Mr. Dennis often takes great liberty with facts and sources. Thus in the case of the Hungarian Bolshevik revolution, being unable to lay this episode directly at the door of the Soviet Government, he puts undue emphasis on the alleged role played in this event by Jews—as though that was of any material importance. In fact, Mr. Dennis himself is obliged to concede that the events in Hungary were due "chiefly to the shortsighted policy of the Allies." Lenin's alleged views on the peace with Poland and the prospects of "causing" revolutions in the various countries of Europe are given on the authority of the *Ost-Information*, an organ of the Russian émigrés which served as a clearing-house for the wildest tales that could be conceived in the work of spreading anti-Soviet propaganda. Mr. Dennis avoids giving sources for such statements as that the Baltic disarmament conference which took place at Moscow in December, 1922, was called by the Soviet Government in order "to secure a reduction in armies of the Baltic League . . . to cover the decrease in Soviet forces" because of "desertion and other causes," or for his weird story about the organization of revolutions in foreign countries under the auspices of the G. P. U., or the Soviet State Political Administration, which succeeded the Cheka and is, as is well known, an organ used exclusively for domestic purposes. The very geography which Mr. Dennis employs in connection with this story is sufficient to brand it as a crude fabrication. The Soviet constitution is dismissed by the author with the unsupported sentence that "it is absolutist in its spirit and Czarist in its conception." These are only a few of the more conspicuous examples of Mr. Dennis's historical and critical method.

With all this Mr. Dennis's work will prove of considerable value to the really interested and attentive reader who will take the pains to check up the sources and make the necessary reservations. For in spite of all the efforts of the author his book shows that the conditions which have been furthering the growth of revolutionary tendencies throughout the world have never been of the making of Soviet Russia; that the foreign policies of Soviet Russia have been actuated by the interests of the Russian revolution, which it was only the logical duty for the revolutionary Government to defend against all foreign aggression, and finally that in all its relations with foreign countries there has not been a single case in which the alleged bad faith on the part of Soviet Russia has been conclusively proved—although this has been the common argument advanced by all opponents of Soviet recognition.

LEON TALMY

## Making Good

*Lottery.* By W. E. Woodward. Harper and Brothers. \$2.

*The Oblate.* By J. K. Huysmans. E. P. Dutton and Company. \$2.50.

SUCCESS in business is not the result of luck alone. To become a Merchant Prince or a Button King a certain native capacity for assuming the credit due to accident and a perfect willingness to let others work hard are also necessary. When chance does the average man a good turn he merely marvels at his luck and supposes that it will not happen again; but native egotism comes to the rescue of the born business man and he hints so darkly at the shrewdness which created his opportunity that the timid ones are only too glad

to do his work for him in the future. Then, if only his self-conceit can keep pace with accomplishment, he is a made man, well on the way to an honored old age and a biography in the *American Magazine* along with the others who have made good. In this land of opportunity fortunes are to be had for the asking, but only the few have gall enough to ask for them.

Such at least is the moral which it seems necessary to draw from Mr. Woodward's new and joyous novel of the Button King who marched forward in his own estimation, step by step, until he half believed the legend that from his own profound meditations on the button problem had evolved the mechanical contrivance which he acquired by a fluke from its inventor, and until he was, like his fellow-townsmen, wholly convinced that his complacent receptivity was somehow responsible for the industry of his manager and the accidents which made his fortune. Jerry Garrison, beginning merely as a young man who could say: "'Gee! I went to bed at eight o'clock last night, hit the hay with the chickens, and pounded the old pillow for twelve hours'—in such a way that you felt for a moment that a definite forward step in human progress had been made, though at the cost of great endeavor," learns as he goes along the secrets of success. He learns, for example, that the perfect willingness of clerks to pledge their savings to rescue a boss's business is the very reason that they will always be clerks, and the golden rule, "Make the other fellow do it," bursts upon him in a sort of apocalyptic vision; but the real lesson is the lesson of self-deception. When he has learned that even such cynical truths as those just mentioned should not be admitted to oneself too often, and when he has come to the point where he can say: "If I didn't believe in this button, I didn't believe it to be a great thing for humanity: I mean a useful thing, a labor saver—Gosh! Mack, I'd throw the whole business out of the window this moment" and really believe it himself, there are no limits to his possibilities; for, as the author says, this urgent banality when it is associated with a strong sense of acquisitiveness is the key to material success.

If "Lottery" is, as it seems to me, the most amusing satire on business since "Tono-Bungay" the cause lies not only in the author's evident practical knowledge of commerce, but to an even greater extent in a jolly good humor which enables him to see the fun as well as the meanness in the life he describes. Most artists who enter imaginatively the world of affairs have a way of losing that urbanity which it would better befit them to wear, and they mingle with their scorn a bitterness which awakens in the mind of the reader the suspicion that their contempt for financial success is not unmixed with envy. Mr. Woodward takes his seat in the jovial company of Rabelais and Mark Twain rather than among the atrabilious satirists. Like Mark Twain he has what the cynic usually lack—the capacity to enjoy life—and the spectacle of his hero's rise moves in him more laughter than sneers because though intellectually he despises him he is capable, temperamentally, of enjoying this bungling and good-natured success. Life in America, he seems to say, is muddled and ridiculous; meanness becomes in time synonymous with ability and prosperity with virtue; and yet, granted the requisite robustness of spirit, this life is not unamusing to watch or even to participate in. Freed by his intellect from the marketplace gods, and yet too full of exuberance merely to growl or sulk, he has been able as often as not to forget the meanness and catch the excitement of the lottery of life. He has said many bitter things, and I have quoted some of them, but the hearty exuberance of his book, not easily illustrated by quotation, will probably remain longer in the minds of most of his readers. No one could catch so well as he does the rhythm of commercial adventure without catching at the same time something of its fun, and though he would mock it unmercifully afterward I am sure that Mr. Woodward could attend a meeting of the Rotary Club on a lark and enjoy himself hugely.

"The Oblate" is, on the whole, the least interesting of the tetralogy of which "Là-Bas" is the first volume, but to those who, like the present reviewer, find the author-hero strangely fascinating, it is certainly not dull and it is the necessary conclusion to the story of that curious man in whom the most prosaic of temperaments was somehow reconciled with the most comprehensive credulity and with a passion for ecclesiastical art as intense almost as his passion for good cookery. Durtal-Huysmans is inexplicable and perhaps ridiculous, but there are few characters in fiction who so indubitably exist. He is inescapably real, and to anyone who has followed his adventures through the four volumes he is never to be forgotten.

JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH

## A Scholar Astray

*The Contemporary Drama of Russia.* By Leo Wiener. Little, Brown and Company. \$2.50.

THE preface of this curious contribution to scholarship leads one to believe that here at last is a history of the Russian drama. Further, one is given to understand that this is not merely an outline of developments but also a startling revaluation of accepted values. The table of contents, in contradiction of the title, indicates that from these pages one may learn about the Russian theater from its origins to its present status under Communism. In all such expectations one is deceived, much as was Mother Hubbard's dog.

The volume is divided into two parts; the second, which is half the size of the first, being an alphabetical list of playwrights with their names meticulously accented and their dates, the titles of their plays, and the dates of the first performance and first publication of these given in due order. The text proper, which makes up the first part of the book, is in effect another catalogue of plays and playwrights, with dates and accents invariably noted, plus other statistical matter not always relevant—all arranged in a rough chronological sequence. The author is unable to sustain the discussion of any topic, whether it be the Art Theater or the theory of monodrama, without taking refuge from analysis and argument in such paragraphs as form the literature of a Who's Who. He makes another escape from the task he set himself in pages of quotations, often pointless and always inordinately long. These are mostly excerpts from Russian critiques, which Mr. Wiener stigmatizes in his preface as vitiated by partisanship. Subtract the quotations and the disjointed Who's Who, and what remains is the occasional summary of a plot, a little chronicling of theatrical events, and some pet animosities which fail to be infectious. The author's appreciation is so shallow and his power of expression so feeble that not one of the hundreds of plays he mentions assumes the semblance of a body, and not one of the playwrights is more than a tagged and dated ghost. In speaking, for example, of Sukhovo-Kobylin's "Krechinsky's Wedding," a piece which is a standby of the Russian stage, Mr. Wiener finds room to say that this play was first produced in 1855, that it was played 194 times in Moscow theaters, that it is based on a famous scandal, that it is "still a favorite play of the repertories," and that its author "had graduated from the university in philosophy"; but he gives no hint of the substance of the play.

Needless to say, the book clarifies the general trends of Russian dramaturgy and stagecraft as little as it does the work of the individual artists. With some difficulty one disengages the scheme which underlies Mr. Wiener's work. He seems to believe that the golden age of Russian drama was in the days when unpretentious realism reigned undisputed. At least he speaks with approval of the great Ostrovsky as "the photographic reproducer of national scenes." The decline commenced with the birth of the Moscow Art Theater, whose "ultra-realism" was just as disastrous as the subsequent symbolist reaction against it. Then the Bolsheviks came upon the scene