

and delivered the coup de grace. We are to understand, then, that the salvation of the Russian theater lies in a return to "the best traditions of the past," that is, to photography; "and then its virtue will not lie in pessimism raised to a cult, but in the usual incidents of everyday life." Thus the work of Chekhov, Gorki, Andreyev, Stanislavsky, Meyerhold—in short, the developments of the last twenty-five years, which constitute one of the richest chapters in the history of the European theater, are treated as a welter of whims and vagaries. In the final pages, which pretend to deal with the theater under the Bolsheviks, and which are marked at every turn by ignorance and prejudice, the author has lost a marvelous opportunity for studying the social function of the theater, just as in the previous pages he passed by all the other opportunities with which the theme bristles. Toward the end the author complains that a certain Russian playwright, Yevreinov by name, is a slippery customer who surrenders nothing but his mortal coil to his investigator. In the same fashion, alas, the subject of the Russian drama completely eludes this pursuer, leaving in his hands the dry, empty skin which with so much aplomb he offers to the world.

One more word to dispel Mr. Wiener's fearful fantasy that the source material for such a book as his purports to be has been "dispersed" by "the World War and the Bolshevik regime." Last winter I was doing research work in Russian literary history in the libraries of Moscow and Leningrad, and I can assure him that I found all the collections intact and growing.

AVRAHM YARMOLINSKY

Refugee Psychology

Leaves from a Russian Diary. By Pitirim Sorokin. E. P. Dutton and Company. 20s.

ON the top floor of a loft building in Berlin is the modest plant of a Russian daily, *The Days*. Its chief editor, Alexander Kerensky, is a slightly built man with no other apparent distinction than the ability to write for his thousand-odd readers. He will shut his eyes and scrutinize you painfully until his shortsightedness becomes embarrassingly apparent. When he rises from his chair you will note that he shuffles his feet, that his hair is closely clipped, Russian fashion, and that his extremely simple apparel creates an impression of defeat and resignation. As he speaks your pity for him will increase.

Behind his sloping back the afternoon sun was setting on the distraught republican Berlin of 1924. Kerensky, however, spoke of the Moscow of 1917, of his blamelessness in connection with the famous Order No. 1, the Korniloff affair, and the past in general, until one got an insight into that kind of mind which cannot take into its consciousness the actuality of painful events and continues to relive and revalue its once glorious past. Professor Sorokin, the former secretary of Kerensky, like Kerensky himself, suffers from the malady of exile, from the psychology peculiar to refugees.

Macaulay, speaking of the Whigs who fled to the Low Countries and there plotted the overthrow of Charles II, says:

A politician driven into banishment by a hostile faction generally sees the society which he has quitted through a false medium. Every object is distorted and discolored by his regrets, his longings and resentments. Every little discontent appears to him to portend revolution. Every riot is a rebellion. He cannot be convinced that his country does not pine for him as much as he pines for his country. . . . The longer his expatriation the greater does this hallucination become. . . . Every month his impatience to revisit his native land increases; and every month his native land remembers and misses him less. This delusion becomes almost a madness when many exiles who suffer in the same cause herd together in a foreign country. Their chief employment is to talk about what they once were, and of what they yet may be, to goad each other

into animosity against their common enemy, to feed each other with extravagant hopes of victory and revenge.

As a historical document Sorokin's book is valuable in the very limited sense that it illuminates this psychology. The story of the Russian revolution has been told and retold by others. In his book, however, we get a glimpse into the mental state of the Russian intellectual and his bitter opposition to the Soviet Government. The author's flight from his enemies, his hair-breadth escapes, his description of the bestialities of his enemies would sound much more convincing if the professor did not occasionally suffer a lapse and indulge in what lawyers call admissions against interest. When, for example, he learns that the English troops in Archangel were concentrating to overthrow the Soviet Government he undergoes hardships and Stevensonian adventures to reach the seat of counter-revolution, but finally he is compelled to surrender to the Soviet authorities. In the end he is given a post at the university, yet when the Kronstadt rebellion takes place the professor writes: "At that time my wife and I were seized with pneumonia. She went to the hospital first, and next morning, although I was suffering, I attended a private meeting of six professors, two lawyers, and two priests, with whom I discussed a plan of action in case the Government fell; plans of organization of a new government, reorganization of the courts. . . ." And while he is unsparing and unstatistical in his condemnation of orgies of blood by the Extraordinary Commission of the Soviet Government he says regretfully: "We moderates are not blood-thirsty, yet in order to prevent repetitions of these murderous uprisings we must exercise great firmness. If it is necessary to execute a few thousand ruffians in order to save millions of Russians, we must be prepared to do it. . . ."

The former Secretary of the Prime Minister of Russia saw how under the Czar and under the Lvov and Kerensky governments the whole social fabric fell and disintegrated, and he pretended to long for a strong-armed dictator to bring order out of chaos. When finally the Soviet Government had established authority over the entire Russian territory the author expresses a peculiar solicitude for the Bolsheviks. He would, like the proverbial Irishman, have them killed for their own good: "If they had been killed by their enemies, they would have lived in history as martyrs who tried to establish a new order but perished before their experiment had time to prove itself. Instead, a different end is destined for them; an end of slow disintegration. Their destiny is to destroy their own ideal with their own hands, to exhibit it to the world in all its rottenness and horror. . . ." And yet Dr. Sorokin, we must assume, has studied the history of Christianity. Ever since their Princeton colleague showed such utter disregard for the cynical lessons of history, professors as statesmen seem destined merely to give proof to the Shavian bon mot that "he who cannot, teaches."

CHARLES RECHT

Books in Brief

The Judge. By Maxim Gorky. Authorized translation by Marie Zakrevsky and Barrett H. Clark. Robert M. McBride and Company. \$1.50.

Gorki's judge is an old released convict acting on the belief that years of suffering have given him the right to undo a fellow-convict who had escaped early in his term and had become a respected and prosperous citizen. The new Jean Valjean is driven to suicide by the fear of exposure and the shame of not having confessed before to the woman he loves. The scene in which a vain appeal is made to the old man's human sympathy is one of tension and terror. But on the whole the play does not pan out. It has the moral didacticism of Tolstoi's dramas yet lacks their reality. Gorki's thesis is that suffering establishes no right to be vindictive. This platitude, which is an element of Gorki's social philosophy, and has special significance for a Russian, is set forth in a piece which

is not sufficiently plausible. Contrary to the publishers' statement that this play "has not heretofore appeared in any language," it should be noted that the original, from which the English text differs in some particulars, was published in 1922 in a Petersburg miscellany under the title "The Old Man."

Under the Red Flag. By Richard Eaton. Brentano's. \$2.50.

Another of those "disclosures" of lurid "intimate details of the Soviet regime" which seem rather out of date in 1924, when Moscow is full of foreign journalists, observers, business men, and adventurers, and when the intercourse between Russia and the outside world is practically free and unhampered. Mr. Eaton went to Russia as correspondent of the *London Daily Mail*, which is notorious for its anti-Soviet propaganda. Mr. Eaton spent a few weeks in Russia, most of which were passed in prison. His prison experiences, even after they have been spiced with the story of his romantic attitude toward the "beautiful Simionova," "the terrible woman inquisitor" of the Cheka, have evidently not been sufficient to fill a book; so Mr. Eaton makes up with a "study" of life and conditions in Russia in all their various aspects. One can only marvel at the meager preparation which individuals with Mr. Eaton's snobbish outlook on the world need before they set out to give their "studies" to the public.

Figures in Modern Literature. By J. B. Priestley. Dodd, Mead and Company. \$2.50.

This volume, reprinted for the most part from the *London Mercury*, is a fair example of the work of the younger British writers who have rallied around that publication since its foundation in 1919. Mr. Priestley's table of contents is not at all conventional. He treats Arnold Bennett, De la Mare, Hewlett, A. E. Housman, W. W. Jacobs, Robert Lynd, George Saintsbury, Santayana, and the *Mercury's* versatile editor, J. C. Squire. Mr. Priestley is a good appreciator. He finds the best things he can in his subjects, and then describes them to the best of his ability, which is sometimes very good indeed. His literary enthusiasm is often the only congruous and unifying element in his work.

The Nation's Poetry Prize

THE NATION offers its fifth annual poetry prize of \$100 for the best poem submitted by an American poet in a contest conducted by *The Nation* each year between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day. The rules for the contest follow:

1. Each manuscript submitted in the contest must reach the office of *The Nation*, 20 Vesey Street, New York City, not earlier than Monday, December 1, and not later than Wednesday, December 31, plainly marked on the outside of the envelope, "For *The Nation's* Poetry Prize."
2. Manuscripts must be typewritten and must have the name of the author in full on each page of the manuscript submitted.
3. As no manuscripts submitted in this contest will in any circumstances be returned to the author it is unnecessary to inclose return postage. An acknowledgment of the receipt of each manuscript, however, will be sent from this office.
4. No more than three poems from the same author will be admitted to the contest.
5. No restriction is placed upon the subject or form of poems submitted, which may be in any meter or in free verse. It will be impossible, however, to consider poems which are more than 400 lines in length, or which are translations, or which are in any language other than English. Poems arranged in a definite sequence may, if the author so desires, be counted as a single poem.
6. The winning poem will be published in the Midwinter Literary Supplement of *The Nation*, to appear February 11, 1925.
7. Besides the winning poem, *The Nation* reserves the right

to purchase at its usual rates any other poem submitted in the contest.

The judges of the contest are the editors of *The Nation*. Poems should in no case be sent to them personally.

Drama The God of Stumps

IN this age of intellectualized art there is an inevitable but unfortunate tendency to assume of Eugene O'Neill, as of every other arresting artist, that his greatness must lie somehow in the greatness or in the clarity of his thought; to seek in "All God's Chillun" some solution of the problem of race or in the "Hairy Ape" some attitude toward society; and then, not finding them, to fail in the fullest appreciation of the greatness which is his. It was not thought which drove him, as a young man, to seek adventure among the roughest men he could find, and it was not thought which he brought back from this and other experiments in life. Something tempestuous in his nature made him a brother of tempests, and he has sought wherever he could find them the fiercest passions, less anxious to clarify their causes for the benefit of those who love peace than eager to share them, and happy if he could only be exultantly a part of their destructive fury. It is a strange taste, this, to wish to be perpetually racked and tortured, to proceed from violence to violence, and to make of human torture not so much the occasion of other things as the *raison d'être* of drama; but such is his temperament. The meaning and unity of his work lies not in any controlling intellectual idea and certainly not in a "message," but merely in the fact that each play is an experience of extraordinary intensity.

Young-man-like, O'Neill first assumed that the fiercest passions were to be found where the outward circumstances of life were wildest and most uncontrolled. He sought among men of the sea, ignorant of convention and wholly without inhibitions, powerful appetites and bare tragedies, embodying his observations in the group of little plays now performed for the first time as a whole (and performed well) at the Provincetown Theater under the title of "S. S. Glencairn"; but maturity has taught him the paradox that where there is most smoke there is not necessarily most fire. He has learned that souls confined in a nut-shell may yet be lords of infinite space; that spirits cabined and confined by very virtue of the fact that they have no outlet explode finally with the greatest spiritual violence. As though to signalize the discovery of this truth he has, in his latest play, "Desire Under the Elms" (Greenwich Village Theater), limited the horizon of his characters, physically and spiritually, to the tiny New England farm upon which the action passes, and has made their intensity spring from the limitations of their experience. Whether he or Robert Edmond Jones conceived the idea of setting the stage with a single permanent scene showing one end of the farmhouse, and of removing sections of the wall when it becomes necessary to expose one or more of the rooms inside, I do not know; but this method of staging is admirably calculated to draw attention to the controlling circumstances of the play. It is a story of human relationships become intolerably tense because intolerably close and limited, of the possessive instinct grown inhumanly powerful because the opportunities for its gratification are so small, and of physical passion terribly destructive in the end because so long restrained by the sense of sin. To its young hero the stony farm is all the wealth of the world, the young wife of his father all the lust of the flesh. In that tiny corner each character finds enough to stimulate passions which fill, for him, the universe.

By half a century of unrelenting labor Ephraim Cabot has turned a few barren hillsides into a farm, killing two wives in the process but growing himself only harder in body and mind and more fanatical in his possessive passion for the