

oppression and war than most European nations. It achieved national unity later than most, and the oppressions of capitalism, when the belated industrial revolution arrived, overlaid unliquidated sediments of feudal oppression. To this may be added the illiberal state guardianship which Bismarck made into a proud tradition and which the Nazis have brought to a brutal perfection. In such a society, where the oppressions not only began but became unbearable close to the top strata, the presence of the Jew, the perpetual alien, permitted all classes to discharge their anger upon him. Goethe, Wagner, Dühring could also flourish the whip for different reasons along with the jealous small shopkeeper and the peasant. Today in this country we see Dreiser, a saddened and embittered man to whom success came too late, who suffered an impoverished and humiliated childhood and in his artistic maturity found himself vilified as a pornographer, finding it easier to satisfy himself with a kick at the traditional scapegoat than with an honest and open fight with the real oppressors whom he recognizes. In Germany the Dreisers have always been depressingly abundant.

THE story of the Jews in Germany is a record of nearly two thousand years in this scapegoat service. Marvin Lowenthal tells it with a pointed restraint that gives his book a curious, tense power. Jewish settlements in Germany were very ancient; even more ancient was Occidental anti-semitism which, in its best known forms, began almost simultaneously with Christianity. Up to the rise of capitalism, anti-semitism had this peculiar check: there was an economic use for the Jew, he filled despised, difficult, or outlawed functions, especially that of the money-lender. He could become a sort of sponge for bishops and priests, soaking up wealth which could then be squeezed out of him. In the communities where ghettos existed he was always privileged as a tax-payer. On the tax rolls the Jew was worth from two to twenty Gentiles.

The rise of capitalism in Germany, in the course of which she absorbed some of the humanity and progress which revolutions had brought to the more enlightened western European states, brought a blessed interlude of peace, freedom, and relative good will to German Jews. Aside from other considerations in the early, formative years of German capitalism, money and skill were in such demand that even Jewish money and skill were welcome. In this brief period of sunshine the Jews not only made a payment to civilization by producing great figures in art, science, and industry, but they began to de-Judaize themselves, to show their gratitude to the at last comparatively fatherly fatherland. They disproved the notion that Jews had a stubborn race pride by becoming 100 percent Germans, giving up their traditional culture and religion, intermarrying, seeking to get rid of the disabling Jewish nationality and exchange it for the honor of being Imperial Germans. But the World War and

Versailles and the post-Versailles misery required of the Jews the old scapegoat service. Today, the capitalism that once freed the Jews now leaves them without even the protection they had in the Middle Ages. Older economies always left room for the Jews in some specialization. Today there is no Jewish specialization. They are competitors no matter what they do. The present persecutions in Germany are therefore more desperate than ever before in history.

There are few faults to find with Mr. Lowenthal's remarkable book. He recognizes the economic and political causes of what, superficially, would seem to be explosions of emotion. Implicitly it becomes clear that he considers that the Jewish problem must wait in other regions, as in the Soviet Union, for its most hopeful solution in a proletarian revolution. The prospect, however, is not expressed in optimistic terms. He can write: "it was to take revolutions and catastrophes for the world to believe them" (the Jews who cried for identity as human beings). In that phrase, "revolutions and catastrophes," we find a significant hesitation. Furthermore, in spite of Mr. Lowenthal's unusual control and wise understanding of history he sometimes descends into a judgment upon the Germans as a race, as when the frequency with which the German people have submitted to domination is seen as a racial rather than as a historical factor. This, however, occurs so infrequently as to be conspicuous when it appears. It only slightly mars a restrained, scholarly, well-written, and very useful book. ISIDOR SCHNEIDER.

Brief Review

AN INTRODUCTION TO DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM, by Edward Conze. London. National Council of Labour Colleges Publishing Society. 1s. A new "introduction" to dialectical materialism is eagerly seized upon by the novice as possibly offering a new clue to the interpretation of a difficult subject. To those trained in its theory and method the new introduction is searched for its contribution to the technique of presentation. The present book offers little of value in either case.

This book is launched with an attack on Communists and "the communist parties outside Russia." The basis of the attack is that scientific method (and dialectical materialism is nothing more nor less than this for the author) is used by everybody who can control things and events on the basis of insight into their laws. The "communist parties outside Russia" have "obviously lost all touch with reality" and are therefore "regularly defeated in their actions." Ergo: they have little understanding of scientific method and presumably don't know the first thing about dialectical materialism. This is a little too easy. But it befits a work which contends that the dialectical method is "nothing but a codification of commonsense."

Much of the exposition of the basic principles of dialectics is, on the whole, well handled. The author has the scientific virtue of showing that dialectics explains nothing but provides the terms in which processes can be explained. He also has the merit of presenting dialectics in terms of modes of approach to any given subject, questions to be asked, rather than as a magical formula that solves problems *a priori*. The book is, to sum up, a suggestion to more thorough Marxists as to how the subject of dialectical materialism can best be presented.

STUART GREENE.

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The Cow-Barn Drama

ACCORDING to Broadway's breezy bible, *Variety*, the summer-theater epidemic reached an all-time high this season. Judging from past performances, it is no feat of clairvoyance to venture that no artistic good will come from 90 percent of them; that of the 150 new plays usually tested in what George Jean Nathan once called "the dramatic hot dog stands," only a half dozen will reach Broadway; and that of the half dozen, two, at best, will be accorded even semi-serious consideration.

Anyone who has closely followed these strange shenanigans that are carried on each summer is entitled to the foregoing, foregone conclusions. That the cowshed circuit has won such an unsavory reputation is its own fault; it is the reward of ineptitude on a wholesale scale and an abysmal indifference to any dramatic project that smacks of being a shade imaginative and experimental.

Glance casually at the summer fare on the country Broadways and you will see that the cows have been unjustly dispossessed. For, rearing often their sex-ugly heads are *Co-Respondent Unknown* and *Personal Appearance*, which proved to be good box office on Broadway. Two weeks ago, an inspired impresario dragged out for another airing the anciently salacious *It's a Wise Child*. *Springtime for Henry*, high in the catalogue of Broadway's most trifling trivia, is also popular. And the playbrokers have been besieged for scripts of such high caliber as *One Good Year*, *No More Ladies*, and *The Pursuit of Happiness*.

Most of the tryouts are nothing but ridiculous. The majority of original manuscripts flow from the pens of Tom, Dick, or Mary, flushed in the first unhappy spasms of dramatic authorship. The Theater Guild, the Messrs. McClintic or Harris, in the hope of whose favor most of these plays are produced, have rarely even bothered to listen.

They have rarely bothered because they have on their strings experienced and reputable authors who would not have their new scripts mutilated by a summer theater under any conditions. Has anyone ever heard of a new play by Robert E. Sherwood, Eugene O'Neill, Sidney Howard, or Maxwell Anderson being tried out in the Old Cowe Barne, Thespis-on-Hudson? Never, of course. (Philip Barry's Play, *Spring Dance*, was done under Jed Harris's personal supervision.) For established authors and young authors of promise have too high a regard for their work to let it out in the pastureland.

SUCH, however, is not the case with actors, who must depend upon the material at hand for their living. Be it *Getting Gertie's Garter*, *Pygmalion*, or *Waiting for Lefty*, the actor, good, bad, or indifferent, welcomes employment in anything. And although his work is at least as arduous as in

the city, his remuneration is considerably less, with Equity's blessing.

For Actors' Equity, under the lead of its president, Frank Gillmore, benevolently took over the bucolic drama a couple of years ago. The council voted a minimum salary of \$40 per week for senior players (those with broad experience) and \$25 per week for junior actors. With these extravagant stipends, the junior and senior player must, in most cases, provide his own lodging, arrange for his own meals and for transportation to and from the theater. He or she is generally broke at the end of the week, after the pay envelope has been exhausted on bare living necessities.

These Equity contracts for summer theaters, in fact, have been divided into A, B and C classifications. The A contract is described in the paragraph above. The B form prescribes that the summer-theater manager pay the actor partly in cash and the balance in food and lodging, providing that these do not exceed \$3 per day. The C contract, permitted in rare cases, permits the summer-theater manager, under certain circumstances, to increase his number of junior actors at \$25 per week, without worrying about their room and board.

So there, if you are looking for it, is the reason summer companies manage to eke out the season without landing on a financial reef. Given a new manuscript which the author is glad to have tried out for nothing, an actors' troupe at absurdly low salaries, and rustic premises at country rentals, the average management can get by with negligible losses.

It happens, incidentally, that few summer theaters are run as money-making ventures *per se* or as legitimate business enterprises. For summer theaters are chiefly operated by

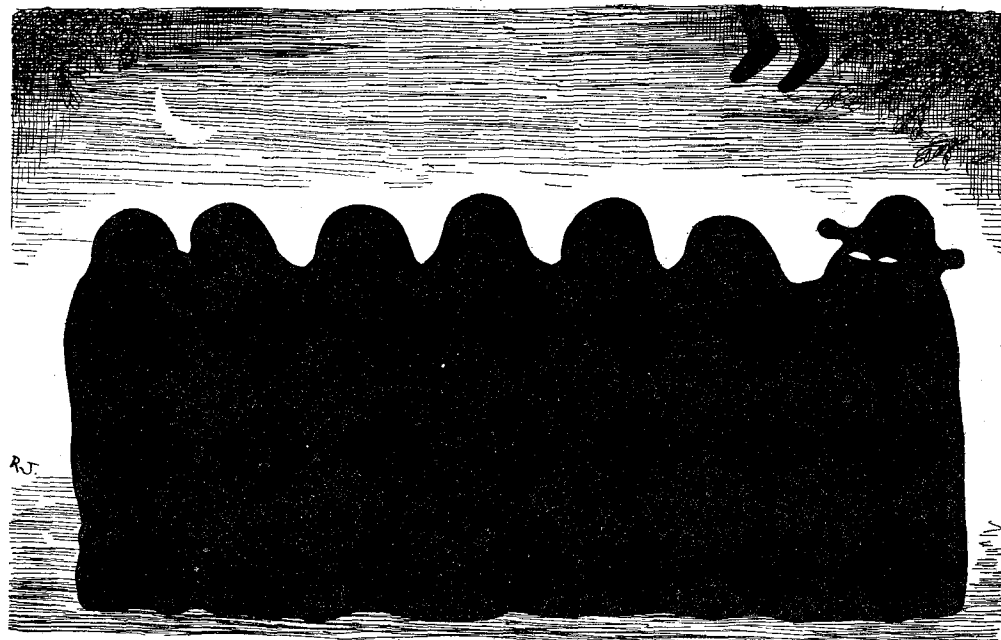
frustrated wonder boys of Broadway who, having been conspicuously ineffectual on the Rialto, become the Belascos of the suburbs—or by frustrated young men who for an inconsiderable investment hope to uncover next season's million-dollar smash.

WHICH brings us around, by uneasy stages, to the theater of the Left in rural parts. Save for workers' camp stage activities, the theater of the Left represents merely a road direction to the average impresario. He wouldn't know a socially significant play if he read one, should not the talking-picture possibilities be clearly smeared over Act I, Scene I. And if the truth be known, there are only two summer playhouses in the country that aspire to the production of plays with important social content. And they are the companies that seek no profit, no subsequent leavings from the Broadway carcass, and no vicarious, stage-struck excitements.

One is the Group Theater, which has settled down on the grounds of the Pine Brook Club at Nichols, Conn., to rehearse Clifford Odets' new drama, *The Silent Drama*, John Howard Lawson's *Marching Song*, and Paul Green's *Enchanted Maze* for next season. The Group earns its bread and keep by offering the Pine Brook patrons bi-weekly dramas it is well trained in, including those enduring favorites, *Awake and Sing* and *Waiting for Lefty*.

The other, Robert Porterfield's Barter Theater at Abingdon, Virginia, is the only non-cash playhouse in the country, accepting anything from a new-born calf to a fattened pig in payment of admission. Mr. Porterfield, a serious-minded and earnest young man, is out on no lark. The actors need what the customers contribute and the customers get their money's worth. *Bury the Dead* was one of the group's recent productions.

Ninety percent of the summer theaters,



"He says he wouldn't have joined if he'd known this was a company union."

R. Joyce.