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of the world is bound up with its existence in the Soviet Union. For, the realization of socialism in the Soviet Union is the fountain of strength for the whole international socialist movement. Destroy the Soviet Union and all the forces of progress and labor, not to speak of the socialist movement, will be crushed in every other land. That is why the test of a socialist today is not just his position on the theory of socialism but his attitude toward its realization in the Soviet Union. It is precisely because the Soviet Union represents the new socialist society, operated and ruled by the toilers without capitalist exploitation, that decaying world imperialism is making such frantic efforts to crush it.

The abstract character and pitiable impotence of Corey's articles flow from the imperialist source of his inspiration. Every individual is fed by the springs of the class for which he speaks. In Corey's articles it is not socialism that is speaking; the helpless confusion and self-refuting contradictions are not the voice of the workers, the exploited and oppressed masses, the real forces of socialism. It is not the language of socialist democracy; for socialism *is* democracy, real, unrestricted, creative democracy; the democracy of the working people freed from the fetters of classes and the stranglehold of parasitic monopoly founded in private property. Corey's is the language of confusion on every fundamental question involved in the struggle for socialism, on the question of imperialism, fascism, democracy, socialism, and the state. Corey the "strategist of socialism" is only less pitiable than Corey the "theoretician" and "historian." In his hands both democracy and socialism are assured of a decent burial. To borrow a sentence from Heine: Nature gave him a small talent and the *Nation* a lot of space, and he has effectively abused both.

A. LANDY.

How Not to Write a Book

HOW TO READ A BOOK, by Mortimer J. Adler. Simon & Schuster. \$2.50.

IN A school of journalism I once attended there was a course in editorial writing which opened with the serious information that "An editorial has three parts: introduction, body, conclusion." Further, the writer must have: "(1) a subject; (2) a viewpoint; (3) facts necessary to his argument." These rules (which it must be admitted, never hurt anybody) kept nudging at my memory as I read Mortimer J. Adler's book. Dr. Adler's rules—how to watch for important words, recognize the author's proposition, be able to criticize, etc.—won't hurt anyone either. They may even help the bewildered or lazy-minded, or the poor college student who *has* to read whether the books interest him or not. But it is hard to imagine an ordinary reader needing to be told, for example, that he should be able to answer four questions about a book: (1) What in general is being said? (2) How in particular is it being said? (3) Is it true? (4) What of it?

The platitudes are sugared with a spoonful of idealism. Through reading the great books, Dr. Adler believes "... free minds are made and, through them, free men." In fact, it's simpler and more wonderful than that: The "good society" can be brought about through proper reading habits. And let Dr. Adler explain the well read man's conception of a good society:

It is simply the enlargement of the community in which we live with our friends. We live together with our friends in peaceful and intelligent association. . . . The good society, in the large, must be an association of men made friends by intelligent communication.

This is a lofty addition to the current "solve all social problems" techniques. We can do no better than apply to it the last two of Dr. Adler's rules for judging a book, to wit: Is it true? What of it?

BARBARA GILES.

It Can Happen Here

BETHEL MERRIDAY, by Sinclair Lewis. Doubleday, Doran. \$2.50.

ONE dislikes to hit a man when he's married to Dorothy Thompson, but that is the chastening duty of this writer. Sinclair Lewis has indited a love note to the theater in his latest novel, *Bethel Merriday*, even if the theater hasn't been properly grateful to him. The title role is played by an obdurate young lady of the theater, who has all of Mr. Lewis' characteristics except his loquacity. Unlike her Boswell, Miss Merriday came to the stage quite early and endured to be mentioned in Leonard Lyons' column. She still has several plugs to go. I was under the impression that Sinclair Lewis had written at least twice as many books as he has; but a check with his bibliography on the flyleaf indicates that half of them must have been something I read in the papers.

Why is it that this brave writing man of the twenties is now lecturing to women's clubs, taking up the theater, and fulfilling publishers' contracts with books like this one?

Sinclair Lewis has been at the typewriter long enough to know what to do to keep the audience, and I confess that he made me laugh and read the damn thing, despite constant twinges at his vaudeville tricks. There isn't three inches of typewriter ribbon's worth of sincerity in the book; it's like a serial in *Collier's* only you don't have to save up copies to read it all at once.

Reviews of books like this should consist of confronting the author with the good stuff his compeers have been doing. Bernard Shaw, who had a fully developed brain when Lewis was making mud pies, retained his literary manhood long past Lewis' dotage.

Does Sinclair Lewis realize that he has some responsibility to the people and to American literature? Otherwise he can go on with his tanktown Alexander Woollcott act.

JAMES DUGAN.

Drama Bites Critic

"Ladies in Retirement" upsets the murder play tradition and surprises Alvah Bessie. A "vital, human spectacle." . . . Ethel Waters dignifies the revival of "Mamba's Daughters."

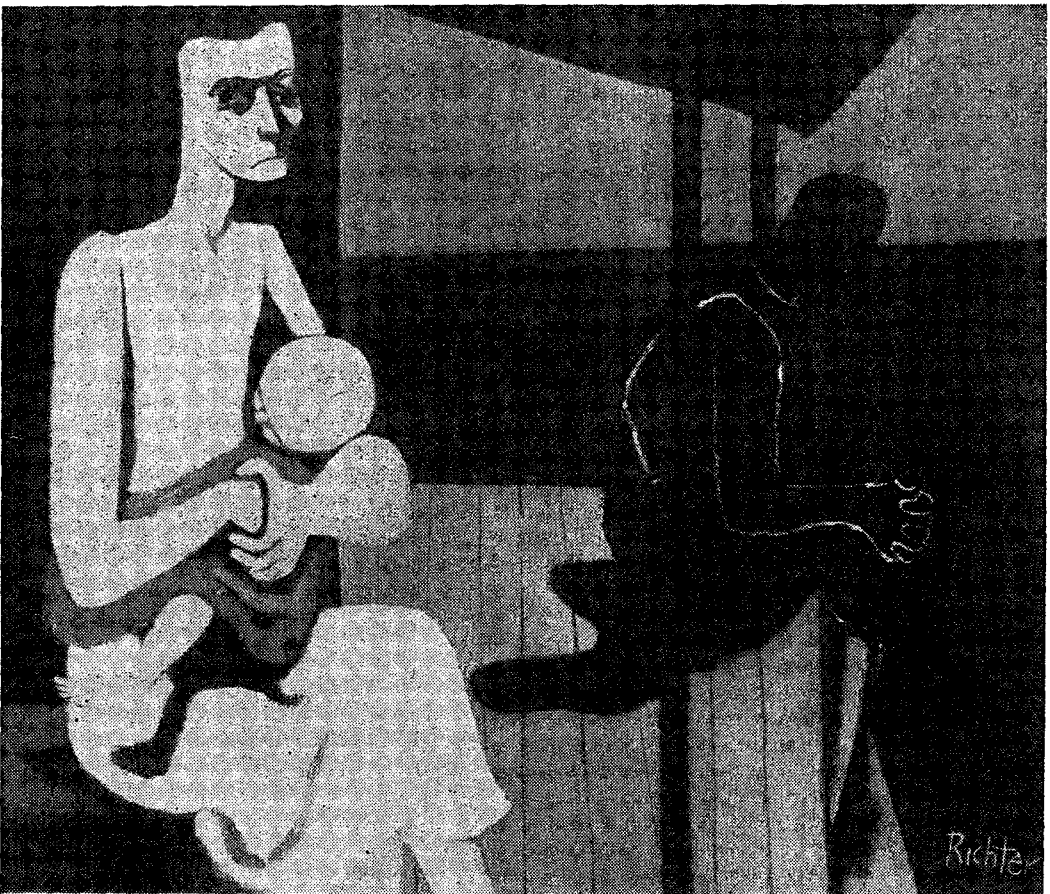
BELIEVE it or not, what we had expected to be a routine murder play by a pair of unknown English dramatists turns out to be the most interesting, vital, and human spectacle on the current boards. This is Edward Percy's and Reginald Denham's *Ladies in Retirement*.

While the dramatic emphasis is on the atmosphere of horror, this is no routine spine-chiller. Although human values are present all the time, the characterizations in every instance are brilliantly observed and honestly presented, the suspense mounts continuously, and thus the horror evoked is real and moving.

Living far from town is a one-time belle of the British musical comedy stage, red-wigged and comfortable on the remittances of her former admirers. She has taken into her home one Ellen Creed, former proprietor of a curio shop and an old friend and sole support of two wacky sisters. The shop has failed and the ancient belle has made Ellen her companion-housekeeper. Ellen, unable to support her aging batty sisters, persuades old Leonora Fiske to give them common shelter, but the old lady cannot abide the pair. Goaded to desperation by Leonora's insistence that she send them packing, and having no place to send them, no money to support them, Ellen murders her benefactress. Henceforth she has the home and the old crone's income to herself and can guarantee the declining years of her "children."

What ensues thereafter is a study in the corrosive effects of a guilty conscience that is worthy of any dramatist you could name. Involved is Ellen Creed's sadistic and good-for-nothing nephew Albert Feather, who, being a rat himself, can smell a rat. With diabolical ingenuity he brings about the confession of his aunt in the fond hope of personal aggrandizement, only to find himself outwitted by her superior acumen. For the police are looking for Albert, too, for embezzlement of funds. But before he flees the scene, he and the dramatists have evoked an atmosphere of horror that is deeply rooted in human character, and not the synthetic product of extraneous theatrical devices.

If the movies don't grab this one and make Robert Montgomery play Albert Feather, they are crazy. (Although Patrick O'Moore is excellent in the part.) The rest of the cast might well remain intact, for it is as uniformly excellent a group as you will ever see playing together in one show. Flora Robson, making her American stage debut, is a convincing murderess whose soul-torment will shake you in your chair. The batty sisters, brilliantly played by Estelle Winwood and Jessamine Newcombe, leave nothing to



THREE PAINTINGS. Top, left: "Innocence Abroad" by Philip Evergood is part of his exhibition at the ACA Gallery at 52 West 8th St., New York City. The exhibition which includes twenty-four paintings, will close on April 13. Top, right: "Children" by Tschachbasov (whose one-man show follows Evergood's at the ACA) has been presented by the artist to the New Masses Bill of Rights Fund Auction, which will be held at the same gallery Sunday, April 7. Below: "Death of a Social Order" by Mischa Richter is included in the Artists Congress Exhibition which will open at 785 Fifth Ave. on April 5.