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### Brief Reviews

HORIZONS, UNLIMITED, by S. Paul Johnston. Duell, Sloan & Pearce. \$3.75.

Mr. Johnston has put together a valuable graphic history of man's efforts to conquer the ocean of air and to move about in it. The text which accompanies the innumerable excellent illustrations is largely non-technical, and should be illuminating to those who have no special knowledge of aerodynamics.

Practically every attempt that man has made to fly since Leonardo da Vinci constructed successful flying models is covered by the illustrations, and they provide an interesting running history of the art. Like most such works, Mr. Johnston's book suffers from a defect yet to be repaired: the absence of any considerable social understanding of the airplane, its place in the history of our developing modes of production. So important an adjunct of man's instruments for the conquest of nature cannot adequately be seen as separate from all the others.

WINGED WARFARE, by Maj. Gen. H. H. Arnold and Col. Ira C. Eaker. Harper & Bros. \$3.

Major-General Arnold is Chief of the US Army Air Corps and acting deputy chief of staff for air. With Colonel Eaker, who is also a pioneer in American aviation, he has written a remarkably inadequate treatment of the history and strategy of air-combat, and the omissions may be ascribed, no doubt, to the necessity for maintaining military secrecy about this most important branch of the armed forces. So it is only to be expected that this book would present only a skeletonized estimate of the operations of air-power, a generalized outline of its various tactics (pursuit, bombardment, liaison, reconnaissance) and the organization of the diverse branches of an air force.

MANSSION HOUSE OF LIBERTY, by Phyllis Bottome. Little, Brown and Co. \$2.50.

In Miss Bottome's book the British ruling class hides behind the humanity of the English people. For the present it claims no credit. "The Devil a monk would be," because he was sick, according to the old saying. It merely hopes that its sins will be forgotten in the contemplation of the fortitude with which others bear the consequences. It would be ludicrous to comment on the author's conception of political science, which includes Otto Strasser as one of the builders of a future Germany. Her ideas would be interesting to an anthropologist, though. Her remark on the future of humanity: "Surely, this would be a new kind of dog worth breeding," shows how hard it is for the inhabitants of Horseback Hall to disguise themselves even when it's a matter of life and death for their class.



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## "WATCH ON THE RHINE"

Lillian Hellman's new play tells the story of a German anti-fascist. Questions that remain unanswered. The magnificent performances of Paul Lukas and George Coulouris.

IN HER new play, *Watch on the Rhine*, Lillian Hellman has attempted a further dramatic evaluation of the central problem of our time—the struggle against the developing forces of reaction. Miss Hellman is a craftsman of far more than average competency—her previous play was a brilliant and incisive portrayal of individual greed that revealed implications far beyond the immediacy of its early twentieth-century parable of "The Little Foxes" that spoiled the grapes.

*Watch on the Rhine* presents Kurt Mueller, German husband of an American wife, who returns with her to her childhood home near Washington, D. C., twenty years after her original departure. They bring with them their three foreign-born children, and they meet in Sara Farrelly Mueller's former home, her mother, widow of the great American statesman Joshua Farrelly; Sara's brother David; Teck de Brancovis, penniless Rumanian exile and his American wife. In this pleasant country home near the nation's capitol there develops a life-and-death struggle between de Brancovis, who is a fascist hanger-on in close touch with the Nazi embassy, and Mueller, originally an engineer, who for the past seven years has been closely identified with the German underground movement, with the anti-fascist war in Spain. De Brancovis recognizes Mueller, who is carrying a large sum of money contributed in small sums by the poor for the purpose of effecting the release of captured anti-Nazi fighters; he attempts blackmail. Mueller, whose mission of anti-fascist struggle and salvation is his life, finds that de Brancovis is in his way; he

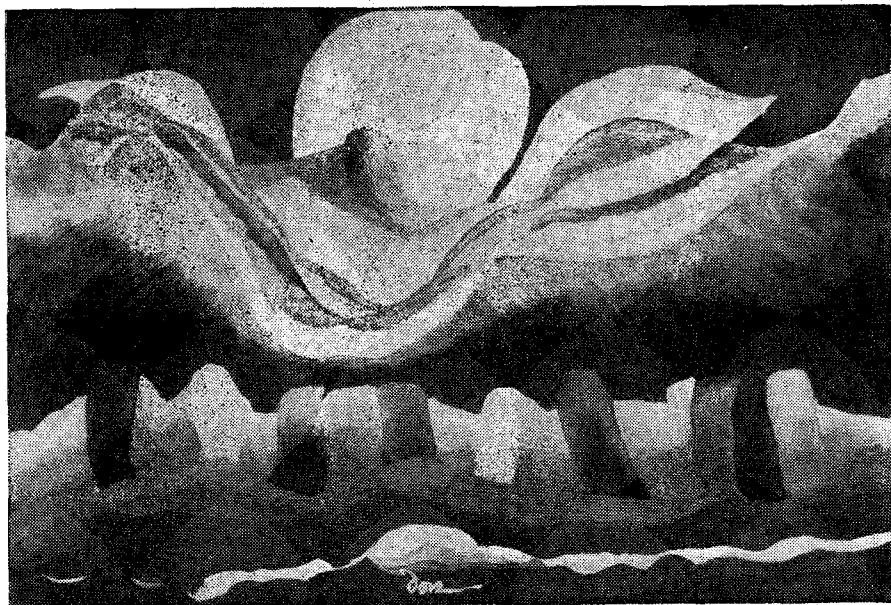
must kill him, to ensure his own arrival in Germany and the safety of his fellow anti-fascists whom he is going to help. His safe return to his wife and children is extremely doubtful.

It is necessary to relate this skeletonized plot of *Watch on the Rhine* in order properly to evaluate what Miss Hellman has attempted, and what she has achieved. With some exceptions noted below, the play is instinct with the sincerity of purpose of a dramatist who possesses potentialities far beyond the grasp of any other writer on the contemporary theater scene. Miss Hellman can, and does, engage the emotions of her audience; there is evidence of a sound mentality and a healthy emotional grasp of human character, in most of what she writes. She makes her hero Kurt Mueller live upon the stage and in the minds of her audience. She relates his wife, Sara, to the spectators, and they understand not only her devotion to her courageous husband and her children, but to the cause for which he fights. Mueller is a figure of complete integrity, with all the qualities of a man and none of the superhuman attributes romantically ascribed to his type. He has known fear, and knows it still. He is full of love—for humanity dead and to be born, as well as for the living. Contrasted with his American mother-in-law, his brother-in-law, and the American wife of the Rumanian exile, he is full of the juice of life while they are desiccated figures. His relatives do not understand him fully, or what he stands for—even though they offer him their support and help him to escape; the sort of life they have led, in contrast to his own, has made it

impossible for them to understand him. Nor is it possible for him—within the frame-work of Miss Hellman's drama—to explain himself to them.

When you isolate this factor, you have placed your finger on the flaw from which there grows and spreads a network of fallacy, both dramatic and political. *Watch on the Rhine* has been hailed by the daily reviewers as the anti-fascist play for which we have all been waiting, and it raises—as a result—a question that demands an unequivocal answer at this very moment when reaction is developing with the rapidity and voraciousness of a plague. To put it positively: it is no longer possible to be anti-Nazi, and nothing more. It is necessary today to define "anti-fascism," to delimit its meaning, to rescue the phrase from the warmongers and the fascists themselves. This Miss Hellman fails to do. Hence, Kurt Mueller, by not explaining himself to his relatives by marriage—and by extension, to the audience—remains vague as to purpose, vague as to direction. And his intentions and direction are central to the success of Miss Hellman's intentions. She is dealing with precious human lives today; her drama should leave no scope for confusion or obscurantism, either intentional or unintentional; the issues are too vital for our survival.

Why cannot Kurt Mueller explain himself? Why does not Miss Hellman do more than skate around the central issue she presents for our consideration? Kurt Mueller cannot explain himself to his well-born Washington mother-in-law and her son, because there is no common ground on which they can stand.



Right: Morris Newwirth's "Fulton Dock" at the ACA Gallery in N. Y.



Left: "Rising Moon" by Arthur G. Dove. At An American Place in N. Y.