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not concerned with its apparent theme of war at all, but with a special problem of psychic insecurity—the return to belief. In *The Empty Room* its symbol is Venetia Rydal; in *The Fort* it is the dead, world-war soldier Jamie who returns on the last page to give back his fresh idealism and courage to the men of today.

In *The Fort* five officers, two English and three French, wait in hiding in the cellar of a ruined farm in northern France. Into their midst stumbles a young German whom they are forced to execute for their own safety. The Nazis are taking the Marne, they are at the gates of Paris; among the six men runs an inconclusive controversy on the cause and purposes of the offstage battles. The two younger French officers quarrel interminably. Why did France fall? As in *Cousin Honore*, written last year, Storm Jameson makes the same answer: "Because the only passion millions of Frenchmen have in common is fear. . . ." For Germany, too, the explanation is psychological rather than political. "It was a German who explained that they're driven to possess other countries brutally, because they're not loved. . . . Why is it only Germany that flings itself into these paroxysms of affection for other people's goods, and rolls about Europe smashing and killing and stealing, when it isn't asking to be admired for its strength?" Such dangerously superficial verbiage explains why this book is neither an effective tract nor a realized novel. Miss Jameson's speakers all voice only their author's ignorance of political truths like the meaning of the Front Populaire, of the Soviet Union, of Chamberlain's Munich policy. What does come through in this dialogue in limbo is her undeniable ability to record the way soldiers feel about home, a particular field or hilltop. Out of this common humanity Hitler's defeat will be made.

MILLCENT LANG.

## An American Community

EVENING IN SPRING, by August Derleth. Chas. Scribner's Sons. \$2.50.

IN HIS most recent addition to his saga of Sac Prairie, Wis., August Derleth places in the foreground of his story a simple idyll of adolescent love. An interest in the localisms of Sac Prairie, however, obtrudes itself upon the story of the young lovers; Mr. Derleth apparently assumes that first love is the monotonous thing in all small towns which it proves to be in Sac Prairie. What is important appears to be differences of fact and differences in local color. The texture of the novel comes, therefore, from Mr. Derleth's industrious researches into the topographical and physical features of Sac Prairie. A map on the inside cover might have spared the reader considerable confusion in following the principal action of the novel: the storyteller's continual journeys on foot from one end of Sac Prairie to the other. His movements are occasionally interrupted by a factitious assort-

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ment of comic aunts, lonely souls, and local color frescoes.

But Mr. Derleth also fails in his efforts to evoke overtones from places, people, and nature as effective counterpoint for the *welt-schmerz* of his disagreeable young man. Nature is brought systematically into every chapter in the fashion of the dreaded set descriptions of a nineteenth century novel. His pictures of nature are catalogues, repetitive itemizations. Mr. Derleth is never afraid of repeating himself; in the scenes between the young lovers the same phrases appear time and again, apparently by design, but entirely without an "artless" effect. Stylistically, in his husbanding of his resources, Mr. Derleth reminds one of a pulp writer, though he might envy the latter's command of narrative movement and economy of statement.

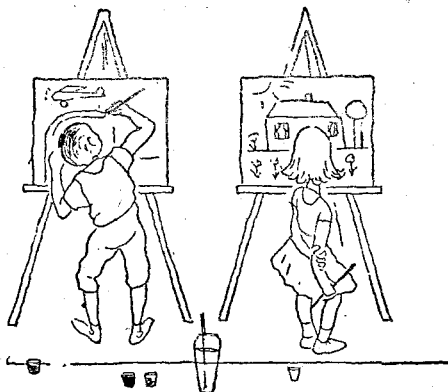
One may not question Mr. Derleth's zeal in the restoration of the Sac Prairie of 1920. But it seems to me that an antiquarian approach to regional material cannot alone provide a basis for good fiction. Finding novelty in the familiar, and an old, old story in a new set of particulars may be a good formula. But to write a human history of an American community at a significant moment in our recent past requires something more than a formula.

ALAN BENOIT.

## Brief Review

A HISTORY OF HUNGARY, by Dominic Kosary. Benjamin Franklin Bibliophile Society. \$3.

This might be called a semi-official history of Hungary. It does a fairly thorough job in tracing Hungarian development through medieval times, and is fairly objective in discussing the Hungarian nationalist movement in the Dual Empire, but it becomes definitely apologetic in its treatment of Hungary's role in the world war and its aftermath. The author, a professor at the Eotvos College in Budapest, attacks both the Karolyi government and its shortlived Communist successor as acting in the "interests of the victorious enemy"; he finds, on the other hand, that the dictator Nicholas Horthy "restored order" and began to "rebuild" the country. The discussion of the past twenty-five years is very foreshortened; the author admits he does not wish to engage in a "political argument" and therefore cannot appraise recent history extensively. But it is only too clear that he is a vigorous supporter of that reactionary Hungarian revisionism which has led his country into the arms of Adolf Hitler.



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