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would organize, in her own modest way, a crusade against the Soviet "peasants" in behalf of avant-garde culture. The "revolution of the word" theory advanced by Margaret Marshall, Edmund Wilson, and a shovelful of literary Trotskyites provides the "ideology" for their anti-Soviet malice. Noting the development of a realistic and humanistic literature in the USSR, they bemoan the absence of that irresponsibility, bohemianism, and snobbish aloofness which they celebrate among themselves as "avant-gardism." They squirm at the lack of decadence in Soviet art, its human warmth, its wholesome firmness. And, like sick men who resent the healthy, they sneer at Soviet virility as "conventional."

Even Manya Gordon is less wild-eyed than Margaret Marshall. Miss Gordon's review is a lyrical tribute to the Cossacks who defended their "freedom" from the Bolsheviks. This is in keeping with her familiar thesis that everything in Russia was idyllic before 1917. Miss Gordon criticizes Sholokhov because he does not present Cossacks who can read and write. Had she read the work more carefully she would have discovered that it is the Communist Stockman who teaches the workers of Mokhov's mill to appreciate the poetry of Nekrassov and the history of their own Cossack region. Sholokhov is at least as eager as Manya Gordon to stress the desire of most Cossacks for freedom, but he makes perfectly clear that this desire was twisted and frustrated not by the new Soviet regime, but by the counter-revolutionary overlords whose cause Miss Gordon champions. "One looks in vain," says Miss Manya Gordon, "for the name of an outstanding Bolshevik." This is a remarkable fault to find in Sholokhov, particularly since on other occasions Miss Gordon has stormed against the "one-man worship" of the Soviets. It is also rather startling to find the reviewer complaining that Sholokhov's efforts at objectivity impede the flow of the narrative. One had supposed that such objectivity would have been a welcome relief to Miss Gordon, who for so many years has bewailed the "bias" of Soviet writers. But she has shown herself consistent in at least one sense: she has proved to be as adept at interpreting fiction as she is at manipulating statistics.

AS A RELIEF from this coalition of carpers, there is the review by Edwin Seaver in *PM* of August 3. Mr. Seaver expresses in his opening paragraph the warm enthusiasm which *The Silent Don* evokes in most readers: "So many adjectives have been lavished by so many reviewers on so much literary trash, one is embarrassed in the presence of a genuinely first rate book. All the big words seem suddenly empty, and nothing becomes one so much as silence. After all, you don't applaud the prairies. You don't say of the sea: 'Easily the greatest ocean of this year, and far surpasses any of last year's oceans.'"

Further on in his review, Mr. Seaver declares: "In an age when the greatest novelists have tended to picture human beings as shadows in a ritualistic dance and have

drowned themselves in the well of time, Sholokhov, the novelist of a collective society, has restored to fiction the dignity and significance of the individual. The great tradition of Russian realism remains unbroken."

These are forthright words. They express an appreciation of Sholokhov's genius which most of the other reviewers recognize despite their reservations and confusion. American readers find in Sholokhov's artistic power the same stirring qualities which they are discovering daily in the heroism of the Soviet peoples.

SAMUEL SILLEN.

## An Engineer on Chile

CHILE, LAND OF PROGRESS, by Earl P. Hanson. Reynal & Hitchcock. \$1.75.

THE author of this book is an engineer who has resided for years in Chile and accordingly possesses a firsthand knowledge of the country. His approach is essentially that of the engineer, and this, to my mind, is a distinct advantage. From an intelligent, honest-intentioned member of the profession who has lived and worked on the scene, one may expect an honest, competent report. That is the kind of report we get here. If the engineer in question happens in addition to be a true liberal and a democrat, with warm, decent human sympathies, we may look for something more; and Mr. Hanson, in his account of the new forms of social and political life that are evolving in the Chile of today, very often gives us this extra measure of understanding and good will.

Mr. Hanson views the great progressive-democratic movement which has been going on in Chile since the ousting of the old aristocratic oligarchy from power in the early twenties as a kind of Chilean New Deal. This approach has at once its advantages and its drawbacks. On the one hand, it easily enables Mr. Hanson, with his temperament and training, to give a sane and lucid account of what is happening in the neighborhood of Santiago. There is, for one thing, a total and gratifying absence of Red-baiting in the book. On the other hand, the author does not realize that it is later than he thinks by the clock of history, and that a Popular Front government at this time tends to be more advanced than the ordinary bourgeois democracy. By portraying the intense struggle of the Chilean workers, peasants, and middle classes, as merely a striving for such forms as prevailed under our New Deal, Mr. Hanson is limiting his own sympathetic understanding. The result is a recurring note of perplexity—for example, over the hostility of American big business interests to the democratic evolution of the Chilean people.



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The chief fault to be found with the book as a whole is that it overlooks the menace of fascist forces both inside and outside Chile. There is no account of the bitter struggle which the people have waged against Nazism these past few years. There are also one or two rather grave misstatements, as when Alesandri is described without qualification as "a liberal," or when (most glaring instance of all) reference is made to "Ibanez' ruthless dictatorship" as having been "organized to enable him to carry out his liberal measures."

The faults, however, are few and for the most part minor ones. What renders the book a valuable addition to anyone's Latin American shelf is the wealth of technical information which it contains on the geography, history, economic resources, and cultural life of the country, as well as its social development. Mr. Hanson has made free use, with due acknowledgments, of other works on the subject, but his own contribution outweighs any borrowings.

SAMUEL PUTNAM.

## Regressive Motion

THE WOUND AND THE BOW, by Edmund Wilson. Houghton Mifflin. \$3.

SUCH motion as can be discerned in the critical career of Edmund Wilson is mostly regressive. The author of *Axel's Castle* is but a step in advance of the young man who wrote a first-rate review of "The Wasteland" for the *Dial* in 1922. The Edmund Wilson of *The Wound and the Bow* is several steps behind both.

The Wilson of both the *Dial* piece and *Axel's Castle* gave evidence of a belief that an artist's work, if it is to have lasting value, must reflect not only his personal universe of experience, but the social universe in which he lives as well. So it was that he wrote of Eliot in 1922, "Sometimes we feel that he is speaking not only for a personal distress, but for the starvation of a whole civilization—for people grinding at barren office routine in the cells of gigantic cities, drying up their souls in eternal toil whose products never bring them profit, where their pleasures are so vulgar and so feeble that they are almost sadder than their pains."

If this point of view can be detected at all in *The Wound and the Bow*, one must be prepared to find it in completely inverted form. For the thesis underlying these essays is simply this: that in so far as a writer concerns himself with the social problems of his time, and in so far as he adopts a position in regard to these problems, he is merely exposing the way in which artists resolve their fundamental psychic difficulties.

The present volume contains a very long essay on Dickens which owes more to Mr. T. A. Jackson's excellent work than Mr. Wilson admits; another long essay on Kipling; a post-obit on Edith Wharton; a very short piece on Casanova; a critique of Ernest Hemingway which carries a caress in recog-

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