



Lithograph by Disraeli Masurovsky.

progressive literature and esthetic thought of Europe. This influence is felt in Rolland's *The People's Theater* and extends throughout all his works. In his old age the great French writer said: "I have continued Tolstoy's severe criticism of the society and art of the privileged."

The well known novelist Marcel Prevost testifies: "Practically no book written by modern French novelists and dramatists would be just what it is if not for Tolstoy." Anatole France said: "As an epic writer, Tolstoy is our common teacher. . . . Tolstoy is a great lesson."

The great English writers of the twentieth century, such as Hardy, Butler, Galsworthy, and especially Bernard Shaw, who raised their voices against the lies and hypocrisy of the defenders of private property, were indisputably

influenced by Tolstoy. So were the authors of those epic works of the new European literature portraying the development of human personality in its contact with society (*Buddenbrooks* by Thomas Mann, *Jean Christophe*, by Romain Rolland, *Les Thibaults* by Roger Martin du Gard). So were the authors of books attempting to reproduce realistically the everyday incidents of war. So were, finally, the most outstanding of the modern European historical novels.

The works of Gorky open an absolutely new page in the development of world literature. Important manifestations of realism and nationalism in twentieth-century world literature are linked with his name and his influence. Some of the greatest European writers of our day worked in close friendship and literary intercourse with

him. Henri Barbusse, one of his followers and collaborators in the struggle against fascist barbarism, wrote, "In our day Gorky is a torch lighting new paths for the whole world."

Martin Andersen Nexø, another outstanding anti-fascist writer, who has tried to follow Gorky in embodying the struggle of the proletariat, defines his teacher's significance as follows: "Maxim Gorky is more than a remarkable artist—he is the living embodiment of his epoch. Through him millions of people, the whole of oppressed humanity, has acquired a voice, never again to be silenced." Upton Sinclair recalls that in his youth Maxim Gorky's books exerted a tremendous influence on the development of his personality.

Gorky's figure, Gorky's example repeatedly rises before all the writers of our day who are striving to express oppressed mankind's will to liberation. Many writers in Europe remembered and strove to carry out Gorky's behest: "The world wants books that lash the vileness of fascism."

Today the interest of the West in Russian literature has increased: this may be seen not only in the huge British and American editions of *War and Peace*, but also in new editions appearing in foreign languages of the works of Turgenev, Dostoyevsky, Chekhov, Gorky and modern Soviet writers. Russian literature is recognized by progressive people in the West as a force that helps wage the fight against obscurantism and oppression on behalf of the freedom and dignity of man.

## A Koestler of the 1860's

THE SCANDAL, by Pedro Antonio Alarcon. Translated by Philip H. Riley and Hubert James Tunney. Knopf. \$2.50.

JUST what led the publishers to reissue this old novel? It lacks the prestige of a classic and it was not even a very popular or important book in its time. Writers on Spanish literature agree that it is a minor performance. Fitzmaurice-Kelly, generally conceded to be our best authority, curtly dismisses it, saying of its author, "Like M. Bourget he found 'salvation,' lost much of his art and, in his more elaborate novels (of which *The Scandal* was one), became tedious."

For myself I find this judgment rather on the severe side. Certainly *The Scandal* is a thoroughly unimportant novel. But the author skillful in managing a complicated plot, keeps his readers sufficiently in suspense to exempt him from the accusation of tedium. More-

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over, he has considerable eloquence and his psychological insights and his entertaining mixture of romantic attitudes and realistic understanding add liveliness to the story.

This said, all is said. None of these qualities are so applied as to shape out a major work. Rather they cover up a puerility hard to condone in a mind so keen and a talent so expert. And, put together, they come to far too little to justify republication of the book during a paper shortage. Since the explanation is obviously not to be found on literary grounds, we must look elsewhere.

The explanation is to be seen in the resurgence of the same force that gave it birth, the neo-Catholic reaction. In the 1870's in Spain that force was strong. It was marked by the recantation of many famous former "radicals," among them Alarcon. The literary fruit of Alarcon's radicalism had been the delightful *Three Cornered Hat*. This remains his one first-rate book and undisputed classic of Spanish literature. He was never to equal it.

The literary fruit of Alarcon's renegacy was a series of novels dedicated to the glory of the Church and, in particular, of the Jesuit Order. Of these *The Scandal* is, perhaps, the best, though decidedly unworthy of the author of *The Three Cornered Hat*. The Spanish reading public turned away from him in his renegade phase and Alarcon stopped writing to devote himself to politics as a champion of the monarchy and the Church.

Apparently, the neo-Catholic reaction of today, rummaging among its literary properties, has decided on an attempt to revive *The Scandal* for whatever can be realized on Alarcon's prestige and on the book's own propaganda value in a period of disturbance and uncertainty. It may have an appeal to the mentally distressed, for it is a fictionalized promise of spiritual peace and even carnal happiness. Its hero, after renouncing wealth, title and a beautiful woman, has the beautiful woman restored to him by way of an ingenious plot surprise.

What makes the book particularly interesting to us, however, is its anticipations of a pattern that has since become fixed in renegade books. The spiritual identity of a Koestler and an Alarcon is balanced by an identity of method and direction in their books.

Reason is always the ally of progress. Having turned reactionary, reason became the enemy to Alarcon just as it has become the enemy to Koestler. Alarcon attacks it, again and again, playing on its limitations and its defeats

just as Koestler plays upon them. For Alarcon the path away from reason leads to "God," who is pictured as a rapturous infinity which it is an ineffable happiness to dive into. The "consciousness" in which Koestler would have us submerge ourselves is the modern renegade version of the same thing.

Still more startling is the similarity in the approach. Both in *Darkness At Noon* and in *Arrival and Departure* the hero is presented in a state of hysteria. In both he is disentangled from his neurotic coils by a confession. In *Darkness at Noon* the confession is in the form of a long prosecutor's examination; in *Arrival and Departure* it is in the form of an outpouring to a psychoanalyst. In *The Scandal* the hero is introduced in a hysterical frenzy and more than half the book is literally a confession—a long confession to a Jesuit priest. The warning should be introduced here that psychoanalysis has been abandoned by Koestler. Being a science and therefore one of the structures of reason, Mr. Koestler has repudiated it. He has turned instead to Yoga for his infinite pool of consciousness.

*The Scandal* is stirring no literary ripples here. If it adds any readers to *The Three Cornered Hat* it may somewhat atone for its publication. As an illustration of the common type and the common futility of renegades from human progress, it may add another something to the atonement.

ISIDOR SCHNEIDER.

## Books on Asia

HOME TO INDIA, by Santha Rama Rao. Harper. \$2.50.

ASIA FOR ASIATICS? by Robert S. Ward. University of Chicago Press. \$3.

THE PEOPLES OF MALAYSIA, by Fay-Cooper Cole. Van Nostrand. \$4.

AT THE age of six Santha Rama Rao was taken to England by her parents. After ten years of schooling abroad she returned to India in 1939, and left for the United States in 1941. In this smoothly written book Miss Rao tells the story of the two years she spent in her native land where she found herself almost a stranger. During these two years she gradually lost her impatience with the traditional customs and manners practiced by her orthodox grandparents, and came to realize that her grandmother, for example, "was as much a stranger to her changing country as I was."

Although Miss Rao developed a general understanding of the social economic and political forces remaking