

with the realization that his ideals are false. Henceforth he will seek life in all its most vital and energetic manifestations, spontaneity and vigor are now more to him than the cautious qualities which he had once so sadly overestimated. He divests himself of everything that constituted his former self. His wife's illness and death leave him unmoved, pity is gone out of him, and his craving for the strong and full-blooded sends him off in search of adventures among thieves and poachers and drunkards. All his inhibitions are released, all his values are transvalued, and he is carried away on the dark stream of primitive life.

Strait is the Gate is another study of asceticism, "a searching analysis," as Mr. Gosse calls it, "of the incompleteness and narrowness of the moral psychology of Protestantism." Alissa Bucolin, the child of a Creole mother and a respectable Huguenot banker in Havre, is possessed by that dual heritage and finally destroyed by it. Her inverted romanticism, like her neurotic beauty, may be traced to that languorous, exotic figure, so ill-adapted to the staid Protestant society of the provinces, whose lovers and nervous crises leave their indelible impressions upon the minds of the grave young Huguenot children whose story is told. These are Alissa, her younger sister and brother, Juliette and Robert, and Jérôme, her cousin, whom she is to marry, according to the family understanding. A childish adventure of Jérôme's with his amorous Aunt Bucolin, and one day the revelation to Alissa of her mother's far from spiritual loves, drive deep into these little puritan souls the conviction of sin and shame. At church the preacher's fulminations against those who seek the broad path leading to destruction are recognized as references to the wickedness of the wild creature from Martinique, who has run away with one of her lovers, and Jérôme and Alissa decide that the strait gate and the narrow way shall be their goal.

Alissa's love for Jérôme is to her mind the chief obstacle to salvation, and it is in a sort of ascetic ecstasy that she sets out to kill this emotion, so contaminated, as she has seen, by things of the earth earthy. Juliette also loves Jérôme, and Alissa tries at first to profit by this opportunity to sacrifice herself in favor of her sister. But Juliette defeats her by marrying an elderly wine-grower, whom she does not love particularly, but with whom she leads an active and happy domestic life. To Alissa this is further proof of the treacherous insignificance of human passion, and renunciation becomes more and more the ideal. Jérôme, meanwhile, has gone off to study in Paris, he has done his military service and has travelled. Life has opened out before him and he has gradually freed himself from the dogmas and superstitions of his youth; his faith, never so profound as Alissa's, cannot live without hers, and she denies him that support with truly pious severity; he must seek his own salvation. But his love for Alissa survives every change; he returns home determined to have their betrothal announced. Alissa repulses him for the last time, and, when she goes into decline and dies, he learns from her diary how she wrestled against what an Irish bishop once called "the degrading passion of love," and died without surrender or victory.

André Gide has written nothing so harmonious and so finished as this variation upon one of the great themes of tragedy, renunciation in pursuit of perfection. He is in the great tradition of Pascal and Corneille when he here

combines a spiritual purity of classic style with the heroic tension of a mystic soul's torturing quest and the tortuous self-questionings of exalted piety. Alissa Bucolin is the portrait of a Protestant saint, drawn with a sympathy and insight as profound as the author's disapproval of the aberration he has studied. This holiness is truly Protestant in its bleak, self-sufficient humility, its self-reliant dependence upon personal conviction and conscience. It is analyzed with a truly Huguenot simplicity, which Edmund Gosse contrasts with "a consecrated Huysmans vapouring about the ecstasies of St. Lydwine of Schiedam." Alissa's diary has already supplied pages which have an honorable place in anthologies of the best modern French prose.

Strait is the Gate is deservedly the book which made André Gide famous; it is one of the great classics of French fiction since the death of Flaubert. It is not only a study of puritanism, in the authentic lineage of Gosse's *Father and Son*, it is a fine picture of an unfamiliar corner of French provincial life, full of remarkable character-drawing and lively incidents and observations. As the author of that widely different but kindred work has said of Gide: "there is something northern about his genius, which loves to cultivate caprices and the twilight hours. . . He is allied with such tender individualists of the close of the nineteenth century as Shorthouse and Pater." His influence in France today is such that he may well mark the transition to a new orientation of the French mind.

ERNEST BOYD.

Russia's Revolution

The First Time in History, by Anna Louise Strong. New York: Boni and Liveright. \$2.00.

FIRST and last we have heard a good deal about Russia and her revolution. They have been served up, in report and interview, in lecture and book, in all sorts of ways and by all sorts of persons—emigrés and emissaries; self-constituted investigators, with their "authoritative accounts," and favored travelers, with their "intimate views;" economic "defenders of the faith" (*laus Deo!*) and economic heretics (*anathema sint!*)—men of big business, and men of small politics; everyone has had his chance at Russia. We have had the "truth about Russia," the "facts about Russia," the "real Russia," "Russia as it is"—what more do we want or need? Why another book on Russia, and what justification, beyond the "inner urge," has anyone for writing another?

Well, that depends pretty much upon the book and who writes it. The author of *The First Time in History* can establish her title to write and her claim to a reading on many grounds—residence in Russia of more than two years; journeys into various parts of the country; relief work and nursing during famine and plague; contacts and conversations with all sorts and conditions of people, high and low, peasants, workmen, soldiers, officials, priests, teachers; first-hand knowledge of many things of which she herself was an active part.

But it is not these experiences which, after all, constitute her chief qualification for writing upon Russia. For, interesting as they are, and vividly narrated, they are, nevertheless, not unique. Others too have been in Russia, have seen much and have told much. Dr. Strong's story is indeed informing, and fills in at many points our all

too meagre and desultory knowledge of Russia. But it is not in new facts and figures that its carrying power lies; but rather in what it adds, not so much to information, as to understanding; not so much in what the author has seen, as in what she has sensed. She does not pretend to have taken the full measure of the revolution, but with fine intuition she has divined the criterion for its final appraisal, the criterion, not of the actual and momentary, but of the potential and ultimate. She sees the revolution, not as a catastrophic event, but as a dynamic process. And viewing it thus she sees in it, "a lot of mess" and "plenty of things to shock," "rotten inefficiency . . . offices tangled in red tape, crudities of every kind . . . profiteers and gambling dens and bootleg whiskey and every rotten thing there is anywhere in the world;" but, beneath this scum, something deep and vast and instinct with creative power, "the Common Consciousness in action, crude, half-organized and inefficient, but the first time in history." Not that there have not been revolutions before, or dramatic exhibitions of national unity under the stress of war; but here in Russia for the first time Dr. Strong sees the governing power of a nation controlling its resources and organizing its forces and energies for the common welfare, infusing a new spirit into the common effort and setting a new objective for the common aim. "It is a purpose as terrific as battle, demanding the same disciplined yet reckless valor. They cannot wait, for Russia cannot wait. They intend to hurry history." Like Paracelsus, they

would have had one day, one moment's space
change man's condition.

Which suggests an affinity to the French revolution, with its ecstasy and its noble rage, its sublime self-confidence, its contempt of time; and sets one to musing and to wondering whether after all revolutions are so different, and whether this latter will go the way of the former, and how long the auroral splendor will linger in the Russian sky, and what will come after. What will come after is on the knees of the gods, and Dr. Strong wisely refrains from prophecy. That the way will be long and arduous she does not doubt. But she has confidence in Russia, a confidence based not upon achieved success, but upon the will to succeed; in Russia alone she finds hope and a plan and the resolute forward-facing of the mind; Russia has broken with the past and stakes her fortune on the future. Herein lies the tremendous significance of Russia's revolution: it looks to the future. It is this that makes it pregnant with incalculable consequences, not only for Russia, but for the world.

THEODORE COLLIER.

The Best Kept Secret

The Mystery of Religion. A Study in Social Psychology, by Everett Dean Martin. New York: Harper Brothers. \$3.00.

THE best kept secrets are the secrets everyone knows and no one mentions. They are the secrets of the sentiments and impulses that we all feel and yet suppress, for the most part, out of a deep sense of shame. The key to the secrecy is the suppression, and the key to the suppression is the sense of shame.

The mysteries of religion are among the best kept secrets of the world, shared by all, understood in a sense by all, yet from generation to generation kept perpetually just below the threshold of full recognition and avowal. One of the universal signs of genuine religious feeling is the sense of inexplicable shame which chokes it back. All feel it. Many are seriously disturbed by it. None overcome it altogether. It leaves its invariable mark of spiritual self-consciousness upon the religious leaders and it frequently provides young people, adolescents, with the major emotional struggle of a life time.

This should furnish a clue to its inner nature. Adolescence is a period of organic maturing, in consequence of which it is most usually defined in terms of organic self-consciousness: the awkward age. But that acute awkwardness to which the rest of life affords no duplicate has deeper causes. From the point of view of behavior adolescence is the period, long or short as circumstances rule, in which one is prompted both to behave like a child and to behave like an adult. Some people and situations cast one for the former, some for the latter rôle. One has a beau; but one still has a mother. A confusing predicament, certainly, from which only time and the indifferent march of events effectively extricate one. The reorganization of interests and affections about new centres which thus somehow transpires has lately come to be called a transfer of fixation. That is a suggestive phrase. But it somehow fails to convey just the image in which to visualize the adolescent's struggle with religion. Rather it is an education: one is led out of childhood, eagerly as the zest for responsibility and independent action grows, but at the same time reluctantly as one realizes in moments of intolerable punishment that the sweet relief of tears and the perfect reassurance of parental protection is being left irrevocably behind.

It is very significant that this is quite generally a period of religious quickening. The secret of religion, says the social psychologist, is that it is a retreat from the harsh realities of adult life to a security and a lifting of burdens quite analogous to that of childhood. And the shame that makes men suppress it or conceal it or avow it with exaggerated temerity arises from a peculiar sense of its impropriety for adults. Not, of course, that church-going is improper, or any of the familiar decorums of established ecclesiastical ceremony. They are the last word in conformity. But they are as remote as can be from the burning emotions of spontaneous and overwhelming religious quickening. The most devout and regular believers prefer quite uniformly to take belief for granted. Fundamentalism is as cold as a fashionable vestryman. And the heat that modernism generates is a by-product of argument rather than the natural warmth of inner fires. Pentacost is a rare phenomenon, and those who would produce it artificially find it necessary to create a cunningly fabricated setting in which to break down prosaic inhibitions.

Though religion has many meanings and the churches many functions, Everett Dean Martin is undoubtedly correct in maintaining that the central meaning is this mysterious emotional self-abandonment that is guarded by inhibitions and concealed even in ecclesiastical literature and ritual by an almost impenetrable symbolism. The essence of the miraculous, as Mr. Martin exhibits with extraordinary penetration, is not the sudden hiatus in an otherwise rigorously commonplace series of events; on the con-