

ever seen. Like him or not, agree with him or not, here he is, Mussolini the man, the patriot, the leader. His bitterest enemy will not accuse him of evasion or deception in this story of his life. What he thought and what he felt is as definitely recorded as his words and deeds. He has made not the slightest effort to protect himself from the charges of egotism, conceit, an autocratic manner and method, or other weaknesses to which his frank, unstudied statements will easily subject him.

In truth this man has placed himself so completely at the mercy of his readers, has so utterly scorned any artifice of self-defense, that one may well suggest that a fair minded reader will be the more disposed to give him reasonable protection and render just judgment upon his mind and heart, his will and work.

At the outset it is all important that one serious misconception should be corrected. The question is often asked, how is it possible for one man to impose his autocratic will upon a nation of more than forty millions? The answer is that it cannot be done. The explanation of Mussolini's power is not found in the too-easy suggestion quoted a moment ago, but entirely in the fact that the Italian people recognized in this man the embodiment of their hopes, their ideals, their aspirations, and discovered that for the first time in a very long period they had found a leader fully equipped with clear vision, rare wisdom, unflinching courage, powerful will, and an unselfish consecration to his country and people. From his first appearance upon the scene of action he has been followed with an almost religious fervor by ever increasing numbers. His strength rests alone upon the faith and devotion of the people of Italy. They are the best judges, they who have experienced the misrule of seventy cabinets in a little over fifty years; they who have given him the power to bring law and order out of chaos, to lift Italy to the level of a self-respecting nation paying debts and keeping faith, to protect both labor and capital in their industrial partnership, and to build in six years more schools, more roads, more institutions for the

I talked with the man about his hopes, his plans, his progress. I believe in his essential honesty and wisdom, that he knows what is right and best for his people, and believing in him I hope that his story of his life and work will be read with patient understanding.

This is my apology for offering not so much a review of Mussolini's autobiography, as an introduction to its reasonable reading and understanding. Much will depend upon the glasses through which you see him. Let yours be neither dark with pessimism, nor rosy with the illusions of visionaries, but clear with the whiteness of truth. See him as his people see him, and you will deal fairly with him and with his book.

On opening the book you are attracted to a foreword by Richard Washburn Child, our former Ambassador to Italy, who was in Rome during most of the impressive events recorded. For obvious reasons his conclusions should have weight. But you hasten on to listen to the story which literally rushes from the lips of one of the most magnetic personalities who has ever appeared upon the stage of history. You are fascinated not only with the record, but with that which inevitably is read between the lines but for which he has no time. You are drawn to him by his deep love and respect for his parents. Of his mother he says: "She might be alive now. She might have lived and enjoyed, with the power of her maternal instinct, my political success. It was not to be. But to me it is a comfort to feel that she, even now, can see me and help me in my labors with her unequalled love."

Of his father, who had been a socialist, he writes: "At the end he understood at last that the old eternal traditional forces such as capital could not be permanently overthrown by a political revolution. He turned his attention at the end toward bettering the souls of individuals. He wanted to make mankind true of heart and sensitive to fraternity. Many were the speeches and articles about him after his death; three thousand of the men and women he had known followed his body to the grave."

In discussing the influences which had contributed to his development he minimizes that of books. He declares that he has used only one big book, that he

has had only one great teacher, and that is life. He asserts, "The reality of experience is far more eloquent than all the theories and philosophies on all the tongues and on all the shelves. . . ." "My political evolution has been the product of a constant expansion, of a flow from springs always nearer to the realities of living life and always further away from the rigid structures of sociological theorists."

And a little later, in this same chapter, he makes acknowledgment to us:

The American people, by their sure and active creative lines of life, have touched my sensibility. For I am a man of government and party. I endlessly admire those who make out of creative work a law of life, those who win with the ability of their genius and not with the intrigue of their eloquence. I am for those who seek to make technic perfect in order to dominate the elements and give to men more sure footings for the future.

In a chapter headed "War and Its Effect Upon a Man," you enter the sacred places of a man's heart and soul. You are swept forward with him in the dramatic but reasonable development which took place in him, you struggle and suffer and triumph with him. It would be a mistake to quote from that chapter. You must see the picture in its completeness.

In fact a similar wise attitude may be taken toward the chapters which follow immediately. "Ashes and Embers" describes the post-war conditions. "The Death Struggle of a Worn-Out Democracy" reveals the depths to which timid and anæmic government had descended. In "The Garden of Fascism" you see the genesis of a new patriotism, and "Toward Conquest of Power" reveals its development in plan and purpose. But it is in the chapter, "Thus We Took Rome," that the story reaches its dramatic climax.

More than a hundred pages of the book yet remain. They describe the first five years of the government which Mussolini established and you discover that he is to-day altogether consistent with the character and purpose with which he began his marvelous experiment. Upon this point let us listen to

out regret all the superfluous comforts of life. I made an exception only of sports which, while making my body alert and ready, succeed in creating healthy and happy intervals in my complex life of work. In these six years—with the exception of official dinners—I have never passed the threshold of an aristocrat's salon, or of a café. I have also almost entirely abandoned the theatre, which once took away from me useful hours of evening work.

He has reprinted quite properly some of his significant addresses to the Italian Parliament. It is good to read the very words and not what, at a distance of three thousand miles or more, a press frequently unintelligent and sometimes hostile reported him to have said.

Near the end there is a chapter entitled "New Paths" which suggests the inevitable roads on which Italy must journey to attain reasonable progress and happiness. This is followed by a description of the Fascist state and the future which has been planned. In the midst of this I observe a sentence which reveals something which I am confident is close to the heart of this man: "I want to give to every man and woman so generous an opportunity that work will not be a painful necessity but a joy of life." Later, in describing the Fascist state, he observes: "In this new conception, which has found its logical expression in our representative forms, the citizen is valuable because of his productivity, his work, and his thought, and not merely because he is twenty-one years old and has the right to vote!"

Still later he declares:

In this, my Autobiography, I have emphasized more than once the fact that I have always tried to weave an organic and coherent character into all the fabric of my political work. I have not confined myself to giving merely an outward veneer or contour to Italian life; I wished to influence the very depths of its spirit.

The pages which follow are filled with definite records which are convincing proofs of his amazing success in influencing the very depths of the spirit of Italy. Some of the practical results are suggested in this single paragraph: "All the offices of governmental character have received a new impulse and new prestige. The great public utilities of the state, railroads, mails, telegraph, telephone, function again.

Certain persons are even sarcastic about the new regularity. And this is easily explained: we should not forget that the Italian people has been for many years rebellious against any discipline; it was accustomed to use its easy-to-hand and clamorous complaints against the work and activity of the government. Some vestiges of the mental attitudes of by-gone days still come to the surface. There is even whining because there is efficiency and order in the world."

The frankness which is apparent on every page is not diminished when he touches the sensitive problems of church and state. You will lift your brows at his occasional disappointment and impatience with the Vatican, but you will respect his confession of himself as a loyal Catholic and a devout believer in God. There is, however, in all of this no suggestion of the subjection of the state to the church. He insists, "Faith in Italy has been strengthened. Fascism gives impulse and vigor to the religion of the country. But it will never be able for any reason to renounce the sovereign rights of the state and of the functions of the state."

The closing chapter of three pages has the engaging title, "En Route." "It is," he tells us, "absurd to believe that one can conclude a life of battles at the age of forty-five." He believes that "Fascism, being a creation of the Italian race, has met and will meet historical necessities, and so, unconquerable, is destined to make an indelible impression on the twentieth century of history."

This comment upon the man, his work, and his book is unfair only in its inadequacy. For the man has earned an honorable and permanent place in history; his work has protected the foundations of civilization; and his book is the most candid revelation of human thought and purpose which we have ever seen.

Three visits to Italy during the last five years, three talks with the man, conferences with two American ambassadors who were eye-witnesses of the great events we have considered, do not necessarily qualify one to speak with authority, not even to these advantages one has added many other interviews with competent witnesses, and some measured patient study and research.

But my judgment is one with an enthusiastic fourth-fifths of the Italian people, one with that of our ambassadors to Italy, one with that of a great company of American travellers, diplomats, and men of affairs, who having known the old Italy and the new, having observed the weakness, corruption and poverty of former times look with joy at the strength, dignity, honesty, industry, and happiness of these days, and hold in gratitude and respect the man who was ready when destiny called.

Manchu Court Life

OLD BUDDHA. By PRINCESS DER LING. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co. 1928. \$3.50.

Reviewed by CHARLES BATCHELDER

THIS fascinating romance by the daughter of a Chinese Minister to France, former lady-in-waiting to the Great Dowager Empress of China, presents in striking colors various episodes in the life of this most remarkable of the Manchu rulers. Though somewhat unconventional in style, a vivid picture is given of the hidden court life of the times, and of the reactions produced upon the eunuchs and women by the historical events which preceded the overthrow of the dynasty.

In order to add to the interest of the novel, rumors are treated as facts, especially those which cannot be disproved, like the love of the Empress for Jung Lu and her responsibility for the deaths of the Emperor Kwang Hsu and others. The description of the attacks of the "Boxers" on the European Legations in Peking does not even hint at the reason for their failure and for the survival of their inmates, due to the opposition of many eminent Chinese to the policy of encouragement of this movement. The reader must not allow himself to consider all statements as historical, though very many of them are accurate.

The book can be recommended to those who desire to know something about the last few decades in China, but who do not care to apply themselves to solid histories and interpretative works. Mrs. White, the author, was present at many of the scenes which she describes and her style is so attractive that it is difficult to lay down the volume unfinished.

"K. O."

THE SET-UP. By JOSEPH MONCURE MARCH.
New York: Covici, Friede. 1928. \$2.

Reviewed by LOUIS UNTERMEYER

THE American language has finally adopted "K. O." as a hall-mark of unqualified approval. In the argot of the prize-ring where it originated the initials tersely announce "Knock-out," finis, the last word, the final judgment from which there is no appeal. Use in the general vernacular has broadened it so that the abbreviation carries particular agreement, a twisted and emphatic form of "O. K." Mr. March's new verse is both. The verdict in the original sense is especially appropriate, for this is a condensed saga of the squared (and vicious) circle, a transcript of the dregs of pugilism as vivid and final as any of George Bellows's lithographs. Like "The Wild Party" (which, unfortunately, is not available to the public) it is brisk, dramatic, brutal, exciting, and vulgar in the cleanest possible way. Unlike its predecessor, "The Set-Up" shows the author more detached, less inclined to drop into sentimental interludes and asides; a narrator, *pur sang*, in complete control of his material.

The story is simple enough. Part One, the prologue, shows us Pansy Jones in his prime, black, "a jungle jinx with eyes like a lynx," battered, a Jack Johnson-like contender for the title. Then, sudden disaster: "a final hope-blast."

The brass-knuckled hand of the law
Hung a hot one on Pansy's jaw.
Dissection of his private life
Revealed he had an extra wife
And three scrawny brats
Living like rats.
"Not guilty," Pansy pled.
"Guilty," the jury said.

Elections were coming.
The judge was firm.
Pansy went up for a five-year term.

The rest of the story rushes on ten years later. Pansy Jones is now a has-been; he is slower, heavier, a mere plugger akin to Hemingway's aging bull-fighter. His managers ("Cohn and MacPhail, the perfect gyps. Conscience? So has a snake got hips!") arrange to have him lay down to a possible champion. Instead of splitting with their victim, they figure that Pansy will be knocked out within two rounds and so say nothing of the set-up. Pansy, stolid and simple, is almost finished, stages a comeback, and dashes the hopes of Sailor Gray by dropping him with a lucky punch. The crowd goes wild. So do Sailor Gray's backers who, thinking the fight was "fixed," plunged heavily. They wait for Pansy, pursue him, track him down. There is a nightmare-movie chase. Pansy dives down the Subway stairs, the gang races after, there is a scuffle, Pansy spins, loses his balance, topples over the edge of the platform, the train strikes him.

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The story, it will be seen, is of the crudest. But no recital of it can give any indication of the narrator's quality or, to be more accurate, his qualities. There is, first of all, the obvious exactness of detail and indubitable veracity of background. Mr. March's minute observation omits nothing that concerns—or offends—the eye, the ear, the nose. The scene in the dressing room of the Star Arena while the bouts are in progress is a masterpiece of counterpoint and contrast. The pounding feet of the spectators outside, the fever-heat of rising blood-lust ("They wanted action, they wanted gore: What had they paid good money for!") is pitted against the cool unconcern of the handlers, to whom heart-break and horror are so much tiresome "shop." The fight, which is the climax, is a series of tensions, almost too dramatic for print. The short rounds stretch themselves with the same terrific intensity of a feature bout; the words land with the impact of triphammer lefts and rights.

But Mr. March's manner is as individual as his matter. His style is, at first hearing, related to the rhythmic chants that sprang from "The Congo." But his idiom is more than a composite; "The Set-Up" has something of Masfield in terms of Lindsay tuned to Harlem. But this syncopation is a new thing in verse; the line is shorter, the rhythm brusque and clipped; the attack is almost unrelentingly staccato. The mechanics are no less admirable. Mention has been made of the moving pictures, and analysis discloses the influence of the cap-

tionless cinema in which there is no comment but only a projection of actor and action. That Mr. March's metric, like his *métier*, is his own may be seen from such cinematographic flashes as this angle of Herman's bar:

Photos
Clipped from Sunday Rotos.
Boxing bouts.
Steeplechases.
Speed snaps from bike races . . .
Higher things were not forgotten.
Under a faded flag of cotton,
Woodrow Wilson's narrow face
Stared three-quarters into space.
Cold, austere:
A face above beer

or this jumble of talk in the prize-fighters' dressing-room:

" . . . Awright, Munsey.
Dat's awright, kid . . ."
" . . . Sure, he licked 'im."



A POET, FROM COOK'S "FREMONT."

From "Queer Books," by Edmund Pearson
(Doubleday, Doran.)

"Duh hell he did! . . ."
" . . . Say where duh hell
Is my hat gone to . . .!"
" . . . So he feints wid his left,
An' den he breaks through . . ."
" . . . A-ah, yuh're nuts. Dat fight was sold. . ."
" . . . If you hadn't of mixed,
You'd of had 'im cold! . . ."
" . . . What'll yuh bet?"
" . . . I know—
Dat's all . . .!"
The voices grew jumbled.
It was cold in the hall.

There is nothing uncertain in this speech. Mr. March's only inconsistency is in accent; his gutturals are arbitrary; he writes "you" "yo" and "yuh" on successive pages. He is even more indefinite about the definite article. On page 40 we find "d'hell," on 41 "t'hell," on 62 "the hell," on 63 "th'hell," and on the bottom of the same page it becomes "duh!"

But it is neither his language nor its speed that makes Mr. March a writer of proportion. It is, first and last, his power of propulsion. Without making a bid for the reader's sympathies, this young author enlists them; Pansy, for example, is unheroic, unromantic, altogether unlovely and yet lovable. Beneath the hard-boiled, twisted exterior, the toughness has the grace of the battling-machine it describes. One wonders what Mr. March could do with the machine itself or the huge business of war on which it is rumored he is engaged. Here, at least, the voice of the streets, raucous, high-pitched, incisive, has found utterance. And who, denying it beauty, will deny it eloquence?

The birth of Baron Münchhausen is to be commemorated by the erection of a monument at Bodenwerder, on the Weser. It will stand in the garden where the Baron used to entertain his friends with his fantastic stories.

Jules De Gaultier

BOVARYSM: The Art-Philosophy of Jules De Gaultier. By WILMOT E. ELLIS. Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington. 1928.

Reviewed by BENJAMIN DE CASSERES

JULES DE GAULTIER, although seventy, like the three great thinkers from whom he stems, Spinoza, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche, comes slowly into his own. He is already an immortal among the unofficial intellectuals of his own country, France, and in spots on the Continent. Havelock Ellis has been the one voice in England to greet him. James Huneker was tremendously influenced by him, although he never devoted an article to him. Mr. Ellis has long been a student of the great French thinker, who was one of the few intimate friends of Remy de Gourmont and the high philosophic light in that great constellation of independent spirits that founded and contributed to the *Mercure de France*. Next fall Harcourt, Brace will bring out an anthology of De Gaultier's work compiled from his nearly twenty volumes by Professor Houston Peterson. So the philosopher and inventor of the word bovarysm, which has already passed into the French language as a common noun, will, with the chapbook by Mr. Ellis and my own two essays on him in "Forty Immortals," be launched on his English-reading career.

The core-thought of bovarysm (a word coined from Flaubert's "Madame Bovary," the female Don Quixote of romantic love whose inherent and fatal will-to-illusion De Gaultier has universalized) is founded on the power with which every human being is dowered of being compelled to conceive himself as he is not (*se concevoir autre qu'il n'est*). From this law—the perpetually comic and tragic attempt to attain the truth and reality by walking into mirrors—flows the great paradox that the universe is an evolving lie, or illusion (the doctrine of Buddha and Schopenhauer and the meaning of the **symbol of Maya**), that ultimate Truth and Reality can only repose in the Absolute, which corresponds to Nothing. So long as consciousness is halved into subjective and objective man will be duped by appearances and, as Cabell (who has much in common with De Gaultier) says, compelled forever "to play the ape to his ideals." A lie, an illusion, whether it is physical appetite or a sublime ideal, is the *cause* of all movement whatever in the universe. Instinct and knowledge follow the bale of hay of the imagination.

All, then, is vanity? No, says De Gaultier; and it is just at this point that he parts company with Buddha, the Preacher, and Schopenhauer and throws in his forces with the Greek ideals of life and its two great modern re-announcers, Goethe and Nietzsche. God and Purpose may be a myth, but only weaklings cry for either. Life is the Great Adventure. Existence is a great tragi-comedy, and the Supreme Artist is Chance and Change. The highest man—De Gaultier himself, "artist-philosopher"—is both actor and spectator. Life is an eternally beautiful spectacle, the more tragic the more beautiful. Io! Evöhé! shouts De Gaultier, with Dionysus, Spinoza, Emerson, and Nietzsche as he weeps and laughs, dies and is born again in the recombination of souls and the war of wills and suns.

The esthetic principle in De Gaultier thus triumphs over the ethical judgments of humanity. He is not messianic, like Nietzsche, for he preaches no Superman to come. The Superman is here, has always been here. It is he who says Yea! to Beauty and Power and creates another gorgeous dynamic lie. De Gaultier is satanic only in the sense that Life itself is. He humorously says that in Paris even atheists make the sign of the cross before him. But so do all men before a new and daring thinker (and atheists are so orthodox and dogmatic!). De Gaultier's God is Beauty and Power, Chance and Change. The Apollonian—Dionysian artist-actor needs no other.

Jules De Gaultier is not only the greatest and most daring of living thinkers, of esthetic-aristocratic breed, but he is one of the greatest, clearest, most compact, and lyrical of prose writers. Of French ancestry on both sides for hundreds of years, he embodies the great French traditions of clarity and profundity, literary skill, tolerance, and gusto. Whether he is writing on bovarysm, manners, the intellect, "the mystical life of Nature," metaphysics, illusion, Nietzsche, Ibsen, Kant, Verlaine, or Baudelaire (all ideas and men in his brain circle