

The Stendhal Riddle

STENDHAL. By PAUL HAZARD. Translated from the French by Eleanor Hard. New York: Coward-McCann, Inc. 1929. \$3.

Reviewed by CHRISTIAN GAUSS

"STENDHAL" by Paul Hazard may be recommended to anyone looking for an amusing and interesting biography. This recommendation can be made safely for two reasons; first, because its subject, Stendhal-Beyle, is one of the most complicated and fascinating figures in the nineteenth century and secondly because its author, Professor Paul Hazard, recognized as one of the most distinguished French literary historians, here proves himself also one of France's most accomplished, humane, and humorous men of letters.

The great Goethe has said in one of his epigrams that it was regrettable that nature had made only one man of him, since there was material in plenty for a rogue and a gentleman. Stendhal, who was inordinately curious in such matters of psychology, was also strangely naive about himself. He lacked Goethe's talent for self analysis and seems never to have recognized that in his own case, nature might have used the materials that were so oddly compacted in him for the creation of an entire gallery of characters. There was the Spanish grandee and the democratic radical; the cynical materialist who read Helvetius and the tenderly sighing lover; the cavalry officer of the Sixth Dragoons, devoted to Napoleon (particularly after such devotion was demonstrably useless), and the man of the world to whom politics and war were nonsense any way and a weariness of the flesh. To be one's self while becoming some one you had never been before called for much ingenuity and some ingenuousness. Stendhal had both and tried to cover them up with bitter sophistries and dashes of devil-may-care. It was this that made him the first of the "sophisticates." One must learn to take a retreat from Moscow like a glass of lemonade and the burning of that Russian Capital was really an interesting bonfire, ruined only by the plebeian character of the audience. These diverse elements repel and stand each other off but rush in to take possession of him by turns while Stendhal unconsciously adds humor to the situation by remaining complacently or woefully himself in each of these contradictory metamorphoses. That is why he is really the Humpty Dumpty of romanticism. This is the story, therefore, of a many-faceted life in that period of social disintegration following the French Revolution.

There has been much misunderstanding of Stendhal on the part of professional scholars and research workers. Usually he is too many for them. They try to reduce him to one. They see in him either a cold, calculating realist or a dyed in the wool democrat, or an aristocrat born out of his due time; or, like Baron Seillière, they see in him the very devil himself of that witches' sabbath of Romanticism. Nowhere is that caution of the Frenchman more needed than in dealing with him. In original research you must be careful or you will find what you are looking for. The central difficulty of Stendhal was not unlike that which later egoists have experienced. It was necessary at one and the same time both to be one's self and to make a proper impression. This was enough to give any sensitive soul a grievance against an unfeeling and an unjust world.

The commonest view, "the Stendhal legend" as M. Hazard calls it, is that which makes him solely a withering cynic. This was the impression he created in the Paris salons after his expulsion from Milan. In those years he was boon with Merimée. "Who is that bad little boy with the pug nose and the naughty eye?" Stendhal had asked, the first time he saw the author of *Carmen*. And, "Who is that fat little man with black sideburns and a head like an Italian butcher?" asked Merimée almost at the same moment. They spent their time vieing with each other in the home brewing of acidulous epigrams, and yet it was, in Stendhal's case at least, according to M. Hazard, largely a defence reaction. He had been driven to it by a cruel world. There were and always had been soft spots in him, but he did not wish to be hurt any more or to have anyone suspect that he ever had been, even though he was probably still wearing those same fatal suspenders upon which he had, in exaltation, inscribed the day and the hour when the once divine but now demonstrably faithless Angela Pietragrua had promised to be his.

It is perhaps the attitude he takes in this period that is responsible for his increasing vogue among modernist readers. His boutades of that time seem strangely contemporary. "My God! What a dreary century we live in, and how it sweats and reeks of boredom." It sounds like the American Mercury.

But this cynical Parisian bravado had to end and M. Hazard tells us how Beyle took the long sad road into exile as consul at that dismal little town Civita Vecchia. As consul in a Catholic land, Beyle creates a scene of opera bouffe with patches of almost cloying sugary sweetness. One day walking above the Lago di Albano he stopped and traced some letters in the dust of the lonely road. They were the initials of the women he had loved, and yet even as he stood there rueful, a gusty wind swooped down and effaced them. Dust and ashes! In one respect he was like Goethe. He obtained relief by writing. When he approached his fiftieth birthday, it all became very sad. He sat down near the Coliseum and wept. To ease himself he inscribes upon the belt of his trousers in a cryptic short hand so that his laundress should not be able to decipher it, that he had now lived half a century. His days of love were over.

Age was coming on. He was ill, but tried to bluff that also and had said, "I have hidden my illness well. I see nothing ridiculous in dying on the street if you don't do it deliberately." The trouble was that you could not forfend the inevitable even with Stoic epigrams and his prophetic soul, alas, was right. Fate was against him and he was to suffer a stroke and fall in apoplexy just outside the door of the ministry of Foreign Affairs—of all places—in the Rue Neuve des Capucines.

M. Hazard's book does not read like a work of scholarship. There is no dull page in it. It is of course authentic, but it is a story rich in such human interest. He is quietly, perhaps now and then with his tongue in his cheek, putting this poor Humpty Dumpty, with all his touches of pretense and sourness and humor and pathos, together again. Stendhal who had analysed himself as he did his characters, asked at the close of his life, "What sort of a person have I been?" and was compelled to answer, "I shall never know." With his many personalities, he was baffling even to himself. Professor Hazard's unpretentious volume will amuse anyone interested in the riddle of life and will help make Stendhal intelligible to those who are content not to force him into any one all-inclusive formula.

Bad Boy. Model 1929

DOWNFALL. By HAROLD W. BRECHT. New York: Harper & Bros. 1929. \$2.50.

Reviewed by JOHN CARTER

THIS story of a "Bad Boy, Model 1929" just misses being a really important book. It is written with sympathy, insight, pity, and restraint and shows expert knowledge of the subject of the American high school sheik. Malcolm Campbell, the central character, is shown to be an essentially courageous, loyal, and spunky lad, who gets twisted by unjust parental punishment, bad advice, and false standards into a four-flusher, a sneak, and a moral coward. In the end, he comes a cropper, is caught trying to cheat in his algebra examination at Spring City High School, and is brought face to face with himself by Miss Sturges, his homely, enthusiastic teacher, who sets him a new code: "Not to be selfish; not to lie. To do your duty honorably and well. To be the best that's in you."

It is just this slightly moral tendency which robs the book of some of its force. Not that Mr. Brecht ever preaches or ever loses his moral perspective. Just the same, his bad boy is just a little too far on the bad side and the story just a little too much of a parable to be intellectually satisfactory. If Malcolm Campbell had been a little less bad and if his fate had been a little less exemplary, the result would have been a more convincingly objective work of art.

The scene is laid in a small inland American city. Malcolm got into trouble by not "telling on" his friend. He was suspended from school. "His father had condemned him unheard, had whipped him without giving him a chance to explain." When Malcolm took from his mother's purse the money he had been promised for mowing the lawn, he was called a thief and packed off to Mr. Gotwals' farm in the country. The object was to cure him by

discipline and hard work. The formula might have worked had it not been for Dick Cain, the hired man, who was engaged to marry Kitty Gotwals, and who told him "what you want to learn, Hairbreath, is how to give in without giving in . . . kid 'em along." Malcolm learned to "kid 'em along" pretty successfully, was returned to his home, and went on up to High School.

Spring City High School is an example of what secondary schools in the gin age are becoming. Fraternities, necking, seduction, and aping of the "collegiate" ideal made it a lively specimen of false standards combined with original sin—which isn't so original, at that. Malcolm, by dint of assiduous practice, developed into a good baseball pitcher. He became the school hero. He seduced Charlotte Calhoun. He drank and smoked and gambled. But success went to his head. He disobeyed the coach's orders in an important game (which he won), told the coach to go to hell, was dropped from the team and generally ostracized. He flunked his examinations for the second successive year, despite frantic efforts to obtain by cheating what he had lost by neglect. He was detected and lectured. "You thought you would get out of doing it," he was told, "get around your job in some clever way. Now you must take the consequences." He does.

As observed, the downfall of Malcolm ("Hump") Campbell is just a shade too inevitable, the conclusion too pat to render "Downfall" altogether satisfactory. Mr. Brecht writes with intimate knowledge of his subject and while what he says of high schools will be vigorously contested by the righteous, there is painfully little doubt but that it is substantially true. As a result, his book has a sociological value over and beyond its literary merits and demerits. By all tokens, it will either be avoided like the plague or will provoke a storm of indignant criticism and rebuttal. Mr. Brecht seems almost to have written with controversy in mind; one hopes, for his sake, that if he is engaged in high school teaching himself, he has written under a pseudonym, for if he has not, he will find himself without a job when school closes this year, or else we know the psychology of the average School Board.

The Evolution of a Geni

WOLFGANG AMADE MOZART. By DYN-ELEY HUSSEY. New York: Harper & Bros. 1928. \$2.

Reviewed by HUBBARD HUTCHINSON

IT is a great pity that Mr. Hussey's *Life of Mozart* could not have been subjected to some process of inversion such as Alice found so bewildering when stepping through the looking glass, thus bringing its conclusion first; so clearly, with such penetration and brilliance, does he in his final chapter discuss the composer's art in the rich matrix of general esthetic principles. One is tempted to review the book backward, conveying Mozart from his death in 1791 to his birth in 1756, from the tragic dissolution of the man whose bitterness never soiled his music, to the triumphal journeys of the child prodigy whose precocity never cheapened it. But this, out of deference to that familiarity with crescendo which doubtless made Mr. Hussey reserve his best chapter to the last, we can scarcely do.

He offers a detailed scholarly presentation of a genius's development in all the forms of his craft. For example, he shows how Mozart combined the Italian and German influences he found in opera and led them to the enchanted fusion, wholly Mozartian, of "The Magic Flute." "We may be said to stand here on the threshold of German music-drama where declamation merges naturally with melody," and which ushered in Wagner.

More important than specific analysis, however, is his relation of Mozart's genius to the historical, social, and artistic tendencies of the time in which it worked, and his nice discrimination of those tendencies. It might almost be said that the more general his matter, the more interesting his observations—which indexes his insight as a musicologist of the first rank.

The biographer's method has been to deal with Mozart's life and output side by side, keeping to chronological order. We see the boy wonder dragged from Paris to Rome by an ambitious father who "saw in the lad nothing more than a precocious talent, to be exploited before he grew up." One cannot blame Leopold Mozart too much, perhaps, since Mr. Hussey shows Wolfgang's youthful composition for what they are; juvenilia that nowhere

—not even in the recently revived *Bastien et Bastienne*—show the slightest sign of the towering talent which was to develop. We see the adolescent genius. We are conveyed through young manhood to death at thirty-six, and led deeply into analysis of the music so incredibly poured forth.

It is a good method, but it is only, it seems to me, half successful. In his preface Mr. Hussey says "I have tried to present Mozart and those who came in contact with him as living characters." This, it is to be feared, he has not done. The book is a theme and variations, *andante studioso*, upon the music of Mozart. Here and there brief *intermezzi* occur, flashes of the man himself. A child in blue velvet embraced by the Princess Amalie among adoring courtiers; a vivid youthful scrawl from a lad in Rome to his sister at home in Salzburg; a vitalizing glimpse of a young man whose letter to his father explains with excessive frankness and great dignity why he wants to marry. But, on the whole, the man is lost among the manuscripts. The reviewer would have to be more familiar than he is with the abundant literature—the works of Abert, Schiedmair, and Schurig—to estimate what fresh material Mr. Hussey brings to the portrait of Mozart's character. He seems a little at pains to strew figleaves over the nakedness exposed in the Schurig biography by carefully explaining the composer's epistolary bawdiness in terms of the pungent eighteenth century to which it was no exception. He devotes some good paragraphs to Mozart's relations with his cousin, his wife, and his father. But whatever of revaluation he brings, the result is static. He does not animate for us a character certainly brilliant and mordant enough to move with its own life.

It will be seen by this time that Mr. Hussey's book must be of more interest to those concerned with how a genius developed the facets of his technique, than to those seeking a vivid portrait of a vivid man. We see the composer experimenting with concerted airs and exploring the capacities of the newly invented clarinet. We are given splendid estimates of the result. But we see a mind at work, not a man. We trace the development from the "baroque" style of Italian tradition to the harrowing power of the Requiem Mass, but we seldom follow the bitter, gay, generous, music intoxicated person. Wolfgang Amade Mozart remains to the end a great name, not a great and tragic human being. And perhaps the two things cannot be handled in one volume. Perhaps it is demanding too much of a book so rich in musical scholarship to insist that it cover as well a vital portrait.



Eleuthera

By STELLA BENSON

WHEN I listen in a silence now, I can pretend to myself that I can hear Eleuthera's spirit—"a sperrit nobuddy never see," say the negroes, "a sperrit come outa tha watter . . ." a deep note, *o-o-oong o-o-oong*, a call for solitude. Well, spellweaver, there is your solitude for you; in so far as I disturbed it, I am now withdrawn. To Nassau, full of drunk Americans—to New York, full of Americans drunk and sober—to London full of everybody in the world, drunk and sober, dead and alive, ghosts and stock-brokers, I am withdrawn, while the noises of arguments for going back to Eleuthera sound less and less logically clear. There are good arguments—excellent reasons why we should all go to Eleuthera. But better than any argument there is the spell, the special haunting folly of the island air.

That spell of exquisiteness is, after all, in spite of its frail unreason, the truest asset of any island. Yes, stone is a heavy, unmistakable thing, certainly, and so are the rock-ploughs that carve it out of the island quarries, and so will be the bungalows that will encase in stone future lovers of the island; the new roads are vital, leaping things weaving between one village and another, waiting for their shuttle motor buses; the harbor is a thing that is certainly there, pinned down with useful buoys, riveted with piers and dredgers. Certainly Messrs Faith, Hope, and Charity, Ltd., can count their blessings one by one, and use at least two hands doing it—Faith, confident in what is achieved, Hope inspired by what

will be achieved, and Charity gentle to the jealousies and pettiness and indolence that stand as obstacles in the way of all achievement in the West Indies—and possibly elsewhere. For this spell is a West Indian spell, reaching all the way from the Bahamas, from Eleuthera—an island that no one ever noticed until Messrs. Faith, Hope, and Charity, saw all the solid assets, moved a mountain or two, and rechristened themselves Hatchet Bay Limited.

But for all their faith and their hope and their charity, it seems to me that there is something missed if they count their blessings one by one and fail to count just one day and another day, and all the still hours among lily-lined sand-dunes and all the whispering minutes beside little green waves—all the vague and exquisite wastes of time that furnish Eleuthera's air.



Take waking up in the morning, for instance—only you can't take it. It is lost as soon as thought of. What is there to hold, alas, in the spell of waking up in a little house like a ship, filled with the brittle chatter of lake ripples all round? . . . For the house, on a rock only forty feet square, swims in a dilution of sunlight and sea-light in the middle of Hatchet Bay. Especially in the mornings does that house swing suspended in light, and to remember those wakings is a holding of the breath of memory. All the grown-up assets—new village—new store—new pier—new cut—new roads—are streaked and spotted about the floating house's skyline, but the spell of exquisiteness—an asset for gods or ghosts or you or me to put faith in, lives in the house, and goes out with you or me wherever we go all day and comes home with us at night.

The new sparkling white village of Hatchet Bay sits in one simple row on a curved rise on Eleuthera's edge. You go to it in a boat from the house—a boat that flies above fishes—ploughs between skittering panics of little fishes. And there is the new village—a store—an office—some clotheslines—a petrol-pump—half a dozen bungalows lived in by real people. If I were Messrs. Faith, Hope, and Charity, Ltd., I should indeed be proud of having added a new white village, full of real people, to the British Empire, but if I were myself and had created Hatchet Bay, I should be much prouder of having found the perfect game to play, the most enchanting pretence—of having deceived real flesh-and-bone people into taking part in my game, into coming to live in my bungalows, and parking their real Ford cars in my toy street. For the game is real enough for real people—that's why it's such a good game—the roofs withstand the rare winds, the goods in the store can be paid for and eaten, the drinks in the bar can make all thirsty niggers as drunk as they like on pay-night—exactly as if real people, instead of Faith or Hope or Charity or I, had made them all. I suppose Messrs F., H., & C. now that they call themselves Hatchet Bay Limited, feel quite real and grown-up about it all, since they spend and reap real money. But to me it would be as if, a quarter of a century ago, grown-ups had accepted as a Practical Proposition a harbor I had dug in wet sand on the edge of a pool—or a town I had built for my chessmen out of wooden bricks. . . .

To carry us now from the new village, the spell would have to take wheels, of course, in the prosaic shape of a Ford. But after all, a spell must take either wheels or wings, and we on wheels can almost enjoy wings. For the bush is moving with wings and streaking, headlong escapes—little yellow-barred birds—little blue-barred birds—big birds with absurdly flattened beaks as though they were forever colliding with their reflections—blue and scarlet and golden butterflies—spinning locusts—springing lizards in bloomy-gray or grass-green. And we, in a veteran Ford with wheels wistfully oval with age, spend most of our time in the air too. If we don't like that, we can enchant the horse, Tomato, into our service, and lollop softly along sanded trails.

Shores of all textures bind our island round—a shore made entirely of shells, a shore of rock, a shore of flawless sand. The shore made of shells is good for lying on—lying with eyes so close to the ground that sometimes a dozen shells or so catch on an eyelash. . . . For any lazy hand—fingerful—eyelash-full—is a store of jewels, ivories, trumpets, rose petals, cornucopias—all perfect and all so small that they cling in the wrinkles of a hand like pollen. But a shore made of pure sand is better for bathing; one must admit that the shapes of tiny sharp-carven shells are more satisfying to have printed on the

sight than on the bare foot. The shore of sand only flowers rarely in big pink or golden shells, or pale graven sand-dollars, or yellow or purple sea fans and coral branches—all sown in silver furrows by a serenely careless, garden-making sea. There are palms that shade that shore, and when you leave the shade and swim, you can see little slim fishes flashing like busy needles through the green, silken water in the sun. And you can watch under the gaudy, clear water your ghostly green legs waving in slow Mordkin leaps above the fluted sand.

But the shore made of rock is to me the strongest charm. On the Atlantic shore of Eleuthera the rocks go sloping down to slip out of sight under the smooth green rollers. On a fine day the Atlantic waves come in from a long way out, tall, polished, foamless, in perfect blue ridges with green shadows—none of your vulgar spray or fuss until—bending further and further and further over, to form the ideal, the perfect cylinder, they overreach themselves and break, shattered and clamorous at last, with a sound like gongs. The rocky shore is pitted with circular garden pools, each with a mossy, gay, coral rock in the middle, and each connected with the sea by a thin, wriggling channel. It is an odd thing that every tiny, tiger-striped fish in these pools, in spite of his youth and his silly look, has always worked out his line of escape, and if so much as your shadow touches his pool, he makes straight for the loophole—never loses his head or bumps his nose as you or I might. Even if we devilishly stop up the channel of escape with stones, the fishlet will, without hesitation, jump out of the water on to dry rock as near to the emergency exit as he can, always on the sea side of the pool, and, with a few deft wriggles, reinsert himself into the channel below the obstruction. And so he pricks through danger into the large safety of the sea—a sanctuary so much too large and lost for so small and exquisite a fugitive. As we move from pool to pool, the longlegged crabs—each thinking himself the only object of your attention, skitter down the rock slopes, scatter-splash into the nearest wave. But sometimes—for even a blue crab is fallible—they start too late, and then, like the striped fish, the crab keeps his head. With a quick swivel of his stalked eyes, he selects a rock-pimple (always much too small to hide him) and curtsies absurdly behind it, watching you with a cold eye sparkling above the tense, quivering claw which he holds over his face—exactly like a baby playing hide and seek. It is good manners to pretend not to see the crab or the baby, in these circumstances. One crab was asleep in the sun; if a crab could nod drowsily in the sunlight, nodding it was. I crept up behind it and gave it a derisive tap on its horny behind. "Golly!"—it cried—it shot into the air—its claws got entangled—it fell over two or three of its feet—its eyes squinted so that the stalks were almost knotted—it reeled away in the wrong direction, trying vainly to collect its self-respect, sweating at every chink in its armor. Unfortunately for its dignity there was another crab looking—a crimson hero, who knew exactly how to tackle us. When we lifted the branch of coral that sheltered it in a pool it instantly flew at us—a little, claret-colored David taking arms against an outsize Goliath with no Israelites to back it up or show off before.

What an enchantment of wasted time. . . . Days wasted exquisitely and evenings spent lying on the pier of the house on the rock—evenings lit by a plum-blue afterglow, lit by far lightning springing from turret to turret of cloud, lit by the swimming moon, lit by the glassy light buried in the still striped harbor. And the unknown thing—the sea-serpent—the spirit that nobody ever saw—moves with its sombre, low moan, slowly across the harbor—*o-o-oong o-o-oong* . . . the disturbed spirit of the violated lake, crying for solitude again.

Small Town

HELLO TOWNS! By SHERWOOD ANDERSON.
New York: Horace Liveright. 1929. \$3.

Reviewed by SARA HAARDT

WHEN the impulse came to him to settle down in the country, says Mr. Anderson, he was riding on a country road, in the Southwestern Virginia hills. He had just come out of a charming little upland valley where there was room for one farm, and immediately, with an exhilarating sense of magnificence, he proposed to buy that farm. It was the Fall of the year, and the country was swimming in color: he had always been excited by color. . . . Superficially this has the effect