

## Man and Artist

THE LIFE OF DOSTOIEVSKY. By E. H. CARR. Boston: The Houghton Mifflin Co. 1932. \$3.50.

Reviewed by MANYA GORDON

THE Russian revolution, Bolshevism, and the Freudian war on the inhibitions brought Dostoevsky to the attention of the English-reading public. By the exponents of the new realism he was hailed as the one great master. With the exception of Chekov, who was introduced to the American public by the Moscow Art Theatre, the other great Russian writers—Turgenev, Tolstoy—were banished to the attic and almost forgotten. The American people was little acquainted with Dostoevsky's background, his ideas, and his aspirations, yet he was accepted as the Russian novelist and was read with tremendous interest as the true interpreter of the "complex Russian soul." This popularity was expressed in a number of biographies in German, French, and English, which are described with understandable impatience by D. S. Mirsky in the preface of the present volume, as the "sensational gossip of the novelist's daughter and the unutterable rot of a legion of pseudo-profound Germans, the sob-stuff of Mr. Middleton Murry, and the arbitrary sophistication of André Gide." All these biographers had something in common. They disliked Russia, they endeavored to present Dostoevsky as a noble, and at times a saintly, person, and they accepted him as the true portrayer of the Russian people. Yet each of them was devoutly grateful that his own fellow-countrymen in no way resembled these "interesting" Russians.

While Dostoevsky occupied the centre of the stage, the biographies of him were of minor importance. Now that his popularity has been receding, we have before us a biography based on fact and presenting not only a complete portrait of Dostoevsky the man but the close relation between his life and his work. Mr. Carr's is a most interesting and impressive achievement. The new material which became available after the death of the novelist's second wife and with the publication of the diary of Pauline Suslova is presented compactly and vividly. We have here a complete, well-written story of the life of a great Russian writer, and as such it is invaluable to the student of Russian literature.

The finished canvas emerging from Mr. Carr's facts reveals Dostoevsky as an epileptic, sexually abnormal, a passionate gambler, egocentric, kindly yet more often cruel, capable of a cringing humility and a supercilious pride, and in his political views an ardent Slavophile and defender of the monarchy. He contained within himself all the vices as well as the virtues of the characters which people his novels, with the exception of Alyosha in "The Brothers Karamazov." This new material confirms the hitherto accepted Russian conception of Dostoevsky's life and ideas as distinguished from the Western interpretation of Dostoevsky. The present volume is valuable because of its factual completeness.

But, oddly enough, when Mr. Carr comes to the interpretation of his own facts he very frequently falls into the same snare as his predecessors. He, too, has little love for Russia and particularly for the revolutionists who were anathema to Dostoevsky. He endeavors to smooth out Dostoevsky's moral and temperamental insobrieties and to recreate him in the image of a gentleman in the Anglo-Saxon sense of the term; an impossible task. In this profitless pursuit the biographer is continually contradicted by his own documentary evidence.

The entire significance of the new information which Mr. Carr has marshalled consists in the fact that it reveals for the first time in complete form Dostoevsky's relations to the three women who most deeply affected the novelist's work, though there were numerous others in his life—the Martha Browns and the Korvin-Krukovskais. There was his first wife, Maria Dmitrievna, whom he met while he was an exile in Siberia. There was Pauline Suslova, whom he met upon his return from Siberia, when she was a

young university student and the author of a short story which had appeared in the *Vremya* of which he was editor. There was, finally, "the cheese-paring," commonplace secretary Anna, who became his second wife and the mother of Dostoevsky's daughter, the author of her father's biography to which Mirsky refers.

Dostoevsky's relations to his first and second wives were long fairly well known. They were revealed in his letters to his brother and to others. About his love affair with Pauline Suslova, on the other hand, there was until recently very little information aside from the fact that she was his grand passion and that as a result all his later heroines were created in her image. It would therefore seem that Mr. Carr would make the most out of the newly discovered material on this particularly interesting theme. He does not. In fact, this "illicit" relationship seems to bother the biographer. It interferes with his effort to represent Dostoevsky as a "gentleman" and Anna as his ideal wife. Very properly he rehabilitates Maria Dmitrievna, the novelist's first wife, who was treated with contempt by Dostoevsky's second wife and her daughter. But he accepts their opinion of Suslova and proceeds to minimize her importance. This is all the more curious because Mr. Carr is aware of the fact that Dostoevsky's second wife lost no opportunity to

of their relations, to take up the case against chastity in woman.

Dostoevsky's development of this particular theme is most interesting. Sonica, the "pure prostitute" of "Crime and Punishment," is quite properly related by Mr. Carr to Camille, the stock heroine of contemporary French fiction. She is followed by Nastasya Philippovna of "The Idiot," but Nastasya is not at all the conventional "pure prostitute." She is a much more important and real person. Dostoevsky himself is aware of this fact. Hence the indecision of his hero, Prince Myshkin, who is supposed to be Dostoevsky, whether he loves more truly the pure Aglaya, who is undoubtedly Suslova as she was when Dostoevsky first met her, or the unchaste Nastasya, who is assumed to be Suslova after her tragic experience. This hesitation disappears entirely in "The Brothers Karamazov." Therein Grushenka, the woman of easy virtue, becomes Dostoevsky's ideal, not as the "pure prostitute" but as the most desirable of women. But Dmitri Karamazov's fiancé, who bears an unmistakable likeness to Dostoevsky's second wife, is treated with derision and contempt.

The vehemence with which Dostoevsky attacks the ideal of purity in woman more than suggests a defense mechanism. In moments of remorse Dostoevsky must have been conscious of the fact that as a

of the word, as Tolstoy was religious. The latter was actually absorbed in a continual struggle against his personal defects in an effort to achieve salvation. Dostoevsky had no such struggle. At no time had he endeavored to lead an ascetic or a Christian life, or to subscribe personally to anything that could be even remotely associated with orthodoxy. His religion was that of a politician who uses the novel as his medium. In ignorant, church-ridden Russia it became his strongest weapon against the nihilists. Alyosha in "The Brothers Karamazov" was not Dostoevsky's ideal man. He is merely the politician's cleverly anticipated answer to the inevitable question of his antagonists, "Well, granting the filth and futility of the Karamazovs, what then?" The pure and humble Alyosha was Dostoevsky's answer to this query; but his heart was not in Alyosha.

An ardent preacher of pacifism, Dostoevsky was in practice most militant. Upon his return from Siberia, whither he had been sent without actual cause for suspected revolutionary leanings, he took up the fight for Czar and orthodoxy. "Crime and Punishment" was the first shell hurled at the republican Nihilists. In this book, Dostoevsky the humanitarian criminologist is likewise the defender of an ancient law: "Thou shalt not kill." No matter for whose sake, for what ideal you believe you are killing, in the end you will discover that it was to satisfy your personal egotism. Later he carried on this fight against Nihilist terrorism as editor of various periodicals, and when these failed because of lack of funds, he resumed the crusade in his later novels. Of these, "The Brothers Karamazov" is the most powerful and the most vehement.

So absorbed was Dostoevsky in the conflict that in creating the elder Karamazov he overlooked an essential part of his own creed. Dostoevsky, the humanitarian, had until then insisted that in the worst criminal and degenerate, if you only dig down deep enough, you will find a human being. But old Karamazov is all black. There is not a chink in him through which a soul can be glimpsed. He is infinitely blacker than the Prince in "The Insulted and Injured" or any other villain of Dostoevsky's creation. But having presented this utterly repellent specimen of humanity, Dostoevsky proceeds to drive home the lesson of "Crime and Punishment"; "Thou shalt not kill!" Even in this "insect," Karamazov, the vital spark is sacred, for this "insect" begat Alyosha. The shaft is meant to go right to the heart. If you have no right to kill Karamazov, then what question can there be of your right to assassinate Nicholas or Alexander, though he be the worst of despots?

Dostoevsky went further than this in his assault on the revolutionists. Behind the active Nihilists he struck at the teachers of revolution. He insists that the degenerate Smerdyakov, who killed old Karamazov, is not the real murderer. The true murderer is Ivan Karamazov, whose sceptical and revolutionary speeches swayed Smerdyakov to the deed. Smerdyakov, after the act, accuses Ivan of being the murderer of his father, and Dostoevsky makes Ivan accept Smerdyakov's accusation as the truth. Ivan, it will be recalled, appears at the trial of his brother Dmitri, and tells the court that neither Dmitri nor Smerdyakov, but he, Ivan, murdered his father. Dostoevsky's creed was not merely Thou shalt not kill, but neither shalt thou preach anything that may inspire insubordination and lead to attempts on the rulers of the land. This was the sense and purpose of his orthodoxy.

A copy of the "Breeches Bible," dated 1599, fetched only 34s. at the recent sale of the Earl of Durham's library at Lambton Castle. This Bible owes its name to a phrase in Genesis referring to Adam and Eve, and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves breeches," the word in the Authorized version being "aprons."

The Hawthornden Prize for a work of imaginative literature produced in 1931 was presented recently to Kate O'Brien for her novel, "Without My Cloak." The story chronicles the fortunes of an Irish family through three generations.



A VILLAGE IN DOSTOIEVSKY'S RUSSIA  
FROM "THE LAND WITHOUT UNEMPLOYMENT" (INTERNATIONAL)

destroy all information concerning her genius husband's life prior to their marriage. He knows that Anna herself was a "cheese-paring" woman of little intelligence who listened through keyholes and understood her husband not at all. To subscribe to this limited woman's interpretation of Pauline Suslova is to part with reality.

It is true that Pauline, after her separation from Dostoevsky, did not live in accordance with the precepts of a Victorian lady. That is entirely beside the point. Had Pauline taken a narrow, conventional course she would most likely have remained unnoticed in history. It was precisely her consequent deterioration, her waywardness, that made a deep impression on Dostoevsky. Erotic, selfish, and unforgiving as a result of her sad experience with him, she remained to him beautiful and fascinating, of much superior stature to his first wife, and certainly to his second wife. She was sufficiently fascinating for the young critic Rozanov to fall in love with her and marry her. At any rate, according to the evidence conveyed in the present volume, Dostoevsky did not love Suslova less because of her subsequent free mode of life, than he did when he first met her as a chaste and charming girl. We may go further. Pauline seems to have made the free life attractive, whereas his dull, prudish second wife made chastity repellant. He continued to correspond with Suslova for two years after his second marriage, against the protest of his wife. Suslova did more than retain the love and respect of Dostoevsky. She imposed a creed and an outlook upon him. She compelled him, because of what he had made her suffer as a result

mature married man (his first wife was still alive), who had had a great deal of experience with women and was at the time in the throes of creating "Crime and Punishment," he had no right to take advantage of the adoration of the beautiful, intelligent, and chaste young girl, Pauline Suslova. Given the same situation, Tolstoy would have condemned himself and written an epic in defense of chastity. Dostoevsky was too weak, too self-indulgent, and much too subjective to think of himself in the role of seducer. Whatever gave him pleasure or diversion was right. For instance, after leaving his second wife far gone with child and losing all their money at the roulette table he tells her, "I knew it was wrong, but it is good for me." But even this egotist was unable to witness the suffering and gradual deterioration of the woman he loved truly without doing something about it. "You cannot forgive me because you gave yourself to me, because I was the first," Dostoevsky told Pauline when she refused to marry him. True to himself, what would have been guilt in another person gave birth to a dogma in Dostoevsky. It was the struggle of the proud and unforgiving Suslova that compelled his attack on chastity and so placed the otherwise reactionary Dostoevsky in the vanguard of "modern" writers.

Dostoevsky was essentially a fighter, and chiefly in the cause of obscurantism. Humility and submission he merely prescribed for others—the hated Socialists, the enemies of his beloved monarchy. In his defense of the autocracy he spared no one, and he utilized every available weapon, particularly the Church. Dostoevsky was not religious in any real sense



## In the Intelligence Service

ON THE RUSSIAN FRONT. By MAX WILD. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1932. \$2.50.

Reviewed by ARTHUR RUHL

THE phrase "Intelligence Service" has a respectable sound, and the work which it describes is a necessary part of war, but as actually practised during hostilities, it's a pretty "lousy" job, as they say on Broadway, for all that.

In peace times, or even in wartime, the activities of what might be called the more fortunate sorts of intelligence officers may be as routine and respectable as those of consular officers or of a newspaper's foreign correspondents. Every war correspondent contributes, in some sort, to "intelligence service," and the reports of a military attaché stationed in his country's Embassy or Legation may be, and frequently are, as filled with more or less obvious facts which sink, unread, into departmental files, as are the reports of his colleagues in the Consular and Department of Commerce services.

Military intelligence work, between nations at war, is, nevertheless, in the nature of things, spying, however dressed up in uniforms and etiquette, and the lower you go in the military hierarchy, the closer does the intelligence agent come to being an ordinary spy. And on an active front, "spying" isn't a simple thing which works only one way, so to speak—spies crossing the lines to find out what they can about the other side—but involves the use of traitors from the other side, of agents who are in the pay of both sides, and completely faithful, perhaps, to neither; of bribery, of provocateurs, of what in normal life would be called blackmail—of victims trapped in one way or another with the "goods"—in short, of any and everything by which useful information can be obtained.

There was plenty of this sort of thing on all the fronts, doubtless, but the Russo-German front must have been the happy hunting-ground. The comparatively "loose" nature of this front—hundreds of miles of marsh and forest land through which it was relatively easy to slip; the jumble of races and political loyalties in the disintegrating Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires; and, finally, the coming of the Russian Revolution and Bolshevism, all prepared a ground in which the work of "intelligence" combined the adventurousness of frontier bushwhacking with the methods of city gangsters.

Max Wild appears to have been in the thick of it. He ran his agents back and forth through the Polish marshes, or, ambushed alongside one of the trails used by the Russian agents, like a big-game hunter beside a water-hole, caught the incoming spies in batches, and turned them over to courts-martial. Many were simply shot out of hand. Others, who seemed to promise usefulness, were threatened with death, or their wives and children were threatened, until they gave up what they knew and then were spared to work for their new boss, always with the threat of death hanging over them.

It was, as already said, a "lousy" business, but practised on both sides, with little to choose, apparently, between them. The inexperienced reader will be surprised to learn how faithfully some of these wretches seem to have served their new masters, and astonished at the amounts of money that seem to have been more or less regularly paid for spying jobs. It was a profitable racket, as long as you could get away with it. There was one Russian intelligence officer who demanded a million marks (\$250,000) from the Germans for his information about the French and English, but Wild doesn't say how much, if any, of this amount was paid.

After the Russian army had begun to crack, and there was constant "fraternizing" between the Russian and German front lines, Wild himself was sent across to talk revolution and promptly caught. Three times, according to his story, he was put against a wall to be shot, but each time contrived to wriggle out. He went from one prison to another, each worse than the last, and zigzagged, with various escapes and recaptures, clear to eastern

Siberia and back, before he finally got out of Russia with the help of the Swedish Red Cross.

Readers, like myself, to whom Max Wild is merely a name, have no means of knowing how true his story may be except from internal evidence. The ability to write well doesn't necessarily make a man another Ossendowski, any more than the inability to write well makes him a reliable reporter. But there is a slogging literalness about this narrative, a willingness to spare himself bouquets—even to telling how his own people threw him out of the German Embassy in Moscow when he got back, ill and broken, from Siberia—which connotes a certain frankness and gives Wild's record an air of fact.

It isn't a pretty story, at any rate, and although Herr Wild may not have intended it, is calculated to shake pretty thoroughly any lingering illusions the reader may cherish about the romance of modern war.

## The Unchanging Battle

THE UNEQUAL CONFLICT. By GODFREY WINN. New York: William Morrow & Co. 1932. \$2.50.

IT is unfortunate that the inequality in the conflict described by Mr. Winn seems to come more from the hands of the author than from those of fate. With all the evidence on his side, with the case won even before the pleading begins, his manifest anxiety to establish his thesis is unnecessary, as well as detrimental to his story. Almost any wife married to almost any husband in the class, time, and place described by Mr. Winn, would have furnished a convincing protagonist for the well-known fact-fiction man-woman con-



GODFREY WINN.

flict, but in selecting a particularly unsympathetic, egoistic, and unfaithful husband as a foil for an exaggeratedly unsuspicious and clinging wife, Mr. Winn has handicapped himself unfairly from the start. With sociology, psychology, and physiology all in his favor, Mr. Winn's little additional tugs at the already unbalanced scales could well have been dispensed with.

The novel opens with an excellent Victorian interior and closes with an equally convincing Georgian one. In each a daughter returns to her mother after a significant passage with a lover; between the two scenes lies the emotional life of two generations.

In the first, Judith Mitchell returns from a ball, eager and confidential, to wake her mother to the gas-lit telling of her secret. She is engaged to Charles Blake! And the mother, cold-creamed and night-capped, recognizes the fact, for what it, gratefully, is,—capture. "Her voice quickened. 'He made you an offer of marriage, did he really, Judith?'"

And the second returning Ann Blake comes back after the torturing "one day and one night" with Derek, from which he goes on to the war, to find her mother (Judith) waiting up for her.

Oh, couldn't you have left me alone tonight, Ann thought. . . . Question me, I am ready with my lies, but Judith did not question her, did not even turn her head to greet her daughter, but instead she went on staring, staring out into the night.

A little over twenty years between the two scenes but a century and a way of life have died out within their span.

The story of the married life of Judith and Charles Blake, from their strange honeymoon, when the groom preferred gambling, night after night, to the company of his puzzled, disappointed young bride, through the tragic birth of a child of the wrong sex, and on to Judith's final rebellion, is a many-sided and multi-colored tale. English home life is given intensively: the pleasantness of it and the narrowness. The book in this earlier section is like a pointillist canvas, with each minute, vivid fleck of color sharp-edged and distinct from the rest when studied closely, but blending, undifferentiated from the whole, when viewed in perspective. Whenever and wherever the story goes quietly along its way in casual day-to-day encounter with life it is gracious and full-fleshed. But when a more dramatic scene is needed or a climax reached, the reality of effect is all too often abruptly dissipated by forced situations or by theatrical touches.

After the insoluble difficulty between Judith and Charles is as nearly resolved as it can ever be and the story shifts to the younger generation, to Ann and Derek, the unevenness disappears, and Ann's fight against an enemy so much less tangible than the horses, gambling, and other women with which her mother had to struggle, forges honestly ahead to the final bitter conflict. Mr. Winn seems much more at ease with the generation that was just old enough, while still too young, to know the war, than with their parents.

It is difficult to strike a balance in writing of "The Unequal Conflict" because the book itself swings with such frequency from phase to phase. But there is enough tough-fibred good in it to withstand the analysis of its weaknesses. It is not a book to lie down quietly under criticism. At each fault mentioned, an attendant virtue raises its accusing head.

## The Night of the Soul

A BROKEN JOURNEY. By MORLEY CALLAGHAN. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1932. \$2.

Reviewed by JONATHAN DANIELS

FROM the almost self-conscious obscurity in which Morley Callaghan has written his new novel, "A Broken Journey," there arises only the sense that life is dark and futile and that neat prose may shed darkness as well as light. In a mysticism strangely compounded of blood-ties, Roman Catholicism, and eroticism, Mr. Callaghan has lost or discarded all the concreteness of his story of a girl in a Middle Western town who gave up her lover once because her mother wanted him and gave him up again because he could not serve the erotic nature which was her mother's gift to her.

This is a strange, dark book. There is actual night in many of Mr. Callaghan's scenes and his scenes in daylight are almost startling, like quick, unexpected illumination out of darkness. Yet, between obscurity and glare, Mr. Callaghan has drawn a number of clear, vividly written scenes, as that in which the devout and sex-obsessed mother prays to the Virgin in the dark Cathedral that her daughter's lover may be her own, and that in which young Marion Gibbons walks unhappily into the rain at night where she finds a drunken college boy whom she hopes in momentary sensuousness will seduce her. In such scenes Mr. Callaghan is master of a fine, vivid prose full of concrete images. It is in the broader handling of his story that he lapses into obscurity.

Essentially his story is the love story of Marion Gibbons who follows her mother, whom she despises and yet loves, both in quest and in disillusionment. Peter Gould, whom she loved, is left at the end of the book a sexless invalid in an intense fraternal unity with his brother whose life had fed before upon Peter's full living. To the helpless Peter comes the realization that he can give Marion up without too much pain. On her part, Marion's passionate will to nurse him ends when her sexual hunger and restlessness carry her into the arms of a woodsman of strong physical appeal. In his arms she finds nothing but disillusionment and the sense of her own worthlessness.

The book is one of very few characters though many minor figures come into its pages. The mother and daughter and the two Gould brothers are the only essential ones in the story. Of these only the mother occupies vividly a whole real world. The others move like figures out of the sub-



MORLEY CALLAGHAN.

conscious and such reality as they possess seems to be only the reality of figures in a Freudian dream. Thus the final futility in their lives seems too much the futility of a slow, erotic dream to be deeply stirring.

Mr. Callaghan writes in a style almost prim in its verbal neatness but his psychological and mystical probings into souls behind the prose is never so definite. There are moments of penetrating clarity. There are a number of fine pages of concrete descriptions and passages that are very close to clear, fine poetry. But there are fumbling passages, too. Many pages are heavy with monotony. Too often the slow, obscure movement of the book is as futile as the story it tells.

The Sir Walter Scott Cenenary is being observed in many cities throughout the world. Bibliophiles will be surprised when they learn how San Francisco, California, is honoring Scott, but more so when they observe what valuable material is there to make such a celebration attractive. The event beginning in August and extending through September, is under the auspices of the Literary Anniversary Club, a small group of devout book-lovers, who meet once each month and celebrate some literary anniversary of that month. It is the only club of its kind in the world. For the Scott Centenary this Club is showing from the collections of its members an exhibit that is quite remarkable. The display includes every book written by Scott and in its original published condition; many of these are presentation copies. There are also magazines containing first publications of his writings, autograph manuscripts, autograph letters, proof sheets, cancel pages, association items, souvenirs from Abbotsford, many publications about Scott, and in addition over twenty portraits and engravings of this beloved romancer.

## The Saturday Review of Literature

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