

Mädchen in Uniform

THE CHILD MANUELA. By Christa Winsloe. Translated by Agnes Neill Scott. New York: Farrar & Rinehart. 1933. \$2.

Reviewed by BASIL DAVENPORT

ON both book and jacket "The Child Manuela" bears the sub-title "The novel of 'Mädchen in Uniform,'" and the publishers explain that it is not a novelized version of the moving picture, but the prototype from which the picture and also the play "Children in Uniform" were taken. Any discussion of the novel in cities where the moving picture was shown, is, therefore, bound to begin with a comparison with "Mädchen in Uniform." This will be remembered by every one who saw it as a happy conjunction of wonderfully effective acting and beautiful photography, used to tell a singularly touching story,—that of little Manuela von Meinhardis, the daughter of a German officer under the imperial régime, who was sent to a boarding school which was under court patronage, received only daughters of officers, and prided itself upon its inhumanly Spartan standards. Here, where there was no beauty, no affection, no decent comfort, only a single one of the teachers, Fräulein von Bernburg, treated Manuela with any kindness; and Manuela inevitably conceived for her the *Schwärmerei* of a starving adolescent. In a moment of mad excitement, she told of her "crush," so hysterically as to cause the head mistress to consider it a disgrace to the school. She was sentenced to separation from Fräulein von Bernburg, in her despair resolved to throw herself over the banisters—and, according to the moving picture, was prevented at the last moment.

That is the drama of the picture. The outstanding difference in the novel is that, beginning as it does with Manuela's birth, it presents her as specifically homosexual even before her being sent to school. The abnormality is revealed with all the gravity and tenderness of a surgeon searching a wound; but it is unmistakable. It was not by any means so in "Mädchen in Uniform." It is true that this was often spoken of as a study in homosexuality, but some of the professional critics of the screen declared that Manuela was only a school-girl who was passing through the recognized and natural stage in all adolescents of adoration for an older person of the same sex, and that it was her tragedy that at this time she was put into so repulsively unnatural an atmosphere. I agreed with this view; not I hope sentimentally, but because it seemed to me a perfectly possible interpretation of the picture, and one which was a much higher conception artistically. It is of the essence of tragedy that there should be a way out; even if it is impossible for the hero to find it, there must be a conceivable solution; and the peculiar poignance of emotion we feel as a tragedy is unfolded comes very largely from our impotence to warn the hero, to rescue the heroine, to hold open the slowly shutting door. And similarly, it is of the essence of drama in general that it presents a struggle taking place, not merely a wound previously sustained: the blinding of Samson is tragic, but a man born blind is merely pathetic. But if Manuela is a born homosexual, then in our society there is no real solution possible for her, no matter what the circumstances of her adolescence.

Upon this side, then, the picture has done better for its author than she has for herself in her book. On the other hand, the book has beauties and values of its own, which could not be brought out in the swifter passage of a drama. It has a wider scope, showing Manuela's childhood, something of the life behind the scenes of a poor officer in a smart regiment—all his official extravagances and secret pinching and scraping. It shows, too, Manuela's little-girl days, spent in a town in one of the captured provinces, where she grows up in an atmosphere of hate and fear of the garrison among the townspeople, and is herself bred up to hate and fear the

French. It makes up an impressive picture of the seamy side of military glory, insisting on the often forgotten fact that, just as prisons are hard on the warders, the splendor of conquest can bear very hard on the conquerors themselves. If the picture is more impressive as an attack upon the unnatural conditions of the school as a breeder of neuroses, the book suggests something ultimately neurotic in militarism itself, some fundamental weakness in the cult of strength which aims at none



FROM THE JACKET DESIGN OF
"THE CHILD MANUELA"

but the Spartan virtues, and will put up with the Spartan vices.

And the book has its peculiar beauty of expression, as the picture its peculiar beauty of form. The whole story is told with a compassion that exquisitely avoids all sentimentalism. This quality finds its finest expression in the character of Fräulein von Bernburg, who is an even more memorable figure than she was upon the screen. She is an innate homosexual, and she is the one good influence in the school. Living herself as rigidly as a nun, she gives her children an austere affection that will be satisfied with nothing but the best in them; she gives many of the girls their only idea of goodness, and their only happiness, she who has long ago recognized the truth and given up the idea of happiness herself. I know of no other book in which a homosexual is presented without an implied claim upon one's pity (or, in gay and humorous books, upon one's contempt). Fräulein von Bernburg has accepted her misfortune, as she would have accepted blindness, and will have no more of your pity than of her own. She is a figure to know in present literature.

Men and Poetry

SHAKESPEARE AND HAWAII. By Christopher Morley. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1933. \$1.

Reviewed by LEONARD BACON

IT is easier to say pleasant things about Mr. Morley's little book than to give the inquiring reader an ordered account of it. This is just as well, for Mr. Morley certainly never intended the inquiring reader to receive such an account. Anyhow the book consists of a series of three talks delivered last year at the University of Hawaii, and it is about Shakespeare and Hawaii and points between and around. It is good talk, discursive, rambling, full of asides. And it has all the virtues and advantages of extemporaneity. Furthermore scattered here and there are fairly extended bursts of consecutive and acute criticism of men and poetry, passages definitely interesting and provocative.

Mr. Morley's lateral approach to his various topics is sometimes worth the trouble. There are stories by the way that are entertaining. But when he does get to what he thinks important, he is frequently more than entertaining. It was worth while to state again and to state well the necessity of getting at the actual poet, unshrouded by tradition, unconcealed by comment. Nourishment can not be taken vicariously. And Mr. Morley is perfectly right to emphasize the point.

There are also good and eloquent pages on the creative imagination in action. In fact the second of the three talks which is called the "Sense of Significance" has the earmarks of genuine wisdom. A man reads in vain if he does not "collaborate" with his author, if the process that created is not in some degree induced and reproduced in the reader's mind. A truism if you like, but Mr. Morley has done himself proud in the amplification.

The book perhaps suffers from too much discursiveness, from an overdose of vagary. But as a whole it is the genuine result of genuine enthusiasm. And it is a relief to listen in on a conversation about Shakespeare without hearing the semi-religious and sepulchral tones of the professional mystagogue congenially employed in slaying his ten thousands.

The Seagoing Breed

NO MORE SEA. By Wilson Follett. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 1933. \$2.50.

Reviewed by HENRY TRACY

AN adroit beginning hangs the interest of this tale upon an episode that is not fully explained or resolved until the end of the story. Following back from this faint clue the novel unfolds a human background in ever-deepening perspective. Out of the background figures come into focus, one after another, in sharp detail. They are the men, the women of a family, a breed of seagoing Teaswiths and their wives. From that group emerges a woman whose will it is to break the tradition, fight the sea, remove her son (and his child after him) from its influence. It is a difficult technique, well handled. The story follows a track of light into the deep past of this family in which all the men are masters of ships, all the women are early widowed. Then it leads forward to a point where this doom is challenged. Hatred of the sea for its crimes against fathers, husbands, sons, becomes articulate in one woman.

Human figures in bold relief dominate the picture, but they are not all that give it value. The coast of Maine is here in all its rhythms, its moods, from vindictive to mild, from implacable to mystical and alluring. There are passages dealing with this background that will put "No More Sea" on a book-lover's most available shelf and keep it there. Not the least memorable of them is the one in which we see Windward Haven through the eyes of Abel Teaswith, founder of the line, lately a fugitive from the king's press-gangs. The harbor, the homes sparsely scattered, shadowed by trees, are a landfall to his roving spirit. These are searching and persuasive evocations.

The tragedy of this tale is that a woman fails to understand the breed which has made her men the figures that they are, and seeks for them only safety. In saving them from the sea she breaks the spirit of the breed, and is herself broken. She does this understandably, and through the working of a common passion. It is the passion of possessive maternity. She must live out her life in her son, she must enjoy him fully. It is well that the results of such a course should be seared into the consciousness of many. In a day of dwindling national pride, this book tells what America has, in the past, been good for.

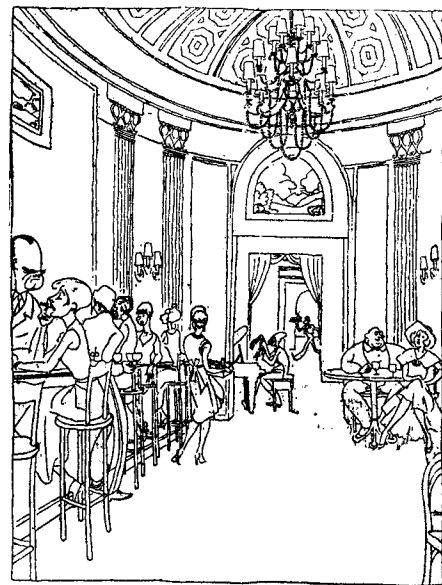


A ROCKWELL KENT DRAWING
From "Rockwellkentiana." Courtesy of
Harcourt, Brace & Co.

Stories of Prohibition

(Continued from first page)

the big First Night to come—the opening performance of "As Millions Cheer; or, Repeal is Here"—but also in what Stanley Walker calls "Last Night." Here, my hearties, is the bitterest, the downright scalding account yet written of The Dawn of Prohibition. If it doesn't become part of the record I'll be greatly surprised. Steeping his pen in pure essence of gall and writing almost casually—and that's what makes it all so devastating—Walker presents the almost incredible story in a series of ironic facts. The method is swell and the story even better. It's a grand piece to read aloud while drinking—perpendicularly, obliquely, or horizontally—the first night of repeal. It will sound remote, unreal, fantastic—and you will get credit for being a great entertainer. Everyone will credit you with improvising as you read. Some of the facts contained in this chapter sound like burlesque and as you bring the house down your friends will chorus, "I didn't know it was in him." One of your best laughs will come when you read the memorable paragraph in which William H. Anderson, Superintendent of the New York State Anti-Saloon League (prohibition is about to become a reality and he is "magnanimous in his triumph") is quoted as saying to the American drinker: "Be a good sport about it. No more falling off the water wagon. Uncle Sam will help you keep your



NIGHT CLUB

Drawing by Al Hirschfeld from "Manhattan Oases." Courtesy of E. P. Dutton & Co.

pledge." What a service the author has performed in recalling—in a quietly satiric setting—this classic example of the modern Pecksniff at his worst!

If you think I'm going to go on telling you what's in the book you're mistaken. For some unknown reason, only mystery stories get any decent protection from reviewers. The indulgent critic invariably shields the murderer's identity, as though it really mattered who killed Sir Cecil Droopinglip.

The type of book that needs protection from the over-gabby reviewer is "The Night Club Era." I'm for shooting anyone who gives away Walker's best anecdotes, oddments, and so on. That's why I won't tell you a thing that's in the chapter called "Owney, the Old Master," a corking study of Owney Madden, one of the world's most amazing characters. If you think I'm trying to arouse your curiosity, you're right. If you aren't interested enough to buy the book, to heck with you. Too many people are enabled, by over-detailed reviews,* to make after-dinner conversation of books they've never read. I expect to change all that. I've turned reformer.

And, by the way, Alva Johnston has written a swell introduction. I admit this grudgingly because I happen to be the Past, Present, and Future President of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Readers and one of our strictest by-laws is an anti-introduction dictum. Now I am all humility, for Johnston has proved to me that an introduction can be worth reading.

* Edward Anthony speaks as an author, having collaborated with Clyde Beatty on "The Big Cage" and with Frank Buck on "Bring 'Em back Alive" and "Wild Cargo."

The BOWLING GREEN

The Folder

CUERNAVACA

SIR: Is it time for another letter from Mexico? I feel like writing one and hope it may disturb you just a little.

All Saints Day and All Souls Day have passed. The pink sugar skulls with purple tin eyes, the chocolate coffins, the tissue paper ceremonials with yellow and red celebrants on little wooden contraptions like the things on which you pull a telephone away from its anchorage, the magenta buns,—these are disappearing from the market, and also the black paper rosettes and cockades for the grown-ups. But things are still brewing: I don't know what. Last evening Carús served dinner with her straight black hair in curl papers under her dark blue rebozo and near midnight I heard a click at the great front door. At four this morning a neighbor was playing a wooden flute on his roof, the same little four-bar tune over and over without pause until almost sunrise. In the earliest dawn there were strains of band music from the square at the palace. The day seems to realize its own importance, for the sunrise was so clear it seemed lighter before rather than after the red ball popped up beside the two volcanoes, just to the right of Popo and lighting its snow above the violet haze.

About the house, however, the routine seems entirely normal. Antonia has gone to market with her big basket and will return with two chickens dangling by their feet, some canna lilies and the usual squash. Chico, the monkey, is doing occasional gymnastics on his perch. He is vain and I suspect that like color his antics do not exist without an admiring eye. Very human is Chico with the useful addition of a tail nearly as long as all the rest of him, an invaluable adjunct to hold him in convenient suspension, to reach a nut otherwise beyond his periphery or to curl around his neck as a feather boa. But perhaps he is over-organized. That enviable tail may be one of those enlargements of potentiality like the motor car, which, seeming to add to physical capacity, actually preclude mental activity by their very availability.

It is time to go to town and learn what is up, but I have grown a little disillusioned about town. When first I saw on the blackboard in front of "The Port of Palmyra" the engaging legend *Picadillos*—5 centavos, I felt the place held promise. No doubt picadillo meant peccadillo. What a happy refuge for the American of affairs, whose peccadilloes seldom come so cheap. And so simple, so frank, so ready at hand! Later came the unwelcome knowledge that picadillo is no more than a vulgar hash.

Nevertheless a stroll of the plaza has its moments. There is the old Buddha with thin white whiskers, in faded *serape*, pajamas, and yachting cap, who already will be offering his magenta ices in traditional song; and the perfect Aztec bootblack who will polish till one's shoes look like Montezuman treasure. And at the end will be a long drink of pure lime juice, and water not so pure but very wet and cool. I will go, but there is no great hurry. Life is not worth hurrying about. We have tried it and have learned that we can crowd in more but not better things.

And anyway life is not so serious. One's own is scarcely noticeable and certainly nothing to make much fuss about. Folk are born and die. As we cannot hurry our arrival we can well let our departure take care of itself. It is no great matter, except now having grown just a trifle chill here in the morning shade it will be pleasant to feel the sun on my back.

Hasta la vista.

HUGH WESTERN.

Cuernavaca,
Mexico.

When the Book of the Month Club recently offered Laurence Stallings's large volume of photographs, *The First World War*, as a "dividend" to subscribers the following letter was received—which the management of the Club allows me to copy exactly:—

"Would like to no if I can get another book as this one seems to be to large for a ordinary library. It dont make a difference how thick a book is but the hight of it."

F. M. M., who has been reading Vincent Starrett's *Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* with much pleasure, adds another proof of Mr. Starrett's contention that Holmes has passed over from fiction to actuality. In the story *The Final Problem* Watson wrote that an account of Holmes's death was printed in the *Journal de Genève* of May 4, 1891 (or some such date)—and M. Chapuiset, the present editor of that excellent paper, says that every year he receives letters asking for copies of that issue.

The adopted sons of Southern California began very early to praise their climate. An exhibition just opened at the famous Huntington Library, San Marino, illustrates. "California: from Legendary Island to Statehood" includes a letter written from Los Angeles, December 6, 1854, by one James Clarke. He says:

"You have no idea the exceeding agreeableness of our climate, it is neither too warm or cold, & one is comfortable in his shirt sleeves."

From Clifford Gessler's alertly conducted book page in the Honolulu *Star-Bulletin* we learn the interesting news that the hero of Thornton Wilder's next novel is to be a book salesman. Mr. Wilder, who has been lecturing at the University of Hawaii, confided to Mr. Gessler that he had not intended to write the story until his "forties and fifties" but that it is pushing itself forward in his mind. Mr. Wilder is quoted:

It traces the development of an American "Don Quixote" from fundamentalism to the life of a sophisticated city dweller; at least, that was the original intention, but the character himself has taken hold of the story now and may not carry it out exactly according to the original plan.

The action is episodic, but the episodes are not unrelated; each has its bearing on the development, the education, of the hero.

He is introduced as a book salesman, travelling in the southwest; an admirer of Gandhi, and to some extent an imitator of him—keeping days of silence, practising voluntary poverty. His geographical wanderings are accompanied by mental and spiritual development; it remains to be seen just how far he will get.

Speaking of those divine Islands, will Repeal make it possible to get *okolehao*, the native Hawaiian whiskey, on the Mainland?

CATALOGUES THAT LIVE

SIR:—This here letter is an endorsement and a rebuttal of Raymond L. Thomson's announcement in the *Bowling Green* that he has broken with tradition and issued a live, entertaining catalogue—"the first of its kind," he opines. Bully for you, Mr. Thomson; go to it! But don't overlook the good work along those lines begun by "Orientalia" a dozen years ago, and kept up through seventy something issues.

"Orientalia's" catalogues have won unstinted praise from all who manage to get on its mailing list, and I have several friends with no previous interest in the East who have become "Orientalia" fans, and read and preserve every copy. If they came in a regular size we would bind 'em,

but they don't, and what's more, we don't know half the time where they're going to come from. I received one amusing issue from Paris, and several from London. Wherever Mr. Brown goes, he buys books, and that lesser feat accomplished, he apparently sits him down and reads them all. Then we get a new catalogue, full of breezy comment, serious criticism, and, at times, quite scholarly counsel.

I was over at "Orientalia" just the other day. You know they long since gave up their street shop, and settled in the top floor of an old loft building in Bank Street, where you may collide with any kind of celebrity from a Buddhist priest, or a German sinologist, to an Oriental dancer, or, perhaps, a millionaire collector of weapons dedicated to the manly art of harakiri. On that particular visit I encountered a hard-boiled business man from Denver who was poring over a map of Arabia, to aid him—so he informed me—in identifying the exact locale of a previous incarnation.

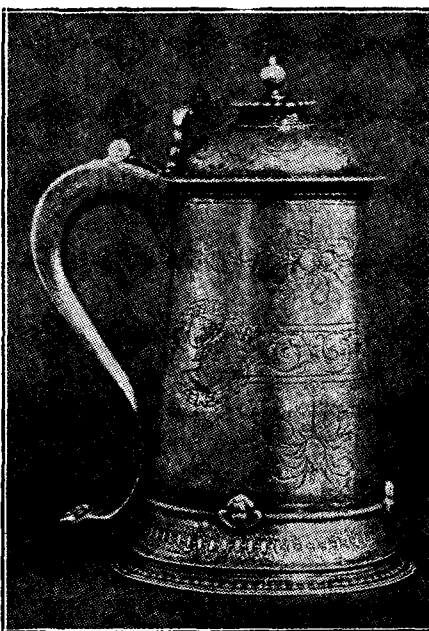
Well, I casually asked Miss Pinkerton, who superintends the mail orders, if there aren't many enthusiasts like myself who regard these catalogues as a sort of humanized bibliography. She showed me letters from all parts of the world, many, would you believe it? from solemn pedants who read every number, and seem to take particular delight in their frankness and originality. Mr. Thomson is certainly on the right track.

In the *Orientalia* catalogues you have Brown in every mood—grave and gay, discursive and reflective, appreciative and at times malicious. Every description technically trustworthy, as far as I can judge, but beyond this so suggestive, so darned stimulating. Or, as Mr. Thomson will be the first to agree, entertaining.

JOSEPH ELLNER.

New York City.

We like the sound of the Wine and Food Society, recently organized in London under the presidency of Mr. André L.



ELIZABETHAN TANKARD, 1572

From the catalogue of the Wine Trade Exhibition, at Vintners' Hall, London

Simon, the distinguished oinosophist. It has just held its first meeting (November 14th) when an Alsatian menu, with Alsatian wines, was served to the members at the modest cost of 10/6—which included wines and tips. The Society's prospectus says it

has been organized by a few enthusiasts who, believing that a right understanding and appreciation of good food and good wine is an essential part of personal contentment and health, desire to bring together and assist all those who share this view, in an attempt to raise the standard of eating and drinking throughout the country.

It is proposed to give effect to the objects of the Society by arranging inexpensive practical demonstrations of the art of the table, at restaurants and elsewhere, in and out of London, under the guidance of M. André Simon, the President, one of the greatest living masters of the art of good living, and an advisory council of well-known experts.

The Wine and Food Society (address 5 Little Russell Street, W.C.1) also hopes to publish a *Gastronomical Gazette*.

Stephen Leacock's much anticipated *Life of Dickens*, announced by Doubleday, Doran, notes a discovery made by Professor Leacock in Montreal to which he refers with agreeable humor:

"In John Forster's account of Dickens's visit to Montreal there occurs one of the few out-and-out errors to be found in that magnificent work. Misled no doubt by Dickens's handwriting in the letters he received, he says that Dickens and his wife stayed at Peasco's Hotel. This is incorrect. Recent researches personally conducted in front of the hotel (still standing, in St. Paul Street) show that the name (still legible) is Rasco's Hotel. All research workers in the history of our literature will find this correction of a standing error a distinct contribution to our knowledge of the life and character of Dickens and an ample justification of the present volume."

Professor Leacock in his book enlarges upon some phases of Dickens's home life which are comparatively little known and admits that the great novelist behaved with unbelievable crudeness on a famous occasion. But there is certainly no understatement in Leacock's estimate of Dickens's powers. He speaks of him as "the highest reach of the world's imaginative literature. Shakespeare was a man of far lesser genius."

Personally I find it hard to distinguish any common measure for comparing the two.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

A Musical Novel

SPIDER. By Marguerite Steen. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1933. \$2.50.

Reviewed by GEORGE STEVENS

MARGUERITE STEEN'S novels, of which this is the fourth, have surprisingly little in common. Each one takes a new point of departure, indicating that the author writes from observation, with remarkable freedom from the element of personal experience which limits and stamps the work of many developing novelists. The objectivity of "Spider" bears out this suggestion, and leads to the further assumption that it was written around an idea. And a very good idea—so good, so suggestive of possibilities, that any failure to make the most of it is somewhat unfairly emphasized by comparison.

The idea of "Spider" can be easily condensed. Richard Adam, the greatest and most famous composer since Wagner, left two lines of descendants. The illegitimate strain has inherited his genius, the legitimate his money. The latter is the result of a marriage into which, late in life, he was bullied by Jacoba, an insatiable egoist who devotes her widowhood to the perpetuation of the Adam Legend—in which Jacoba figures as the inspiration of Adam's life and the priestess of his cult. She has bought and destroyed all letters between Adam and his various mistresses; she has established a counterpart to Bayreuth in the annual Adam Festival in Brittany; she has, by the time the story properly begins, developed into a preposterous but quite credible old hellion. The children of the Spider have submitted to being devoured in the name of the Legend; it is the granddaughter, Dendy, who revolts.

Miss Steen has made splendid use of the opportunities for satire, for subtlety of characterization, and for the best portrayal of a European musical milieu since "Maurice Guest." But in the clash between Dendy and her grandmother, the book is overridden by the plot. The appearance of Richard Adam's illegitimate descendant in the person of Dendy's lover complicates the issue. Some of the love scenes barely escape being mawkish. Dendy has an access of conflicting loyalties to dead traditions—the kind of thing the late Galsworthy (as distinguished from the earlier Galsworthy) foisted upon his heroines—and Miss Steen's brilliant cosmopolitan satire is submerged for another melodrama of star-crossed lovers.

All this however is thrown into high relief by the excellence of the book otherwise. If the idea behind "Spider" were not so good, "Spider" would seem even better than it does.