

# Farewell to the Nineties

WINNER TAKE NOTHING. By Ernest Hemingway. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1933. \$2.

Reviewed by HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

WE have accustomed ourselves to Ernest Hemingway, and therefore it becomes more possible to estimate his values and to place him in the literary show. His staccato style has had the compliment of much imitation. His themes, drawn from the wreckage of war, or from ruthless analysis of youthful memories, or from the upsurge of savagery or brutal egoism in supposedly civilized man, have become as expected and familiar as the Cinderella plot of the conventional short story. Hemingway, like Ring Lardner, like O. Henry, like Kipling, has created his world and his technique of making it articulate. He is no longer one of the youngsters, and we must praise him now, not for his novelties as such, but for their merit as renderings of life, and for the qualities of that life itself.

And what does one find in a collection of short stories such as this new volume? On the plus side, an extraordinary power of observation, worthy of comparison with Kipling's, an observation that knows no inhibitions, but is as limited as was that earlier master's—who could do the sensational, but not nuances and subtleties of a matured culture. An observation, however, that, because it is not inhibited, brings a fresh range of subjects into the light. I find nothing in this volume as poignant as certain sketches of trout fishing (a passionate subject for Hemingway) in earlier writing, or as beautifully organized as the retreat from Caparetto



ERNEST HEMINGWAY  
The author is at the right of the 468-lb. marlin he caught in Cuban waters. There are no fish stories in his new book.

in "A Farewell to Arms," unless it be the dangerously macabre descriptions of horrid death in "A Natural History of Death," or the hysterical account of fornication in "Fathers and Sons." Yet no one can read of the brute who looks through his water glass at the sunken steamer, with bodies floating inside the port holes, his rudimentary pity only felt, not realized like the frustration of his greed, or the deceptively simple account of the prize fighter in "The Mother of a Queen," whose egoism is so perfect that no blow can touch it, without hailing one of the most skilful writers of our generation.

And yet, and yet, the comparison with Kipling persists. Now that the novelty is off these studies of egoism, brutality, cold lust, and pathetic demoralization, it becomes clearer and clearer that we have not changed so much from the nineties as we supposed. Then it was what somewhere East of Suez had to say to smug Victorianism which excited the younger readers. The lid was on in genteel America and England—even Mark Twain had not dared to lift it, but under the old Chinese pagoda at Mandalay the Westerner became primitive man again. He fell in love with Dinah Shadd but could not step out to tell her so without worse than philandering on the way. He lived a brute's life and paid for it. He was usually drunk, usually lusting for women, and sadly willing to tell about it. Of course Kipling threw a glamour over it all—removed it by half a world from the complacent West. His Mulvaney's were romantic figures in a cleaner, greener land than

ours. The raw shocks to our sensibilities were cushioned by humor and restraint in language, for one remembers that the Soldiers Three told their stories to a gentleman and pruned their language to suit. And unquestionably Hemingway has come a step further along the road. Kipling could never have handled his cold killers, for the war had not yet drained humanitarianism from the imagination. Kipling was incapable of such unadorned brutality of natural speech between men and women only their vulgar selves with no overtones of humane possibilities given to them by the writer.

Yet Kipling, with more humor, was far less sentimental than Hemingway. He never is so sorry for himself as this man who records struggle where the winner gets nothing. His norm is still a hearty, courageous world in which brutality or degeneracy is an aberration, romantic because it releases the inhibited in man, but transitory. And Kipling is the better story teller. When you cannot reread with the old pleasure a story of Kipling's it is because he so gloats upon and over-emphasizes the sensations. His style is sometimes all exclamation mark. Yet even then the brilliant plot remains. When you

are bored by Hemingway, as I frankly am by a half dozen of these new stories, which are repetitive with the slow pound, pound of a hammer upon a single mood, there is nothing to revive you except flashes of excellent observation. The younger man is at his best precisely when (if one insists upon regarding him as a novelist) he is at his worst,—when he takes one episode, one phase of a temperament, one mood, one moment, and eliminating all context, all verbiage, cuts a stencil of it

and stamps it on the page with unforgettable incisiveness. I would cite from this volume the narrative of the doctor at the end of the "Natural History of the Dead" who will not let them kill the dying man. I don't believe that Kipling or anyone of his time could have written those few pages. They would not have dared the language, they would not have been able to keep what they believed was the hearty normal world so completely out of their imaginations.

And yet I cannot see much difference in the history of art between the sensationalism of Hemingway, except that the first (like his business contemporaries) had Asia to exploit, and the second, after the breakup of the great war, finds his horrors at home, and makes his romance out of reversions instead of adventures. Neither man is a novelist, both men deal in specialties eminently suitable to the sketch or the short story. Both depend upon over-emphasis. Both will suffer heavily from a change in taste, as Kipling has already suffered from the shift in interest away from the romance of imperialism. Kipling, of course, has a far greater endowment as a writer. Yet I do not believe that it is merely the franchise to speak plainly of things not written about in nineteenth century English which has given Hemingway his great success. His dialogue is limited. It is good only for special people—especially for primitive passionates, for wounded sophisticates where the primitive shows through like an exposed bone, for pathetic inarticulates, and for men of abnormal simplicity whose

love of wine, of women, or of murder so dominates as to run the whole machine—but for these it is a superb instrument. Whether Kipling's humor and his superb apprehensions of the beauty of heroism, of the fundamental decencies, of patriotism, of love not merely sexual, do not make him the greater man, depends upon whether the brutality in which the world is just now indulging is, in truth, further from the heart of human desire than what other ages have longed for. But the two belong to the same wave of historical culture. Kipling began what Hemingway, perhaps, is ending. The path seems to lead into a swamp.

## O'Neill Backs and Fills

AH, WILDERNESS! By Eugene O'Neill. New York: Random House. 1933. \$2.50.

Reviewed by JOHN CORBIN

IN a double sense Eugene O'Neill turns time backward in his latest play. "Ah, Wilderness!" which his publisher insists on calling "A Comedy of Recollection," dates a full quarter of a century ago, when the author of it, now panoplied in years, was seventeen; and its technique is that of the then-honored "new school" of realism, which O'Neill practised so ably in his earlier plays. As they used to say on the Connecticut shore where his action takes place, he backs and fills. The phrase has come to connote vacillation; but originally it described a difficult manipulation of sails by which Yankee skippers made headway against the wind. It applies in both senses. We have here no technical stunts—no rubber masks denoting the double-facedness of life, no pseudo-Freudian soliloquies, no sedulous aping of Æschylus. But the sails of the playwright swell to the breeze, and the result is some measure of progress.

The theme and the setting are curiously similar to those of Booth Tarkington's "Seventeen," but with a difference equally curious. A case of calf love crops out in a very respectable small-town family, developing a world of adolescent passions and posturings, of flighty speech and fly-by-night conduct, male and female. But between the mental horizons of the two small-town youngsters there is a significant contrast. The passions and posturings of Tarkington's Willy Baxter are recognizable and welcome alike to readers of *The Saturday Evening Post* and, let us say, to the audiences of the Theatre Guild, where "Ah, Wilderness!" is now playing; they are universally human, fundamental, eternal, and all that sort of thing. And they are primordially American, being innocent of the three deadly sins of our small towns. The mind of O'Neill's Richard, on the contrary, is immersed in wine, women, and song, though he puts it in no phrase so bald.

To the horror of his skirt-and-shirt-waist mother, he reads Swinburne and Omar on the sly (not to mention Shaw and Ibsen); and, wooing a girl of fifteen, he sends her elegant extracts about drinking her veins like wine, eating her breasts like honey, and thus entombing her very flesh in his flesh. This cannibalism enrages the girl's father and even nonplusses the boy's more reasonable male parent. To Richard the upshot is an adolescent despair that drives him to the back room of a bed-house saloon and lands a tart little peroxide blonde in his lap. He escapes drinking this lady's veins, being kicked out of the family entrance by an irascible barkeep; but he gets very drunk and, like the young lady of Twickenham, when he took off his shoes he was sick in 'em.

Is it possible that, as chronology and the publisher's insistence on that word *recollection* imply, we have to do with a bit of fictional autobiography? Mr. O'Neill himself suggests this—suggests even that he is, so to speak, the eponymous hero of his tribe. For, singling out George Jean Nathan from among his followers, he dedicates "Ah, Wilderness!" to him—"who also, once upon a time, in peg-top trousers went the pace that kills along the road to ruin."

As always in his zig-zag course of backing and filling, Mr. O'Neill reveals a new facet of his genius. Hitherto he has been least of all things remarkable for the sym-



EUGENE O'NEILL

pathetic humor which is the essence of comedy. He has, indeed, shown the keenest of insight into character, which is the essence of drama in all its forms; but the bent of his plays has been tragic, or at least sardonic. When "comedy" folk appeared, as in the hick chorus of "Mourning Becomes Electra," the humor has been lugubrious. In "Ah, Wilderness!" there is the same preoccupation with deadly sin, and the revelations of it are at times rather heavy-handed; but the play reads better than it can be briefly described, and, thanks to an inherent instinct for theatrical effect, it acts better than it reads. Certainly the sophisticated have joy in it.

John Corbin was for a time dramatic critic of the New York Times and later of the New York Sun.

## March in Reverse

RADETZKY MARCH. By Joseph Roth. New York: The Viking Press. 1933. \$2.50.

Reviewed by FRED J. RINGEL

WITH the critical applause which "Radetzky March" will undoubtedly receive, it seems absolutely imperative to analyze first the startling change in the intellectual personality of Joseph Roth before one sets out to review this beautifully written book. Hardly another writer directly after the war entered upon so striking a career, aroused so much attention and expectation, and so influenced a whole school of writers. Six years ago, when Joseph Roth with his book "Flight without End" started out in a new direction, he rejected the word "novel" as designation of a contemporary means of expression for the social upheaval, hopeless despair, and groping for a new future after the collapse of a world. He called his book a "report" and, interpreting his conception, he wrote that "there is no longer any point in 'improvising'." Most significant of all is what has been observed. Today Roth returns to the structural depth of the novel, but he has accomplished only a drawn-out narrative. The refreshing gusto of satire and sarcastic criticism in his former books, bound to lead to an active attitude towards present-day problems, has escaped in the turbulence of our chaotic time into a painful passivity, which naturally had to find its climax in the glorification of a decaying past.

The first novels of Joseph Roth portrayed our imprisonment within the times: "Flight without End" was the report of Lieutenant Tunda, who returns from the war and marches towards his home without being able to find it. In the ultimate realization that he will never be home, he stands in the end, in the same spiritual state as at the beginning of the book, "on the square in front of the Madeleine, in the center of the world's capital and didn't know what to do. He had no calling, no love, no desire, no hope, no ambition, and not even egotism. In all the world there was no one as superfluous as he." Then Joseph Roth writes the book of "Zipper and His Father," and paints the pre-war time with its comfortably soulless, idyllic life; he writes of the sleek respectability underlying all ambition, the childish ad-



miration for every uniform, the patriotism that consisted of a thousand little weaknesses and vanities and sent both generations to the war. . . . In "Right and Left," Roth turns back to the undecided and indefinable present. Again he sets father and son before us, but the father soon dies, and the son goes to war, from which he comes back completely changed, oppressed by his own inner emptiness.

"Radetzky March" reveals an astounding change in Joseph Roth's work. The fighter Roth has become the meditating observer of a bygone epoch, with a burning nostalgia for the things past. His soothing melody lulls all criticism into soft-spoken, caressing descriptions. Carefully weighed prose, details painted in miniature, enwrap the analysis of the past presented in the form of a story of a family of officers. The son of a Slovenian peasant, Joseph Trotta, becomes a noble because he saved his emperor's life in the battle of Solferino, and remains for his whole career under the inconspicuous though tangible influence of the gratefulness of Francis Joseph. His son becomes not a soldier but a member of the civil service, the grandson again an officer.

Joseph Roth has the courage not to shy away from apparent banalities; with his masterly prose he makes of these some of the splendid chapters in the book. This may be a virtue, but the whole of these kaleidoscopic passages does not even formulate and certainly does not penetrate the driving social forces moulding the fate of his characters. And this accomplishment is the criterion of a really great work. The original conception of the novel: the novel of three generations, the military castes, the civil service, and again the generals and officers—who actually represented the sociologically most important layers of the ruling class in the old Hapsburg empire—is presented merely within the small radius of one single family. But what caused the change and what brought about the final collapse of these upper classes? No answer can be found in this book. Yet Joseph Roth is well aware that there is no action without reaction, no decay without a cause.

Nevertheless, "Radetzky March" does show all the merits of a noble, conscientious, and mature writer. Admirably translated by Geoffrey Dunlop, it is a most commendable book. Although it does not altogether live up to what it promises at the outset, it must be looked upon as the work of one of the best writers of modern German literature.

Fred J. Ringel has for many years been American correspondent for the German press. He was the editor of the symposium, "America as Americans See It."

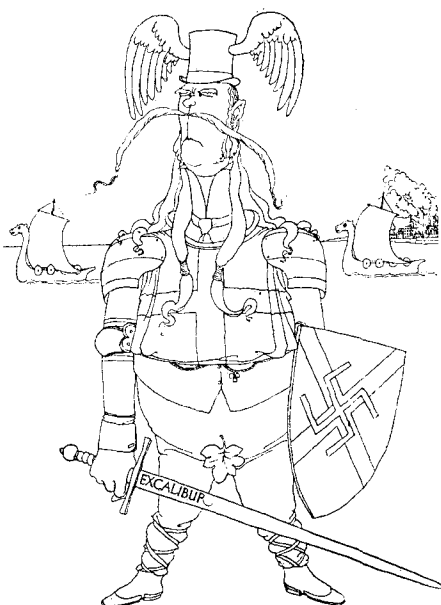
## The Collapse of Internationalism

(Continued from first page)

it is now indulging in a wave of national and anti-parliamentary radicalism.

"The mass of the people have looked to nationalism to give them bread as well as freedom." The result has been the worst "age of violence" in a century.

Part II, "The Countries of Europe," consists of fourteen chapters sketching the recent history, present status, and relatively permanent characteristics of the European countries. The authors not only cite the known facts but call attention to such essential matters as the following: in the much contested Upper Silesian decision 350,000 Germans were, to be sure, placed under Polish rule, but not less than half a million Poles remained under Germany and are today at the mercy of Adolf Hitler. Poland possesses perhaps too many Ukrainians and White Russians but the country is capable of great economic development if the capital can be found. The authors show for Bulgaria a sympathy shared by this reader: they pay tribute to Yugoslavia while noting that the attempt of the Serbian nucleus to ride roughshod over the other sorts of Slav and non-Slav in the country can, if persisted in, lead to nothing but trouble. The unhappy situation of post-war Hungary is well if somewhat pessimistically described. Yet here one may also read of the immense importance inherent in the Little Entente's present efforts to draw closer together.



MENACE TO INTERNATIONALISM  
"The Nordic Man," a caricature from Time and Tide (London).

The Coles note that Germany, before the war as now, was unwilling to accept the "position of world inferiority" inherent in the maintenance of the status quo. And in this sentence lies more wisdom than in a dozen volumes of detailed discussion of "war guilt." The roots of Nazidom go back to the failure of the 1918 revolutionaries to crush the pre-war rulers. For without the destructive work of the ex-soldiers and nationalists, the Junkers and the big businessmen, Hitler's seed would have fallen on barren soil. In the discussion of Belgium they correct the idea suggested earlier that the Flemings are a national minority. France, in their opinion, emphatically is not governed in the interests of the ironmongers of the *Comité des Forges*, but for the benefit of the mass of small peasants and town-dwelling *petits bourgeois*. France is a well balanced country and a highly civilized one: individualists, the French desire a weak government and get it. For their fundamental political ambition is to be left alone. The description of Great Britain is magnificently lucid, that of Soviet Russia enthusiastic.

Part III, treating the economic situation, is admirably illustrated with tables and charts so that all the fundamental factors of the present slump—all the measurable factors—are exposed. These one hundred and thirty odd pages make none too easy reading but they are worth the effort required if the "intelligent man" ever intends to sit in judgment upon men and means of the Great Depression.

In Part IV, "European Political Systems," lies what is to me the most interesting discussion in an interesting volume. For here the authors explain the decay of many of the parliamentary constitutions foisted upon the new states after the war. Balkan peoples, Poles, even Germans were simply not up to a democratic system, particularly not during a world depression when parliamentarism had, even in such eminently democratic countries as Great Britain and France, begun very noticeably to creak. Therefore the challenge of communism and the vast growth of socialism in Europe, therefore the answering challenge of fascism. Socialism insisted on class elimination on an international scale; fascism answered by frenzied nationalism under a "totalitarian state," maintaining private property by petrifying the classes (corporative State).

Part V, "European International Relations," reaches several interesting conclusions: (1) there can be no security without disarmament and "the Peace Treaties ought to be revised," but nations will not disarm "as long as they continue to be nations in the sense of claiming complete national sovereignty"; (2) the League of Nations aims primarily at the prevention of wars yet "within the existing system of sovereign States there is no possibility of a territorial settlement which will remove the danger of wars aiming at territorial readjustment"; (3) therefore all nations ought to hasten to establish the socialist Internationale.

Part VI, "The European Outlook," consisting of a single chapter, closes this first-rate book on a note of pessimism. For this outlook is, according to the authors, depressing. Capitalism is clearly changing to

something like planned economy or "state socialism," but this must not be confused with real socialism. The world could recover from this crisis under capitalism, but only to plunge into another similar one within a short time. And the creditors and the working class will not permit a return to the (perhaps) workable principles of *laissez-faire*. There is danger of war, for the causes of war lie fundamentally in "capitalist nationalism and capitalist imperialism." The fundamental question of our age is therefore "whether the forces making for cosmopolitan socialism will be strong enough to build up the new society before sheer disaster overtakes the peoples of Europe."

This conclusion makes a dramatic conclusion to a fascinating play of forces. But here, in my opinion, lies the key to those points on which I differ with the authors. I do not refer to insignificant errors of fact like those on page eleven or to the statement that Adolph Hitler is a former socialist, but to far more fundamental conceptions. These writers, gifted as they are, seem to me to suffer from a divided intellect.

At the end of the volume they confess their belief in the philosophy of Karl Marx: had this been done at the beginning, many things would have been clear. For Marxism is a dogma and its adherents take fundamental opinions ready made. Anyone close to international affairs could predict that Marxians, even English Marxians, would condemn the treaties of peace as incredibly harsh (which they were not as such treaties go); would tend to favor their revision regardless of the international consequences; would believe that the Germans have done everything in their power to pay reparations, quite regardless of the fact that in the boom years the German living standard was considerably higher than that of victorious France or Belgium; would consider that by a conciliatory treatment of the Germans the horrors of contemporary Hitlerism could have been avoided—a crucial but highly problematic point; would believe that periodic depressions are inherent in the nature of imperialistic capitalism and will ultimately destroy it; would see the cure for the present depression not in trying to make both ends meet or allowing bankruptcy to eliminate decay, but in money and credit manipulation and public spending, with a departure from the gold standard; would consider fascism primarily a capitalist reaction to the threat of communism, whereas in point of fact it may be a prelude to a new lot of national communistic States of a peculiarly vicious and obscurantist type; would neglect the historically retrograde development of such countries as Italy and Germany in favor of some sort of economic decay in explaining why fascism broke out there and not elsewhere; would overestimate the popular happiness and economic achievement of Soviet Russia while underestimating the essentially despotic, intolerant, and cruel nature of its handful of rulers; and finally, would reach the conclusion, not that capitalism is by its nature international and must become ever more so if it is to survive, but that only socialism is sufficiently cosmopolitan to save European society from final destruction. As Marxians, the Coles believe all these things. Doubtless, they make a good enough dogma, if you want one. This reader does not. He notes that whereas as Marxians the Coles are forced to attribute fascism chiefly to the economic motives of preserving private property at a time when capitalism becomes over-ripe, as individuals they understand that capitalism in Italy, where fascism started, had not even reached maturity. Nationalism and other factors of a predominantly political sort were at its origin and the Coles know this—whenever they simply look at affairs instead of trying to apply their dogma to them. Fortunately this habit of looking prevailed; thanks to it these authors have produced the best existing book of its type.

Edgar Ansel Mowrer, whose "Germany Puts the Clock Back" brought him into the ill favor of the Nazi government, has been president of the Association of Foreign Press representatives in Germany. The Association refused to repudiate him when the Hitler régime attempted to have him deported. He is now in this country.

## Dictator, Old Style

BORIS GODUNOV. By Stephen Graham. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1933. \$2.50.

Reviewed by GRAND DUCHESS MARIE

TO most, Boris Godunov is a legendary figure, but not to one brought up in the shadow of the great belfry of St. John, erected by Boris in the heart of the Moscow Kremlin. In the light of actualities his character should assume an added reality as the construction of the St. John belfry in 1600 represented an item in an extensive "building program" conceived by Boris during a period of "depression," a year when the total failure of crops and resulting starvation brought large numbers of restless people to the capital.

Boris himself belongs to an epoch of transition in Russian history, an epoch when the struggle with Asia and its invading hordes was about to terminate, allowing the Russians to relax from a state of constant armed vigilance and turn towards more peaceful pursuits. His was an epoch of transition also for another reason. The dynasty of Moscow Grand Dukes, all of them wise and astute rulers who had consolidated the power and influence of Moscow over the rest of the land, had come to an end.

Ivan the Terrible, the last of these capable rulers, left his throne to a son who was both weak in body and in mind; and Boris, Ivan's man of confidence, became regent soon after the grim old Czar's death. Like Ivan he sought to establish closer contact with the Western world and strove for an outlet on the Baltic Sea. His inclinations were peaceful, and he tried to avoid unnecessary conflicts with neighboring states. He welcomed foreigners to



BORIS GODUNOV

Moscow, particularly physicians, architects, and engineers. He was interested in matters of education, sent men to study abroad, thought of building schools, and even of founding a university in Moscow.

After the death of Ivan's last offspring Boris became Czar, and his rule promised to be a brilliant one but did not fulfil expectations. Boris did not possess the independence of spirit which would have allowed him to rise above his time and surroundings, neither did he have the background of traditional authority to support him. He was never able to assert himself completely upon the throne of the Moscow Grand Dukes. Knowing that in the eyes of his milieu he was a usurper, as time went on he himself became increasingly conscious of the uncertainty of his position and saw his power threatened on all sides. From a good statesman he degenerated into a man haunted by suspicion and doubt. His reign ended in tragedy, involving not only himself and his family but also the whole of Russia.

Mr. Graham's "Boris Godunov" presents us with a masterly description of an epoch in Russian history full of strange happenings, curious personalities, and complicated intrigues. Not only is his narrative based upon the most reliable documentary sources, but it is also permeated with that glamorous and rather mysterious atmosphere of the Russian sixteenth century.