

A Woman's Life in Retrogression

THE WOMAN SHE WAS. By Launcelot Gibberne Sieveking. New York: William Morrow & Co. 1934. \$2.50.

Reviewed by NATHALIE COLBY

ALREADY at thirty-seven this author has lived with variety and depth as actor, poet, book illustrator, and novelist. In the war he was an aviator, a private, R.A.F., and naval officer. At present he is absorbed in television with the B.B.C., where he has been playwright and producer. Vicariously his vista extends into the last century, through his mother who took part in the first stirrings of the feminist movement and to whom the book is dedicated.

These experiences have sifted and shifted themselves into a pattern which bridges the years from 1855 to 1933. Through this formal framework of historical events flows the life of Dame Charlotte D B E and R A—who gives us the personal side of her time. An artist of distinction, the friend of the great men of her day, Charlotte is projected against the background of a tepid marriage, her children, her friend Mrs. Harriet Garside, who foils and amplifies her personality, and groups of relations whose differing generations serve to carve out each period of the inverted sequence.

Inverted—because this tale is told in that new technique which reverses the life current. From the opening chapter where we attend Dame Charlotte's funeral we proceed backward to the finale of her birth. Smoothly, beautifully, the author moves us from each effect back to its cause, every episode accentuated and made valuable by the shadow its previous death casts upon it.

This process of combining the retrogression of time with a gathering momentum of interest, is faultlessly managed. With each step Mr. Sieveking takes us nearer the hidden incident of horror in Charlotte's young life, which sounds in advance its recurrent note of warning, until it bursts nakedly through the crust of her calm environment. The whole weight of the calamity rests upon her. No one shares it. We are told that a weaker woman would have died under the strain.

We are told a great many things about Charlotte. We note them with interest rather than feeling. For in spite of the absorbing quality of the book, it is Charlotte, whom we long in vain to know, who disappoints us, because emotionally she is reported rather than disclosed. Because never once is her secret self unlocked to us. And yet—a woman from whom such force emanated that she could make a man commit suicide in her presence, must perforce conceal a multitude of women suddenly focussed for that single attack on another personality. In Greek tragedy Charlotte's anguish would have risen to a universality of passion in whose scope we could expand ourselves.

Only when she herself touches the recorded happenings of her generation, and history warms her into being under the mantle of Sylvia Pankhurst and the war, do we vibrate to her personality. Nor is she vivified by her friendship with Sargent and Swinburne, by the senile love-making of Rossetti and the flattery of Renoir—for the synthetic woman is blotting out by the authentic figures.

This flatness of Charlotte's personality



FROM THE JACKET DESIGN OF "THE WOMAN SHE WAS"

is no doubt inevitable in the mass motion of a book where the importance of the individual is lost in the conglomerate whole. It is not the book, but the title that dissatisfies us. For it is as a complete and delightful entity, rather than as a life of Charlotte, that the story, with its cherished country, its cultivated society, its oncoming generation which reverberates after the tale is finished, remains with the reader.

Fortunes of a Patriarch

FOUR GENERATIONS. By Naomi Jacob. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1934. \$2.50.

Reviewed by CHARLES ROLAND

EMANUEL GOLLANZ is a Jewish art dealer. Four generations of his family, with representatives in every European capital, form a veritable clan. Intermarriage in the group has become a pleasant habit. Some of them have gone to the synagogue but chiefly they have come to attend the Episcopal service. Emanuel has experienced a profound love for Juliet, who rejects him out of kindness; she is ten years his senior, has been married, had a lover, and as a brilliant singer, loses herself now in her globe-circling career.

To forget the unattainable Juliet, Gollanz marries the charming Viva—both women are Gentile—and for two years the marriage is comfortably pleasant, until he again meets Juliet. The urgency of the earlier, potent love flares anew. Miss Jacob holds that it is possible to solve such an entanglement on a rational and still human basis, and she proceeds to the unraveling with dignity and conscience. We cannot help feeling grateful for her emotional honesty. If the novel is a beacon of social trends, as it should be, perhaps the world is returning to sanity after all.

So far it may be reasoned that Miss Jacob's novel consists of a Galsworthy plot in a G. B. Stern setting. To the extent that Gollanz, stolid business man, succumbs to the gypsy passion, recognizing its primacy, we have Galsworthy. The Jewish background inevitably invites comparison with "The Matriarch"; yet there is no rival here for the Stern opus. The Gollanz family happens to be Jewish; but the story of Emanuel and Viva and Juliet would stand unaltered whatever the tenets of its principals.

After remarking on the emotional honesty and the sense of dramatic values in the novel, it may be unkind to note a nullity of literary merit. But Miss Jacob, honest with herself as with her characters, makes no pretense of fine writing. Descriptive passages get reduced to mere connective links, and the dialogue does not sparkle, though it is veracious. For summer reading, the story is amply absorbing, and many a hammock swaying in the breeze will find its occupant busily tracing the fortunes of Emanuel Gollanz.

One of the realistic portraits is that of his brother, Julian. Whoever has a Julian in the family will appreciate learning how effective a piece of sculpture can be when well-aimed. For this reason alone, art shops may enjoy a flurry of new business. That, and other episodes in the book, notably Emanuel's plea to Juliet, might pass directly to the stage, and doubtless will. Miss Jacob's close association with the theater has stood her in good stead. Meanwhile the novel should attain a substantial and deserved popularity.

The Red and the White

ON THE VOLGA. By Panteleimon Romanof. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1934. \$2.

Reviewed by ARTHUR RUHL

THIS new book by the author of "Three Pairs of Silk Stockings," contains sixteen short stories of Soviet life, to which is tacked a curious sort of literary lean-to in which Romanof gives his impressions of some of the huge new Soviet industrial settlements. Objectively, the New Order is, of course, taken for granted. But Romanof was already an adult when the old order crashed, and he is so instinctively the artist, in almost the pre-revolutionary, or "bourgeois" understanding of the word, that although extremely tactful, he now and then seems to be saying just a wee bit more—or other—than meets the eye.

The longest of the stories, for example, "One of Us," contrasts the new and the old generations in the figures of a father,



PANTELEIMON ROMANOF

foreman of an iron foundry, and his "komsomol" son, just returned after passing his examinations as an engineer in Moscow. The father "was a careful man: he saved his kopeks, never drank, had two cows and a couple of dozen chickens. He was never idle." In short, he has all the characteristics of that pestiferous type which the Bolsheviks call "kulak."

Against this outmoded type, individualistic, limited, rather dour, deaf to the thrilling music of the new collective world, is set the son, contemptuous of his parents' religion, of the primitive old household ways, of family ties, of "getting on in the world" as the father understands that phrase, but open and alive to all sorts of things—even clean country air—which his poor parents never heard of.

And to the father's fumbling, sometimes slightly crotchety, efforts to throw a bridge out to the boy he is inwardly so proud of, the latter simply returns a cool stare of conscious superiority. When the young man leaves the village again, the "komsomols," who have made life so miserable for the father in the factory, give the boy a great send-off while openly snubbing the bewildered father. "There's nothing surprising about that," says the son, with a shrug, "They look on me as 'one of themselves,' while you—you are a stranger."

Well, the son undoubtedly is the superior human type, and granting a revolutionary psychology and Bolshevik predilections, you may take Romanof's story at its face value, and simply accept this superiority. But this sort of difference between two generations is nothing new in the world. It is characteristic of millions of "second-generation" American families. But generally, outside Russia, a certain sporting spirit is expected to accompany such advantages. And the naive insolence which Anton exhibits on the mere basis of having, so to say, learned to wash himself behind the ears, will impress outsiders less as something admirable than as proof that he was an insufferable prig.

Possibly the fixing of that impression was the author's real intention. Every

now and then, in these stories, some humorous, some delicate, even very sentimental, there is a similar suggestion of divided advocacy on the author's part, and readers so inclined may indulge in some rather amusing detective work. There are tales of husbands and wives, lovers and mistresses—the best of the sixteen is that which gives the book its title. It is brief, tragic, objective (for whether the victim was Red or White is neither here nor there); the whole action compressed into the incidents immediately preceding an execution (apparently during the civil war period)—a single thrust of horror set against the beauty of a spring evening and the calm majesty of the flowing river. Here, there is none of the trickiness and mere "artistic" playing with an idea, found occasionally elsewhere. It is true, within itself, and in that other, "universal" sense in which a tale may mirror the life, or perversion of life, of its particular time.

Pioneers of Money

THE LAST PIONEERS. By Melvin Levy. New York: Alfred H. King. 1934. \$2.50.

Reviewed by ALVAH C. BESSIE

FROM 1869 to 1929 Mr. Levy traces the career of Herman Merro, born Chaim Shemanski, son of a village shoemaker in Poland. He had the shrewdness, the lack of scruples, the materials of survival that have characterized certain members of the Jewish race, and with these materials and attributes he built a life that may be found duplicated in a multitude of individuals of different race and origin. He was, in a sense, a pioneer—one of the pioneers of money. Leaving his home in early youth, he knocked around Europe, was for a time a soldier of the Czar, a thief, a pimp, a prestidigitator. All of these experiences qualified him for his eventual success as a finance capitalist. In Alaska of the gold-boom days he made his stake, but not from prospecting. He staved in Nome and entertained, picked up money by every means. He moved on down the coast to the town of Puget, built a hotel, made money of the prostitutes, and married one.

His friend Paul Dexter married another, and he and another fellow Herman had picked up in Nome, Mick Delea, between them built the mill-town, Puget, into "Queen of the Pacific," an open town on whose every activity they levied toll. In course of time Paul became convinced that everything he did was for the welfare of the town. In a sense it was, but things were so arranged that when the town obtained a street-car line, huge sums of money automatically lined the pockets of Paul Dexter; he came to own the town; he had his finger in every pie; he was a great man. Herman never was as wealthy, but he was the guiding hand, he got his share and it was ample. None of his activities, whether running a hotel, buying stolen property, profiteering during the war was strictly honest; neither was it out and out dishonest. He did what many other men would have done under the circumstances. He was a "good" man; he treated his dependents handsomely, whether they were relatives or servants; he had a kind heart. So had Paul; so had Mick Delea. And it was the slump that wiped them out, and it was their sort of activity, reduplicated everywhere, that created the slump.

Mr. Levy has written a racy, intensely interesting book. With a wealth of unobtrusive documentation, he has reconstructed an open town of the Pacific Northwest, during the days of its ascendancy, and he has painted a convincing picture. There is an overtone to the book, ironical, prophetic, and it points the moral of communism more convincingly than many avowed "proletarian" novels.

The death at eighty-eight of Julian Hawthorne, son of Nathaniel Hawthorne, marks the passing of the last of a generation of writers which included Edgar Saltus, H. C. Bunner, and John Habberton. Julian Hawthorne in his day was prolific and popular; he had his hand in more than a hundred books, sometimes producing half a dozen novels in a year.

The BOWLING GREEN

Was Sherlock Holmes an American?

"I think the fellow is really an American, but he has worn his accent smooth with years of London."

—The Three Garridebs

A CAPRICIOUS secrecy was always characteristic of Holmes. He concealed from Watson his American connection. And though Watson must finally have divined it, he also was uncandid with us. The Doctor was a sturdy British patriot: the fact of Holmes's French grandmother was disconcerting, and to add to this his friend's American association and sympathy would have been painful. But the theory is too tempting to be lightly dismissed. Not less than fifteen of the published cases (including three of the four chosen for full-length treatment) involve American characters or scenes. Watson earnestly strove to minimize the appeal of United States landscapes of which Holmes must have told him. The great plains of the West were "an arid and repulsive desert."¹ Vermessa Valley (in Pennsylvania, I suppose?) was "a gloomy land of black crag and tangled forest . . . not a cheering prospect."² Watson's quotation from the child Lucy,—"Say, did God make this country?"—was a humorous riposte to Holmes, spoofing the familiar phrase Watson had heard too often in their fireside talks. There is even a possible suggestion of Yankee timbre in the Doctor's occasional descriptions of the "well-remembered voice." The argument of rival patriotisms was a favorite topic between them. Watson never quite forgave Holmes's ironical jape when after some specially naive Victorian imperialism by the Doctor (perhaps at the time of the '87 Jubilee) Sherlock decorated the wall with the royal V. R. in bullet-pocks. (Or did the Doctor misread as V. R. what was jocularly meant to be V. H.—because Watson too insistently suggested a sentimental interest in Miss Violet Hunter of the Copper Beeches? An H. in bullet-pocks, if the marksman's aim was shaken by a heavy dray in the street, or by the neighboring Underground Railway, might well look like an R.)

Why, again, does Watson write "It was upon the 4th of March, as I have good reason to remember," that the adventure of the Study in Scarlet began? And why was Holmes still at the breakfast table? It was the 4th of March, 1881, and Holmes was absorbed in reading the news dispatches about the inauguration, to take place that day, of President Garfield.

Was Holmes actually of American birth? It would explain much. The jealousy of Scotland Yard, the refusal of knighthood, the expert use of Western argot, the offhand behavior to aristocratic clients, the easy camaraderie with working people of all sorts, the always traveling First Class in trains. How significant is Holmes's "Hum!" when he notes that Irene was born in New Jersey.³ And Watson's careful insertion of "U.S.A." after every American address, which always irritates us, was probably a twit to tease his principal. True, as Inspector MacDonald once said, "You don't need to import an American from outside in order to account for American doings." But let us light the cherry-wood pipe and examine the data more systematically.

Holmes's grandmother was "the sister of Vernet, the French artist."⁴ This of course was Horace Vernet (1789-1863), the third of the famous line of painters in that family. Horace Vernet's father (who had been decorated by Napoleon for his *Battle of Marengo* and *Morning of Auster-*

litz) came from Bordeaux and Horace's grandfather, the marine painter, from Avignon. Here we have an association with the South of France which Holmes acknowledges by his interest in Montpellier where he probably had French kindred. Like Sir Kenelm Digby, who delivered there the famous discourse on the Powder of Sympathy,⁵ Holmes knew Montpellier as an important center of scientific studies. (See *The Empty House*) It is deplorable that our Holmes researchers have done so little to trace his French relationship. It is significant that though he declined a knighthood in Britain he was willing to accept the Legion of Honor in France.⁶

Much might be said of Sherlock's presumable artistic and political inheritance from the Vernets. His great-uncle's studio in Paris was "a rendezvous of Liberals."⁷ Surely the untidiness which bothered Watson at 221B is akin to the description of Horace Vernet "painting tranquilly, whilst boxing, fencing, drum and horn playing were going on, in the midst of a medley of visitors, horses, dogs and models."⁸ Holmes's grandmother, one of this radical and bohemian and wide-travelling family, brought up among the harrowing scenes of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, may quite possibly have emi-

before proceeding to recount some specific passages which prove our hero's exceptional interest in America let me add one more suggestion. The hopeless muddle of any chronology based on the *Gloria Scott* and *Musgrave Ritual* is familiar to all students; Miss Dorothy Sayers has done her brilliant best to harmonize the anomalies. But all have wondered just what Holmes was doing between the time he left the university and his taking rooms in Montague Street. My own thought is that the opening of the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore in 1876, and the extraordinary and informal opportunities offered there for graduate study, tempted him across the water. He was certainly familiar with papers in the chemical journals written by Ira Remsen, the brilliant young professor who took charge of the new laboratories in Baltimore. Probably in Baltimore he acquired his taste for oysters⁹ and on a hot summer day noted the depth to which the parsley had sunk into the butter.¹⁰ In that devoted group of young scholars and scientists, and in the musical circles of that hospitable city he must have been supremely happy. His American-born mother (or father) had often told him of the untrammelled possibilities of American life. The great Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia (1876) was surely worth visit; there he observed the mark of the Pennsylvania Small Arms Company.¹¹ During his year or so in the States he travelled widely. He met Wilson Hargreave (who later became important in the New York Police Department¹²) perhaps in connection with the case of *Vanderbilt and the Yeggman*, a record of which he kept in his scrapbook.¹³ He went to Chicago,

story of *The Resident Patient* the episode of the Henry Ward Beecher portrait which he had already told in *The Cardboard Box*.¹⁴ It is interesting to note, in passing, that when Holmes spoke in that episode of having written two monographs on Ears in the *Anthropological Journal*, the alert editor of *The Strand* at once took the hint. A few months later, in October and November 1893, the *Strand* printed "A Chapter on Ears," with photos of the ears of famous people—including an ear of Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes. Surely, from so retiring a philosopher, then 84 years old, this intimate permission could not have been had without the privileged intervention of Sherlock.

Speaking of the *Strand Magazine*, it is odd that our researchers do not more often turn back to those original issues which solve many problems. The much belabored matter of Holmes's university, for instance. There was never any question about it, for in Sidney Paget's illustrations Holmes is clearly shown sitting in Trevor's garden wearing a straw hat with a *Light Blue* ribbon.¹⁵ (He was, of course, a boxing Blue.) Why has such inadequate honor been paid to those admirable drawings by Paget?—Oxford was unthinkable to Holmes; with what pleasure he noted that Colonel Moran¹⁶ and John Clay¹⁷ were both "Eton and Oxford."

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

(Concluded next week)

The Economic Front

HISTOIRE DE LA CRISE. By Richard Lewinsohn. Paris: Payot. 1934.

Reviewed by PAUL SCHWARZ

I HAVE just read a book not for the purpose of reviewing it but for the purpose of learning something from it. It is by Richard Lewinsohn, the talented German author of such well-known books as "Das Geld in der Politik"; "Geschichte der Inflation," and "Amerika in der Krise." After looking through its 230 pages, I confess to be baffled over the aspects of an economic cataclysm which is as senseless as it is contrary to human interests.

Lewinsohn's book is for the greater part written around the American crisis. It analyzes the prosperity boom, the American standard of living, price and agricultural problems, and the devaluation of the dollar. It is a brilliant exposé of economic conditions and the financial disequilibrium which led to the debacle of 1929. It sketches reparations and other debt problems and their consequences. Currency problems occupy considerable space.

Dry as the material may seem, the book is written in a very lively fashion. No chapter seems to me more fascinating than that dealing with the failure of financial trusts. Here we find our old friends and economic wizards, the Belgian Loewenstein, the Britisher Hatry, the German Lahusen Nordwolle concern (incidentally one of the great mysteries surrounding Hitler's ascent to power), the great enigma Ivar Kreuger, and Samuel Insull.

The author points to the great similarities between the political and economic dictators who tolerate no control whatsoever. It is exactly this lack of public control which led the highly complicated economic machinery of our times into the present mire.

The first Roosevelt year is also adequately pictured. Fortunately, the author does not attempt to present a blueprint of to-

(Continued on next page)



SHERLOCK HOLMES—WITH CAMBRIDGE (LIGHT BLUE) HATBAND
(Strand Magazine, 1893)

grated to America.¹⁸ It is not inconceivable then that at least one of Holmes's parents was an American. My own conjecture is that there was some distant connection with the famous Holmes household of Cambridge (Mass.). Every reader has noticed Holmes's passionate interest in breakfasts: does this not suggest the Autocrat of the Breakfast Table?

I will not cloud the issue with futile speculation, though certainly it is of more importance than many of the controversies (such as, was Holmes's dressing gown blue, purple, or mouse-colored?).¹² But

where he made his first acquaintance with organized gangsterism.¹⁹ I suggest that he perhaps visited his kinsmen the Sherlocks in Iowa—e.g. in Des Moines, where a younger member of that family, Mr. C. C. Sherlock, has since written so ably on rural topics.²⁰ He must have gone to Topeka; and of course he made pilgrimage to Cambridge, Mass., to pay respect to the great doctor, poet and essayist. From Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., then a rising lawyer in Boston, he heard first-hand stories of the Civil War, which fired his interest in "that gallant struggle." Indeed he spoke to Watson so often about the Civil War that Watson repeated in the

¹The Empty House. Cf also *The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax*.
²Anne Macdonell: *The Closet of Sir Kenelm Digby* (1910) p. xxxi.

³The Golden Pince-Nez.
⁴Encyclopaedia Britannica, article Vernet.
⁵Ibid. Perhaps Sherlock as a child got his first interest in boxing and fencing from great-uncle Horace.

⁶Turning to the telephone book, as Dr. Watson did for Garrideb, I find that several of the Vernet (Verner) family came to the U. S. There are 2 Vernets in Brooklyn, 3 Verners in Manhattan, 1 Verner in Floral Park, L. I.

⁷Elementary. This particular gown was blue when new. (The Twisted Lip.) It had gone purple by the time of the Blue Carbuncle. During the long absence 1891-94, when Mrs. Hudson faithfully aired and sunned it in the back yard, it faded to mouse (The Empty House).

⁸The Sign of Four.

⁹I forget the locus of this allusion. Please will someone else look it up? Holmes's interest in the butter-dish is shown in *The Musgrave Ritual*.

¹⁰The Valley of Fear.

¹¹The Dancing Men.

¹²The Sussex Vampire.

¹³"My knowledge of the crooks of Chicago," v. *The Dancing Men*. Cf also allusions in *The Valley of Fear* and *The Three Garridebs*.

¹⁴C. C. Sherlock: *Care and Management of Rabbits* (1920); *The Modern Hen* (1922); *Bull Gardening* (1922), etc.; v. *Who's Who in America*. Iowa is a great apiarian State; undoubtedly from the Sherlock side came the interest in roses, bee-keeping, etc.

¹⁵Otherwise how could he know that there was no such person as Dr. Lysander Starr? (The Three Garridebs.)

¹⁶There was no duplication in the stories as first printed: *The Cardboard Box* in the *Strand Magazine* of January 1893, *The Resident Patient* in August of the same year. In the latter story as it absurdly appears in the collected editions the description of the "blazing hot day in August" is repeated for "a close rainy day in October." The explanation is that Dr. Watson withheld *The Cardboard Box* from book publication for 24 years; perhaps because it revealed some anti-American bias in his never having had the portrait of Beecher framed. But the Beecher incident showed Holmes's keen observation, and in compiling the *Memoirs* Watson carelessly spliced or trepanned it into *The Resident Patient*. Then, when he republished *The Cardboard Box* in *His Last Bow* (1917), he forgot this.

¹⁷*Strand Magazine*, Vol. V, p. 398. While speaking of the *Gloria Scott*, has it been pointed out that Holmes never admitted to Watson why he chose Mrs. Hudson's lodgings? She was the widow of the ruffian Hudson who blackmailed old Mr. Trevor—and so more than ever "a long-suffering woman." And of course the rapid disappearance of Watson's bull-pup was because Holmes had been bitten by one in college days.

¹⁸The Empty House.

¹⁹The Red-Headed League.

¹A Study in Scarlet.

²The Valley of Fear.

³A Scandal in Bohemia.

⁴The Valley of Fear.

⁵The Greek Interpreter.