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A German Girl's Autobiography

RESTLESS DAYS. By Lilo Linke. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1935. \$3.

Reviewed by ROSIE GRAEFENBERG

THIS is the story of a young German girl, who grew up during what Mr. Hitler calls the "fourteen shameful years of the German Republic." Her parents, Miss Linke tells us, were convinced that Germany could have won the war, if the revolution had not stabbed the army in the back on behalf of the Jewish internationale. This was the attitude of the German petty bourgeoisie, who paved the way for National Socialism and acclaimed it fervently when it came to power in 1933.

A passionate ambition to achieve something above the average made the girl critical of her narrow environment. A girl friend, Anne, daughter of a Jewish scientist, became a strong influence.

I do not know [she writes] what would have become of me, without Anne. Perhaps uncontrolled sentimentalities might have led me the same way as my family, my school friends—and as it seems at the moment—the majority of my countrymen: into the arms of the Nazis. As it was, they never tempted me for a moment. The belief in a masterful spirit, knowledge, understanding, and justice made me their enemy. . . .

While a burning ambition to achieve something above the average is apt to be lost in weaker personalities after puberty, Miss Linke, obviously gifted with a certain cautious coolness, makes it her principle of life. Her success with the *Wandervogel*, a youth movement, where she became "leader" of the group of girls, is of course only a beginning. Yet the chapters on the *Wandervogel* are the most remarkable of the book.

The German youth-movement of the present is a typical German phenomenon. Many features of National Socialism—from the cult of collectivism as against that of individualism and the pagan solstice-celebrations to the *Heil*—go back to it. Miss Linke does not attempt to analyze the historical meaning of the *Wandervogel* movement, but she makes you see the young people of this confused German after-war and inflation era, as they wander through the wonderful German lands with their guitars and their songs. You see these girls and boys share their struggle and their poverty, their idealism and their hope, and you understand why their relationship is so real, though it is so chaste.

The conflict between community and personality sprang up soon enough for the heroine of "Restless Days." It wore the features of a male *Wandervogel*. The "group," resenting the interest of the "Leader" in an individual, and feeling neglected, imposed on her the choice of belonging heart and soul to the community or of resigning. Miss Linke resigned—not so much because she was in love with the boy but because of her principles. "You make a god of the community and degrade the individual into its slaves," she tells her "group" in her valedictory speech.

It must have been more than pure chance that this girl with her liberalistic leanings got a job as secretary of the "League of Young Democrats," the youth movement of the democratic party. Yet the narrative of the agony of German democracy, which Miss Linke witnesses

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PATHETIC LOVER AND GILDED VILLAIN RETURN TO BROADWAY
Humphrey Bogart as Duke Mantee (left), Leslie Howard as Alan Squier (seated, center) in "The Petrified Forest" by Robert E. Sherwood. Photo by Vandamm Studio.

Broadway's Bright Ideas

BY ALLARDYCE NICOLL

IN "The Petrified Forest" a young man who has proved a failure in life takes his insurance policy from his pocket, writes on it the name of a young woman as the recipient, commits suicide by persuading a gangster to shoot him, and leaves the next generation to enjoy itself; in "Awake and Sing" an old man who has proved a failure in life also takes his insurance policy from his pocket, writes on it the name of a young man as the recipient, commits suicide by slipping off a tenement roof, and so likewise leaves the next generation to awakened and sonorous enjoyment. The duplication of this device has an undoubted interest. It serves to remind us that, even though we are accustomed to laud this dramatist for his freshness of vision and that one for his distinctive originality, there is truly nothing new under the acting area floods. Theatrical audiences over countless generations have proved that they want, not novelty, but merely the semblance of novelty. Certain definite formulas they have established firmly by their approval and the really skilful, or lucky, playwright is he who succeeds in planning the greatest number of variations on time-worn themes. The self-sacrificer of "Awake and Sing" is old and he is taking the house dog for a very necessary constitutional on the roof; his companion in "The Petrified Forest" is moderately young and confronts a gunman's sub-machine-gun: these are sufficient distinctions for the stage, and spectators, actually rejoicing in the reception of a long-tried favorite, imagine they are getting the thrill of unexpected encounters with unknown faces. Writing a play is rather like taking a ticket in the Irish Sweep: in one drum are names of situations, situations as varied as those of life itself, in another are names of characters, from New York to Los Angeles, from London to Timbuctoo. The dramatist hopefully dips in his hands and draws a set of situation cards and then a set of character cards. Two rules there are in the game. First, in the two sets good cards must match if there is to be success. Second, and more important, the playwright must draw runners, if he is to win. Should he be so fortunate as to draw even three runners in each set and find good situations matching good characters, then,

in these days, he may confidently expect to come near the Pulitzer Prize.

For some hitherto unrevealed reason the character presented in "The Petrified Forest" and in "Awake and Sing" has always proved a very capable runner. The early drama had him in the guise of the Pathetic Lover who sighed for the love of a lady he might never attain and who often self-sacrificingly abandoned his life that she might enjoy the devotion of the Hero. The age of melodrama knew him in the thousands and in the days of Dryden he multifariously expired on the stage with the most proper of sentiments on his paling lips. Latterly as Pathetic Lover pure and simple (in more senses than one) he has not been quite so popular; a little experience and a judicious sowing of wild oats succeeds today in adding spice to his appearance. One of his Protean entrances in modern dress is made by the elderly dramatist of "Accent on Youth." True, this gentleman does not take his insurance policy from his pocket, but he condescends to write a love scene for a less aged, more athletic, and less witty competitor who, thanks partly to the aid thus given him, carries off for a time the charming young idol of his affections. Why failure should be theatrically appealing is a mystery; perhaps we all recognize our own stupidities and limitations; but whatever the cause, when we are one of an audience, we find a strange sympathy for such persons, even for those who, like Dr. Cardin of "The Children's Hour," are only vaguely of their kin, or who, like Charlotte Lovell of "The Old Maid," are but cousins.

If the Pathetic Lover (genus Failure) was paradoxically one of the most successful types in the old-fashioned heroic play and melodrama, the black-cloaked Villain ran him a good second. Of dramatic villains there have been, and are, two essential kinds: the guilty villain and the gilded villain. The first is unrelieved in sable; the second is discovered to possess, in spite of his enormities, an unsuspected heart of gold. Between the two, honors are about even. In watching evil unregenerated man derives peculiar pleasure; but he also derives pleasure from the recognition that, however bad appearances may be, a human pulse throbs under a hard-

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The Russian Lincoln

TSAR OF FREEDOM. By Stephen Graham. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1935. \$3.50.

Reviewed by GRAND DUCHESS MARIE

IT is only recently that Russia has begun to attract the attention of the world. Hitherto her history and her problems were too remote to excite interest. At present however she has become a center of study and observation and a subject of heated discussion. But few know anything of her past, and for the majority it is as if her history started with the advent of communism. There is no comprehension of the earlier stages of her development and without this comprehension a fair judgment of her present problems is almost impossible.

The Russian rulers, the most criticized and misunderstood in the world, were judged entirely as individual characters without any consideration for the situations they had to deal with. Their efforts to the good, their constructive work, were either overlooked or belittled; their errors, personal weaknesses, and failures were emphasized and held in prominence. Yet they contributed their share in the building of the Empire and in the shaping of its destinies. Some of them expressed the spirit of their epoch as regards their country and they also crystallized the aspirations of the people, giving them a definite expression.

This was particularly true of Alexander II, a sovereign who embodied the Russian will toward intellectual release and emancipation. He was a monarch of a new type, a Western minded man, profoundly liberal in his convictions and aspirations and a realistic humanitarian. Not only was he well intentioned, but he had a faculty which few sovereigns possess however noble their aims, he had the feeling of what was timely, he also had the capacity of penetrating below the surface and understanding the real needs of the people. He was a man of courage and determination but a lover of peace. His reforms, the greatest of which was the liberation of twenty-three million serfs, amounted to a revolution, but it was so wisely conducted that it created no social upheaval. The scope and importance of his reforms were tremendous and they were achieved in spite of overwhelming difficulties and opposition on all sides. Under his reign Russia's intellectual forces blossomed forth,

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By JULIAN HUXLEY

Broadway's Bright Ideas

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ened skin. The murderer who, fleeing from his enemies, stops to befriend an orphan child, is wondrously appealing; as the creator of Duke Mantee knew when he made that killer chide the hero for his too, too cruel words to an old, old man. Among villains, Miss Hellman picked a rather good one in "The Children's Hour"; her combination of Iagoish malignity and of lisping childhood would be hard to beat. Albert Maltz elected a more familiar, but for that reason none the less effective, example for "The Black Pit"; his Prescott stems directly from the days of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" and melodramatic joys. For "Post Road" W. D. Steele and Norma Mitchell decided to have a whole bevy of villains, not one of them with hopes of redemption. Of the second type, the Carole Arden of "Personal Appearance" is an interesting specimen. Drifting glamorously on stage she nearly succeeds in alienating the affections of the noble Hero from the Heroine; we are, however, duly informed that a kindly spirit flutters within her breast and appeal to that (together with a skilful employment of Hollywood sentiment) causes her to drift as glamorously away. Had she appeared in melodrama, she would have been the mistress and tool of Duke Mantee in "The Petrified Forest." Different as she seems, Judith Anderson's part in "The Old Maid" belongs to the same lineage.

An examination of these Failures and Villains serves to prove that there are certain things which will always bring success in the theatre and, still more important, that the theatre demands, not individualized and intimately observed personalities, but a series of stock types. From the presentation of so-called realistic plays we have cheated ourselves into believing that the play is able to delineate life in the same way as the novel can, but the fancy is a vain one. In the theatre unconsciously we expect and fervently we welcome the old favorites. The Stupid Boy and the Innocent Male are always

present. The Hero and the Heroine are always present. The villain is always present. The comic is always present. The romantic is always present. The tragic is always present. The pathetic is always present. The grotesque is always present. The absurd is always present. The ridiculous is always present. The ludicrous is always present. The monstrous is always present. The hideous is always present. The ugly is always present. The repulsive is always present. The detestable is always present. The execrable is always present. The abominable is always present. The detestable is always present. The execrable is always present. The abominable is always present.

thetic Lover thrown in for extra measure, in "Man and Superman" and in "Candida." The innocent hero of "Personal Appearance" gets one of his best and most sympathetic laughs when he has his most innocent line to utter. Most appealing proves the dramatist of "Accent on Youth" when he is most dumb; the involuntarily erring husband of "Three Men on a Horse" pleases us best when he is most stupid. A common and serviceable device is to display this worm turning; and in turning that worm invariably takes center stage. Sam Feinschreiber of "Awake and Sing" does it when he comes in gasping for Mama; so does Erwin Trowbridge of "Three Men on a Horse" when he succeeds in dominating his captors; even George Preble has his moment as, after a radio-tinkering existence, he faces up to the different music of a Church Meeting. Maybe the element of unexpectedness enters in here: unquestionably its exploitation is another sure-fire winner in the playhouse. Audiences derive a thrilled and amused excitement when the gangster of "The Petrified Forest" reproves the Hero for insulting the old man: and "Personal Appearance" has for its final,

and successful, curtain-line the statement by the would-be refined cinema star that her manager is, so to say, the male offspring of a lady dog.

This, however, carries us to yet another dramatic device. Spectators have always been interested and amused if they see a situation wherein the characters on the stage are forced to reveal something they have hitherto carefully concealed. Any dramatist knows how effective it is to make the hero begin to take off his pants or the heroine her dress; equally effective is a spiritual stripping. Sometimes the scene is brutal as that which shows Captain Schlegel in "Till the Day I Die" raving hysterically in thwarted rage: but more commonly the device has a laughter-moving quality akin to that of "Personal Appearance," or else is associated with the contrast between fiction and life. Pirandello has created an entire international reputation on this one motif alone. When W. S. Gilbert built up an imaginary "Palace of Truth," an enchanted spot entering wherein all persons were forced to dispense with their daily lies, he was composing "The Petrified Forest" of the seventies. What today is accomplished by means of a Black Mesa filling-station and a gangster's gun was effected in Victorian times by a fairy palace and a magician's wand. Nor does "Accent on Youth" stand far off. The entry of fiction into the world of the real has close affinities to this; that device, too, has intrigued audiences from the days of Beaumont and Fletcher ("The Knight of the Burning Pestle") through those of Frederick Reynolds ("The Dramatist") down to those of our very own.

The truth is, of course, that plays are like jokes: they continually seem to be, but essentially are not, new. On a modest computation a thousand public dinner parties are held every night of the year—in all, let us say, some 350,000. At each of these from one to half a dozen speakers rise nervously to their feet, finger their ties, push their chairs back and their coffee cups forward, and proceed to produce a few lines of verse or a few sentences of prose. The number of such publicly uttered jests amounts in a year to massive millions: yet several famous critic-philosophers have solemnly assured us, and have backed up their assurances with all the weight of their scholarly wisdom, that there are only about a dozen essential comic situations from which these myriad variations have come. Man's ability to devise such variations and his unending power of deriving fresh interest therefrom are qualities which, to an impartial observer, are at once awe-inspiring and a trifle pathetic.

Like jokes, not only dramatic characters but whole plays find their basis in firmly fixed situations of an eternally established kind. "Abie's Irish Rose" does not at first sight look like "Romeo and Juliet"; but closer examination reveals that the fundamental action of both is the same. Not only so, but between the time when Shakespeare wrote his tragedy of love and Anne Nichols her comedy, there have been popular on the stage hundreds of plays, serious and laughable, wherein two sweethearts find their course of wooing rendered thorny and hard because of

family prejudice. The combination of Hero and Heroine with Family Opposition is one of the perennial winners. Another of the never-failing winners is the Melodramatic Rescue. Take a Distressed Heroine in the clutches of a Villain (who may be at times merely Adverse Circumstances), show a Hero rescuing her, and your play cannot fail. Rudolf Besier knew this when he wrote "The Barretts of Wimpole Street," casting Elizabeth Barrett as Heroine, her father as Villain, and Robert Browning as Hero. Browning's carrying of Elizabeth from her father's house was just as good as any cowboy's thrillingly equestrian feats in preserving a fair maid of the ranches from the marauding cattle-thieves. Robert Sherwood knew it, too, when he wove his philosophical reflections into a framework of a similar sort. Conflict of Love and Honor is a third bringer of success. Display your Hero passionately devoted to your Heroine and let some outside force, Honor, create a mental battle within his heart, and you have an appealing force as powerful as Robert Browning's unflinching and unflinching passion. For centuries dramatists subsisted on these Love and Honor themes. Generally their Heroes and Heroines were princes and princesses: but Albert Maltz makes the conflict equally appealing when he disguises them as a miner and his wife in "The Black Pit."

Such a change of dress, naturally, is essential, just as Shakespeare's Capulets and Montagues are transformed into Miss Maudslowi and Mr. Maudslowi in "The Barretts of Wimpole Street." The change of dress, naturally, is essential, just as Shakespeare's Capulets and Montagues are transformed into Miss Maudslowi and Mr. Maudslowi in "The Barretts of Wimpole Street."

tings themselves. One of the dramatist's problems is to motivate adequately the coming together of his persons. The Roman playwrights did it by setting every play in a street or a city square. Later, the Elizabethans and their followers chose taverns: later still coffee-houses came in fashion: and later even than that, grand hotels. To obtain seeming novelty demands constant search: "Personal Appearance" and "Post Road" secure it by placing their action in tourists' homes. The entry of extraneous elements—a cinema star whose automobile has broken down or a set of crooks who have chosen this as their hide-away—provides just the contrast that the drama has ever demanded.

For all this utilization of ancient material the playwrights are not to be condemned: but it is good to call these facts to mind lest we imagine the theatre to be something it can never hope to become and ask of the dramatists something they can never hope to attain. We are unjust to a great play if we relate it too intimately to life. The life of the theatre is a thing distinct in itself, with its own rules, its own conventions, and its own interests. If "The Petrified Forest" or "Children's Hour" or "The Black Pit" succeeds it is not because these are excerpts from life or even because they use material from life: it is because they have made use of some of the theatre's oldest stock situations, stock thrills, and stock jests, because they have so adapted or handled their material as to introduce those qualities which generations have recognized as constituting the essentially dramatic. "Hamlet" is a great play precisely because it has kinship with the crudest of melodramas, and "She Stoops to Conquer" is a clever comedy because it has a basis in farce. After all the best jokes are the oldest.

Allardyce Nicoll, a noted British historian of the drama, is George Pierce Baker's successor as chairman of the department of drama at Yale University.

An Informal Defense of Queen Victoria

QUEEN VICTORIA. By E. F. Benson. New York: Longmans, Green & Co. 1935. \$3.50.

Reviewed by CHARLES DAVID ABBOTT

AS a biographer, Mr. Benson has several outstanding qualities, all of which were won, perhaps, from his long apprenticeship to the novel. He has a remarkable ease of narrative, which makes event follow event with precision and grace; he has the collector's fancy for knowing all the facts, no matter how trivial; he has a quiet humor, quite free from any bitterness of wit, that enjoys gossip for its own sake and savors it as a kind of art in itself; and, most important of all, he has the suavity and gentleness of the born spectator, whom nothing can move very deeply but who understands even the most extraordinary aberrations of conduct without feeling contempt for their authors. These are very great gifts for a biographer, since they lead almost inevitably to the

production of books which are rich in entertainment and full of information, books that have charm and vivacity and the polish that marks the elegant drawing-room. If they lack power and compelling prophetic insight, it is because they have the defects of their virtues.

"Queen Victoria" is the unchronological sequence to Mr. Benson's "King



domin in gaiety and gossip were not inconsiderable. Naturally it covers some of the same ground, but with a difference in perspective and emphasis. It is a good story, told with an agreeable lightness of touch. The characters are all deftly, if superficially, presented, and the minor ones are frequently summed up with great intelligence in a few lines. Stockmar, Lehzen, and John Brown, to mention only a few, are admirably understood, for all the brevity of their treatment. Larger figures, like Palmerston and Disraeli, are less complete since they are seen almost wholly through the eyes of the Queen. It is with his three major characters, however, that Mr. Benson is at his best. To Victoria, Albert, and Edward the informality of his method contrives, by means of acute observations which have the manner of afterthoughts, to give a new familiarity, so that one begins to feel as if one were a regular visitor at Windsor's domestic tea-parties and as if it would be quite usual to ask Bertie for another scone. And this atmosphere he evokes without a trace of that vulgarity which would be inevitable from a hand less skilful.

Mr. Benson has come to admire the calm common sense that eventually grew out of Victoria's early petulance, the grave altruism and self-sacrificing industry of Albert, the geniality and sportsmanship of Edward, and to see in the whole of the trio an essential family solidarity notable for its wise efficiency and respectability, which even Edward's lapses from grace could not seriously mar. His admiration is so sincere and open, and the realism of his scenes so pleasant and homelike, that the most hardened of anti-Victorians could scarcely fail to respond, at least a little, to this mild, non-irritating kind of advocacy. Nor is it poetically unjust that, after the wit and malice of Strachey's brilliant thrusts of fourteen years ago, there should be this smooth and able defense, in a style and manner so unlike Strachey's.

April of Our Desire

By LOLA RIDGE

IS not this April of our brief desire
That stirs the robins to a twittering
But waste vibration of some vaster spring
That moves the void to utterance? This fire
Once babbled on our hills (that have forgot
Their fiery accents) when the earth was cleft
And flooding in her canyons, raging hot
Ere this intricate, fair design was left.

Long, long before strange creatures overhead
Cast wheeling shadows on the desert wings
Flamed from out the mountains; radiant things
That stood erect upon each blazing rim,
Of horned horizons, shone like seraphim,
And shook the earth with their enormous tread.