

Gemütlichkeit

MY LIFE AND WORK. By Dr. Adolph Lorenz. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1936. \$3.50.

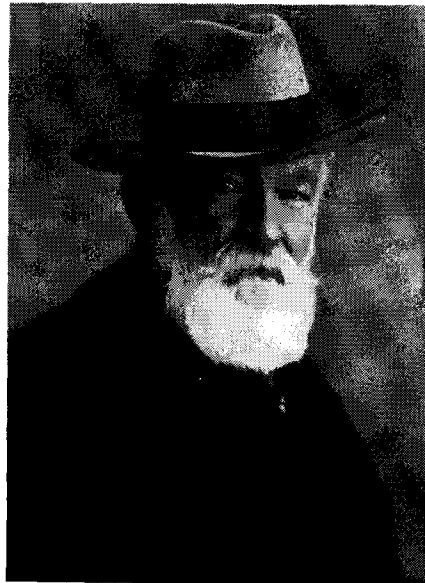
Reviewed by MABEL S. ULRICH, M.D.

IF you have ever been in Vienna—or even if you haven't—you will find sheer delight in this book. Not that it contains a great deal about the Kaiserstadt auf der Donau, but because it is permeated throughout with that zest for good human living, that combination of almost childlike simplicity and true sophistication, that genial warmth which for centuries has made and still makes of that old city the most endearing of all the capitals of the world—even today when "Vienna is a noble lady still in mourning dress, but deliberating how to enliven her dark clothes with a bit of color." The subtitle of Dr. Lorenz's book might well be what he terms "a bit of Viennese philosophy of life." "Work, work hard if need be, but never forget that you are a human being and not a beast of burden destined to die in harness." "Don't miss anything but be moderate in everything." And certainly one can say of this man that he has indeed missed nothing although one may be permitted to doubt if moderation was invariably his rule. He gives us a vivid picture of tremendous work but he interlards it throughout with all the human joys. He tells us of "bloodless operations," but close on the heels of straightening deformities comes the fun of eating, drinking, travel, sports, the theatre, paintings, marbles, of building one's house, the pleasure in pretty women, the charm of children, the delight in nature. Truly here is a life crowded with big and little experiences, from all of which now in his eighty-fourth year, he extracts for us color, humor, wisdom, and human understanding—in short "Gemütlichkeit."

Adolph Lorenz was the son of poor Silesian peasants. His father was a harness-maker who kept a little inn for the coachmen who came to him to have their harnesses repaired. His mother, a peasant woman, fired by admiration for an elder brother who had succeeded in becoming an imposing figure in one of the large Austrian monasteries, determined even before her first-born had come into the world, that he should become "a grand gentleman," and succeeded in so impressing the young Adolph with the intensity of her conviction that there was never a time in his life when he doubted his destiny. How the lad worked his way through the Gymnasium and the medical school in Vienna, how his delight in "nice, pretty girls" made him renounce his dream of priesthood, how under the glamorous influence of

the famous Billroth and Albert he dreamt of becoming a great teacher-surgeon is all told with gay exuberance and without a trace of vanity. Difficulties and humiliations he took easily in his stride, and what he remembers and depicts most entertainingly now are the humorous incidents which came his way, and the colorful personalities of his teachers and associates. "To be poor, healthy, and young gives life its swing."

Then came his first, and what seemed at the time, a fatal set-back. Close to the top of his profession, the proud possessor of a coveted assistantship, his entire career collapsed by reason of the poisoning of his hands by carbolic acid which rendered his skin so permanently sensitive that he had no choice but to renounce all dreams of operative surgery. A chance remark from his chief drove him reluc-



DR. ADOLPH LORENZ

tantly into orthopedics, at that time a disdained stepchild of the medical sciences.

Of the way in which the Gymnastics teacher became the world's greatest orthopedist we are given scarcely a glimpse, yet we can guess that his path was by no means all rose-strewn. However, the news of his work spread, and this modest peasant was sent for by kings and queens, by lords in Japan, Australia, India, Spain. And what lively little pictures he shows us of some of these personages. When he is "imported," as he says, to America, his astonishment is boundless, and surely no traveller to these shores has written more amusingly of his first visit. Every doctor who reads his account of the license examination forced upon him in Illinois and his terror thereof will greet it with a chuckle.

Back in his beloved Vienna, patients and money poured in upon him. But with

the war all changed once again. His securities melted away, a serious operation confronting him, he felt that he was indeed growing old. "Old, sick, and poor, God have mercy." But to this man hopelessness was ever of the briefest duration. "Get well again, get fit to work again, and old age and poverty lose their terror," he says stoutly, and he starts out once more. Back he comes to America to raise money for destitute Austrians, and, shepherded by Senator Copeland, then Health Commissioner, makes a brilliant comeback. He returns to Austria but now to "abdicate." Astounded when proposed for the Nobel Prize, he confesses to weeks of elated expectation, but when he loses out by one vote his philosophy does not desert him. "What an old fool I was to have allowed hope artificially kindled to grow to a conquering flame!" So he takes to play-writing!

To give the full flavor of this ripe, wise, and so humanly lovable life one is tempted to quote indefinitely. But perhaps it is as well that space will not permit of recklessly dragging too many sentences from their context. All of it should be read as it stands. Too seldom does it happen that age is both equipped and feels the desire to impart its story to the hurrying procession behind it. When this happens, and when the story is one of courage, humor, and rich experience, surely we are favored indeed and should stand up and cheer.

Conquests of Medicine

DISEASE AND DESTINY. By Ralph Major. New York: D. Appleton-Century Company. 1936. \$3.50.

Reviewed by HOWARD W. HAGGARD

EVIDENCE is rapidly accumulating to demonstrate the profound influence that disease has had upon the development of civilization. Medical knowledge and medical practices, in so far as they were scientific and effective in controlling disease, have been important factors even in political development. This fact—tardily recognized by historians—furnishes the thesis of Dr. Major's book.

The time is ripe for insistence upon the recognition of the medical aspects of general history. This book could not have been written even a few decades ago in its present form. Each of the chapters tells of the influence upon mankind of some important disease; the development of means for controlling the disease; and the resultant beneficial changes. In each case the control is modern, literally of our generation. No other field of equal importance offers such solution of its basic sociological problems. In the midst of the welter of present-day political and economic search and fumble, trial and error (there is no science yet in these

fields) the importance of the fact cannot be overemphasized that one, and perhaps only one, of the major features in shaping man's destiny has at last come under man's control.

The diseases which furnish the author with the material for his chapters are smallpox, diphtheria, malaria, leprosy, typhus, yellow fever, syphilis, plague, and tuberculosis. These are the most serious epidemic infections with which man has been confronted and yet the author can in each case tell of its eradication from our fortunate generation. The plague—the Black Death—which devastated Athens in the days of Pericles, Rome in the time of Marcus Aurelius, and London in the time of Charles, broke out in the United States in 1924; it was brought under control with a loss of only thirty-three lives as contrasted with the millions of the past. Of the amazing decline of tuberculosis in this century the author says truly that it is “one of the most spectacular and significant events in the history of our times.”

Dr. Major is professor of medicine in the University of Kansas; he not only knows the field of which he writes, but there is about his way of writing a restraint and certainty of factual matter that gives a sense of reliability. He has not here copied the old stories with their bias and their errors; he has visited the scenes where they were enacted; he has talked to men who have known and seen. And with this reliability it is more than refreshing that he can enliven his pages with anecdotes—medical anecdotes—of famous men. For the historian who has repeated and for the layman who has believed that Washington was bled to death by his physicians, it may be of interest to know that in reality he died of diphtheria. The legend of the excessive bleeding, so says Dr. Major, grew out of political propaganda.

Facts such as this—and the book is replete with them—may be matters of only passing interest, but such is not the case when the author, as he occasionally does, deals with the diseases of men who have made history in our times. The reader should turn to the most fascinating chapter in this wholly fascinating book, “the worst plague of all,” and read a speculation (it is purely such) on the part which the pale spirochete of syphilis may have played in shaping the World War and the Russian Revolution. The doctrines of Nietzsche that dominated Teutonic views were the doctrines of a man suffering from syphilis of the brain. He was a parietic. And Lenin, so Dr. Major learns from physicians who treated this revolutionary leader, was likewise a parietic.

Howard W. Haggard is associate professor of applied physiology at Yale University. His “What You Should Know about Health and Disease” and “Devils, Drugs and Doctors” met with critical and general acclaim.

Of Thee I Sing

ROOTS OF AMERICA. By Charles Morrow Wilson. New York: Funk & Wagnalls. 1936. \$3.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE

MR. WILSON has written a low-brow book on a high-brow subject. Which is by way of saying that the book is easy to read although its implications are significant. Here Mr. Wilson has set down in the simple language of the Sunday supplement a description of certain phases of lower middle-class America. It is out of this class that the America of the first quarter of the twentieth century was bred and out of this class practically all of the rulers of the nineteenth century came—financial, political, industrial. Here, in the lower middle-class, the people of small incomes, say less than \$2000 a year, live and breed a sturdy race. Their incomes do not indicate their general intelligence, their native shrewdness. All their children go to common schools, two-thirds of them finish high school, half of them are exposed to a college education of some sort, generally in small colleges in nearby towns, towns of less than 10,000, colleges with less than 500 students.

Mr. Wilson apparently travelled across the country leisurely making the journey in terms of years rather than months. He saw the auctioneer in New England, the hotel keeper in the Ozarks, the country editor in Arkansas, in the border line between the Yankee North and the deep South. He stopped at filling stations and tourist camps. He loafed on the courthouse steps and listened to the oratory of

the local Demosthenes. He saw the stockman of the plains growing a high-grade shorthorn yearling steer to fill and fatten on blue stem grasses of Kansas, Nebraska, and the Dakotas. He saw the restless population which makes the Pacific Coast seem like a great cafeteria. He has heard the rattle of the old “T” model on many roads. He has listened to the wind in the pines of the Rockies. He has “heard the darkies singing in the cotton fields and corn” and set down this gorgeous story of the common people who voted for Bryan, the common people whom Lincoln loved.

It is no academic story these people tell us. Precious little erudition is found in these pages. But here you will find a basic knowledge of America as it is. Calvin Brice would have enjoyed this book. Theodore Roosevelt would have read it with great gusto, bought it in dozen lots to send to his friends. The man who does not understand this America, the man whose America is bounded on the North by 14th Street in New York, on the South by Huey Long, on the West by the Comstock Lode, and on the East by Lenin, knows precious little about this friendly America which has survived the machines; but this America accepts machines as casually as that man wears his clothes and eats his food. He functions in machines and ignores all they have done to man in the great cities. Thousands of people will read this book without realizing what a laboratory is here for the sociologist, the economist, the political philosopher.

William Allen White is editor of The Emporia Gazette.



“MUSCLES STILL AS TOUGH AS HICKORY”—from “Roots of America.”