

a compelling personality, a human being in whom one can become deeply interested; one listens to him constantly, but one rarely sees him. In general Mr. Aldington is inclined to talk about his scenes and characters instead of rendering them, and though his talk is excellent, it is the stuff of essay, not fiction. His indignation, moreover, makes him fearfully explicit, prodigal with epithet. All this is the more unfortunate because when he does allow his characters to take their story into their own hands, they sometimes tell it admirably.

I suspect, however, that "Very Heaven" will be criticized more for holes in its argument than for deficiencies in its artistry. Mr. Aldington passionately denounces war, fascism, and all the evils of capitalism, as he has been doing for some time—notably in "Death of a Hero" and "All Men Are Enemies"; but what, critics are going to ask, does he propose to do about it? He has no formula for salvation, no program, and indeed seems to distrust programs that, like communism, endorse violent means and sacrifice the individual to abstractions. Apparently he even lacks confidence that civilization will survive this crisis; the dim light in which we live is perhaps of dawn, perhaps of twilight. Although he is against any form of regimentation, repression, brutal destruction, all he opposes to them is a somewhat shrill protest, a somewhat desperate trust "in free impulse and the quick brain."

What especially weakens Mr. Aldington's work, however, is not his indecisiveness but his uncontrollable indignation. In his rage he distorts his people so much that they cease to be representative of the evils he is attacking. He pummels scarecrows in the delusion that he is slaying dragons. In short, he proves nothing by this very special case; and though this would ordinarily be a silly criticism, it is pertinent when he has so obviously set out to prove something.

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If We Live

By VICTOR KELLER

UNDER the burden
of my soul and body
her great loveliness
grows whole.

If we live long enough
she will have found out
what made flesh and blood
start from the ground.

If we live long enough
it will be plain
between the earth and us
what ties remain.

Under the burden
of my delight
she will discover
both day and night.

Innocent Doctor

WE ARE NOT ALONE. By James Hilton.
Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1937. \$2.

Reviewed by LLOYD C. DOUGLAS

ANY rapid reader, impatient to learn why Doctor Newcome was hanged—a dismaying eventuality predicted in the prologue—can dispose of Mr. Hilton's new story in an hour and a half. The brief book follows the Hilton tradition in respect to the importance of reading between the lines. The publishers have obligingly left plenty of room.

Here you have a heart-warming picture of a pipe-smoking, untidy, detached, absent-minded little man in his late forties, spending all forenoon in the operating-room (where he came alive and really enjoyed himself), all afternoon bicycling through the narrow streets, trotting up and down steep and shabby stairways, and two hours every evening in his office



JAMES HILTON

ministering to such miseries as were able to get about on foot.

Jessica, his wife, lean, prim, five feet ten, and the daughter of a rural dean, owned their residence. Nature had impishly paid Jessica off for her stiff decorum by requiring her to whelp a son, Gerald, whose jitters, tantrums, and assorted neuroses were becoming quite unattractive. Only David could tranquilize the lad, condone his nastiness, and deal understandingly with his ingenious lies.

One night there was a call from Calderbury's not very high-toned theater that a dancer had met with an accident. David found Leni in a ragged rathole on the top floor of a cheap lodginghouse, her arm dangling, her purse empty, her tongue exclusively German. At first, Jessica seemed much pleased when Leni came to serve as companion and governess to the detestable Gerald, for the girl was promptly successful in dealing with the problem. Then the war came, changing everybody's character but Leni's who, unfortunately, was still a German.

Jessica's growing jealousy of Leni, and

the subsequent death of Jessica under circumstances resembling murder, lead to the dismaying dénouement. Zealous in the cause of justice (for Doctor Newcome would have been no more likely to commit a murder than Mr. Chips), the earnest reader may be amazed if not annoyed by the hapless hero's apathy while being tried on the flimsiest sort of circumstantial evidence and will find it difficult to believe that the friendly little city of Calderbury gave consent to the execution of its most useful citizen. Some may wonder, also, how a man who had placed so high a value on human life could be so drowsily unconcerned about his own.

"We Are Not Alone" strongly tempts the reader to be so indignant that he is likely to miss the more subtle implications of David's philosophy, expressed while waiting placidly in jail. Recalling our own savagery of thought and speech, twenty years ago, we should be able to understand the callosity of Calderbury, the fanaticism of a war-scared court, and the unutterable weariness of an innocent defendant. Only in this mood does one stand a fair chance of taking of a trial balance on one's own thought about death in relation to other inevitables.

Lloyd C. Douglas is the author of "Green Light" and "White Banners."

Good Mean Fun

THE ANTIGUA STAMP. By Robert Graves. New York: Random House. 1937. \$2.50.

Reviewed by GEORGE STEVENS

ROBERT GRAVES has written a British version of *The War Between Men and Women*. It takes the form of a feud between Oliver Price and his sister Jane, beginning in childhood over a stamp collection, and continuing for some thirty years—until 1946, in fact—in a comic crescendo of spitefulness, meanness, and generally low-down behavior on both sides. Jane wins at every point, because she is clever and unscrupulous, and Oliver is merely stupid and greedy. The childhood scenes are conventional, but later on the book turns into an extravaganza. Jane becomes a fashionable dramatist, and her fantastic theatrical career is largely devoted to caricaturing Oliver on the stage. This part of the story, and the series of lawsuits which follow—in which Jane double-crosses not only Oliver, but her own lifelong friend and partner—is elaborately unconvincing, but none the less amusing to read.

The significance of all this comes out pretty close to zero. Spite is meaningless in isolation from all other human qualities. But it has considerable comic value; and if you like good mean fun, and don't mind associating through 326 pages with two of the most unpleasant characters in contemporary fiction, you can have a good time with "The Antigua Stamp."

The Thermidor in Russia

THE REVOLUTION BETRAYED. By Leon Trotsky. Translated by Max Eastman. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company. 1937. \$2.50.

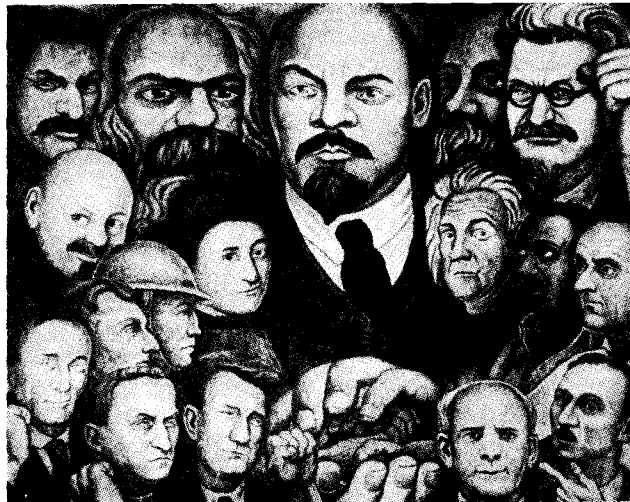
Reviewed by CRANE BRINTON

THIS is a survey of the last twenty years of Russian history, definitely not for those who want an easy introduction to the subject. Trotsky writes as a controversialist who assumes his readers are already familiar with the framework of soviet political and economic life. He has a subtle and penetrating intelligence, devoted with bewildering alternation now to the objective, now to the wishful, ordering of facts. He has a style which, even in the lively and quite unpedantic translation of Mr. Eastman, moves about among the metaphysical abstractions of Hegel and Marx in a way still foreign to most of us Westerners. But for those who have the patience to follow him, he has written a book about Russia more illuminating and important than any to appear in recent years, a much better analysis of the present situation in that country than is offered by the highly praised work of the Webbs.

Trotsky builds his picture around a formula once thrown off by Lenin: Russia in 1937 is "a bourgeois state without a bourgeoisie." It is not a socialist society, for it has not eliminated the kind of struggle—contention for the means of satisfying the basic human needs—which must be eliminated before you can have a socialist society. Far from "withering away," the state in modern Russia is assuming bureaucratic and police forms typical of the more decadent forms of the bourgeois state. Basically, this continuation in Russia of what is really class struggle is due not so much to the obvious incompetence and villainy of the leaders—Trotsky is here the consistent Marxian at whatever cost to his personal hatred for the Stalinites—but rather to the fact that the productivity of Russian labor is so low that there isn't enough of the bare necessities to go around.

Trotsky cuts most skillfully through the bombast and false statistics of the present Russian government to bring out this simple fact of slow *per capita* production. He points out how in past years a managed currency has made it possible to conceal what a free currency would have exposed at once: the difference between what was produced and what was wanted. The recent return to stable money, and still more the return to piece-

work—which is what Stakhanovism really means—seem to him a sensible admission that the soviet economy is still an economy of scarcity, the relative effectiveness of which must be measured as the relative effectiveness of bourgeois economics is measured. For the Russia of Stalin is no longer attempting to achieve even the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is, historically, where France was after the Thermidorean reaction; it retains the words "soviet" and "socialist" as Bonaparte retained the word "republic." It differs from contemporary bourgeois states only in this, that the ruling class, the new soviet bureaucracy (with its dependents, some ten to fifteen percent of the whole population) is a privileged but not yet a propertied class. It will, Trotsky thinks, either consolidate its position through the acquisition of property rights,



"PROLETARIAN UNITY" BY DIEGO RIVERA
From "Portrait of America" (Covici-Friede).

particularly if state monopoly of foreign trade is broken down by pressure from Russia's capitalist allies, or will be overthrown by a new social revolution. This latter is inevitable if another world war breaks out, since the proletariat in other countries will also rise against their masters. Trotsky is still hankering after a real revolution on a world-wide scale.

The book will certainly have an interesting reception. Conservatives will hail it with joy, for it exposes the gap between the word and the deed in modern Russia more effectively than any propagandist of the Right has done. The orthodox of the party line will explode with fury. The Trotskyites and the other heretical sects will nod and sigh. Some who fancy themselves as detached observers will no doubt be led to the easy but quite erroneous conclusion that this book is another illustration of the fatal weakness of socialists in general to indulge in doctrinal quarrels. But a tendency to doctrinal quarrels and the growth of heresies

is not a sure sign that a movement is on the decline. Heresy was never so common or so varied in the history of Christianity as in the first four centuries after Christ, when Christianity was sweeping the Mediterranean world and the New Rome rising on the ruins of the Old.

Crane Brinton is the author of "The Lives of Talleyrand."

Making of an Irishman

ARMY WITHOUT BANNERS. By Ernie O Malley. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1937. \$3.50.

Reviewed by RAYMOND J. SONTAG

HERE is the story of the making of an Irishman. It is a good story in itself; and at the end the reader will be able to understand better the history of the Irish nation. The O Malleys were thoroughly Anglicized. Their mistake was the surrender of their children to Irish servants—how many throw backs, particularly among Irish families, can be explained by servants? The mistake of England was the slow martyrdom of the Easter rebels of 1916—Machiavelli had demonstrated four centuries before that blood-letting should be quick and final. The two mistakes changed Ernie O Malley from a medical student into a rebel. For the next five years his life was a part of "the scrap." Now, fifteen years later, he has set down his adventures in a narrative which could not have been more fresh or exciting if recorded when the events took place.

It is the story of never ceasing, but never successful, efforts to give organization and training to bands of young guerillas, a story in which spectacular incidents—raids, arrests, betrayals, escapes—seem at first to compete only with vivid descriptions of Irish countryside. Slowly there becomes perceptible the demoralization of troops unaccustomed to fighting an invisible enemy, and the wavering drift of opinion to the side of the rebels. Occasionally, the joy of action was clouded by the thought of what would come when the fight was over, when the energies now concentrated on fighting the alien master were thrown into the fight of class against class, town against country. Action was the best remedy for such doubts, until action suddenly stopped. In July, 1921, the order came to cease operations. "What did it mean? And why had senior officers no other information than a bald message?" Revolutionary leaders from ancient Greece to contemporary Germany provide the answer: to win requires one kind of agents; to rule requires another.