

books contain the wisdom, experience, and folly of mankind. The scholars, young or old, attempt to interpret and understand the books. At the beginning of his career he wrote: "There are two great problems of library management—one to get the books for the readers, the other to get the readers to the books."

Dr. Putnam saw that this could be done only by refinements of library science which would make our American resources available to any scholar who has need of them. A new philosophy of librarianship has been developed through his vision. Great scholarly resources are available to those who can use them. Two anecdotes will illustrate the change. The first was told on the fortieth anniversary of Dr. Putnam's Librarianship. Early in the nineteenth century someone saw the Librarian of the Harvard Library slowly and ponderously locking up the doors of his building at three on a Saturday afternoon. When the librarian was asked why the building should be so securely locked at an hour when the young gentlemen were presumably at greatest leisure to use it, the reply was: "All the books in this library are on the shelves where they belong except one which Louis Agassiz took out and I'm going over to get that." This is the old library. Here is the new: The curator of a very important private library spent her vacation, as so many librarians do, working in the Library of Congress. When her vacation was over she wrote Dr. Putnam, thanked him for the courtesies granted her, and said she regretted that she had been unable to finish her work on an illuminated fourteenth century manuscript, but understood why the book must remain locked in the well guarded fireproofed vault of the Rare Book Room. Somewhat to her astonishment the book was delivered to her by express the next day. Dr. Putnam's explanation was this: First, in the five hundred years of its existence the book had surmounted hazards of war, fire, flood, and destruction much greater than it can conceivably meet in a journey from Washington to New York. Second, this book is necessary now for researches which may contribute greatly to human knowledge. No one can tell when it was needed last or how many decades will pass before some one else with adequate training and knowledge will appear to make use of it.

The moral is: The real value of a book is in the use we make of it. This view has put the learned resources of the world at the door of the American scholar.

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Lorca's Poetry in English

POEMS OF F. GARCIA LORCA. With English Translation by Stephen Spender and J. L. Gili. New York: Oxford University Press. 1939. 143 pp. \$2.

Reviewed by DUDLEY FITTS

POOR Tantalus, clutching at the fruit-laden boughs above his head, diving for the adorable water beneath his chin, was never more blankly frustrated than are Messrs. Spender and Gili in this book. The problem: catch Lorca, make his Spanish your English. What can you do? The "Romance Sonámbulo" opens "Verde que te quiero verde." Is this "Green, how I love you, green?" No.



F. Garcia Lorca

That is not the force of the line. It's not even what the Spanish *says*, let alone what it implies. The sounds are wrong; the rhythm is wrong; even the commas are wrong, although without them the line would be sillier English than it is. Or again: "No hubo príncipe en Sevilla / que compararse pueda." When you've labored out "There was no prince in Seville / who could compare with him," what is left of the passionate splendor of that cadence? Where is the wonder, that "aire de Roma andaluza" which the poet saw touching with gold the head of his dead bullfighter friend?

*Ay Federico García,
llama a la Guardia Civil!*

"Call out the Civil Guards!" Call out someone, at any rate, to investigate this latest loving crime against the memory of contemporary Spain's finest poet.

Grant first of all that poetry cannot be translated without loss; grant then that it is desirable that the poetry of one language be made accessi-

ble to readers of another. For this there are various techniques. There is free paraphrase: the poem is "written again" in English, but written as it were for the first time, with no attempt to retain such idiosyncratic qualities of the original as clash with the genius of our own language. This method is least objectionable when the translation is from a language that is technically "dead" (the ancient classics), or when the two languages are not too far apart in structure, texture, whatever it is that composes the *anima linguae*. Thus there are excellent German translations of Shakespeare; and I would cite a recent version by Louis MacNeice of Horace's ode "Solvitur acris hiems." Another way is that of the strict rendering, preferably into prose, in which the attempt is not to equal the untranslatable qualities of the original, but to represent as faithfully as may be its ideas, its images, its intellectual content. At its worst, this method produces the interlinear trots of Virgil ("Arms the man—and I sing"); at its best, Rouse's versions of the "Odyssey" and "Iliad." In their translations from García Lorca, Spender and Gili have apparently tried to combine a literal rendering of the text with an English prosody based upon the principles of Spanish versification. The result is, to be mild about it, unhappy.

It could hardly have been otherwise. Have you heard the *cante jondo*? Have you heard the old gypsy women improvise their wailing *saetas* to the insistent drumbeat of the street processions during Seville's Holy Week? Nothing could be farther, rhythmically, melodically, emotionally, from the nature of the English language. Yet it is this *flamenco* style, derived from Spain's Moorish past, bound up with the whole tradition of the *romances*, the ancient balladry, that is at the very heart of Lorca's poetry. It can no more be reproduced in English than the Ballad of Sir Patrick Spens can be reproduced in Arabic. Add to this folk-element a poetic technique of astonishing virtuosity, a perfectly controlled manner which ranges all the way from the objective brutality of the "Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías" (published in translation by A. L. Lloyd as "Lament for the Death of a Bull-fighter") to the Dali-like extravagances of "Romance Sonámbulo" and the aerial music of the "Canciones," and you have Federico García Lorca, the despair of any conscientious translator.

It is easy enough to write these things, to point out the failures of a book so long expected and so well-

meaning. Now that the job has been done, it seems probable that many of the failures would not have occurred if the translators had been less ambitious. If, for instance, they had been content to accompany the Spanish text with a plain prose translation and, when necessary, notes describing the *genre*, the technique, the background of the individual poems. In a way, this would have left them more free. They would not have been tied down, as they are now, by the lineation of the Spanish; there would have been no need for this staggering, lurching verse which can only annoy the reader who has some Spanish and befuddle the reader who has none.

A Posthumous Novel

MAGNA. By Zona Gale. New York: D. Appleton-Century Co. 1939. 119 pp. \$1.50.

Reviewed by BASIL DAVENPORT

THIS posthumous book has Zona Gale's accustomed midWestern small-town setting, but attempts a wider range of emotion than was usual with her. It is highly thematic, setting in sharp opposition the love that is peaceful certainty and the love that is ecstatic madness.

At the beginning, Magna Pethner has just become engaged to Bolo Marks. (Almost all the nomenclature is unfortunate; Magna's mother, for instance, is Ethna Pethner.) She has grown up with Bolo, she knows him thoroughly, she has always loved him. But her handsome cousin Alec arrives; he comes from the Hebrides; she becomes acquainted with him amid the excitement of the Forty-Niners' Fair; he represents romance, unfamiliar and exciting. If it were not for Bolo, she would be completely swept off her feet, but she still loves Bolo, too; she is torn between the two kinds of love. This opposition is reinforced by a sex crime in the town, pointing up love as madness, and by the portraits of a number of Magna's elderly relatives, who have grown old together in loving serenity and who show the fruits of love as peace. In one or two of these small vignettes, the author is at her best; but the other side of the picture, the depiction of love as madness, lies outside the scope of her gentle, fragile art. Alec sweeping Magna off her feet can only be compared to Bottom roaring like a sucking dove. It is only at the beginning and the end of the story, the delicate portrayal of first love and the tranquil conclusion, that Zona Gale's art glows with a flame that is faint but very clear.

Some Personal Philosophies

I BELIEVE. A Series of Intimate Credos. Edited by Clifton Fadiman. New York: Simon & Schuster. 1939. 429 pp. \$3.75.

Reviewed by ROBERT BIERSTEDT

MANY long years ago, in 1931 to be exact, when the world was young and untroubled by totalitarianism, the first series of intimate credos of eminent men and women appeared under the title of "Living Philosophies." In a sense it summed up a period of intellectual fashion and philosophic fancy and satisfied a public eager to ponder out loud the permanent problems of human life and destiny and to speculate orally on the nature of man and his relation to the universe. The people to whom it appealed had watched with apprehension Harry Emerson Fosdick's attempts to defend theism against the gentle attacks of Albert Eustace Hayden and other religious humanists, had helped Irwin Edman bring Richard Kane to maturity, and, on the philosopher's working-day, listened to Adam, the baby, and the man from Mars as they commented on the human scene. Those were the days too when other people besides Republicans read Walter Lippmann, when Will Durant, not yet a Saturday evening prophet, served short orders of philosophy in delectable packages at low



Lancelot Hogben

prices, when Joseph Wood Krutch tempered despair with disillusion, when John Herman Randall, Jr. made the modern mind account for its antecedents, and when H. G. Wells outlined the history of the world in one volume.

To a similar public the present book

will appeal. Similar in intent and design, and competently edited with introduction and biographical notes by Clifton Fadiman, it offers a new batch of personal philosophies from a group of eminent persons which includes W.



Harold J. Laski

H. Auden, Franz Boas, Pearl Buck, Stuart Chase, Havelock Ellis, E. M. Forster, Ellen Glasgow, Lancelot Hogben, Julian Huxley, Harold J. Laski, Lin Yutang, Emil Ludwig, Thomas Mann, Jacques Maritain, Jules Romains, George Santayana, Vilhjalmur Stefansson, John Strachey, James Thurber, Hendrik Willem Van Loon, and Rebecca West. In addition, most of the contributors to the earlier volume, although protesting in the majority that their basic philosophies have not changed, furnish brief supplementary essays.

In a rather striking sense, however, this book differs from its predecessor. Even in the fairest of intellectual climates some rain must fall, and the now darkening heavens promise storms which will flood the ivory towers. Questions of God, the soul, immortality, and the other imponderables have therefore receded into relative unimportance and throughout many of these contributions there runs a strain of immediacy, an emphasis on things temporal and political and sociological. Some of them support the belief that songs of social significance must have a martial rhythm and a Marxian tune. Except perhaps in the case of Santayana the philosophic calm of a personal credo gives place to an impatient confusion characterized by vital concern for the contemporary affairs of men. One gains the impression that here we have a new modern temper, one somehow foreign even in its more philosophic expressions to the temper of 1931.