

for precision will wonder just how many automobiles per thousand were used in Germany in 1914, when they see the picture of a fragment of an automobile on page 59 showing the use of automobiles per 200 population in Germany in 1914. Is it a fourth, a fifth, or a sixth of an automobile? For general purposes perhaps it does not matter much, but for purposes of exactness, precision, it may matter a great deal. One thing is certain: Any complex of phenomena which may be graphically presented may be described in words or mathematics or both, insofar as it can be described at all. In some cases, for example, a geographical complex, a map is a shorter form of statement, but in other cases words and mathematics provide a shorter form. I may be wrong but I have a deep suspicion that most adult minds will prefer to take their information straight in the shortest form. Graphic presentation gives strong impressions of general and gross situations and helps to fix particulars and details in mind, but it does not take the place of cold facts and figures for the serious students.

The second level on which Dr. Neurath's book may be reviewed is that of a conception of world history and society, for such a conception underlies the text and pictures of this volume. This is conceded in the Foreword: "An attempt has been made to evolve . . . a special picture-text style which should enable anybody to walk through the modern world that is beginning to appear about us and see it as he may see a landscape with its hills and plains, woods and meadows. The aim is to trace the origin of 'modern men' and to depict their behavior and achievements, without presenting any social or economic theory." This idea is reinforced by Waldemar Kaempffert in a statement that appears on the jacket of the book: "The economic, social, and political progress of mankind becomes [in this volume] a pageant that moves before us from primitive times down to our day."

Yet Dr. Neurath's language is the language of metaphorical or literary imagination, not hard, factual description. We can walk through the modern world and see factories, people, automobiles, and telephones, but we cannot "walk through" birth rates, mortality rates, unemployment, immigration, strikes, public opinion, leisure, and political rights of women, and see them as we may "see a landscape with its hills and plains, woods and meadows." Nor do statistics on the number of telephones in use tell us much, if anything, about the effect of telephones on human conduct and

society or anything about what is said over these instruments of communication. When we are told that there are so many million radio sets in the United States, we do not get much information about the effect of the noises that go over these sets upon the morals, intelligence, thought, or conduct of the recipients. As for giving a picture of the pageant of progress from primitive times to the present, baffling problems of historiography are raised at once—problems that have long engaged the profoundest students of human history and are dealt with in volumes about as difficult to read and understand as the volumes on higher physics. For present purposes, it is sufficient to say that the profoundest students of historiography are by no means agreed whether history is a pageant of progress, a story of generation and degeneration, or a senseless *pis aller*. For a side light see Th. Lessing, "Geschichte als Sinngebung des Sinnlosen." In this field Dr. Neurath is not as sure-footed as in the graphic presentation of the measurable.

The third level on which Dr. Neurath's volume could be reviewed is the high philosophical—the ultimate design of the universe (if any) of which historical events and personalities are manifestations. It may not be known to the puzzle-workers who are delighted with this book, but Dr. Neurath is one of the leaders in the Unity of Science Movement, out of which has grown the "International Encyclopedia of Unified Science," covering such baffling subjects as the theory of signs, the foundations of logic and mathematics, procedures of empirical science, and the theory of probability (which latter subject drove a friend of mine to suicide). This school holds that "all biological, psychological, and sociological concepts may be reduced to physical concepts." Its general thesis is fairly well represented by the slogan: "Everything that exists, exists in some quantity and therefore can be measured and statistically or graphically represented." This is not the place for me to discuss that topic. So I shall merely remark that, in my opinion, fruitful research has been and is being carried on under this conception, but I am deeply impressed by the obvious limitations on its procedures and on the meanings of the findings. A mother's love for her child exists; it can be measured; let us say that it is 1.23456789 per pound of her weight. My query is: How much do we know and what, when we have arrived at this result? And I have no more use for metaphysics and theology than the Unified Science Movement has.



Bertita Harding

An Evening with the Hapsburgs

IMPERIAL TWILIGHT. The Story of Karl and Zita of Hungary. By Bertita Harding. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co. 1939. 345 pp., with index. \$3.50.

Reviewed by GARRETT MATTINGLY

HAVING written of Maximilian, "Emperor" of Mexico, in the "Phantom Crown" and of Franz Joseph in "The Golden Fleece," Bertita Harding continues the family chronicles of the later Hapsburgs with a book about the last emperor of Austria, Karl, which brings the annals of the house down to date. They are curiously alike, these Austrians, honest, well-meaning, ridiculously limited aristocrats, stiff in the archaic uniforms of their obsolete tradition, fumbling vaguely with a world which nothing has prepared them to understand; and their impresario has found just the tone to present them to a modern public, a decorous, slightly amused familiarity which almost conceals its condescension and admits a touch of awe. It is not unpleasant to admit a little awe of aristocrats, provided one can also pity them, and it is impossible not to pity a little persons who, in success and failure alike, are shown to be so unequal to the burden of the centuries. An evening with the Hapsburgs under Miss Harding's guidance becomes as entertaining and instructive as a tour of Schönbrunn, as beguiling and as little permanently disturbing as a third helping of chocolate cake and whipped cream at a café on the *Ring*.

It might seem that Karl, whose son

is still the claimant to the Austrian throne, would lend himself less happily to this sort of biography. But at his most earnest moments the shadowy young war emperor was never quite real; even in the excited headlines of the daily press his peace letter to Prince Sixtus seemed like a student's hoax, and his desperate bid for the crown of Hungary like a rehearsal of costume theatricals. Bathed in a warmly sentimental flood of gossip and anecdote, simplified history, and glorified society-page journalism, Karl and his family in this skillful book become as appealing and as remote as the Stuart pretenders. No doubt that is the right attitude towards them, that their woes make pleasant reading but no longer concern history. Out of the convulsions of Europe almost any monster may be born, but a Hapsburg restoration is one of the least likely.

Mr. Aldington's Satirical Novel

REJECTED GUEST. By Richard Aldington. New York: The Viking Press. 1939. 378 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by RICHARD A. CORDELL

MR. ALDINGTON'S new novel is wholly cynical; one remembers that the author is a student and biographer of Voltaire. On the first page is a witty discourse on bastardy, to prepare us for the advent of the hero, David Norris, who is born out of wedlock; on the last page when David, aged twenty-two, leaves for his first job, he receives this advice from his closest friend; "Be artful, mistrustful, selfish, and unscrupulous—as I am—and get to know the law and the stock market. Much more use than biography and poetry . . . But you're a materialist like all your generation. You have no taste for the higher aspects of life." Between the first page and the last the author fires shot after shot at such targets as schools, the Church, the university, the lower classes, the middle classes, the upper classes, romance, love, idealism, Signor Mussolini, and Mr. Chamberlain.

The story itself is serious. David Norris, a 1914 "war baby," is brought up in a dull, ugly, provincial town, tormented by the knowledge of his illegitimacy and the limitations of a stifling environment. Finally, desiring money for his education, he reveals his identity to his paternal grandfather, who grants him a handsome allowance.

How the Chinese Live and Like It

THE CHINESE ARE LIKE THAT.

By Carl Crow. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1939. 328 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by T. A. BISSON

IT is pleasant to come on a new and well-written book about China which does not deal with the war. Not as its central theme, that is, for even this stimulating and humorous commentary on how the Chinese manage to live and like it, in the face of difficulties that would submerge a less healthy and sound-minded race, throws off penetrating sidelights on the struggle in which China is now engaged.

The Chinese "way of life" is an absorbing and fascinating subject, as the success of Lin Yutang's "My Country and My People" demon-

strated a few years ago. And Carl Crow proves that it is still a rich mine, only partially worked over, for one who makes the approach with insight, philosophic understanding and tolerance, and an adequate background of first-hand knowledge. To the uninitiated, he presents an excellent introduction to China and its people; to those who have lived for longer or shorter periods in China, he renews an experience.

In this treatment the foibles and inconsistencies of Chinese life, touched upon with a light hand, serve to set off its more serious and substantial aspects. It is relatively easy for us to appreciate the achievement of a people which has farmed the same land for a period of forty centuries, and multiplied in the process; also, the merits of certain virtually self-regulatory restraints on competition set up within a society where the struggle to survive is more than a Darwinian phrase. But the advantages of indirection, of a rather casual attitude toward accuracy and exactness, or of such a phenomenon as banditry, are more difficult to see. These things are comprehensible in terms of their setting—and it is the locale of Chinese life which, in broadest terms, Carl Crow sets before us with an extraordinary degree of success. Stories of his own experiences form the most amusing elements of his genial explanations; in other cases, a certain amount of rational exposition is required to make his point. Where the expense of a cake of soap and the fuel required to boil water must be balanced against the cost of food, and the choices are mutually exclusive, it can be seen that elements enter into the problem of cleanliness that the ordinary run of Americans might easily overlook. In China, the author notes, a good harvest means increased sales of soap. Much of his explanation is done by way of suggestive comparison or direct illustration, and in almost all cases the points are driven home convincingly. A slight miss is, perhaps, registered in the chapter on the "reward of labor," where the wages of the house boy chosen for illustration seem too high—and the outcome of his financial career too perfect—to do full justice to the general standard of living in China.

This book appears at a fortunate time. Its racy and readable chapters will call forth many smiles and some outright laughs, and leave every reader with a deeper and more appreciative understanding of the way one-fifth of mankind lives.

For a year he lives on the French Riviera in colorful magnificence. When suddenly his grandfather dies without having provided for him in his will, his fair-weather friends vanish, his fiancée deserts him, and, completely disillusioned, he accepts a job as office boy in a broker's office.

The flavor of the book, however, is almost uniformly sprightly and comic, and the story does not sag under a burden of truculent fault-finding. In "Very Heaven" Mr. Aldington as a critic of his times was too earnest, often angry; but in "Rejected Guest" he is more amused than indignant, and smashes his idols not savagely but in boisterous high spirits. As a matter of fact, most of the philippics come from David's wordly, amoral friend, Johnny Martindale, opportunist and sensualist.



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Richard Aldington

(One thinks of Alexander Woolcott lying on a couch indolently reciting S. N. Behrman's sybaritic conceits.) Proceeding from such a grotesque, these gibes at conventional morality and the contumely heaped on widely cherished institutions thin into amusing persiflage, and the book successfully keeps to its comic level.

Ten years ago Richard Aldington, poet, essayist, and translator, began his career as an English novelist with his brilliant war novel, "Death of a Hero." With "Rejected Guest" he auspiciously begins his career as an American novelist, for he has now taken up permanent residence in this country.