

Germans against Hitler

THE OTHER GERMANY. By Erika and Klaus Mann. New York: Modern Age Books. 1940. 318 pp. \$2.75.

Reviewed by TONI STOLPER

THE two eldest Mann children's lively little book is the continuation in print of their doings and sayings as political lecturers across the United States. It bears ample testimony to their eloquence in explaining to Americans their slant on the German tragedy. A large public in America seems to have found good reason for liking to listen to them, the now grown-up children of one of the foremost writers and most courageous thinkers of the century, members of the German generation that is to determine the fate of Germany for the next thirty years, two wide-awake persons who have well spent their youth in looking around in a world in which, in spite of all, it was fun to live.

Their present book gives much of the dramatic flavor they like to spread around themselves. Beginning and ending with conversations and discussions "somewhere in Europe and America" with persons puzzled about the same things they have at heart (somewhat à la "Zauberberg"), the book is more pretentious in its central theme. The authors do not only want to discuss and suggest what may have happened to Germany after 1918. At many points they like to believe that they are telling the truth about Germany for the benefit of Americans willing to learn it from them. And at these points necessarily many misgivings must arise. From Germans who have lived through these troubled and blundering years of Hitler's rise to power, nothing but an *ex parte* judgment may in all fairness yet be expected. If the Manns were clearly aware of this, their judgment would be entitled to a good deal of interest. But the eloquence of this book on "the other Germany" often turns into glibness and superficial problem-blindness. One of the main objects of the book is to convey the glad tidings that, opposed to the depravity of Hitler and his crowd, there is this other Germany, sedulously fighting and sabotaging under cover today, and only waiting to resume its fine role as a worthy member of Western civilization.

Why it did not stop Hitler in the first place—this paramount question for every decent German today—the Manns try to explain by a quick glance over German political thought and experience in the past, and then by a rather more ambitious criticism of the short-lived Weimar Republic. After reading this criticism, the depressing

thought occurred to this reviewer: would the authors, with all their present knowledge and insight, have known how to avoid one of the disasters that befell German democracy? What we are given here is a view from rather far to the Left in the variegated groupings of the German Republic. So close the Manns seem to be to this left wing that rather miraculously, in their review of German politics, the leftist element almost completely escapes their attention. We are told how the reactionary element, cowed at first by the defeat in war, raised its ugly head in schools, inside the bureaucracy, naturally inside the army; how the pedestrian Social Democrats failed in their revolutionary duty and missed the spectacular chance of converting the Kaiser's Germany into a land of socialist promise. The Conservatives and the Center come in for their share of



Erika and Klaus Mann

the blame (although for some reason or other Chancellor Brüning is absolved from the crime of breaking the Constitution by way of his emergency decrees and all the responsibility for this is put on President Hindenburg, an impossible procedure). But we are told next to nothing about the extreme Left in post-war Germany, which made such a large number of average Germans so extremely apprehensive and unhappy for years. The names of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht are mentioned only to convey the impression that they were frustrated by assassins in their work of "softening the irresponsible radicalism of the leftist opposition"; but after all they had first organized the "Spartacus League" in a manner that did not look soft to the German patriot. The Munich Soviet Republic of 1919 is glossed over in half a paragraph, although many judicious observers tend to believe that without that horrifying experience the good Munich petit-bourgeois never would have afforded Hitler the solid

stepping-stone to power. We do not get a hint of the threatening proximity of the Russian Soviets with their fervent belief at the time of the German collapse at the fronts that now the German Soviet Republic was ripe, nor of the good work of the Communist International in all the intervening pre-Popular Front years. And we hear nothing about the last tragic chapter of the Republic when the Republican governments, representative of parliamentary and popular majorities, were hemmed in and frustrated by concerted action from the enemies of the Constitution at the Right and the Left, Nazis and Communists, who at last put forth almost identical slogans of National Socialism to kill German Liberalism, thus foreshadowing the Nazi-Soviet collaboration of today. The Manns' concept of a conspiracy of the German Right against the Left may therefore not be acceptable to many students of German realities, and the puzzling about the "other Germany" will have to continue. Besides the role of German romanticism, racialism, hero-worship, of German neglect of politics in their love of irresponsible "culture," besides all this neatly referred to by the Manns, the role of the German brand of Leftism, of Marxism, will have to be investigated. It may appear in the light of some wiser generation that all these German trends had the one common denominator of setting up collectivist ideals for civic life as against the ultra-individualist habits of German cultural life. The German has never been taught in history to be a responsible and self-reliant citizen. He has never been taught really to understand what was meant in the Western nations by individual civic rights and duties, by the Magna Charta and the Habeas Corpus Act, by parliamentarism and independent courts; he has never understood that no modern government is thinkable that does not demand checks and balances on the part of free individuals raised in the art of political judgment. Neither Left nor Right in the German Republic was in the least concerned with such thoughts as these. And none of the German critics seems yet detached enough from his native sphere of political thought to go to the bottom of the German failure. Therefore, these two gifted young writers would be well advised if they could spare some time from explaining things to Americans for a thorough study of the origins of Western liberties. Perhaps it would detract something from their trusting faith in the existence today of the "other Germany." But it may make them better able to cope with the duties of interpreting Western liberties to helpless Germans which, we fervently hope, may some day be awarded to them.

Final Collection

THE SCRAPBOOK OF KATHERINE MANSFIELD. Edited by J. Middleton Murry. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1940. 280 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by HARRY THORNTON MOORE

MIDDLETON MURRY admits that "this final collection of Katherine Mansfield's literary remains needs some explanation. . . . About a year ago, for medical reasons, it appeared imperative that I should lose no time in tidying up my affairs. I turned my hand first to Katherine Mansfield's papers, because her handwriting is very difficult, and it seemed unlikely that anyone but myself would be able to decipher them." He has dug up all the unpublished fragments of her writing he could find, and has arranged them chronologically.

This book can hardly be aimed at the wide public. It will probably be most closely read by three other types of readers—Katherine Mansfield addicts, literary students seeking to know the contemporary field thoroughly, and those interested in the problems of authorship and in the workings of an author's mind. All three groups will be rewarded for their efforts, though perhaps not so greatly as the length of the book might lead them to expect. Some of the Mansfield charm is preserved here, but there is also a certain amount of sediment. Most of the verse is neither sufficiently poetic nor sufficiently clever to justify its being salvaged for posterity, and a good many of the prose tags simply take up space. Some readers may feel cheated because so much of the Scrapbook is made up of quotations from other authors, but there is little ground for complaint, for the quotations are in the main intensely interesting, most of them taken from the Russian writers. Chekhov appears oftenest; towards the end of Katherine Mansfield's life there are frequent passages from a little-known book by "M. B. Oxon" entitled "Cosmic Anatomy"—one can feel it pulling her towards those last days at Fontainebleau. Many of the quotations are followed by characteristically pert comments. Sometimes Katherine Mansfield briefly calls the author a fool, sometimes she wishes she could talk with "the Master" who had written a passage she liked. She can even correct Coleridge: beneath his statement, "Intense study of the Bible will keep any writer from being vulgar in point of style," she writes: "In point of language."

The stories in the book do not rank with Katherine Mansfield's finest, but there are some good parts to most of them. As Middleton Murry says in his

Introduction, it is impossible to state whether most of them are completed or not: Katherine Mansfield was after all a lyric writer, and her stories do not necessarily have the beginning, middle, and end which the stories of "plot" authors have. It is pleasant to meet a few of her people again (such as the "Kezia" who appears in some of her best work) and to make the acquaintance of new ones, and to be plunged again into that vivid world of hers, that is so different from the grey-and-white, photograph-negative world of most other fiction writers.

The World at Seventeen

WALK LIKE A MORTAL. By Dan Wickenden. New York: William Morrow & Co. 1940. 530 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by WILLIAM MAXWELL

MANY people will remember Mr. Wickenden's first novel, "The Running of the Deer." It was set in a suburban community on Long Island, and was concerned with ordinary American family life—particularly with the humors, longings, and growing pains of youngsters in their teens. And it was not merely promising, it was a delight. Using the same background in "Walk Like a Mortal," the author has contrived a better constructed and a more authentic story. Though it is less entertaining than the first one, it is also solid and promises even more for Mr. Wickenden's future.

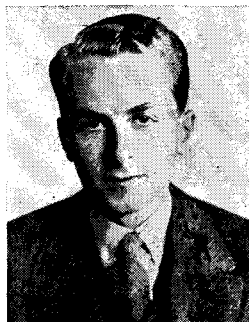
The central character, Gabe Mackenzie, is a bright, conscientious boy who, during the summer when he is seventeen and during his last year in high school, is an unhappy witness to the end of his mother's and father's marriage. What might have been disastrous for an oversensitive boy proves to be, for Gabe, merely disturbing. It does not prevent him from handling himself with credit in his difficult relations with both his parents, or even from getting good grades in school. His coming of age is an ordeal, but he manages it safely, and finds himself, soon after his eighteenth birthday, on solid ground.

Gabe's daily life at school—his friendships, his attempt to play football, his studying, his tennis matches, his encounters with teachers—is presented fully, and without a false note. So fully, in fact, that one feels there

As an example of the better kind of imaginative writing found in the Scrapbook, there is the story (certainly incomplete) "The Scholarship," a memorable fragment, with the sudden chemistry of that New Zealand twilight made as dramatic as the clash between two strong personalities in a psychological novel. Like certain other sections of this Scrapbook, it will help to make those who have enjoyed Katherine Mansfield's work regret that, except for some new material Middleton Murry promises to add to a later edition of the "Letters," this is the last previously unpublished writing of hers that we shall be given to read.

can be nothing left of the boy's external life to tell. One would recognize Gabe easily enough, if one passed him on the street. The question is whether all of this was necessary to the story; and whether devoting two hundred thousand words to a seventeen-year-old doesn't, in the end, produce a world that is slightly out of whack.

At seventeen, boys can no longer isolate themselves or induce the invulnerability of childhood. They have to fit, willy-nilly, into a life that is dominated by their elders, into a world where they are not yet important. What they do can be made interesting to read about, but it isn't always, in this book. Anyone who can write as entertainingly as Mr. Wickenden has an artistic obligation to make the most of his comic characters. There are half a dozen of them in "Walk Like a Mortal," but they seem hardly to get a word in edgewise. They stand aside,



Dan Wickenden

usually, in attitudes of admiration for the rather humorless young hero, for the way he keeps his problems to himself. All this is not quite convincing at times, and certainly not much fun.

In spite of what seems an unnecessary length for such a book, one cannot help being impressed by the orderly sequence of scenes, many of them excellent, all of them soundly observed and simply recorded. Mr. Wickenden knows the part of this country that he is writing about, and he knows it cold. I don't think it is extravagant to hope that there exists in him a very young Arnold Bennett; or to expect that in God's good time he may recreate the suburbs on Long Island as substantially as Bennett did the Five Towns.