

Two Germanies

THE GERMANS: Double History of a Nation. By Emil Ludwig. Translated by Heinz and Ruth Norden. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1941. 496 pp., index. \$4.

Reviewed by ROBERT PICK

EMIL LUDWIG, who in many quarters enjoys the reputation of being the greatest living biographer, now offers us what might have been his *magnum opus*. Everything in his career would seem to have singled him out as the ideal biographer of the German people as a whole. He has analyzed and synthesized the German character through a dozen of its outstanding exponents. He is gifted with sensitive insight, a restless, flickering style, and startling imagery—all present in his latest offering, but here they are used in an attempt to cover up the author's failure to grasp the essential spirit of his subject—the spirit of history.

Ludwig's thesis is sophomorically simple: it is the "schism between power and spirit." How can the "nation of poets and thinkers," the cradle of Beethoven, Goethe, and Kant, have given rise to the monster, Hitler? Well, the Germans are profound and creative on the one hand, incredibly cruel and treacherous on the other; they have an unquenchable drive that urges them on in their quest for the infinite, and they have an everlasting sense of moral uncertainty. All this is perfectly true. But we have heard it before.

In portraying some incident, as, for example, Luther's encounter with Charles V, this "struggle between spirit and power" is exhibited in splendid colors indeed. But it never occurs to Ludwig to question whether this schism is essentially German. (Jacob Burckhardt, by the way, called the power "immoral per se.") Ludwig repeats his oversimplification time and again, and blows it up to a book that explains little about the Germans. Eager to show how curious, how different they are, he does not bother too much about the causes for that undeniable Teutonic uniqueness.

Ludwig's book must inevitably be judged as a historical work, and that is precisely where it falls short. It is all very well for the author to protest indifference to dates, battles, kings, which represent "the zenith of a trajectory, whereas the real points of interest are where the projectile is fired and where it strikes." But to write solely in terms of what one reads into the minds of individuals and groups of individuals is no acceptable substitute for scholarly analysis. Such admittedly lucid statements as, "The

Germans aspired to lead the world and succeeded, at any rate, in leading the world's unrest" will not do.

There are flashes in this book—striking passages, and character sketches of Frederic Hohenstaufen, of Luther, of Matthias Grunewald, the mysterious painter, of William II—and its last hundred pages make excellent reading. But apart from his *leitmotif*, Ludwig neither asks the questions we might expect him to ask nor does he solve the "riddle" of the character of the

focal European people, whose failure has been Europe's tragedy. And thus he comes perilously close to adopting the national character clichés—which, to use a charitable term, is unworthy of a man who wrote "Napoleon."

There is a definite need in this country for a book which will throw light on the historical reasons for the "black record of the German people" (to use Sir Robert Vansittart's expression). It is too bad Emil Ludwig does not live up to this task. Even the valiant efforts of the translators, who have done an excellent job, cannot gloss over this fact.

as a work of amazing power and beauty, and I have not seen anywhere a more dramatic expression of the tragedy of France. Deserves superlative praise.

A magnificent Christmas present." — WILLIAM LYON PHELPS

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200 pp. (10" x 13"). 125 illus., including 48 etchings. \$3.75.

▶ **RECOMMENDED BY THE BOOK-OF-THE-MONTH CLUB**

Sportscope

THE AMERICAN SPORTING SCENE.

By John Kieran. With pictures by Joseph W. Golinkin. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1941. 212 pp. \$5.

Reviewed by DOUGLAS C. FOX

A FIRST class sports-writer and a competent all-around-man with brush and pencil have joined forces to produce a handsome gift book. Mr. Kieran, of the *New York Times*, is nationally known for the encyclopaedic learning he airs weekly on Information Please. Mr. Golinkin, a Lieutenant Commander in the Navy, is equally well known to connoisseurs of contemporary sporting art. His pictures came to my attention some fifteen years ago when they began to appear in *Polo*, *The Sportsman*, *The New Yorker*, and *Vanity Fair*. More recently they have been on display in some of New York's commercial galleries.

These gentlemen have joined forces rather than collaborated, for only in the first chapter do Mr. Golinkin's excellent action sketches supplement Mr. Kieran's witty, anecdotal text. Elsewhere, the artist's picture of the Meadow Brook Fox Hounds leads one to hope for a chapter on hunting; his

frontispiece of *Endeavour II* and *Ranger*, close-hauled and going great guns, whets one's appetite for yachting; his full-page water colors of The Nose Dive, Mount Mansfield, Race Day at New London, and International Field at Meadow Brook prepare one for stimulating stuff on skiing, rowing, and polo. In Mr. Kieran's text, however, there is no fox, no cup defender, no boat race, and no international match; only two paragraphs on skiing.

This lack of collaboration may be Mr. Kieran's fault, for in the introduction he is content not merely to state "that art and athletics have gone together since time when the memory of man runneth not to the contrary," but must prove this contention with talk of Greek marbles, Rembrandt's Golfer, Degas's race horses, and the sporting art of the Americans, Eakins, Bellows, and Mahonri Young. Faced with this competition, it is small wonder that Mr. Golinkin has chosen to go his own sweet decorative way.

Despite the fact that the pair often tend to pull in opposite directions, each has produced a clever and diverting piece of work. With the alliance between art and athletics safely established, Mr. Kieran starts off with a long and interesting chapter on our heavyweight champions, from John L. Sullivan to Joe E. Louis, who, Mr. Kieran thinks, is the greatest of them all. There follow seventeen pages on spring training, Ty Cobb, Hans Wagner, and the immortal Bambino; nine on His Imperial Highness of the Courts, William T. Tilden II; about fifty on horse-racing, including a memorable trip to Aintree for the Grand National with Paul Brown in 1935, and some pleasant stuff about harness hoeses and the Hambletonian. Add some golf tales and the story of how Columbia beat Stanford in the Rose Bowl at Pasadena, and you just about have the book. Through it all you can hear Mr. Kieran chuckling as he pastes up the clever rhymes which appear in every chapter, and see Mr. Golinkin frowning as he weeds his works, pausing to see whether this drawing will reduce well or that water color lose in reproduction.

Most people will like "The American Sporting Scene." They will smile at the quiet humor of Mr. Kieran's reminiscences and they will enjoy the dash and color of Mr. Golinkin's pictures. In them the painter shows a versatility rare in a sporting artist.

A New Beard

Charles and Mary Beard are now at work on a fourth volume of their famous "The Rise of American Civilization," to be called "The Idea of Civilization in the United States: A Study of the American Spirit."

Bridges of the Mind

FROM CRETIN TO GENIUS. By Serge Voronoff, New York: Alliance Book Corporation. 1941. 281 pp. \$2.75.

Reviewed by I. S. WECHSLER

THE title of the book is both misleading and sensational. Aside from the fact that cretinism is miles removed from genius, the author does not even discuss adequately the mental defectiveness resulting from absence of thyroid secretion, and merely drags in the subject as a foil to his speculations. He might just as well have referred to any number of congenital or acquired brain defects, and with more reason.

Nor are the ideas embodied in the book either novel or deep. Actually it consists of a superficial analysis of genius, with illustrations from the lives of great men. Unfortunately the author, although a scientist, is not too familiar, either with the structure or the function of the brain, or with much of modern neurophysiology and psychology. For instance, he speaks of the parietal lobe as being the language zone of the brain. Actually it is the temporal. He states that fifteen to twenty grams (225 to 300 grains) of caffeine will stimulate the brain. Naturally, but the dose will knock out an elephant. The average dose is seven and a half grains.

The chapter on frustration of genius is of interest from the point of view of self-revelation. The author feels that his pioneer work met with the resistance which every great achievement has always encountered. The fact is that gland transplantation was not altogether novel when Mr. Voronoff came on the scene. Lydston in this country was an earlier pioneer.

The author evidently has read many biographies, and has done a lot of arm-chair thinking. A scientist is entitled to literary excursions, and may indulge in speculations, but he must not overdo it. For example, the author harps on the importance of chance in discoveries. It is true that chance often plays a role, but he fails to realize that only genius could seize the opportunity afforded by chance.

Notes on the Mousetrap Theory..

Published in June. No ballyhoo, no plushy advertising budget. But news of this book goes on spreading among discriminating readers and reviewers.

N. Y. Times' Edith Walton called it "as exciting and excellent a volume of short stories as I have come across in quite a while." Chicago News' Jessica North says, "Here is a book for the gourmets. When you have read one or two stories a sense of well being flows into your veins." James Gray: "There is insight and dignity and humor to all of the stories."

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