

Mowrer . . .

ARREST AND EXILE. *The True Story of an American Woman in Poland and Siberia: 1940-1941.* By Lillian T. Mowrer. New York: William Morrow & Co. 274 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by NYM WALES

OLGA KOCHANSKA, now safe in Chicago, the city where she was born, was arrested by Soviet police in Lemberg, Poland, on June 29, 1940, and transported to a work camp in Siberia. She had applied for an American passport in Lemberg, but this did not arrive for six months, during which time she was held prisoner by the Soviets.

In Washington Mrs. Kochanska told her story to the wife of the noted foreign correspondent, Edgar Mowrer, herself author of a volume entitled "Journalist's Wife," and a woman who knows the European scene from first-hand observation. She has made the third-person narrative vividly dramatic and alive. In its well-written pages you feel the atmosphere of the Siberian work camp almost as intimately as if you were one of the unfortunate prisoners.

Though it seems almost trivial at this moment to dwell too much upon the minor sufferings of one individual who was highly uncomfortable but never in serious danger, when millions of men are being killed and hundreds of thou-

sands of women in Asia and Europe are being driven across whole war-torn continents without protection or help, and thrown on their own resources in order to keep alive (beside which Mrs. Kochanska's work camp seems almost a haven of refuge), this story is of special interest from two angles. It is first of all a unique study of the reactions of an American middle-class woman to this type of imprisonment, for few American women have as yet had experiences in either Soviet, Fascist, or any other kind of concentration camp; and secondly, it is a sensitive psychological study of professional Polish and Jewish exiles under duress, obliged to stain their hands with hard manual labor for the first time.

We spoiled and soft Americans are notoriously unable to move about without Flit, private baths, upholstery, and inner spring mattresses—things totally unknown to half the world's population. And we American women tend always to be sob-sisters, especially about the little comforts. Mrs. Kochanska and Mrs. Mowrer are rather typical in this. Herself a musician, born into a prosperous physician's family, and widow of a famous Polish violinist, Mrs. Kochanska is a person of sensitive and decisive middle-class consciousness. Intensely anti-Soviet, and despising the inferior, ignorant clods, as she regarded her jailers, she could never quite understand why they enjoyed watching the exiles getting calloused at hard work,



Lillian Mowrer

rather than asking her to teach music lessons. "Why should you *not* suffer?" her guard said. "We have been suffering so for twenty-two years." This book is her revenge. "Keep alive . . . get back to civilization . . . find Johnny (her grown son) . . . That was her plan. Nor had she any intention of letting them silence her. 'For how many will get out alive to tell the tale?' . . ."

Your Literary I. Q.

By Howard Collins

"I KNEW HIM WHEN . . ."

Quoted below are things the neighbors might have said (and probably did) about ten of literature's well-known characters at certain times in their lives. Allowing 5 points if you recognize the person being talked about, and another 5 if you recall the author who created him, a score of 60 is par, 70 is good, 80 or better is excellent. Answers are on page 13.

1. "He's a big shot now, but before he married that blonde heiress from Belmont he owed everybody in town. Women always go for those phonies . . ."
2. "Crooks sometimes do reform. One of the slickest safe-crackers I ever knew is running a shoe store . . . and has married the banker's daughter."
3. "Queer, isn't it, how he always looks the same? Those stories about his scandalous dissipations can't be true: his face would show it if they were."
4. "Remember that time, just after he'd been ordained, that he mistook a respectable young lady for a prostitute and got six months in gaol for attempted assault? And now he's a successful author!"
5. "Since he inherited that million dollars less than a year ago he's been spending money like a drunken sailor. If he keeps on at this rate he'll soon wind up without a cent to his name."
6. "They say that back in the Old Country he spent most of his time in debtor's prison, but since he's come to Australia he's a new man. He gets my vote for magistrate."
7. "Oh, I'll admit that she can *talk* like a duchess, since Higgins has been training her. But does that make her one? No. She's still a flower peddler, and not even good for that anymore."
8. "She used to be an artist's model and poor as a church mouse, but since that Jew has been training her she's the most talked-of singer in Europe."
9. "It must be quite a comedown—from being the Prince of Bohemia to the proprietor of a tobacco shop. But he doesn't mind."
10. "Do I know him? The movie actor? Why, he used to wait on me every Saturday night right here in Gashwiler's store."

True psychological insight

Now, Voyager

BY OLIVE HIGGINS PROUTY

"ONE gets to know and to like and believe in these people. As though they were friends, there is both suspense and satisfaction in watching them work out the freedom which is hardest to attain—the freedom of peace with one's self. Undoubtedly more than a little psychological knowledge underlies this portrait of New Englanders, but so natural and unassuming is Mrs. Prouty's wisdom, so ready her humor, that the book is neither a 'study' nor a costume piece but a very readable and not easily forgotten story." — *New York Herald Tribune* \$2.50

A national best seller

HOUGHTON-MIFFLIN-COMPANY

Latin-Americana

LATIN AMERICA. By William Lytle Schurtz. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1941. 378 pp. \$3.75.

LANDS OF NEW WORLD NEIGHBORS. By Hans Christian Adamson. New York: Whittlesey House. 1941. 593 pp. \$3.50.

Reviewed by KATHERINE RODELL

MR. SCHURTZ'S book has many merits which the recent crop of Latin American "interpretations," many of them the fruit of a mere six-week's acquaintance with the southern continent, necessarily lack. His is a book of facts, as assembled from his own explorations and re-

searches, carefully checked, and set down in a dispassionate record. There is little that is new here, but the book does what the excellent Royal Institute study of South America did a few years ago in assembling much relevant and scattered information. The reader who wants to view with alarm the Nazi menace, or who seeks a glib answer to the question of what we should do about Latin America, will be dissatisfied with Mr. Schurtz. The facts are all there, but the reader will have to work out the answers for himself.

It is perhaps a pity that a man of Mr. Schurtz's wide knowledge and understanding should elect to keep his own apparently liberal and informed

point of view so much in the background. While he is to be commended for such restraint in these days, when everyone who has taken a Caribbean cruise is a self-constituted authority on Latin American affairs, his opinions would unquestionably be worth listening to. But Mr. Schurtz simply set down all the information he considered useful, and then stopped abruptly, with no attempt to sum up, or to draw any conclusions. There is, however, only one real criticism to be made of Mr. Schurtz's book, and I set it down with regret, for it is difficult to have to report that a book so excellent is at the same time so dull.

"Lands of New World Neighbors," by H. C. Adamson, is a collection of brief accounts of the discovery, exploration, and early history of all the lands in the Western Hemisphere, including the United States. It is written in the self-consciously easy style often employed in an attempt to dramatize history for children. Any self-respecting travel folder contains much of the material here presented, while the "World Almanac," in a fraction of the space, contains much more that is valuable and significant. Those who want to gild their dinner-table conversation with the names of a few conquistadores will perhaps find it useful.

It is unfortunate for the cause of inter-American understanding that, with a very few exceptions, most of the new books on Latin America fall into the category of the superficial but readable, or that of the sound but dull. For this the publishers must take their share of the blame, either because they know so little of Latin America that the most casual observations appear to them profound and newsworthy, or because they feel that the public interest is such that uninspired but factual work will get by.

It is also true, however, that the caliber of the writers who have chosen to investigate Latin America is lamentably low. No one has yet surpassed Darwin's "Voyage of the Beagle" as a travel book, while Bryce's "Observations and Impressions" is worth a dozen of the books produced by the "good will" travelers of the last ten years; and the blind Prescott's "Conquest of Peru" still stands head and shoulders above all the Latin American histories that have since been written. Surely it is not too much to ask that both publishers and authors try to measure up to the standards of the past, even if they cannot surpass them, and that they foster, rather than take advantage of, the genuine public desire really to understand our Southern neighbors.

Katherine Rodell is the author of "South American Primer."

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