

Swan Song

NO SAD SONG FOR ME. By Ruth Southard. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1944. 175 pp. \$2.

Reviewed by KATHARINE SIMONDS

IT would be hard to find a more voluptuous study in Spartanism and self-abnegation than this story of Cas who, sentenced to die by cancer in nine months, pledged the doctor to secrecy, told no one, not even her husband, made no protest when he fell in love with another woman, but, judging her a worthy successor, tacitly made the succession easy by showing her the ropes—Brad likes his suits pressed every week; Brad is careless about where he drops his watch; little Polly must practise her music regularly; Flora the cook never remembers to wash the icebox; let me teach you bridge; and I want you to meet my friends at the Red Cross. When the future had been prepared—the lessons learned, the house cleaned—and the past placated—then still with dignity, she hid in the hospital the final moments which no courage can surmount.

This is the Roman way translated into terms of the suburban housewife, and touching for the fact that this superhuman strength is ascribed to a person outwardly so familiar and so fallible. The formula is superb, calculated to incarnadine *The Red Book*, and to justify the hopes of the publisher. For if it does not fulfill the most cherished adolescent dream of "they lived happily ever after," it has its own place in child dreaming; it expresses the adolescent resolve to be a nun, a nurse, a doctor, nobly living, but best of all, nobly dying. As in the child's dream, much of the satisfaction comes from the grimness of the picture; similarly also, the background figures are only puppets in the play of the self-sacrificial impulse. Thus the beloved Brad cannot be allowed to share her knowledge and earn the comfort of knowing he did well by her last months; thus also she accepts as final the dictum of one doctor, as if she half embraced her sentence. Another reason why the reader permits Cas to die is that by nature first and then by Cas's education her successor is a new edition of Cas. An exile from Prague, Roma Hradna is like Cas given to public-meeting speeches about the verities, honest to rudeness, impatient of appearance, warm of heart. Now that she knows about the sachets in the linen, and how to transplant dahlia bulbs, she lacks only humor and Anglo-Saxon silliness. And while Cas is in the hospital, Roma discovers and sends to her "Alice in Wonderland." Thus Cas is completely replaced.



Frances Parkington Keyes

As the nobility of Cas and Roma is slightly exaggerated, so most of the lesser figures, especially the women, are made too dull and ignoble. The dialogue is often wooden, made unreal by the use of semi-literary words like "dubbed" and by orations on "the beauty of the poppies in Flanders fields" and the horrors of Munich. Moreover, not content with spiritual elevation, Cas is something of an intellectual snob, speaking reverently of Shostakovitch and Montaigne, while being a touch lofty about *Collier's* and the Book-of-the-Month Club. There are some heights and abnegations to which I cannot be persuaded.

But whatever your adolescent self dramatizations may have been you will find it pleasant reading, since try as she will, the author never quite cracks the surface of the tragedy.

"Protest Bombing of Sacred Edifices"

By Sara Henderson Hay

THOUGH God, I hear, is not at home
In any temple man has made,
Against the arch, the gilded dome,
Let violence be stayed.

Upon the heaven-thrusting spire
Allow no bomb to plummet down.
Aim at the city square, the shire,
Try for the factory town.

Even if all it represent
We violate in word and fact,
Respect the tangible monument,
Preserve the shrine intact.

Thus shall our piety be shown
As we go forth to bloody strife.
Remember—spare the stick and stone,
Though not the human life.

The Conn. Farmans

ALSO THE HILLS. By Frances Parkington Keyes. New York: Julian Messner. 1943. 622 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by MABEL S. ULRICH

HERE is one of those long stories about a nice everyday family, their joys and their heartaches (mostly heartaches) with a little war—even a soupçon of spy trouble—a few glimpses of turbulent Washington, a couple of racey newsmen to give it the up-to-the-minute flavor.

Daniel and Serena Farman live in a quaint ancestral farmhouse full of rare antiques, in the Connecticut valley. Daniel runs the farm and Serena the household, the while she sheds serenity and wisdom. They have three grownup children: Jerome who left the bank to go to Fort Bragg, Judith a trained nurse who wants to go to war for adventure's sake and cannot make up her mind to marry a faithful suitor, the wayward Jenness who is secretary to a shady Congressman and doing other things in Washington she shouldn't. Jerome suddenly marries a Creole beauty, Alix St. Cyr, is sent overseas, and is killed. Judith goes off to the war and Jenness gets into a deplorable mess. Poor Daniel and Serena have a dreadful time. Leaving Judith's suitor to do the chores, they go to Washington to help Jenness. But for a slangy reporter with a heart of gold, they would have been lost indeed. (They can't be much more than fifty, but they sound eighty-five at least, so artless and helpless are they.) When things are at their worst, home to the farm comes the lovely Creole widow to have her baby. She brings plenty of money, too, so the farm is modernized, her beauty and grace bring happiness all around, and in the end we leave the Farmans lustily singing America around the melodeon. In spite of its up-to-date-ness, this story brought nostalgically to mind memories of the Pansy books and others of my childhood. It has a curious old-fashioned flavor that I found as beguiling as a revived Victorian model on a movie actress. If you know what I mean. Loads of women will love it, and it should be in every loan library.

The Swedenborg Foundation, Inc., 51 East 42d Street, New York, publishers of religious texts by Emanuel Swedenborg, famed theologian and scientist, has announced the free distribution of four texts entitled "Heaven and Hell," "The Four Doctrines," "Divine Providence," and "Divine Love and Wisdom." There is a 5c postage charge on each.

The Saturday Review

"A shrewd, warmly done study in loneliness and love, set against a lush Caribbean background . . . A first rate piece of work"

—Joseph Henry Jackson, *San Francisco Chronicle*

LIANA

THE NEW NOVEL BY

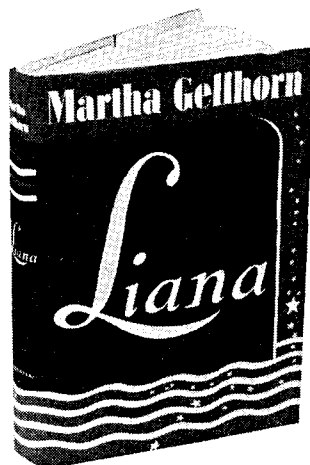
Martha Gellhorn

"With this novel Martha Gellhorn establishes herself as an honest and intelligent writer who has something to say and knows how to say it well."

—*New York Times*

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\$3.00

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By

George Santayana

author of "The Last Puritan"

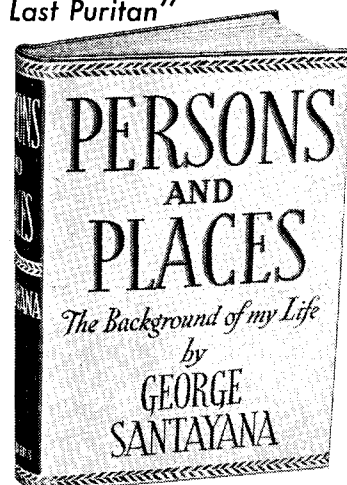
"Beautifully contrived and magnificently written. A classic of its kind, mellow, challenging, pungent."

—*Boston Herald*

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Life in the Cold Country

THEY SENT ME TO ICELAND. By Jane Goodell. New York: Ives Washburn. 1943. 248 pp. \$2.75.

Reviewed by MABEL S. ULRICH

IN January, 1942, the Red Cross sent its first unit overseas. There were eleven American girls in the group, their mission to establish recreation centers in Iceland where thousands of service men were gathered to guard the North Atlantic. How these girls met the unanticipated difficulties and how the boys themselves made all of it worth while are the themes of this book. When the girls arrived there was practically nothing for the men to do in their off-time; such attractions as the capital offered were restricted to officers. And so the R.C. girls had to start at rock-bottom. In the beginning they were frustrated at every turn. There was scarcely any equipment, red tape had to be unwound, housing and transportation difficulties seemed insurmountable, sudden storms or air-raids disrupted days of planning, the reinforcements they looked for every day failed to turn up. A small group of army nurses were the only American women the boys had seen since they had left home. Now they not only showered the newcomers with teasing attentions but used them to do their shopping, to write their letters, to ease their homesickness, and heartaches.

But the girls soon learned to be ready and equal to anything from washing cups and shaving chewing-gum from floors, to dancing, writing the scripts for shows they directed and acted, singing, planning, and executing programs for all the various camps, and, in Miss Goodell's case, even learning to play the saxophone. It meant swollen feet, hands blistered from opening thousands of coke bottles, traveling miles over crude lava-coated roads with the little Iceland ponies. But it was always exciting, often fun, and an experience that none of them would have missed.

Miss Goodell's book is the first to describe the doughboy's life on this lonely outpost. It should be a god-send to those families who have been able to glean all too little from the censored letters of their boys stationed there, many for two long years. Her descriptions of the island, its bleak volcanos and green valleys, and the natives make a colorful background for her lively accounts of the service men themselves, their merciless kidding, their grouching, and their lusty good humor. At the end of a year she came home but she left a "center" all were proud of, one with comfortable chairs, plenty of games, books, writing facilities, a coffee bar, while other centers were in the making for the other camps. Every one of these now had its periodic shows and programs, a sizable group of Red Cross workers had come to help the work along, a vast amount of buried talent had been brought to light; the boys were carving in wood, painting, going in for handicraft in a big way, and so many were writing poetry that a "poetry contest" was held with great success! The girls had done a fine, important job, one that demanded character, tact, never-flagging energy, and humor. Jane Goodell's telling of it may seem mild reading after the tales of incredible horror and heroism we meet every day, but it is well for us to know, too, of the thousands of boys who, denied the drama and excitement of battle, must endure the monotony and nervous tension of inaction while they stand guard that others may be safe. Miss Goodell learned to respect and admire these boys in Iceland; her experiences with them leave you glowing with pride in the spirit of America's youth.

Doubleday, Doran announces a prize of \$20,000, of which \$10,000 will be a cash award and \$10,000 an advance against trade and possible book club royalties, for the best novel submitted in a contest which will run from June 1, 1944 to January 1, 1945.



Roped to the man
she knew would
exterminate the
whole village..and
only she knew the
path down the
treacherous, snow-
covered slope!

Avalanche

A NOVEL OF LOVE AND ESPIONAGE BY

Kay Boyle

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