

## Salad Days with French Dressing

WITH MUCH LOVE. By Anne Green.  
New York: Harper & Bros. 1948.  
276 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by SARA HENDERSON HAY

HERE is another book of reminiscences of life with mother and father, but Mamma and Papa Green were a far cry from the substantial, humorless, arrogant Mr. Day and his mild lady. Anne Green, herself well known as a novelist, and the sister of Julian, writes with affection and amiable extravagance of her expatriate family; cheerful, improvident Papa with his gentle wit and good spirits, and volatile, abusive, unpredictable Mamma, transplanted from Savannah of the 1870's to France, flung by financial disaster from a comfortable world of Southern affluence into a very different environment of struggle and penury in a strange land. Papa, it is true, had had a rather cosmopolitan bringing up and was not unacquainted with European life; like many rich young men of his time he had studied abroad, and had lived for a while in Hamburg and Barcelona.

When, in 1877, he was brought home again to Savannah he came trailing clouds of foreign glamor and elegance, but to say that he swept Mary Hart-ridge off her feet is overstatement. This belle of the cotillions led him a

merry chase until she finally made up her mind to marry him, and even then it took several tempestuous months for her to realize that she was madly in love with him. She remained in love with him all their years together, as he with her, and their daughter pictures them here as she remembers them, still tempestuous, still romantic, quarreling, laughing, getting fearfully exasperated with each other and their brood of seven children, talking endlessly to their fascinated audience of the old days at home. "They gave us," she says, "a perfect childhood." It is a handsome tribute. Less spirited and captivating parents could not have done so, because many of those years in France were difficult and bleak. But Edward and Mary Green managed to maintain through all the precarious, hand-to-mouth days, with seven children to feed and clothe on an infinitesimal salary, a warm atmosphere of gaiety and well-being, an emotional security when there was no material security whatever.

Anne Green's story of the family's life in Paris around the turn of the century and up to the time of the First World War is written with cheerful hyperbole and much charm. Mamma and Papa occupy the center of the stage, the numerous children appear in varying degrees of color and shadow as their personalities impressed themselves on the narrator.

One of them, Charles, went to live in America when Anne was very small; two of them, Rhett and Lucy, were inconspicuously nice little girls. Eleanor and Mary, says their candid sister, were wicked from start to finish; Julian stands out boldly because of his extremely good behavior; she herself, she reports, had quite a reputation as a sanctimonious monster. In any event, the crowded flat on the Rue Khumkorff was a lively place. Mamma, like the old woman who lived in the shoe, was inclined to spank them all soundly and send them to bed whenever possible. She was maddened by their gabbling a mixture of French and English, she cuffed them about and shooed them out from underfoot with affectionate ill temper, and they all adored her. She budgeted, managed, dressed them in weird hand-me-downs donated by more affluent relatives and friends, quarreled with them ferociously, and understood them perfectly.

The carefree Paris of the early nineteenth century was not such a bad place to be poor in at that. They went to the Bazaar and brought home wonderful bargains for a few sous; they went to the Paris Exposition where they were nearly frightened to death by the lurid waxworks; they trooped along with Papa and Mamma through the Bois on Sunday afternoons, they sat with them in the sidewalk cafes and heard the fiery arguments over the Dreyfus case. Occasionally friends from America dropped in, and were regally entertained, as befitted Mamma's and Papa's heritage of Southern hospitality, even though it took the last of the next week's money.

The family fortunes bettered eventually, and they moved from the shabby quarters on the Rue Khumkorff to a house with a garden, and later to a series of more and more luxurious apartments. But it is the turbulent early days that Anne Green recreates with the greatest zest. And the most appealing and enduring memory of all is the picture of Papa and Mamma, seated side by side talking:

They always had an audience. Their long conversations relating to a surprising American past went straight into the ears of children playing on the floor, lying behind the sofa with a book, picking out a tune on the piano. We loved to listen. . . . I think they hoped, by making us familiar with so many details of their past, to draw us into it. . . . To be truthful, they talked too because they loved talking. Reminiscences of the past are doubly sweet in a foreign land. Whatever their purpose they succeeded in filling us with love. Their memories and the spectacle of their daily lives, the rosewood furniture, and a perfect childhood were our inheritance.

## Your Literary I.Q.

By Howard Collins

LINES FROM TENNYSON

A. C. Palmer, of Pomfret Center, Conn., submits twenty familiar lines from Tennyson, each from a different poem. Can you name the poems from which they were taken? Allowing five points for each correct identification, a score of sixty is par, seventy is very good, and eighty or better is excellent. Answers on page 25.

1. Across the walnuts and the wine.
2. Kind hearts are more than coronets.
3. The spacious times of great Elizabeth.
4. I am a part of all that I have met.
5. The old order changeth, yielding place to new.
6. Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers.
7. O for the touch of a vanished hand.
8. Men may come and men may go.
9. His honor rooted in dishonor stood.
10. 'Tis better to have loved and lost.
11. Theirs not to reason why.
12. Father will come to his babe in the nest.
13. I hope to meet my Pilot face to face.
14. A haunt of ancient Peace.
15. You must wake and call me early.
16. My strength is as the strength of ten.
17. In that fierce light which beats upon a throne.
18. It is the little rift within the lute.
19. He that wrongs his friends wrongs himself more.
20. The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls.

**The World.** *With the world in crisis and Russia at the heart of it, a journey perilous through that country must not be taken lightly, as Louis Fischer indicates here in his review of Steinbeck's and Capa's "A Russian Journal." . . . Out of the debate over Russia and the United Nations has come at least a widening belief in some form of world government as the only alternative to chaos. Crane Brinton's "From Many One" and Paul McGuire's "Experiment in World Order" represent a conservative, evolutionary view of the possibility of world government in the future. Although advocates of world government agree on the objective, they often differ on the means to be used. Contrasted with the position of Professor Brinton is the bolder stand of the World Federalist group, best represented in last year's "Peace or Anarchy" by Cord Meyer, Jr.*

## Conducted USSR Tour

A RUSSIAN JOURNAL. By John Steinbeck. New York: The Viking Press. 1948. 220 pp. \$3.75.

Reviewed by LOUIS FISCHER

HAS ANYBODY the right to write a book? Is an author justified in turning out a book simply because he is sure his publisher will publish it? I am inclined to think that this volume should have been suppressed by Steinbeck. Or perhaps he should have surrendered all the excellent heavy paper to Capa's marvelous photographs (one would have liked three hundred instead of only seventy) and limited himself to a few lines of text for each picture. This book was conceived in cocktails and nurtured prenatally with a ghastly volume of vodka and wine and an indecent amount of food. I do not know what stimulated the actual writing but it certainly wasn't loyalty to the original intention of reporting on the "private life of the Russian people."

Under the influence of several green swisses served by Willy at the bar of the New Bedford hotel in New York, Steinbeck and Capa decided that too much had been printed about what the Soviet leaders were thinking and doing and too little about the "private life of the Russian people." "No one wrote about it," Steinbeck complained. Well, in all these 220 big pages there is not a single private conversation between the author and a plain, private Soviet citizen. On the rare occasions he went into a home it was always crowded with visitors who had come for a feast.

Of course, Steinbeck and Capa do not speak Russian so they had to talk through a Soviet government translator, and no Soviet citizen would speak freely in such circumstances. But the book contains no evidence that Steinbeck even tried, despite the

interpreter, to get a Soviet working-man or peasant or intellectual to express himself on the problems of private life in the Soviet Union. Most conversations recorded in the book were at public dinners or in groups and then the Russians all orated like *Pravda* editorials. So did officials and prominent authors he met individually. In cases where they spoke English, Steinbeck did not probe at all into matters like friendship, family relations between persons under a dictatorship, relations of persons to the dictatorship, relations of the artist to the state, freedom of speech, of movement, of conscience, etc. Usually they talked about the danger of war and then Steinbeck elicited nice Kremlin cliches.

Steinbeck writes that the American journalists resident in Moscow cannot travel outside the city without special permission, which is rarely if ever granted. Now some of these correspondents are consistently pro-Soviet. Did it occur to Steinbeck why he was allowed to travel through the country though they are not? They could, since they know Russian, establish direct contact with Russians and look into their hearts and minds and really study their private lives. Therefore, they are forbidden to move from Moscow or to maintain friendly contacts with Moscovites.

Steinbeck received permission to go about the country because the authorities knew he couldn't learn anything, surrounded as he was by translators, officials, and big-shot writers who knew what to tell him. This being the case, Steinbeck might have come back to New York and said, "I went to do a really important and revealing book, but I didn't get enough material, so I'll just write a few newspaper articles and pay back the publishers' advance, if any, from the royalties of my next novel."

"Surely it is superficial," Steinbeck admits in his last paragraph, "and how could it be otherwise?" Correct. "We know that this journal will not be satisfactory either to the ecclesiastical Left, nor to the *lumpen* Right. The first will say it is anti-Russian, and the second that it is pro-Russian." This statement reflects the grave error of many fellow-travellers who think that America is either Left or Right. As a matter of fact, neither the Communists nor the Fascists count for



—Capa photo from the book.

Stalingrad, a raving ruin—"... in groups the Russians all orated like *Pravda* editorials."

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