

in itself, but in the context of the novel, it reads like mere Hollywood "progressivism."

In general, the influence of the scenario and of motion pictures is to be observed in the organization of the novel. Touches of realistic dialogue are mixed in with a love affair and a strike which are conceived on the level of the American motion-picture imagination. Further, the sympathy of the author is constantly negated by recurrent comments which are on the smart-aleck side, and which are highly distracting, at least to this reader.

Mr. Mende has talent, but he here shows no power of conception. He is careless, not in his writing, but in his conceptions and in the way he has worked out the underlying structure of his novel. There are lessons in this deficiency. For a writer to be on the side of the angels does not necessarily help him to organize his details in writing a novel which recounts the victory of the angels over the devils. Also, the conventions of so-called realistic fiction do not substitute for depth of insight. More and more, young writers are adopting these methods, but they are using them in order to introduce a motion-picture scenario imagination, and to depict human and social relationships on a Hollywood and journalistic level. This is masked by a more free treatment of sex than is permitted in motion pictures, but the realism of books of this order is merely superficial. Mr. Mende can write better than he has done in his first novel. It seems that

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FRASER YOUNG'S
LITERARY CRYPT: No. 300

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 300 will be found in the next issue.

B DPPTLDHCK LCEHALI HT B

DPPTLDHCK TRHKK BAI DLL-

TL VHKK DBMMKL LFLCNVUL-

CL TUL DPLT.—IPCPRUN CLHI.

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 299

There is no cure for birth and death
save to enjoy the interval.

—G. SANTAYANA.

The World.

The great debate about what our part in the post-war world should be continues to engross the attention of public officials, publicists, and publishers. Among the more notable discussions of the past triennium are Clarence Streit's "Union Now," N. J. Spykman's "Geography of the Peace," Walter Lippmann's "The Cold War," and Sumner Welles's "Where Are We Heading?" To this international-relations bookcase, since the turn of the year, have been added Paul McGuire's "There's Freedom for the Brave," Robert Payne's "Report on America," and Fritz Sternberg's "Living with Crisis." Two books we review this week seem to merit place on the top shelf. In "The World's Best Hope," Francis Biddle urges that we assume the role in world affairs formerly played by Britain. In "We, of the Americas," Carlos Dávila argues that British policy in Latin America continues to menace world peace.

For Potential Isolationists

THE WORLD'S BEST HOPE. By Francis Biddle. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1949. 175 pp. \$3.50.

Reviewed by CRANE BRINTON

AS soon as you start applying in human relations any neat polar dualism you realize that in fact you are dealing with a spectrum in which one instance shades almost immeasurably into another. None the less, if it is not held and applied dogmatically, the dualism is often useful. There seems to be emerging now in the United States two contrasting group attitudes on foreign relations, one in favor of a world government of some sort, with at least some sovereign powers, and with or without the participation of Russia, the other in favor of frank American acceptance, in a world of balance-of-power politics among seventy-odd "sovereign" nations, of something like the position held until recently by Great Britain. And yet, even accepting the gradations and shadings from one of these positions to the other, the analytical observer knows this dualism is inadequate. For, as the wise among both our world federationists and our balance-of-power "realists" know, there is a third group, the nowadays rather subdued isolationists, heirs, certainly, of long years of American history.

Mr. Biddle, who is a wise, moderate, and persuasive advocate of the policy of our accepting, and improving on, the British role in world politics, is fully aware of the existence of the isolationists, not so much as an organized political group, but rather as a mass of Americans verbally internationalist enough, but by conditioning, and by habit incapable of accepting in action the responsibilities of our present international position.

"The World's Best Hope" is directed rather at ordinary, hesitant Americans than at the world federationists. It is directed particularly at those potential isolationists who hold that we must not collaborate with, let alone buttress, Western European nations practising wicked Socialism. Just how successful Mr. Biddle will be with innocent businessmen who think that Socialism and Communism are identical is hard to say. One phase of his argument—that in the eyes of the orthodox economic individualist American practice is not untinged with "Socialism"—though profoundly true, is not the kind of argument that easily wins converts. It may boomerang. "The World's Best Hope"—the phrase is Jefferson's, and refers to the United States, if you're in doubt—is one of the best of the many little books on our international relations that keep falling from the presses. Mr. Biddle presents in clearest terms the assumptions, standards, aims, and temper of the very important group that would have us, at least for the present, organize the world against Russian aggression by methods essentially like those the British have used for four centuries successively—and in some senses, certainly, successfully—against Spanish, French, and German aggression. He is less deliberately hard-boiled than the school of N. J. Spykman, more persuasive, less pontifical, than Mr. Lippmann, more earthy, less aloof, than Mr. Welles. The idealists who think the British were themselves hypocritical aggressors will probably think that Mr. Biddle is in fact preaching hypocritically a form of aggression. Yet, to an observer perhaps not sensitive enough in these matters, Mr. Biddle seems to avoid the attitude of "holier than thou," seems not to want to take up

the white man's burden, seems, in short, to have avoided preaching as successfully as he avoids cynicism.

This is a book written from a wide experience of men and of ideas, a book that somehow conveys the atmosphere of concrete reality, of con-

fused cross-currents of opinion, of contingency, of decision-making, in this democracy of ours. It should be read and pondered, even by those who think we can do better than accept the heritage of Cobden, Palmerston, Disraeli, and Earl Grey.

Dodgers. In all of these and the many other pieces which make up the book the Enemy is always Status Quo.

Yet despite Lerner's vigorous support of what are widely hailed as "progressive" movements, he has had the good sense to avoid the use of hackneyed and overworked terms such as Fascist and Enemy of the People to characterize all who might oppose the social changes he desires. This, in itself, is a refreshing tactfulness in a book of this kind. Mr. Lerner has not been entirely successful in breaking out of the circular web of left-wing thinking, however, and phrases such as "the Big Money," "Big Business," and "the Big Press" are used constantly to describe the industrial, newspaper, banking, and business interests of the nation.

Unquestionably Lerner's fear of the evil effect of monopoly capital on our established system is well founded. It also can be reasonably asserted that the huge newspaper chains have failed to support the processes of an ideal democracy. But it is notable that while he has constant terror of these institutions, Mr. Lerner has no similar fear of the equal dangers to our traditional system inherent in monopoly unionism, special-group politics, and paternalistic government.

In all fairness it should be remarked that the book is one of the less strident works of its genre, and that as an expression of faith by a warm human being it is an acceptable addition to contemporary social-political literature. It is not (as the publisher's jacket blurb would have us believe) a reliable guide for the liberal in search of direction in the confused and confusing times in which we live. Its greatest appeal will be to a readership which is familiar enough with Lerner's viewpoint to find it a pleasurable echo of its own thinking.

Enemy, Status Quo

ACTIONS AND PASSIONS. By Max Lerner. New York: Simon & Schuster. 1949. 367 pp. \$3.50.

Reviewed by WELLINGTON ROE

HERE is a book to delight the left-center intelligentsia. And it must be said immediately that like Mr. Lerner's previous works (with the possible exception of "The Mind and Faith of Justice Holmes") it is spirited political comment and a bold attack upon the defenders of social orthodoxy. Precisely, it is a generous sampling of the author's columns and editorials in the newspaper *PM* and its recently defunct successor, the *New York Star*. Most of the selections in the book, however, are from the *PM* cycle of Mr. Lerner's work. Not more than a dozen have been culled from the *Star* and other publications such as the *American Scholar*. This indicates both the scope and perspective of the volume.

Radical in tone, it is only occasionally shrill. Repetitious in theme, it is not dull. It is further evidence of Mr. Lerner's sincere belief in the all-time righteousness of the left-wing cause; and it is another exhibition of his mastery of the dialectic of the revolutionary cult. Lerner has a special talent for stating such arguments forcefully without descending to the melodramatics which make so much of the left discourse infantile. Consequently, while many readers doubtless will disagree with his political and social position, it seems likely that only intellectual primitives will contend the book is not an excellent statement of the view of the left-liberal toward American society. Because its language is generally restrained, it also will doubtlessly prove a useful weapon for native radicals in the complex battle for the American mind.

But beyond such limits the book will have minor appeal. For one thing it proves again—if proof is needed—that while a newspaper column read at random may be profitable, some 200 such columns compressed into a single volume become plethoric. It is just too much, even of a good thing. Mr. Lerner has enhanced this tend-



ency by selecting pieces written to a consistently similar pattern. His intent appears to have been to provide his readers with a continuity of expression on a number of subjects, but the result is in the nature of a phonograph recording of the sounds from a political battleground.

Nevertheless, as readers familiar with Mr. Lerner's previous works know, the range of his interests is amazing. In this book he comments on such diverse matters as President Truman's handling of the 1946 railroad strike (where he has distorted the established facts), Charlie Chaplin's superb ability as a mime, H. G. Wells's imaginative writing, Palestine, the cold war, Trotsky and Stalin, the evil of the Ku Klux Klan, Jim Crowism, the 1948 political conventions, and the management of the Brooklyn

March Day in Vermont

By Gerhard Friedrich

SPRING is not yet. The trees stand gaunt and bare,
Like ghostly dancers, dark and atrophied.
Becalmed, without a cloud, the wintry air
Numbs the rebellious blood, and, canopied
By the immaculate expanse of sky,
The patient earth lies spellbound and subdued,
A hoary sleeper dominated by
Pale dreams of autumn's past beatitude.

Bird notes are missing from this frozen scene.
The sun has not her strength. The fettered brook
Remains ensnared. No hints of golden green
Come from the mountainsides. Write in your book:
Spring is not yet, but spring is none the less
One March day nearer with its loveliness.