

People

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which made the days slip by and gave them the illusion of being always busy."

The reconstruction of that merry, pointless life is very engaging, but Miss Mitford seems temperamentally inclined, as Gibbon wrote in a wholly different connection, "to scorn the profane virtues of moderation and sobriety." Nothing was amiss, one gathers, when Jeanne ("Reinette" to her friends) stalked the King while he was improving his health by stalking his game in the forest of Senart; but when another lady of the court tried (and failed) to gain the unconsecrated but usual honors from Louis she was revealed as "a horrible little creature," while an even younger aspirant (who succeeded) is characterized as "a silly goose." One gets the impression that the King could not really be blamed if when he was not hunting, or gambling, or entertaining at court he was tumbling in and out of beds. "The wives of his subjects had no difficulty in falling in love with him," for "he had a most caressing look, a curious husky voice . . . and a sexy moodiness of manner irresistible to women." To lots of women, including his little call girls at the Parc aux Cerfs. Though scandalous stories were related then and later about that establishment, it was in fact, the author assures us, "a modest little brothel, run on humane and practical lines."

The contemporaries did not grasp the simple fact that "Madame de Pompadour excelled at an art which the majority of human beings despise because it is unprofitable and ephemeral, the art of living." The Parisians had no appreciation of the taste which went into the purchase of her thousands of *objets d'art* the inventory of which took two lawyers more than a year to draw up after her death. They were not thrilled over the fact that "few human beings since the world began can have owned so many beautiful things." They grumbled instead, and she was defenseless against the "horrid little poems and epigrams . . . dull and dirty" that they composed.

Louis, too, was unhappy over the obtuseness of his subjects: "He suffered when his people behaved, as it seemed to him, so unreasonably. He felt that he and they were united by a religious link: he loved them, he lived for them, and, like a father with naughty children, he was vexed." Neither subjects nor the historians had sufficient objectivity to understand that what prevailed in *ce pays-*

ci was "a perfectly serene laziness of the spirit, . . . perpetual youth, . . . happy days out of doors and lazy evenings' chatter and gambling in the great wonderful palace."

All this is very edifying, of course, and we can congratulate ourselves on living in the broadminded and democratic twentieth century that corrects the distortions of our prissy fathers.

Beloved Country

SWEET REMEMBERED YESTERDAYS: What my mother used to refer to as "the fatal gift of complete recall" is the cornerstone of Marion Edey's book of childhood reminiscences, "*Early in the Morning*" (Harper, \$3). If you belong to my mother's school of thought, which looks towards the rising rather than the setting sun, Miss Edey's book will hold little interest for you. . . .

A distant lighthouse on a peninsula that curves into the broad Hudson River sheltered a vast old house, big, comfortable, shabby. Its rooms were enormous, all except those up under the eaves, where the children slept. They all had a view of the river. And the attic was filled with everything ever discarded, which made it a wonderful place for hide-and-seek.

The great event in the children's lives was the change in the seasons. These they enjoyed as fully as though they were adventures into another land. Dogs and horses, a good-natured cook, chickens preyed on by neighboring weasels, snakes and turtles in the river—they were part of the dramatic accompaniment to life in the country.

On this pastoral scene there descended a governess, whose days were mercifully numbered, and then the family moved to the big city, and began life all over again, in a new, unfriendly world. The old house, on which the lighthouse still flashed intermittently, was deserted. Nostalgia, of course, brought the children back years later, and they experienced that feeling that overcomes us all when we visit the scenes of our childhood: "I thought it was larger! It all seems to have shrunk!"

"*Early in the Morning*" is not just a chronicle of some children in a gaslit era. It possesses a kind of magic, the kind that made Kenneth Grahame's "*Wind in the Willows*" an excursion into the land extolled by Peter Pan. Marion Edey remembers it all—particularly her companionship with her brother Noel. She is so steeped in the past that she remembers every detail, how people looked and talked and laughed and cried. "*Early in the Morning*" is a happy excursion into a beloved country, long gone.

—KENNETH HORAN.

Fiction

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aunt's confidence and fortune by "punctual, prudent, servile, devout ways." Since his aunt considers all activity outside church doors tainted by sexuality, Theodorico has to conceal his humanity craftily and, much against his will, has to undertake a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, where he discovers Moslems guarding the temple to keep "rival priests . . . from coming to blows." Even this extended effort to maintain a reputation for sanctity (while living as seems sensible) fails. He doesn't get the inheritance, surprisingly but plausibly becomes a respectable (but unusually candid) member of the middle class, and nevertheless enjoys himself.

As Federico de Onis has said, Eça de Queiroz might have been considered a great novelist long ago if he had written in one of the languages frequently translated into English. In Aubrey Bell's apparently excellent rendering, Queiroz appears as an excellent stylist, a master of the ironical approach that makes one get the serious point while smiling. He has a great deal more that is serious to say about religion, philosophy, and Portugal than I have space to tell—and almost always does it divertingly.

His excellent, almost unknown novel makes me wonder what first-rate books should be translated from the many small and large countries of which we are and should not be ignorant if we want to make the American way different from the Roman way that led to decline and fall.

Notes

BACK HOME TO TROUBLE: The purpose of the suspense novel is simple enough. It is to create suspense, which in turn is complicated by revelations, which in turn create more suspense, which in turn creates more revelations. And in his first novel, "*The Deserter*" (Macmillan, \$3), Lowell Barrington has managed all this with enough adroitness and action to justify its existence. Ostensibly, the story begins with the release from military prison of a dishonorable dischargee convicted of having abandoned another man under fire and with his search for this other man in order to prove his own innocence. Happily, this apparent seriousness of purpose on the part of Mr. Barrington breaks down into a more entertaining pattern just as soon as his protagonist reaches the well-protected mansion in which his crazed former cohort now lives amidst

nurses, an unspecified number of male bodyguards, a senescent grandmother who comes off in the right style, and just the right unspecified number of upstairs and downstairs maids. All these manage to keep things very lively and to serve up the suspense and the revelation in alternate courses which, as things go, will probably make just as good a movie as they now make a book.

—JOHN HAVERSTICK.

FIFTEEN CHANGED LIVES: Rodolfo L. Fonesca's original and moving story "Tower of Ivory" (translated by Walter Starkie and published by Julian Messner at \$3.75) hinges around an act of violence of a peculiarly horrifying and repulsive nature: the violation by Chinese bandits of fifteen missionary nuns. The author does not make the reader a witness of the crime; he presents the unhappy victims to us just after the event as they are embarking on the ship which is to take them back to Italy and their problematic future. Their shocking experience is not to be the end of things—ignominious or exalted as they might think in their state of dismay and confusion—but rather a beginning.

The fact that at least in the first section of the book the whole community, which remains united in its Umbrian refuge, is the protagonist gives the story a special character; however, as the tale unfolds certain figures come into increasing prominence and finally dominate the plot. Sister Juana, in whom her experience has aroused a sensual need that might have been satisfied by a child—or so she tells herself—leaves the order and makes a career of vengeance on men. Sister Hilaria bears an unwanted baby and in her reaction of grief at its early death goes mad. The truly tragic experience is reserved for Sister Praxedes, the other involuntary mother. With the birth of her child, a powerful maternal instinct awakes in her; the struggle between this new love and the love symbolized by her vows is the core of the novel.

The second part of the novel does not, unfortunately, have either the same originality of concept or the same stamp of authenticity; it is, in fact, a little novel in its own right, a tale of the pre-1914 Continental sort—common enough from Madrid to Vienna—in which the leading characters are the Virtuous but Jealous Wife, the Sensual Siren, and the Philandering Husband. Had the novel ended with Part I it would have had an emotional as well as a structural unity; as it is, the freshness and honesty of the early conception is blurred by the false drama of the ending.

—THOMAS G. BERGIN.

Modern America

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castigates the book as an attack upon intellectuals. While certain aspects of the novel may permit such an interpretation, it can be read instead as an assault upon the sin of pride, whether encountered in intellectual circles or elsewhere. Miss Howe's intellectuals were self-centered and exclusive, addicted to "groupism" and even "little-groupism" (to borrow Riesman's concepts), and because they were neither class-free nor clique-free they failed to satisfy the criteria of a genuine and creative intellectualism. Miss Howe satirized them not because they were intellectuals but because their intellectualism was only an absurd pretense.

AS ANOTHER example, Riesman quotes with approval Peter Viereck's remark that anti-Catholicism is the anti-Semitism of the intellectuals. The juxtaposition of these two subjects is both illogical and dangerous. Neither Viereck nor Riesman apparently notices that anti-Semitism means prejudice against persons and that anti-Catholicism means opposition to a doctrine, an idea, and an encompassing creed. It is clearly possible to be a critic of Judaism without discriminating against Jews, a critic of Catholicism without discriminating against Catholics, and a critic of Calvinism without discriminating against Presbyterians.

Riesman's method serves him better in his distinguished essays on Veblen and Freud. He shows that Veblen was caught in the culture he criticized and was never able to dispossess himself of the farm boy's envy and admiration of the city-slicker—in this case the baronial businessman. Freud, whose contributions to social science Riesman praises above all others, was nevertheless a "nineteenth-century bourgeois gentleman," a Puritan in his attitude toward work, orthodox and even Victorian in his tastes, a man who accepted an economics of scarcity, and one who had too much reverence for the past and too much respect for authority.

The essays as a whole sustain no single thesis and judgments as to content can only be disparate and diffuse. The level of discourse is another matter. Riesman is utterly prolific with ideas. Where some sociologists need six articles to elaborate one idea, he reverses the proportion. It may be that we shall have to use these ideas as catalysts rather than as conclusions. In any event, we have in Riesman a sociologist with "style," a moralist



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