

Arabic medical practices and practitioners. The surgeon's quick response, drawn from his fantastically retentive memory, made the caller blink. Soon the doctor and the shy, equally lonely writer became inseparable companions. Their friendship flourished until Hearn took up residence in Japan; then the correspondence ceased. Of the writer, Rudolph Matas once observed: "His mind towered like a cloud-capped mountain on one side; while on the other, it was not only underdeveloped; it was a cavity."

Besides his operation for aneurysms, Rudolph Matas was credited with a dozen or more "firsts" in other fields. In the early days it was he who identified typhoid fever as an entity; up to then the disease had been regarded as a form of malaria. At Charity Hospital he performed the first thyroidectomy for a malignancy; he made the first attempt to relieve acute attacks of anemia by intravenous saline injections. His liquid injection techniques later led to the wide use of saline infusions for other disorders. In 1893 Dr. Matas cleared the way for more successful chest surgery with a new method for keeping the lungs inflated.

Perhaps the greatest threat to his career occurred in 1908, when the surgeon lost the sight of one eye from an infection caused by rubbing his eyelid with a soiled surgical garment after an operation. "As a cyclopean individual," would this interfere with his surgery? "No," he told a friend. "Despite marked astigmatism and myopia in my remaining eye, I have never done more minute and exacting work than in the seven years after the loss of my eye."

For nearly five years before his death Dr. Matas was almost totally blind. He used a wheel chair, but there were occasional revolts when he refused to ride an elevator installed in his home. "While no one can be very cheerful living in the penumbra of a ghost world, I am not rehearsing the lamentations of Job," he wrote to a friend. At his request, his funeral took place in the St. Charles Avenue house, from which his "Dearest Adri" had been buried in 1918.

Three years previously Dr. Matas had made a memorable address, "The Soul of a Surgeon," before the Mississippi State Medical Society. His biographers close their book with significant words from that speech: "The transition between life and death must be gentle in the winter of life. Death must be invested with a certain grandeur and poetry, if it comes to a man who has completed his mission. He has nothing to fear, nothing to dread."

Seventeenth-Century Coexistence

"Peter the Great: Emperor of All Russia," by Ian Grey (Lippincott, 444 pp. \$7.50), depicts the czar not as a "dynamic barbarian," but as a man dedicated to his country and his people. Ivar Spector of the Far Eastern and Russian Institute at the University of Washington is the author of several books on Russia, including "An Introduction to Russian History and Culture."

By Ivar Spector

IN SPITE of Peter the Great's colorful personality and "volcanic energy," there is a comparative paucity of biographies of this first Russian emperor (1682-1725). Inside Russia he and his policies were for decades the subject of bitter controversy, especially by Slavophiles opposed to Russia's Western orientation. Leo Tolstoy, repelled by the alleged immorality and vulgarity of the monarch and his court, abandoned all plans for a biography of Peter. In Soviet times Alexei N. Tolstoy produced a novel (filmed by the gifted Sergei Eisenstein) which unabashedly depicted the debauchery of Peter's court, but also by implication drew laudatory com-

parisons between Peter's policies and those of Stalin.

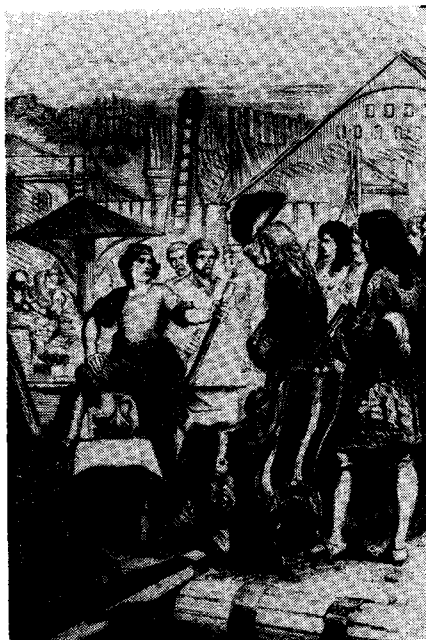
This volume by Ian Grey is more than just another biography of Peter the Great. By design or accident, the author has created a new image of the emperor. From these pages Peter emerges, not as a "dynamic barbarian," but as a man of "humility and selflessness," dedicated to Russia and the Russian people. He is portrayed as the "antithesis of Louis XIV," an "autocrat uncorrupted by power," whose cruelty and barbarities were part of the age in which he lived, and as one of the "very great princes of history."

Whether or not his interpretation of Peter will be accepted by other scholars, Ian Grey has deftly substantiated his analysis with a wealth of primary source materials, chiefly Russian and English, some of which were collected in the USSR when this Australian author was attached to the British Military Mission in Moscow during World War II. There is room for doubt, however, as to his interpretation of the motives of Peter the Great.

What makes this biography such interesting reading is that it combines some of the best elements of the diary, the novel, and formal history. The author's descriptive powers, especially his depiction of numerous battle scenes, make the reader virtually an eyewitness to the most dramatic events of Peter's reign—"a hard reign for the whole nation."

The bulk of the biography is devoted to Peter's foreign relations and wars. Of the 444 pages in the book, only sixty-two deal with the emperor's domestic policies, with the reforms by which he sought to transform Russia from an underdeveloped country into a modern state.

According to Grey, the event which molded and shaped Peter's thinking and action throughout his reign was his visit, when still a teen-ager, to a storehouse some five miles from Moscow located on the estate of a forebear of the Romanovs, where he saw his first English boat, the "grandfather of the Russian Navy." Henceforth Peter's determination to make Russia a sea power became an obsession. The impression is given by the author that all Peter's subsequent decisions on domestic and foreign policy were subordinated to this objective. It likewise conditioned his



—Bettmann Archive.

Peter the Great, visiting an English dockyard — Woodcut, 1777.

attitude toward England. "The English island," he remarked, "is the best, most beautiful, and happiest that there is in the whole world."

The basis of Peter's foreign policy, as presented in this biography, was co-existence in Europe and expansion in Asia. Peter labored to unite European Christendom in a "holy alliance" against "infidel" Turkey. He pursued this objective for eighteen months as leader of the Grand Embassy to Western Europe (1697-98). Convinced that Sweden was responsible for the failure of his efforts to form a Western coalition, Peter retaliated by abandoning his crusade against Islam in order to conduct the "Northern War" against Charles XII—a conflict that lasted twenty-one years. This war, according to Grey, proved Peter to be "a greater monarch, a greater general, and a greater man" than Charles XII.

During this protracted period of hot and cold wars, however, Peter's popularity with the Russian people was at low ebb, as substantiated by numerous plots and uprisings. The reader experiences the war fatigue of the Russian masses. Not until he achieved peace with victory in 1721 was Peter acclaimed by the nation. It was then that the Senate asked him to assume the title "Father of the Fatherland, Peter the Great, Emperor of All Russia."

This biography is the best apology to date for some of the more controversial aspects of Peter's policy and action. It minimizes his mockery of the Orthodox Church, the implication being that he attacked the Orthodox hierarchy, which stubbornly resisted progress, rather than Russian Orthodoxy. Peter is represented as a deeply religious man, although far removed from the bigotry of his subjects. To lift the Iron Curtain between Orthodox Christianity and European Christendom he encouraged the erection of Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches in Moscow and elsewhere. Because of his tolerance foreign representatives in Russia ceased to regard the Russians as "baptized bears," and Russians in turn stopped labeling Protestants and Roman Catholics as "damned and unbaptized." In the words of the author, in Russia there was "no collision between the State and Church as in the West." There was "a revolution of customs and institutions, not of doctrine and ideas," which did not assault the national faith.

Grey's new image of Peter extends to the emperor's moral behavior. He contends that allegations of Peter's gross immorality stemmed largely from the unreliable gossip of the court and from disgruntled foreign hirelings, who

disparaged the emperor's reputation in the West. The new image includes Peter's "only love," his second wife, Catherine I (erstwhile mistress of two of his subordinates), who bore Peter twelve children. There is enough material in this biography to provide the basis for a novel on Peter I and his Catherine.

Although the author has demonstrated the impact on Peter of the Grand Embassy's tour of Western Europe, he is silent as to its impact on the more than 250 persons who made up the emperor's entourage. While Peter's main purpose in exposing his entourage to European ideas and technology was to secure their support for his foreign policies and domestic reforms, it is obvious that this trip was a double-edged sword. As the members of the party became familiar with European ways, they imbibed European political doctrines at variance with those of an autocratic state. Thus they became the progenitors of the nineteenth-century leaders of Russian political and revolutionary movements—any study of which should start with Peter's opening of this window to the West. Mr. Grey's biography should serve to offset in part the traditional concept and interpretation of the emperor's conduct and policies.

GAEL WITHOUT GAB: The vehement, volatile, exuberant, sentimental Irishman, prone equally to tears or laughter, and modulating—often with the aid of liquor—between elation and despair, was a caricature (not wholly unfounded in fact) long familiar to Americans. If—despite the popularity in Ireland of austere figures like Parnell and de Valera—there are those who still cherish such a stereotype, Padraic Colum's admirable and much-needed biography, "Ourselves Alone: The Story of Arthur Griffith and the Origin of the Irish Free State" (Crown, \$6), may supply a needed corrective.

Mr. Colum quotes a saying of Parnell: "You would never get the young men to sacrifice themselves for so unlucky a country as Ireland only they picture her as a woman." However, to Arthur Griffith, the first premier of the Irish Free State, poetic images like those of Cathleen ni Houlihan or Dark Rosaleen appealed as little as, for different reasons, they did to James Joyce. A small, stocky man, his shortsighted eyes peering behind thick glasses, his mouth hidden under a heavy mustache, Griffith was dour, taciturn, and undemonstrative. Churchill once referred to him as "that unusual figure—a silent Irishman; he hardly ever said a word." But Sir Winston also paid tribute to his

old antagonist as a "quaint little man of great heart and great purpose."

The "great purpose" of Arthur Griffith was to free his native land. For that he went to jail three times, and risked his life on a number of occasions. A journalist by profession, abhorring violence and pursuing democratic means, Griffith founded in 1905 the separatist organization, Sinn Féin (Ourselves Alone). Where Parnell had sought Home Rule through Westminster, Griffith wished to use the existing electoral machinery to establish an independent Parliament in Dublin.

As leader of the Irish delegation to London in 1921—after the two years' terror of the Black and Tans—Griffith secured British recognition of the Irish Free State. In Mr. Colum's considered judgment, he deserves on this account to be ranked with Parnell as one of "the two statesmen that Ireland produced in a century."

As the subtitle of his book implies, Mr. Colum has written not only a biography of Griffith, but a narrative of Irish history during a very critical epoch. Despite the fact that—after a lifetime devoted to literature—this is his first biography, Mr. Colum has written a work of sound historical scholarship. His book is clear, well written, and well documented. He has handled with charity and understanding, and with complete absence of rancor, questions which still arouse passion in Ireland. Mr. Colum is to be congratulated on a fine accomplishment in what is for him an entirely new genre.

—GIOVANNI COSTIGAN.

**FRASER YOUNG'S
LITERARY CRYPT NO. 895**

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 895 will be found in the next issue.

QA BCLKGK&L NPPN
QA BCCBHLDAKLM
KA PFFPHM SQZQGKLM;
Q CPNNKGKNL
NPPN Q SQZQGKLM
KA PFFPHM
BCCBHLDAKLM
—QDLXBH DAEABYA
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Answer to Literary Crypt No. 894

A wise woman will always let her husband have her way.

—SHERIDAN.