

presented it with a certain sadness. "It is very difficult to get now. There are only two bottles left here. And now only one."

He glanced at our table settings, and his eyes spit fire. "*Les ballons, les ballons!*" he snapped at a busboy.

"What's wrong?" I asked.

Mr. Dale made a soothing gesture. "They are changing the glasses. A great wine has a great bouquet. These balloon-shaped glasses will catch it."

Without thinking, I lit a cigarette. I cannot describe the waiter's look. I think if he had not already uncorked the wine, he would have denied us the bottle.

Eventually, the wine was approved and poured, and the waiter retired. "Why did you select this wine?" I asked.

Mr. Dale studied its color against the light. "It is the best Bordeaux, and besides, I have it listed in the book. Did you know that Douglas Dillon, former Secretary of the Treasury, owns the chateau this bottle comes from? Anyway, this wine is perfectly balanced for treep, you should pardon the expression, tripe."

I guess my friends are right about my taste buds. All I got out of my *ballon* was that same dry red taste I've always gotten from the ninety-eight-cent specials at the local liquor store. But, what the hell, Mr. Dale and the treep girl were doing deep-breathing exercises in their *ballons*, sipping and savoring away, so I joined them for a few choruses until the expert put his glass down. "It's a bit on the acid side and not too round. But, of course, you have to remember it's a Bordeaux."

I made a note to remember, and then permanently put away my pen. I know when I am outclassed. Round wine? Not for squares like me.

So I ate my duck and figs, and Mr. Dale said it was "*moitier-moitier*" and dark-eyes ate her treep, which was "*comme ci-comme ça* but full of vitamins." And there was a salad of raw mushrooms and watercress, which, Mr. Dale noted, "should have been served after, not with, the meat course." And there was *la poire Belle Hélène* (named in honor of Offenbach's opera about Helen of Troy), which turned out to be half a pear with raspberry ice cream. And finally *café*, which I knew all along was coffee but I let Martin Dale translate it anyway, and brandy in another *ballon*. I didn't inquire as to the brandy's shape.

A little later on, after fond goodnights to the treep fancier and deep goodnights to Martin Dale, I stole away. My last stop of the evening was at a little bistro I am partial to. I hoisted myself onto a stool, flipped a few pages of *How to Read a French Menu*, gave a Chevalier pout to my lower lip and leaned toward the bartender. "*Alka-Seltzer en ballon*. Round, please." —HASKEL FRANKEL.

## A Loveless Start in Life

**The Unrepentant Pilgrim**, by J. Percy Smith (Houghton Mifflin. 274 pp. \$4.95), charts the growth of George Bernard Shaw from his unhappy childhood and years of professional trial and error to his ultimate achievement as a dramatist. Armina Marshall is a director of the Theatre Guild, one of whose founders was Miss Marshall's husband, the late Lawrence Langner.

By ARMINA MARSHALL

ADMIRERS of George Bernard Shaw will be fascinated by J. Percy Smith's *The Unrepentant Pilgrim*, for it is a thorough and revealing documentation of the evolution of a genius, an important factor in which—luminously pictured by Professor Smith—was the playwright's lonely childhood in Ireland. "Rich only in dreams, frightful and loveless in realities" (to quote Shaw himself), it forced him to take refuge in music, which became an emotional and passionate part of his life, one that helped to focus his early activities in London, where at length he became a music critic. During that same loveless childhood Shaw spent much of his time haunting libraries, which likely inspired his interest in writing.

In Shaw's youthful attempts to find an occupation, his jobs were changed as often as the seasons. It was not until after fifteen years of trial and error—as a novelist, journalist, lecturer, and critic—that he finally found success and recognition as a playwright.

It is impossible for me not to compare this life of Shaw with my own personal observations of him during my husband, Lawrence Langner's, and my many visits with GBS over a period of twenty-five years. I am sure Professor Smith's description of Shaw's early physical laziness and disorganization is authentic, but I must add that this had changed by his seventy-first birthday, which Lawrence and I spent with the Shaws at Stresa on Lake Maggiore. At the hotel where we were staying GBS would bound up four flights of stairs to awaken us early in the morning to go across the lake for a swim. There he would order the boat out into the choppy waters a good city block from shore, then bid us all follow him as he dived into the lake, demonstrating a crawl stroke that could challenge any Olympics athlete. Afterwards, on a drive around the lake, he would leave the car four miles from town, explaining that he wanted to get some exercise walking back.

I am intrigued by Professor Smith's



"This may be your idea of a quiet evening at home, but it's not mine!"

evidence of Shaw's infidelities, especially since over recent years several biographers have attempted to prove the contrary, even going so far as to suggest that GBS was totally impotent. Although at the age of seventy-one, when I first met him, he had undoubtedly given up his philandering, I am inclined to agree with the author that Shaw most likely enjoyed an amorous youth. One morning at Stresa, as we all lay on the beach sunning ourselves after our swim in the lake, GBS spent two hours criticizing current women's fashions. Slyly and amusingly, he pointed out that the flapper clothes were not nearly so beguiling as the Victorian styles. The numerous petticoats, the yards of covering from neck to toe, leaving nothing but an occasional blush to be seen, were far more exciting to a young lover, whose speculations as to what was beneath the frills could produce more erotic pleasure than any exposed part of the body. Whereupon, he didn't hesitate to let his imagination run riot, much to the amusement of all of us listening. Only an experienced philanderer could have spoken with such candor. Yes, I'm inclined to believe Professor Smith's proofs of Shaw's infidelities.

On the other hand, it is hard for me to credit his theory that Shaw was totally lacking in sentiment. That very summer at Stresa, Shaw was spending four hours a day posing for the sculptor Prince Troubetzkoy; he explained to Lawrence and me that he was really doing it because he felt sorry for Troubetzkoy, whose wife had just died, and he hoped it would help to take his mind off his grief. This is but one of many examples of Shaw's sentiment that I remember.

The chapter in *The Unrepentant Pilgrim* on the theater and Shakespeare is important, for it calls attention to Shaw's philosophy of the meaning of playwriting, the function of the theater, the qualities and the art of acting—creating a vision of what the theater can be: a temple of art. To all who are struggling constantly to cure the fabulous invalid this should give hope.

Professor Smith has encompassed the true stature of Shaw, and, in spite of the documentary style, has given GBS an extra dimension not usually found in other biographies of him. My one reservation with respect to this study is that it is too serious, too studious; though illuminating and knowledgeable, the book was not written with humor. True, it was not the intention of the author to be amusing; however, anyone writing a biography of Shaw must have a sense of humor, and this should surely creep into his writing. GBS would expect it, I know, and rail at Professor Smith for not having used it.

## Far Lands and Fairy Tales

*The Wild Swan: The Life and Times of Hans Christian Andersen*, by Monica Stirling (Harcourt, Brace & World. 384 pp. \$6.95), tells of the Danish cobbler's son whose stories are part of the heritage of children the world over. Harry T. Moore teaches at Southern Illinois University and often writes on modern European literature.

By HARRY T. MOORE

ANDERSEN's stories shed magic on most of us in childhood, and throughout our lives the tales linger in our consciousness. So when a book about Andersen comes along it touches our curiosity. What was the man who wrote those stories really like?

Of course he came out of poverty, the son of a cobbler and a washerwoman. When he was a small boy he saw various plays, and these drew him toward the theater. In 1819, at the age of fourteen, he left the tiny Danish island of his birth for Copenhagen, then as now a fairy-tale city of improbable spires and storks'-nest chimneys. There Andersen tried to break into the theater as an actor, a singer, even as a dancer, but met with little success. Nevertheless, the bony and awkward youth attracted friends, who arranged to provide him with an education. Despite a tyrannous schoolmaster he did well, and went on to Copenhagen University; but at twenty-four he gave up his studies to become an author.

Beginning as a novelist, poet, and travel writer, he was taken seriously in these genres by the Danish public if sometimes battered by the critics. But it wasn't until he started writing his fairy tales, when he was thirty, that Andersen laid the basis of his enduring world-wide fame. In these tales he found a way to reflect his own deepest experiences of life.

His newest—and in English his amples—biographer, Monica Stirling, is herself a novelist, but, fortunately, she doesn't use the semifictional approach that so often makes books of this kind vexing to read. She writes a good, straightforward narrative. In dealing with Andersen's sex life—or lack of it—Miss Stirling asserts that there is no evidence to support the whispers that he was a deviate. Andersen fell in love



—From the book.

with several women, including the famous singer Jenny Lind; but the unfortunate ugly duckling "had no capacity for arousing sexual passion in those he loved." He seems, in any event, to have been rather feeble sexually. As he grew old "he changed for the better physically," Miss Stirling says, and his face became "a map of spiritual beauty." By the time he had become the wild swan, however, he was used to loneliness.

The rags-to-comparative-riches chapters are the most compelling part of his story. After he became a professional writer his life contained little of the excitement of conflict, and even the Jenny Lind episodes are rather tame: she reduces him from potential lover to spiritual brother. But Miss Stirling keeps interest alive by dramatizing Andersen's travels. He was an incessant pilgrim, continually voyaging from one corner of Europe to another, though he especially favored Paris. The author provides many engaging anecdotes of his experiences with the political and literary-artistic royalty he encountered. In England Dickens entertained Andersen warmly, but later became somewhat cool toward him. Andersen knew Franz Liszt, but, after hearing him play his *Faust* music at Weimar, dodged his dinner invitation in order to avoid dealing out either insincere flattery or critical candor.

The book also contains stories of Heine, Balzac, Hugo, Mendelssohn, and others, as well as engrossing descriptions of all the places Andersen visited. Along with its purely biographical aspects the volume presents a lively picture of nineteenth-century European life, and is often an entertaining commentary upon it.