

Russian solutions upon the world at large." The "Russian solution" that ultimately triumphed and is now being imposed on an ever-growing number of countries brought with it phenomena that enlightened Russians living on the threshold of the twentieth century thought relegated forever to the remote and benighted past: deification of heads of state such as the world has not seen since the days of the Roman emperors; restoration of serfdom for the peasants (now it is called collectivization); imperialist conquest of small countries; savage persecutions of religious and national minorities; compulsory indoctrination of the entire population with the tenets of a state religion (secular in letter, millennial in spirit); a return to bourgeois Victorian prudery; and more severe forms of censorship in every sector than had existed anywhere in the nineteenth century. It would have been hard to convince an Anton Chekhov (or an Oscar Wilde) that all those things would be brought back one day and that they would be brought back in the name of liberation and socialism. The entire Russian experience of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries stands before us as a prophecy and a warning. It is sad to reflect how little the West has learned from that experience. ☉

Books in Brief

The Young Romantics: Victor Hugo, Sainte-Beuve, Vigny, Dumas, Musset and George Sand, and Their Friendships, Feuds and Loves in the French Romantic Revolution

by Linda Kelly

Random House, 192 pp., \$8.95

IF YOU feel guilty about enjoying a good scandal, *The Young Romantics* is the book for you. First of all, everyone in it is dead. Second, they're all writers and so can be counted on to have publicized their affairs themselves. Besides, they're French. In short, this racy account of a decade or so of intertwined relationships is a book that serious readers may well want to keep in a plain brown wrapper, but there's no denying its piquancy.

Although Kelly makes feints in the direction of scholarship and quotes her poets in the luxuriant original (English prose translations are included in an appendix), her discussion of romanticism and its historical moment is, at best, casual and serves mostly as a backdrop

for her real drama: love affairs, glittering salons, literary alliances, and quarrels. George Sand and Alfred de Musset are on-again, off-again. The great actress Marie Dorval drives Alfred de Vigny to despair, the not-so-great actress Juliette Drouet is driven to despair by Victor Hugo, while his friend Sainte-Beuve secretly courts Hugo's wife. The wonder is that these people ever found time to write, but their literary energies would put many a modern writer to shame; a recurrent scene in their lives seems to have been the overnight production of a brilliant last act for a play due to open the following evening. Psychological subtleties, however, are not Kelly's strong suit. It would be hard to guess from her breathless dash through a gay, youthful Paris that the Romantics had a dark side—the side hinted at by Musset in his description of his generation as "old men born yesterday."

The Young Romantics is gossip, but it's also high-toned. As such, it will appeal to the legions of readers too intelligent for *People* magazine and too lazy for scholarly biography. Kelly tells her story briskly and with humor. Although one may deplore the concept of biographical romps through the bedrooms of geniuses, only a curmudgeon (or a French scholar) could resist this one. —KATHA POLLITT

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**Caged: Eight Prisoners
and Their Keepers**
by Ben H. Bagdikian
Harper & Row, 519 pp., \$12.50

THE salient points have been made before, powerfully, though not more so than here, in Jessica Mitford's *Kind and Usual Punishment*—to wit: that federal prisons are laws unto themselves, that those punished for committing crimes come mostly from the ghettos, that physical torture (beatings, Macings, withholding of medicine, and so forth) and psychological torture (pre-eminently, indefinite solitary confinement) are commonplace, that the policies of the Federal Bureau of Prisons are designed to punish rather than rehabilitate.

In 1972 eight men—among them a Marxist draft resister, a black mafioso, a Bible-quoting alcoholic (once given electroshock treatment for adultery), bank robbers, and a drug pusher—led a strike at Lewisburg Penitentiary that was to prove the longest in federal history. It was also totally nonviolent. Despite their jailers' promise of no reprisals, the men were punished; when some of them later sued their keepers, an almost unprecedented occurrence, the judge denied them the benefit of any doubt.

Bagdikian, who left a senior job at *The Washington Post* when he began this book, recreates the drama of the strike with the aid of a wealth of documentation gathered, against stiff odds, from correspondence, trial transcripts, and interviews with all and sundry. The eight men don't cry innocent—in most cases the stories of their crimes read like the stories of their lives; they cry that prisoners

Wit Twister No. 79

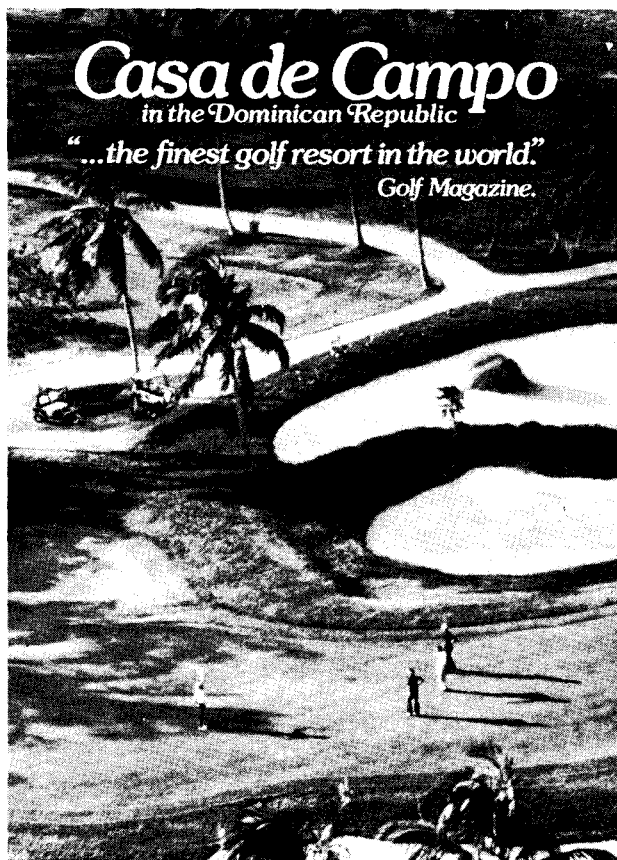
Edited by Arthur Swan

The object of the game is to complete the poem by thinking of one word whose letters, when rearranged, will yield the appropriate word for each series of blanks. Each dash within a blank corresponds to a letter of the word. Answers on page 66.

Turn East of — — — —, weary
soul,
And view the ancient ground.
'Twill — — — — the jaded
spirit,
Restore it — — — — and
sound,
To see those fields of alien corn
That Ruth and — — — —
found.

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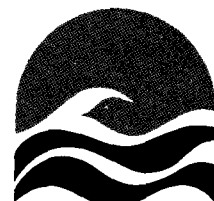


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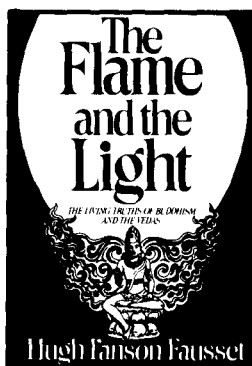
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