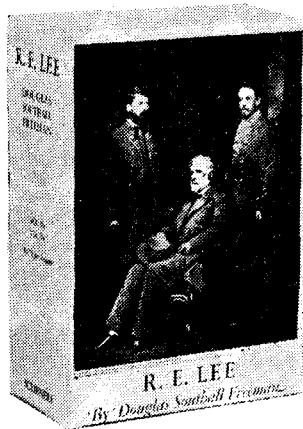


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The Marxian Philosophy

THE MEANING OF MARX: A SYMPOSIUM. By Bertrand Russell, John Dewey, Morris Cohen, Sidney Hook, Sherwood Eddy. New York: Farrar & Rinehart. 1934. \$1.

Reviewed by FABIAN FRANKLIN

UPON a book entitled "The Secret of Hegel," by an eminent English scholar, a reviewer passed sentence as follows: "Mr. Stirling has written a book on the secret of Hegel, and he has kept it very successfully in several hundred large octavo pages." The teachings of Marx, in their purely philosophical aspect, stem from those of Hegel; accordingly, on hearing of a book on "The Meaning of Marx," the fear arises that it may lie open to the judgment which the English reviewer passed on Mr. Stirling's treatise. But the fear proves to be unfounded. One part of that judgment is obviously inapplicable, for we have here not a bulky treatise but a little book of 144 pages; and it may at once be added that, although the book is small, and although of its space not more than perhaps one fourth is devoted to Marx's philosophy, it succeeds in giving the reader some understanding of that philosophy. To have done so much as this, in a brief space, is a meritorious achievement; and if the writers have not made Marx's philosophy more fully intelligible to the rude Anglo-Saxon mind, the fault, dear reader, is not in themselves but in their Marx. At least such is the opinion of the present reviewer; and by the same token he feels absolved from undertaking to condense into a few words the gist of Mr. Eddy's or Mr. Hook's condensation of the Marxian philosophy.

The major part of the book is concerned not so much with Marx's basic philosophy as with his practical conclusions. Every one of the five writers dissents vigorously from Marx as to some of the most important of these practical conclusions; but, broadly speaking, Hook and Eddy are reverent Marxians, while Russell, Dewey, and Cohen are not. The contributions of the last three are grouped under the heading, "Why I am not a Communist"; but their non-communism consists chiefly in

objections to the specific type of communism embodied in the existing regime of Soviet Russia, to the cast-iron Marxian theory of class conflict and its ignoring of the role of individuality in human life, and to the attainment of communism by violent revolution. On all these points, both Professor Dewey and Professor Cohen present their case with great force. Bertrand Russell's very short paper is too offhand to be impressive.

As to the two Marxians, a few words concerning their dissent or deviation from Marx are all that it is here possible to say. To a non-Marxian like the present writer, it is a satisfaction to find in Mr. Eddy's paper such outgivings as these:

I do not for a moment believe that labor-power is the sole source or measure of value. (p. 39.)

Is it any wonder that in spite of its ponderous economic theory, despite its glaring defects and inconsistencies, the burning heart of the message of Marx has gone straight to the heart of labor in many lands?

of which the second goes far toward pricking the bubble of Marx's prestige as an economist. And Mr. Hook, after quoting Marx's definition of historical materialism as the belief that "the mode of production in material life conditions the general character of the social, political, and spiritual processes of life," proceeds to say that "the extent to which this conditioning goes is an empirical matter," and therefore a matter of degree on which "different historical materialists have different theories." This takes the starch pretty completely out of that cardinal Marxian doctrine; we can all be historical materialists on these terms.

But though observations like these are pleasing to a non-Marxian reviewer, he cannot forbear to remark upon the absence, in the whole book, of anything like a candid acknowledgment of the simple fact that under the individualist regime capitalists and entrepreneurs perform an essential function in the process of production, and that therefore their appropriation of part of the result of that process is not the sheer robbery which Marx's economic theory makes of it.

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The New Books

Belles Lettres

MOUNT PEACOCK, OR PROGRESS IN PROVENCE. By Marie Mauron. Translated by F. L. Lucas. Macmillan. 1935. \$1.75.

Into a tideless backwater of Provence, Mme. Mauron transports us from a world that is too much with us, and lets us rub minds and elbows with the local characters, encouraging us the while to smile gently at their provincial independence and sturdy resistance to the march of progress. The experience is enjoyable, but of no literary importance. We have long been familiar with this type of genre painting and this type of humor, whether the subjects are rooted in New England, Italy, or France. After our first introduction, we are at home in Mont-Paon. Once we have learned that Mont-Paon believes in the status quo, everything that we learn subsequently is but a variation on a single theme. In this village of the Midi, governmental red tape and official incursions, no matter what form they take, encounter the same passive resistance, the same unyielding characters. (For the sake of entertainment, the characters are too constant.) And, in the course of the record, written by the Schoolmistress - and - Mayor's-Secretary, we see the bureaucracy of France stalemated on various fronts. Of course, there is the party of progress, dreaming of a village lit by no less than four electric lights; but even the progressives cannot sacrifice an ancient freedom for the sake of realizing their glorious ideal. Something of Daudet's humor, without Daudet's vigor,—that seems a fair verdict on this little volume. And it would be less than fair to ignore the excellence of Mr. Lucas's English version.

B. R. R.

Drama

THE CHILDREN'S HOUR. By Lillian Hellman. Knopf. 1934. \$2.

Twenty or thirty years ago Miss Hellman's play, enthusiastically received in New York, would doubtless have been stopped by the police. As it is both engrossing drama and a serious and sincere study of abnormal psychology, this change may imply a certain progress in the public's discernment.

The piece shows the tragic effects on two young women school-teachers of poisonous gossip spread by a pestiferous little pupil—one of those "problem" children who can so disrupt the life of a boarding-school that prudent head-mistresses decline to admit them if they know the facts. The two young women, who have built up their school by years of patient work and self-sacrifice, are forced to close it, and although they are objectively innocent, one of the friends loses her fiancé, while the other, confessing that she has "felt that way" all along, finally kills herself.

There is an inherent difficulty in the double-headed nature of Miss Hellman's theme which is not successfully surmounted on the stage, although somewhat less apparent in the script. For two of the three acts, the spectator's interest is so centered on the schoolgirls themselves,

and in particular the part of the pestiferous little girl—extraordinarily well played in the New York production—that the last act, which consists of retrospective moaning and moralizing, six months later, by the unfortunate teachers, comes as a decided anti-climax. Hiss Hellman feels the need, evidently, of showing the tragic results of the child's unfounded accusations, but has not been able to do this without slowing up and clogging action which, up until the end of the second act, marches straight ahead. The play is not for children but is decidedly a contribution to the adult theatre.

Fiction

THE ROYAL WAY. By André Malraux. Smith & Haas. 1935. \$2.50.

This is an earlier book by the author of that powerful and tragic study of the effect of revolution upon men's souls, "Man's Fate," which was much discussed here last year. "The Royal Way" is disappointing. Ostensibly a narrative of men in love (and morbidly in love) with death, its plot overshadows its philosophy. Claude, the hero, is a predatory archeologist determined to make his fortune by stealing sculpture from old temples on the king's way that leads up from the French colonies toward Siam. His adventurous expedition is involved with a strange and desperate soldier of fortune who has organized the wild inner tribes for his own purposes. And together they move through a story which externally is second-rate Kipling, and internally a tension of mysticism, eroticism, and abnormal psychology. Thus a book that is neither good tropic sensationalism nor significant psychology, but a corruption of both.

H. S. C.

LIONS STARVE IN NAPLES. By Johan Fabricius. Translated from the German by Phyllis and Trevor Blewitt. Little, Brown. 1935. \$2.

This is a modern fable, and its author, Johan Fabricius, has not a little of the whimsical wisdom of an Æsop. With romantic Naples for a setting and the bankruptcy of a German circus for a plot, this Dutch novelist has made a fantastic and endearing caricature of contemporary vicissitudes. Here is a book that should amuse tired business men, disarm serious-minded critics, and, in fact, please everyone.

The story centres upon three very different but, at moments, equally pathetic figures: the magnificent Director Storm with his jewelled spats and his Mercedes automobile; the herculean and saturnine lion-tamer Saul with the sixty lions whom he loves and whips; and a little Neapolitan lawyer with his straw hat and secret ambitions. But it is the ludicrous horde of creditors, the strange and naive troupe of circus "artists," and the hysterical population of Naples that supply the tale's peculiar, flavorsome humor. As for the lions, they disturb the Neapolitans and the reader alike with their hungry roars.

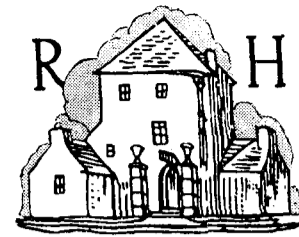
Like the fixed smile on the face of the clown, the humor of this fable has its un-

(Continued on page 525)

Over the Counter

The Saturday Review's Guide to Current Attractions

Trade Mark	Label	Contents	Flavor
EAST RIVER <i>Borden Chase</i> (T. Y. Crowell Co.: \$2)	Novel	Sand-hogs, the under-pressure laborers driving an underwater tunnel, swagger and sweat through a yarn now screened with Mc-Laglen, Lowe, & Bickford.	He-man
TEXAS SPURS <i>Charles Ballew</i> (Loring & Mussey: \$2.)	Western	Typical hoss 'n' gun epic.	Average
THAN THIS WORLD DREAMS OF <i>Ruby M. Ayres</i> (Doubleday, Doran: \$2.)	Love Story	Young clergyman sets tongues wagging when Norah and her invalid sister are discovered in residence at the parsonage.	Sugar
OUTLAW JUSTICE <i>Leigh Carter</i> (Covici-Friede: \$2.)	Western	Johnny becomes wroth when the villains killed the tenderfoot boss he'd grown fond of. One by one he wipes 'em out.	Good
THE KINDLY GODS <i>Eileen Dwyer</i> (Macaulay: \$2.)	Novel	Personable young Mexican's blood-stream wars with his European education.	Hollywood
DARK CANYON <i>River & Weed</i> (Stokes: \$2.)	Novel	Good open-spacer in which action is centered around the construction of a huge dam—presumably the Boulder.	OK



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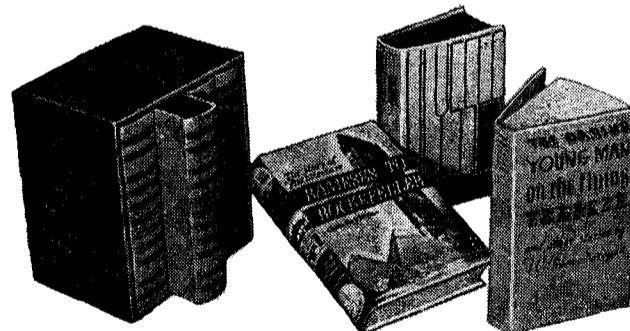
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