

cared singularly little what the British did with Litvinoff but they were desperately afraid of losing face diplomatically and in the end consented to exchange agent for agent. Lockhart returned to London to find his career in the foreign service over, for all practical purposes.

By no means brilliant, the book is readable and amusing—and valuable for its diverting bits of diplomatic gossip and pictures of personalities. There is one exquisitely ironic scene in which the American Ambassador Francis, reading a Secret Service report on Bolshevik devilttries to a group of appropriately horrified Allied ambassadors, finds that it begins: "Ambassador Francis is a stuffed shirt front."

JOHN BAKELESS

MAN AND MASK *by Feodor Chaliapin*
(KNOPF. \$3.50)

Man and Mask is a completely new autobiography by the famous Chaliapin. In his preface the author states that it differs from *Pages of My Life* (his first autobiography, which appeared in 1927) in that the first book was more of a chronological and detailed account whereas this is an attempt at an analytical tracing of the development of man and artist.

It is interesting to know an author's intentions, doubly so when the book is an autobiography, for the reviewer's task in the latter case is to comment not only upon the author's style but also upon the author himself. And now I find myself in an unpleasant predicament, for I have been reading Mr. Chaliapin's speculations as to why men are so unkind until a sort of automatic sympathy has been inspired in me for this naïve, gifted, and well-meaning celebrity; but at the same time the public should be warned that a

good part of *Man and Mask* is devoted to reiteration of platitudes on art and Russia, and that the author has not succeeded as well in analyzing as in extolling himself.

What will probably be of most interest in this book to persons who have read *Pages of My Life* are Chaliapin's impressions of Gorki, Rimski-Korsakov, Rachmaninoff, Tolstoi, Lenin, Trotsky and other outstanding Russian figures, and his descriptions of the vicissitudes of an artist's life under the U.S.S.R. Under the old régime an artist had about as good a time as anyone. But the Soviets have flooded their country with theory. Trotsky, for instance. "From a box or a circle he would wave his clenched fists and shout contemptuously at the audience, 'The blood of the people is running in the gutters, and you, you thickheads and vulgarians, you lower yourselves to listen to the stupidities and banalities that a pack of rotten actors spew at you. . . .'"

The amusing and pathetic feature about the new theories is that they were often operated by the vague, fantastic peasant so familiar to us. Chaliapin goes to protest the requisitioning of his collection of small arms. Bored, the Komissar sits gazing out of the window at a heap of firearms of all descriptions in the snow of the courtyard below. "Give them up," murmurs the Komissar, still staring out of the window. "But they'll rust!" cries Chaliapin. "Yes, they'll rust," agrees the imperturbable Komissar. Or again: "the amiable Commissioner of Police at Kiev who received me in his bath, up to his neck in water, and who, divested of any artificiality, offered me a glass of vodka at the most unseasonable hour; the eccentric Komissar in the north who telephoned me at three in the morning to say that he must come and drink my health immediately and regale me with smoked

salmon that he had just received from Archangel." The book is rich in incidents of this nature.

Chaliapin has left Russia, and his title of Premier Singer to the Soviet People has been withdrawn. It is his conclusion that the Revolution, instead of making men superhuman, has made them inhuman. There is no doubt that the artist has had a trying time of it in Russia. Whether Communism will eventually be as detrimental to art as Chaliapin seems to fear remains to be seen.

JOHN BRONSON

TEXTS AND PRETEXTS: AN ANTHOLOGY WITH COMMENTARIES by *Aldous Huxley* (HARPER. \$2.50)

THIS is an exciting book about the art of living. The dominant person is Aldous Huxley. But there are also George Herbert, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Arthur Rimbaud, Coventry Patmore, George Darley, Vaughan, Prudentius, Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir John of the Cross, Shelley, Pope, Epictetus, Leigh Hunt, Karl Marx, Biran de Maine, Edward Thomas, Milton, and nearly a hundred others. The "texts and pretexts" are poems, parts of poems, and (rarely) bits of prose, arranged under forty-five topical headings; for example *Country Ecstasies, Man and Behemoth, Physical Passion, Old Age, Hocus Pocus, Money, Nonsense, The Rest Is Silence, Misery, Serenity*. The comments are the sort that a man as eager for knowing what to make of life as Huxley might write in the margins of his volumes of poetry, with now and then a page out of his journal. Neither too long nor too many, they are witty, austere, honest, sceptical, understanding, and provocative. Though they betray the fact, evident in others of his books, that he is too anxiously intellectual, that his consciousness

is not sufficiently an animating force interfusing his whole body and his whole being, to make him quite akin to great poets, they convert an anthology into a book to be read avidly straight through.

The number of extremely good poems and parts of poems in *Texts and Pretexts* is surprising when one realizes that the emphasis is on statement, that there are so few of the established favourites, and that there are so many selections unfamiliar to the average reader of verse. I doubt if there is another anthology in which intelligent men and women in 1933 can find so much that is in accord with their own desires, sensations, feelings, frustrations, tentative resolutions, and, particularly, ideas.

In its bright, sturdy cover, with its good print on handsome paper, it is a charming book to handle, to read, and to pass on to friends. Even those friends who think themselves too tough-minded for poetry will find themselves going on and on, beguiled by the ideas.

SIDNEY COX

ZOLA by *Henri Barbusse* (DUTTON. \$3.00)

THIS is an example of the "new" biography. Not the biography of the Strachey school, indeed hardly new by this time; nor the compromise between the Strachey and the older documentary type which now seems to be the prevailing mode. Commencing with a novelized description of the "hero" in the form of speeches, colloquies, interior monologues, it shifts to an academic, technical discussion of his literary exploits and comes to an end in a revolutionary call to arms, the climax of the thesis which the author of *Under Fire* sustains throughout. For with this translation of *Zola*, the Marxist biography makes its bow in this country.