

The Russian Riddle

SOVIET RUSSIA. By WILLIAM HENRY CHAMBERLIN. Boston: Little, Brown & Company. 1930. \$5.

Reviewed by ARTHUR RUHL

IN a little, old, white house in the Borisoglebsky *pereoulouk*, in Moscow, any time these six or seven years past, you might have heard the patient *tap-tap-tap* of a typewriter. It was William Henry Chamberlin, correspondent of the *Christian Science Monitor*, plugging away (when not busy with his newspaper letters and despatches) on his history of the Russian Revolution. Correspondents, delegations, trippers of one sort and another, came and went, and still young Mr. Chamberlin kept plugging along—"William Henry's book" became a sort of personality or institution for the rest of the foreign colony, to be mentioned in the day's gossip as one would mention a common acquaintance's progress or health—and now it appears at last.

It differs from most of the many books about the Revolution, beginning, as we recall it, with the one reeled off by the *Saturday Evening Post's* Mr. Marcossou, in something like twenty-four hours after the March revolution. It isn't one of those "Me and Russia" affairs, after the fashion of Mr. Dreiser or H. G. Wells, nor one of those collections of hasty impressions, excellent in their way, which have been published by several capable journalists. It represents the study and observation of an American who has had the great privilege of sitting down and regularly living in Russia, summer and winter, year in and year out, through practically all the tremendous period from the days of the "NEP" down to today.

As a newspaper correspondent, Mr. Chamberlin naturally read, daily, the Soviet papers and pretty much anything else he could lay his hands on, and kept in touch with a correspondent's usual news sources. As a student and objective observer, by nature, with the help of a Russian-born wife, he has supplemented this daily immersion in the flowing stream of events with many excursions to the provinces, and sojourns of weeks at a time in various of the remoter villages. And he has had the possibility, which comes only to the man who settles down with some permanence in a foreign country, of checking first impressions this way and that, and seeing the same thing in all sorts of weathers and emotional atmospheres. The result is not, of course, a definitive history—several generations more, at least, will be needed for that—but what is probably the soundest and most useful presentation yet made of the Bolshevik revolution's flood of disturbing and many-sided facts.

Mr. Chamberlin is neither dramatist nor phrase-maker. His approach is that of the student rather than the artist. All those atmospheric imponderables which so often preoccupy or distract the attention of the sensitive observer, especially in a country as exotic to our own as Russia, largely pass him by or have been lived out of during his long stay. There are no stinging or haunting sights or sounds or smells in these slightly gray pages. But the "human interest" is there, nevertheless, however transformed, by the author's temperament and his long association with the scene, into intellectual terms.

Beginning with the historical background and the face of the Russian land, he proceeds, objectively and with excellent commonsense, to answer most of the questions strangers to Russia and the revolution want to have answered. In nineteen chapters, with a bibliography, index, and a very handy map showing the many units which make up the Soviet Union, he discusses the Communist Party itself, personalities of the revolution, the class state, socialism's balance-sheet, labor as aristocracy, Karl Marx and the peasant sphinx, the Babel of nationalities, foreign policy, the general staff of the world revolution, the revolution in education and culture, the question of religion, young Russia, the tragedy of the intelligentsia, Russia and world capital, women in the new state, and liberty, and ends with a chapter on "Whither Russia."

Mr. Chamberlin writes without indignation and horror, on the one hand, and without any of the mawkish sentimentality of some of those maiden ladies of bourgeois beginnings, who, having made a sort of adopted baby of the Bolshevik revolution, put into the mouths of their dear peasants and darling proletarians, tendentious tosh which would choke the latter with astonishment were they ever actually to find it there. He is thoroughly aware of the Revolution's crimes and faults, and aware at the same time, as anybody who has lived steadily in

Russia for the past six or eight years, must be, that the Revolution is "real"; and that it has brought to large masses of the people, a sense, at least, of liberty, self-respect, and human possibility which they did not possess in the old days. And he points out the fact, often overlooked, that "Russia lay almost entirely outside the influence of three movements which probably contributed most to implant the ideal of respect for individual consciousness, thought, and judgment in the Western mind—namely, the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the French Revolution."

He is cautious about prophecy, but does extract four definite results which he deems likely to endure. They are: (1) the expropriation of the land; (2) the substitution of state for private control and operation in industry and transport, banking, and trade; (3) the cultural autonomy of the many non-Russian nationalities within the Soviet Union; (4) the emergence of a new spirit of "what may be called plebeian democracy, based on the smashing of the former privileged classes and the working of a social system under which the workers, and to a much smaller extent peasants, are given preference in political and educational opportunity."

He finds that a "new epoch in the history of the Revolution began with the Fifteenth Communist Party Congress, which adopted the fateful resolutions calling for the rapid socialization of agriculture. It is an epoch of sharp struggle between the disciplined will of the Communist Party on the one hand and the propertied instinct of the well-to-do peasants on the other. The truce represented by Lenin's proclamation of the New Economic Policy is at an end. It is now a fight for a final decision of the question whether Russia shall or shall not remain half socialist and half capitalist. . . . And the answer to that riddle lies with the Peasant-Sphinx."

The Spirit of Calvinism

JOHN KNOX. By EDWIN MUIR. New York: Viking Press. 1929. \$3.50.

Reviewed by ERWIN R. GOODENOUGH
Yale University

MR. MUIR has attempted a most interesting and difficult feat in his new biography of John Knox. It is a biography and not a biography, for he declares, "The object of this book . . . is to give a critical account of a representative Calvinist and Puritan. . . . With the historical figure I am not particularly concerned." The justification for a study of Knox is not, he feels, so much in any inherent interest in Knox's own individuality or experiences as in the light he has to throw upon a movement which has "deeply influenced our ancestry and ourselves." The book is thus to be read as an attempt at accurate analysis of the spirit of Calvinism as it operated in English, Scotch, and American civilization, rather than as a contribution to detailed knowledge of the reformer.

That Calvinism has been of tremendous importance in our developing civilization, and is still a living force, is by no means an original observation. Intelligent people in all these countries have been consciously struggling to rid themselves of their Calvinistic heritage now for many years, but their struggles have led to few if any attempts at understanding just what Calvinism was, or precisely what its heritage means. Historians have been as negligent of the subject as popular writers, in spite of the fact that it is one of the two or three most astounding phenomena of the past. Everyone talks about Calvinism, but rare indeed is the man who understands it. One aspect of the subject has been made readily available in Tawney's popular exposition of the theories of Max Weber that capitalism has largely been nourished by the ethical teachings of Calvin's followers. A much more profound and thorough-going interpretation of Calvinism still lies locked away from the English-speaking world in the involved German of Ernst Troeltsch, a popularization of whose theories would be as great a public boon as any I know.

But an exposition of Calvinism in its original significance and historical and contemporary importance would be a large undertaking. To begin with it would have to recreate the spirit of the great medieval Church out of which Protestantism reacted; then it must describe the conditions in the late Middle Ages and Renaissance to which the Church for a time fatally refused to adapt itself. From this our ideal author must go on to make clear on what issues Luther made his break, what of the old he

kept, how much of the Renaissance point of view he adopted, and what character he gave his movement by passing all that was before and about him through the fire of his own unpredictable personality. Then the author must give us a glimpse into the hearts of Luther's bastard children, Zwingli and the variegated Anabaptists. In doing all this the ideal author would find the conceptions of God held by these different religious bodies the most illuminating guide both for himself and his readers. For each of these created a God in its own image. So the Catholic God was as tremendous as must be the God of the Church Universal, yet as near the life of man as the parish church, and as sane and practical as the great system of sacraments and indulgences. The Lutheran God was a deified Luther, hating his enemies, loving his friends, inconsistent, beautiful and terrible, sometimes petty, mostly sublime—a personality always. And so for the Gods of Zwingli, Erasmus, and the others. Then, when he had covered this and more, our ideal author would be ready to introduce Calvin who could not hope to be appreciated apart from such a background. And the central point would still be the God Calvin created, Luther's God without his bowels, as Calvin was a Lutheran without a heart.

To be able to understand the God of Calvin would be well worth the effort to grasp all that preceded, if only for the inherent interest of the incredibly bizarre. For mythology knows no other such demon in any saga of savages. To be sure Calvin's cultus did not involve such bloody rites as those demanded by the war-god of the Aztecs, but that life-consuming monster glows with a kindly light in comparison with Jehovah whose glory could only be manifested in the pre-determined and eternal holocaust of a vast majority of the human race. Calvin's cultus, sacramental theory, and public and private ethics are all perfectly intelligible when, and only when, this deity has been adequately grasped. The persistent force of Calvinism, after a dozen generations of training in such a belief, becomes intelligible: we may think we have got away from believing in Calvin's God, but habits of mind inured into our fathers in their terror are still with us all, conditioning our actions as well as our reactions. To trace the influence on down from Calvin's time would thus complete the ideal book on Calvinism.

I have described the ideal exposition of the spirit of Calvinism because I think that Mr. Muir's attempt to do it through portraying a single individual with little or no reference to the background and fundamentals was foredoomed to failure. What is the reader to conclude? He knows that every Calvinist was not as actively violent even in Knox's time as Knox himself, but what were the rest doing and thinking? Mr. Muir does not tell us, but implies, what is not remotely true, that this violence was typical of Calvinism throughout its history. He describes how Knox was for several years a preacher of Protestantism before he had any acquaintance with Calvinism, but he nowhere makes clear what the addition of Calvinism meant to Knox's thinking. If a reader who knew nothing about the Reformation wanted to find out why the reformers hated the Catholics he would get no explanation here, for while Mr. Muir has given a graphic picture of the hatred Knox bore them, he does not attempt to explain that hatred. Most of all, the weakness of Knox as a typical and revealing Puritan is the fact that we know nothing about his psychology in the earlier formative period, and Calvinism without its psychology is accident without substance.

Yet if Mr. Muir has not satisfactorily generalized his "sample Puritan" he has written a very interesting book. If it is slow in getting going, and much too sketchy at the beginning, with disproportionate description of his uninteresting relations with women, that is made up by the brilliance of the latter part. The picture of Knox in his dealings with Mary Stuart is as excellent biographical writing as you would hope to find. Lacking the ideal book on Calvinism Mr. Muir is well worth reading. But it is the greater work which will alone do what he proposed to do in his preface.

The Keats House Museum, Keats Grove, Hampstead, has been offered, for £120, the desk and inkstand used by the poet when he lived at Wentworth House (now Keats House). Miss Helen J. Niles, the owner of the articles, is a descendant of George Keats, the poet's brother, by whom they were taken to America.

The
BOWLING GREEN

John Mistletoe
VII.

IF the paper were not before him as he writes,
I doubt if he could quite believe it—

OXONIAE, Termino S. Mich. A. D. 1910
Die XV^o Mensis Oct

Quo die comparuit coram me

Joannes Mistletoe è Coll. Novo, Gen. Fil.
et admonitus est de observandis Statutis hujus
Universitatis, et in Matriculam Universitatis
relatus est.

C. B. HEBERDEN
Vice-Cancellarius

That took place in the Divinity Schools, behind the Sheldonian, on a Saturday afternoon. Each young freshman, properly wearing his white tie, mortarboard, and the comic little cape dignified as a "gown," was given a large blue copy of *Statuta et Decreta Universitatis Oxoniensis*. Carrying which, and filled with a pleasant sense of important anticipations, they probably all trooped back to their various colleges. There would be time to study those Statutes while the kettle was boiling for tea. I know that Mistletoe took great pleasure in the section entitled *De Moribus Conformandis*, written in a vigorous dog-Latin of the 17th century, and still happily and humorously perpetuated in the volume. There, while waiting for hot buttered crumpets to come up from the college kitchen, the freshman might learn something of academic etiquette. He might learn (you must allow me the pleasure of writing down the actual captions)

De Reverentia Juniorum erga Seniores,

De coercendis otiosis Scholaribus in Civitate ober-
rantibus,

De Domibus Oppidanorum non frequentandis,

De Oenopolis, seu Tabernis vinarius, Popinis et
Diversoris non frequentandis.

("It is decreed that scholars of whatever condition shall abstain from lodging-houses, inns, wine-shops and any houses, whether in the town or the precinct of the university, in which wine, or any other drink, or the nicotian herb known as Tobacco, is ordinarily sold." This excellent statute, a student of academic history would ponder, was not originally devised for moral requirements only, but also because the various colleges had their own breweries and cellars, and quite properly intended to make their own decent revenue on the potatoes of their members.)

De Nocturna Vagatione reprimenda—

"It is decreed that all scholars of whatever condition who chance, for whatever reason, to be outside their colleges or halls in the evening, shall betake themselves to their own colleges and halls before the ninth hour (which is wont to be denounced by the pulsation of the great bell of Christ Church College); and that immediately on the pulsation of this same great bell, the gates of the several Colleges and Halls shall be shut and locked. These having been shut, if occasion requires, the prefects shall explore (by perflustrating the cubicles of individuals) whether any are pernoctating or wandering outside their own College or Hall."

What a language is Latin: the phrase for Big Tom's 9 p. m. "pulsation" is *quae denunciari solet*. To denounce, to report downward—yes, perfect.

De Ludis prohibitis—

"That scholars shall abstain from the hunting of wild beasts with dogs, traps, nets or gins; from carrying bombards and crossbows; and from the use of falcons for fowling. Also that within the University of Oxford or its precinct, unless by special grace of the Vice-Chancellor, no tight-rope walkers, actors, nor contests of gladiators are permitted."

De famosis Libellis cohibendis, et de Contumeliis compescendis,

De Armis non gestandis

"It is decreed that no scholar, or other person, within the ambit of the University, shall carry either offensive or defensive weapons or missiles, by day or by night, except those who for honest recreation carry a bow and arrows."

De Vehiculis—

"It is decreed that all scholars abstain from the

use of vehicles in which they are wont to be carried with themselves as charioteers, by whatever name these may be called, unless on account of infirm health or any other rational cause a license has been granted by the Proctors."

I have chosen, and baldly translated, a few of these good old precautions. No one could read them without realizing he had become part of something very ancient; nor without perceiving Oxford's sovereign and typically English sense in keeping these archaic statutes in force. By interpretation, by latitudes and fictions, they cover every contingency of modern life. When an airplane first appeared in Oxford, in 1912, it was by the statute *De Vehiculis* that undergraduates were forbidden to go flying.

* * *

I leave him there for the moment, that young Mistletoe, with his new copper kettle steaming on the trivet, and the ugly brown teapot he bought for himself, and the small silver teaspoons. Already he had paid his first visit to his tutor, and learned what were the requirements of the examination *In Rudimentis Jurisprudentiae*. Already he had bought his copy of *Englische Verfassungsgeschichte* by Gneist, that learned and illegible German; and his Gaius's Institutes. R. L. Stevenson remarked that of his own studies in Roman law all he remembered was that "emphyteusis is not a disease, nor stillicide a crime." It is sad that of the sprightly Gaius all one is likely to recall offhand is the doctrine that women were excluded from suffrage *propter levitatem animi*. Mistletoe now regrets having parted with his copy of Gaius, who would undoubtedly bear re-reading. Also, as he drinks his first tea as an Oxford matriculate, he meditates that he is to undergo an examination in Divinity, viz. in Greek Testament; but that "those who object on religious grounds to the study of Holy Scripture are entitled to offer the equivalent." The "equivalent" is stated to be either Plato's *Apology* or Pascal's *Pensées*. I leave him there, alone with his tea and very happy. I would not intrude on the dreams of a boy at such a time. Very likely it was a soft hazy afternoon, the treetops in New College garden, seen over the ancient wall, were turning yellow, and the stroke of those innumerable chimes beginning to din themselves into his memory.

* * *

I rarely speak of Oxford; I do not often think of her, as I knew her; it is not wise. To think of Oxford, alone and from far, is to be thrilled as one is thrilled in reading Donne or Milton or Sir Thomas. I do not think now of the much hilarity of that life, of its hale frolic and good wine, of its joy in exercising the mind for the mere pleasure of it. I think of the unbelievable beauty of those colleges, their fantasy of green and grey, of flowers and firelight, fit indeed to blast open the mind of many a young outlander come from the uglier alcoves of education. I was in Oxford, years later, for a few hours only; it was a rare morning of sunshine and I spent it strolling about, or thinking in New College garden. No, not even thinking, but aware of those flowers, the lindens and chestnuts and the fortified wall. I was reproached afterward, in all kindness, by an old good friend, for not having gone to see him. But I was not in Oxford to see anyone. I was there to recreate a little heaven of my own, and I would not willingly have crossed the lawn to meet Walt Whitman or the King.

I speak of what I know. Often the most sociable of creatures, Oxford helped to teach me the bliss of solitude, the power when needed to beget my own world for myself.

To be too near her now, too often, I could not bear. She is a dream, and for some who love her she must remain so. To be too near her would remind one of her delicious snobberies (which I pray God she may never lose; nor will she as long as she has plenty of young Etonians and Wykehamists); of her too comfortable certainties, of her gallant modernizations. I want her, and my heart holds her fast, as she was in the last of the Unquestioning Era, 1910-13, before the war; when I was a boy and supposed there was an answer to everything. There are plenty of beauties in the world besides hers: I can see, on New York streets, miracles of man's bravado such as she never dreamed. But for something quite other I revisit her in thought, humbly and seldom. How else can I say it but that you will find it also in Sir Thomas Browne, in *De Quincey*. You will hear it in the deep organ, quivering the squares of stone.

I said to Mistletoe that it would be well not to

be sentimental about Oxford; to which he replied, What else does she exist for?

In honor of those bells, those gardens, those friendships, those idle evenings by the fire, I make the enormous and impossible effort to reach back. How gay, how clear, how naive might the language be, to tell the comedy of that time. But it cannot be just that; man, the noble animal, splendid in ashes and pompous in the grave, has been at work since then with his drums and trappings. I would not look at that jocund life without thinking what was preparing for it in the hollow of Time. Then, then, in that golden prime, the great world hung in the balance. Anxieties of trouble to come were not lacking, but who, drugged in such benison of charm, could take them seriously? The dear old Spooner toddled about the quad like a wise and innocent white rabbit; the hansom cabs came clashing up the narrow crooked lane; at dinner time the candle-light shone upon silver mugs and Yorkshire pudding and the starched shirts of dons. In the front lodge the whiskered porter, with more presence than an archdeacon, kept guard over the gentility of this strange mixture of cathedral, athletic club, monastery and tavern. New College bumped Magdalen and went Head of the River; the young sportsmen-monks burned the seats of their medieval privy and capped the chapel pinnacles with jordan. A King was crowned, the college ball was held and there was dancing all-night long in a huge marquee. All night long those shy or lonely or frugal scholars who did not attend heard the sweet suggestions of the waltz as undertone to their dreams, or lay awake thinking that Life is Very Unfair.

And what dignity she has. Not once, in all these years, has she circularized her alumnus with appeals, requests, inquiries, questionnaires. Only once, officially, has he heard from her: when she sent a list of her members who had fallen in the war. She is doing her job, let him do his. He wishes he could give her a silver mug, for some unsuspecting child to drink her fine bitter beer.

(To be continued)

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

Poems

KALLITHEA

I AM in love with solitude again
And deepest country. There the hollow sky
Has room for stars and the slow-winking eye
Of the sly moon. There evenings entertain
No stranger guests than coachmen of Charles' Wain;
Long before midnight every sound shall die
Lest whisper wake the Wind, majestically
Clean to sweep heaven with his brush of rain.

Or is it winter? Then the night is quick
With icy tinkles, elfin squeaks, perhaps
The scamp of squirrels merry in the frost
Across the snowy, sway-backed roof. Homesick
Am I for every frozen oak that snaps
And fairest foot-falls, and for one the most.

IL CORTEGIANO MODERNO

IF any fiddle frets, to dance;
Of all but pattern drain the cup;
Against the rascal arrows of chance
To turn a careless collar up;

To laugh, when it were wise to cry;
To flirt, when prudent men would pray;
To find all life but levity
And death another holiday;

A credo? God forbid, nor banner
To follow nor a proper plan,
But just the macaronic manner
Meet for your modern gentleman.

O ARTEMIS

IF God is good I wonder that he mangles
So many men to make one universe;
If Providence, I question why she tangles
Offenceless folk in martyrdom or worse.
Such thoughts perplex me till the mist dividing
Shows Artemis pursue a silver hind
Through skyey landscapes, on a bright cloud riding
Her heavenly hunt,—then say I "Never Mind."
Aye, never mind. Enough if I, a mortal,
Few times but telling can the crystal cry
And glimpse beyond my cypress-shaded portal
Across the mounts and meadows of the sky
To where the Moon, imperial, takes her flight
And princely stars pitch and patrol my night.

HUGH WESTERN.