

but the cream there begun led him to found the Theatre Guild in conversation with Helen Westley and Philip Moeller at the Hotel Brevoort, December 18, 1918. Now he writes an exciting history of three decades with the Guild, describes the beginning of his friendship with George Bernard Shaw and his personal representation of the Irish dramatist in this country from "Heartbreak House" in 1920, through such masterpieces as "Saint Joan" and "Caesar and Cleopatra," down to "The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles" and "You Never Can Tell." Some of the most engaging chapters are those that tell of Langner's visits with GBS in England and Italy and their exchange of correspondence.

Similarly, he recounts the association with Eugene O'Neill from Langner's first meeting with him at Provincetown, a hardy swimmer in the surf, through the triumphs of "Strange Interlude," "Mourning Becomes Electra," and "Ah, Wilderness!" and the failures of "Dynamo" and "Days Without End" to "The Iceman Cometh" and "A Touch of the Poet."

The Westport Country Playhouse, incubator of acting and playwriting talent, another of Lawrence Langner's dreams come true, has celebrated its twentieth anniversary. Since the summer of 1931, when he engaged Cleon Throckmorton to convert an old red barn into a professional theatre and there rehearsed the New York Repertory Company in Boucicault's "The Streets of New York" while carpenters were still nailing the new construction together, Langner has had the satisfaction of establishing a genuinely experimental theatre that is unique in the United States.

Theatre, specifically the perceptive presentation of quality plays, is the author's lodestar in art. He has tested it in radio (The Theatre Guild of the Air), even in movies and television, and feels that, whereas these discoveries may have increased the spread of theatrical entertainment, "they have, up to now, taken far more from the theatre than they have returned to it." With Shakespeare still as close to him as it was in his boyhood memory of Ellen Terry, Lawrence Langner is about to "dream true" again with the American Shakespeare Festival Theatre (to be patterned in modern adaptation on the Old Globe of London) to produce the Bard's plays in superlative fashion. "The Magic Curtain" shares with the reader its author's enthusiasm and excitement. What a pity there aren't more Lawrence Langners to make "the fabulous invalid" a really healthy patient, permanently on the mend!



Tokyo Rose—"in the limelight."



Mata Hari—"a first-class thriller."



—From "The World's Thirty Greatest Women Spies."

Judith Coplon—"unrevealed facts."

## Behind the Events

THE WORLD'S THIRTY GREATEST WOMEN SPIES. By Kurt Singer. New York: Wilfred Funk. 318 pp. \$3.50.

By LEO LANIA

AUSTRIAN-BORN Kurt Singer, an American citizen but a man of many countries, has become a leading expert in the field of international espionage. Neither his flair for the romantic nor an urge to atone for past errors—so common to many ex-Stalinists—prompted him to expose the workings and crimes of Communist conspirators. He has always been on the right side, a fighter for democracy. His excursions and raids into the jungle of the totalitarian underworld were undertaken only to defend and promote the cause and struggle of free men. This explains why his many articles and books on Communist and Nazi traitors are distinguished from similar exposes by their cool objectivity and factuality.

In his latest book the author again shows his special skill of combining diligence in unearthing hidden facts with the insight of a political journalist and the natural gift of an excellent storyteller. Each of the thirty case histories not only reads like a first-class thriller but gives the reader a clearer understanding of the forces behind the events that make headlines.

All of the women spies Singer portrays, with the exception of Mata Hari, have walked across the world stage during the last twenty years. Some of them like Judith Coplon, Ruth Greenglass, and Ethel Rosenberg only recently stood in the limelight and are familiar to the public. Yet even their stories as related by Kurt Singer seem new and fascinating because of the wealth of little-known or hitherto unrevealed facts the author presents. For instance, the chapter The Woman Behind Klaus Fuchs was used by the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission in their official report on atomic espionage, so new is Singer's material.

In this gallery we find the daughter of Mata Hari, who spied for the Allies and was caught and executed by the Communists; the "lady with the dolls," an American girl who was a Japanese spy; and Tokyo Rose. In the opposite camp are Odette Sansom, heroine of  
(Continued on page 57)

Leo Lania, who has covered Europe for American newspapers and magazines, is the author of "Nine Lives of Europe" and other books.

**Belles-Lettres.** For the past two decades charters of literary trends have periodically announced the demise of the familiar essay. David McCord makes some cogent comments on this foible of the fraternity in reviewing Irwin Edman's book "Under Whatever Sky" on page 27. Professor Edman is, as Mr. McCord points out, one of the valiant little band that keeps the form alive in America. In England the essay is lustier. One of the reasons for its health there is the devotion of such men as E. M. Forster, whose "Two Cheers for Democracy" is discussed below. . . Three of the finest American literary voices of the nineteenth century are the subject of two other books reviewed this week. SRL's Henry Seidel Canby brings out the resemblances and the disparities of Mark Twain and Henry James in a Plutarch-style double-biography, "Turn West, Turn East." Rebecca Patterson offers a novel, if unconvincing, key to one of our great poets in "The Riddle of Emily Dickinson."



—Howard Coster.

E. M. Forster—"unified personality."

## In Defense of Values

**TWO CHEERS FOR DEMOCRACY.**  
By E. M. Forster. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 363 pp. \$4.

By JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH

THE PUBLISHERS call this collection of essays Mr. Forster's "first full-length book in fifteen years." Such stretchings of a point are not always justified, but this one is. To be sure, the volume is a collection and a very miscellaneous one at that, for the subjects as well as the forms vary all the way from broadcast talks during the late war through personal essays to pure literary criticism. But it is unified more than such collections usually are by the fact that the author is possessed of a very unified personality and by the fact that this personality is very much present no matter what he happens to be talking about. Both his temperament and his opinions are, as he would be the first to admit, what are commonly called old-fashioned. He is a defender of values often overlooked and sometimes rejected by moderns; and though he by no means either washes his hands or surrenders to despair he certainly looks toward the future with a good deal of misgiving. Obviously he sometimes wonders if he is not what his opponents complacently call a characteristic phenomenon of a dying culture.

The book's title, which may at first sight seem trivial and which Mr. For-

Joseph Wood Krutch, Brander Matthews professor of dramatic literature at Columbia University, has written his share of familiar essays, which have been published in such volumes as "The Twelve Seasons."

ster says was first suggested as a joke, is actually extremely apt. One's attitude toward democracy is today a touchstone, and two, rather than three, cheers precisely defines what Mr. Forster's is. He is almost as far from Eliot as he is from Hitler or Stalin. Yet at his most unhappy he can say: "Democracy is not a Beloved Republic really, and never will be. But it is less hateful than other contemporary forms of government, and to that extent it deserves support." Or, two hundred pages further on, speaking of the shift from agriculture to industrialism: "It has meant the destruction of feudalism and relationship based on land, it has meant the transference of power from the aristocrat to the bureaucrat and the manager and the technician. Perhaps it will mean democracy but it has not meant it yet and personally I hate it."

The nearest Mr. Forster comes to any summings-up are in two essays, one called "The Last Parade," in which he gives an impressionistic account of the Paris Exposition of 1937, where for the last time the modern world demonstrated playfully the toys with which it was about to destroy itself; the other called more formally "What I Believe," dated two years later. But wherever one turns one finds some facet of the unified attitude, and one realizes that Mr. Forster has no all-sufficient faith in Democracy for the same general reason that he has none in any of the other magic formulae such as Economic Law, Proper Conditioning, Psychological Adjustment, or for that matter Christianity. He is not a Utopian; he does not believe that all our problems will ever be solved; and while he admits that tolerance, good temper, and sympathy—in

which he does believe—probably require faith as a "stiffening" even if "the process coarsens them," nevertheless, "I dislike the stuff."

Inevitably Mr. Forster is concerned with the arts—with literature as a professional, with music and painting as an amateur. There are essays on Tolstoy and Proust, on Virginia Woolf, and, what is surprisingly enough the best of the lot, on John Skelton. But here again there is unity, not merely because he has definable and defensible literary tastes, but also because literature is one of the provinces in that realm of human activity where, far less dubiously than in politics or economics or even physical science, unmistakable and enduring achievements have been celebrated. Yet it is perversely just those achievements which democracy as well as every other form of organized power discounts, discourages, and destroys. Not too much has been gained if we escape from the condescension of the aristocratic patron only to fall into the hands of those who insist that art must be, even if not doctrinally correct and demonstrably useful, then at least "democratic," which is taken to mean "universally accessible." And though here again Mr. Forster's conclusions are scattered through half a dozen different essays—and the better for so being—it would not be too difficult to synthesize a body of doctrine.

In the next to the last paragraph of the very last essay occurs the sentence, "The sense of a world that asked to be noticed rather than explained was again upon me." Perhaps nothing else could sum up better his convictions concerning the point at which