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Memories of Free France; Exhortations to Her Conquerors

Both books reviewed by

Klaus Mann

MEMORIES OF HAPPY DAYS.
By Julian Green. Harper. \$3.

THE Franco-American writer, Julian Green, is one of the most curious and most engaging characters in the realm of modern literature. His mother came from Savannah, Ga.; his father from Prince William County, Virginia. In 1895 Green Sr. accepted a proposition from the Southern Cotton Oil Co. and moved from Savannah to Le Havre in Normandy, where he established himself as European agent of the American firm. Subsequently the family moved to Paris. It was there that Julian Green was born on the sixth of September, 1900.

He fell in love with France before he realized that he was not a Frenchman. As a little boy he tried to impress and, if possible, to frighten his mother by stamping his foot and singing, "Tam, tam, tirelo," but his performance only puzzled and somehow irritated Madame Green from Savannah. "Who does he think he is now?" she asked Julian's eldest sister. "Ask the little French monkey what he means, Eleanor." The sister asked him in French. "I am a Gaul," announced young Julian, all fierce determination and aggressive pride. At this point his mother interfered and she certainly did not talk in French when she scolded her boy. "Who ever heard of a child of mine calling himself a Gaul? Gaulois indeed! You are just a plain American!"

For a "plain American" Julian Green's career as a French novelist is indeed most unusual. There can be no doubt that the author of such singular works as "Adrienne Mesurat" ("The Closed Garden"), "Leviathan" ("Avarice House") and "Minuit" ("Midnight") ranks with the most distinguished narrators of his generation. He introduced his own unmistakable rhythm into the rich symphony of contemporary French writing. Fantastic and yet urbane—a visionary with sedate manners—he added a new set of accents and images to the great tradition of the French novel.

The European disaster compelled him to leave France. In 1940 he found shelter in the United States like scores of his French colleagues. But, while other refugee writers depend on their American translators or on their own linguistic versatility, Green's situation is less discouraging. He does not need to discover the rules and secrets of English (nor of American) style; all he has to do is to rediscover the half-forgotten cadence of his mother tongue. After two years spent in Baltimore he comes out with his first book written in English—a book of nostalgia and gratitude, devoted almost completely to his second homeland, France.

With wistful tenderness he evokes the Paris of his childhood, full of enchanting things that disappeared long since. What an abundance of visions and sounds—fleet and yet imperishable, delicate but lasting, preserved by the force of love. They come back, tangibly—the games and sorrows of his early years. And there is always this glorious background, Paris—the streets, the gardens, the monuments and the churches of the incomparable city. "I don't suppose," says Green, "that any street in the whole world will ever seem as beautiful to me as the Rue de Passy when I was six. Nor will ever any vehicle excite and

delight him as much as did his mother's favorite bus, "the much lamented Passy-Bourse," which assumes, in Green's memory, the baroque grandeur of a fairy-tale carriage. "Those happy days can never return," he exclaims—overwhelmed, as it were, by the splendor of his reminiscences and the bitterness of his losses.

There are sombre moments—the irrational fears of childhood; the uncanny vision of his mother's imminent death—and there are also humorous interludes. But the general vein is one of contemplative serenity. Even as sweeping and vast an event as the outbreak of the First World War fails to disturb this mellow and placid mood. "I cannot say," writes Green, "that I was made unhappy by the war of 1914." He was a lad of 14 at the time. Three years later he joined the American Field Service as an ambulance driver. "I was then almost 17," he tells us, "and it was considered proper that I should 'do something,' since everybody else in the world seemed to be doing something for or against the Allies."

He had a glimpse of the war but is rather laconic in describing it. "War experiences," he says, "are as a rule so dull that I cannot bring myself to dwell on mine at great length, although I feel that they have enriched me in many ways." More inspiring than the spectacle of mechanized warfare was the first impression of Italy, where he went with the American Red Cross. "To see Venice for the first time at the age of 17—well, whatever dreams I had, and I lived much on my dreams, this surpassed them all."

He lived much in his dreams. At the University of Virginia, where he spent three years, he kept dreaming of Paris, "with a

kind of morbid obstinacy," as he himself puts it. The passages dealing with this American episode are rather tenuous and perfunctory. The story gains momentum again as soon as the hero and narrator returns to Paris—the city he admires the more passionately, the more intimately he comes to know it. "Each walk I took through the streets," he writes, "seemed to create a new tie which bound me to its very stones."

He wanted to become a painter



From "Contemporary Art" by Rosamund Frost, Crown.

"Le Parc Monceau, 1912," by Maurice de Utrillo.

Dorothy Thompson Speaks to Her German Friend, Hans

LISTEN, HANS. By Dorothy Thompson. Houghton Mifflin. 292 pp. \$2.50.

THE German people want peace, according to Dorothy Thompson. "All the peoples of the earth want peace," she says. "The ability to frame principles for a peace acceptable to the rational mind and the yearnings of the human spirit is the greatest political weapon of this war and the one most calculated to blast down the Verduns in the German mind."

As for Dorothy Thompson's friend, Hans—"a not unrepresentative German, of a certain class and type"—there are no "Verduns" in his mind to be blasted. He is a German patriot but he is not a Nazi. Previous to the war, Dorothy Thompson and Hans agreed upon all basic issues in European and world affairs. So Hans, as an individual ("not unrepresentative of a certain class and type"), is not an enemy to be conquered; on the contrary, he is a potential ally to be supplied with factual information and moral encouragement. And that is what he gets from his American friend—plenty of information, encouraging facts, irrefutable arguments.

Every Friday, between March and September, 1942, Miss Thompson addressed Hans, over the short-wave facilities of the Columbia Broadcasting System. It is to be hoped that not only Hans but thousands, millions of Germans may have listened in, when Dorothy

Thompson instructed, comforted, warned them, from across the Atlantic. Of course, radio sets with short-wave receivers are dangerous things to possess in the Hitler Reich. But Hans and his friends are perhaps as daring and ingenious in their search of truth as are their masters in the art of lying. Be this as it may, Miss Thompson's spirited appeals are stirring and important in themselves, quite apart from the question of whether or not they may have reached the German addressees. These weekly harangues, now presented in book form, are apt to strengthen the anti-Nazi morale, not only in Germany, but also in this country.

The most elaborate part of the book is a long theoretical introduction, "The Invasion of the German Mind." It opens with some penetrating remarks about psychological warfare in general and then tackles the complex issue of German psychology in particular. Miss Thompson prides herself on having spent more than 20 years of her life "trying to understand the mind of Germany and studying the mental and social shape of Europe." And, indeed, she commands considerable insight into the contradictions and entanglements of the Germanic soul. True, her resume of German history is too condensed to be quite adequate; but it contains a great many original ideas and striking formulations. As a stylist, Miss Thompson excels in dramatizing abstract issues, without oversimplifying or distorting them. Succinct

but was soon discouraged. "What I drew," he says, "looked like what I might have drawn had I been living at the time of Prudhon and David, so what good to me were Daumier, Cezanne and Matisse, all of whom I admired rather indiscriminately? Wasn't it rather absurd to go back when everyone was frantically rushing forward?"

He had to find and to develop his own medium, which would help him to overcome the inhibitions and antagonisms inherent in

his nature. His medium is the half-fantastic, quasi-realistic narrative—the sober account of nightmarish adventures, the meticulous presentation of dreamlike images. It is Julian Green's vocation to transform his intrinsic drama and incurable nostalgia into the symbolic actions and gestures of invented characters. That is what he tried to do, still in his early twenties, and he succeeded beautifully. His first story, "The Pilgrim on the Earth," is one of the finest he has ever written. His two first novels, "The Closed Garden" and "Avarice House," brought him international fame.

Green's autobiographic report ends with the beginning of his literary career. The sombre visions of "Adrienne Mesurat" and "Leviathan" loom behind the concluding pages. No doubt there is a somewhat disconcerting contrast between the halcyon climate of these reminiscences and the sinister atmosphere of Green's early novels—the literary product of those "happy days." Does Green delude himself? Was his youth less joyful in reality than he remembers it now? Or is the tragic tenor of his previous books affected and overdone? But the authenticity of those gloomy visions is compellingly self-evident. Nor is there a shade of forced optimism in his candid memoirs.

Artists are split personalities. At one time they may dive into the depth of their unconscious and return laden with weird tokens and entrancing images. At another time, they may sit back and tell us, without any rant or trickery, the story of their "real" life, and it may turn out to be a pleasant, unassuming report—a lovable if not stirring tale as is Julian Green's account of happy days that never can return.

and sturdy, she defines and elucidates the rampant paradoxes inherent in the German mind—the alarming blend of scientific rationalism and emotional romanticism, of over-organization and chaotic anarchy. What she says about the unfortunate split between the spheres of culture and politics in Germany is not excitingly new but truthful and relevant. "German intellectual culture," she writes, "has probably influenced the world more than it has influenced Germany." How true! And how brilliantly said!

The passages dealing with the Reich as a mythic concept are instructive and significant, as long as they remain analytical. Miss Thompson is very good at exposing Hitler's at once muddled and shrewd attempt "to synthesize in the Third Reich the ideas of the Holy Roman Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Prussian caste-state, and the revolutionary concepts of 1848 and 1918." But I'm afraid her own views are a trifle confused in regard to the "German nation-state," so dear (in the author's opinion) to all German liberals and so indispensable to the world. I wonder if any historian can agree with Dorothy Thompson when she holds that the German movement toward national unity "has never been furthered by aristocratic, dynastic, reactionary, or caste interests, but by the deepest popular trends in the German masses—exactly as similar movements were inspired in France,

Italy and the United States, by the people, not by the classes."

It is impossible, in this context, to dwell on the obvious and fundamental differences between the concepts of "national unity" in France, England and the United States, on the one hand, and in Germany, on the other. Even the Italian Risorgimento differs essentially (and favorably) from its Germanic pendant, which was indeed not an awakening or a renovation of the German genius but its violation by Prussian militarism. The Reich means, simply and sadly, the hegemony of Prussia, first over the southern and western German countries; then over the German-speaking world at large (including Austria, Bohemia, Switzerland and Alsace); finally over Europe. Nietzsche—truly clairvoyant in his morbid irritability—unmasked and arraigned the founder of the Reich, Bismarck, as the murderer of German culture. Was Bismarck, the Prussian Junker, free of reactionary or caste interests? His cursed creation, the Reich, enabled Wilhelm II to challenge and imperil the world. And from the Kaiser there is only one step to the Fuehrer.

Says Miss Thompson—and I disagree: "If it should be our purpose to underline and support those things in German historical development which tend to bring Germany into the framework of a popularly founded, democratically inspired European system, then we

See Dorothy Thompson, Page 7.