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One Fair Daughter: Novel, by Bruno Frank.

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ONE FAIR DAUGHTER: Novel, by Bruno Frank; translated by
(Viking Press. \$)
Reviewed by K l a u s M a n n

Among the many ~~gifted~~ German refugee-writers living now in this country, Bruno Frank is an outstanding and engaging figure. Some of his books -- especially his fine Cervantes novel and a cycle of short stories around Frederick of Prussia, "Days of the King" -- have greatly appealed to the American reading public, in virtue of their elegant craftsmanship and the moving authenticity of their emotional impact. The same qualities -- artistic skill and true ethical fervor -- are manifest in his new novel, while in other respects "One Fair Daughter" -- a topical story, intensely ^erelevant to the problems of our time -- undoubtedly surpasses the historical narratives.

The intrinsic theme of Bruno Frank's entire work -- presented and dramatized in various forms and from many different angles -- is the moral concept of Justice and, interrelated with it, the pathos of sympathy and compassion. His two masters and guides are Voltaire and Schopenhauer. As the latter, he conceives Pity as the only ethical and most effective approach to the bitter mysteries of our transient life; while -- in the former's spirit -- he believes in, and ardently recommends, moral activism, uncompromising fight against evil. "Ecrasez l'Infame!" Voltaire's battle-cry is the leitmotiv of Bruno Frank's writings.

Elizabeth -- a remarkably attractive, high-mi~~dd~~ed girl of half Polish-Jewish, half Austrian-aristocratic stock -- refuses, with gallant obstinacy, to acquiesce in the power of evil.

She knows what intolerance is: its abysmal stupidity and cruel viciousness destroyed the life of her mother. Recha Doctor, a Jewish music-hall star, was in love only once -- with Elizabeth's father, Count Franz von Pattay. The novel opens with her short, nostalgic romance -- a miniature masterpiece in itself, exquisitely written, akin to Arthur Schnitzler, where he is at his best, in its mellow charm and psychological penetrance.

Recha's lover is killed in the first World War -- not by an enemy bullet but, cravenly, by a compatriot and fellow-officer -- one of those puny villains who ~~later~~ will flock in masses, twenty years afterwards, to the high-priest of vileness, Schicklgruber of Brunau.

The spirit of hatred and intolerance can assume many different forms, but its withering, deadly impact is invariably the same. Elizabeth -- brought up in a small Polish town which formerly belonged to the Habsburg monarchy -- is boycotted by her schoolmates because of her Austrian-Jewish parentage. As for the Jews, they, too, distrust and despise her. Has not her mother, Recha, betrayed her race and creed by marrying a gentile? The proud and sensitive child has no friends, except two melancholy, aging women - her mournful, enchanting mother and Aunt Chana, a Jewish matron of truly Biblical grandeur and stamina. Their circle will soon be joined by Pjotr -- one of the most original, most lovable characters of the story; a Ukrainian peasant boy who used to be Count Pattay's military servant and ^{later} becomes Elizabeth's most faithful pal and companion.

The drama of Elizabeth -- that fair daughter of two ancient races -- is intimately, insolubly connected with the European drama in general, indeed, with the very drama of modern civilization.

She was born at the historic moment of the Austrian empire's collapse and disintegration. She lives to witness, first, the national rebirth, then the tragedy of the Polish people and the martyrdom of the Jews. Versed in ominous signs and experienced in suffering, she recognizes the danger; she warns, protests, tries to help -- in vain. Those whom she loves are doomed. The Nazi Huns invade Poland, ransack and almost destroy her hometown. Aunt Chana dies. Recha and Pjotr perish. Elizabeth survives. There is a man who could not bear to lose her -- John Herkimer, an American correspondent, robust and upright, reliable, taciturn. He rescues her from the inferno.

But she survives also thanks to certain energies inherent in her complex and delicate being. She survives because she wants to live; because she has faith in life and in human nature -- despite, and beyond, all tragic insights and experiences. For the author, in his generous tenderness, has endowed her with the very forces and impulses that enabled him to write this beautiful ^{, noble} book.



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