

It Seemed to Him

COLLECTED EDITION OF HEYWOOD BROUN. Compiled by Heywood Hale Broun. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1941. 561 pp. \$3.50.

Reviewed by GEORGE BRITT

UNLESS some cult of disciples should arise to spread the word or some unpredictable backsurge of popularity should sweep in to demand a five-foot shelf of the complete writings, here in this handy volume we have the main bid of Heywood Broun for the attention of posterity.

Broun's published volumes can be found in the libraries, to be sure. And old Broun readers digging into forgotten table drawers will run across columns of his, or play reviews or sports stories, which they once considered worth tearing out. Read again, those crumbling scraps probably will seem about as good as much that is in this book, because felicity seldom forsook him. For the *New York Telegram* and *World-Telegram* alone Broun wrote something like 3,000 columns, whereas this whole collection numbers only 189 items—from all sources. It is only a sampling.

But it is a broad, sensitive, and honest sample which avoids no inconsistencies, which touches Broun discriminatingly at his chief milestones, and recognizes dozens of the familiar old favorites that every reader would want. Broun's son, Heywood Hale Broun, has been a fine administrator of this literary heritage. And here it stands within the stiff limitations of two covers—the most of Broun that anybody is going to read for a long time and the part by which many judgments hereafter will be formed.

What will those judgments be? Is Broun going to make the team as a creator of literature or be dismissed with the tag of journalist? He had hopes himself, insisting that "It is not inevitable that today's strip of newspaper should be no more than tattered scrap in tomorrow's dustbin."

In Broun's case the dogmatic approach would be wronger than for almost any writer of our day, for he was not writing essays and stories and polemics and poetic fables. He was writing himself. This book, meeting an essential requirement for any Broun collection worth reading, is selected to present the man. The editor has recognized the necessity and offers his readers optimistic assurance about Broun that they may "feel that they know him as well as his oldest acquaintances when they have fin-

ished this book." Probably they will not, even though few of the oldest acquaintances had any confidence that they deeply knew the complicated person who was Broun. At any rate, in these pages lives a man, a character of infinite jest and boundless compassion, whose self-portrait is composed of truth, whim, indignation, and faith.

Broun comes through very strongly. It was no dim theory with him that, "When a man has a conviction, great or small, about eggs or eternity, he must wear it always in plain sight, pulled down tight upon his forehead." "I see no wisdom," he said again, "in saving up punches for a rainy day."

His indignation burns and flashes today as alive as ever in his pieces on Sacco and Vanzetti, and only slightly less hot against the New York Legislature which defeated the Child Labor Amendment.

His farewell shot at the *New York World*, "The Piece That Got Me Fired," is a bugle call to conscience and alertness which should find a bullseye in editorial minds so long as men in any manner tell what is the news. Many many others shine with the fire still blazing in them.

It is noteworthy, perhaps it is surprising, to find here the proof that up to the very last Broun was charging along with no sign of declining power. The earliest selections have the characteristic touch. After Sacco and Vanzetti the writing is laden with convictions. And some of the best pieces are within six months of his death. A match for any in the book is "There Is a Ship," June 9, 1939, and no light interlude could be more delicious than "Saratoga Fades," August 19.

As a writer Broun was as natural as a flowing stream. He never bothered about the writing. "When a commentator's chief concern," he said, "is finding the right word rather than the just cause, he isn't a reporter any more. He has gone around the corner and become one of posterity's children." Broun defied posterity on those terms. His causes were immediate, and if they were to fade from memory he accepted the risk.

On the showing of this rich and varied book, his chances with posterity should be good. It is not so much a chance I think, for Broun as the author of this and that. I am talking about Broun, a living character in our literature, a man who prevailed over a great talent in order to make himself an enduring and memorable person.



Heywood Broun

The Strachey Faith

A FAITH TO FIGHT FOR. By John Strachey. New York: Random House. 1941. 146 pp. \$1.75.

Reviewed by PAUL BIRDSALL

THIS brief and simple message by the former Communist spokesman in England repudiates explicitly the present—or should one say recent—Communist Party line concerning the war, while abandoning none of the socialist faith John Strachey has steadily professed. His change of mind about the character of the war dates only from the Nazi invasion of Norway in April, 1940, and is admittedly not complete. Prior to April, 1940, he felt that the "decisive aspect" of the war was its Imperialist character, "in which we are fighting to hold colonies for our exploitation, while the Nazis are trying to grab them for their exploitation." He still feels that "this is one of the aspects of the war," even though clearly secondary to the essential task of preventing a Nazi world conquest.

The present preoccupation with self-defense against subjugation is a simple matter of self-preservation, and Strachey is entirely clear about it. He challenges the criminal irresponsibility of those who preach to Britain's depressed classes that Hitler's conquest would be for them merely "a change of masters." For all Englishmen it would mean permanent subjection to a status of slavery, in economic terms a bare and hopeless subsistence. For those already at the subsistence level of existence it would mean the permanent extinction of hope for betterment. "We sense that we are fighting to keep open the possibility to work and live for ourselves; to change and, if we so wish, overthrow our governments; to preserve, or to transform, our economic system for ourselves as we like; to dispute, to quarrel, to fight, if we must, amongst ourselves; instead of to serve,

hopelessly and for ever, the Nazi will."

These things are enough to make men fight; they are not enough to insure victory. The substance of the book is an appeal for a fighting faith to achieve victory and with it a better world. The creed of Nazi world domination and the ideals which the Nazis have forged to achieve it—"lying, force, hatred and terror"—must be opposed by the most positive ideals which are worth fighting for, dying for, living for. The black Nazi creed of fear and force and hate and lies will create a "hell-world," and it can be overcome only by the moral principles of truth and love.

Strachey's principles of truth and love are not abstractions, since he discusses them specifically within the context of human society. Truth is the application of the scientific method to the analysis of society and its pursuit shows us the inequalities of power and opportunity in the capitalist democracies which are aligned against Hitler. To the extent that the beneficiaries of these disproportions maintain their political and economic power by the techniques of the fear they inspire and the falsehoods they tell, they are the enemy within the gate, the home-bred Nazis. The scientific technique supplies not merely the diagnosis, but the remedy. Marx took the first and most difficult "steps in laying down a genuine social science." "Socialism is the child of the attempt to apply the scientific, truth-seeking attitude of mind to human society."

But the truth is cold and intellectual. It is a star to steer by; it had no warmth for motive power. Science supplies the blue-print for the reconstruction of society, but there must be the will and the good-will to apply it. "The ideal of a society based upon the voluntary coöperation of free men, based upon their mutual love, persuasion and comprehension, instead of an empire of fear and force, has slowly emerged from the centuries of human evolution." "For if truth is the father of Socialism, then love, the love of our fellow-men, is its mother."

Socialism is the only aim that ultimately justifies the war and the only aim that can achieve victory. "Our war is only partly a war against the Nazis: it is equally a war against those amongst us who, whether they know it or not, at heart share the black Nazi faith." Strachey does not tell us much about the progress of the war on the home front, but it is clear that he is not satisfied that even a beginning has been made.

Paul Birdsall is the author of "Versailles: Twenty Years After."

French Diary

FRANCE SPEAKING. By Robert de Saint-Jean. Translated by Anne Green. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc. 1941. 335 pp., with index. \$2.50.

Reviewed by ANDRÉ MAUROIS

I REMEMBER that, at the beginning of the war, as I was spending a few days at the Ministry of Information, a young French journalist arrived from New York and created a great stir in that little world of professors and diplomats. At a time when nobody seemed to know what sort of information was wanted from us by the outside world, this young man, who was Robert de Saint-Jean, produced a complete and concrete report about news for America. It was a brilliant piece of work, concise, intelligent, exhaustive; it won its author the vice-chairmanship of the North American section, where unfortunately he was never given the means to act up to his ideas. However, in spite of all obstacles, he did more than anyone in that section to help American newspaper correspondents whose needs he understood and whose friendship he soon gained.

He publishes today the diary he kept during the terrible ten months which go from the declaration of war to the Armistice. It is, to me at least, an absorbingly interesting document. Not so much because Robert de Saint-Jean knew intimately many of the protagonists in the drama, but because he is an acute and fair observer who was then much more interested in the reactions of the average man than in the boasts of garrulous politicians. Saint-Jean never allowed his personal political passions to interfere with his judgment. In fact I believe his only strong passion was the desire to serve France. He had been, a few years before, secretary to Jacques Bainville, and he shows great respect for this disillusioned and profound historian. A



friend of Reynaud, Saint-Jean was, like many others, desperate when he discovered that this brilliant and pathetic statesman, who spoke so well of action, was himself unable to act.

Of the French man in the street, whom he calls Arthur, he analyzes the reactions with deep insight. Arthur believed in France, in victory, in the Army, but respected no leader. The President of the Republic, if he appeared on the screen, unleashed Arthur's laughter. Robert de Saint-Jean quotes the very remarkable answers of a French schoolboy, a child who was, during the war, questioned by a journalist:

"Who is the head of the Germans?"

"Adolf. . . ."

"Who is the head of the British?"

"The Queen, whose name is Elizabeth."

"Who is the head of the French?"

"Well, there are several; some are in plain clothes, and others are in uniform."

An anecdote which shows very clearly how abstract the Republic had become. Contrary to Louis XIV, Saint-Jean remarks, all our Prime Ministers ought to have said: "I am *not* the State."

On the causes of the disaster, Robert de Saint-Jean agrees with André Morize and with all Frenchmen who do not make the defeat of their country an occasion for attacking their political opponents. Treason? No. Essentially lack of industrial preparation, lack of unity, lack of faith. All this was said before, but Robert de Saint-Jean says it with dispassionate wisdom and with a wealth of personal observations which help the reader to live again those dreadful days. If we find, in the younger generation, many minds of such honesty and intelligence, we shall not have to wait too long for the rebirth of France.

ANSWERS TO LITERARY QUIZ

1. New Switzerland, in "The Swiss Family Robinson," by Johann David Wyss.
2. Avilion, in "Morte d'Arthur," by Alfred Tennyson.
3. "Penguin Island," by Anatole France.
4. Laputa, in "Gulliver's Travels," by Jonathan Swift.
5. Lincoln Island, in "The Mysterious Island," by Jules Verne.
6. Pago-Pago, in "Rain," by Somerset Maugham.
7. "The Island of Doctor Moreau," by H. G. Wells.
8. Ship Trap Island, in "The Most Dangerous Game," by Richard Connell.
9. Barataria, in "The Gondoliers," by W. S. Gilbert.
10. "Orphan Island," by Rose Ma-caulay.