

Season's Most Famous Autobiography Stirs Up Satirist

Asquith Parody Amuses London

MARGE ASKINFORIT. By Barry Pain. Published by T. Werner Laurie, Ltd., London.

Some prefaces are decorative. Some are explanatory. Many are written for advertising purposes. Barry Pain has employed his preface to protect himself in case of libel, for in it he says: "A parody of an autobiography should not be a caricature of the people biographed—some of whom must already have suffered enough. Nobody in the parody is intended to be a representation of any real person, living or dead."

Under the safe shelter of this bombproof preface proceeds to tell of the life and battles of Margarine Askinfort, whose name is derived from the Latin *margo*, meaning the limit, and who has always tried to live right up to it.

Few New Yorkers have had a chance to compare the breezy little yellow back with the autobiography of Marge Askinfort's "Great Example," for the book has not been placed on sale here. The stray copies that have been mailed from the other side, however, are especially amusing to those gluttons for punishment (other folks' punishment) who read Marge Asquith's recently published story.

"For autobiographical purposes," Marge tells us, "always treat a deficiency as a gift. My Great Example (prefaces notwithstanding, the G. E. is plainly Margot) was apparently a duffer at arithmetic, but she makes you admire her for it. I wish I had been one of those factory girls she used to reclaim in their dinner hour; I am fundamentally honest, but I could never miss a chance when it was thrown at me."

Again Marge quotes from Margot: "If I had to confess and expose one opinion of myself which might differentiate me a little from other people, I should say it was my power of love coupled with my power of criticism." Whereupon Marge follows up her advantage:

"No, never mind. The power of love is not an opinion, and in ending a sentence it is just as well to remember how you began it. But I absolutely refuse to let my simple faith be shaken. Besides, the explanation is quite simple, for when my Great Example wrote that paragraph the power of criticism had gone to have the valves ground in."

"My revered model wrote that she had always been a collector of letters, old photographs of the family, famous people and odds and ends. I have not gone as far as this. I have collected odds, and almost every autumn I roam over the moors and fill a large basket with them, but I have never collected ends. I do want to collect famous people, but for want of a little education I have not been able to do it. I simply do not know whether it is best to keep them in spirits of wine or to have them stuffed in glass cases. I have been told that really the best way is to press them between the leaves of some very heavy book, such as an autobiography, but I fancy they lose much of their natural brilliance when treated in this way."

Here is Marge Askinfort's estimate of "me, Marge Askinfort, by myself": "If I had to confess and expose one opinion of myself which would record what I believe to be my differentiation from other people, it would be a judgment to everybody else."

The drives at the Great Example are hung together by the adventures of Marge, who in her capacity as a servant rarely kept her places and never kept her friends. The only thing she could keep was her diary.

Those who read "Margot Asquith"

will recall her frankness in describing how men loved her. Here's how the milkman loved the mythical Margot: "On Sunday I told him I would accompany him on his usual walk. "Better not," he said. "Looks to me like rain." "But you have an umbrella," I pointed out. "Aye," he said, "and when two people share one umbrella they both get all the drippings and none of the protection. You take a book and read." "No," I said. "I'm coming with you, and though it's leap year I definitely promise not to propose to you." "Well," he said, "that makes a difference." We went on to the heath together. Some minutes elapsed before I asked him to tie my shoelace. "He looked down and said it was not undone. "I simply turned round and left him. I was not going to stay there to be insulted."

Margot Asquith danced once before a bishop. She tells how she swore, whereupon the bishop complimented her for her dancing. Marge took dancing, too.

"My education in dancing was irregular, as the greasy Italian did not wheel his piano around every week. However, I acquired sufficient proficiency to attract attention, and that is the great thing in life."

Man's Power Over the Other Animals

SON OF POWER. By Will Lewington Comfort and Zamin Ki Dost. Doubleday, Page & Co.

The wonder man of the universe—if you must know—is Sanford Hantez, better known as Skaz, who is the hero of this romance of India. Skaz, by the control of his emotions and the absence of fear, held the wild animals of the jungle with the glance of his eye. Cobra or tiger, it mattered not, only the hunting cheetah was unmindful of this power, and of him the faithful Nels disposed—Nels, one of the four best hunting dogs in all India.

The first manifestation of Skaz's love of animals came at the age of eleven, when he wandered into the Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago. He spent seven hours a day for four consecutive days in the monkey house, defying an unsympathetic father and truant officers, and inevitably making his way back to the monkey house from the restraining bonds of reformatories.

When his mother died he joined a circus. Came a day when his knowledge of animals in captivity seemed to have reached its limits. Skaz thereupon set sail for India to study wild animals in their native jungle. His power over animals gave him the name in India of "Son of Power" and the reputation of a holy man sent by the Indian gods to protect the children of men from the beasts of the jungle.

And then he met the Rose Pearl, Gul Moti, the Unattainable, otherwise known as Miss Carlin Deal, physician to the natives and member of an ancient half-caste family. And the unattainable was attained.

The story is full of the ancient lure and mystic power of India. The motif running throughout is that man has a whole menagerie of wild animals within his own nature and when he conquers these he need not fear the wild beasts of the jungle.

Thomas Hardy, whose novels and poems of Wessex are published in this country by Harper & Brothers, designed the marble tablet which has recently been erected to the memory of the man of the Dorchester, England, postal staff who fell in the war. The veteran novelist, who was an architect in early life, offered to do the design, and the result of his work is said to be of rare beauty and dignity. A line from one of his Wessex poems, "None dubious of the cause, none murmuring," was chosen as the inscription for the memorial.

Dorothea Moore's "Read of the Lower School" (Putnam's) is a story for girls centering around Redlands College and of Joey Graham's first term in the Lower School. There is a German plot interwoven in the story of life at the school and Joey and the girls play a great part in uncovering it.

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A Temperamental House



ILLUSTRATION FROM "POLISH FAIRY TALES."

POLISH FAIRY TALES. Translated from A. J. Glinshi by Maude Ashford Biggs. The John Lane Company.

The renaissance of a new Poland is one of the fairy romances of history. After suffering the tortures of partition that kingdom is coming into her own again, and we want to extend her felicitations. Sympathy with another race ought to begin in the nursery and Mrs. Biggs has performed a service in giving English speaking children a chance to read or to hear the fairy tales of Poland. She has drawn from an almost inexhaustible reservoir, for Glinshi did a remarkable work in collecting tales from the peasants of Poland. Her selection has been wise. She has taken subjects which are familiar to the children of our land, and yet at the same time rather new. There are no such exotic characters and situations as appear in the Cossack tales collected by Nisbet Baine, but childhood has its own conservatism and prefers variants of the familiar story of the beautiful princess and her brave rescuer.

These tales are among the most ancient stores of folk lore of the Aryan race, and in the original Polish they contain much needless repetition and not a little coarseness. This is a testimony to their antiquity which interests the bespectacled student of primitive mythology but has no appeal to the child who demands a story at bedtime or on a rainy day.

The volume is illustrated with splendid pictures that have both color and movement to appeal to the child, and elements of composition which will make them liked by discriminating adults.

An Irish Dostoevsky

IN CLAY AND IN BRONZE: A STUDY IN PERSONALITY. By Brinsley MacNamara. Brentano's.

Reviewed by E. W. POWELL.

One feels certain that "In Clay and in Bronze" is in some degree autobiographical, so minute, concise and personally observed are the impressions on record here; and in fact the author, who writes under a pseudonym, is known to have been one of the actors in the Abbey Theatre, and is said to have played with astonishing finesse a "porter drunkard" as distinguishable from a whiskey or wine drunkard, as does Martin Dugan, the central personality in the book. It is this kind of infinitesimal naturalism that makes Brinsley MacNamara, as well as his introspective here, "an Irish Dostoevsky," the first Irish-Russian realist, as he says, who wishes to "scourge" his countrymen "into a clear view of themselves," and unflinchingly reveals all "the mud and filth" in the peasant life of Ireland.

When noble men died for Cathleen ni Houlihan on Easter day of 1916, Martin asks himself, what can be the source of that strange thing the love of Ireland? Ireland hadn't shown him much worth dying for, with the possible exception of Ellen (never much more than a remote and ideal vision). And as for Sinn Fein, Martin analyzes his own mind as so "subtle and minutely threaded by cross currents of sympathy" that he understood humanity as a whole and could never imagine himself a Nationalist. Yet the love of the beautiful is so strong in him that the idealism of the leaders of the revolution fires him with longing to take his part with them, in which response he sharply contrasts

with the ungrateful, uncomprehending, unimaginative, reactionary and scurrilous "pub-crawling" population about him, whose cumulative, vicious ignorance and innate cruelty remind one of the Iberian folk life set forth in "The Cabin," by Ibanes.

It would seem that Brinsley MacNamara has suffered so much from the human beings, who, like Martin, had sprung from the clay, crawling about dark places, filled with the heavy "stench of souls" that he is filled with bitterness toward them. They have warped Martin's soul and he hates them, and with such unforbearing intensity that he must proclaim his repudiation to the world and to them. He knows their malice for what it is. And in particular does he expose the hard, narrow soul of his ambitious, meanly practical mother. Perhaps it may not be without significance that in MacNamara's first novel, "Valley of Squinting Windows," the chief character is a somewhat similar mother. "In Clay and Bronze" is his third work of fiction, and "The Clanking of Chains" his second.

When he is twenty-two, Martin, who sees himself worse than any "play-boy," yet is conscious of genius and a "heart filled with too much good nature," lays what he justly recognizes as his "morbid callousness" to weakness of character and to the peculiar suffering that had twisted his soul for the last four years. At this point he is something of a Sanine, except that he slaved as hard a sense of duty and slavery as tilling the land till circumstances outside himself whisked him away to study in Dublin, where he was soon engulfed in the literary Renaissance as it existed just before the war, reading in the National Library side by side with inspiring celebrities, falling in his exams, acting in the Tower Theatre and escapading with Kitty Haymer, a fascinating pagan with whom he later copes to New York. Here hard times befall, they grow apart, and Kitty returns without him. He does not answer her appeal to come to her before their child is born. He returns to the clay instead and to the old hated life—now ever more hateful—when Lucy on the adjacent farm, who loves him, is, as before he went away, his only consolation, except for the vindictive novel he is writing about his neighbors. And in the end he is still a Sanine, going his own way, back to the beauty of Dublin and this time to fame, leaving Lucy, with her wedding dress ordered, to the mockery of the community.

In one period of the world's history an inventor would have been burned to death because he was thought a sorcerer. Now an inventor is recognized as a benefactor. The United States Patent Office is the avenue through which world-transforming inventions pass, and Dr. Francis Roit-Wheeler has picked this phase of Government work as the subject for his book for boys, "The Boy With the U. S. Inventors" (Lothrop, Lee & Shepard). The author in his book shows how, through inventions, this country has blossomed into greatness. In doing so he describes the most intricate and complicated mechanisms in language no boy will have trouble in understanding.

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Americanization Behind the Scenes

UNCLE MOSES. By Sholom Asch. Translated from the Yiddish by Isaac Goldberg. E. P. Dutton & Co.

Reviewed by MILDRED L. BLUMENTHAL.

No preconceived notions of racial sympathy have prevented Sholom Asch from courageously portraying the weaknesses of the immigrant Jews, and the hideous abuses that they practise upon each other within the sacred precincts of the Ghetto. That "Uncle Moses," however, is a labor of love no critic can deny, and it is doubtless the all-pervading and all-seeing quality of the author's love of his people that forces him into a realism which, though highly poetic in spots, is usually so stark that it chafes almost always instead of betimes. But Mr. Asch has achieved something far greater in this book than an extraordinarily vivid and masterful interpretation of the life of the Ghetto Jew in New York. He has lifted the curtain on the drama of Americanization.

Leroy Beaulieu has called attention to the potential power of metamorphosis in the Jew, to the ease with which he transforms himself, to the nimbleness of his mind beneath an exterior that often seems dull, and he emphasizes the fact that only one or two generations are necessary to "transform the most abject Oriental Jew into an Occidental, a Parisian." America, however, is the setting of a far greater transformation, and this despite Renan's bigwigan that "a Jew will never be a citizen; he will simply live in the cities of others." In the American Jew we have a Jew with a State, a Jew with a country, a Jew with a nationality. But the price of this transformation must be paid in a whole generation, sometimes two, and it is with the gropings and stumblings of those generations that Mr. Asch concerns himself.

The scene opens in that section of New York and Brooklyn which hovers and seethes about the Williamsburg Bridge, that "living giant of iron that stretches across the East River, clutching at either bank with his hands and feet, while over his back, in unending succession, fly wild iron creatures packed with human cargo." And, on that part of the giant's back reserved for pedestrians, we are introduced to Masha Melnick, a desolate, shrinking, jobless father back to an ignorant, caustic mother, and a household of hungry children in Hopkins street, with lashings like this: "Shame on you, papa. You didn't come home for two days. You didn't know where to hunt for you. Mamma was crying, and the children were crying. We all thought you were lost. Shame, papa!" Masha had red cheeks, black eyes, long black braids, and red hands that stuck way out of the short sleeves of an outgrown dress. She had 8-8 to her credit, had lived fourteen years, and was "so well acquainted with all the family affairs and secrets that she was not ashamed to mention them to her parent."

At Masha's appeal, her father resolved to return to Uncle Moses's shop on the Bowery and "thread himself once again into the needle."

It never occurred to him that Uncle Moses, in his quiet hours, compared himself to that selfsame thread in that selfsame needle. The "American" Moses Melnick, the Bowery manufacturer, president of the Congregation Ansh-Kuzmin, who gave employment to half of his native town, and whose employees trembled before him; Moses Melnick, who owned tenements and who had endowed beds where sick Kuzminites could be harbored; Moses Melnick, whose name was inscribed over the gate of the cemetery where go hungrily trail Kuzminites would go to their "last rest"; he, too, was beginning to question what life had yielded.

Moses was to be seen in his shop daily, standing coatless among a dusty mass of trousers, vests, sack coats and coats laid out and piled half way to the ceiling on rows of long broad tables. Sometimes he would be "partable" his nails with a pair of huge tailor's shears, "sometimes he would be spitting on his hands and glossing his hair, but always he would be whipping up his workers. In the summer he sweated, puffed and panted rather than leave the shop, and in the winter he would be out early enough on cold mornings to be on hand "the first, and see whether the workmen came on time." With one hand he ground them down, with the other hand he lifted.

Somewhere along the line he had once had a wife. "She had looked up to him as a god," had respected his bulk and his "powerful, manly neck, had feared his serious, careworn face, and had wondered at his vitality and activity. . . . But he did not see her." "To him she was a thing." Nevertheless she anguished and languished, while he snored dreamlessly, or was "absorbed with trousers, vests, buttons and goods." Finally she died. Then women came and went in the life of Uncle Moses, although he had no legitimate or certain heir. "Everybody said he was still a young man and matchmakers wore out his threshold."

But he had no intention of marrying; "he didn't need to!" With the coming of the half century mark, however, he was conscious of a growing discontent. No longer did business have the same zest for him; no longer could he visualize and plan new projects, and no longer did he have enthusiasm for building new houses. Suddenly he wanted a family, a wife—children. And this is where the real story of Uncle Moses begins.

Perhaps by this time you will realize that Moses was a type; the kind of a man who wants what he wants, though not necessarily when he wants it. His was a patiently persistent, if impulsive makeup. He knew how to make plans and could execute them. This time he wanted Masha. And her stupid, selfish, ineffectual parents enjoyed a vision just long enough and broad enough to see the end of their own misery and poverty. Why, it was an honor to have Uncle Moses manifest even the slightest interest in the child, the rich Uncle Moses, the benefactor of all Kuzmin! That he was coarse and rotund, that he had no spirit and no dreams, that his conception of sentiment and romance ended with a lavish purse and that she despised him and rebelled, were of no account. The pledged notion of getting a daughter married, whether or no to any one, as long as he had money, must prevail. So tragedy comes thick and fast, and finally even the overconfident, omniscient Moses is forced to ask: "Why did God punish me? Why? What did I wish? What every common laborer has—a wife and a child." In "the end every one is undone, and another generation is saddled with the avoidable mistakes and stupidities of its elders."

Mr. Asch shows it all up, even unto the details, and although the infirmities of the characters depicted in "Uncle Moses" are more or less universal, their peculiar expression as manifest in this book are characteristic of the typical, unenlightened immigrant Jew. We see at close range his poverty and his aspirations, his inhibitions and his desires, his weakness, his ideals. We meet the living dead—the older generation that cannot tolerate change, that would be part of a new, free land, but cannot bring themselves to relinquish their old traditions.

And we feel the moving force of change—"the protest of healthy youth educated in a land of freedom and equality." The reader likewise gets a glimmering of the genesis of that destructive discontent of immigrant youths of twenty-one whose misconceived, impatient "ideals" of Americanization result in temporary havoc. All in all the portrayal of these well meaning but blinded people is so pathetically realistic that "Uncle Moses," apart from being an unusual book, should serve a good purpose. For no American Jew, born and bred, can read it without being awakened to a realization of the need for guiding the faltering steps of those transition generations that go askew while learning the first essentials of real American citizenship.

Blasco Ibanez

the great Spanish writer who made so deep an impression upon America that no American should fail to read at least one of his books is author of *Enemies of Women*, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, *Mare Nostrum (Our Sea)*, *The Shadow of the Cathedral*, *Blood and Sand*, *La Bodega*, *Woman Triumphant*. Each \$2.10, or *Mexico in Revolution* Price \$3.00. These books, if not on sale in your book store, can be had from E. P. Dutton & Co., 681 5th Ave., N. Y.

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