

HITLER AND THE GENERALS

THE FATAL DECISIONS, edited by William Richardson and Seymour Freidin; Michael Joseph, English price 25/-.

SIX accounts by six German generals of phases of World War II, in which they played a leading part form the subject matter of this book. It has an introduction by Cyril Falls; and a commentary by General Siegfried Westphal, Chief of Staff to Commander-in-Chief West, explains the background of each campaign described, and synthesises events in their proper sequence.

The generals are at one in bitterly resenting Hitler's interference. He clung with fanatical obstinacy to the maxim that no German army should ever surrender an inch of conquered territory. On one occasion, at least, his judgment proved to be correct — as General Blumentritt is honest enough to confess



—when he ordered the Fourth Army, checked before Moscow in the winter of 1941, to hold its ground rather than retreat under conditions that would certainly have brought about its destruction. But on the whole the consensus of opinion expressed in these pages shows Hitler to have been a disastrous liability. His obsession for standing firm was a harassing impediment to manoeuvre after El Alamein and during the Normandy landings, but at Stalingrad it was manifested in a form that verged on lunacy according to General Kurt Zeitzler, Chief of the Army General Staff, whose account of that campaign is, to my mind, the outstanding one of the series. Avoiding undue preoccupation with the details of battle and manoeuvre Zeitzler describes his persistent but abortive efforts to obtain Hitler's permission, first for the Sixth Army to retreat, and later on for it to make an attempt to break out of its encirclement. With the inevitability of a Greek tragedy the story approaches its climax as time after time the general pleads with his hysterical leader.

"Hitler lost his temper again and again, and began to interrupt, but I went on:

"There is, therefore, only one possible solution. You must immediately order the Stalingrad army to turn about and attack westwards."

"Hitler now lost all self-control. He crashed his first down on the table, shouting:

"I won't leave the Volga! I won't go back from the Volga!"

One may question the suitability of this book's title. The six decisions herein described did not, as Westphal points out, "turn assured German victory into certain defeat." The primarily fatal decision was made by Hitler in 1939.

—R. M. Burdon

SELF-REVELATION

A GALLERY OF MIRRORS, by Richard Heron Ward; Victor Gollancz, English price 16/-.

PRESUMABLY in order to prove his critical awareness, a reviewer is inclined to indicate the faults and failings of a work under consideration rather than the merits. With the exception of an occasional involved sentence where a moment of reconsideration or an extra comma might be desirable, *A Gallery of Mirrors* seems to me a flawless—a superb piece of autobiographical writing. It is good; it is very good; provocative of jealous admiration, extravagant superlatives, and affectionate respect.

Richard Ward has evolved a fascinating and unusual form of self-revelation. He makes no attempt to describe himself, his personality, his family, his background, nor to recount his life. Factually he gives meagre details, profoundly and unreservedly he gives himself. He is reflected, variously, through the mirrors of the eighteen characters in his gallery, the people who had formative influences on his early life. The drawing of each of these characters is masterly. There is in the writing something of Katherine Mansfield's understatement; of Colette's nostalgic revealing detail; of Claudel's aloof generous charity. Ward still remains, uniquely, himself.

It is not possible to describe the characters or to indicate which of them were the more important in his life. All of them are fascinating. There is a grand, squalid, intellectual old lady; a gardener redolent of fresh-cut lawns and sweat; a stodgy schoolmaster with hidden sensitivity; an errand-boy whose revelations were sexual but sound; two eccentric poseurs who may have been something more; an actress who may have been less than an amateur prostitute; a dream-like encounter with a girl in a wood that introduces him finally to physical completion, though another pastoral interlude has already revealed to him the ecstatic beauty of the human body. He reveals people and himself obliquely, with a poet's sensitivity and the simplicity of a mystic.

A Gallery of Mirrors is a book that will bear rereading without losing its charm, perception and revelation. It is the most completely satisfying, stimulating and enjoyable book I have read in twelve months at least.

—John V. Trevor

MEN AND IDEAS

PORTRAITS FROM MEMORY and *Other Essays*, by Bertrand Russell; Allen and Unwin, English price 16/-.

THE essays in this book have been collected from various sources: some are broadcasts, including an autobiographical series and the famous hydrogen bomb warning, "Man's Peril." But there is no underlying unity, unless it be the author's unflagging interest in ideas, and one suspects that the bottom of the drawer has been reached in an effort to obtain sufficient material for a volume. The portraits from memory which supply the title are impressions of famous men, brilliantly done, and with the full flavouring of salt which makes Bertrand Russell so easy to read. It may be necessary to remember, however, that people like Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells and D. H. Lawrence could have seemed quite different to a less ironical observer.

—H.

FATHER OF AUTOMATION

I AM A MATHEMATICIAN, by Norbert Wiener; Victor Gollancz, English price 21/-.

THE autobiographer must tread delicately between the candour which makes a biography worth reading, and objectivity in his account of great events in which he may have had a part. This book takes up the tale where Wiener left it in *Ex Prodigy*. That brash young man is no more pleasant now than then, even when allowance is made for his lack of a normal childhood. Father, who directed his son's development, emerges much more than life size. He is the one really memorable portrait in the book. By contrast, wife and daughters are rather shadowy.

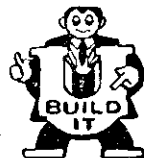
In this book, we follow Wiener to maturity, and the path is a difficult one. This genius flowered early, as is usual with mathematicians, and such was the

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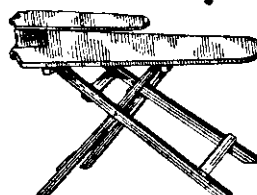


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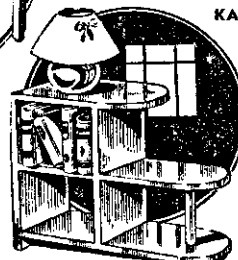


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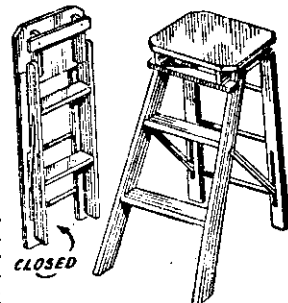
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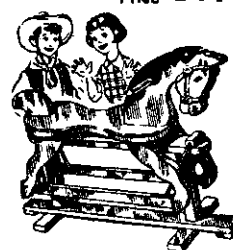
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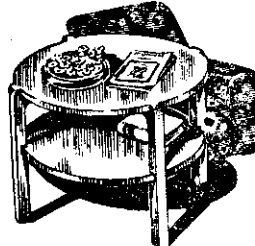
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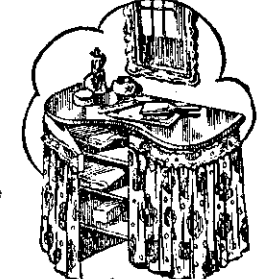
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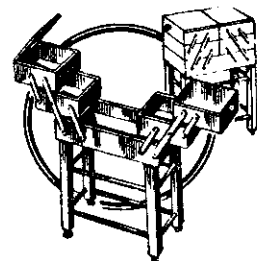
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