

become a few academic lines in history books may now alter the reader.

Also out of documents, memoirs, personal recollections of St Petersburg is *The Witnesses*, a view of the Russian revolution from several sides. It will give pleasure to many and those whom it would infuriate are unlikely to come across it. It begins, with some charm, in a great Russian country house, 1903. The plot is rather cardboard. An American girl marries the family heir, whose illegitimate cousin Max is a link with the grimmer world of revolutionary exiles. The author attempts to portray Plekhanov, Martov, Trotsky, Lenin, Kerensky. Max, a distant echo of Dr Zhivago, finds love a search for truth and dies for performing a kindness, is drawn towards Lenin's mistress (the contrivances are not always subtle) and throughout is cynically fooled by the Leninist faction for political purposes. The intellectual argument is the ends-means dilemma.

Period touches are interesting: Geneva markets, a maid ironing, the Dowager Tsarina's sewing-circle, dogs formally dining at table. The reader sees a minister assassinated, Lenin escaping over Finnish ice, right-wing plotters, the Tsar's abdication. Outbreak of revolution is admirably described. The novel is all contrasts: country idylls, the slime and blood of the Eastern Front; ministerial interviews and clandestine meetings; Lenin, moral hooligan of genius, Nicholas II a dignified nothing; curved St Petersburg staircases and the classical straight lines outside. St Petersburg indeed dominates: its parks, gardens, architecture, seen in all seasons, superb in authority and, as regimes topple, sagging as though the caryatids had rebelled.

The author is not overtly partisan and has a healthy disregard for that hoary stand-by, the Russian Soul. Behind the stock relationships one can see the inevitability of revolution, the absurdities, crooks and exuberant idealists, and the terrible flaw within victory. The flaw was once succinctly expressed by Lenin himself. 'A scoundrel may be of use to us precisely because he is a scoundrel.'

The Deserted House was written in 1939-40 when the scoundrel had reached total power. The short simple tale from Russia, again written from personal recollections, is of Olga, a Leningrad typist, rather a Jemima Puddleduck, whose boss, colleagues, friends, son, are alike swept away, on ludicrous charges, by the Stalinist purge. Somewhat monotonous, by no means new, it can still arouse indignation that Stalinism can ever have been sold as humane socialism. The cold moral is that dictatorship is justified only if it at once sets about creating conditions for its abdication.

The latest H. E. Bates has matter fairly familiar from this author: loneliness, vulnerability and betrayal of the English summer countryside. A boy has been left in charge of a young girl. He inhabits a fantasy world which threatens to engulf her too. A youngish man intrudes, for whom a damaged piano rates

worse than a damaged human being. The boy, not a go-between but an obstacle, tends to be a bore with his imaginary friends. The girl is sadly real.

Town and country

KNIGHT OF GLIN

Irish Gardens Edward Hyams photographs by W. MacQuitty (Macdonald 6 gns)

Dublin: A Portrait V. S. Pritchett photographs by Evelyn Hofer (Bodley Head 4 gns)

The first volume under review is a book for gardeners and not one that tries to give any account of the origins and history of the Irish garden. As the author states, it is concerned with what he terms the 'paradise garden'; in other words, the collection of native and exotic shrubs and plants naturally laid out and epitomised in England by the Savill gardens at Windsor or Nymans in Sussex. The paradise garden, it is pointed out, owes much to a mixture of Italianate formal gardening and the English eighteenth century landscape garden. Edward Hyams explains why he uses the term; it gave expression 'to the feeling for pre-Fall-of-Man innocence evoked by the English language version of Genesis'; it reminds him of 'a colourful jungle tamed by art as formerly paradise was tamed by innocence.'

This may be all very well, but it seems a pity that Mr Hyams could not have injected a little more factual historical background into this book as he has so brilliantly done in his other large tome on English gardens. Could he not at least have quoted from the primary source of information on the Irish garden, Joseph C. Cooper Walker's *Essay on the Rise and Progress of Gardening in Ireland*, published in 1790, or conceded some slight order to the biographies of the various gardens? For example, Birr's late seventeenth century or early eighteenth century thirty-five-foot-tall box hedge allé (unfortunately not illustrated) might have begun the volume. Then Powerscourt could have followed, though here Mr Hyams has missed the origin of this great formal garden that spills down the terraced slopes south of the house. In fact, these banked terraces and round pond were the creation of Richard Castle, the architect of the house, and the whole layout was started in 1731.

Be that as it may, I must add that at six guineas the photolitho offset method of printing has reduced all the black-and-white photographs in the book to the dreariest and most opaquely grey assemblage it has ever been my privilege to see. The colour plates are for the most part made up of citrus greens and washy blues—a singularly bad advertisement for the island of subtle lights and luminous colours.

It comes as a brilliant gem-like relief to turn to Evelyn Hofer's photographs in