

BOOKS ABROAD



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CONTENTS: WINTER 1941 - - - - - VOLUME 15, NUMBER 1

Sigmund Freud	Frontispiece
<i>My Uncle Sigmund Freud</i> —ERNST WALDINGER	3
<i>Greek Literature Attains Its Majority</i> —M. J. POLITIS	11
<i>Knut Hamsun and the Nazis</i> —EINAR HAUGEN	17
<i>Sholem Asch</i> —CHARLES A. MADISON	23
<i>Paul Ernst</i> —HENRIETTA VON KLENZE	30
<i>Rafael Vidal</i> —MARSHALL NUNN	36
<i>Paraguay's Theater</i> —WILLIS KNAPP JONES	40
<i>Literary Landmarks of 1940</i> —CHARLES C. ZIPPERMANN	43
"The World's Worst Book"	49
<i>Not in the Reviews</i>	59
French As She Is Spoke in Canada—Michael Fedics the Story-Teller— French Canadians and French Louisianians—The Military Lexicographers— The Historical Sense in Soviet Fiction—Hitler and the Penny Dreadfuls— The Desertion of the Spanish Intellectuals—The Late Flowering Russian Theater— An Inca Tragedy for Modern Audiences—The American Fritz Reuter	
<i>The World's Literature in Review:</i> Head-Liners 67; Books in French 81; Books in German 99; Books in Spanish 109; Books in Italian 119; Books in Various Languages 124	135
<i>The Editor Parenthesizes</i>	136
<i>The Once Over</i>	

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THE ARTICLES IN "BOOKS ABROAD" ARE INDEXED IN
"THE INTERNATIONAL INDEX"

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HITLER AND THE PENNY DREADFULS

(From *Karl May, Hitler's Literary Mentor*, by Klaus Mann, in *The Kenyon Review*)

"The Wild West is still wild and wonderful and very far away—for the boys in Leipzig, Breslau and Hanover. The names of Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, Rio Grande, Sierra-de-los-Organos, Rianca and Guadalupe, are still charged with romantic spell. . . . Millions of young readers in all German-speaking countries were captivated by him (*Karl May*) for decades. He was no mere favorite author: he was an idol, and all these admirers of his were possessed by the one ardent desire of becoming heroic, daring and ingenious like Old Shatterhand. . . . One of the most ardent *Karl May* fans was a certain good-for-nothing from Baunau, Austria, who was to rise to impressive heights. Young Adolf was seriously smitten by *Karl May*, even in later years. . . . It hardly is an exaggeration to say that *Karl May's* childish and criminal fantasia has actually—though obliquely—influenced the history of the world. . . . Herr *Karl May*. . . had been swindling his millions of credulous followers: he had never been in America at all. . . . the idol of German boyhood

turned out to be an ordinary ex-convict who had served many years of severe imprisonment in various Saxon jails. . . . There is hardly a single detail in his 'American' stories, such as *Winnetou*, *Old Surehand*, *The Black Mustang*, *Christmas*, *Winnetou's Heirs*, that is not a total and ludicrous misrepresentation. Atmosphere and landscape, gestures, words and actions are thoroughly un-American. . . .

"The Third Reich is *Karl May's* ultimate triumph, the ghastly realization of his dreams. It is according to ethical and esthetic standards indistinguishable from his that the Austrian house-painter, nourished in his youth by Old Shatterhand, is now attempting to rebuild the world. His murderous minions are perverted romanticists, infantile, criminal, irresponsible. They are hopelessly estranged from both reality and art, sacrificing all civilization and all common sense on the altar of a brutish 'heroism,' but stubbornly loyal, whether consciously or not, to the foul substitute for poetry and culture represented by *Karl May*."