

* Born Kalamazoo, Mich. 1886

+1968 Apr 16

(82 yrs)
Ferber Edna, writer

Jacob Karl Ferber father came from
Upper Hungary, born near

See her autobiography ^{Eperjes} to U.S. when ₁₇
"A peculiar treasure"
Rev. P. Lloyd 1939 July 30 (18)



PERSONAL APPEARANCE: In August, 1940, Edna Ferber fulfilled a lifelong ambition and took a lead role in one of her own plays. For one week only, in Maplewood, N. J., she acted with a professional company, which included Louis Calhern, above, in "The Royal Family," written in collaboration with George S. Kaufman and originally produced on Broadway in 1927. "To my amazement," she reports in "A Kind of Magic," "I found I was bored. Bored by the routine of coming down to the theater nightly and twice on matinee days; making up . . . going on stage to say those same lines, night after night."

In Moonlight and Magnolia the Protest Was Lost

A KIND OF MAGIC. By Edna Ferber. 335 pp. New York: Doubleday & Co. \$5.75.

By W. G. ROGERS

EDNA FERBER again, we ask ourselves? When hasn't there been Edna Ferber? About 40 years ago she gave us the Pulitzer winner, "So Big," followed by "Show Boat" and "Cimarron." Her public, she says, extends over four generations. She keeps on like "Ol' Man River," and we're glad of it, and we're lucky.

She's lucky, too, in her parentage, in what she describes as her "declarative and purposeful" self, in her health, her drive, even her name, which is a clipped and catchy run of four syllables, easy to remember, short enough to fit the spine of a book or, in bright lights, a theater entrance.

Over the years there have been a lot of theaters, and there still are, she doesn't hesitate to remind us. She has done six plays, five in collaboration with George S. Kaufman, and also written 25 books, including this one.

Her life divides roughly in

Mr. Rogers is a roving journalist and critic with a special interest in novels and novelists.

three quarter-century stretches. She refers to herself as old and gray, without really meaning it, no doubt; her busy days certainly belie that, and who ever heard of an old gray dynamo? In four years of Midwest newspaper work, she covered everything which, she says, was not marked "Men Only." She had a real character for a mother, Julia; her father, Jacob, Hungarian-born Jew, went blind and left his wife to run a general store and bring up two daughters. Generous swatches of Julia help fill out many Ferber fictional persons, as in the ever popular Emma McChesney.

HER first book came out 52 years ago. Her first quarter-century of writing was described in her autobiographical "A Peculiar Treasure" of 1939. That was, in a way, she recalls, a patriotic gesture. If other Americans must remain indifferent to Hitler, she would answer him with a picture of a middle-class Jewish family in America.

This book, covering the third quarter-century, is about Ferber, writing, food, war, women Negroes, our fine but less than perfect country, and how wonderful it is to be alive. Miss Ferber's sturdy old fashioned

strain shows in her nostalgia for the long-ago childhoods that were not pampered, and the outmoded pleasures of walking. Her attitude toward Negroes is only one of her unwavering liberal convictions. Muckraker Ida Tarbell was one of her idols, and there's a wide streak of unconventional Tarbell daring in the Ferber thinking.

Deciding she must have a little country place, say half an acre, where she could work without interruption, she wound up, amazingly, with 116 acres on a hilltop, and built a 14-room house with swimming pool, gardens, drives, terraces. During the war she did assignments for the Writers' War Board, sold bonds by speaking and contributing her own manuscripts for auction, and served for a time in Europe in captain's uniform. A visit to Buchenwald horrified her. She partly recovered from the appalling shock by mixing with American soldiers—she is sociable and has a host of friends. A soldier repeated from memory a passage from "Show Boat." It was a tonic, a renewal, a heart-to-heart communication. She calls it "A Kind of Magic"—a magic she works in this volume only in the stirring account of wartime.

Her novels were written as protest, she says, but adds "loving protest." She exaggerates their social vigor and bite. "Ol' Man River," to her is "a compassionate and terrible indictment of the white man's treatment of the Negro." Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein wrote a moving song, but with more moonlight and magnolia than revolt, and no one ever came away from "Show Boat," book or musical, determined to fight segregation. To her, "Saratoga Trunk" is about "the rape of America" by "the land grabbers . . . the old-time railroad millionaires." Of course it's only the love affair, now dated, of a daughter of the New Orleans red-light district and a handsome, broad-shouldered uncouth Texan.

Miss Ferber bares no soul here, but says a lot of very sharp, astute things—the very things that sparked her books. Nevertheless while the novels will not serve as models for future novels, Miss Ferber herself will serve as model for future novelists. She has been unremittingly dedicated to her task. She is the 24-hour a day professional, forthright and uncompromising. As a working woman, writer, she has no superior.

* Born Kalamazoo, Mich. 1886

+1968 Apr 16

Ferber Edna, writer
(82 yrs)

Jacob Karl Ferber father came from
Upper Hungary, born near
Eperjes

See her autobiography ^{To U.S. when}
17

"A peculiar treasure"

Rev. P. Lloyd 1939 July 30 (18)

ing Equals Noun

emediano was of obscure arison his mother's eginning he is a one who will enter into life." ail to enter into re; he was born pain during the monarchy, the le Rivera's dicne follows Ra-rticipation, but in an Anar-sing very simi-creates it, to ising in Cadiz blican Govern-7, 1933) to his ven forced, ene Nationalist vil War breaks plexity of Sen-omes easier to

ts a world, and h the tensions y genuine po- impossible. It ogether appro- uro should be quietism of the aniard, Miguel quietism that y of the will an until it ene castle of his his misery is cts proceeding e meaningless

and, "after a long process the word devoid of meaning one point Ramiro hears Molinos say of if He doesn't come the worse for Him, Himself will be loss perdition."

The framework story is an interv gives to a newspa years after he beg fession of hangman Franco regime. S took part in the C an officer in the army, has not writ cal tract, but he e written a political regime which does men to act freely i that is to say, ac amputates every m is no significance i ing politics if the does not exist. Re tism was condemn in the 17th centu political quietism century, whether the Right or the Le to make genuine hangmen, for the truth.

Fiction Rev
Continued on Page