

Hemingway's "For Whom the Bell Tolls"

The author, Alvah Bessie says, 'has written a book about Spain without the Spanish people, and without illuminating the cause of the republic Hemingway championed.

FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS, by Ernest Hemingway. Scribner's. \$2.75.

"NO MAN is an Iland, intire of it selfe; every man is a peece of the Continent, a part of the maine; if a Clod bee washed away by the Sea, Europe is the lesse, as well as if a Promontorie were, as well as if a Mannor of thy friends or of thine owne were; any mans death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankinde; And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee."

This is the quotation from John Donne which Ernest Hemingway sets as a rubric for his new novel, and this is the touchstone by which that novel must be evaluated. Since we must assume that Donne was speaking of the universal brotherhood of man, of the inter-relationship of human life and its indivisibility, we have a right to expect that Hemingway's long novel of the war in Spain will illuminate that text and not obscure it, will demonstrate the novelist's realization of the significance of that war, and find him at the peak of his achievement. For that war, which Hemingway witnessed at close hand, is being revealed with every day that passes to have been a touchstone and a turning point in human history which those who had foresight in 1936 stated it would be: "the cause of all advanced and progressive mankind."

Ernest Hemingway's relationship to that war was intimate and varied. In many senses he was as much a participant as those men he knew and loved who now are gone—Lucasz, Werner Heilbrunn, and the many anonymous dead of the glorious Twelfth International Brigade. The novelist gave freely of his substance and his spirit in the cause of Spain; he wrote and he spoke and he acted. And he commanded the admiration and respect of the men of many nationalities who fought there and who knew his name. It was during that war that he wrote a novel that represented what should have been—and what many thought was—a transition book: *To Have and Have Not*. It was both interesting and inevitable that that novel should have been the first work from his hand that was not greeted with unanimous enthusiasm by the critical fraternity of the bourgeois press. For in its pages a new note had been sounded. The old Hemingway of the post-war what-the-hell-boys and the old let's-have-another-drink was gone. A new Hemingway made his appearance, a new theme emerged. Whereas in his short stories and in two previous novels the author had exasperated his most perspicacious admirers by his inconclusive treatment of the necessity for manli-

ness and the pervasive horror of death, a maturing artist found another subject—the problem of making a living, the necessity for human solidarity. "One man alone ain't got," whispered the dying Harry Morgan, an honest man who had found that he could not feed his wife and children by honest labor. "No man alone now." He stopped. "No matter how a man alone ain't got no bloody —ing chance."

The critics deplored this new and serious note in their pet disillusioned author, an author they had praised for being above the political arena, who dealt with eternal realities in a "lean, athletic prose." It was whispered freely among these objective gentlemen that Hemingway was slipping; he was a member of the League of American Writers; he had discovered that non-existent figment of the Reds' imagination—the Class Struggle. But many who had thought Hemingway was dead (for more valid reasons) took new hope with the appearance in his work of this wider realization of man's humanity, this deeper understanding of his struggle. Sex and death were eternal verities, but it was not until 1937 that Hemingway discovered taxes. *To Have and Have Not* was a vastly imperfect work; the author's satirical treatment of the human parasites who lived on luxury yachts off the Florida keys was both brittle and jejune, and his old limitations were amply manifest: the interchangeability of his conversation; his feeble understanding of female character; his inability to fully explore and plumb character at all. For with the rarest of exceptions few characters that Hemingway has dealt with up to date have been more than pegs on which to hang those moods and intimations of mortality which have been the author's forte, and which reveal his greatest gifts.

That those gifts are considerable no sensitive person could doubt. He has an ear for

the language (in dialogue) that is unique. No human being ever talked the way Hemingway's characters talk, but every word they speak makes the reader say, "How true to life." This is a real artistic triumph. This man can create moods and crystallize certain fundamental emotions in a way few writers have ever been privileged to achieve. And it is these moods and these emotions that the reader generally remembers, not the people who live through them—the futility of the life of the expatriate, his emptiness and his frantic search for a kick; the horror of the retreat from Caporetto; the loneliness that surrounds the death in childbirth of the heroine of *A Farewell to Arms*, the brutality of *The Killers*, and the frustration of *Fifty Grand*; the loneliness and incongruity of drunkenness, and the sense of decay that pervaded all his work up to *To Have and Have Not*, where the wider significance of living made a momentary appearance.

Many expected that Hemingway's experience in Spain would so inflame his heart and his talents, that his long-announced novel of that war would be both his finest achievement and "the" novel about Spain. It is not. It is his finest achievement only in the sense that he has now perfected his extraordinary technical facility and touched some moments of action with a fictional suspense that is literally unbearable. But depth of understanding there is none; breadth of conception is heart-breakingly lacking; there is no searching, no probing, no grappling with the truths of human life that is more than superficial. And an astounding thing has happened, that anyone who was even remotely concerned with what happened in Spain will find almost incredible: Hemingway has treated that war (in an essential way) exactly as he treated the first world war in *A Farewell to Arms*. Touched in his own flesh and spirit by the horror of that first great imperialist conflict, struck into a mood of impotent despair by its utter lack of meaning and its destruction of everything all decent human beings value, Hemingway proclaimed the futility of life and love and happiness. He killed his heroine and in a memorable evocation of utter human loneliness, his hero "walked home in the rain." The *Farewell* was so bitter a condemnation of imperialist war that it aroused the ire of Archibald MacLeish, who found that it had been largely responsible for destroying the new generation's faith in its misleaders.

Let us examine *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and see what the author (who only recently aptly replied to MacLeish) has done with one of the greatest human facts of our century—the two and a half years during which



ADVERTISEMENT

IF you want to know

Why

nations are at war . . . why Wall Street and Roosevelt have buried the hatchet . . . why the Hillmans, the Greens, the Dubinskys, act as "labor spokesmen" for the White House . . . why Willkie has refused to put forward an opposition program for the Republican Party.

What

compels the imperialist powers to take a desperate gamble and stake everything on a new world slaughter . . . what forces are gathering new strength each day in the struggle against imperialism and war . . . what is the final solution for problems of war and unemployment.

Where

the real Fifth Column is to be found . . . where the people of nations under the heel of foreign powers are moving toward freedom . . . where the eyes of American war-mongers are turning in the scramble for new empires.

Who

are the men and women who sit in elected office . . . who speaks for the people and who betrays them . . . who leads labor further along the road to an independent Third Party of the people . . . who blocks this road.

THE ONLY NEWSPAPER WHICH ANSWERS
THESE QUESTIONS FEARLESSLY AND HONESTLY

IS THE

Daily Worker

Tear Off This Subscription Blank

RATES

(Except Manhattan, Bronx, Canada and Foreign)

	3 mos.	6 mos.	1 year
Daily and Sunday Worker	\$2.50	\$4.50	\$8.00
Daily Worker	\$2.00	\$3.50	\$6.00
Sunday Worker	\$.75	\$1.25	\$2.00

INTRODUCTORY OFFER

● Daily and Sunday Worker 6 weeks for \$1 ●
 Sunday Worker 24 weeks for \$1

I am enclosing \$..... (stamps, check, cash, or money order)

Please send me the { ☐ Daily and Sunday Worker for { ☐ Months
 { ☐ Daily Worker ☐ Sunday Worker for { ☐ weeks

Name

Address

City State.....

MAIL NOW TO THE

DAILY WORKER

50 EAST 13th STREET

NEW YORK, N. Y.

the Spanish people held in check, with their bare hands, the forces of international fascism. His hero this time is Robert Jordan, American volunteer in Spain who is a *partizan* fighter—one of that small band of extremely courageous men who worked behind the fascist lines. Jordan is sent behind the lines again to blow up a strategic bridge—his signal for the explosion is to be the beginning of a government attack upon Segovia.

The action takes place in three days' time. Jordan makes contact with a group of Spanish *guerilleros*, meets a Spanish girl who had been captured and raped by the fascists, falls in love with her, makes his plans to blow the bridge—a difficult enterprise in which he fully expects to lose his life. His guerrillas attack the fascist garrisons, and he blows the bridge as what is to be a futile attack gets under way—for the fascists have learned of the plans for the offensive and are prepared to meet it. In escaping, Jordan's horse is wounded, falls upon the man, and breaks his leg. He is too badly injured to be carried, and must be left behind to do what damage he can with a light machine-gun, and then to end his life.

This is a story of action, and the action is fast and furious, fused with a suspense that is magnificently handled in every incident. But this is also *A Farewell to Arms*, slightly in reverse. For the total implication of the novel is, again, the necessity for virility, the pervasive horror of death, the futility—nay, the impossibility of love. Given only seventy-two hours in which to live, Robert Jordan must live his life within that span. He accepts that fate, but the reader's disappointment in his fate is Hemingway's disappointment with life—for there is no tragedy here, merely pathos. Here, again, are long and fruitless and somewhat meaningless disquisitions upon the significance of death and killing (in war, in murder, in the bullring, by accident, by design). Here again is the small and personal (and the word *personal* is the key to the dilemma of Ernest Hemingway's persistent lack of growth) frustration of the individual, and here again is the author's almost pathological preoccupation with blood and mutilation and sex and death—they all go together and are part and parcel of his attitude toward life, and they are the *only* facts of life with which he has consistently dealt. I do not mean to imply that these subjects are unworthy or incapable of profound treatment, singly or together; I do mean to insist that in Hemingway's hands they have never achieved the stature of universality, perhaps because Hemingway cannot see them in perspective, cannot see them more than sentimentally.

It must be clearly stated that Hemingway's position in this novel is unequivocally on the side of the Spanish people; there can be no question of his defection from that cause. It is, however, a tragic fact that the cause of Spain does not, in any *essential* way, figure as a motivating power, a driving, emotional, passionate force in this story. In the

New Masses Welcomes a New Advertiser
To Its Pages

BRONX MUSIC CENTER

presents

VICTOR MUSICAL MASTERPIECES

At Price Reductions up to 50%

	Was	Our New Low Price
Beethoven Violin Concerto	\$ 9.00	\$5.00

Jascha Heifetz—violin

Arturo Toscanini conducting

N.B.C. Symphony Orchestra

Prokofieff's Lieut. Kije.....	6.50	3.50
-------------------------------	------	------

Serge Koussevitzky conducting

Boston Symphony Orchestra

Beethoven's 3rd Symphony	12.00	6.50
--------------------------	-------	------

Serge Koussevitzky conducting

London Symphony Orchestra

Write for our descriptive catalogues

BRONX MUSIC CENTER

Proprietor EDWIN CORNFELD

383 E. 149 St., Bronx, N. Y. ME 5-1413

Open Evenings until 8 P. M.

Saturday until 10 P. M.

FREE DELIVERY ON ALL PHONE & MAIL ORDERS

NM's Florist

FRED SPITZ & Co.

CHOICE FLOWERS

74 SECOND AVENUE

Corner 4th Street NEW YORK CITY

Flowers Delivered All Over the World

by Telegraph

WEDDING BOUQUETS, HALL AND CANOPY

DECORATIONS, PLANTS AND POTTERIES

BASKETS OF FRESH FRUITS, NUTS

AND CANDIES FOR ALL OCCASIONS

One Store Only

No connection with any other store in

New York or Brooklyn

GRamercy 5-7370-7371 GRamercy 3-8878

To Keep

New Masses

in the Fight for

PEACE

My contribution \$.....

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

11-5-40

widest sense, that cause is actually irrelevant to the narrative. For the author is less concerned with the fate of the Spanish people, whom I am certain that he loves, than he is with the fate of his hero and his heroine, who are himself. They are Hemingway and Hemingway alone, in their (say rather his, for Jordan is the mainspring of the narrative, and the girl Maria is only lightly sketched) morbid concentration upon the meaning of individual death, personal happiness, personal misery, personal significance in living and their personal equation is not so deeply felt or understood as to achieve wide significance. For all his groping, the author of the *Bell* has yet to integrate his individual sensitivity to life with the sensitivity of every living human being (read the Spanish people); he has yet to expand his personality as a novelist to embrace the truths of other people, everywhere; he has yet to dive deep into the lives of others, and there to find his own.

This personal constriction has long been evident and has made inevitable other aspects of Hemingway's personality that are, to say the least, reprehensible. I refer to his persistent chauvinism, as referred to the Italian people, and to women; to the irresponsibility he has shown in publishing in *Hearst's Cosmopolitan* such a story as *Below the Ridge*, a story whose implications gave deadly ammunition to the enemy—Hemingway's enemy, the fascist-minded of America; to the irresponsibility he demonstrated in permitting his play, *The Fifth Column*, to be mutilated and distorted out of all semblance of what he originally wanted to say, to the point where it was actually a slander of the Spanish people.

There are many references in the *Bell* to various political aspects of the struggle in Spain. And few of these references do more than obscure the nature of that struggle. Robert Jordan, his American anti-fascist fighter, wonders "what the Russian stand is on the whole business." If Jordan, who is pictured as an utterly inflexible anti-fascist, did not understand what the Soviet Union felt about Spain, surely his creator did and does. And just as in his story *Below the Ridge*, Hemingway's sins of omission in the *Bell* allow the untutored reader to believe that the role of the Soviet Union in Spain was sinister and reprehensible. For certainly he must himself know—and it is his obligation to clearly state—that that role was clear and well-defined, and so honest as to command the entire respect and adherence of the Spanish people, who hung banners in their towns which read: *Viva La U.R.S.S.; Mejor Amigo del Pueblo Espanol* (Long Live the Soviet Union, Best Friend of the People of Spain!).

Now this concentration, this constriction of Hemingway's indubitable genius, to the purely personal, has resulted in a book about Spain that is not about Spain at all! It has resulted in the intensification of his idiosyncratic tendencies to the point where he, an inflexible supporter of the loyalists and an avowed admirer of the International Brigades, can conceive and execute as vicious a per-

I CAN GET IT FOR YOU WHOLESALE!

... and I haven't got a brother in the business. I haven't even got a brother. But I can get you gorgeous trimmed and untrimmed coats direct from the manufacturer—at manufacturer's prices. Because I'm the manufacturer. In the season, I design for the wholesale trade. But right now, I'll cut your winter coat to order—or let you have one of my sample models—at prices that almost make me weep. *Untrimmed cloth coats* from \$35 (worth at least from \$50 retail!); *Mink and Persian trimmed cloth coats* from \$55 (the better stores show the same thing from \$80!). I'll be starting on next season's line soon, so come up right away and ask for Mr. Goldstein. Goldstein & Berger, 226 West 37th (6th fl.) LO 5-1070.

1940 Book Ball

Manhattan Center
34th St. at 8th Ave.

FRIDAY, NOV. 8, 1940

● THE FIRST ANNUAL AWARD of the Associated Motion Picture Advertisers, to the best movie of the year made from a book. Award to be presented by J. Donald Adams of the Times, and chosen by all the New York book reviewers.

● AN EXHIBITION OF COSTUMES actually used in outstanding films worn by the publishing folk who are lucky enough to fit them.

● A COSTUME PARADE of all the merry-makers who remembered to dress, in costumes representing book titles or characters.

● AWARDED OF MAGNIFICENT PRIZES for the best costume, the most original, the funniest, the prettiest. Your favorite screen stars will make the presentations.

● DANCING to Art Paulson's Hotel New Yorker band.

● REFRESHMENTS (all kinds).

Did you ever see a book dancing? Well, you will!

at the 1940 BOOK BALL

and you'll meet the famous authors, screen actors and actresses, publishers, critics, booksellers, the plain people who make the books you read and the important people who read the books we make. You'll never forget the 1940 Book Ball, or the good time you'll have there.

Tickets: \$1.50 at door, \$1.00 in advance. On sale at Book and Magazine Guild, 31 East 27th Street, 4th floor—or by mail on receipt of check.

ADVERTISEMENT

NEW MASSES

introduces

The Innovation of the Season

"Interpretation, Please!"

on

FOREIGN and DOMESTIC AFFAIRS

Things are popping all over the world—bewildering to some, intriguing to others. There are questionmarks on every horizon: how will the American elections react on the war? What is Herr Hitler cooking up in Europe? Can the Greeks resist in their mountain passes? Where does Turkey fit into the picture? Will there be peace in the Far East? Can Almazan really become president of Mexico on December 1st? Steal a march on the audience. Send in your questions, and the questions people ask you, in advance. Address them to "Interpretation, Please!" care of New Masses, and they will be answered by our . . .

PANEL OF EXPERTS

THURSDAY, NOV. 14th, 8.30 P. M.

Webster Hall, 119 East 11th Street

Stimulating: Entertaining: Instructive:

Tickets: 50 cents reserved section (for those buying tickets in advance).

50 cents general admission at door.

at New Masses office—461 4th Ave.

at Workers Bookshop—50 East 13th St.

sonal attack upon Andre Marty, the *organizer* of the International Brigades, as could be and has been delivered upon him by French fascist deputies themselves! This attack upon Marty, who is portrayed in the novel under his own name, and upon whom Hemingway exercises the presumption (both personal and artistic) of *thinking for him*, is entirely irrelevant to the narrative. To understand it at all, one would have to know, at first hand, the nature of Hemingway's personal contact with this man—a revolutionary figure of the first magnitude, organizer of the Black Sea mutiny of the French navy (an achievement that could scarcely have been conceived and executed by the criminal imbecile Hemingway portrays), a monolithic representative of the French working class, and the man who was the organizational genius and spirit of the Brigades Hemingway makes such protestation of admiring. Both as novelist and reporter Hemingway had an obligation to understand this man, whatever his personal experience with Marty, whatever his personal opinion of Marty's personality might have been. He cannot plead that his intentions in attacking Marty were good; that it was his honest conviction that Marty was a part of the incompetence, the red tape, and the outright treachery that strangled Spain, for such "facts" simply will not hold water; they are lies. And I am afraid that Hemingway will live to see his book hailed by our universal enemy *precisely because of* his attack upon Marty; I am afraid he will live to see every living and dead representative of the Abraham Lincoln Battalion attacked and slandered because of the great authority that attaches to Hemingway's name and his known connection with Spain.

Yet this man Marty is the man the author portrays as a fool, a madman, and categorically indicts as a murderer! And I wonder, when he wrote these pages, whether he considered for a moment that he was attacking him with the very terms that have been leveled at him by the French fascists who sold France down the river to Hitler. I wonder if he considered he was accusing him in the very same way and with the very same words that were used by American deserters who appeared before the Dies committee and attempted to smear the Veterans of the Lincoln Brigade, with the very words of the Hearst press which, throughout the war in Spain, characterized the Internationals as the scum of the earth, international bums, gangsters, and murderers.

This is the trap into which the individualism Hemingway's bourgeois critics so admired, has led a man who is still one of our most greatly endowed creative artists. For he has written a novel of Spain without the Spanish people, a *Hamlet* without the Dane. And he has forgotten the words he wrote earlier this year: "There are events which are so great that if a writer has participated in them his obligation is to try to write them truly rather than assume the presumption of altering them with invention." For the author

of the *Bell* does not convince us, with this novel, that "any mans death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankinde." He only convinces us—no matter how tenderly he may write of the love of Robert Jordan and Maria—that the imagination of his own death may yet destroy him as an artist.

It seems certain that Hemingway did not intend to write a *Cosmopolitan* love story against a background of the Spanish Civil War; yet this is what he has done. It is certain that he did not intend to slander the Spanish people or the Soviet Union; yet his method of telling the story has resulted in both. With minor exceptions, the Spanish people portrayed here are cruel, vindictive, brutalized, irresponsible. Throughout the long narrative there is evidence of much confusion: Hemingway praises the individual heroism of individual Communists, and impugns and slanders their leadership, their motives, and their attitudes. He admires the Brigades, and assails their leadership (and surely he knows enough about military affairs to realize that no soldier can fight well unless his officer commands his respect).

Already this greatly endowed writer, who on innumerable occasions has placed himself without equivocation on the side of the people against their enemies, has been readmitted by the most reactionary critics to the Valhalla of the Literary Giants. J. Donald Adams of the *New York Times* has forgiven him for writing *To Have and Have Not*; the defected liberal, John Chamberlain, absolves him for having (in the same novel) made "a common murderer of inferior sensibility and no moral sense whatever . . . do duty as a symbol of downtrodden humanity," cheers the fact that "If Archibald MacLeish still thinks of Hemingway as an underminer of the soldierly virtues he will have to change his mind," and becomes shrill with joy over the attack on Marty, Hemingway's "turn (ing) on the politicians of Moscow" and finally arriving at the point announced by John Dos Passos in *Adventures of a Young Man*. (This should be news to Hemingway, for Dos Passos ultimately became an avowed enemy of the republican government of Spain.) Edmund Wilson also points the Dos Passos parallel in the *New Republic*, lauds Hemingway for being more interested in "The kind of people . . . rather than their social-economic relations. . . ."

But this is strange company for a man like Hemingway, a man who transcended the futility created in him by the first world war, was vitalized, as a man and as an artist, by Spain; a man who won the respect and admiration of almost every International Brigade man who met him, and who gave liberally to these men of his own substance. For at the moment he is found in bad company; in the company of his enemies, and the people's enemies—clever enemies who will fawn upon him and use him, his great talents and his passion for the people's cause, to traduce and betray those talents and those people.

ALVAH BESSIE.

ADVERTISEMENTS

"The greatest, most encompassing play on Negro life that has ever been written"—LANGSTON HUGHES
 THE NEGRO PLAYWRIGHTS COMPANY, INC., PRESENTS
"BIG WHITE FOG"
 By THEODORE WARD STAGED BY: POWELL LINDSAY—SETTING & LIGHTING: PERCY WATKINS
 OCTOBER 22, 1940—8:40 P.M. At THE LINCOLN THEATRE, 135th St. and Lenox Ave.
 Regular Prices \$1.65, \$1.10 and 55c — Matinees Thursday and Sunday. Prices \$1.10, 55c, 28c
 TICKETS NOW AVAILABLE AT BOX OFFICE — Tel. ED geombe 4-3190
 PERFORMANCES NIGHTLY, EXCEPT MONDAY—MATINEES: THURS. & SUN.
 For Parties & Benefits call Federated Theatre Parties Service, WI. 7-5681 LA. 4-1167-1199

VOTE FOR THIS PARTY
 Our PLATFORM includes
 Woody, Johnny Meyers and his puppets, Frances and Michael exhibition dancing, Refreshments, Free Lunch, Dancing and Diversions.
SAT. EVE., NOV. 2nd, 77 FIFTH AVE.
 Poll Tax 49 Cents

BALLAD EVENING SUN. NOV. 10th
 • WOODY • AUNT MOLLY JACKSON
 • BURL IVES • LEDBELLY
 • WILL GEER • TONY KRABER
 The Palm Gardens, 52nd St. West of 8th Ave.
 Auspices New Theatre League, 110 W. 47 St. CH. 4-8198
 LAST TIMES: "INSIDE AMERICA"
 Musical Revue at Malin Studios, Nov. 1 & 8

Hear
EARL BROWDER
 Communist Candidate for President
JAMES W. FORD
 Communist Candidate for Vice-President
WM. Z. FOSTER
 Chairman Communist Party, U. S. A.
ISRAEL AMTER
 Communist Candidate for U. S. Senator
E. GURLEY FLYNN
 Communist Candidate for Representative-at-large
JOHN GATES
 Secretary N. Y. State Y. C. L.

ELECTION RALLY
MADISON SQUARE GARDEN
SUNDAY, NOV. 3 . . . 7 P. M.

TICKETS NOW ON SALE: Workers Bookshop, 50 E. 13th St.; Workers' Cooperative Colony, 2700 Bronx Park East; C. P. State Office, 5th floor, 35 E. 12th Street; ADMISSION: Reserved seats, 44c, 55c, 66c, 83c and \$1.10. General admission 20 cents.
 AUSPICES: N. Y. STATE ELECTION CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE, COMMUNIST PARTY, 35 E. 12th ST., NEW YORK, N. Y.