Wharf Nigger
A Play by Paul Peters

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THE STORY OF ELLA MAY
By MARGARET LARKIN

Drawn by William Siegel
L. C. Carter testified: "There was a crash and right then a shot. A lot of them in the truck began jumping out and them that called themselves the law yelled:—'Halt them damn Russian Reds' and they began shootin' at them.'

"Did you run?"
"No, I don't come from a sellin' out country."
"Folks where you come from don't run."

"No, they hain't apt to."

—At the inquest into the death of Ella May Wiggins, killed by mill thugs in Gastonia—as reported by the N. Y. Telegram, Sept. 25, 1929.
GASTONIA

L. C. Carter testified: "There was a crash and right then a shot. A lot of them in the truck began jumping out and them that called themselves the law yelled: 'Halt them damn Russian Reds' and they began shootin' at them.'

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The Mays were hill folks. They farmed a little patch of rocky ground far up in the Great Smoky Mountains. They had yams, cabbages, and beans, some apple trees, and a corn patch, and in the fall they killed and cured "hawg" meat and hunted rabbits and 'possums. But they never had enough money for clothes, and the family was large. So when Ella May was ten years they came down to the logging camps.

Old man May worked first in one camp, then in another, around Andrews, North Carolina. Whenever the camp was changed, the company would move the rickety shanty they lived in on a flat car.

Mis' May and Ella, her second oldest girl, took in washing for the bachelor loggers. They heated water over a brush fire in the big iron soap kettle, and washed out of doors.

Schools in the logging camps were casual affairs, but somehow Ella May learned to read and figure, and to write a neat hand. She was popular in camp, for she was a "party young'un". She had a fine, ringing voice, and nobody else could sing "Little Mary Fagan," "Lord Love" and "Sweet William" with such plaintive sweetness as she. "All she needed to a-ben a doll was to have the breath squeezed outen her," said a man who remembered her brief childhood, when she lay dead at twenty-nine.

When Ella May was sixteen she married John Wiggins. Myrtle was their first baby. Just before their second child was born, John Wiggins slipped and was crushed by a log. He didn't die, but he was crippled for life.

There is no work for a crippled man in a lumber camp, and there was no way for Ella Wiggins to earn a living there, either.

When the National Textile Workers' Union called a strike in her mill, Ella May was one of the first to join. Then there opened for her six months of intense, eager living. Like many another mill worker whose life has been cast in a drama, uneventful pattern by the mill, she gloried in the vivid strike. Meetings, speeches, picket lines, and that strange mass power we call solidarity, developed the latent talents of the spinner from the mountains. She learned to speak; she worked on committees; she helped give out relief; she organized for the defense of imprisoned strikers.
Down South: "The hell it ain't legal" I says, "why we got the county prosecutor doin' the floggin'!"

Drawn by Walter Steinhilber

The Baptist minister was there. He hadn't known Ella May. He didn't know anything about her union. He didn't mention how she had met her death in that wild pursuit of the union truck by the Black Hundreds of the Loray mill. "I've stood at a thousand graves and said these same words of comfort. In my Father's house are many mansions," he said. Ella May was just another dead mill hand to him.

As the first clods of wet, red earth fell on the coffin, Katie Barrett sang one of Ella May's best loved songs.

"We leave our homes in the morning,
We kiss our children good bye,
While we slave for the bosses,
Our children scream and cry."

Eleven-year-old Myrtle, who had been a "sight of help" shepherded the four littler children at the head of the grave. The tiny ones did not know what was happening at the grave side, but Myrtle knew everything. Her small shoulders drooped; her thin face was full of grief and worry.

"It is for our little children
That seem to us so dear,
But for us nor them, dear workers,
The bosses do not care.

"But listen to me workers,
A Union they do fear.
Let's stand together workers,
And have a union here."
Down South: “The hell it ain’t legal” I says, “why we got the county prosecutor doin’ the floggin’!”

Drawn by Walter Steinhilber
Down South: "The hell it ain't legal" I says, "why we got the county prosecutor doin' the floggin'?"

Drawn by Walter Steinhilber
IN A GERMAN MINING TOWN

By ED FALKOWSKI

I....BOTTROP—RUHR'S HUNKETYOWN.

Few people ever wanted to come to Bottrop. It's 80,000 inhabitants represent an accumulation rather than a settlement. Bottrop is a place people "fall into." A part of the Ruhr coal-pot.

The Cool, like its sister towns—Gelsenkirchen, Buer, Hamborn—is a "hunkeytown." Over 80% of its inhabitants are Polish immigrants; 10% represent the Hungarian and Slovakian elements; and only the remainder are descendents of original Germans.

Within fifty years the onetime village blossomed into a huge, unhappy city. This was during the Ruhr's bigboom period. Thousands of foreigners were induced to part with their landpitches and seek their fortunes in the Ruhr. Peasants dreamed of this region as they dream of America—a place one can pick up sudden wealth.

Their disillusionments have printed themselves on their faces. Lean, hunch-backed, hazy-eyed, the men revolve in eternal circles of shifts, struggling to keep bread on the table. Dirty, underfed kids play on the local ash-locks, lambasting another one with rusty tin cans, or rooting for pieces of unburnt coal.

Mothers, whose wombs turn out offspring with an ominous regularity, fight the daily battle against dirt and hunger's monotony. These Polish and Hungarian women dream of their homelands with deep regrets. "Everything is so sad here," they tell you. "And there, everybody, although poor, seemed happy and content."

But nobody ever leaves Bottrop again, once he has got deeply enough into it.

II. STORY OF AN INCUBATOR.

Bottrop enjoys the dread distinction of being the Ruhr's first child-incubator. It is, to paraphrase the German expression, "child-rich with poor children."

Everywhere one sees children. Lean, undernourished creatures, turned loose upon the streets and grassplots to spend hours in play. Kids with withered arms and humped backs, and some with faces of idiots. One is amazed by the large swarm of unhappy children who "bless" the table of the miner whose income can no longer include meat on his bill of fare.

Church and officialdom encourage this enormous fertility. On one occasion a group of radical women tried to engage the Schauburg—a local kino—for a public lecture on "sex reform." The mayor refused permission to hold the lecture on the grounds that "Bottrop's honor must stay fast."

Priests advise women that remaining longer than three years without a child becomes a sin.

The government itself encourages the childbirth increase, the parents of a twelfth child receiving a handsome cup and saucer, of genuine Meissen-porcelain, and decorated with the black-red-gold habitants represent an accumulation rather than a settlement. The Rheinischen Stahlwerk corporation.

These swamps of depressing houses accommodate the miner and his family. A fifth of his income each month pays the rent for the three or four rooms which he enjoys. Frequently this narrows down to one or two, because of the pressure of population growth.

Crudest sanitary conveniences, flies, smoke from the mine, lack of breezes in summer and ungodly cold in winter, give atmosphere to the family's domestic history.

The pressing poverty inspires much thievery, so that everyone lives under eternal lock and key. Cases have been known where pigs were chloroformed and slaughtered in their stalls by thieves, and the flesh hauled away during the night. No one trusts another in these miserable jungles of repeated houses.

Poverty is everyone's common friend here. Its harsh touches are everywhere evident. Patched clothes, dried breadcrusts, the flesh hauled away during the night. No one trusts another in these miserable jungles of repeated houses.

III. STREETS HAVE MEMORIES.

1920—the Kapp Putch year—singled out two Ruhr cities for bloody distinctions. Hamborn was one of these, Bottrop, the other. The Communists made their stand against the government troops in Wesel, retreating finally until they reached Bottrop where another battle was fought.

The townhall still bears bullet-holes from those dramatic days. The big battle however was fought in the "Polish gangway"—a swampy miner-settlement on the northern fringes of the city. The communists fortified themselves behind the walls of Prosper 6, a Rheinischen Stahlwerk mine, while the government troops occupied the slaughterhouse about a kilometer away.

After the communists retreated still further, Bottrop was filled with policemen and a terrific vengeance followed. Hundreds of workers were stood up against the wall and executed. To be suspected of red sympathies was enough to place one in front of the firing line. Miners on their way home from work were dragged in front of the murderous squad and butchered.

The fact that Bottrop is a "hunkeytown," that the murdered victims were mere polacks and foreigners, inspired the "legal" butchers in their bloody occupation, made them more brutal than usual.

Everybody knows what followed. The republic was "saved," to the present dissatisfaction of the two extreme social groups—the workers and the capitalists. Germany has become an economic and political rocking-chair, rather wobbly in its entire internal structure. Its freedom celebrations (Constitution-Day) consist usually of police manoeuvres—an ironic comment on the tone of peace and freedom in the Germany of today!

IV. THE DISMAL SWAMP.

The town's center boasts of its Woolworth, its movie theatre, and its large, modern store. Bottrop has over 200 saloons, and not a library or a decent bookshop.

The business core is surrounded by long streets of monotonous brick houses, smoky and tired, one house looking exactly like another, with strips of black, dusty road between. These are the mine-dwellings, belonging to the coal company. 80% of the land belongs to the Rheinischen Stahlwerk corporation.

These swamps of depressing houses accommodate the miner and his family. A fifth of his income each month pays the rent for the three or four rooms which he enjoys. Frequently this narrows down to one or two, because of the pressure of population growth. The pressing poverty inspires much thievery, so that everyone lives under eternal lock and key. Cases have been known where pigs were chloroformed and slaughtered in their stalls by thieves, and the flesh hauled away during the night. No one trusts another in these miserable jungles of repeated houses.

Drawn by Cecil Boulton.
Drawn by Cecil Boulton.
WHarf Nigger
(A Scene from a Proletarian Play)
By PAUL PETERS

SCENE 3.

(This is the wharf. You are looking through a shallow section of the shed toward the sunlight on the river. The stern of a rusted freighter juts out at the right. The shed is spotted with islands of freight: sacks, boxes, barrels, bales of cotton. Down the center is an aisle for stevedores.

Black longshoremen in torn, dirty undershirts, or stripped to the waist, sit, eating. Some are sprawled on sacks, some lie in the sun on the wharf apron, some sit on the boxes clicking dice.

(Fag Williams, a tiny, animated jack-in-the-box Negro, with his trousers draped around the bottom of his legs, snatches at a sandwich eaten by Bobo Valentine, a sporty buck.)

Fag Williams. What you eating dar, Bobo Valentine?
Bobo Valentine. Get yo' dirty black hands off my lunch. Did you ever see a fresh li'll nigger like dat?

Fag Williams. Dat's my sandwich. Give it hyar!
Bobo Valentine (seizing him by the tail of his undershirt). 
Nigger, you better chase yo' li'll tail away from hyar befo' I cuts off both yo' ears and makes you eat widout no salt.

(he spins Fag around and kicks him. Everybody laughs)

Fag Williams. (belligerent) If I catches de nigger dat stole my lunch, Lawd! 'Ts sho' 'nough gwine cut his throat.

Men. (jeering at him) Listen dat li'll black monkey talk, will you?

Bet he don't even own a razor.

What you need a razor for? You aint no man, Fag Williams.

Blacksnake Johnson. (a huge, vital Negro) Better keep yo' razor edge sharp, Fag. Taint no use wearing it out on de wharf nigger's throat. Maybe you gwine need it one of dese hyar nights.

(There is a hash. Everybody looks at him)

Jim Veal. (a tall morose mulatto with a cowsern face) What you 'sinuating, Blacksnake?

Blacksnake. Reading dem newspapers about de nigger, de nigger doing all de wrong, dat make my blood boil.

Bobo Valentine. (with derision) Ho! Hyar's another one of dem niggers, like Sam Oxley, listening to Yallah all de time.

Fag Williams. (wagging his head wisely) Yallah, he reads books.

Men. Books aint made no good wharf nigger out of nobody.

Dat Yallah nigger's stuck up. Thinks he's as good as de white folks. And he talk too much. Something gwine happen to him.

Blacksnake. Taint Yallah I been listening to. I been listening to de nicks in yo' butt all right. But it won't be yo' gun butt.

(Pauses)

Blacksnake Johnson. Ole Aunt Dinah had a rawbone mule, Got up one mornin' when de air was cool, Hitch him to de wagon, and what she do?

Started down de road fo' de barbecue. (begins to clap)

And de ole mule holler bow-wow, Anh-huh, anh-huh, Lawd he holler, Ole mule holler bow-wow, Wid a mowf chock full of rope.

Ole Aunt Dinah gwine down de road, Ole mule pullin' 'gainst a mighty load, Sun gwine over to'ard de end of day, Barbecue way yonder, fu'der away.

And de ole mule holler bow-wow, Anh-huh, anh-huh, Lawd he holler, Ole mule holler bow-wow, Wid a mowf chock full of rope.

Hawse-fly sitting on a pumpkin vine, Lit on de mule and bit his tail behin', Mule kicked up and de dashboard bus', Yonder come Aunt Dinah, rolling in de dus'.

And de ole mule holler bow-wow, Anh-huh, anh-huh, Lawd he holler, Ole mule holler bow-wow, Wid a mowf chock full of rope.

(Wide mowf chock full of rope. The song ends in yelps of delight. Blacksnake, pleased with himself, goes around puffing and blowing: "Whew! Hot stuff. Shake 'em up. Whew, nigger!")

Dem cotton field niggers!

If dat nigger ever heerd a gun go off, he'd run so fast, he'd have to stop at de corners and wait fo' his shadow.

Fag Williams. I got six nicks on de butt of my gun. You know what dem nicks is dar fo'?

Bobo Valentine. I reckon dat's whar yu' knees used to knock against it from shaking so.

(Laughs and hoots)

Jim Veal. You get funny wid de white folks, and you'll get nicks in yo' butt all right. But it won't be yo' gun butt.

(Shrill laughing, whistles and hoots)

Angrum. (a shuffling, melancholy Negro boy of 18, who sings with a dirge-like wail)

Oh, I been sick, A-laying in a bed, Aint got nobody For to hold up my head.

De road was rocky, De sun was hot, Oh, my Lawdy, What pain I got!

Bobo Valentine. Dat crying-singing sho' give me de heeby-jeebies. (he rises and prods Angrum with his foot) Come on, nigger get up and sing something wid— (clapping his hands in jazz rhythm) some of dat in it.

Angrum. (glum) Aw, I don't know none of dem songs.

Mose Venable. Brother, leave dat po' boy eat his beans and rice, why don't you?

Bobo Valentine. Aint he de contrariest li'l nigger? (he jerks Angrum up and jabs at him with a crow bar) Come on, sing, nigger. Sing, I tells you!

(Angrum looks at him with dumb misery. It is Blacksnake Johnson who crashes out with a roaring song. By and by he begins to clap his hands. Then he cake-walks. His vitality is infectious. Negroes yip, shrick, clap, laugh.)

Blacksnake Johnson.

Who don't know dat low white trash!
Blacksnake. Dey been talking about raiding Binnie Green's one of dese hyar nights. Saying dey's gwine wipe up de wharf nig­gers dat's fooling wid de white folks women. Now you know dar aint no wharf niggers fooling wid de white folks women.

Jim Veal. You like an old hon, Blacksnake Johnson. Always scratching in de back yard fo' gossip.

Fag Williams. (jumping up on a sack) If dey comes fo' dis hyar nigger, I'd shoot 'em, dat's what. My gun would do my talk­ing fo' me. (shooting with both hands) Bang-bang, bang-bang! Dem would be my arguments.

This springs an explosion of mirth)

Joe Crump. Lawd! Aint he de big roaring nigger, though!

Mose Venable. (the stevedore-preacher: grey, gentle, sing-song piou) "Vengeance is mine, saith de Lawd," brother.

Fag Williams. I bet dat li'l nigger don't know how to hold no gun.

Fag Williams. Say, listen, man! Back home I used to be de best nigger shooter in all of Yazoo County, Mississippi. And dem niggers up dar, dey does shooting what you calls shooting.

Men. (jeering) Yeh? What you calls shooting?
Jim Veal. (seornful) Blacksnake Johnson, you sho' is de laziest, playing-aroundest nigger ever born.

Blacksnake. What I wants to work any harder fo' fo'? I can't no mo' a smart nigger, Yallah. But de white folks, dey gwine hold him down. Dey aint gwine let no black man get no higher. never be no mo'na wharf nigger nohow.

I'se a lazy nigger. Dat's cause I's a smart nigger, Jim Veal. You works hard and you worries, and what it gwine bring you at? First thing you know some li'll white folks girl find she gwine have a baby she don't want, and man! dey burn yo' po' heart out wid fire just like you was de laziest, no-countest nigger back of town.

Jim Veal. Dey don't burn no good nigger.

Blacksnake. Good nigger? Dat mean, good nigger? Dat you got to be ignorant all yo' life, like Joe Crump over yonder? Or go crawling on yo' knees full of Jesus, like Brother Mose, de preacher? Or be a fool like Fag Williams, so's de white folks laughs at you? Or scrape yo' face all over de ground every time you see a white man, huh?—like dat fancy-pants nigger, Bobo Valentine. Good nigger! Dat's just a scared nigger, dat's all. A nigger dat don't see and don't hear and don't talk and do just what de white folks tell him to. Sho', I knows you. I knows you all. Good niggers!

Men. Don't blaspheme de name of de savior, brother. Who you calling a fool, Blacksnake Johnson? I can't help it if I's ignorant.

Dat's Yallah talking in him again.

Blacksnake. (spiking Jim Veal) And de best nigger, dat's de nigger dat does de white folks' dirty work fo' 'em. Specially de dirty work against de black man.

Jim Veal. (rising) Who you talking about now, Blacksnake?


Blacksnake. (pulling himself up at full height and sauntering slowly toward Jim Veal) You aint gwine let nobody—what? (so quietly you'd think they were the best of friends)

Sit down, black boy. Sit down befo' I sets you down—hard.

(Jim Veal turns away and sits down on a sack)

Jim Veal. (grumbling) I guess I's de captain of dis gang. Blacksnake. (good-natured, but contemptuous) Dat's all right. I aint gwine take it away from you.

Joe Crump. (long pondering, now bewidered) Den what am de po' nigger to do? How am he to act wid de white folks?

Fag Williams. Yallah say us is got to be proud we's colored folks. Us is got to fight de white folks, Yallah say.

Blacksnake. 'Taint no use fighting de white folks—'cepting when dey starts to fight you. My idea is: Enjoy yo'self! De Lawd put you hyar to have a good time. Aint dat right, preacher? (with great joy) Good eats and good clothes and loving womans: dem's my principles.

Men. Now you talking, Blacksnake.

Dem's mine too, Big Boy. Specially de loving womans.

(this brings yips and laughs, a voice sings:)

Ashes to ashes,
And dust to dust,
Was dar ever a woman,
A bo'gar claud could trust?

Fag Williams. (argumentative, like a little fox-terrier) Yallah say you wrong dar, Blacksnake. Dat's de trouble wid de black man, Yallah say: he go so far, den he sit down, like de mule. Done, through—hee-haw!—don't go no mo'!

Jim Veal. Yallah say, Yallah say! What am dat nigger, anyhow? De four gospel and de 'pocalypse?

Bobo Valentine. (doing an ape-like cake-walk in a circle, clapping, singing)

Yallah say, De moon am brown,
Yallah say, De square am roun',
Yallah say, Just stick aroun',
And heear what Yallah say.

(Laughter. Enter Sam Oxley)

Men. Dar Sam Oxley.

Hey, Sam! Hello, Sam!

Bobo Valentine. Aint you brought Black Jesus wid you, Sam—
de savior of de colored race?

Sam Oxley. I don't know whar Yallah. Dey chase us.

Men. Chase you!

Who chase you?

(all crowd about him)

Sam Oxley. Some white men on de other side de viaduct. Just as us goes past 'em, somebody yells: 'Let's get dem niggers.' Den dey starts throwing stones and chasing us. I don't know whar Yallah run.

Jim Veal. What you done to 'em?

Sam Oxley. We aint done nothing to 'em. We aint even looked at 'em.

Joe Crump. Now what you suppose dey chase you fo'?

Blacksnake. Aw, nigger, hush up! Don't you never read a newspaper?

Joe Crump. How I read a newspaper? I never went to no school. Fag Williams. Dat white woman last night—

(A hush falls over the men)

Mose Venable. The Lawd have mercy on us.

Blacksnake. Sho', de Lawd gwine do a lot fo' you. He gwine take you right up to heaven in a golden chariot after de white man kill you.

Men. (alarmed) M-m-n, dat look bad!

I told you something gwine happen.

Bet it was some of dem Darcy Colts.
Construction Workers—

Drawn by Rufino Tamayo
Construction Workers—

Drawn by Rufino Tamayo
A moment of indecision.

Bobo Valentine. (slyly) You sho' dem Darcy Colts is out yeronder?

Joe Crump. Dat's right. Maybe dey done went home.

Blacksnake. (teasing with derisive laughter) De brave black man! Lawd o' mercy, just look at dem niggers pushin' to fight!

Yallah. (quiet, determined) De white man make slaves of 'em, and cheat 'em and rob 'em like mules and takes it.

Blacksnake. I knows whar I gwine.

Fag Williams. Let's all go.

Blacksnake. Us'll show dem Darcy Colts.

Mose Venable. (in the sudden silence) Now, bredren, de preacher gwine lead us in prayer.

Jim Veal. You niggers better get to work. Yallah. We don't care fo' dat whistle. You gwine follow me, men?

Walcott. (to Jim Veal, pushed out of the crowd) Why don't you stay with yo'self, dar? Dat's my truck.

Jim Veal. Dat's right. Maybe dey done went home.

Wharf hands. (already he has a truck and is rattlin' off with it) De brave black man! Lawd o' mercy, just look at dem niggers pushin' to fight!

Yallah. (with a grin he spears his canthook in the wharf. Shriekin' like Walcott) Hyar I lays me down to sleep. A big black man's feet.

Walcott. (to Jim Veal) Here he is, boss.

Jim Veal. (looking them over) Dat's right. Maybe dey done went home.

Wharf hands. (Another sharp blast from the whistle. The men drop back, to their trucks) Why aint you men at work?

Walcott. (to Jim Veal) You calls yo'self black men! Dat's 'cause you aint no black men.

Jim Veal. Aint no use in dis.

Bobo Valentine. (slyly) You aint no black men. It takes men to make black men. You aint nothing but low-down white man's niggers!

Yallah. (to Jim Veal) Go on, hit 'im! Hit 'im down!

Bobo Valentine. (bursting with anger) Go on, hit 'im! Hit 'im down!

Walcott. (already he has a truck and is rattlin' off with it) Why aint you men at work?

Men. (all anxious to be helpful) Yallah. (to Jim Veal) Get yo' hands off, dar. Dat's my truck.

Jim Veal. (bellowing, like Walcott) Get yo' hands off, dar. Dat's my truck.

Walcott. (to Jim Veal) You niggers better get to work. Yallah. We don't care fo' dat whistle. You gwine follow me, men?

Walcott. (to Jim Veal) Where's Jim Veal?

Men. (all anxious to be helpful) Yallah. (to Jim Veal) Go on, hit 'im! Hit 'im down!

Walcott. You big lazy black baboons. That whistle blew ten minutes ago.

Men. Yassuh, cap'n.


Yallah. (teasing) Yallah. (to Jim Veal) You niggers better get to work. Yallah. We don't care fo' dat whistle. You gwine follow me, men?

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Men. Yassuh, cap'n.


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Men. Yassuh, cap'n.
Big Time for the Kale of It

manufactured dyes their wool
with a maximum of profit
and if it starves the navaho,
 pity the rich,
 albeit the rugs are woven:
if some were to say
white men in new england
are starving the hopis,
or apache spread a white disease,
anyway, the germ
and the capitalists
make a good time of it.

—NORMAN MACLEOD.
NEW MASSES

Drawn by Jan Matulka.
and even grows. How? Ten and twelve hours a day and more, and no salary for five or six months. No one is paid a nickel for work—editors, artists, writers, etc. They are a united and enthusiastic group. It is just a miracle of hard work and sincere conviction.

Nothing like this is happening in fat America today. There is not another literary magazine that is being run for conviction and not for money. The New Masses has begun to have as much significance for its time as the old Masses in its best days.

I have read some of the recent letters of comment on the magazine. The readers seem to feel the paper is important. It does not matter that our circulation and advertising are not yet up to the Saturday Evening Post. Literarily and financially speaking, we must appear like a lot of hoboes to the Brisesbans and G. H. Lorimers of the great world. But to hell with the bass-drums.

The workers are coming up in Europe and Asia. What the workers think and do is something the bourgeoisie there have to worry about—even the bourgeois writers. The literature of the future belongs to the workers. This is nothing to argue about any longer. It is clear to the social student. The old crowd have simply nothing left to write about—nothing—except the stale old bedroom triangular farces and tragedies. They will do this for years, until it all ends in Kraft-Ebbing. Meanwhile there appear hundreds like Panaist Istrati, Agnes Smedley, I. Babel, etc. in every land; young graduates of the class struggle. Simply, they tell about the working-class life. They do not adorn, stylize or pose; they put down the facts. And it is literature; it is art; it is the new and creative thing in the world.

Our labors are worth-while. The New Masses happens to be one magazine in this country that is headed for some place. We need no literary manifestoes; we are. We speak for the submerged nation within the nation. We may commit a thousand crudities, puerilities and crimes against so-called good taste; but in ten years these founderbags may look like the dawn of a new kind of American writing.

I know it. And I am sure the other writing counts less in the scheme of things than my present attempts to fool the snappers and tomcos with a hook. It is just a way of passing the time.

I received The New American Caravan to review. I can't do it. It is worth reviewing, because it shows so clearly where another group of "avantgarde" American writers are heading.

I glanced through the pages and read some of the contributions. It is expert writing. But it gives one the uneasy blues. It is all so solemn and pompous as Joseph Wood Krutch. If a clam were literary it might write this way. This is not the anthology of any kind of revolt. It is just a mournful yipping in the desert. Nothing challenging, clear-cut. A kind of insipid mysticizing over obscure and petty sorrows. Lots of splendid words, phrases, sentences. But no power. This is not America or life. It smells to me like the old, familiar, academic, academic, literary introversion. Maybe I'm wrong. The book should be tried on someone else. I simply can't understand this sort of thing and more. I am getting older. I want only plain food and the plain and eternal emotions.

I am through, I guess, with the form-searchers. The movies make these painful, intricate wrenchings for a new literary technique almost criminal. In two or three years these founderbags may look like the dawn of a new kind of American writing.

I can't get them. I suspect they are merely passing the time. I prefer fishing.

I think this letter will make you impatient. Like other comrades in the labor movement, you love literature, but dislike all kinds of shop-talk about technique. I think some of it necessary in the New Masses, however. Proletarian writers have no tradition in the world to work by, as have the others. We must thrash out our problems as we go along. The New Masses is the one magazine in English where it can be done. This is part of its function, I think.

Now I will close this wandering letter. I feel I am on the sidelines down here. I feel guilty about loafing when so many of our people are in hell in Gastonia and other places. But a man with malaria has to loaf; he's good for nothing else. I found a few gray hairs today, Walt. My God, I thought, past 30 and still broke. Then I remembered Upton Sinclair and felt better. Though I disagree with him on almost everything, I admire him more each year. He is 50, and has remained a Socialist writer for 30 years in capitalist America.

No one who hasn't put his sweat, gall and fury into a piece of unpopular writing, while wondering at the same time how the room rent would be paid, can understand the drama of a proletarian writer's role.

But thousands of Jimmy Higginbisses endure as much in this prosperous country, and it will all mean something in the long run. It is certainly preferable to being a white slave for the editor of "big" magazines, or a coocoo "artist."

So long. I will send you in a mess of clams and whiting if the tide is right. Regards to the gang.

MIKE GOLD.

P. S.—I read some more into the Caravan last night. William Rollins has a good character study of an American college freshman—a little precious, however. Joseph Vogel has a picture of a Jewish wedding that could have been a glorious farce, but got lost among the instellar spaces of "Art." A good try. Then I read Yvor Winters' long critical article on poetry. This was too much, and I quit for the night. What pomposity! The kid writes on poetry like a sixty-five year old professor with prostate troubles. As my friend Bill Sheehan would say, he needs a dose of salts. And such are the revoltsees, college professors out of regular jobs.

CAPITAL JOKE

Up—he goes—
Balancing gracefully, with agile knees
Pressed tight against the inside of the web,
Sealing a column:
Clinging with his toes
To gusset plates or stud bolts as he throws
A careless arm
Over a horizontal beam and draws
Himself erect, to walk with cat-like ease
Across a narrow member or to pause,
Bracing himself against a stinging breeze,
To contemplate the pavement down below
A matter of five hundred feet or so.
Five hundred feet,
Or so, above the street,
With back against a column, he may read
And eat
In solid comfort, having, at his need,
The newspaper in which his lunch was wrapped.
There he may read
That capital is better paid, indeed,
Than labor, for a certain risk
Attends investment, and the sturdy breed
Of financiers must always stand the gaff,
The chance of falling, on a certain street.
It is to laugh!

FREDERIC COVER.
THE SOVIET UNION FORGES AHEAD

By SCOTT NEARING

The great capitalist empires have gone the limit since 1917 in their efforts to discredit and destroy the Soviet Union. Despite their military invasions, blockades, denials of credit, and barrages of lies the Soviet economic system has been able to survive and to grow. Today it stands out as the most important single experiment that is being made anywhere on the planet.

These facts have been evident, for some time, to the friends and supporters of the Soviet Union. Now they are recognized by its enemies.

Soviet trade with the United States, in 1928-1929, reached the unprecedented total of $149 million. This trade includes an extensive sale of Russian goods in the United States, and an even more extensive sale of United States goods in Russia. General Electric, Standard Oil, International Harvester, Ford Motor, Chase National Bank, and others among the most powerful business organizations have been making long term contracts with the Soviets. One of the latest and most important of these contracts, made with an American engineering firm, calls for the construction, by this firm, of an entire industrial city in the Soviet Union.

A New York publisher in good standing, recognizing the growing importance of Soviet economy, has issued a book* in which he presents important parts of the Five Year Plan for Economic Reconstruction about which the whole economic world is talking.

When the Soviets took over the broken fragments of the Tsarist economic system they faced the necessity of economic reconstruction on some line that would provide a satisfactory livelihood for the Russian masses. As they did not intend to permit Russian economy to become capitalist, they were forced to adopt some alternative system.

Already the resources, public utilities, and some of the more important industries had been taken from their former owners and placed under social control and direction. But, in a vast country like Russia, direction and control are impossible unless there is some plan. One of the first moves of the Soviet Union was therefore the establishment of planning commissions, whose business it was to coordinate the whole Soviet economic structure. It is the central planning commission, with offices in Moscow, that has drawn up the Five Year Plan.

The Five Year Plan covers the economic development of the whole Soviet Union from 1928-29 to 1932-33. It covers manufacturing, trade, transport, finance, electrification, agriculture, foreign trade, new capital construction. It is a picture of the next five years in the history of Soviet economy.

The plan for capital investments gives a good idea of the picture.

Between 1923-24 and 1927-28 (the last five year period before the development of the present plan) the total of investments in new capital forms was 26.5 billion roubles. During the five year period contemplated by the present Five Year Plan, the total of capital investments will be 64.6 billion roubles, or two and a half times the capital investments of the previous five year period.

These 64.6 billion roubles of new capital investments will be divided up as follows: for industry, including industrial housing construction, 16.4 billion, or a quarter of the total; for electrification, not including industrial power plants, 3.1 billion roubles; for transportation, 10 billion roubles; for agriculture 23.2 billion roubles, or forty percent of the total; for other items, 11.9 billion roubles. Thus every important branch of Soviet economy will share in the proposed construction program, with the largest expenditure for agriculture and the next largest for industrial capital equipment.

The problems of the last five year period were comparatively simple. They were concerned with getting Russian economic life back to the pre-war level. The five year period which is now being planned will mark the initial phase, which means the most difficult one, of new construction. The entire period will bear the impress of the new development program.... By the end of the period about 35 per cent of the total industrial output is expected to come from new enterprises, not including old plants reconstructed during the period.

What are the chances of success in the working out of this five year program? Perhaps the best answer comes from the experience of the last five year period. When that period began the economic system of the Soviet Union was staggering under the blows of foreign war, civil war and famine. The capitalists had gone. The workers were not yet acquainted with the tasks of economic organization in a socialist society. "Industrial production had fallen to 54 per cent. The output of metal ores had stopped almost completely... The transportation system was serving almost exclusively military requirements, and economic relations between the various regions were completely wiped out. The market had disappeared and the monetary system had been destroyed." Despite these terrible handicaps "by 1927-8 the country had surpassed the pre-war economic level and had started on the road to basic reconstruction."

During the last two years of the previous five-year period, the increase in production each year exceeded the percentage allowed in the plan. There is therefore every reason to expect that the present plan can likewise be followed out.

The plan has been drawn with exceptional care. Special conferences were called, attended by scientists and practical experts, who discussed various aspects of economic reorganization,—metalurgy, machine construction, transport, the chemical industry, the textile industry. Regional conferences were also held to consider the particular needs of some of the more important economic regions of the Soviet Union. Besides mobilizing the technical experts of the Soviet Union, new enterprises were brought to Russia from various capitalist countries, including the United States, and their advice was secured on various technical problems of economic reconstruction.

The directors of Soviet economy are under no illusions regarding their task. Their purpose is "to secure a rate of economic development higher than that yet attained by modern capitalist countries." It is by this means that the Soviet economy can assure "the triumph of the socialist economic system."

United States engineers have had an opportunity to plan and carry out the work involving the building up of a Standard Oil Company of New Jersey, or of a General Motors Corporation. Occasionally some great enterprise like the Panama Canal has presented itself. But for the most part, the economic development of the United States (and of every other capitalist country) has proceeded planlessly. The laws of chance and not the principles of science have dominated its development.

The situation in the Soviet Union is far otherwise. There, for the first time in history, the whole of an industrial economy is placed under the control of one general staff, and the plans for its development are being made according to the demands of science.

No one who is interested in the future economic structure of society can afford to overlook the Five Year Plan, or any other part of the Soviet economic program. They are the stuff out of which the economic foundations of the new world order are being built.

THUS HE DIED

By A. B. MAGIL

"I saw Jonas brought in and taken upstairs in an elevator. I saw him placed on the operating table with the handcuffs on his hands. Thus he died. Later a deputy sheriff came and removed the handcuffs."—Douglas Eller, Marion, N. C., reporter, as quoted in the New York Times, October 3, 1929, after the Marion Massacre.

Thus he died.
Life is cheap. Hang that up where the world can see it.
And death—death comes on panther feet.
An animal dies,

Say an oz in a Chicago stockyard, bellowing, making a fierce hullabaloo.

Plants die and grass and the autumn
Sleek with winter.
A man dies—a human being is shot down in cold blood,
And is a stone.
Shovel him into the earth.
Life is cheap.

Lying in the hospital flat on the operating table—John Jonas, 65, textile worker, bullets in chest and abdomen,
John Jonas, blackjacked, beaten with the butt of a gun,
John Jonas, iron handcuffs around the wrists—
Wrists of a corpse.

It's all over now:
the pickets, the mill, the scabs, the sheriff, the sheriff's men, standing in the frightened dawn.
It's all over now:
the hot words, the curses, the guns tearing the air, the shouts, the feet running in terror, the black pain burning through chest and abdomen, burning, burning.
It's all over now:
hours in the mills, endless, plodding like slow cattle, misery, despair, strike, memories of childhood, days lost, forgotten, smell of rain, mud on roads, wife, children, sweet words of little children in the darkness.

It's all over now.
Write:
Thus he died.

Thus.
With the iron handcuffs grinning on his wrists.

Were you afraid, little heroes with the big guns,
Afraid of the mill worker, John Jonas, lying flat on his back with the bullets you shot into him eating his life out,
That you put handcuffs round his wrists,
That you manacled a corpse?

Suckle well your fear,
Little heroes with the big guns,
And you, exalted millowners, governors, congressmen, stoolpigeons, preachers, patriots, journalists, labor fakers, kissers big and little of the backside of the great,

Suckle well your fear:
You can put the handcuffs round the wrists of death,
Death that comes on strong panther feet,
But can you chain life?
And if you build a million million factories and pour into them all the monster machines of the earth,
Do you think you will chain it?
And if you make a thousand treacherous laws and your schools and your church and your press trumpet your command to the ends of the earth,
Do you think you will chain it?
And if you gather together all the prisons of the world, from Italy, from Rumania, from Hungary, China, India, Venezuela, from wherever men's bodies rot and their minds burn, bring the choicest dungeons and fill them with all the tortures that god's noblest creature, man, has devised,
Do you think that then you will chain it,
That then the cancerous fear will be loosed from your hearts
And you will be masters secure in your slaves?

And the hands of the mill worker, John Jonas, that lie still now in the embrace of the iron grinning handcuffs—
Do you think that these dead hands that will never spin cotton again nor touch the arm of a comrade nor do any human thing will not rise up like battering rams to beat down the walls of your world, to break all your chains and build out of suffering and heartache and tired dreams new life, new hope, peace and a new slaveless world?

Suckle well your fear, masters.
Look North and South and East and West—see:
Dead manacled hands are digging a grave!
NOVEMBER, 1929

Drawn by William Gropper.
commanding it to do so my mind brings forth fragmentary memories of this play and that sketch connected with this same Joan and this same “passion” . . . you think of Shaw’s contraption written with dirty water . . . you think of lachrymose tears, turrets, medieval castles and white stallions . . . long winded speeches and the usual chauvinistic lingo about saving France and sending the English back to their foggy haven and beefsteak. But . . .

Imagery of faces, immobile faces, faces of wax, of rust, iron, of cramps, of clay; unholy odors of the catacombs, of communion, of incense, of “holy” sacrament wafers. Waiting. Joan is brought in. That is, her head suddenly swins on the screen. A single face. The face of a child close to the earth. A human face. Waiting. The eyes of the images begin to move. Death sees life and is envious. Opening its lips it utters the words one expects from bishops, priests, deacons, monks. The holy Inquisition, as drawn by Jehovah and his only begotten Jewish son to try Joan and anybody else who dares. Poison and sarccharine ooze from the mouths of “our” Fathers and Brothers. Joan is being persuaded that she is sent by Satan and not by God to do harm to the English. “Please admit that you are a heretic and let us burn you as quickly as possible so that we can go back to our rosaries and plum pudding so help us the Allmight.” But Joan refuses to be persuaded. Saint Michael sent her to save France and they cannot tear out a negative answer from her. The prong like tongues speak again. What did St. Mike look like? Did he have wings? (How many angels can really dance on the point of a needle?) How do you know he was a man? One of the gargoyled leers as recently. Was he clothed or was he naked? Another one of the papas smiles ditto. They are having a grand time. One after another their faces come on the screen . . . close-ups filling the whole screen against flat gray and white backgrounds. Monotony. But the same monotony one finds in Bach’s music. Precise. Cruel. Relentless. First round over and Joan the winner.

The pace quickens. The plot here is of no moment. The bewildered Maid is beset by the holy brethren. Shut up in her cell surrounded by her tormentors the provercial cross appears to appease her mind. The Department of Intrigue and Fabrications (the most important department of any church) gets to work and Joan is again before her Judges. A forged letter from the French King, more questions and the eleventh commandment. “Thou shalt torture and maim all those who do not believe as the church believes. Amen” is put to work. The child is taunted and torn and tortured. The machines of the Inquisition show as much mercy as the followers of the Jewish carpenter. On the verge of death Joan is still adamant in her belief. Defeat of the church. The English commander is peeled. She must not die a natural death. That would be cheating law, order, statesmanship and his majesty the King—men hon’t expect the defeat he has suffered at the hands of the French—and the Passion of Joan. She is leched. Saved. The judges remind her of the stake. She makes her confession prompted by one of her inquisitors all the while—and is condemned to life imprisonment. In her cell. She repudiates her confession. Fear of the flames forced her to confess. She is burned at the stake. The burning. The mob. The charge of the British soldiers.

It is almost impossible to describe the remarkable direction, settings and photography of this great film. It is magnificent from start to finish. The acting by Falconetti, as Joan, is the finest piece of pantomime I have ever seen done by a woman on the screen. Not one of the Hollywood high-salaried actors now showing themselves before the American public could have come anywhere near this performance.

And: there was nothing to tell.

THE WEavers by Gerhart Hauptmann. Produced in Germany by Frederick Selznick. 55th Street Playhouse.

Hauptmann’s great play needs no introduction. This play certainly had something to say for its theme was true when it was written many years ago as it is today. Change the theme and the names of the characters and you have a play for today. The cruel police and Gastonia. The struggle of the weavers against their exploiters . . . their terrible misery . . . the heartlessness of their oppressors . . . the cruelty of the police, and you have a play of our own day and hour and struggle.


The “passion” of Saint Joan or of Saint Ludmilla or of Saint Mrs. Murphy’s Cow never did play havoc with my emotions in spite of the fact that I hate to see any human being suffer—even historical human beings. Somehow these saintly martyrs for whom high, medium and low masses are always sung to the accompaniment of clinking coins taken from poor and frightened humanity lose their saintliness when you remember that their lives were short (they always die young you know) and since the spite of the fact that I hate to see any human being suffer—even shudder. And Broadway they say is crowding ’em in. But this . . . Murders, Trials, Shadowy Figures hiding under your seat and of poor butlers being accused by the District Attorney.
Breakfast—

Lithograph by Louis Lozowick.
Breakfast—

Lithograph by Louis Lozowick.
But something better is expected from Germany especially when you consider the fine things they have done up to now. Perhaps the fact that American movie trusts bought up their best directors and actors has something to do with the poor showing of this film. Whatever it is this film is nothing to sing about. It is neither proletarian faithful nor good. It is produced and directed like Scaramouche or The Waltz Dream.

There was something to tell here but they just didn’t.


Rumor whispered in my ear that this was a bad, very bad film. Way below the standards set by Russian producers and directors. True, so far as the technique of films go this is not a great movie. It has no great “shots”. No big names, no grand names . . . photography and settings are passable.

But the content: against this simple story place all your romantic, heroic, “epic” affairs and be sure that before an audience of plain workers this picture will win out and do so without benefit of arguments about “montage,” art, acting and what not. And all because of the story. The story of a race held in bondage by the terrible forces of Czardom trying to free itself from the yoke. The old sit in their little huts and pray; the young are out stirring up the people. The Governor holds the threat of a pogrom over their heads. Whichever way they move there is danger. How to breathe? How to live? To the rich Jews: graft paid to the powers who hold their lives in their hands. Well covered roofs . . . comforts . . . servants . . . security. To the workers: poverty, hunger, leaky roofs and the lash. But the will to fight, to carry on regardless of the pain, the almost insurmountable task is the moving force . . . The governor is shot. The young worker is hung.

There is nothing fancy about the class struggle . . . no perfume, no jade, no frills, no romance (as we know Romance). Whether its tale is told in verse, the theatre, film, painting, music it is always real and uncompromising. In the production of The Weavers it is diluted, scented, made up. In Seeds of Freedom it is cold, brutal, painful. It forces you to remember the past of the class struggle and reminds you of the present and the future. A fragment of revolutionary history written with memories still fresh in our minds: 1905 is not so long ago. Sacco-Vanzetti is not so long ago. Frank Little is not so long ago. Gastonia is today.

We are living history. We began living when the first slave raised his fist and his voice against the master. Our story is told as we go along and make history.

This film is dedicated to the memory of the heroic young worker who removed the minion of the czar from this long suffering earth.

Movie for Sweatshop Girls

A gallant sheik upon his potent steed
Went lightly over dunes at darling speed.
Against his hairy breast he bore along
A western virgin supple like a song—

Beautiful as an hour,
Redolent as a rose.

When by a brown seductive hand
'Tis c-c-crushed beneath the nose!
A willing captive yet an artful one,
She feigned to fight the bold bad desert son,

The sleek and handsome, hot, Sahara hon;
For she was tired of humdrum city days,
Of western lassies—all the western ways.

But the sheik!
The wealthy, titled sheik!
Hot dog!

Snack! . . .
Then came the dawn.

H. H. LEWIS.
STRAUSS SCHOOL OF THE DANCE
Sara Mildred Strauss, Director
Beginners, advanced and recreational classes
Concert Group
Studio 825 Carnegie Hall — New York

After years spent in shacks and camps, far from the subways and streetcars and fifteen-cent flops and "main stems" of cities, the bunkhouse man acquires certain peculiarities that differentiate him from a migratory worker of any other class. Not in clothes alone is he different, but in his reaction to "civilized" life. Due to the enforced isolation, with a concomitant lack of women, liquor, and, in general, normal living conditions, he becomes, very often, an animal with perverted and magnified sexual impulses, naive, credulous, an easy mark for unscrupulous "madames" and "piggers." The camps are usually isolated, with no facilities for recreation and no place to go but into the bunkhouse, with its rafters heavy with steaming socks and vermin-infested underwear and sweatstained shirts. The monotony, combined with abominable machinery and other demoralizing agents, the conditions are rapidly falling back to the pre-war level.

The bunkhouse man is, above all, a migratory and seasonally occupied laborer. He may be seen in any large city in the north-west with his packmack and mackinaw pants and high boots studying the sharkboards for the latest bulletins. He "chips" from point to point. In Duluth and Minneapolis his numbers are legion. He is a restless and bewildered floater. Border towns in northern Minnesota have hundreds of respectable businessmen who have made their starts from the bunkhouse men on one of their periodic sweeps. It is no uncommon sight, even under prohibition, to see a "hacker" enter a blindpig noisily, slapping the surfaced in explosive amiability, and calling on all "wallflowers" to belly to the bar. After a few "shots" of rotgut thrown into a stomach unused to alcohol, he becomes more childlike than ever. His three or four month's stake is thrown on the floor. The bartender pockets the bulk of the stake and charges excessively for supplies as well, and a bunkhouse man quitting before the "cut" is completed, and forced to depend on the company's camps on his long trek back to the cities for food and shelter, is mercilessly over-charged.

His ointments to ameliorate the condition of these men are not potent. He believes in respectable organizations. The splendid preliminary work of the I.W.W. he dismisses with impatience. On page 272 he has this to say of the O.B.U.: "While the I.W.W. was little in evidence in work-groups along the National Transcontinental, yet its counterpart, the One Big Union, which a few years later reared its head in the mines and logging camps of western Canada, and hissed its venom in the streets of Winnipeg, in June, 1919, was a direct product in part of the neglect of the navy and other workers in the camps of Canada."

His repeated reiteration that his intention is not to paint a black picture of contractors and managers of railway systems (largely responsible for the conditions that prevailed during the time of his survey) is irritating. After a particularly revealing description of a case, which unavoidably paints the "big boy" in a very bad color, he hastens to add, time and time again, that he has nothing against the men directly responsible for the conditions he describes. Through the chaff, however, the value of his book is apparent. There is no better book, so far as I know, on the bunkhouse man, with particular emphasis on railway construction gangs, than the present book.

JOSEPH KALAR.
Money For Love, by Josephine Herbst. Coward McCann. $2.50.

In her second novel, Josephine Herbst strips her vocabulary to fighting trim and goes for poor lost middle western human nature with a kind of cold detached ferocity that makes my hair rise. When she has finished, I am inclined to cry, “Better never to have been born if this were all!” yet while I would like to argue with her on the grounds that I never met any people quite like this, I have to admit they do exist, for she has created them. Without apologies or explanations, without pity, Miss Herbst states the case of a set of young, half-endowed, once-hopeful men and women who have to admit they do exist, for she has created them. Without concerting calmness on the part of the author, you will be tempted almost to believe that nothing much is happening. At the end, and this is not a happy ending, you realize that a miniature drama of crime, with blackmail, adultery, and a half dozen cross plots of betrayal, has been played to its logical end of frustration for each of the confused, self-engrossed plotters. You see, they are all really such nice young people—or would have been if only they had not all needed money so badly. All of them are presumably in good health, they have youth and good looks, they come from sound decent God-fearing middle western families, and each one is intelligent enough to have made a start in such specialized professions as chemistry, medicine, and the theatre, but none of them know how to go about getting the money they need to finish with.

They meet up in New York and form one of those aimless, accidental group associations, and get involved gradually in each others affairs, which they confide in monosyllabic phrases in blind pigs over beer and synthetic whisky. Each one wishes he were somewhere else, or with some one else, or could get along a little more smoothly with the others, but this is impossible, because they are all scared, and distrust one another, with rather good reason, as it turns out. They are not really criminals, they are young people determined to live according to the code they half-believe in: Love is so much tripe and honor is a romantic word, and what it takes to get on in this world is money . . . My God, where to get it? For they know nothing of finance, economics, they have no inheritance to look forward to, and when they work they do not earn enough. So in their weakness they are cruel, and commit unpardonable petty crimes against each other continually, and they blunder around until you want to shake them.

Harriet, the most living creature of them all, is an actress on the road to Broadway success, but her real vocation is love, and her true ambition—a perfectly womanly one, not to be despised—is to be successful with men. Alas in her race for sophistication she attempts to take a married man away from his wife. This man, made up of “obscene timidity,” a yearning for extra-marital adventure during his wife’s recurring seasons of gestation, and a grand faith in conventional bourgeois morals, is the only one who plays double and wins. He betrays his wife to his mistress and his mistress to his wife, profiting by the emotional vanity of both, and comes out even. He is the only one who does.

Harriet, having failed with him, and failed in the theatre because of the unhappiness she suffered through him, blackmails him for $5000 in order to help her present lover, who wants to study medicine in Vienna. He sends her forty dollars. There follows a dreadful little struggle between them, and she succeeds, after a humiliating episode, in wringing $1000 from him. There remains only to bind her present lover, who is half in love with another girl. I have the feeling that the only true satisfaction Harriet got out of the whole affair was her pretty new hat, the first buy with her blood-money. No one could call her a victor.

The others are not in much better case, but we won’t go into that.

The story, is nothing much, and these people are less than nothing, but they are terrible in their nothingness, and you observe them finally with the most acute sensations of pity and horror because they are like fishes trapped in an aquarium, swimming round and round . . . What good would it do them to have money? Suppose they did work at their professions, where would they end? What if they do so-to-speak fall in love? Even their few sexual
advantages are half-hearted, bleak, joyless. The maternal Else, wife of Harriet's former lover, is only a Harriet who married young. It is a poor, faithless, worthless marriage, but it is hers, and so she accepts all indignities and has her complacent little moments of triumph, forgiving her husband his tasteless escapades. Not much more interesting in the book than they were before, or could be again. They are fascinating in a fearful way, because a good artist, perfectly in command of her method, has for her own mysterious reasons chosen to assemble them: her lack of human pity is her own business. She has made a fine job of destruction. What, precisely, is she trying to kill?

KATHERINE ANNE PORTER.

Improving Humanity

Sterilization for Human Betterment, A Summary of Results of 6,000 Operations in California, 1909-1929, by E. S. Gosney and Paul Popene. The Macmillan Co. $2.00.

The authors advocate legal and compulsory sterilization in the male by vasectomy, (a small, easy, convenient operation) and in the female by tying and cutting the tubes, (a deeper, more dangerous surgical intervention) in abnormal individuals, criminals, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insane, insan...
The Non-Believers

The Story of Religious Controversy, by Joseph McCabe. The Stradford Company. $5.00.

Infidels and Heretics: An Agnostic's Anthology, by Clarence Darrow and Wallace Rice. The Stradford Company. $3.00.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, religion lost its significance for intellectually critical, informed people, except as an object of investigation as a cultural survival and as an aspect of psychopathic behavior. For astronomy had dispensed with heaven and shown the insignificance of the earth which is, in religions, the central feature of creation. Chemistry had made organic products from inorganic materials eliminating the supernatural origin of life. Physiology had advanced far enough to show that life processes are chemical and to be able to change the sex of lower animals by mechanical means. Geology had extended the age of the earth and of man into the remote past which showed that there was sufficient time for the differentiation of the species. Comparative anatomy and embryology had revealed the kinship of all animal life and its progressive development into more complex forms from the lowly amoeba to the whale (in some respects more highly developed than man) which evolutionary doctrine dispelled the religious fallacy of the special creation of man. Psychology dismissed the soul as completely untenable in the light of experimental evidence and with the soul went immortality. Psychiatry threw light on the religious behavior of adolescents and of adults during crises, and showed the psychopathic origins of the visions upon which most religions are founded. Revolutionary sociologists and historians showed how religious institutions functioned exposing the wide-spread corrupt use of their power and revealing the debasing effect they have had upon the masses. The claims and pretenses of religion collapsed before the glaring light of irrefutable proof.

But a social institution like religion does not surrender without a struggle. Its vested interests are great and its alignment with ruling capitalism too intimate to be forced to retreat before scientific shrapnel. By intrigue and propaganda, the church has condemned science and denounced the critics of the church as charlatans; by pressure on political and educational institutions, they prevent the diffusion of scientific knowledge. There are laws against blasphemy in sixteen of the United States and most of the State Universities, not to mention the grade and high-schools, are dominated by church-going regents to whom loud-speaking ministers of the gospel dictate policies. The ignorant obscurantists of the pulpit are abetted by weak sisters among the scientists like Osborn and Millikan who prate about there being no conflict between religion and science. Recently Whitehead and Eddington have contributed their mite to reaction by insinuating that religion is now vindicated because certain older scientific approaches must be abandoned in the light of new developments, but their arguments fall miserably. The majority of scientists and learned laymen, satisfied with their own personal emancipation from the thraldom of religion, lack the courage to combat the church lest they be discredited by the unscrupulous abuse of “men of God.”

The book under review has serious defects and deficiencies. The author’s anthropology is shallow; his psychology not up to modern standards; in the chapters on biblical criticism, he shows no knowledge of the literature of the last twenty years; one searches in vain throughout the volume for a reference to a book less than five years old, although the more recent data forcefully corroborates his contentions. The fact is that McCabe seems to be oblivious to contemporary developments. This is most glaringly brought out in his failure to show the importance of the struggle against religion in the Soviet Union, where government policy is actively anti-religious and a sincere attempt is being made to regulate human behavior by rational scientific principles rather than by the taboos and superstitious sanctions of religion. The author writes more in the spirit of Voltaire than of Lenin.

Infidels and Heretics which purports to be the reading of a life-time of the two collaborators is no great shakes. The collection of prosaic poetry is peculiarly heterogeneous and is oddly chosen and arranged. From the selections, one gathers that the heresies of the authors of the anthology are highly respectable.

BENNETT STEVENS.
Editor New Masses:—

I have your very interesting letter about your plans for Workers' Art. I am especially interested in the problem of the drama and moving pictures having the working class point of view. I have a mass of material of this sort which is completely barred from both stage and screen, and for no reason at all except its Socialist content. This is something which has been explicitly stated to me, over and over again in the course of the past twenty-five years, by the recognized leaders and masters of capitalist drama and screen. Not less than a hundred times in my life I have been approached by these great ones with a proposition to do some work for them—always on condition that I would "leave out the Socialism". Not less than two score times they have gone so far as to sign contracts with me, and either they have broken the contracts when they got the Socialism, or they have set to work to undo my efforts, thus forcing me to break with them. There will never be in America radical drama or moving pictures, until the workers have become sufficiently intelligent and sufficiently organized to have their own machinery of production and distribution.

I want to help them all I can, and I don't want to stop with just saying a blessing. I have printed most of my plays at my own expense, in an effort to have them available for the very purpose which your new movement envisages. Let me say, therefore, that I have a group of plays available, which I will send free of charge to any workers' organizations which care to produce them free of charge. The titles of the plays are, Singing Jailbirds, Hell, Bill Porter, The Pot-Boiler, The Second-Story Man, The Nature Woman, Prince Hagen, The Machine. In addition to the above, I have just made a dramatization of my novel Oil. Despite the fact that this novel has been a best seller in the United States, Great Britain, and Germany, and has been translated and published in a dozen countries, I am finding it impossible to interest any capitalist producer in this play. If I cannot do anything else with it, I will have it printed uniform with the other plays, and await my time.

The same statement applies to moving pictures based upon my novels and plays. The Russians have made a moving picture out of Jomminie Higgins, and a print of it is now in New York in the hands of the Russian Amkino; but if they have been able to do anything with it I have not yet heard the news, and I doubt if it will ever be shown to any American audience until the workers take the job of getting the audience together.

As for the three cases in which works of mine were made into moving pictures in America, my experiences were as follows:

(1) The Jungle was very well done, but the firm went into bankruptcy, got no money, and very few people saw the film.

(2) An unpublished play having a Socialist theme was purchased for a small cash price, and turned into a story about a lost will.

(3) The Moneychangers, which tells how the elder J. P. Morgan caused the panic of 1907, was purchased for a small price, and turned into a story of the drug traffic in Chinatown.

I am living in the hope that the next twenty-five years of my dealings with the drama and movies may be better than the last twenty-five.

Yours for Socialism,

UPTON SINCLAIR.

Dear Comrades:—

Thanks very much for dealing so promptly with my letter. Paul Peters has sent me the MS of Hallelujah I'm a Bum which is certainly very fine indeed. I'm having it copied with a view to doing it later this season.

I was very interested to see that things are moving in New York in the workers' drama line. New Masses will no doubt be a very powerful weapon in building the organization.

You have had (and published, thanks!) our report on last season's work. So I won't discuss past history. Except to say two things. That our experience has shown that too much emphasis cannot be placed on the propaganda side of performances. This is the principle which will keep workers groups on the right road, away from the morass of dilletanteism which is the biggest danger they have to face. Second; while we have steadily concentrated on propaganda plays, we have the feeling that we may have been a bit too "highbrow" in the past. We face the fact that our programme of 4 one-act plays has definitely not been the success with the workers clubs that The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists is.

Consequently we are endeavoring to get out a programme which will be the propaganda equivalent of the familiar music-hall or vaudeville show. Parodies on popular songs, knock-about, dramatic monologues, choruses, quick-change artist, etc., etc., all with the proletarian "twist" to make them bite. The advantages of a programme such as this from a purely practical point of view are that a larger number of comrades can be usefully employed, and that individual turns can be detached for presentation at minor events such as socials and dances. We are aiming at producing a show which will interest the least class-conscious worker, and at the same time bombard him with our ideas in such a way that he'll find himself laughing with us at his boss and his pet politician.

Certainly we have found that the best way to interest a work-
Elevated Tracks—From a movie of New York by Oscar Fischer—Spartacus Film League.
ing-class audience is to depict on the stage their own lives, experiences, and language. A point that is often overlooked by working-class dramatists is the question of the psychological effect of the concluding passages of any play. Too often the "peroration", so to speak, of a play is depressing and sends the audience home on the lowest note of the evening.

This comes of too rigid realism. Death, defeat and destruction of homes are not the right notes to end a proletarian play upon.

We know that the working-class is doomed to defeat in many struggles, until the final victory is accomplished. But we must show that out of struggle and apparent defeat new weapons are being forged and minds made clear, and on this strong confident note must the curtain fall.

I am trying to get together a few subscribers for the New MASSES.

London, England

All the best, yours fraternally,

H. THOMAS,

(Hackney Group-Workers' Theatre Movement)

Dear Friends:

In addition to relief in economic struggles and natural catastrophes the W.I.R. is concerned with the welfare of workers' children. It has established its own camps wherever possible and has given vacations to working-class children at a minimum cost taking care as well of the children of the unemployed, locked out and those on strike—without cost and without the odor of charity.

But its function does not stop there. It realizes that war is fought with many and varied weapons. Capitalism leaves nothing unsaid, untold or unsung if it can use it to its advantage.

Theatres, films, magazines, clubs for this and that, camps, choruses, gymnasiums,—any activity which will help it maintain itself in power is exploited. The W.I.R. aims to win away those workers who have had to depend upon the above functions thru capitalist institutions for their recreational and cultural needs.

It has organized a Department of Cultural Activities under the direction of Em Jo Basshe, director and playwright. This department will attempt to provide for the worker and his children a field of activity which will encompass the sorely needed educational, dramatic, artistic and physical culture of a proletarian nature.

And here is where we begin:

Organized and functioning: W.I.R. Scout Camps. Thirteen such camps were running last summer. We plan to increase this number next year and add to the facilities now existing.

Brass band now rehearsing and studying under a leader. A special class for beginners. Rehearsals every Tuesday evening at 8.

In process of formations:

A chorus (men and women) in English.

Physical culture training groups.

A camera and film club and school.

A music, art and dancing school.

Children's theatre. (A part of this theatre will be a marionette and puppet studio).

A workers' theatre. (Including a studio to teach acting, production of plays, direction, stage management and playwriting)

A library where music, plays, reproductions of work of art, etc., springing from the revolutionary struggle will always be on file and on exhibition.

A bureau to collect and exchange films and photographs from all over the world. (A department to distribute these films).

The production of films depicting the life of the workers and their struggle to free themselves from the yoke of capitalism.

A magazine to deal with these varied functions.

These activities are not limited to New York City or its environs. The W.I.R. will gladly help form branches of the above for any organization under the auspices of the Department of Cultural Activities.

For information address: Room 512, 848 Broadway, New York City. Phone: Algonquin 8048.

Comrade Gold:

The members of our group read your call in the September New MASSES, and felt that you were undertaking a most important task.

Our dramatic group, called the "Vanguard" was organized last winter by the Communist Youth League of Philadelphia. We functioned as a separate organization for the purpose of drawing young workers and students to the Communist movement; and also in order to raise funds for militant workers' organizations, such as the International Labor Defense.

Our membership list approximated fifty persons. About half or even less attended rehearsals.

We were a dues paying organization. Thirty-five cents per month was our tax. Business meetings were held very rarely, once in every four weeks and those who had not been chosen to participate in the play then in preparation did not attend as a rule. Most of the work was done by a Production Committee, which consisted of stage manager, wardrobe manager, secretary, publicity agent, and two or three members of the group. One social evening was held during the season. One play was presented—we organized late in the season.

We were fortunate enough to have Jasper Deeter as our director. He liked our "material," but lamented the fact that we were unable to give undivided attention to the work of building a proletarian dramatic group.

This year we are faced with two principal difficulties:

1. the procuring of a director who sympathizes with our aims.

2. we must find plays, simple (but inspired) militant and still suitable for an embryonic but promising group.

The American movement should be producing lots of material. But it is not. Surely some of the Russian and German plays could be translated! That is our first suggestion to you.

Last year, after much search, two of our members wrote a three scene one-act play, which we produced. Our need provided the stimulus for the writing of this play. That was perhaps our most important function last year.

But for this season we have not yet found a play. We are not well enough organized for a play such as God of the Lightning. The excellent scene from Hallelujah, I'm A Bum by Paul Peters, which you printed some months ago, is not sufficient in itself. Give us simple plays (preferably one-act) and we are sure to build up a fine movement. We were poorly organized and yet response was forthcoming from all quarters. Everyone wants to act; and selling tickets for amateur dramatics is the easiest job I know.

An immediate reply, containing suggestions, plays, or addresses for procuring plays, will be greatly appreciated.

If you like, I will send the play which we presented last year.

Comradely yours,

SOPHIA, FUMAN, Sec'y.


The radical artists and writers of New York have organized The John Reed Club. The group includes all creative workers in art, literature, sculpture, music, theatre and the movies.

About fifty members have joined. Temporary officers have been chosen. Committees are functioning. Clubrooms have been secured.

The purpose of the club is to bring closer all creative workers; to maintain contact with the American revolutionary labor movement.

In cooperation with workers' groups and cultural organizations discussions, literary evenings, exhibits will be organized.

The organization will be national in scope. Other sections will be organized throughout the country.

For the first time a group of socially conscious creative workers has been organized in America to compare with existing groups in Europe.

Steps have been taken to make immediate contact with existing proletarian groups of writers, artists and all creative workers in France, Germany, Russia and Japan.

Further details as to program and activities will be announced soon. Sincerely,

New York, N. Y.

SECRETARY.
More Creative Writing!

New Masses:
I have nothing against “potential writers.” Recognizing the fact that a good 99% of the world’s writers are “potential,” it would be fatuous for me to condemn New Masses because it was giving voice to the aspirations of “potential writers.” I admire New Masses so much just because it has been friendly to the obscure and, as yet, semi articulate voices hidden in mines, textile mills, farms, sawmills, and lumber camps. There are more of these “potential writers” scattered over America: I want New Masses to reach them and bring them out into the open. They have really more to offer our purpose than the drawingroom scenes and in spite of all of their splendid contributions to New Masses and Liberator in the past notwithstanding, or a James Rorty who, suddenly becoming conscious of the blurring, crude, lumberjacks of the pen in his company, attacks New Masses in the Nation with oh such a damned superior air! The proletarian writers I particularly have in mind at this time are Ed. Falkowski and MartinRussak and Herman Spector: sufficient proof, I think, that a proletarian can write. My vague letter (which by the way was not intended for publication) in a previous New Masses could easily be misunderstood: what I meant, and still mean, is less manifestoes and more actually creative work! Several months ago New Masses was in danger of becoming undistinguishable from Books—and that is what I mean when I ask if New Masses is to be read by “potential writers”—coming to New Masses for the Hows and Whys of the writing game: I don’t mean that “potential writers” shouldn’t be permitted to “practice” in New Masses.

Weiss, in his plea for a more utilitarian poetry, over-estimates the value of poetry in the revolutionary movement. He forgets that the great mass of proletarians were subjected to “poetry study” in their school days, and carry with them a congenital “fear” of poetry. If Joe Hill’s work has caught the fancy of working-stiffs, it is not because it is poetry, but because it is sung. I am willing to bet that the songs of Joe Hill were introduced to the workers not in printed form but in song—or to say it another way, I feel certain that the great majority of the workers had sung “Pie in the Sky” before they ever read it. There is room for a magazine such as Mr. Clifford wants, that could publish purely utilitarian poetry. And publish as well, articles on Communist theory written in plain direct English—not in the involved terminology now the bane of the Communist movement. But let us keep New Masses open for experiment—there is room in it both for Herman Spector and H. H. Lewis, room, that is, both for the fine experimental work of Spector and the more traditional work of H. H. Lewis.

(By Himself)

H. H. Lewis (Oswald pictured before becoming the Bald). 28 years old. Residence: a farm at Cape Girardeau, Missouri. Former mission stuff and jungle buzzard. Town trade, dishwashing; country specialty, milking Missouri cows; hobby, writing poesie for New Masses. His creed: to make words rhyme and syllables come in exact order, to poetically exalt the proletariat out of its misery. His burden: about 2800 lines of radical jingles ready for book publication.

IN THIS ISSUE

Margaret Larkin—has contributed to the Nation, Opportunity, and many other publications. For the past month she has been in the South covering the Gastonia Trial for the press and collecting songs of the Tennessee mill folk.

Paul Peters—is now working in the steel mills of Pittsburgh. He writes: “If I’m not stuck with a job that makes me dog-tired I’ll write again . . . a little one-act play and a funny little musical-comedy for workers’ groups: a burlesque on cops, judges, etc.—not much plot, mostly a series of funny songs.”

I. Klein—is contributing editor of New Masses.

Katherine Anne Porter—is author of The Devil and Cotton Mather just published.

Scott Nearing—is at work on another book now. He has just written an unusual story “The Color Line in Art” to appear in the next issue.

Dr. Liber—a frequent contributor to New Masses and labor publications is author of As A Doctor Sees It and other books.
(By Himself)
NEW MASSES ABROAD

Stories and articles in recent issues of the New Masses are being widely reprinted in Europe. "Generals Die in Bed" by Chas. Yale Harrison appeared in Workers Life in England, Rothke Fahne, Berlin, and in other German and Austrian publications. "East Side Memoirs" by Paul Peters ("The Spanish Jitzi"), by Michael Gold ("East Side Memoirs") and others, as well as drawings by Gropper, Gellert, Dehn, Lozowick have been reprinted in Monde, France and in the Moscow press and many Russian literary publications. The Proletarian Writers League of Germany (including Kurt Klaeber, Ludwig Renn, Piscator and others) are making monthly translations of New Masses material for a weekly literary service, issued to the labor and revolutionary press of Germany. New Masses material appears in current issues of Linkakurwe, newly issued magazine of the League.

The Banner, organ of the revolutionary writers and artists league of Japan is reprinting New Masses stories.

An exhibition of Paintings, lithographs, drawings by Louis Lozowick will be shown at the Wayhe Gallery, New York, October 28 to November 9.


State of New York:
County of New York.

Before me, a Notary in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Walt C. M. Rosenthall, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of the New Masses, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above space, that the Act of Congress of Aug. 24, 1912, required by the Act of Congress of Aug. 24, 1912, embodied in section 411, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor and business managers are:

Publisher New Masses, Inc. 112 East 19th St., New York City; Editor, Michael Gold, 112 East 19th Street, New York City; Managing Editor, Walt C. M. Rosenthall, 112 East 19th Street, New York City.

Business Manager: none.

2. That the owner is: The American Fund for Public Service, 2 West 13th St., New York City; James Webbonson, President; L. L. W. Dunn, Sec'y, 2 West 13th St., New York City; Robert W. Dunn, Sec'y, 2 West 13th St., New York City; Morris L. Ernst, Treas., 2 West 13th St., New York City.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are:

4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, containing not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the two paragraphs contain true statements of (a) the amount and character of all funds or other property and (b) the names of all persons who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, but who hold stock and securities, in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and that this affidavit is not required to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as stated by him.

WALT CARMON, Managing Editor
Sworn to and subscribed before me this 14th day of October, 1929.
Max Kitzes, Notary Public.
My commission expires March 30, 1930.

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