

PACIFIC WEEKLY

A WESTERN JOURNAL OF FACT AND OPINION

GIFT TO CARROLL LEWIS
NOVEMBER 16, 1936

HOUSING BY TRAILER

ELVAR WAYNE

BIRD AND BOTTLE

NATHANAEL WEST

A GLASS WORKER DIES

TOM KROMER

STEFFENS AND WE

PETER QUINCE

MIDWEST WRITERS' CONGRESS

MERIDEL LE SUEUR

A LETTER TO GALKOVITCH

ALEXANDER KAUN

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PACIFIC WEEKLY

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Made up by Union Labor

NOTES AND COMMENT

News of the week: No change on the waterfront . . . Several times Admiral Harry G. Hamlet has arranged the hearings on the "situation," and several times these have been postponed. Special Administration trouble-shooter Edward F. McGrady meanwhile has stated that it appears the ship-owners insist on keeping to a policy of doing nothing at all. ("Shipowners Blocking New Dock Peace Efforts says McGrady" runs a headline in a Republican newspaper.) They would like to do something, but the election has spoiled more plans than one. If Hearst won't cry "Red" any more in every strike situation (see comment below) the employers have lost one of their biggest cards . . . The beautiful Bay bridge is finished and will be opened with great celebration this week . . . and all the tied-up ships will be plainly visible.

An interesting sidelight on local election fights is the similarity of the "dirty" tactics used by Republicans. Los Angeles, where Buron Fitts (once a reform district attorney) ran for re-election against Harlan G. Palmer, publisher of the Hollywood Citizen-News is a typical example. Every kind of charge was brought against Palmer's private life and all the old gags from mistresses and illegitimate children to unlawful jockeying with the law in his legal practice . . . The Fitts interests spent a cold \$2,000,000 while Palmer's election expenses were about \$4000 . . . Fitts spent \$54,000 alone on bringing one woman from the Middle West to institute court action against Palmer for alleged malpractice. The case was thrown out of court, but the publicity was attained. It is

computed that every vote for Fitts cost \$4.00 while Palmer votes came to one cent apiece. Miscounts galore are being reported (one precinct counting 10,000 Fitts votes instead of 100!) and the "mistakes" are all in the Fitts interest. Palmer would neither write about the campaign in his newspaper nor make election speeches. Yet with all these handicaps, the Fitts machine has apparently so disgusted people that the mere thought of even a "reform" District Attorney has brought voters flocking on the side of "good government."

We quote from *The Pacific Reporter*:

"THE election has shown one thing conclusively, and that is, that no alien theory is necessary to realize the popular ideal in this country. All that is needed is a vigorous application of fundamental democracy and a free exercise of American rights and liberties—"

This was part of a wire William Randolph Hearst sent to the staff of the *Guild Daily* in Seattle which has been demonstrating for three months that no alien theory is necessary to realize the popular ideal in this country and that all that is needed is a vigorous application of fundamental democracy and a free exercise of American rights.

When Seattle Guilders began demonstrating this theory that Mr. Hearst now advocates, Mr. Hearst had a lot to say about Beck-Bridges-Roosevelt-Moscow, all of which he apparently identified in one horrible red mass.

Has he changed his mind? Is he now telling the Seattle Guilders the Guild was right and Hearst wrong? Is there any connection between Mr. Hearst's astonishing wire to the Guild and the new rule on Hearst papers that red-baiting is out, that "red" is to be used only in reference to a known member of the Communist Party, and "radical" only in "quotes"? Have the strike, and the election and the nationwide antipathy for Hearst papers—sshhh!—taught an old dog new tricks?"

AND other Guild news: W. N. Burkhardt, editor of the *San Francisco News*, informed the N.C.N.G. he would accept the statement of terms worked out by him, the Guild negotiating committee, and Sam Kagel of the Pacific Coast Labor Bureau. A majority of the News Chapters have already cast ballots accepting the agreement.

The agreement provides for a minimum wage scale ranging from \$20 a week for beginners to \$50 for employees with five years experience; the five-day, 40-hour week; equivalent time off for overtime; paid vacations; dismissal pay.

Salaries of many staff members will be substantially raised by this agreement, the increase in one instance amounting to \$20 a week; in another, \$12.50.

This is the first agreement to be reached in the West between the Guild and a publisher. It was the result of long and painstaking preparation. The Guild congratulates the liberal Scripps-Howard *News* on being the first paper West of the Rockies to give the Guild authentic recognition and guarantee a fair pay schedule. That the Guild is distinctly successful in some of its work is shown in the case of Adelaide Fielding, leader in the young Santa Monica Guild, who was fired recently, and told she could "choose between the Guild and her job." She wired the N.C.N.G. The N.C.N.G. got busy on the telegraph wires rallying support from Southern

California labor and sending a protest against this flagrant violation of federal law to the Santa Monica Outlook.

Adelaide Fielding was reinstated.

DEMOCRACY IN SPAIN

THREE persons from Spain—a Catholic priest, a noted woman artist and writer, and an eminent statesman—are in California to speak in defense of the democratic government of Spain and explain the Spanish situation to the American people.

In an interview at the time of their arrival in New York, the priest, Father Luis Sarasola, stated that he was amazed at the currency in America of atrocity stories of the church-burning and priest-slaying variety. When he visited a New York store a clerk, seeing his clerical garb and hearing he was from Spain, said to the amazed priest:

"How in the world did you ever manage to escape Spain alive?"

The other two Spanish visitors are Isabel de Palencia, artist, writer, and prominent woman leader of Spain who is a noted authority on modern Spanish painting, and Marcelino Domingo, who has held various portfolios in the republican government and was one of its founders.

The delegation speaks on November 13 at the Women's City Club, San Francisco, on Saturday afternoon in Sunnyvale, and on Saturday evening in Redwood City. There will be large mass meetings in San Francisco and in Oakland on Sunday. On November 17 the visitors speak in the Shrine Auditorium at Los Angeles.

FASCIST TERROR KNOWS NO BOUNDS

FASCISM never rests in the pursuit of its opponents who have left their homeland, seeking asylum in a foreign country.

Thus, last month, two Nazi agents, Heinrich Mueller and Gustav Roemer, were convicted and sentenced to jail terms by a Swiss court for attempting to kidnap Dr. Heinrich Bruening, leader of the German Catholic Centrist Party and former Chancellor of the Reich. The Nazis confessed they aimed to take Dr. Bruening back to Germany for liquidation.

Just as outrageous as the activities of Nazi agents in foreign countries is the co-operation among Fascists of different countries. One phase of this co-operation is to be observed in the action of the Portuguese government which has to date returned 500 Spanish Loyalist refugees. All 500 were murdered after being handed over to the Spanish Fascists.

In addition, 77 Spanish Loyalist militiamen have been imprisoned in a concentration camp at Braganca, Portugal, a short distance from the Spanish border. These 77 are seriously threatened with the same fate which has befallen their 500 comrades and three other militiamen originally interned at Braganca but returned to Spain and murdered.

At the outbreak of the civil war many German Jewish refugees found themselves stranded in Spain. "Saved" by official refugee transports the majority were thrown into Nazi concentration camps upon their arrival back in Germany.

Heinz Kraschutzki, an ex-lieutenant in the Imperial Fleet and former editor-in-chief of the pacifist review, "The Other

Germany," has been murdered by the Spanish Fascists at Palma de Majorca. Kraschutzki was arrested with ten other anti-Nazi refugees living on Majorca. He was removed to a prison cell and later shot. The other ten refugees were handed over to the Nazi authorities, embarking on the German warship, "Gneisenau," enroute for Hamburg, where they were given over to the Gestapo.

Previously reported was the story of the German refugee colony on Iviza, one of the Balearic islands. When the Spanish Fascists temporarily occupied the island in July the refugees were arrested. A German battleship put into the harbor to "rescue" them and the anti-Fascists were handed over to a local Nazi agent, von Wenckstern, who had them transferred to the German ship. At least five were kidnapped in this way, among them Hans Putkamer, former editor of the Frankfurt *Volksstimme* and former Reichsbanner leader. Putkamer, it is reported, was no longer a German citizen, and was rightfully in possession of a passport of a foreign country.

At its recent session the League of Nations turned down a request that it "direct an energetic protest to the German government in order to achieve a change in the policy which represents a source of unrest and disturbance for the whole world, and a threat to the legitimate interests of the states affected by the immigration of German refugees." Its work is technical, not political, said the League, hoping still that it could convince Germany to rejoin as a member-State.

The International Bureau for Right of Asylum and Aid to Political Refugees, from its International Office in Paris, has led the fight in stimulating public opinion in the democratic states of the world to bring pressure on the German and Portuguese governments to put an end to this Fascist collaboration in violation of international law and the accepted principles of right of asylum.

The International Office has also petitioned the League High Commissioner for German Refugees, Sir Neill Malcolm, to intervene with the Nazi government on behalf of the refugees.

The fight to achieve right of asylum for anti-Fascist refugees stands in the forefront of the fight to maintain civil liberties and democratic rights in the present-day world.

ABNER GREEN

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MIDWEST WRITERS' CONFERENCE

MERIDEL LE SUEUR

THE Conference held in Chicago last Spring established a Federation of Arts and Professions of the Midwest. The function of the Federation is: 1. To break down the isolation of midwestern writers, artists, and professional people by forming circulatory groups, and by communal action creatively and defensively. 2. To further break off dependence upon the publishing East by backing co-operatively the Publication Committee which has already gotten out its first book "This My Brother" by John Rood, and which will get out regularly anthologies of poetry, short stories, novels and the works of artists and also of technical writers. To members of the federation these books will be half price and will be sold in any case as cheaply as possible. 3. To back *Midwest*, a Review, first issue already out, as organ of expression for these groups in the Middle West.

The conference showed the terrible isolation of artists, writers, and professional people. For example at the same time as the conference Miss Josephine Johnson was arrested for her investigation of the sharecropper situation and it was not known to any of us until we read the Eastern papers; and it was too apparent that we had no organization to make any sort of concerted protest, or form any protection for one of our own craft. This also was brought home to us in various other instances of censorship in which the artist and writer was forced to fight the combined and awakening forces of Fascism alone and single-handed—which now is no fight at all, or at best a quixotic one.

These and many other instances made it apparent that it was no task of ours simply to leave each other and return to our isolation and the obscure dangers that surrounded us in that isolation, or to get out a pure and literary magazine.

Other factors also bore on the side of this new orientation. The psychic illness, the personal animosities, the purely individualistic approach to our work showed itself in a very tawdry fabric of personality, social orientation, and made it seem that the writers and artists would grow in better soil if more closely, organically, and creatively linked to each other in mutual creation and protection.

Also the spurious regionalism of the "little" magazine showed up, the necessity of the artist to establish some roots not, however, in past history or reactionary regionalism; rather what we wanted was a regionalism of class roots, class history. Our writers and artists isolated from the strong current in this direction in the East, felt the strong necessity to build that consciousness in our own region, to create stronger and richer roots for the growth of the creative personality, a rich and wide audience—also for the artist who is breaking away from the traditional support of the institutions and for the writer who is breaking away from the traditional middle class audience that has been his main support.

Most vital to correct, however, was the growing isolation in which the writer was being thrown by the growing forces of reaction, leaving him stranded dangerously alone. Very productive and exciting has been, since the conference, the growing alliance, mutual awareness and growth between known and unknown writers, between developed writers and young writers from farm, industry and city. Such a conference as our Midwestern Writers' Conference, if it does nothing else, creates an exciting body of communal thought

and growth, so that you feel not alone and stewing in your own juice, but attached to the growing body of thought of others, existing in the warmth of comradeship instead of in enmity and jealousy, spurred by quick and living communication with others.

Such conferences of writers and artists are the living glowing nuclei of a new life within the maggotty body of a social corpse.

SOVIETS AND ABORTION

THE scientific method is not customarily applied by society to its own social problems. Sociology, (the science of society) has generally been the province of the writers of text books. Rules governing social conduct have been made by those in authority with the view, first, to safeguarding that authority. Now, according to observers of the Soviet Union, we seem to be witnessing a change in this tradition and find the scientific method applied to social relations. There is a fact-finding committee for this and a fact-finding committee for that. What is more—laws are actually changed to meet the facts found.

In 1920, artificial abortion was made legal throughout the Soviet Union. Anyone with \$1.75 and for the asking could go to a reputable doctor and have a pregnancy terminated. On May 26th of this year the Central Executive Committee and the Central People's Health Committee of the Soviet Union published the draft of a new law prohibiting abortion except under conditions where the life or health of the woman is threatened. Now the Journal of the American Medical Association quotes an article by Bakht in a Russian periodical giving the reasons for this change. The conclusions of the medical profession were that artificial abortions were endangering the lives and health of large numbers of mothers throughout the Soviet Union. Their findings are summarized as follows:

- (1) Danger of perforation of the uterus—occurred in 0.01 to 1.11 per cent of cases; often fatal or followed by sacrifice of the uterus in a young woman.
- (2) Permanent damage to lining of the uterus leading to subsequent menstrual disturbance.
- (3) Trauma to cervix resulting in scars or complete closure—10.5 per cent of cases.
- (4) Postabortive fever from infection—40 to 50 per cent of cases.
- (5) Chronic pelvic infection was present in 12.8 per cent of a follow-up study of 1500 cases.
- (6) Disturbance in glandular balance—extent difficult to estimate.
- (7) Artificial abortion is an important causative factor in extra-uterine pregnancy.

The advocates of the bill stressed "the salutary effect the new bill will have on the relations of the sexes, on the irresponsible and frivolous attitude toward the sex problem and on the building of character in the growing generation."

The legislative bodies responsible for the bill asked the people for a free and fearless discussion of the proposed legislation. After a full hearing, the bill was passed, June 27th 1936.

R. A. KOCHER

HOUSING BY TRAILER

ELVAR WAYNE

AUTOMOBILE trailers are potentially a housing menace, and the fact that they are being produced in large numbers is evidence of a diseased social order unable to provide jobs and proper housing for its working population. Those workers who can afford them are buying or building trailers in an effort to escape high rents and slums. Some advocates of better housing and slum clearance are seeing in the recent development of automobile trailers a solution for housing people whose incomes are less than \$1200 a year.

A recent March of Time film exhibits contemporary developments in the trailer industry, reveals several models embodying ingenious designs, and suggests that these trailers might be the answer to a deplorable housing situation. A *Nation* article, "Resettlement by Trailer," by Ernestine Evans, August 15, 1936, grows lyrical over the thought that trailers may mean the emancipation of the working class from slums and landlords, and suggests that the Resettlement Administration experiment with these movable homes rather than subsistence homesteads and camps for workers.

The manufacture of luxury, or "yacht," trailers is assuming the proportions of big business. Factories are working twenty-four hour shifts turning out models which range in price from \$500 to \$5000. It is estimated that 300,000 units will be produced during the next year. Recent models resemble a small modern apartment in regard to furnishing and up-to-date equipment. They have everything from refrigeration to built-in toilets. Well-designed and appointed, constructed of fine wood or light alloy metals, these modern trailers are ideal for solving the housing problem on vacation tours where sleeping accommodations are bad or expensive. Hotel bills may be avoided, and a family of two or three persons can live in comparative comfort in the most desirable locations along the way.

Such trailers might be all right for short camping trips, but they were never designed for year-round living quarters, and like most luxuries they are meant for middle class consumption.

The main value of the automobile trailer would be to house migratory agricultural workers in warm climates. Industrial workers, however, are concentrated in sections of the country where year-round living in trailers is impossible. In some sections of the South and California, the automobile trailer might conceivably offer an escape from present wretched housing conditions for the migratory worker. Unfortunately, however, it is hard to imagine how migratory worker families, whose present annual incomes are generally less than \$500, could afford a trailer, even with cheap government loans. The low-priced mobile units are not built to withstand continuous usage for many years, and those of better construction are

simply out of reach, costing as much as a well built cottage. Furthermore, it takes an automobile in pretty good mechanical condition to haul a trailer weighing a ton or more around the country. Most automobiles owned by low-paid workers have difficulty in moving their own weight.

Thousands of American families since 1929 have been forced out of their homes and farms on to the open road. They migrate from city to city or from state to state in search of employment. Often with their last few dollars they purchased an old trailer or built a "house" on the chassis of their broken-down automobiles and started the great hejira to escape starvation. Thousands of them gravitated to California where the climate is generally suitable for all-year camping and where seasonal crops require nearly 200,000 migratory workers.

For the migratory worker in California automobile transportation is indispensable; he must move quickly from crop to crop, often at great distances. He may go as far north as Oregon and Washington for fruit picking or as far East as Arizona to chop cotton. If he has a house-car, the problem of living accommodations is greatly simplified, especially since migratory workers' camps are generally unfit for human habitation. Hundreds of agricultural workers in California already have trailers designed for living which are old, dilapidated, often home-made and notoriously lacking in comfort. One sees them along the highways or parked in roadside camps. Their numbers have been swelled by recent migrations of the dispossessed into the state from blighted areas in the Southwest.

Unfortunately many migratory workers with trailers have been stranded in "Hooverilles." They have been unable to find work; their car has broken down; or they have become disabled through accident or sickness. Some have been stranded so long that they have sold parts of their automobiles to buy food or other necessities, or their cars have become useless through exposure to the weather over a period of months, and now the trailer has become a permanent habitation.

In many of California's numerous "Hooverilles," trailers are to be found in significant numbers. Accurate statistics on the number of these trailers used by migratory workers for dwellings do not exist. In many "Hooverilles" about one-third of the families live in mobile housing units. The State Department of Motor Vehicles in 1935 registered over 95,000 trailers, but these figures do not specify housing trailers. It may be estimated conservatively, however, that at least 2000 families live in trailers all or the greater part of the year. In the vicinity of Sacramento live nearly 3000 persons in squalid "Hooverilles" along river banks, near dump heaps and swamps, and a recent survey showed that about one-fourth of these depression victims dwell in trailers or house-cars. Some of them have been there from three to five years.

The trailer dweller has some advantages over the average "Hooverville" inhabitant in the matter of choice of location. If this machine still functions he can move to a cleaner more segregated camp than a person without a portable dwelling. But even with this advantage of mobility, his movement is circumscribed and his location confined to certain areas, which are generally inhabited by other depression victims.

There is not much choice between present trailers used by workers and the average "Hooverville" shanty as suitable



living quarters. Generally the trailers are inhabited by families, whereas a majority of the shacks shelter single persons. Additional space can always be added to a shack, but a trailer cannot be enlarged, hence over-crowding is more peculiar to the latter than to the patchwork huts.

Many house-cars and trailers house from four to eight persons in less than one hundred square feet of floor space. The average dwelling on wheels is seldom more than fourteen feet by seven. Many workers' families who inhabit them have communicable diseases, and one often finds small children cramped in these quarters with tubercular parents. In good weather, of course, beds for older children can be made under the trailer or out in the open.

Most of the house-cars and trailers owned by migratory workers are badly constructed with almost no inside furnishings. A few are equipped with inefficient stoves; some have collapsible tables and beds; and some have facilities for inducting water and electric current. But few of these families can afford electric bills, so candles and lanterns furnish light. Windows are small and admit very little sunlight.

Hundreds of families dispossessed by the depression have come to look upon such housing units as permanent habitations. In many respects the owners are worse off than other

depression victims, for they have less chance of getting relief than other unemployed persons, since they move about whenever they can in search of employment and therefore seldom meet residence requirements for relief. In California it is the custom in many counties to give these migrants one meal and enough gasoline to move on to the next county. They are shunted around from one locality to another until their automobile breaks down or until they find a community more hospitable than the one departed from.

Many migratory workers built or purchased trailers in order to have better living accommodations than are provided by agricultural employers and to escape paying exorbitant rentals often charged in migratory camps. Now, perhaps, with the advent of trailers on a mass production basis, the cure may become worse than the disease. The thought is not pleasant that, with the passage of years during which the manufacture of these "dwellings" may reach 500,000 annually, used-car lots will be stacked with mobile miniature tenements for American workers. Until decent living accommodations and jobs of a more permanent nature are provided for workers in states requiring a large number of migrant agricultural employees, the automobile trailer, as a health and housing problem, will be potentially a social menace.

A GLASS WORKER DIES

TOM KROMER

JUDSON ART GLASS CO., Makers of Fine Glass . . . and he'd pick up this pipe that lay on the rack and sprint with it to this tank that had in it the glass. These other working stiffs would circle the tank the same as my old man and you'd think this was a Merry-Go-Round in a circus when you'd see them around the tank like this. He'd stick the end of this hollow pipe down in the hole that was in the side of the tank and down into the orangy glass and the heat would sheet out and scorch his face and clear back to the stooping shoulders.

Pay attention only to me.

It's my old man Michael I am telling you about. He sits there now and looks in at the embers of the fire and thinks of nothing but the belching factory chimneys and the pot of glass that he will see no more for his sweat will drench their goddam floor no more and come up in hot steam from their floor no more. The bugs have got him at last and he sits by the fire and hardly speaks all day. Gas on the stomach he thinks and he will be all right in a week. Gas on the stomach, hey, old man? And what are those pussy sores on your side and on your belly if it is not the cancer that had worked clear through you and clear through to the outside? Look at your legs that are swollen up like a couple of telegraph poles. Bloated up like a couple of telegraph poles your legs are and if you got up out of that chair and walked, you would gurgle when you walked. That is not you sitting in that chair, old man. You are in the factory. You are molded up in the tumbler that people drink highballs out of and get drunk and throw it on the floor, and I know that it is not a tumbler that is on the floor, but my old man, broken and splintered and crumbled.

He'd pull this wad of glass out of the pot and hurry over to the marble, this shiny, steel, flat marble, and he'd roll it

around on the marble till it was as round and as smooth as the pipe it hung to. Then my old man would blow through this pipe that was a hollow pipe, and the glass on the end would come out like a balloon, a red balloon, a carnival balloon. But where the hell was the carnival there? The pink lemonade, the hoocha-koocha dancer, and the red lemonade?

And now it's the lake. The old man thinks the lake will help his indigestion. He thinks the lake will help the sores that cover his side and spread to his belly that I can see as I wrap the thin gauzy bandages around his side and his belly. Well, I hope he is right but I know he is dead and as good as dead. For don't I know the lake won't do him a bit of good and nothing will do him a bit of good for when he laid his pipe down on the rack and keeled over on the floor that was wet with the sweat of a million bottles, wasn't he dead then? He is only a shell that sits by the fire and now he wants to go to the lake and he is like a peevish child that wants to go to the lake. A broken tumbler thrown on the floor by a drunk who asks for another and says he will pay for the tumbler and what's a tumbler that's broke when you're feeling good? Hock the family furniture and send the old tumbler to the lake. Three and a half per cent a month and aint that Forty-two per cent a year and pay it and like it. On to your sister, old man, who lives on the lake in Lorain and for Christ's sake stop grinning like that with the skin of your lips stretched across your teeth like that.

And my old man would hand this pipe up to the blower who stood on the dummy, this boxy platform with a mold that they called a dummy, and that blower had the bugs and he knew he had the bugs. He knew it. Cancer? Hell, not cancer. He blew all the cancer out into the pipes and my old man caught the cancer. It was T. B. for the blower and at that he was better off than my old man for he knew he had

the bugs and he knew he wouldn't have to blow his guts out on top of that dummy forever. But my old man didn't know he had the cancer, though, and wasn't that a good joke on my old man for there he was a' slavin' his ass for them shoes for the three four five beautiful smart kids and he couldn't ever get them shoes and wasn't that a good joke on my old man? And wasn't that a good joke on the Metropolitan for there was a thousand with the Metropolitan and the old Metropolitan would screech out from the magazines and screech out from the newspapers for my old man to get his ass away from there to the milk and to the sunshine and to the milk and wasn't that a good joke on the Metropolitan?

And we met him at the station when he came back and what's the black hearse backed up against the curb for and can't you guess? Not on the cushions tonight and not on the tops and not under the rods. He's riding the express car tonight in a pine box for what's the use to buy a coffin away up there in Lorain, Ohio, for don't you pay by the pound, or do you pay by the pound?

Walk along the street of sorrows oh,

Walk along the street of dreams.

Sit up in the driver's seat, old lady, and lets take the old tumbler home from the lake for he's

The old man of the mountain.

The old man of the mountain.

Put him there in the parlour and lay him on the couch for that's what the silk covering on the couch is for, so the old man can lay on silk. Wake up, old man, wake up! You would get a kick out of this, laying on silk! Eat your fried spuds in the kitchen and can't make it go down very well for its sticks in your throat with the old man laying in there. Have a spud, old man. You oughta have the habit. You oughta miss your spuds. And who is screeching in there and what are you yelping for, Billie? Black cat on the old man's chest and he won't get off! A sign that is and my old lady thinks that is a goddam bad sign and aint we got troubles enough in this house without black cats omen' on my old man's chest and him as dead as four o'clock?

On to the church and hello old horse-face-man-close-to God. Like hell you got my old man on the mind. You got a slew of juicy, lump-bringing words on the mind. Working stiff's in stiff starchy collars and shiny blue serge suits sit and squirm in their seats and working stiff's wives sit beside them and squirm with them. And just listen to that goddam kid in the back a'squawkin' his head off and get that kid out of there for he's ruinin' the funeral. Its not often you have a good funeral. And never, never squawk loud at a funeral but so soft and low and get the vulgar kid out of here.

ROCK OF AGES

That's the one and sing'er out loud for that's the one he wanted. My old man always said he had gas on the stomach but he was no fool, my old man wasn't. He told us what he wanted and first the

ROCK OF AGES

and then

THE OLD RUGGED CROSS

and after that just start shoveling the mud in. But don't you forget the cross and put in the outside pocket of the coat next to his heart. He asked for it so put it here just to humor the old man, but, hell, and it aint no secret among the working stiff's that my old man's heart is over there in the cracks of the concrete floor of the glass factory where he sweated his life away and sweated his heart away. But what's the use to

mention that here for aint old horse-face gettin' ready to turn on the water works?

Look up, look up
And seek your Maker
Before you travel on,
A hey nonny-nonny
And a hot cha-cha.

And the send-off! Great Christ, was there ever such a send-off as my old man is getting? Bellowing, rolling, tumbling clouds, dark and black and mad, and I do not blame you for getting sore up there for this show they are throwing for my old man. Pall-bearers and grave-diggers chanting and weeping and singing and who gives a good goddam about my old man? Throw my old man in the mud and cover him up with the mud. And the rain pours down in watery sheets and plasters the blue silk dresses of the working stiff's wives to their scrawny necks and plasters to their breasts till you can see the nipples of their breasts. The thunder rolling and you can bet, by God, somebody up there is goddam mad up there for all this foolishness for a working stiff that blew his heart out throwing the end of a hollow pipe.

Stawmy weathah and, oh, ahm suh loneleh.

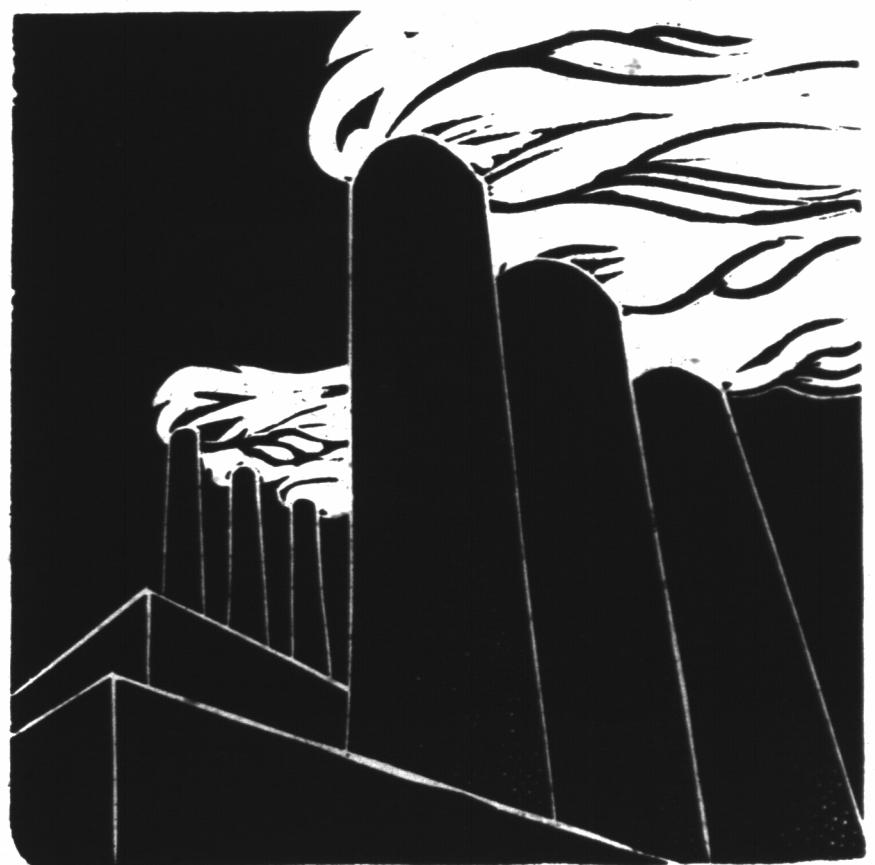
Big black straps and I wanta creamy casket when I die. Fifteen men on a dead man's chest. Lower the mainsails. Lower the jibs.

And the sands on the desert grow cold.

Splash she goes. Plump in the amber water in the bottom of the hole. Pull out the straps for you gotta save the straps for more working stiff's. Quintuplets coming up and twins and triplets.

Stawmy weathah and, oh, ahm suh loneleh.

Here's mud in your eye, old man, and mud in your face, and mud in the sores on the old man's belly. Mumble the prayer and jibber the chant and moan the song and throw in the mud. Clunk the first shovelful and clunk the second and third. Five beautiful smart kids stand around the hole and watch the water eddy in the bottom of the hole. Clunk the fourth shovelful and I will not wait till they cover you clear up, old man, for I am getting goddam soaked and the old lady is getting goddam soaked, too.



STEFFENS AND WE

PETER QUINCE

TWICE I met Steffens, once I wrote to him and once I voted on a question concerning him.

Our first meeting took place about four years ago. An unemployed kid, not long off the box cars, and I had bummed down to Carmel. Steffens was a dozen yards away when I first saw him, standing alone on a sidewalk, evidently lost in thought.

I nudged my companion. "That's him, Charlie, the writer." "Steffens?"

"Yeh."

"Hey!" he yelled. "Hey!"

Steffens turned around. We came up to him. "You're Steffens, aren't you?" asked Charlie.

"Yes," he said drily, "I'm Steffens."

"How are you?"

"Fine. How are you?"

"Okay."

There was a little silence. Steffens began to chuckle. "I suppose that after a while you'll tell me who you are."

"Oh, sure. We're from the Young Communist League in 'Frisco. We came here to collect some dough. I hear this place is lousy with it."

"It's lousier with signatures."

"We're getting up a youth anti-war congress. You know, church groups, sports clubs, shops, especially shops."

"I know. You're going to save the world."

"Sure."

Steffens' eyes laughed. "I guess you will. What do you want me to do?"

Charlie pointed to me. "He said you're a writer. We want you to write a letter to some of these people with dough. We can't have a youth congress without stationary—d'you know how much that costs?" His voice rose.

My ears burning with embarrassment, I broke in. "Listen," I said to Steffens, "this guy's nuts. He—"

"Is he really?"

I looked at him suspiciously. "He—"

Steffens put a finger against my chest. "Can YOU run a youth anti-war congress without stationery?" My mouth opened. "Come along." We walked toward the beach. "By the way, have you any credentials?"

"Sure," said Charlie.

When Steffens finished reading the credentials he asked: "Who is the person who signed this?"

Charlie pointed to me. "Him."

Steffens laughed the rest of the way to the house. And when he got there he wrote the letter. "Now," he said, "I know how congresses are started."

About six months later Charlie and I got off the elevator in a San Francisco building. We'd gotten the congress under way and were about to talk the head of the ——— Forum into letting us have a popular lecturer speak to us on his recent European tour. We wanted particularly to hear about the youth movements in Germany, Italy and Russia.

We were walking down the hall, slowly, trying to figure how we'd go about it, a little scared. Suddenly, "Hey!" someone shouted, "hey!"

It was Lincoln Steffens. We shook hands. "What are you up to now?" We told him. "Well, I don't know whether or

not he's available." His eyes twinkled. "Won't I do?"

Before I could answer Charlie said: "No, I made all the signs already."

We got our speaker, and with so little difficulty that I have an idea we received outside help.

Once, on a New Year's Eve, a bunch of Y.C.L. members got together for a party. There was some wine and cake and apples and coffee. There was an open fireplace, too, which was an experience to most of us. We got out some marshmallows and toasted 'em. There was a lot of light-hearted banter passed around. Now, according to all tradition, this note should have been sustained throughout the evening. But someone piped up and said: "Let's send Steffens a letter."

"Steffens? Why?"

"What'll we tell him?"

"Oh, just that we like him and think he's okay."

There started a discussion which lasted over half an hour. And I was unanimously elected to write the letter because "you know him, didn't you shake hands with him once?"

Steffens died. We were at a meeting of the Young Communist League Waterfront Branch. One of the main points on our agenda was a couple of words. Lincoln Steffens. The subject called for neither introduction nor review. We all knew Steffens, how much the movement would miss him.

The Chairman merely said: "Comrades, Lincoln Steffens just died. There's a motion that we send Ella Winter a letter telling her how we feel about it. If anyone objects, so help me, I'll throw the table at him." He spoke quietly, with utter seriousness.

Nobody laughed. The motion carried unanimously.

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BIRD AND BOTTLE

NATHANAEL WEST

EARLE HAINES stood in front of the saddlery store on Vine Street, Hollywood. In the window of the store was an enormous Mexican saddle covered with heavy silver ornaments. Around the saddle was a collection of torture instruments: fancy, braided quirts loaded with lead, spurs that had great, spiked wheels; heavy, double bits that needed only a few pounds pressure to dislocate the jaw of a horse. On a low shelf, running across the back of the window, was a row of boots. Some of them were black, others a pale yellow color. They all had scalloped tops and very high heels.

Every day and all day, Earle stood in front of this store. He stood stiffly, looked straight in front of him. His eyes never followed the people who passed, but remained fixed on a sign on the roof of the one-story building across the street. The sign read: "Malted Milks—Too Thick for a Straw." Regularly, twice every hour, Earle pulled a sack of tobacco and a sheaf of papers from his shirt pocket and rolled a cigarette. Then he tightened the cloth of his trousers by lifting his knee and struck a match along the underside of his thigh.

He was a little under six feet tall. The big hat he wore added another eight inches to his height and the heels of his boots still another three. His pole-like appearance was exaggerated by the narrowness of his shoulders and his complete lack of either hips or buttocks. The years he had spent in the saddle had not made him bow-legged. In fact his legs were so straight that his dungarees, bleached a pale blue, hung down without a wrinkle. They hung as though empty. They were turned up at the bottom to form very wide cuffs and to show five inches of fancy boot. Over his left arm, neatly folded, was a dark grey jacket. His cotton shirt was navy blue with large white polka-dots, each one the size of a dime. The sleeves of his shirt were not rolled, but pulled up to the middle of his forearm and held there by a pair of rose-colored arm-bands.

Next to Earle was another young man. This one sat on his heels. He also wore a big hat and high-heeled boots. He, however, had on a suit of city clothes, cheap and over-styled with padded shoulders and high, pointed lapels. Close behind him was a battered paper valise that was held together by some heavy rope tied with professional-looking knots. Like Earle, he rarely moved his head, but his jaws champed continuously on a large wad of gum.

A third man sidled up to the store. He wore the same head and foot gear as the others. He spent a few minutes examining the merchandise in the window, then turned and looked across the street.

"Lo, boys," he said finally.

"Lo, Shoop," said the man next to Earle.

Shoop saw the paper valise and prodded it with the toe of his boot.

"Going someplace, Calvin?" he asked.

"Azusa," Calvin replied. "There's a rodeo."

"You going, Earle?"

"Nope," he said without turning his head. "I got a date."

Shoop considered this information for fully ten minutes before he spoke again.

"Columbia's making a new horse-opera," he said. "Ferris told me they'll use more than forty mounted-actors."

Calvin turned to Earle.

"Still got that fur vest?" he asked. "It'll cinch you a job as a sheriff."

This was a joke. Calvin and Shoop chuckled and slapped their thighs loudly. Earle paid no attention to them.

They liked to kid Earle, and tried to think of another joke.

"Ain't your old man still got some cows?" Calvin asked, winking at Shoop. "Why don't you go home?"

Shoop answered for Earle.

"He dassint. He got caught in a sheep car."

It was another joke, and a good one. Calvin and Shoop slapped their thighs. After this they became silent and immobile again. About an hour later Calvin moved, then spoke.

"There goes your girl," he said.

Faye drove by the store and pulled into the curb some fifteen feet further on. Calvin and Shoop touched the brims of their hats, but Earle did not move. He was taking his time, as befitted his manly dignity. Not until she tooted her horn loudly did he begin to move. He walked toward the Ford touring car.

"Lo, Honey," he said, taking off his hat.

"Hello, cowboy," Fay said, looking at him with a smile.

She thought him very handsome. He was. He had the kind of two-dimensional face a talented child might draw with a ruler and compass. His chin was perfectly round and his large eyes were also round. His horizontal mouth ran at right angles to his long, perpendicular nose. The evenness of his complexion heightened his resemblance to a mechanical drawing. His face was the same color from hair-line to throat, as though the tan had been washed in by an expert.

"Get in," Faye said, opening the door of the Ford.

He put on his jacket, adjusting the collar and sleeves with great care, then climbed in beside her. She started the car with a jerk. When she got to Hollywood Boulevard she turned left. She was watching him out of the corner of her eye and saw that he was preparing to speak. She tried to hurry him.

"Get going, cowboy. What is it?"

"Look here, Honey. I ain't got no money for supper."

"Then we don't eat."

He considered this for a few minutes.

"Well, we got some grub at camp."

"Beans, I suppose."

"Nope."

She prodded him.

"Well, what are we going to eat?"

"Miguel and me's got some traps out."

Faye laughed angrily.

"Rat traps, huh? We're going to eat rats."

Earle laughed, but did not say anything. She waited for him to speak, then pulled to the curb and slammed on the emergency brake. She was very sore.

"Listen, you big, strong, silent dope, either make sense or get out of this car."

"They're quail traps," he said apologetically.

She ignored his answer.

"Let me tell you something," she scolded—"talking to you is too damned much like work. You wear me out."

"I didn't mean nothing, Honey. I was only funning. I wouldn't feed you a rat."

She slammed off the brake and started the car. At Zacarias Street, she turned into the hills. After the car had climbed steadily for about half a mile she turned into a dirt road and followed that to its end.

Most of her anger had disappeared when she looked at him again. He was so handsome and had such a beautiful tan. She got out of the car.

"Give me a kiss," she said.

He took his hat off politely and wrapped his long arms around her. She noticed that he closed his eyes and puckered up his lips like a little boy. But there was nothing boyish about what he did to her. Both his hands and his lips were very active.

When she had had as much as she wanted, she shoved him away. Her hands went to her hair, then she took out a compact and fixed her face.

Faye was about seventeen years old and very pretty. She had wide straight shoulders, narrow hips and long legs. Under her tight sweater, her tiny breasts showed like the twin halves of a lemon. She had no hat on. Her "platinum" hair was drawn tightly away from her face and gathered together in back by a narrow baby blue ribbon that allowed it to tumble loosely to her shoulders. The style of her coiffure had been copied from Tennel's drawings of Alice.

Earle started along a little path that began where the dirt road ended. She followed him. They entered a canyon and began to climb.

It was Spring. Wherever weeds could find a purchase in the steep banks of the canyon they flowered in purple, blue and pale pink. Orange poppies bordered the path. Their petals were wrinkled like crepe and their leaves were heavy with talcum-like dust.

They climbed still higher until they reached another canyon. Here no flowers grew in the decomposed granite. But the bare ground and the rocks were brilliantly colored. The earth was silver with streaks of rose-gray and the rocks were turquoise and lavender. Even the air was a vibrant pink.

They stopped to watch a humming bird chase a blue jay. The jay flashed by squawking with its tiny enemy on its tail like an emerald bullet. The gaudy birds seemed to burst the colored air into a thousand glittering particles.

When they gained the top of the hill, they saw below them a little green valley thick with trees. They made for it. Miguel came to meet them at the edge of the wood. He greeted Faye ceremoniously.

"Welcome, welcome, chinita.

The Mexican was short and heavily muscled. His skin was the color of milk chocolate and had Armenian eyes. He wore a long-haired sweater—called a "gotilla" in and around Los Angeles—with nothing under it. His white duck trousers were badly soiled.

Faye followed the two men to their camp. There was a fire burning between two rocks and she sat down next to it on a broken swivel chair.

"When do we eat?" she demanded.

Miguel put a grill over the fire and started to scour a large frying pan with sand. He gave Faye a knife and some potatoes to peel.

Earle took up a burlap sack and moved off into the woods. He followed a narrow cattle path until he came to a little clearing covered with high, tufted grass. He stopped for a moment behind a scrub oak to make sure that no one was watching him.

A mocking bird sang in a nearby bush. Its song was like

pebbles being dropped one by one from a height into a pool of water. Then a quail began to call, using two soft, almost guttural notes. Another quail answered and the birds talked back and forth. Their call was not like the cheerful whistle of the Eastern bobwhite. It was full of melancholy and weariness, yet marvelously sweet. Still another quail joined the duet. This one called from near the center of the clearing. It was a trapped bird, but the sound it made had no anxiety in it, only sadness, impersonal and without hope.

Earle went to the trap, a wire basket about the size of a washtub. When he stooped over, five birds ran wildly around the inner edge and threw themselves against the chicken wire. One of them, a cock, had a dainty plume on his head that curled forward almost to his beak. Earle opened a little door in the top of the trap and reached in. He caught the birds one at a time and pulled their heads off before dropping them into the sack.

He started back. As he walked along, he held the sack under his left arm and plucked the birds. Their feathers fell to the ground point first, weighed down by the tiny drops of blood that trembled on the tips of their quills.

When Faye had finished the potatoes, she put them to soak in a pan of water. The sun had gone down and it was chilly. She huddled close to the fire. Miguel saw her shiver and got out a jug of tequila. They both drank deeply. Earle came along just as they were having a second shot. He dropped his sack and took the jug.

Miguel tried to show Faye how plump the birds were, but she refused to look. He took them and washed them in a pail of water, then began cutting them into quarters with a pair of heavy tin shears. Faye tried not to hear the soft click the shears made as it cut through flesh and bone.

While the meal was cooking, while they ate and afterwards, they passed the jug. Faye grew hot and excited. She smoked a lot of cigarettes.

Both men stared at her. She knew what they were thinking but seemed not to care. She assumed enticing positions and made little, obscene gestures with her tongue and hands. Miguel opened his mouth several times as though to shout, but only gulped a deep breath of air. Earle shifted uneasily on his haunches and began to curse quietly.

Faye was frightened, but her fear, instead of making her wary, made her still more reckless. She took a long pull at the jug and got up to dance. She held her skirt well above her knees and did a slow rhumba. Her round bare thighs flashed silver and rose in the half-dark. She shook her yellow head.

Miguel made music for her. He clapped his hands and sang: "Tony's wife . . ."

Earle beat out the rhythm on a box with a thick stick.

"Tony's wife . . ."

Miguel stood up to dance. He struck the soft ground heavily with his feet and circled around her. They danced back to back and bumped each other.

Earle, too, began to dance. He did a crude hoe-down, the only dance he knew. He leaped into the air, knocked his heels together and whooped. But he felt out of it. Despite the noise he made, they ignored him.

The slow beat of the rhumba went on. Faye and the Mexican retreated and advanced, came together and separated again with a precision that only the blood knows.

She saw the blow before it fell. She saw Earle raise his stick and bring it down on Miguel's head. She heard the thud and saw him go to his knees still dancing, his body reluctant to acknowledge the interruption.

There is release in running; flight, too, is of the blood. She

ran up the hill, then down into the canyon, then down into the next canyon.

She sat down on a fender. In a little while her breathing became normal again and her heart stopped pounding. The violent exercise had driven most of the heat out of her blood, but there was still enough left to make her tingle pleasantly. She felt comfortably relaxed, even happy.

Somewhere in the canyon a bird began to sing. She listened to its song and sighed with pleasure. At first the low, rich music sounded like water dripping on something hollow, the bottom of a silver pot perhaps; then, like a stick dragged slowly over the strings of a harp.

The bird stopped as suddenly as it had begun. She got into the Ford and drove off down the hill.

A LETTER TO GALKOVITCH

ALEXANDER KAUN

My dear Moisey Grigoryevich! It was thoughtful of you to send me, on your way to Moscow, Y. German's novel.* When, on the eve of your departure from San Francisco, you rhapsodized about this new luminary on the literary horizon of the Soviet Union, I listened somewhat skeptically. Your countrymen, supposedly internationally minded, are apt to show signs of patriotic swell-headedness, when the label of "Made in U. S. S. R." is in question. I further discounted your enthusiasm, because at the moment you were in a state of savage elation. Three years of consular service in San Francisco, amidst comfort and opulence and oozing geniality and good will, failed to convert you. Your youthful eyes sparkled with shameless triumph, when at your request you were recalled to Moscow, with its admittedly inferior plumbing and automobiles.

My misgivings did not leave me when I was half way through the nearly six hundred and fifty pages of the novel. In fact, time and again I swore and sent you to the superannuated Russian devil for having inflicted a burden of dubious value on an overburdened man. At that stage the story seemed rather ordinary, and needlessly drawn out. The heroine, Antonina, hardly warranted such an elaborate presentation. I am convinced that the story would have gained much if the author had condensed his account of Antonina's deterioration. A mere sketch would have suffered to outline her downward path, under NEP conditions of penury and exploitation, from charming and promising adolescence to loveless marriage, fortuitous motherhood, and deadly tedium of bourgeois plenty that set her off on the slippery road of *Emma Bovary*. To be sure, the very length of the story conveyed the sense of time dragging on with murderous slowness in the futile, flaccid, and desireless existence of Antonina. But a more experienced writer could have produced this effect with a greater economy of means, which would have resulted in a proportionally greater intensity.

Then, Moisey Grigoryevich, about the middle of the story, things began to happen. The regeneration of Antonina, her being rehabilitated and restored to a creative social life, moved with an intensity and a cumulative speed that caught one's breath. Through the process of Antonina's rebirth I was made conscious of the surge and the tempo of Soviet life. Again, the theme itself is familiar enough in Russian literature. Think of what Dostoyevsky or Tolstoy would have done in such a case, of the profound analysis and introspection and compassion they would have exerted, and of the

ultimate moral they might have suggested for individual salvation. Your Yuri German is neither so deep nor so analytical. But he does make you realize that the revolution which has taken place in Russia is not only political, social, and economical, but above all mental. The active Soviet youth who save Antonina from the morass of bourgeois defeatism, do not indulge in Tolstoyan moralizing or Dostoyevskian psychologizing. The Soviet intelligentsia is no longer verbose or sentimental. The Sidorovs, Shchupaks, Altuses approach Antonina understandingly but without degrading pity or self-flattering altruism. She is allowed to note the difference between the wingless hollow existence of the Last Mohicans of the old order, and the exuberantly creative life of the New Builders. The Sidorovs sense in Antonina a potential fellow-builder; this is why, and not because of any Christian charity, they tactfully help her to open her eyes. When they feel that her "education" is complete, they entrust her with responsible work among mothers and children, and she proves to be an excellent organizer. In aiding Antonina to find her real self, to find happiness in social activity, the Sidorovs are following their line of building and enriching the new life.

Yuri German has much to learn yet from his contemporaries and predecessors. His novel has many sins, of omission as much as of commission. The preliminary part, antedating Antonina's rebirth, is too long and elaborate. On the other hand, such important characters as Sidorov and Altus are too vaguely outlined, and are far less tangible than such negative characters as Skvortsov or Pal Palych. Yet, with all its defects, it is one of the most stirring novels that have come out from the Soviet Union. It makes you feel the everyday life, as few books or articles or speeches do. The very title, "Our Acquaintances," or "Our Common Friends," suggests that the author has depicted the average, the typical, the quotidian. In his masterly dialogues German individualizes his types, much more than in his descriptions; hence the dramatic quality of the story. In scene after scene, between Antonina and those about her, you gradually absorb more and more intimately the atmosphere of that New Life. How intoxicating, for one thing, the joy of labor that you feel in those men and women, who plan and study and seek ever newer avenues for the expression of their insatiable greed for creative construction! Far from drudgery, or the fulfilment of some dogmatic duty, their labor spells dynamic happiness.

There was a time when Soviet writers portrayed Bolshevik heroes as men of iron, devoid of emotions, mockingly indifferent to "bourgeois" sentiments and passions. Today Bolshevik characters are revealed in all their human faculties. They feel, they love as intensely as they build and plan. But with them the passion of love is not a self-sufficient

*NASHI ZNAKOMYIE, by Yuri German. (Molodaya Gvardia: Leningrad, 1936.)

experience, excluding everything else and hindering one's work. In recent Soviet fiction you feel more and more the attainment of a synthesis of love and work. German's novel shows graphically that love and creative work are not only compatible, but that they are interdependent. The completeness of love and congeniality between Altus and Antonina would be unthinkable outside of their joy and absorption in their respective activities. The same is true of Sidorov and Zhenya. They glory in their love and labor, and they despise melancholy and unhappiness, once upon a time the leading motives of Russian fiction and life.

And so, I thank you, Moisey Grigoryevich, for having caused me to take a deep draught of Soviet reality. The novel, incidentally, helped me understand the sparkle of elation in your eyes over the exchange of the coziness of Divisadero Street for the inferior plumbing of Moscow.

ON THE DILEMMA OF CRITICISM

EDWARD RADENZEL

● BOOKS

THE controversy recently provoked by James T. Farrell's "A Note on Literary Criticism," which persisted in the editorial and correspondence pages of the *New Masses* until a score of contributors rose in protest, indicates, among other things, that criticism is a game which few men will play and not many can enjoy. Still, the significance of the critical turmoil is not to be discounted by this evidence of popular disinterest, but is, rather, to be reconsidered. In the hands of the critic, despite the average reader's indifference, is vested the responsibility of evaluation, the duty to probe literary effects and analyze social consequences.

More than twenty years ago Van Wyck Brooks set forth the distinct origins of the "highbrow" and the "lowbrow" as American attitudes and states of mind. He found that two main currents paralleled one another in the development of the American mind—divergent, opposite, but, considering the division of political opinion after the Declaration of Independence, complementary—one, the stream of Puritan pietism carried through Jonathan Edwards to Emersonian transcendentalism; the other, the practical way of New England life, later dignified by the opportune and vulgar philosophy of Ben Franklin. These currents, running side by side at first but growing farther apart, the highbrow and the lowbrow in American life, paved the way to the romantic rebellion in our letters, inspired the revolt of the artist against the puritan and the financier, and gave birth to the transplanted desire to "*épater le bourgeois*" in the vicarious bohemia of the American twentieth century, Greenwich Village.

Inheriting as it did the romantic struggle against philistinism, radical literary opinion early suffered from the disdain of the practical, lowbrow American, as has almost every kind of literary opinion since. In the heyday of the old *Masses* revolutionary thought tended, not to minimize its worth, to fly in the face of "normal" ideas. It was not so much captious as it was precocious and innovatory, to normal minds, but it was young and, to normal minds, brash. This newness, this freshness of opinion, requiring as it did a certain solitary courage, drew from the editors of that pioneering journal the kind of forthright insistence that makes young men so obnoxious to the staid and aged in spirit.

Faced with the overwhelming and perfumed atmosphere

created by the "impressionist" critics like Joel Spingarn, whose milk had been sterilized by Croce, the left-wingers in literature began to throw, in reaction, all aesthetic standards out of the window, to replace them with purely "revolutionary" standards in literature. Thus, a new situation has come into being, only in recent years, which is the net result of the art-for-art's-sake barrier and the attack that had to be made on it. Now, a book that deals with the proletariat or contains a revolutionary attitude is a good book; and vice versa, if a book reviews the antics of the *haute monde* and leans to the right in sympathy, it is, *ipso facto*, a bad book.

Waldo Frank has pointed out that the primary social function of art is "so to condition men that they will . . . be the medium for the actions of growth and change required by their needs." *King Lear* left a memorable lesson on the minds of men: not to accept honeyed words in lieu of evinced loyalty. Continued re-dramatization of this theme is proof of the fact that *Lear's* agonizing lesson persists and recurs in man's experience. Now when the conscious writer of today, writing out of the contemporary experience, writes as feelingly and universally of the pain and punishment of our time as did Shakespeare of the king whose daughters were to him what they themselves said, then perhaps a literature will arise as great as Elizabethan.

The experience that the new universal artist will write out of, no doubt, will be the experience of the current struggle between democracy and reaction. Heroism will manifest itself in defense of the attack against the right of men and the international murder of culture. Tragic characters have already made their appearance in this new literature: in the chief protagonist of "Fatherland"; in the character of Kyo Gisors in "Man's Fate." In these two instances aesthetic creations are shaping the minds of men so as to enable them to meet the changes which life demands of them in loyalty and in conscience.

Perhaps then the division between good and bad books that has been made, with reference to the proletarian or non-proletarian works of recent years, however unfortunate, however infantile, was inevitable. The heroic character today more often adapts itself to the worker and to the intellectual than to the man of commerce or the hereditary ruler. In terms of this class, or social, change in the human matter with which literature deals, changing standards of good and bad must of necessity be recognized. However, these standards have to avoid the pitfall of the obvious and the over-simplified, as James Farrell has pertinently commented. It is not possible, because the hero of a work of art is a character in accordance with certain class ideals of struggle, to say that the work of art is good or universal. Only if the hero manages to execute the tasks and assume the world responsibilities thrown upon him with the strength and realism which sound literature demands of him can the hero assure himself and his author of universality. Too many novels have been written whose authors, leftists, were convinced that, if the desire to destroy the bourgeoisie were strong enough in the proletarian breast, the novel would be a great novel. Nothing could be less true.

The hero, then, of revolutionary or proletarian novels will undergo the trials of his life and time in the heroic cast. His actions will have to inspire pity, terror and tragic catharsis. His creators will have to avoid revolutionary sentimentalism; they will have to eschew mechanical determinism of the event of struggle. As the protagonist of current fiction, the heroic character will present much the same problem to the critic as he has always presented; and the critic will have to deal with literature much as he has always dealt with it.

Then the horns of the dilemma upon which the contemporary and realistically inclined critic will too easily impale himself are these: the revolutionary sentimentalist viewpoint, being sympathetic with the proletariat or the worker beyond the demands of a sound literary approach; and the sharp, hard view of the zealous materialist who applies a glib

"dialectic," only to misuse it as though every literary evidence had its economic counterpart or seed. Of course the writer of conscience will embrace the proletariat in sympathy; of course, the modern thinker can see everywhere the insertion of the economic crisis into the application of theories of psychology, society, politics: it is unavoidable. But politics alone does not make a good left-wing book as too many novels of recent years have proven. And men still love and hate, fight and collaborate, in tasks and desires removed from the struggle between classes.

Is the duty of the critic not obviously the study of these new inter-relations? Should it not be he who will distinguish from the good the bad, from the dramatic the dramaturgic, from the universal the particular? He should recall that long before him Taine, Michelet, and earlier, Vico, had come to understand that literature had a social function. "Revolutionary" literature is not something new under the sun, but is an intensification of the conscious distinction between men and men as members of classes and economic groups. "Revolutionary" criticism then must be only an intensification, a subtilization of the instrument of discrimination, selection, judgment.

DRAMATIC AND POWERFUL

ABSALOM, ABSALOM! by William Faulkner (Random House) \$2.50

THE sheer dramatic beauty and sensitive strength of this, Faulkner's latest and probably best novel, will delight his readers, but it's packed full of meaning, too. As we relive the strange lives of Thomas Sutpen and his abortive dynasty, we meet and see tackled the old problems and prejudices of the tinselly romantic bloody South.

We get the story third hand, listening with Quentin Compson, impressionable young relative, to the disconnected bitter talk of an angry spinster, and the more tolerant memories of his father. And with him we become fascinated, lose our bored superior attitude and follow breathlessly the tragic events of fifty years before.

The characters emerge hazily and distorted in the reminiscences of Rosa Coldfield and we see Sutpen as the ogre of her childhood, the ruthless husband of her sister Ellen who brought destruction on her whole family, and whom in spite of all Rosa almost married; who insulted Rosa so that after forty-three years of outraged loneliness she lived only for revenge on his descendants. He himself had died as a last insult. Rosa gives the whole story, Sutpen riding into the little Southern town with his wild Negroes, seizing a hundred square miles of land and building his great mansion. The strange engagement that was never announced of his daughter Judith to the young man she hardly knew, for whose sake her brother Henry renounced home and inheritance and whom he shot on the day the wedding was to have taken place. All this we hear from the outside, without explanation, without kindness.

Then, gradually, from Quentin's father's more understanding, but conventional version to, finally, Quentin's own imaginative and glowingly dramatic reconstruction, we get the deep significance, the subtle but powerful propaganda of the book. We see the incredible paradox of Henry, young provincial idealist, who after four years reconciled himself to the idea of his sister's marriage to the man he knew was their brother, and then shot him because he was part Negro. Perhaps that is the clue to the whole story, the old story of the hatred and fear of the white for the Negroes, which has grown if anything since those last days of slavery.

At any rate this is a book you won't easily forget. One that you will read wide-eyed and breathless and then read again.

SUZANNE HEDGER

SOME OF MY BEST FRIENDS

ANTISEMITISM, by Hugo Valentin. (Viking Press) \$2.50

IT is a little disheartening, even to such a hopeful person as this reviewer, to contemplate the implications of this book. Hugo Valentin is Lecturer in History in the University of Upsala, and he has here brought his scholarship and his critical intelligence to the task of trying to explain antisemitism historically and of refuting the endless lies which fascism so industriously concocts against the Jews. It is a little as if the *Journal of the American Medical Association* were to find itself forced to publish a series of learned articles devoted to proving that Lydia Pinkham's Vegetable Compound will not cure prolapse of the uterus, or as if the American Association for the Advancement of Science were to devote one of its yearly meetings to discussing the question whether the account of creation in Genesis is correct. Quite some years ago an American humorist hazarded the guess that the inhabitants of the other planets use this one as an insane asylum. The suggestion makes an attractive hypothesis at times.

The first half of the book discusses antisemitism from antiquity to modern times. In the second half, Mr. Valentin has collected the characteristic forms of "Aryan" and fascist nonsense and patiently taken them apart. His evidence is, of course, completely unanswerable. The only other thing to be said is that to the Goerings and Moseleys and Pelleys it is completely irrelevant. The evidence that the late "Legs" Diamond and the Chief of Police of Terre Haute both acted illegally is also completely unanswerable.

In the face of this situation it is unfortunate that Mr. Valentin goes to considerable pains to steer clear of a Marxist defense. One may spend some little time explaining to a coiled rattlesnake that his animosity is the result of a misapprehension, but such earnest pedagogy is seldom rewarded, and, not infrequently it is cut off in the middle.

EDWARD LIVINGSTON

GOOD WRITING

NOW THAT APRIL'S HERE and other stories by Morley Callaghan. (New York: Random House) \$2.00

BY THIS TIME the reviewers in general have pounced on the most obvious aspect of this collection of short stories, which is the effect of monotony after a continuous reading. This is in a small way due to the inclusion of too many stories in one volume but it principally illustrates a feature of Mr. Callaghan's writing that so far has not been sufficiently noted. For there has been a considerable change in the direction in which Mr. Callaghan is traveling. This is most evident in two ways: with the improvement in his writing has come concurrently a steady weakening in his themes. From the time he published "Strange Fugitive," for example, probably his best novel although certainly not the best written, he has steadily improved his style: eliminating the stiffness and lifelessness which so bogged it down, but at the same time retreating from his early "toughness" that led to the comparisons with Hemingway. No fault can be found with him for sloughing off this spurious coloring but he has carried the process to such a great extent that he is in danger of eliminating, in another way, the lifeblood of his work. To get back to the quality of monotony which exists in this collection, it is of course mainly due to his continued subjection of theme to treatment: he treats all themes in the same fashion which ultimately results in all his themes occupying an identical level.

To say all this is not to condemn Mr. Callaghan out of hand: far from it. Mr. Callaghan is what might be called, to

use a careless phrase, a self-made writer. He did not possess any easy brilliance to carry him along when he was learning to write. He has gone as far as he has because of self-discipline and a constant application to sharpening those abilities which he did possess. But his abilities are greater than he apparently thinks they are. Compare, to use "Strange Fugitive" again as an example and despite its weaknesses, the compelling and valid development in that novel of a young man turned boot-legger and the inevitable conclusion to his career with the material found in even the best of these later stories: an adolescent thief realizing for the first time the kind of life his mother has had raising him; an old kimono holding together a young couple buffeted about by the economic crisis; a young wife faithful to her tubercular husband; a reporter in a small town making the acquaintance of a hangman and realizing that he is a human being; the depiction of the deep bond between two very dissimilar brothers.

The fault in these stories is not that they are too subtle or that Mr. Callaghan does not get angry and wave his arms around; God knows there is too much of that already in modern fiction, to its detriment. The difficulty is simply that Mr. Callaghan is too modest: naturally these are short stories and not novels but by not attempting to do enough his stories are not developed and they are nearly all filtered through the same sieve of delicacy regardless of the appropriateness. In this way he materially handicaps himself. He has the ability by this time to handle more important material than that with which he has lately been preoccupied.

LEON DORAIS

CORRESPONDENCE

NOT THAT UNION

Editor, "Pacific Weekly,"

Dear Sir:

Will you please correct the note in your contributors' column last week. I am not a member of the Marine Firemen's Union but belong to the Marine Cooks and Stewards and am working on their strike Committee.

Sincerely,
John Woodburn

San Francisco
November 10, 1936

PROVOCATEUR?

Editor, "Pacific Weekly,"

Sir:

You may have received a copy of an open letter addressed to me in my capacity as chairman of the Los Angeles Saturday Afternoon Discussion by one "Captain" James N. Seymour. This man, who poses as a super-revolutionary and claims to be a retired British army officer, has for several years been a disturbing element in the Saturday Club as in various other local discussion groups and open forums. His tactics from the floor have been at all times those characteristic of the professional provocateur; he is forever attacking the united front and the Communist Party, and calling loudly for violence. Recently, after figuring in a street brawl with a person unknown to me, he charged that he had been beaten by "the strong arm squad of the Saturday Club and the Communist Party," acting at my instigation! Such charges are, of course beneath contempt, but the point is that he is trying by every means—including the writing of a letter to the management of the cafeteria at which our club meets—to cause the disbandment of our organization.

Since our club is a thoroughly democratic group, Seymour has never been denied use of the floor, despite his constant abuse of the privilege. Limitations of time in the general discussion period following the main address sometimes makes it impossible to hear all who wish to comment, and when, a week or so ago, he missed the boat for this reason, he tried to speak without recognition from the chair, and after Dr. Taft, the guest speaker, had risen to make his concluding remarks. It was only with extreme difficulty that order was restored; Seymour contended for several minutes against the combined noise of the gavel and boos from the audience of two hundred.

This incident is itself trivial, but at a time when free speech is so seriously menaced by its natural enemies, it may be well to take steps against its pseudo-friends. Although the club has as yet taken no official action, it seems probable that it will vote to instruct the chairman to refuse the floor hereafter to a man who, whether a paid provocateur or a mere psychopathic, is a threat to its existence. It may be significant that the only meetings at which Seymour is *persona grata* are those of the Trotskyists.

Sincerely yours,

Leroy Rice

Chairman Los Angeles Saturday Discussion Club

October 28, 1936

MOST CHARACTERS HISTORICAL

"Pacific Weekly"

Dear Miss Winter:

I have just reread Suzanne Hedger's review of "Drums Along the Mohawk" which appeared in the issue of the "Pacific Weekly" of October 5. I appreciate this review very much, but would like to call your attention to one rather serious error which Miss Hedger has made in quoting from Mr. Edmond's preface. She says:

"Most of the characters are fictitious and the few historical ones are vividly and humanly drawn."

As a matter of fact Mr. Edmonds states quite distinctly, and I have reiterated this in several book notes, that of all the many characters in the book only 13 are fictitious, the rest being historical; Miss Hedger's statement gives an entirely erroneous impression of the essentially historical character of the book. It is quite possible, of course, that the transposition of fictitious and historical was merely a slip, and I am proceeding on this assumption in writing you. In any case, I'd be grateful if you could run a correction note.

Sincerely yours,

Little, Brown & Co.

Laetitia Bolton

November 2, 1936

WE WERE IN ERROR

Editor, "Pacific Weekly,"

Dear Sir:

"Pacific Weekly," issue of November 2nd, Page 275 has just been brought to my attention. This editorial refers to the Salinas lettuce strike situation, and concludes with the following paragraph:

"Meanwhile the government has stepped in in the guise of the WPA stating that lettuce strikers cannot benefit from relief jobs if lettuce packing jobs are offered them at equal wages. They must take them! Thus the State tells honest union men they must become scabs, and on their own union! A pretty lesson in ethics for the children."

The "Pacific Weekly" is in error in stating that the WPA stated that "lettuce strikers cannot benefit from relief jobs if lettuce packing jobs are offered them at equal wages." The Works Progress Administration never has released workers to jobs under strike conditions, and did not do so in the Salinas lettuce area.

For your information, the WPA labor relations are governed by the Handbook of Procedure Letter No. 26, issued September 2, 1936. Chapter 15, Section 5 of this handbook states as follows:

"Neutral policies shall be maintained by the WPA in all disputes between workers and employers in private industry. Workers may not be discharged from projects for refusal to accept private jobs where employees are locked out or on strike."

We would respectfully ask that the erroneous statements in your November 2nd issue be corrected in your next issue. May we suggest that in future statements with reference to the Works Progress Administration, about which you are not informed, be referred to this office for clarification.

We will be glad to assist you at any time by furnishing you with authentic information to which your readers are entitled.

Yours very truly,

Frank Y. McLaughlin

Administrative Assistant in charge of Information Service

49 4th Street, San Francisco

November 4, 1936

(The report which inspired the note in "Pacific Weekly" appeared in a local newspaper which normally reports very accurately. Our apologies are tendered the WPA herewith for believing anything we read in a newspaper without verification and thus for unwittingly misrepresenting them. —Eds.)

FLAME BEASTS

Lithely and lightly through the umbrage of smoke
Glide the sinewy beasts of the flame; lions
With yellow tails lashing, manes tossed,
Nostrils searching the wind; undulant leopards,
Gaunt tigers of hunger, their rippling pelts,
Their glistening flanks, gilded with a shining dew.

Muscles of lunging shoulders crash through the rustling woods,
Eyes phosphorescent glint from the depths of the shadow.
Amber and yellow and tawny they pace, the beasts of the
flame,

Roused from smoke-drowsy lairs, restive with strength;
Sleek jaguars of languorous motion, swift pumas of burning,
Panting and famishing from ambush to ambush,
Bared teeth pointed and cruel,
Talons adroit with hunger of waiting.

Now let them wait no more!

Too long have the panthers of love lain hid in their furtive
dens,

The gleaming fire-claws too long have been sheathed.

Let the tigers of restless flame

And all the desiring and desperate fiercely spring forth:

Now let them stride through the world stalking their prey in
bright heat,

The woods be torn as with claws, devoured as with terrible
jaws;

Flame be the prey of flame, the hunters and hunted

Crying out with harsh voice of fire till all be devoured—

The night resonant with loud-throated burning.

HELEN HOYT

THREE GENERATIONS

There was a beacon over the West

When my grandfather left Europe,

Followed it to California

Looking for gold.

He left a saying, Europe will have no peace

Until its boundaries are broken.

That seems long ago, and he didn't find the gold

But starved and froze and lived in hope.

His children grope in the dark and mutter desires and curses
Breaking under the strain.

They are not pioneers; they understood little of such things
now,

They are afraid and at night they pray.

His children's children growing in a waste land of plenty

Starving and surfeited

Lonely, blindly resentful

Have seen in the tombs in high places,

In the careful fingering out of items of beauty

Also an acceptance of old wounds and disasters,

And the spirits of men turning inward starving and drying
up at the source.

And they have said, the blindness of the fathers shall not be
visited upon the children.

And now what they said has meaning, millions strong.

RUTH LIEBERMANN

THEY TELL ME . . .

HENRY AND MONA WILLIAMS have returned to Carmel for the winter after an enchanting Summer spent on Strout Island off the coast of Maine, where they were the only inhabitants. Mona wrote a novel but Henry spent most of his time working on improvements on the house and cabins, indulging in his favorite pastime, fishing, and discussing life with the lobstermen who all worship him. Williams, who like his father Jesse Lynch Williams, knows how to savor life, from a glass of red wine or his own-mixed salad to world changes in ethics and social customs, is perhaps one of the best-known fishing and hunting writers next to Hemingway. He is at present concentrating on short stories; his novel, entered for the Houghton Mifflin fellowship last Fall, came very near the top. It is a novel about Maine.

The Williams' drove across the continent with their two small children, Karin and Christopher, who have now made this trek three times in two years and are very fond of it.

AND SPEAKING of Hemingway, he is in Montana just finishing a new novel.

THE WORLD'S POPULATION is richer by one. Mike Gold writes: "Well, it happened last night. Seven pound boy named Nick. All's well with babe and mother, but daddy's in a fog." The fog will clear, Mike! New strength to the United Front!

SIMON AND SCHUSTER are issuing reprints of some of their best-sellers of past seasons at low prices. The series include "Van Loon's Geography," formerly \$3.75, now \$1.79; "Nijinsky" formerly \$3.75, now \$1.49; "The History of the Russian Revolution" by Leon Trotsky, formerly \$10.00, now \$2.98; and "Cross Word Puzzle Books," Series 10 through 19, formerly \$1.35 each, now \$.49. The publishers report a sharp rise in the sales of cross word puzzle books. The reprints have already sold 37,500 copies. In 1937, the publishers plan to add the following to the series: "Men of Art" and "Modern Art" by Thomas Craven, "The Victor Book of the Symphony" by Charles O'Connell, and "A Treasury of the Theatre," edited by Burns Mantle.

THE HOGARTH PRESS in England, owned by Leonard and Virginia Woolf, announces publication of a new novel by Virginia Woolf called "The Years," which will be one of her longest. It will cover the last fifty years and give the events of that period in the individual lives of certain people, then at the end give a bird's-eye view of the whole.

WEBB MILLER, whose journal of his twenty years as a foreign correspondent was published on November 11th by Simon and Schuster under the title of "I Found No Peace," has just telephoned the Inner Sanctum from London to report his return from the Toledo front in Spain. Mr. Miller was present at the fall of Toledo and the Alcazar, was arrested and almost executed. Later, while motoring to Oviedo, he barely escaped death by rifle fire. In the course of his transatlantic telephone conversation he expressed the wish that he could add to his forthcoming book this postscript: "I'm sick of the human race." As a foreign correspondent for the United Press Associations, Mr. Miller has had ringside seats for every important battle from Verdun to Addis Ababa, but he told his publishers that nothing he has ever seen could equal the cruelty and horror that he has witnessed in Spain. "I Found No Peace" is the December selection of "The Literary Guild."

Among other things it has a very exciting account of the story, trial, witticisms and execution (by guillotine) of the French blue-beard, Landru.

HAVING COMPLETED his 40 drawings of distinguished men of letters for "Portraits and Self-Portraits," announced for November publication by Houghton Mifflin Company, Georges Schrieber is turning with enthusiasm to feminine faces. His most recent portrait is of Frieda Lawrence, whom he has been visiting at her ranch near Taos, New Mexico.

THE LEAGUE OF AMERICAN WRITERS sends out the following notes about the activities of its members:

Thomas Bell's "All Brides Are Beautiful" is being very favorably commented upon as a novel with a class struggle theme done vigorously and gaily without a lugubrious moment. . . . Van Wyck Brooks' "The Flowering of New England" is in its seventh edition.

George Dangerfield is on a lecture tour. . . . James Farrell's new book, "A World I Never Made," was in the third edition a few days after publication. . . . Genevieve Taggard's "Calling Western Union" has a special interest in autobiographical prose passages which explain her turn to revolutionary subject matter. . . . Merle Colby is Assistant State Director of the Massachusetts Writers' Projects.

ELLA WINTER



HIS WORDS GO ON ♦ ♦ ♦

He taught people to see, he forced them to think, he inspired them to act. His great "Autobiography," part of the intellectual heritage of our time, did not, to his mind, say it all, for he was still intensely alive, making new discoveries about the America to which he returned in 1927. Up to the day he died, he was deep in the native environment of America, making new soundings, speaking to a vital, turbulent world.

LINCOLN STEFFENS SPEAKING

This, the last book Lincoln Steffens wrote before he died, epitomizes his knowledge of and reflections upon the current scene. It is typical Lincoln Steffens, a penetrating, alert, humorous commentary on most of the people and events worth comment. In addition to selections from his columns, a number of longer pieces appear as Interludes. \$2.50

HARCOURT, BRACE AND CO., 383 MADISON, N. Y. C.