

papers, bitter rivals—the one a hide-bound Tory organ and the other a mouth-piece for the most advanced Liberals. He composes thundering leaders for both, and is a shining success in both jobs. Finally, a third paper, occupying the middle ground, is started in the town, and he takes that on also! One suspects that there must have been a living sitter for this extremely amusing portrait; in his dedicatory note, indeed, Mr. Montague is at pains to declare that the original was *not* employed by the *Guardian*. Whatever the source of the story, it is a charming and uproarious piece of buffoonery, carried on with the utmost dexterity from start to finish. Satirical novels are all too few: in England, since Max Beerbohm retired to Italy and Mr. Montague took to anatomizing the war, the only practitioner in the form is Aldous Huxley. In America there is Carl Van Vechten, but who else? It is a pity that the field is not more assiduously cultivated.

"Country People" is Miss Suckow's first book, but it is quite bare of the usual obviousness and irresolution of the novice. On the contrary, it is a highly competent piece of work, judiciously planned and expertly executed. Miss Suckow, indeed, is extraordinary among writers of fiction, for she seems to have gone through no apprenticeship. Her first short story, "Uprooted," published in the *Midland* in February, 1921, instantly attracted attention, and before the end of that year, after she had printed two stories in the *Smart Set*, she was almost universally recognized as a writer of sound and unusual capacity. "Country People" amply confirms this view of her. A simple story of a farming family in Iowa, shorter than the average novel and entirely without any sign of a conventional plot, it yet manages to produce a powerful and brilliant effect of reality. You may not be interested in such folks, but you will find it hard to resist the fascination of this austere account of them. They begin to live on the first few pages, and before the first chapter is ended they seem almost

more real than reality itself. Nor is the thing merely dazzling representation. There is the same deep feeling in it that Miss Cather gets into her stories—the same profound understanding of simple and stupid people—the same eloquent picture of life as men and women lead it on lonely farms and in remote and sleepy country towns. Certainly, the American yokel of the Middle West has never had a more sympathetic and understanding interpreter, not even Miss Cather herself. There is no self-conscious aloofness, no air of a biologist studying strange animals; instead the chronicle is unrolled in its own terms, by one who misses no detail of it, on the surface or under. A curiously impressive piece of work, indeed. And by a writer whose future seems unquestionably secure. She has developed, full-blown, a technic that meets accurately the demands of the material before her—and what tempting material it is, and how thoroughly she seems to have mastered it!

The Slave and His Ways

THE AMERICAN LABOR YEAR BOOK, 1923-24. New York: *The Rand School of Social Science*.

REBELLION IN LABOR UNIONS, by Sylvia Kopald, Ph. D. New York: *Boni & Liveright*.

THE PERSONAL RELATION IN INDUSTRY, by John D. Rockefeller, Jr. New York: *Boni & Liveright*.

ENGLAND'S LABOR RULERS, by Iconoclast, with a foreword by S. K. Ratcliffe. New York: *Thomas Seltzer*.

Of these books, two are quite worthless: that by young Mr. Rockefeller and that on the English Labor Cabinet—the latter because it depicts the present jobholders through a purple haze and as noble altruists, and the former because it is made up principally of sentimental slush. The Labor Cabinet, as a matter of fact, is almost indistinguishable from any other cabinet. Most of its members have been hunting good jobs for themselves all their lives, and those that have been free from the itch in the past are now acquiring it in office. They will function hereafter, not as prophets and martyrs, but as politicians

pure and simple, and when they are kicked out at last by a disappointed and irate populace they will leave behind them a smell exactly like that which followed all their predecessors. "Iconoclast" is thus a fanciful writer, and very romantic. Mr. Rockefeller is still worse. His remedy for labor unrest consists of "the introduction of a new spirit into the relationship between the parties in industry—the spirit of cooperation and brotherhood." The same dose, I believe, is prescribed for the French and Germans, for cats and dogs, for landlord and tenant, and for Ku Kluxer and Pope. Most very rich men, when they aspire to write books, hire needy literati to do it for them. Mr. Rockefeller, I suspect, wrote this one himself. Let him avoid such hazardous originality hereafter.

The American Labor Year Book, though it is published by the Rand School and thus leans a bit toward the left, is on the whole a workmanlike, impartial and extremely valuable compilation. Its statistics are elaborate and apparently reliable, and they cover not only the United States, but also all other countries. They reveal very eloquently the gradual wearing down of labor in the United States by capital's vigorous and well-planned war of attrition. The American Federation of Labor, between 1920 and 1923, lost 1,152,272 members, or nearly 30 per cent of its total membership. Meanwhile, all the so-called Red labor organizations—for example, the I. W. W.—decayed even more rapidly. The census returns of homes owned in the United States stop with the year 1900; they show, during the thirty years previous, a steady increase in renters. When they come in for the years since 1920 they will show, I believe, that that increase has been greatly accelerated. The working classes, in truth, are fast losing their old independence. The money that they collared during the war was

chiefly fool's gold; it slipped through their fingers very quickly. Today a workingman who owns his own home, even in the smaller towns, is becoming a rarity; when he still claims title to it his equity is commonly very slight. Capital bribed him, during the war, to be docile, and has now taken back the bribe. He mortgaged his house to buy Liberty bonds at 100, and now they are in the strong-boxes of his masters, bought at 83.

Dr. Kopald's volume deals with the resultant unrest in the labor unions—the widespread feeling among the toilers that their leaders have led them badly. She presents an elaborate study of four outlaw strikes. In one case, so far as I can make out, the strikers seem to have been mere idiots. In the other three cases one finds them with plausible causes, but flinging themselves in vain against unbeatable combinations of bosses and orthodox labor leaders. That the latter hold on to their offices, despite their incompetence and worse, often puzzles superficial observers of the labor movement. Dr. Kopald shows very simply how the trick is done. All the difficulties of democratic government in general are reproduced in the labor union, and in exaggerated forms. It would be as hard for the organized slaves of the United States to get rid of such incompetent leaders as Sam Gompers as it is for the whole people to get rid of such mountebanks as Coolidge. The labor jobholder defends his job from behind unscalable ramparts. The very fact that he is in office, with control of all the union machinery for disseminating news and doctrine, makes it a practical impossibility to get him out. So he goes on dining with the bosses, touring the country in Pullmans, putting up at the best hotels and paying instalments on his Pierce-Arrow. And meanwhile, his dupes gradually lose their savings and their hides.

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