

Inside Stuff

MONEY WRITES, by Upton Sinclair. \$2.50. 8½ x 5¾; 227 pp. New York: *Albert & Charles Boni*.

IN THIS tract Mr. Sinclair returns to the thesis of his earlier work, "Mammonart"—that the Money Power has the art of swell letters by the ear—and applies it to American writers and their books. Practically all of them, he says, are slaves to the Golden Calf, or, at all events to Wall Street, the Pennsylvania Railroad, and George Horace Lorimer. They not only write for money; they also write from the standpoint of money. Their view of the world is that of the Park avenue *noblesse*. Mr. Sinclair lists some of them on his slip-cover: James Branch Cabell, Joseph Hergesheimer, Sinclair Lewis, Gertrude Ather-ton, Carl Sandburg, Carl Van Vechten, Edna Ferber, the late Jack London, and so on. "Through them," he says, "*Wall Street Writes!*" (His own italics, capital W and exclamation point). And inside he adds many more: Edgar Lee Masters, Booth Tarkington, Wallace Irwin, Rupert Hughes, Stewart Edward White, Zane Grey, Robert Herrick, Winston Churchill, Edith Wharton, Sherwood Anderson.

The case of Anderson, it appears, is typical. Viewing the world, he observes that it is full of misery. Men with pre-war Scotch tastes have corn likker incomes. Men with soaring souls have wives in greasy Mother Hubbards. Women who yearn to Express Themselves are doomed to endless potato-peeling. Women born to make Jack Gilbert happy are married to garage-keepers in Iowa. Anderson, noticing all this, finds himself very uneasy. It is a distressing business, indeed. Having a knack for literary composition, what ought he to do about it? Sinclair answers instantly. He ought to say at once: "Yes, of course, I see the class struggle. How could any clear-sighted man fail to see it? How could any honest man fail to report it?" But an unseen hand holds him back, for "no one who understands economic inequality as a cause of social and individual degeneration is permitted to hold

any responsible post in capitalist society." So instead of filling his reports with Marxian indignation, Anderson resorts to the lewd quackeries of Freudism, which is a madness of Greenwich Village, which, as every one knows, is an outhouse of Wall Street.

Hergesheimer is even worse. Having sold himself to the Morgans, he stalks about in "brocaded pajamas of burnt orange and cerulean and glass green," glorying in his shame. Once he was a struggling artist, poor and virtuous—a sort of American Villon. Living upon crusts, he tried to paint. His gaudiest dream, in those far-off and innocent days, was to get a contract to paint a side-show front. But Wall Street saw to it that he never got it. More, Wall Street proceeded to tempt and fetch him. With demoniacal subtlety, it sent a beautiful and intelligent young woman across his path—the daughter of a Pennsylvania millionaire. An artist, he was enchanted. A man, he was presently in love. To make sure of him, the lady's relatives were induced to set their dogs upon him. Instantly, he was lost; the High Church rector from Wall Street, conveniently in waiting, tied the knot. Next day Hergesheimer heaved his palette and maulstick into the fire, bought a gold-plated Corona, and began business as a Wall Street novelist. Now he rolls in luxury. His house at West Chester, Pa., is an ivory tower crammed with objects of art—carpets from Beluchistan and Persia, diamond-studded safety razors, solid platinum dog-collars, Hepplewhite cocktail-shakers. In it he entertains Russian grand dukes, Long Island millionaires, the editors of the *Saturday Evening Post*, the more conservative United States Senators, and such members of the literati and cinemati as have aseptic table manners. Art has passed out of his mind. He produces only such revolting Wall Street propaganda as "Java Head," "Cytherea" and "San Cristobal de la Habana." In all his works there is not a single mention of the class struggle. He refused to march in any of the Sacco-Vanzetti parades.

But it is not only the Money Trust that has corrupted the literary art and mystery in America: there is also the Booze Trust. It works in two ways: first, by debauching Socialist authors, and second, by endowing wet magazines. The late Jack London offered a shining example of the former process: once the Booze Trust had got him in its clutches, it handed him over, roaring drunk, to its papa, the Money Trust, and thereafter he quit Socialism and went to work for the Hearst magazines. An example of the latter form of corruption is afforded by *THE AMERICAN MERCURY*. Its editor, it appears, is "a man of German descent and continental tastes," who "has always had his cocktails, and always means to have them." Having been informed, some years back, that he had a flair for literary composition, certain "gentlemen of wealth" were "moved to put up money to found a magazine for him," and in the pages of that magazine he now offers unlimited space, at lavish rates of pay, to "writers who defend the American saloon." But writers who "point out the destructive effects of alcohol upon genius" are barred out, just as Marxians are barred out. The amount of the subsidy to *THE AMERICAN MERCURY* Dr. Sinclair does not mention: he has heard it privately, but his delicate sense of the proprieties prevents him revealing it. There is, however, no reason why it should not be known. It was \$10,000,000. Nor is it necessary any longer to conceal the identity of the "gentlemen of wealth" who forked it up. They were John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Sebastian S. Kresge and Edward W. Bok.

The Third Degree

LITERARY BLASPHEMIES, by Ernest Boyd. \$2.50.
8½ x 5½; 265 pp. New York: Harper & Brothers.

WHY was this book not written long ago? For who, now that it is written, will deny that it is fundamentally sound—that most of the doctrines it preaches are immensely more plausible and persuasive than the

stale nonsense inflicted upon sophomores, women's clubs, and the customers of literary magazines? The professors, I suspect, will find it hard to put Boyd in his place: he knows more than any of them, and is, in fact, a sort of super-professor, even to the whiskers and the sepulchral High Church voice. He could pass, as the Afro-american publicists say, not only at Vassar, Yale and the Iowa Wesleyan, but even at Oxford.

But here he indulges himself in ribaldries that must needs make the professorial blood run icy cold. John Milton, under his horrible blow-pipe, disintegrates into a puff of SO₂ and a sediment of Lenten ashes. Dickens becomes a manufacturer of sugar-teats for the immature—in brief, for children and morons. Poe becomes "a hard-working, neurasthenic journalist, whose beautiful eyes and caustic pedantry gave him his hour of fame and opprobrium." And Whitman—but for poor old Walt there is mourning rather than sneers. It is his dreadful fate, in Hell thirty-six years, to be patronized by the "scholar swells" he despised, and imitated by the poetasters he hated. He is the father, argues Boyd, of the whole rabble of Expressionists, Imagists, Dadists, Futurists, Ultraists and other such keepers of poetical hot-dog stands. It is a fact as sad as Emerson's begetting of the New Thought.

Boyd's most penetrating and convincing essay, though his shortest, is the one upon Henry James: what remains of that transplanted tuberosity, when it is done, is little save a cloud of yellowing petals, fluttering in the wind. His worst is the one on Shakespeare, for what he says in it has been better said by George Bernard Shaw, and moreover, most of it is irrelevant and some of it is not true. His revaluations are by no means all destructive—which should be some consolation to the apostles of sweetness and light. Of Swift, Byron and Thomas Hardy he has many highly polite things to say, though they are never the usual things. Why, he asks, has the terrible Swift become transmogrified into the