



THINGS HAPPENED TO HER

She was graduated from college — she wanted to see things worth writing about. She went to a mining town — lived with a miner's family — became one of them.

She went through a strike with the miners, begged with their children, dressed as a boy and descended into a mine herself. She witnessed a thousand things which challenged her typewriter, has set it all down in fast moving, authentic narrative — a story, strange, breath-taking, every word of it excitingly factual. It is an unforgettable human document, filled with the stuff that makes great books. Some of Miss Gilfillan's shorter works have appeared in *The Forum*. \$2.50.

I WENT TO PIT COLLEGE

by Lauren Gilfillan

*The Literary Guild
Selection for March*

An eyewitness account of Soviet Russia since 1921, written by the *New York Times'* special correspondent who covered Russia for 12 years and achieved one of the most memorable feats in the history of journalism. \$2.75.

DURANTY REPORTS RUSSIA

by Walter Duranty

VIKING PRESS, INC.



BOOKS IN BRIEF

BY EDITH H. WALTON



THE ROBBER BARONS, by Matthew Josephson (Harcourt, Brace, \$3.00). American capitalism has become somewhat more urbane in the twentieth century, and one reads half incredulously the story of the great industrialists, bankers, and railroad kings who joyously raped the country in the decades following the Civil War. As Mr. Josephson points out in his excellent and solidly documented book, the potential masters of America were too canny to go to war themselves. Young as they were at the time, Jay Gould, Jay Cooke, Jim Fisk, Collis Huntington, Rockefeller, Morgan, Carnegie, and the rest knew enough to stay home and build the foundations of their power while others fought. Within a decade they were seated firmly in the saddle and riding hard. In a book which necessarily emphasizes the terrific and insensate railroad wars, Mr. Josephson explains how they won their spoils, how they consolidated them, how they arrogantly ignored the public welfare, how, with unimaginable waste, extravagance, and mutual throat-cutting, they built up the present American system. He dwells on the buffooneries of the Erie Ring, the mad rush of rails to the Pacific, the wholesale watering of stock, the growth of modern monopolies as exemplified by the Standard Oil Company, the emergence of the investment banker in the person of J. P. Morgan. Obviously Mr. Josephson owes a considerable debt to Gustavus Myers' *History of the Great American Fortunes*, and to other pioneers in the field, but he has retold the brutal story of America's "development" colorfully, crisply, and with conscientious thoroughness. Though Mr. Josephson refrains from much overt commentary, and is willing to admit that these amoral giants were indeed titans of a sort, *The Robber Barons* is, as it was intended to be, an appalling book. It should be made compulsory reading.

THE NATIVE'S RETURN, by Louis Adamic (Harper, \$2.75). The Guggenheim Foundation did America a favor, as things turned out, when it awarded a European Fellowship to Mr. Adamic. He used it to return to his native country, Yugoslavia — which he had not seen since he was fourteen — and he brought back a fresh-flavored, discerning book which is pure delight. On the strength of two previous books and numerous odd writings Mr. Adamic found that all Yugoslavia was primed to welcome him as a famous native son. He was fêted prodigiously in his home district, where he re-encountered his large

and charming family of hearty peasants; he was given every facility to travel the length and breadth of his picturesque but backward land. He saw Dalmatia; stern, impoverished Montenegro; Sarajevo, that largely Turkish city; and Belgrade the boom-town capital whose predatory rulers maintain a stranglehold on the helpless agricultural regions. His book is at once a fascinating record of old customs and superstitions in a peculiarly primitive country and an analysis of the important part which Yugoslavia plays in modern European politics. He writes informally and with infectious zest, and however little you may care about the Balkans, you will like this book.

THEY ALL SANG, by Edward B. Marks, as told to Abbott J. Liebling (Viking, \$3.50). A prominent music publisher, Mr. Marks has known everyone in the world of Tin Pan Alley since Tony Pastor reigned over the burlesque centers of Fourteenth Street. This is the kind of book that makes old-timers ache with remembrance and whistle teary-eyed into their beer. Ed Marks describes how he put his songs across from the days when he "plugged" them by personal persuasion in the saloons and beer halls of the nineties to the time when the war, the phonograph, and the radio created new, urgent problems for the music trade. His book is lavish with wistful reminiscences of the old minstrel shows, of Lillian Russell and Anna Held and Harrigan and Hart. It is profusely illustrated with facsimiles of those incredible bathetic songs of the age of innocence, and with portraits of the buxom beauties who then delighted New York. The book is badly written, jumbled, scrappy, but the material is so enthralling that it carries its own weight and Mr. Marks' gusto is un-failing. Specialists in New York, the nineties, and popular music will welcome it with cheers, and almost anyone else ought to find it grand reading.

MORE OR LESS ABOUT MYSELF, by Margot Oxford (Dutton, \$4.00). Only death, one gathers, could curb the tongue of Margot Asquith, now Countess of Oxford and Asquith. Some ten years older than when she wrote her galvanizing autobiography, she is still as witty, as richly primed with gossip, as reckless of reputations, and as naively self-centered. Her present book is a chaotic potpourri, repetitious at some points, but as eccentrically vigorous as Margot herself. One cannot ignore this woman. On the heels of some fatuous bit

BOOKS IN BRIEF

of arrogance, some appalling lapse of taste, she will draw in corrosive ink the portrait of a political personage — a Balfour, a Churchill, a Salisbury, a Lloyd George — and one will marvel once more that so much canny acumen can be joined to such folly. As wife of the Prime Minister, and as a celebrity in her own right, she knew everybody — and almost everybody of political importance in latter-day England is a target for her wit. Her gossip is better than her philosophizing, but even at her worst there is a kind of galantry and honesty about Margot which prevents one from ever being too much annoyed.

THE WORLD IS YOURS, by G. B. Lancaster (Appleton-Century, \$2.50). Written in a rich and quite powerful prose this novel of the Yukon uses all the appurtenances of a Jack London adventure story and yet manages to differ from the genre. Primarily it is the tragic romance of Tamsin MacDonald and Kirk Regard, who were children in the roaring gold rush days, with their tinkly-tink saloons, and who grew up to develop an ill-starred passion for one another. The novel is full of color and action — and of excellent descriptions of the Yukon wilderness — but it pays far more attention to characterization than the average adventure yarn.

CITY HARVEST, by Margaret Cheney Dawson (Macmillan, \$3.00). The cheating of the modern sophisticate, who lives by a code as barren and exacting as Puritanism itself, is the theme of this very subtle and adroit story. The action is confined to the dizzy merry-making of New Year's Eve, 1932, and the group of New York intellectuals who are involved commit infidelities and wear their hearts out in the perpetual consciousness that they are playing a false rôle. Mrs. Dawson knows the type. Her purpose is serious and her book more authentic and satisfactory than the usual "sophisticated" novel.

THE PARIS FRONT, by Michel Corday (Dutton, \$5.00). So many people, as we have come to understand, were grievously duped by the war that the author of this "unpublished diary: 1914-1918" seems preternaturally gifted with foresight and common sense. A well-known writer, holding a high position in the Civil Service, M. Corday was the familiar of the great during the war years, a witness to the manner in which they and the rest of France succumbed to the war hysteria. A relentless pacifist from the first, he reveals with unsparing bitterness the suffering, corruption, and folly which war breeds. The wranglings of the ministers and generals, the heartless extravagance of the profiteers, the excesses of stupid

The Robber Barons

BY MATTHEW JOSEPHSON

"It ought to be read by every one who wants a genuine insight into our national history. Readers who have learned about the Vanderbilts, the Goulds, the Fisks and the Rockefellers, will not be too greatly astonished at what is currently revealed about the Insulls, the Mitchells and the Wiggins."

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