

reflects life in Russia as it was up to 1942, and, of course, it is loyal to Soviet ambitions, even when considering the harshest regulations. Like all Russian novels, it requires patience, but parts of it are animated and instructive.

There is hard boiled murder, fine Italian intrigue of the de Medici period, love, and passion, in *The Sword of Il Grande*, by Will Creed (Little, Brown, \$3.00). It is set in imaginary Vicenda with less historical and more romantic attention than customary. A stalwart hero (who should have been a better swordsman for my money), a deformed and evil son and heir to the ruler, a necromancer, poison, and even a torture chamber all add up to a period novel that will hold your interest if you like that sort of thing.

The second volume of the historical romance depicting the life of Robert Burns is *The Song in the Green Thorn Tree*, by James Barke (Macmillan, \$3.50). This covers two years of Burns' love making, writing, and enjoying his wild oats while preaching against intolerance and the stiff-necked requirements of the church and the times. It is a must for Burns fans.

A pleasant tale of early New England, *The Mill on Mad River*, by Howard Clarke (Atlantic-Little, Brown, \$2.75), is a gentle, old-fashioned story of a young man in Waterbury, Connecticut. The plot is thin; interest lies in the characters, the customs, and the little things that made up small town life in 1810, with pioneering and struggle, and, of course, love.

GENERAL INTEREST

Rumbles of the recent war, wholly on the military side, go with *The AAF Against Japan*, by Vern Haugland (Harper's \$5.00). This is the story of the American air force and its uphill fight in the Far East, from Alaska and Australia, over the South Sea Islands, to its ultimate destination in Japan. It is a fairly complete record, taken from government files and individual reports.

The makings of the dramatic expose of the Russian spy ring in Canada are revealed in *The Iron Curtain*, by Igor Gouzenko (Dutton, \$3.00). Gouzenko tells his story as a boy near Moscow, growing up under the

Pioneer movement of the Soviet, and going on to the war and his post at the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa. The climax is now history, but the descriptions of life in Russia, and of the intrigue in the embassy in Canada, are of definite interest.

Two recent volumes in the Viking Portable Library offer rich reading in handy form. One is *Swift*, edited by Carl Van Doren, who also supplies a suitable introductory résumé of Swift's career. The other is *Veblen*, edited by Max Lerner. The first half of the famous *Theory of the Leisure Class* is given complete, as well as a liberal selection from Veblen's other works. Each volume is \$2.00.

For New Yorkers and strangers alike, *New York City*, by the Editors of *Look* in collaboration with Frederick L. Allen (Houghton, Mifflin, \$5.00), is a fascinating introduction, guide book, and souvenir. It is fascinating enough to enthrall the native, because it gives vignettes of the things he knows, dislikes, and loves all at once. With pictures, maps, and other illustrations, it offers the visitor information and a broad idea of what to look for when in town.

Life in Sumatra, with all its exotic charm and color, is reflected in *Tropical Adventure*, by H. Tscherning Petersen (Roy, \$3.50). The Danish author put in a year on a plantation in his youth and makes an entertaining book of his experiences with the people and the customs of the Far East. His adventures with the native men—and a woman—sound as honest as they seem natural.

One of those curious stories of former Axis officials telling all is *From the Ashes of Disgrace*, by Admiral Franco Maugeri (Reynal & Hitchcock, \$4.00). While Italy was in the war, he was, of course, carrying out his duties as a naval officer against the United Nations. After Italy's surrender, he worked for the democracies. During the former period his recollections seem to have a tinge of regret and apology that luck did not favor the Italians. Later he was staunchly for the Allies. The interesting portions are his conversations with Mussolini, Bagdolio, and other of the bigwigs, and the descriptions of the changes when the fortunes of war turned.

YES!

By JAMES CARR

IN January, 1948, the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics issued a budget for a "modest but adequate American standard of living" for a family of four. The average income necessary to sustain this living standard was estimated at \$3,200; with later rises in prices the necessary national average would become \$3,450, or approximately \$66.00 per week. For a 40-hour week, this would call for an hourly wage of \$1.65.

Only a glance at the items of this budget confirms the statement of the Bureau that this is not a "luxury" budget. The wife of the family is permitted one new wool dress about every five years, and half soles on old shoes every second year. All four members of the family are allotted a single visit to the dentist every two years. For entertainment, the man of the house may have the equivalent of one beer a week (about 10 cents). No "new look" nonsense for the women of this household! Illness, or even a toothache, may plunge the family into debt.

So much for those American families with an average yearly income of more than \$3,000. Without allowing for any time off, Philip Murray, of the C.I.O., recently estimated that the average weekly earnings of the American worker, when multiplied by 52 weeks, comes to only \$2,730. And even this represents a high hourly wage to many honest American workers. According to statistics compiled in 1946, almost seven per cent of the four-person urban families in the United States had incomes below \$1,500; 27 per cent had below \$2,500, and almost 39 per cent had below \$3,000. Even in mid-1946, the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated income for an acceptable living standard was more than \$2,700 annually. Prices today are still rising; late in June the Bureau reported that as of mid-May the consumer price index (based on the 1935-1939 average at 100), hit a new record at 170.5. All over the United States, lower income groups are struggling to make ends meet in the face of spiralling prices.

FORUM: Ar

Federal Reserve Bank surveys point up the plight of millions of Americans. By June, 1947, more than half the total Series E savings bonds in the lower denominations had been redeemed. Between January and June of 1947, for every one hundred \$25.00 bonds sold, 194 were cashed in. In June, 1948, life insurance companies reported a 25 per cent increase for the past year in the surrender of policies for cash.

Between the fourth quarter of 1946 and the fourth quarter of 1947, the annual rate of savings declined by \$2.1 billion, despite the rise in incomes after taxes at an annual rate of \$15 million. The rate of saving today is almost as low as it was in the low-income year of 1937! According to the Federal Reserve Board, in 1945 individuals with incomes of less than \$3,000 held 15 per cent of the total net savings; this same group in 1946 held only three per cent. True enough, the percentage held by those with incomes of over \$7,500 increased markedly; this fact merely accentuates some of the difficulties faced by the common man today. Actually, the consumer's dollar today buys only 60 cents worth of goods, compared with its value in 1939. The dollar has in fact been shrinking steadily in value since we entered World War II, for in 1942, the dollar was able to buy only as much goods and services as 85 cents bought in 1939. By 1946, the dollar was buying only 71 cents worth, although before price controls were destroyed the dollar was worth more than 75 cents. By the spring of 1948, consumers were getting less for every dollar than they got for 60 cents in 1939, according to the B.L.S. official consumers' price index. Even these figures, however, do not present a complete picture. The *food dollar*, for example, is worth only 47 cents, and the *meat*

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