

is not sufficiently plausible. Contrary to the publishers' statement that this play "has not heretofore appeared in any language," it should be noted that the original, from which the English text differs in some particulars, was published in 1922 in a Petersburg miscellany under the title "The Old Man."

Under the Red Flag. By Richard Eaton. Brentano's. \$2.50.

Another of those "disclosures" of lurid "intimate details of the Soviet regime" which seem rather out of date in 1924, when Moscow is full of foreign journalists, observers, business men, and adventurers, and when the intercourse between Russia and the outside world is practically free and unhampered. Mr. Eaton went to Russia as correspondent of the *London Daily Mail*, which is notorious for its anti-Soviet propaganda. Mr. Eaton spent a few weeks in Russia, most of which were passed in prison. His prison experiences, even after they have been spiced with the story of his romantic attitude toward the "beautiful Simionova," "the terrible woman inquisitor" of the Cheka, have evidently not been sufficient to fill a book; so Mr. Eaton makes up with a "study" of life and conditions in Russia in all their various aspects. One can only marvel at the meager preparation which individuals with Mr. Eaton's snobbish outlook on the world need before they set out to give their "studies" to the public.

Figures in Modern Literature. By J. B. Priestley. Dodd, Mead and Company. \$2.50.

This volume, reprinted for the most part from the *London Mercury*, is a fair example of the work of the younger British writers who have rallied around that publication since its foundation in 1919. Mr. Priestley's table of contents is not at all conventional. He treats Arnold Bennett, De la Mare, Hewlett, A. E. Housman, W. W. Jacobs, Robert Lynd, George Saintsbury, Santayana, and the *Mercury's* versatile editor, J. C. Squire. Mr. Priestley is a good appreciator. He finds the best things he can in his subjects, and then describes them to the best of his ability, which is sometimes very good indeed. His literary enthusiasm is often the only congruous and unifying element in his work.

The Nation's Poetry Prize

THE NATION offers its fifth annual poetry prize of \$100 for the best poem submitted by an American poet in a contest conducted by *The Nation* each year between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day. The rules for the contest follow:

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2. Manuscripts must be typewritten and must have the name of the author in full on each page of the manuscript submitted.
3. As no manuscripts submitted in this contest will in any circumstances be returned to the author it is unnecessary to inclose return postage. An acknowledgment of the receipt of each manuscript, however, will be sent from this office.
4. No more than three poems from the same author will be admitted to the contest.
5. No restriction is placed upon the subject or form of poems submitted, which may be in any meter or in free verse. It will be impossible, however, to consider poems which are more than 400 lines in length, or which are translations, or which are in any language other than English. Poems arranged in a definite sequence may, if the author so desires, be counted as a single poem.
6. The winning poem will be published in the Midwinter Literary Supplement of *The Nation*, to appear February 11, 1925.
7. Besides the winning poem, *The Nation* reserves the right

to purchase at its usual rates any other poem submitted in the contest.

The judges of the contest are the editors of *The Nation*. Poems should in no case be sent to them personally.

Drama The God of Stumps

IN this age of intellectualized art there is an inevitable but unfortunate tendency to assume of Eugene O'Neill, as of every other arresting artist, that his greatness must lie somehow in the greatness or in the clarity of his thought; to seek in "All God's Chillun" some solution of the problem of race or in the "Hairy Ape" some attitude toward society; and then, not finding them, to fail in the fullest appreciation of the greatness which is his. It was not thought which drove him, as a young man, to seek adventure among the roughest men he could find, and it was not thought which he brought back from this and other experiments in life. Something tempestuous in his nature made him a brother of tempests, and he has sought wherever he could find them the fiercest passions, less anxious to clarify their causes for the benefit of those who love peace than eager to share them, and happy if he could only be exultantly a part of their destructive fury. It is a strange taste, this, to wish to be perpetually racked and tortured, to proceed from violence to violence, and to make of human torture not so much the occasion of other things as the *raison d'être* of drama; but such is his temperament. The meaning and unity of his work lies not in any controlling intellectual idea and certainly not in a "message," but merely in the fact that each play is an experience of extraordinary intensity.

Young-man-like, O'Neill first assumed that the fiercest passions were to be found where the outward circumstances of life were wildest and most uncontrolled. He sought among men of the sea, ignorant of convention and wholly without inhibitions, powerful appetites and bare tragedies, embodying his observations in the group of little plays now performed for the first time as a whole (and performed well) at the Provincetown Theater under the title of "S. S. Glencairn"; but maturity has taught him the paradox that where there is most smoke there is not necessarily most fire. He has learned that souls confined in a nut-shell may yet be lords of infinite space; that spirits cabined and confined by very virtue of the fact that they have no outlet explode finally with the greatest spiritual violence. As though to signalize the discovery of this truth he has, in his latest play, "Desire Under the Elms" (Greenwich Village Theater), limited the horizon of his characters, physically and spiritually, to the tiny New England farm upon which the action passes, and has made their intensity spring from the limitations of their experience. Whether he or Robert Edmond Jones conceived the idea of setting the stage with a single permanent scene showing one end of the farmhouse, and of removing sections of the wall when it becomes necessary to expose one or more of the rooms inside, I do not know; but this method of staging is admirably calculated to draw attention to the controlling circumstances of the play. It is a story of human relationships become intolerably tense because intolerably close and limited, of the possessive instinct grown inhumanly powerful because the opportunities for its gratification are so small, and of physical passion terribly destructive in the end because so long restrained by the sense of sin. To its young hero the stony farm is all the wealth of the world, the young wife of his father all the lust of the flesh. In that tiny corner each character finds enough to stimulate passions which fill, for him, the universe.

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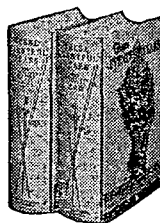


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single object which has absorbed his life. Two of his sons, rebelling against the hopelessness of their life, leave him for the gold-fields; the third, who remains with him in dogged determination to inherit the farm, he hates; and so he marries once more in the hope of begetting in his old age a son to whom, as part of himself, he can leave his property without ceasing to own it. But he has reckoned without considering the possessive instinct of the wife herself, and so between the three, and in an atmosphere charged with hate, is fought out the three-cornered battle for what has come to be the symbol of earthly possessions. Love springs up between the wife and her foster son, but in such a battle the directest win, and love, confusing the aims of these two, dooms them to tragedy, while to the old man is left the barrenness of lonely triumph. Unlike the others, he has a god, the hard God who hates the easy gold of California or the easy crops of the West, the God who loves stumps and stones and looks with His stern favor upon

such as wring a dour life without softness and without love from a soil barren like their souls. And this God comforts him: "I am hard," he says, when he learns that the baby, murdered by its mother, is not his but his son's: "I am a hard man and I am alone—but so is God."

It may with some show of reason be objected that O'Neill's plays are too crowded with incident, that the imagination of the spectator refuses sometimes to leap with the author so quickly from tense moment to tense moment, or to accept violence piled so unremittingly upon violence, and his latest play is not wholly closed to such objection; but impetuosity is an essential part of his nature and not likely ever to be subdued. To those who, like the present writer, can overlook it, it brings great compensation. "Desire Under the Elms" will be, with one exception, the most moving play seen during the current season. It is competently acted and Mary Morris and Walter Huston deserve special mention. JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH

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International Relations Section

Russia's Industrial Progress

By LEON TALMY

THE Soviet fiscal year recently ended (September 30) was marked with a series of ups and downs. The economic organization of the country underwent severe trials during which the soundness and vitality of the industrial policy inaugurated by the Soviet Government was put to a serious test. At the beginning of the year the country went through a crisis which resulted in overproduction owing to the low demand for manufactured products. The main cause of this crisis lay in the problem of the "shears," as it was graphically described by Trotsky. The prices for manufactured articles were disproportionately high as compared with the prices for agricultural products. Consequently the peasant population refrained from buying. The task before the Soviet economic organization was to achieve a decrease in the prices for industrial products and a corresponding raise in the returns for the products of agriculture, so as to "close the shears" and stabilize the normal course of the internal exchange of commodities. This could be brought about by diminishing considerably the overhead expenses of production and, at the same time, expanding the market for agricultural products.

To what extent this task has been achieved is shown by the conditions which were reported at the end of the year. In his report made before the plenary session of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party on October 25, L. B. Kamenev pointed out that, according to the data of the Supreme Council of Public Economy and the State Planning Commission, the production of all industries increased in value over the preceding year by 350,000,000 gold rubles. But, while with the lower output of the previous year the industries had been suffering from overproduction, the increased output in the present year has proved insufficient to satisfy the actual demand for manufactured products. Especially has this been manifest in the case of the textile industry, where by the increased production during this year the output has been brought up to 63 per cent of the pre-war standard.

The output of the industries for which data are available at the Central Statistical Department of the Supreme Council of Public Economy, embracing about 80 per cent of the total production, has amounted to 1,484,000,000 rubles in pre-war prices. This is an increase of about 80 per cent over the output during the preceding fiscal year 1922-1923. The industries, however, have been hampered in their growth to a great extent by the lack of working capital. One of the greatest needs of the industries in Soviet Russia is the rehabilitation of equipment which was badly worn down during the years of civil war. According to calculations made in the *Ekonomicheskaya Zhizn* of October 1, the total need of the industries during the next few years in capital for reequipment and for the organization of new branches of production is figured at 1,000,000,000 gold rubles.

Progress was made in the coal-mining industry and in the oil industry. In the Donetz basin the amount of coal mined reached 540,000,000 poods, which is about 100,000,000 poods more than the original mining program for the year. The oil industry yielded about 360,000,000 poods,

which is 48,000,000 more than in the preceding year. The output of the oil industry has been brought to within 75 per cent of the pre-war level. Yet the significance of this progress is reduced to a certain extent by the slower growth of the heavy industries which are the chief consumers of fuel.

The problem of expanding the market for the agricultural production of the Soviet Union was dealt with in conjunction with the problem of reestablishing the foreign trade of the country. In the fiscal year 1922-1923 the exports totaled 133,200,000 rubles, and the imports 147,000,000 rubles in pre-war prices. A significant detail of the imports is the change in their nature. In the year 1922-1923 food products made up 48 per cent of the imports; in 1923-1924 only 10 per cent. The bulk of the imports during the last year consisted of machinery and raw materials.

The favorable balance which was shown in the foreign trade turnover contributed materially to the success of the monetary reform which was effected during this year and is considered as the greatest economic achievement on the road toward the complete rehabilitation of the economic organism of the country. As a result of this reform the Soviet Union received a stable currency based on the chervonetz. By successive degrees the old depreciated paper money was taken out of circulation and the issue of the new currency was made only against strong security. The financial resources of the country have been steadily growing, as shown by the increase of money in circulation. In December, 1923, the total amount of currency in circulation was 303,000,000 rubles. By the end of September this amount increased to about 650,000,000 rubles.

Owing to growing financial stability the Soviet Government was enabled to limit the issue of currency for budget purposes. The new budget, as announced for the year 1924-1925, is balanced without the issue of currency. The budget, which totals 2,091,648,000 rubles, which is 10 per cent higher than last year, is balanced with a deficit of 80,000,000 rubles, which will be covered by the issue of silver and copper currency. Thus the budget is balanced, in fact, without a deficit for the first time since the war.

A serious setback in the economic reconstruction was the partial crop failure. Besides diminishing the material resources of the Union it required the increase of budget expenditures by 48,000,000 rubles to be used for relief in the stricken districts. The flood in Leningrad will also require the expenditure of an extra 12,000,000 rubles. However, the ultimate effects of the crop failure turned out to be much less disastrous than had been anticipated. According to the report of the Commissariat of Agriculture at the recent session of the Central Executive Committee, the total crop yield will amount to over 2,600,000,000 poods, which is 9 per cent less than the preceding year. This yield, together with the reserves on hand, will not only be sufficient to satisfy the home needs but it will leave a surplus of about 100,000,000 poods for export purposes.

These are, in general outline, the economic facts with which the Soviet Union is entering the eighth year of its existence. In Kamenev's report, referred to above, the situation is summed up as follows:

We are moving forward. The rehabilitation of the industries, and consequently the strengthening of the socialist elements of our economy, has progressed. In the field