

Only a job can solve these problems, can restore dignity and security to youth. And there are no jobs. The hero slides down the conventional social scale until he lands in a Hooverville, the last refuge of the dispossessed proletariat; the reporter slips from the police-card in his hat to the police-club over his head.

Starvation has a remarkable effect on the intellect; the latter becomes susceptible to ideas to which, in the pride of its security, it had been stubbornly closed. Newhouse, who has a remarkable gift for seeing people, shows us the natural transition of the unskilled intellectual toward revolutionary ideas; they come to the ex-reporter not abstractly but out of pitiless experience. And they come through other people—through the worker in the Hooverville shack who reads Earl Browder's report to the Communist Party convention, to those who talk about Scottsboro and Steve Katovis and Angelo Herndon. The movement comes alive through individual workers whose propaganda gains authenticity from visible misery shared by the intellectual.

By the time the hero participates in an unemployed demonstration, gets beaten up and lands in the hospital, his drift toward the revolutionary movement has the inevitability of personal character. The idea is never imposed from above; it is there for the oppressed to understand, when all else has failed, as the sole remedy for the horrors of contemporary society. When you have worn out your shoes looking for work, when the landlady has

thrown you out of the stinking room because you have no rent, when your poverty keeps you from marrying Eileen, when the authorities reply to the demand for jobs with violence, nothing is more natural than to transform youth's previous philosophy of pleasure into a philosophy of struggle. You can't sleep here; not even in the chilly railway station, on the cold park-bench; but you can fight here, everywhere, for the destruction of a society in which your misery is a drop in the sea of the universal misery.

This theme is implicit in Newhouse's story; but it is above all a story, full of life and color and sensation. You are so engrossed in its people and places that the theme steals on you unawares; you read the best passages several times for their wit or poetry, the freshness of the phrasing or the keenness of the insight. The author's hard-boiled pose—characteristic of his generation—cannot conceal his gift for feeling and conveying true emotion. His art, combined with his viewpoint, marks him as one of the best of the younger revolutionary writers. So does his restraint. He does not pretend to speak for his whole generation, or for the whole of the revolutionary youth. There are other twenty-two year old men and women who have come into the revolutionary movement in other ways and have gone into it deeper than the central figure of this novel. But that is another story. Perhaps Newhouse will write it some day.

JOSEPH FREEMAN.

Poet No Longer in Exile

POET IN EXILE, by Antonina Vallentin.
The Viking Press. \$3.

IN view of the fact that old Doctor Plato once wished poets into exile because of their unfitness for an ideal republic, and that more than one man of genius has been condemned to actual exile by the powers ruling his native land, and that we now have the wretched spectacle of the moron, Hitler, banning leaders of German thought who happen to be Jews, and that, even in "enlightened" America, poets are looked upon with contempt and suspicion, even by some Communists, Antonina Vallentin's life of Heine, *Poet in Exile*, is more than a timely book. It is not alone a fascinating narrative around the greatest of all lyric poets, but it reveals with dynamic sincerity the remarkable parallels to be drawn between the Germany of Heine's day and the Germany of ours, with the world of revolution as a growing background. It is impossible in just a few hundred words to summarize this impassioned volume, written with the finest restraint. And it would take more than a few hundred words to carry on the many implications the volume holds for the imagination. Another book might be written on the implications alone. Needless to say, Miss Vallentin's book has not yet appeared in Germany. It came out in France, the land of Heine's adoption.

The author of *Die Lorelei* was more than a love poet, and much more than a mere romanticist, as someone recently dubbed him in *THE NEW MASSES*. The criticaster even went so far as to dub him the howling example of romanticism! Howling ignorance supported by sneering effrontery! Nearly a hundred years ago, Heine fought for his political opinions and was literally banished for them. Spies were continuously on his trail, especially the spies of Metternich, and they haunted his very deathbed, dragged out year after year in torture which Heine greeted with a profoundly realistic, objective, incisive and ironic eye and tongue. As he did everything inside or outside the self. Isn't it known by this time that Heine was Marx's favorite author; that when Marx was 26 and came to Paris with his bride, in order to study economics and sociology, that Heine was one of his first friends and visited him daily? That Heine saved the life of the Marxes' first child, a gentle feat of which the father of *Das Kapital* was proud? That Marx and Heine started a paper called *Vorwärts*? That they disagreed about fundamental principles simply because Marx had a superb singleness of purpose Heine couldn't share completely. Even so, my dear friends, where, turning back ninety years or so, do you find the following passage: "The second act is European; the world revolution, the great duel between those who possess nothing

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ing and the aristocracy of property-holders; and then it will no longer be a question of nationality or of religion, there will be only one Fatherland, the earth, and only one Faith, man's happiness on earth." And who was it wrote to his fellow poets: "Don't coo any more like Werther . . . talk daggers, talk swords!" And who was it saw through certain *professional* proletarian poets who, after a monumental success, fell in love with comfort and degenerated? And who was it felt that Communism possessed "a universal tongue as plain and simple as hunger or envy or death. They are quickly learnt." And who was it, visualizing the possible ruin which threatened his poems in the event of the rise of the proletariat, nonetheless concluded: "Let this old world be smashed in which innocence is long since dead, where egoism prospers and man battens upon man! Let these whited sepulchres be destroyed from top to bottom, these caverns of falsehood and iniquity. And blessed be the grocer who shall one day use the pages of my poems as paper-bags for the coffee and snuff of poor old women, who, in this present world of injustice, too often have to go without that solace!" But enough of Heine. What did Marx say about him in a moment of disappointment? "One cannot judge poets by the standards applied to ordinary people; one must just let them follow their own bent, they are made that way." (And what is their own bent if it be not universal?) And what did Engels write to Marx during Heine's last years? "What an appalling tragedy to see so precious a being die by inches!"

Enough of quotation, and enough, let us pray, of criticism which ridicules not the poet flayed so much as the Communist movement which tolerates such criticism. There is also

together too much facile criticism of others, and too little self-criticism. The air begins to reek of self-complacency, of a holier-than-thou attitude, of a gloomy and gloomier Puritanism. The latest person to rush into print by way of attesting his faith in Communism, comes knocking with a "Please, Mister, let me in—everybody else is a scoundrel." All of a sudden, we hear that Whitman was a bourgeois, that Emily Dickinson was merely fantastic, that a poet whose father never worked in a factory cannot belong to the proletarian movement and is in fact no poet. This last from Mr. Newton Arvin! A list was then given of young men who are poets because their fathers worked in factories. Two older poets were left out of the honored brigade whose fathers *had* worked in factories. Sandburg was one—and the others?

I once asked Mayakowsky how it was the Russian revolutionists fought so many enemies on so many sides at once and with such superhuman bravery. "Partly because"—said he quietly—"when the bands could no longer rouse the tired soldiers to renewed energy, we poets were ordered to the front-line trenches, and harangued and recited to hundreds and thousands of our comrades."

ALFRED KREYMBORG.

Brief Review

BIRTH CONTROL, Its Use and Misuse, by Dorothy Dunbar Bromley. Harper and Brothers. New York. 1934. \$2.50.

Despite Miss Bromley's liberal and humanitarian approach to the subject of birth control, her work is the best of its kind extant in the United States. Simply written, pro-

moting no special type of contraceptive and concealing no advertising for a private physician or surgical supply house, it speaks plainly of rubber sheaths, pessaries and spermicidal jelly, their advantages and drawbacks and their relative factors of safety. Miss Bromley cannot help but show that millions are denied effective birth control aid because of the cost. It is, in fact, impossible to write about abortions, medical attitudes toward birth control, clinics, sterilization, etc., without revealing the nature of our unbidden bedfellow—capitalistic exploitation. In discussing the maternal death rate, Miss Bromley says: "It goes without saying that well-to-do women who have the best medical care and who are not overburdened with housework have a much lower maternal death rate all along the line." No italics are needed. This is the glory of motherhood under capitalism.

TWICE A BAKER'S DOZEN, by Milton Harvey. Margate Press. 25 cents.

There is dramatic pathos in the spectacle of little poets bringing themselves out in badly-printed pamphlets, insinuating their villanelles under the suspicious nose of whatever public such works reach. This pamphlet would not be an exception, or notable in any way, if it were not for the index. This chef d'oeuvre, hysterically placed in the middle of the book, is almost interesting. It tells the reader that the table of contents is divided into two parts, the first of which has the pace of "The Ballad of Wistful Wisteria" to "Mother's Day" and the second ranging from "Altgeld Sonnet" to "John Reed." If some nature-lover is looking around . . . ! But the poems slap down any hope: for instance, the close of "John Reed" goes in for "ephemeral tinsel," "thwart luminous," "that Greatheart," and "Liberty speaks," all in six lines. A John Reed Club writers school might be able to do something for a writer trying to talk about such matters; it is certain that nobody else will have sufficient interest.

CANDLES IN THE STORM, by Robert Littell. Harper and Brothers. \$2.50.

In which Robert Littell, dramatic critic and son of Philip Littell, manages to make a summer colony of artists (author, poet, advertising artist, and mural painter) and their families as drab as a Salvation Army mission. Mr. Littell writes carefully but without vigor. His characterizations are precise and his style unobjectionable, but the result is dishwater.

THE POEMS AND PLAYS OF ROBERT BROWNING, edited with an Introduction by Saxe Commins. Modern Library Giant. \$1.

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