

ing the picturesque quality of Tuscaloosa streets. The charge was that he had made the inhabitants out to be "no better than a bunch of foreigners!" In the midst of a "man hunt," Mr. Carmer visited a Negro church and listened to the preacher shout, "Anythin' the Lord do is right." These are Alabama "extremes."

With placid curiosity Mr. Carmer describes conjure women, poor whites, planters, a Big House with servants taken from the chain gang, and peculiar sea and land folk like the Creoles and the Cajans. The picture of savagery and brutality that emerges is appalling. It includes not only lynchings and chain gangs but also the racial chauvinism of poor whites, some of whom never saw a Negro until they were full-grown men, the complacent cultural backwardness of the ruling class, and the industrial slavery existing in Birmingham.

But Mr. Carmer retains his temper throughout, has no idea of any solutions, and our conservative and liberal friends will be able to read this book with the same delighted horror, and futile pity with which they read *I Went to Pit College*. Only Communists will continue to vex that Southern ruling class which believes that Alabama and Paris are the only places where "civilized man can comfortably live."

SAMUEL LEVENSON.

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Sweetness and Barter

THE BARTER LADY, by Evelyn Harris.
Doubleday, Doran and Co. \$2.50.

The subtitle, "A Woman Farmer Sees It Through," is importantly misleading. Mrs. Harris does not solve the agrarian crisis or even, unless this book happens to sell well, her personal problems. She does get to the end of a year's diary, describing the doings on the farm and her attempts to pay off last year's debt with next year's crop. She reveals herself as a typically petty-bourgeois farmer with a big capital investment, a good-sized mortgage, and a large crop. Mrs. Harris, of Howell's Point Farm, Eastern Shore, Maryland, is, except for her cultural pretensions, like most fruit farmers, who differ somewhat from other classes of farmers because of their dependence on seasonal labor. She wants the good old ways back again, dislikes city workers, and has a vague idea that maybe Big Business is to blame.

Mrs. Harris has discovered that she is expected to sell her fruit below cost of production and still pay interest on the mortgage. She has not discovered that finance capital has a grip on the cultivated land of this country and is determined to put the burden of the crisis on the workers and farmers. Because she has a large crop and cheap labor, she is more interested in the price than in the debt. She thinks that the commission men are all foreign-born racketeers (some of them may very well be) and if the government would enable the farmer to sell direct and would

keep all foreign products out of the country, all would be well again. She also maintains that city workers generally do not deserve their high union wages. The idea of socializing distribution without destroying private property, when combined with nationalism and a longing for the rugged innocence of grandfather's day, sounds mildly fascist. Meantime, bartering hogs for books and pears for opera tickets is a temporary solution that permits Mrs. Harris to go on being brave and sweet and literary.

It is a good thing for the lady that her economics is haywire; else her optimism would be impossible. And without her optimism, so encouraging to those who have an interest in the back-to-the-land movement, her articles would not have been likely to appear in the *Saturday Evening Post*. She nowhere touches on the real problems of the great mass of farming people, almost half of whom are tenants. They have not the wherewithal to barter, and their problems cannot be solved by writing sweet sentiments about the land for the magazines. Only struggle can save them. In that struggle Mrs. Harris will not join. But one can count on her to keep picking away at the typewriter with indomitable courage.

DAVID LURIE.

Modern Russia

MODERN RUSSIA, by Cicely Hamilton.
E. P. Dutton and Company. \$2.75.

There appears to me to be little excuse for a book of this type. Everything in it has been better written before. It is a loosely knit account of a short tour through European Russia which rambles from one subject to another and back again with the detachment of an after-dinner conversation, and as such it serves as an excuse for much moralizing on civilization and ethics. In the preface Miss Hamilton records her prejudices: she is an individualist and she believes that "thought of the Highest cannot be embodied in man but strives beyond him to a God." She might have mentioned another prejudice but she did not know about it. She went to the U.S.S.R. confident that if she remained unruffled and serenely liberal she would understand what she saw. Not once did an economic or social idea, beyond her natural democratic ones, enlighten her in her observations. When she found that she could not reconcile the Soviet Constitution and the power of the Communist Party, no glimmer of the meaning of the class struggle came to her aid. When she was unable to explain how men could live without God she solved the question neatly by calling Communism another religion. Always she found an explanation for everything in terms of "historical continuity," "human nature," or "slavic temperament."

On the whole Miss Hamilton writes as though she were considering a savage tribe; she is polite, but completely at her ease in the knowledge that she is not a partisan. The liberal approach is certainly a wonderful cloak for ignorance. When an author becomes so

engrossed in proving that he is only recording facts it never seems to occur to him to what extent he is selecting his facts. In the case of Miss Hamilton, she was so busy being objective that she presents very few facts indeed. Had she openly attacked those things of which she did not approve, criticism could be given to some purpose. As it is, she contributes nothing to the enormous mass of travel literature on the Soviet Union. Rather unfairly, I think, she poses questions in her book which she did not ask of her interpreters for fear of embarrassing them. In fact, she seemed to be suffering under the delusion that she might get people into trouble if she got them to admit any failures or paradoxes in the "Soviet experiment" as she chooses to consider it.

The new world appeared to her mainly as a drab ant heap with no shop windows, no freedom, and people dressed in monotones. Something is wrong, she is sure, in a country teeming with so many paradoxes: preaching internationalism and cutting itself off from the outside world, striving for Communism and urging people to invest in the Five-Year Plan loan, boasting employment for everyone and declassing kulaks. Nor did the standards of food, clothing, and shelter appeal to her as commensurate with a workers' paradise. That people can deliberately deny themselves physical comforts for the sake of building a secure and pleasant future never seems to have occurred to her.

Just for her own amusement, Miss Hamilton might read a few more books on the "Soviet experiment." And now that she has seen how the workers live in modern Russia, a proletarian neighborhood in England might be of interest to her. Also an evening stroll through the heart of her own delightful London would be illuminating; in the back streets she might even see people asleep in doorways. And when she is near Piccadilly she could settle for herself the definition of a tenement by looking at Newport Buildings. Or better still, she could peep into the crypt of St. Martin's and catch a glimpse of the crowded and damp living quarters of some of the English public. Churches used as museums might not appear a matter for so much comment after that.

The kindly, liberal attitude towards a new phenomenon is not enough to justify a book; the author needs a little background and comprehension too.

ALICE WITHROW FIELD.

The Skirts of Norway

THE ROAD LEADS ON, by Knut Hamsun.
Translated by Eugene Gay-Tift.
Coward-McCann. \$3.

The new bank, the movie-house, the road up the mountain to young Gordon Tidemand's country place—it was by signs like these that civilization was thrust on Segelfoss. Norway, in Knut Hamsun's more than five hundred pages, is a place of rudimentary needs, dependent on sheep and herring and potatoes for its

livelihood. In a book that continues the stories of some of the characters of *Vagabonds* and earlier novels, he makes it clear that the concerns of the fishing village are not the concerns of a world of cities and industry. The young gipsy-eyed heir is made British Consul, and begins his rise in affairs, sending his traveling salesmen south with store-made dresses; but at home the women go from house to house to borrow, according to tradition, a fine skirt in which to carry home the hay.

Knut Hamsun has always been master of the epic treated familiarly; *The Road Leads On* is constructed in magnificent proportions, and told in the most informal conversation. The characters are rich, savory folk: peasants for the most part, shepherds elevated for a while to road-workers or bicycle-boys; ladies who sparkle into middle age, like Tidemand's mother, Gammelmoderen, who could always find a place to meet Otto Alexander, the Gipsy, even though he might have to jump two stories to safety in the end; the druggist, the hotel-keeper, the English guest, the doctor who had his eye torn out by Aase, the witch-woman; and finally August, enterprising, a Munchausen of the North, with his amazing capacities as man-of-all-work, and the shabby weaknesses of the pioneer in industry. He comes to Segelfoss as a symbol of the world of automobiles and competition, descending with his ingenuity on the peasants for all the world like a nightmare Machine Age on a terrified bunch of artists. Not that Hamsun endows his villagers with any false subtleties; they are all painted in the raw primitive colors of truth. But August, for all his charm, comes as a disrupting influence; he is baptized under the waterfall, it is true, but he gets drunk to cure his chills after the ordeal; he fires his pistol in the air time and again to stop the village fights; he curses the knife-wound in Gammelmoderen's breast; but "it was his mission in life to father all forms of progress and development, and he had left behind him desolation in one form or another wherever he had gone."

In such dubious innocence, he brings the twentieth century to Segelfoss, enchanting even London-bred Gordon Tidemand with his invention, and stunning the community brilliantly with his wealth when he receives a long-overdue lottery prize of forty-thousand kroner. Distributing ten-ore notes to the children, buying up sheep by the score, he makes a figure of himself in the town. He has imposed a mechanistic civilization on them, but he still can impress them with the feudal magnificence of himself and his overlords.

The Road Leads On is a folk-tale, slow, rambling, simple. The very competent translation carries the folk-quality well. Money and competition exert their power, but not in far-reaching sweeps; tides and weather are more important. What must be pointed out, as industrial life seeps into these margins of the world, is the necessity for order in its meaning; merely a mechanistic civilization will indeed ruin a farming and fishing country, as far as its culture and the charm of its people is con-

cerned. Knut Hamsun has pointed this out without any mention of the class struggle, which seems a long way away from Segelfoss. It is only in the flashes of poverty, of sudden rise through profit, that we can see the implications of the modern world's encroachment on a land alien to large-scale industry and cities' sprawling influence. Geography, if nothing else, has made Norway's life simple; the valuable miles of coastline do not allow much room for metropolises; and shrewdness and unplanned development can do a lot towards the ruin of such a country. All this lies implicit in the novel; for the rest, *The Road Leads On* is a slow, good-natured story of slow and simple folk.

MURIEL RUKEYSER.

Required Reading

LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF V. I. LENIN, by R. Palme Dutt. International Publishers. 50c.

This is without any question the best introduction to the study of Lenin that is available. And it is much more than an introduction. Despite its brevity, it is so thorough and so thoughtful that the most careful student of Lenin will, I believe, profit from reading it. It seems to me that Dutt might well undertake a much longer work on Lenin, applying in detail the analytical methods that he uses so skillfully in this little book.

The aim of the book is to show Lenin "as a world leader at a critical turning-point of human history," and this Dutt accomplishes by describing at every point the background of Lenin's thought and the setting of his actions. After a short introductory chapter on the historical epoch in which Lenin lived, Dutt briefly but precisely outlines the fundamental Marxist theories, traces the conflict between Bolshevism and Menshevism, describes Lenin's work during the war, summarizes the Bolshevik Revolution, and portrays the founding of the Communist International. Thus he makes clear the extraordinary unity of thought and action that characterized Lenin's life, and prepares the way for his excellent analysis of Leninism. The book closes with a discussion of the events of the past decade and of the work of the Third International, "the heir of Lenin."

All in all the book seems to me a model of its kind. There are omissions, of course, but I am amazed at what Dutt has managed to include in his ninety-two pages. The only pertinent comment is unqualified recommendation.

GRANVILLE HICKS.

Capital's Private Armies

PRIVATE POLICE, by J. P. Shalloo. *The American Academy of Political and Social Science*. \$2.50.

Revolutionists would do well to read this book, if only to familiarize themselves with the enemy's resources and organization. The author, a typical "impartial" professor, is mud-

dled in his outlook and apologetic for the corporations, but the information he supplies is valuable.

For example, it is important to know that the railroads in the United States employ more than 10,000 police at an annual payroll in excess of \$20,000,000—ostensibly to protect valuable freight shipments and to carry on routine police work. But—the roads have arsenals for their police, which include "riot guns, tear bombs, submachine guns, revolvers, clubs, badges, rifles, shotguns, cartridges, rule books, and all other equipment necessary for any emergency. The riot guns and submachine guns are used in protection of value shipments . . . and also for protection of property and strikebreakers during an industrial crisis."

It is interesting to know that that paragon of class collaboration, the Baltimore & Ohio, uses its police to find out "what is going on in all shops and among its employees at all times." Other roads, such as the Pennsylvania, use private detective agency men as spies. "Every railroad uses some system of espionage." A detailed exposition of the organization and methods of these undercover men makes this section particularly valuable to organizers on the railroads.

The material on coal and iron police and undercover men in general, while largely familiar, is useful because it is compact and inclusive. To be sure, it is rather sickening to read of the Molly Maguires as "a grove of criminals" and that at Homestead "the strikers were responsible for the bloodshed and destruction far more than were the Pinkertons"—but it is worth it to learn such facts as that Governor Pinchot, that eminent "friend of labor," sponsored a bill supposedly abolishing the coal and iron police in Pennsylvania—and supplanting them by a special state police force to perform the same functions at much less cost to the coal operators! It seems also that this amiable gentleman showed his devotion to the cause of labor by pardoning a coal and iron police officer a few days after the thug had been sentenced for assault!

There is plenty of other material in the book which makes it useful to those who are daily battling against these "lowest forms of human life" and their employers. To get such information one can endure the professor's smug bourgeois moralizing.

JAMES STEELE.

Hearst's Lackey Reports

THE BOILING POINT, by H. R. Knickerbocker. Farrar and Rinehart. \$2.50.

As part of his intensive campaign to whip the American public into a war-acceptance and preparedness mood, William Randolph Hearst sent Knickerbocker on a tour through Europe to "get the facts" on the war-danger there. The task of this trusted lackey of the yellow press was an easy one; war is scrawled all over the face of western Europe. His series of dispatches, based on interviews with some thirty kings, dictators, ministers and generals, and