

Mr. Miller told me that he would pay me \$2 on his wife's account if I came by today. At a charge of \$3 I make a weekly call at his house to give his wife a treatment for which I used to get three dollars in my office, then another trip to collect two dollars. When the balance runs a little high I discontinue treatment until it is reduced. During the year he will pay me about \$50 even though my average pay per trip will not run over \$1. True I could have given her better treatment if her finances had been in better shape but she has improved wonderfully and I have done as well as I could for her under the circumstances.

Edna has to pay me only \$2.50 more and the baby will be all hers. He is now eleven months old and I have never collected more than two dollars on him at one time, and seldom more than one. Why should a physician accept such poor paying work? I have delivered all of the five children with which this family is blessed. For the first I received cash on delivery, the next was a month or two in liquidation and with each increase a gradually increasing time was required for payment. The father was employed only at spasmodic intervals when I learned of the fifth expectancy and I purposely shied clear of the family hoping that they would decide that they were too poor to pay and apply to the free clinic. But no, before daybreak on the morning when the stork flapped his wings over this household the call came for me. I inquired as to the ability to pay and was assured that the father now had a job and would be able to pay and since they had always paid and I had served them for years, I went.

The superintendent of the hospital which handles a large free clinic calls to tell me

that they now have a bed for my patient, Mrs. Brown, for whom I had asked hospitalization about three weeks ago. I appreciate her kindness in letting me know that there is a bed waiting but I have to regretfully inform her that Mrs. Brown was buried last week.

Another morning and the first call is from one of those industrial sick-and-accident insurance companies concerning Mrs. Amrine's condition. She is a widow in her early forties who was bitten by a dog about three weeks ago and developed an infection which however subsided in about ten days. Last week I told her that she would be able to return to her work of selling cosmetics before the week was over but she still insists that she is disabled. There is no objective evidence of the complaints that she makes so I filled out her blanks reporting precisely what I could see and what she said she could feel. I believe she could get out of bed and run a mile with sufficient stimulation but nevertheless I leave it to the insurance companies' examiners to decide. Those persons having ills which present no objective signs but for which they insist upon compensation are commonly referred to as cases of "Insuritis" and are among the most persistent and pestiferous of annoyances.

Sarah paid \$1 on her account, which is now several months standing. Twenty dollars would have been reasonable for the service I rendered her but knowing her circumstances I charged ten and she still owes four. She is a recently bereaved widow in her late twenties and works in service for a prominent tailor who now owes her thirty dollars back pay of her promised \$8 per week. He still keeps up appearances, attending his clubs and his wife entertains. Now

since Sarah has quit he will get another girl, promise her the same, pay her the same and keep going.

Another day and "Big Tim" is first in with his call. Four hundred and sixty pounds of avoirdupois warrant his nickname and fortune was his constant companion until the depression. He ran gambling joints, saloons, legal and illegal, and played race horses in his palmy days. Diabetes and high blood pressure threw him for a loss a few months ago and since then there has been no money forthcoming. I am not quite sure myself why I should feel compelled to answer his call but perhaps the fact that he did pay when he could, together with the additional fact that he has a brother and sister still among my paying patients, may have some influence on me.

My city arranges for the care of the dole lists, about 55,000 persons, by paying the magnificent salary of \$75 per month to seventeen physicians in return for which they agree to serve the indigents in a certain area for twenty-four hours daily, seven days a week. They average slightly under 10½ cents per hour straight time and furnish their own medicine from ten o'clock at night until seven in the morning. A very convenient arrangement for the city. Since the seventeen physicians accept the care of 55,000 persons they average about 3,200 patients per doctor, the city pays about 2.3 cents per month per person for physicians' care for one-sixth of its citizens. Since there is no difficulty in securing physicians to accept this work I assume that there are other low incomes among physicians in my town. My personal reaction to this arrangement is that if I must starve I prefer to starve without working rather than both to work and starve.

Correspondence

New Masses to Miss Perkins

[TELEGRAM—JULY 30]

Frances Perkins,
Secretary of Labor,
Washington, D. C.

Joseph North, our Terre Haute correspondent, reports reign of terror in wake general strike there stop Excesses by National Guard include arrest and holding incommunicado of active union leaders and rank and file members, illegal breaking into their homes, attempts to terrorize workers into resuming work stop Our correspondent able prove charges against National Guard terrorism seeking break strike with names, dates, places, supporting testimony stop We demand you set time within week when he can personally lay facts before you and that meanwhile you act to bring about a cessation of illegal mistreatment of strikes.

EDITORS, NEW MASSES.

Dept. of Labor to New Masses

TO THE NEW MASSES:

Replying to your telegram concerning the situation at Terre Haute, Indiana, we have been keep-

ing in very close touch with this matter and since receipt of your telegram the "hired policemen," who were brought in by employers in the enameling companies' plants, were sent out of town. The State militia has also been withdrawn from the City.

The strike at the Columbia Stamping and Enameling Company is the only remaining strike in Terre Haute.

H. L. KERWIN,
Director of Conciliation.

August 3.

Terre Haute to New Masses

[TELEGRAM—AUGUST 16]

TO THE NEW MASSES:

Hired guards mostly withdrawn stop Martial law and militia still present stop Fifteen strikers still in jail stop Two plants now on strike stop Discrimination, blacklist and broken agreements in several other factories stop Possibility of Five County strike.

J. L. BILLINGS.

Terre Haute, Ind.

"Conversion Endings"

TO THE NEW MASSES:

Commenting on my article "The Proletarian Short Story," the correspondent in your July 23 issue makes it appear that I was trying to prescribe "rules for fiction." Alas, I was attempting to do exactly the opposite. I wasn't trying to hand down formulas for story writing; on the contrary, I was protesting against certain formulas which had been imposed upon proletarian fiction. I thought that the anti-dogmatic character of my point of view was clear throughout the essay, especially in such sentences as "Proletarian writing should not impose limitations upon the material suitable for art" and "No sphere of human or natural relationships is closed to the proletarian story-teller."

Your correspondent seems to base her conclusion on the fact that I "pretty definitely damned all conversion endings," by which she apparently means that I categorically condemned all stories describing how people join the revolutionary movement. Looking through my essay carefully, I can't find where I even suggested such a "conclusive" generalization. What I did was simply to analyze a *specific* example

of a formula-plot (I labeled it "conversion ending"), which I cited as "only one symptom of the vulgar (oversimplified, schematic, dogmatic) approach to proletarian literature." I described this particular type of plot very definitely, hoping there would be no confusion as to what I meant. I objected to it because of the way in which "just a few lines or paragraphs before the end, the protagonist witnesses a street-corner meeting or demonstration, suddenly sees the 'light,' and leaps into action"—because this abrupt transformation "from a passive ignorant individual into a highly class-conscious activist" produced "idealized black-and-white abstractions, bearing little relation to the flesh and blood of life and realistic literature."

As an example, I mention Meridel Le Sueur's "Alone in Chicago," which follows the exact formula I referred to; I contrasted it with her "I Was Marching," which also deals with how an individual joins a working-class demonstration, but does it so realistically and at the same time recreates the whole situation so well that the result is a work of literature. I did not "damn" all plots which tell how people join working-class demonstrations; I criticized a particular formula-plot because it handled this theme unrealistically and in a stereotyped fashion, that is, without literary skill.

ALAN CALMER.

A Misleading Title

TO THE NEW MASSES:

I know that headlines covering reviews are things not to get excited over. But the one given to my review of Thomas Mann's *Young Joseph* (THE NEW MASSES, July 23), "Flight into the Past," calls for a brief comment.

First: The heading conveyed an impression that is the very reverse of the one aimed at in the discussion. The review pointed out that Mann was not concerned with the past, but with a timeless present and that his position was not "flight," but the liberal stand toward contemporary issues. Then, there is the question of what "flight" means. The term has been employed widely to designate all sorts of positions which a critic did not agree with. Seen clearly, "flight" is impossible for the simple reason that we cannot escape living somehow in our own time. The term is therefore not alone question-begging; it is badly misleading.

VICTOR BURTT.

Ann Weedon Answers

TO THE NEW MASSES:

J. B. has attempted to answer my questions about the activity of women in the Communist movement, but has disappointed me by falling into the error of supposing that this can be done by offering generalities, advice and chow mein. He says sweepingly that my statements (which were made tentatively in the expectation of being refuted or modified) are "erroneous," but he neglects to show how any of them are wrong. The chief statements I made were based on observations of the press for two reasons: it is that part of Communist activity we may all observe; and writing is an activity in which great masses of women participate. These statements were: all the editors of NEW MASSES are men; the then current (June) Communist is written entirely by men; the current (July 2) NEW MASSES likewise, as compared to Scribner's (July) containing contributions from four women. No attempt is made to correct any of these statements; they are merely called "erroneous," an easy but futile thing to do. J. B. remarks also on my lack of caution, unbecoming the ignorant. I take no issue on being called ignorant, rather I profess ignorance by writing for information, but as to the lack of caution (unless it be incautious to ask questions), that is not true. I cautiously made allowances for the fact that some of the articles in these Communist publications might have been written by women ghost writers, or that the names themselves might have been deceptive.

The question deserves thought; many people are interested. I suspect that it is not necessary to resort

to abstractions to solve the problem. The deplorable but real reasons for the backwardness of women in Communist activities may not be too hard to find. The readers of THE NEW MASSES having defaulted, I am strangely tempted to answer myself. Perhaps, with more study, and the permission of the editors, I will do so at some length in a later issue.

New York City.

ANN WEEDON.

Hal Ware

TO THE NEW MASSES:

Harold M. Ware, that great organizer is dead.

It left me with a feeling of deep sorrow after reading in The Daily Worker that Harold M. Ware had died on August 15.

I first met Hal in 1923. He had just gotten back from Russia to organize a group of American farmers to go over there and operate a 15,000 acre farm with American machinery. He practically got us off the plow. After a short conversation, he convinced us that there was no future here for us sitting on a tractor ten hours a day, \$75 per month and after the summer was over having the boss turn you out because there was no work to do. "Come to Russia, you will be a professor there," he said, "teach those young muzhiks how to run a tractor, thresher or combine. They never saw anything like it before. Plenty of grub, 100 bucks per month—swell!"

But Hal was not finished there. He needed machinery which costs money and that he never had.

Rose Baron, secretary of the Prisoners' Relief Department of the International Labor Defense, informs us that Captain John L. Shand, Deputy Chief, Los Angeles Jail Division, is refusing prisoners in jail there the right to receive literature and is censoring their outgoing mail. She asks that protests be sent to him.

Frank Fatur of Cleveland writes: "Forsythe's 'The World by the Tail' was excellent. It was humorous, sparkling with wit, smacking of freshness, Marxist, informative and clear-cut."

The Committee for the Protection of Foreign Born, 100 Fifth Avenue, New York City, writes that John Ujich has been ordered deported to Italy where certain death awaits him. Protests should be sent to Secretary of Labor Perkins.

Persons who were aboard the Bremen during the demonstration on the night of July 26 are needed as witnesses, Mike Walsh, secretary of the Bremen Demonstrators Defense Committee, writes. They are asked to get in touch with the committee at 22 East 17th Street, Room 514, New York City.

Dr. Price of New York City writes us that a move to organize news dealers is getting under way. He points out that dealers are being charged higher prices for evening papers and that higher taxes are also threatened.

The publishers of The American Spectator write that beginning with the October issue Charles Angoff will become its editor. The magazine will be issued monthly at ten cents per copy. "The magazine will be vigorously Left," the announcement states.

Phil Frankfield, national organizer of the Unemployment Councils, writes to appeal for mass pressure to force the granting of a parole to Charles Krumbain, New York Communist organizer, who is serving a term in the Lewisburg prison for a technical violation of passport laws. Protests should

But with his great organizing ability, borrowed his first hundred dollars to go West and get those "iron horses." And within two years he got \$75,000 worth. Boy, what a joy when we first saw them and packed our overalls in those baby's boxes. "Kid, we will meet you in Novorosisk and make the dirt fly."

What a happy family indeed, over forty of us. Doctor, teacher, carpenter, engineer, plumber, financier, dairyman, chauffeur and ex-priest, and with Hal as our chief. Although one could never find him in his office, one had to look for him in the fields, in the shop or having a meeting with the rabotchkom.

For three years our tractors, thrashers and combines were mended by those young Russians, and by those young students that came out from various agricultural schools to learn our methods. We as "professors" and Hal our guiding star. By now a lot of us had married here as we could not afford that luxury at home. A hundred American dollars, mind you, 200 Russian roubles (while Stalin was getting only 150 roubles), and besides we were guzzling wine while those young Russians were now running that farm. There were some who cried, "More money or we go home." And now there are a lot of us here on unemployed relief and in the bread line, while George, our buddy, who stuck it out, got the order of Lenin with a pension and 5,000 roubles to boot.

Peekskill, N. Y.

BEN SCHOENWETTER.

Letters in Brief

be sent to Judge Arthur D. Woods, United States Board of Parole, Department of Justice, Washington.

The Farmer's Weekly, a militant farm paper, writes to announce a prize campaign in connection with its fall circulation drive. A number of prizes will be awarded and those interested should write to Farmer's Weekly, Box 540, Minneapolis.

Carl Brodsky, secretary of the New York State Campaign Committee of the Communist Party, writes to inform us that every member of the Socialist Party will receive an appeal for united working-class political action. Appeals will be distributed to all registered Socialists by Communist Party members.

Herbert Benjamin, national organizer of the Unemployment Council, 80 East 11th Street, New York City, informs us that the organization is launching a national newspaper to be issued every two weeks, and to be published in Chicago. The first issue will be on the stands on Labor Day and the paper will foster unity of the unemployed as well as fight for adequate unemployment insurance and kindred measures. A sustaining fund of \$5,000 is needed immediately and contributions are asked.

Ella Winter writes from Carmel, Calif., to correct an error in her article "Love in Two Worlds" in the July 16 issue: "I understand Stanley Richardson no longer A.P. correspondent in Moscow, and that the despatch I spoke of as coming from his typewriter actually came from another A.P. man's. My apologies to Stanley Richardson."

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REVIEW AND COMMENT

On Revolutionary Poetry

WE ARE agreed, I feel sure, that the poetry written to be read and remembered by our side in the American class struggle will have to be simple. We are agreed, I think, that our poets do not need to create new forms. Our classical poetry, that is to say, the poetry of our class, must, like all classical poetry, be representative. It must have a sense of solidarity and a sense of responsibility. And it must, in the main, be written in the English language.

Now English is a language in which great poetry has been written. It is also a language whose nature imposes certain peculiar difficulties on the writing of great poetry, especially on the writing of great simple poetry. I do not, in saying this, intend moony and mystical references to the soul and spirit of English, but merely to mechanical difficulties which inhere in the structure of English speech.

This is a problem that many American revolutionary poets so far have been either too ignorant to realize or too impatient to bother with. There is no use evading this issue. We have got to learn more about the technical problems of our craft. The most practical way to acquire the necessary technical skill is to study those English poets who knew most about them. They are, of course, bourgeois poets: (there is so far very little English literature that is not bourgeois literature). But if we think we have nothing to learn from these men, if we fight shy of them because they are bourgeois and we fear infection, then our own political and esthetic condition must be far from healthy. Let us not be guilty of an infantile literary leftish snobbery. What would we do if we had a machine gun captured from the enemy—use it, find out all we could about its mechanism, keep it clean and polished, improve the model if we could spare the time of a mechanical genius to study it, and turn it against the enemy again?—or, like savages, curse as unclean a thing that had been in the hands of the enemy, bury it with incantations and waste time and energy starting from scratch by throwing rocks while the inventive process had to be set in motion from the very beginning to produce a new and official apparatus? For our purpose—for the purpose of writing vigorous simple poetry—the American revolutionary poet has more to learn from Housman than from Whitman, and more to learn from Pope than from bad rhetorical prose paraphrases of the great proletarian poets of the Soviet Union.

To illustrate, if I may do so without seeming invidious at the expense of one of the

most active of our revolutionary poets. Alfred Hayes has described how his imagination was moved by The Daily Worker's stream-head: INTO THE STREETS MAY FIRST!—how that seemed to him—"a swell line for a poem." Comrade Hayes' enthusiasm and energy are more than admirable and contagious, they are necessary; but here it seems to me he illustrates the dangers of yielding to a naive impulse without subjecting it to sophisticated critical analysis. He has been carried away by the image of the line, or perhaps by its rhythm (| u u | | |) into an acceptance of the line without resolving its difficulties. These, however, are so numerous as to threaten, if not completely vitiate, its usefulness. To begin with, the irregular character of the beat imposes difficulty on the subsequent structure of the poem, for it should be obvious that this cadence can not be happily continued without variation—it would kill its own effect with monotonous repetition; and at the same time it is a difficult matter to work out the varied metric that will support the opening effect without distracting from it.

Secondly, examine the sounds of the line itself—too many consonants, too many T, TH, S, F, sounds, and not enough vowel richness to keep them from interfering with each other. Hence your line loses, in sound, the marching fluency that its content requires—you call your comrades into the streets declaratively, but you get them all jammed up poetically. You can see what you are up against if you exaggerate the dangers a little by writing them out this way.

INTaTHaSTReeTSMaFIRST

Not only are there too few vowels to balance the line and keep the consonants from choking it, but the vowels themselves are either indeterminate (inta, tha, first), or else thin, feeble, where they need to be robust and full-throated. And the congestion becomes worse toward the end of the line, just where it should be loosened. The line ends, as it were, on a grunt instead of a call. Comrade Hayes might be interested in the opening lines of William Vaughn Moody's elegy (On a Soldier Fallen in the Philippines), and see how, out of an almost identical cadence, Moody has achieved a more effective rhythmical statement. Write it the same way.

STReeTSaTHaRoRiNGTowN

The vocal variety is better, the vowel contrasts richer and more sonorous, the repetition of the liquid consonant R and the vibrant N towards the end of the verse corrects the packed-in consonant quality at the beginning and lifts the whole line out of flatness.

This kind of criticism, for both teacher and

pupil, is no more fun than parsing in grammar. It is unpleasant, arduous, exhausting detail. But do we do ourselves any good by letting ourselves out of it?

At this point I want to meet the form-for-form's-sake objection. Of course we should not fall into the error of form-for-form's sake-ism, literary *je m'en foute-ism*, in the American vernacular, kicking the dog around. We are not apt to fall into that error if we have something to say, and are honest enough to shut up when we suspect we have nothing to say. But on our side, of course, there is always plenty to say; we must not disgrace the substance by saying it badly. There is too much caution against falling into the error of form for form's sake, anyway. Form for form's sake is a special manifestation of decadence, not its general direction. Even in the corruption of bourgeois esthetics, the tendency is more apt to run to a disintegration of form than to excessive concern about it. The bourgeois will in esthetics as in everything else becomes too weak to grapple with problems of organization, substitutes impotent laissez-faire individualism or frenzied rhetorical violence, for vital artistic energy. That is a way we don't want to be, any more than we want to fritter away our powers in academic elegances and esoteric practice, in cults and schools. But there is an important distinction to be made between form for form's sake as end, and form for form's sake as means. On the same terms that a musician does five-finger exercises or a rifleman practises the trigger-squeeze, so our poets can and must get themselves a lot of good practice by rigorous and formal self-discipline. If this means writing poems for practice only and tearing them up, and never putting them in the paper, or not seeing them published or any other poem by you published for weeks or months, all right. Who are poets to consider themselves fit for the battle, but excused from the drill? They are doubly subject to it, for both their cause and their craft demand not merely professions of loyalty, but vigorous and resolute performance in action. Form for form's sake nobody but a damn fool would require; but form for energy's sake, for victory's sake, for life's sake nobody but a damn fool, and a lazy and cowardly damn fool, would seek to avoid.

Tied up with this kind of above-the-battle-ism there is a matter of attitude—too much revolutionary verse reflects this attitude of banner-carrying, of ostentatious nobility. There is too much putting the poet in the forefront—compensation, I suppose, for the secret and dreadful reality that we have no audience like the dramatist's audience. But maybe if we acted a different way, we would get an audience. If poetry is a weapon, let it be used as a weapon, not as a standard, not