

that I could have made a song that would have caught the sound of it: 'Good morning, comrade'."

But no. The inspiration is not followed through. Instead: "What was I working for? For whom? My work did no one any good. I thought of death; that would put an end to everything."

But he does not die. The "good morning, comrade" fades from his mind under the pressure of his drudgery; his sister-in-law dies; his wife and mother quarrel; his brother disappears. "Life has to go on." That is all.

Louis Zara has created a character that will live: Jacob Krakauer. Coming to this country from Szaki, Russia, in 1890, he soon learns the American secret of success: make a profit at any price. Strong of body, keen of mind, good of heart, Jake Krakauer, in a Soviet land, might have become a great leader—a shock trooper of production, a planner for the public good, an inspiration to his sons and the sons of others. But what happens to him?

As a loader of hay in a livery stable—his first job, at three dollars a week—he almost unconsciously learns to pile extra weight on the wagons of those who "tip" him. As a hauler of coal, he soon learns how to leave a residue in his wagon and sell it through underground sources at a handy profit. As the owner of a fruit and vegetable store, he learns how to fix his scales so that they register a pound for every 15½ ounces. And each time, a rationalization to soothe his twinging conscience. "Understand how a half-ounce can matter: not to the customer, of course . . . but for the greengrocer a half-ounce and a half-ounce make no mean profit."

But as the years pass and the store grows to two stores, to three, to five—to the Kra-

kauer Krown Food Shops—Jake learns that the really big money is made legally: Stocks. Bonds. Real estate. Jake can smell a drought coming on, stock up at a low price and sell just as prices reach their peak. From a hard worker he becomes a coupon-clipper. From the ghetto he moves to a fine estate. The trappings of Judaism, cast aside while he was a laborer, a huckster, are doomed once more. Ho, everyone kowtows to Jake Krakauer now! Philanthropy makes demands upon him, but he never turns it down, for, as the author slyly insinuates, so much money is pouring in that what is another thousand dollars, another ten thousand? Even the stock-market crash does not affect him; that too, he smelt in advance. Defiantly he cuts wages—and opens a super-store on State Street. And as the book ends, we find him planning a nationwide network of Krakauer Stores.

This progress of success Louis Zara traces with a fine sense of the realities implicit in it. The personal life of Krakauer is given in rich detail. Each of the scores of characters springs to life under the author's touch; each belongs where he is. The futility of Krakauer's life is apparent. At the end, he is deserted by most of his five children (except for what they can get out of him), estranged from his two brothers (one of whom he has exploited), spurned by the wealthy gentiles (except when they are after his wealth or political influence), bewildered by a deepening economic crisis, robbed of his old cronies because of his station and their poverty, racked by growing bodily infirmity; what is there left for Jake Krakauer? Nothing but the grubby business of trying to squeeze ever more and more profits from the toil of others. The wreck of a good life.

JOHN DRAKE.

## Two Pictures of Society

*CHICHI*, by Rachel Grant. Thomas Y. Crowell Co. \$2.

*WALLS AGAINST THE WIND*, by Frances Park. Houghton Mifflin Co. \$2.

*CHICHI*, according to its publishers, is a "priceless" satire "on certain publishing methods." It tells the story of a society gal who decides to impress her friends by writing a book. With the help of her male friends she gets the opus under way, vamps a publisher into giving her a contract after he has seen only the first chapter, and presto! by means of literary teas and publicity becomes the author of a best-seller. It doesn't matter that her offspring is mostly illegitimate, that it takes an overworked assistant editor's evenings to put it into readable shape: our social wasp quickly acquires the idea that she is God's gift to literature. On Miss Grant's typewriter this skit, however excellent its possibilities, becomes not a satire on publishers, but simply a weakly sarcastic sketch of a Parkavenooish gal who

accidentally goes literary. The broader and sharper aspects of the tale escape the author entirely; she spends her time emphasizing what the reader already knows after he has read the first two chapters. "Chichi" is of average height, weight and depth and would go well in a room which has a baby-blue picture on the wall.

Frances Park is a different sort of a writer. Whatever "average" tendencies her novel has are due more to her lack of a sense of direction than to any inability in writing. Occasionally her story falls into the deeply-grooved paths of fiction, not knowing somehow where else to go, and the novel loses whatever individuality it might easily have had. *Walls Against the Wind* tells about an American girl who goes to France to visit her mother whom she hasn't seen since she was a tot. When she arrives at her mother's country home she finds an unfriendly half-sister on the premises and an attractive young musician nearby, on whom half-sister has already cast covetous eyes. Tir-

ing of the unpleasant atmosphere, Kay goes to Paris. Luke, the young composer, follows to make his debut in Paris as a pianist. They soon fall in love but a number of complications block their happiness; Luke's devoted sister falls for a man who has "animal magnetism" and is thoroughly disliked by Luke; Kay's half-sister lets her jealousy get the best of her. Things are finally straightened out somewhat and Luke and Kay go to the Soviet Union where "anything can happen."

With her keen understanding of sensitive characters and her happy knack of suggesting the subtleties of human relationships without overstatement, Miss Park makes her story much better than it sounds in brief synopsis form. Her chief trouble is that she deals with her characters as though they were suspended from the material environment about them. When Miss Park has learned to integrate people with the realities about them, she will undoubtedly turn out better novels than this one.

JAY GERLANDO.

## Current Art

YOU will not find the exhibition at the Artists Union listed on any of the "official" art calendars, such as are gotten out by the Municipal Art Commission for summer tourists, but if you are interested in serious and vital contemporary art you will find it worth your while to pay this show a visit. (Artists Union, 60 West 15th Street.)

The paintings are by artists on Project 262 (mural painting) of the New York City Works Division. Relatively few murals or studies for murals, are present, the artists preferring to show their own conceptions here. Although many of the names are well-known in the art world (Charlot, Shahn, M. Soyer, Refregier, Block, Edie, to mention but a few), one of the most significant aspects of the exhibition is the high caliber of the work by many of the artists who are relatively unknown to the gallery art world. In its varied character and general liveliness this show is one of the most interesting of the summer art season.

Also worthy of your visit is a small but excellent graphic exhibition at the LaSalle Gallery, (123rd Street and Broadway) where a group of revolutionary artists are represented by good prints and drawings, some of which have been seen before but will bear re-seeing.

If you did not see Joe Jones' exhibition a few months ago by all means take advantage of the present opportunity to do so at the return engagement of these splendid paintings at the A.C.O. Gallery, 52 West 8th Street.

STEPHEN ALEXANDER.

PHOTOGRAPHS OF  
MOSCOW SUBWAY  
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Lithograph by Anton Refregier

MINER'S FUNERAL

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