

Seldes confirms the worst fears of the publishers by saying, "What the Guild really wants is a say in newspaper making in America. It is entitled to that. The day of the irresponsible employer is over and the employer who does not recognize this fact is inviting revolution."

If Mr. Seldes really believes that the publishers will forestall revolution by yielding part of their power to organized newspapermen, he is dead wrong. That, to the publishers, would be revolution; and they have said so. Many have complained bitterly that a Guild member cannot write the impartial brand of labor news which glorifies strike-breakers for loyalty and National Guard machine-gunners for heroism. In fairness to the publishers, the complaint is sound. The reporter who has carried a sign no longer thinks that picketing is whimsical or ungentlemanly. But honest newspapermen, even when organized, aren't enough. They can't compel publication of their stories as written and neither can they rearrange the sources of the publishers' income.

Thus Mr. Seldes, after an excellent presentation of the case against the capitalistic press, hesitates to record the proper verdict. Plainly he is not yet prepared to advocate a workers' press as the substitute. He does say that if the Guild fails to win newspaper freedom, we must turn "toward changing the order under which we live today." Mr. Seldes is sincere, but his statement should be weighed with other "if" warnings. For example, it was Daniel Willard, whose duties with the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad prevent him from taking an active part in the radical movement, who said that if his family were starving, he would not hesitate to steal. Last reports were that the Willards still had something in the icebox and the Baltimore courts were busy with other cases.

Incidentally, the portions of the book dealing with the Soviet Union show exceptional fair-mindedness, especially when it is remembered that Mr. Seldes left his post as Moscow correspondent some years ago at the request of the government. He distinguishes, for example, between the government-controlled Soviet press, with the welfare of the workers its immediate aim and complete freedom its ultimate goal and the captive press of Germany and Italy. Our American publishers frequently point to press restrictions in the Soviet Union as proof of the great blessings enjoyed by readers in this country.

To some extent, the book is out of balance because Mr. Seldes is primarily a truth-hunter and chronicler rather than an appraiser. An entire chapter, albeit a short one, is al-

lotted to the sins of The Paris Herald and the defunct Paris Tribune, probably because the writer had plenty of dirt on hand. Yet three more important subjects—the smashing of the San Francisco strike, the publishers' operation of a strikebreaking agency and their fight against the child labor amendment—get only one chapter combined. It may be doubted, too, whether the newspaper roll of honor, occupying fifteen pages, can be justified. Certainly most of the individual news-

papermen and newspaperwomen deserve the kind words given them, but a majority of the newspapers cited smell bad despite the perfume of a good deed or two.

But these are minor objections. The important thing is that Mr. Seldes has told enough to convince any intelligent person that newspapers habitually betray working-class readers on a grand scale. The book should be widely read.

ALEXANDER L. CROSBY.

"In the Genteel Tradition"

VEIN OF IRON, by Ellen Glasgow. Harcourt, Brace. \$2.50.

MISS GLASGOW'S list of published books has now reached the very impressive total of twenty, most of which are novels, all of them distinguished by meticulous craftsmanship and a fine feminine feeling for the more delicate shades of mood, the subtler aspects of character and all that in nature is most pleasing to the senses. With each succeeding novel she has further perfected her enviably sure, deft touch, until today it is indeed a rare reader who will not surrender, momentarily at least, to the pervasive compound of lovely color, the scent of flowers, refined yet rich emotion, nostalgia and Virginian idealism that is the peculiar distinction of her work. Not without cause has her position in the world of conventional belles lettres become increasingly eminent and secure. If not America's first woman novelist, she is certainly, in the opinion of most reputable critics, of the company of such "immortals" as Willa Cather and Edith Wharton.

There are a few readers, however, who have always been impervious to her charms. Since I am one of them I will admit that I have never before been able to offer really cogent reasons to support my rather ungracious stubbornness. I felt only a vague uneasiness about the truth and importance of her pictures of life among the decaying aristocrats of her beloved Tidewater region. It seemed to me that they were embellished pictures, pictures distorted by too much sympathy, too much compassion to allow a realistic understanding of what lay beneath the decay and what the value was (to "civilization") of the grace and ritual and "culture" of these Southern ladies and gentlemen. I have been told that her pictures are true—factually as well as artistically—and that no one has ever so profoundly searched into the souls of these people as she has. Since I have never been south of Washington I have been willing, though a little reluctantly, to grant her the truth, but I have not been willing to grant her the value. Her work seemed to me to relate not at all to anything that I or any of my friends can consider significant or moving or even simply interesting in this country today.

I am pleased to be able to report that I can now sustain my point of view with

somewhat more rational arguments. I have discovered that when the eminent Miss Glasgow comes down to the earth that most of us recognize, she is a great deal less than omniscient. In fact, I am tempted to go so far as to say that she really doesn't know what she's talking about. I discover, too, that she is not especially gifted with imagination and her beautiful poetic style fails to overwhelm me. She should never have written this novel. She should have confined herself to that rarefied sphere of existence inhabited by those whose blood is no paler blue than aquamarine or ice.

Vein of Iron is the story of several generations of Fincastles—a family descended from pioneers, Calvinist clergymen and Indian-fighters, who live in a valley in Virginia's mountain land. Around them are forests and old farms and tiny villages and beyond, the Blue Ridge and the Appalachians. Living now are these of the Fincastles: the inevitable Grandmother, a true descendant of pioneer stock, doughty, valiant, iron-willed; her son, a defrocked minister, agnostic, philosopher, dreamer; his wife, a daughter of the Tidewater nabobs, fragile, sweet, happy in spite of privation and pain; their daughter, a piece of the Grandmother, proud, indomitable, "single-hearted." I hope that I have been able to convey, in spite of absolute fidelity to Miss Glasgow's portraits, the triteness of these stock characters. I am tired of lusty grandmothers and incredulous of unworldly dreamers in the wilderness of Virginia who write five-volume works of metaphysics capable of being appreciated only by half a dozen scholars in Europe.

At any rate, the story is concerned chiefly with the love and marriage of the daughter, Ada. She grew up with and adored a youth named Ralph McBride, whose Irish paternity was doubtless responsible for "his charm and his amused, friendly manner," "his auburn head," and "his sudden smile that had a power over her heart." Unfortunately, just as they were about to become engaged, he was trapped into a marriage with a silly, spoiled, beautiful, but cunning young lady whose father was apparently the richest man in town. Ada despaired, yet the "vein of iron" in her—that singular heritage from the Fincastles of the frontier—enabled her to go on living and even to find some happiness. Eventually, Ralph divorces his wife, has a

"... creates real theatre... deserves enthusiastic support"—New Theatre Magazine.

LABOR THEATRE presents—Sept. 9 to Sept. 28

**TAKE MY | UNTIL
STAND | WE TURN**

BROOKLYN LITTLE THEATRE, 126 St. Felix St.
Brooklyn—Adj. Brooklyn Academy of Music
Evenings 8:45 — 35c to \$1.10 Saturday Matinee 2:45, 35c-83c
I. R. T. and B. M. T. TO ATLANTIC AVENUE

brief affair with Ada (of course, she becomes pregnant), and goes off to war. Of course, they marry when he returns, but, of course, he has returned from France embittered and grey. It would have helped a great deal at this point if Miss Glasgow had indicated that McBride's bitterness grew out of wisdom—out of a realization of the injustices that made possible the horrors of war. There is no such indication. There is no indication at all of the cause of his bitterness. He is just bitter.

They move to the city (Richmond?) where for a few years they prosper. The stock market crash in 1929 does not touch them, but the depression does. McBride's illness despoils them of their savings, ultimately he loses his job and then, together with their child and Ada's incredible father, they suffer poverty, humiliation and that miserable fear of tomorrow that only the proletarian can ever know. In the end, the father leaves them unobtrusively and goes back to their old mountain home to die. Ada and Ralph follow him and when they arrive they know that to settle once more on the land of her ancestors is their destiny and that they will find peace and contentment there without riches.

The story is obviously false from beginning to end. Its falseness is literary—a sequence of events which arise not out of the author's personal experience or knowledge, but out of a limited imagination engaged in creating a narrative concerning a way of life about which the author is ignorant. It results from accepting a poorly understood subject: the events conform to a pattern, each element of which may be convincing, but the composite romantic and even lurid. No situation seems wholly natural. Its logic is not that of reality but of literature and the reader is reminded at a hundred points of other novels, other stories, other scenes. It is not only the characters (all of whom are traditional types) that give this impression, but the actual incidents irrespective of the parts played in them by the personages of the story. The constancy of the childhood lover, the reversion to the pioneering strain, the pregnancy, the wartime disillusionment of Ralph, the cheerful patience of the self-sacrificing Ada, the finding of themselves in poverty, the return to the land of the forefathers—nothing is without a literary precedent, everything conditioned by the needs of romance instead of the demands of life.

Nor is that all that lends falseness to Miss Glasgow's novel. To a writer of her stature and her manifest gifts, one must concede without question that she has felt deeply the fate and suffering of her characters. But she has felt them remotely—in a realm of imagination that on the one hand has no contact with fact and on the other has not attained the level of genius. For example, the most poignant section of the book is that which deals with poverty, breadlines, illness and the grief of social rootlessness. With what timidity Miss Glasgow enters that fearful world of the poor. With what gentility she pictures the hungry and the desolate! How clean the air is, how pure the spirit, how pathetic! How unconvincing! Miss Glasgow is lost, just as she was lost when

she touched on the war. She cannot write of things she does not know. When she does, even her style suffers. Its richness becomes then something very close to lushness.

But in justice to Miss Glasgow, I must add that that style, with its embroidery of wit and physical sensitiveness, makes her novel readable enough so that one may go through it without realizing that she has done a courageous thing in writing it at all. It is no light matter for a novelist as old as Miss Glasgow to adventure in foreign lands and with foreign themes. She has failed utterly, but let us respect her attempt. We know her now as a writer of definitely bounded talents, but at least we know her as a person of feeling and sincerity.

BERNARD SMITH.

No Crime and Plenty Punishment

PRISONER OF THE OGPU, by George Kitchin. New York: Longmans, Green & Co. \$3.

BETWEEN the time this "true-story narrative" was written and the time it was published its author very obligingly died. I say obligingly only because that would seem to be the attitude of Mr. Kitchin's publishers, inasmuch as they do not hesitate to try to make capital out of their client's demise. In a box sentimentously funereal, preceding the body of the narrative they state: "As this book was being prepared for the press, news was received of the death in London of George Kitchin from pneumonia following complications which resulted from his privations in Russian penal camps." Can any one doubt that the narrative which follows must be 100-percent true, since its veracity is vouched for by a bona-fide corpse?

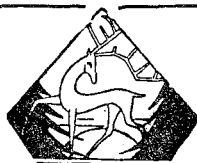
What are the facts? By the author's own admission, thanks to his "guardian angel," much of the time during his four years stay in the Northern Penal Colonies was spent in "soft" office jobs. In this capacity he even was promoted to the rank of a functionary, lived in the town in comparative freedom, was sent on an investigating committee, received a salary, etc. Again, by the author's own admission, although he insinuates and in fact says—untruthfully—in so many words that political prisoners were almost never released at the end of their terms, but instead were given new and more severe terms of

servitude, he was released on the dot and permitted to depart for his beloved white Finland. Following his release, according to information given to us in the preface, Mr. Kitchin spent a year and a half in Italy "convalescing" and, having convalesced sufficiently, still another year in writing the present book. To attribute his death in London by pneumonia, two and a half years after his release, to the machinations of the O.G.P.U., may be good anti-Soviet propaganda, but it seems to us to be poor medicine.

What manner of man was the late Mr. Kitchin? A citizen of Finland, he was "lured to Russia by the promises of the N.E.P. (New Economic Policy) proclaimed by Lenin in 1921 . . . I had started out as the representative of a Finnish group seeking a concession in Russia and within a year developed an import business on a large scale . . . I had also established a plant for the manufacture of oil and candles for churches. There were sixty thousand churches in Russia at the time and I enjoyed a virtual monopoly of the business." In other words, Mr. Kitchin was a typical representative of the capitalist riff-raff who were so sure that, given enough rope, the Bolsheviks would hang themselves and Russia would become at last an open hunting ground for concessionaires, thieves, entrepreneurs, white guards, pimps, whores, murderers and other such ladies and gentlemen of the old school.

Like his wife Luba, who was twice arrested by the O.G.P.U. on suspicions of espionage, Mr. Kitchin had a buddy in the personage of "a British consul in Leningrad, Mr. Preston, who occasionally entertained both foreigners and Russians at tea. Mr. Preston was a thorn in the flesh of the Soviet officials. He wore a monocle in the land of the Soviets, donned a silk hat when driving out on official visits and his English manner irritated the comrades exceedingly. Moreover, he consistently ignored the local representatives of the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs (purely for social reasons, of course)

INTIMATE



COLORFUL

GREEN MANSIONS

WARRENSBURG, NEW YORK

Enjoy the rare charm of a September vacation in the Lake George region of the Adirondacks.

RATE: \$27.50 A WEEK

Private Golf Course - - - - No charge after Labor Day

Booklet M on request

New York Address: 157 West 57th Street, CO 5-6346

LENA BARISH, SAM GARLIN, Directors