

Sharecropper

LAST year weevil, year before
Gully washin' come and craps can't grow.

Didn't make, 'cept a bale or two;
Bossman take it all for his due.

This year no weevil, no washin' rain.
Cotton grow thicker'n a hoss's mane.

Presiden' asayin' too much cotton grow;
Got to plow under every third row.

Mule say "huh"—whip say "whack;"
Plow get shovin' craps right back.

Guv'men' apayin' all what it cos';
Man get the money 'cause he the boss.

Look heah, Bossman, my share can't be foun';
Course not, nigger, you plow your share under-groun'.

Good crap, bad crap—no dif'ren' which one,
Til we start plowin' under with gattlin' gun.

LAWRENCE GELLERT.

Reds of Szechuan

On the March: Retreat

Among the Mausers march the long T'ai-ping
Muskets which had been hoarded two men's years—
Barrels bound to stock with wire and hempen string;
Farm-smithied swords march, too, and bamboo spears.
Ever our rolling eyeballs search the sky
For hostile aeroplanes of Chiang Kai-shek;
(So stoats turn on the hawk a reddened eye
And needle-fangs poised on a snake's neck.)
Long since our gun-butts shattered our own josses—
Each one, each incense-stick, each priest, a tool
Of our own landlords and the foreign bosses;
Our cult is for the great red star which tells
There is a country where the workers rule:
We brace our belts and count our rifle-shells.

In the Mountains: Waiting

Our cartridges are low; we haunt like goats
These crags—but down them boulders still can leap,
And sentries of the Kuomintang must sleep—
The better if a knife be through their throats.
We dig the root and strip the bark—our millet
Suffices but for seasoning; of hairs
Outlawed from barbering we fashion snares
For crows and mountain-rats—not worth a bullet.
For we must live till to the plains below
Our scouts can creep and peasants whet their hooks and hoes
And march to burn the rental-books;
Till then we watch mouse-footprints in the snow.
And we shall be here when the last snow melts,
Girding lean loins with empty cartridge-belts.

KENNETH PORTER.

Longshoreman's Song

HOT blood dreams not of the year's cold,
Young hands know they are stout for work.
Why must he skulking thought lurk:
What will I do when I'm old?

Fear rots the brain, slacks the hold,
Termite in sound wood: fear,
Fouling sleep, haunting love's face with a sneer:
What will I do when I'm old?

Forget. Work, sweat in the sun; hold
Your girl in bed while you are young.
Forget. Work. Love your girl: you are young.
What will she do when I'm old?

Shrewd Morgan figuring up his gold,
John D. giving a poor kid a dime
In the camera-eye-march-of-time,
Don't ask what they'll do when they are old.

They've got you working for them, sold
Out to their future from the start.
Maybe they'll help bust your heart
Twenty years before you are old.

When you are strong, pulse beating bold,
When you have work, it's a grand world.
Swing your load! It's a swell world.
What will I do when I'm old?

Heave high! Maybe you'll be paroled.
Heave! maybe you won't get stung.
God loves workers, workers die young,
Maybe we won't grow old.

"Get wise! Wake up and take ahoid,"
My girl says. "Don't wait till you die
"To look for your pie in the sky.
"Get your share before you are old.

"Is it bankers' sweat makes the corn gold?
"Whose guts are in the mortar of this town?
"Whose blood in the steel? Wake. Take your own,
"Big boy, before we grow old."

ELSA GIDLOW.

Return

What can I say . . . now that I must return
hollow-mouthed, my fingers empty of bread,
muscles rusted, arms loose in the chant of
no work, no work. . . ?

What can I say
with this heart, stark, relentless pendulum
pounding the hard crust of ribs,
stamping my footsteps into the pavements, monument of
no work, no work. . . ?

What can I say
in the pain-deep dusk of a two-room flat?
O muted tongues of man and wife . . . too late
for words, O clench the fist, steel it
to strike, to smash.

MARTHA MILLET.

A Course in French Fascism

ALFRED HIRSCH and ROGER BEAUCHAMP

WHAT are the students of French in American colleges and high schools learning about the France of today?

Until the War of 1914, most of the French textbooks published in America, aside from grammars and elementary readers, represented editions of the classics of the 17th century—with an emasculated Voltaire and an anodyne Rousseau, poems of the Romantic movement and a few novels of Balzac. The middle of the 19th century and later were represented by a number of editions of *Le Voyage de Monsieur Perrichon*—expurgated, of course—and Alphonse Daudet's *Tartarin de Tarascon*, likewise purified, together with his worst and most chauvinistic short story *La Dernière Classe*, and such unbelievable pap as Halévy's *L'Abbé Constantin*, the saccharine tale of a benevolent American heiress who subsidizes a French priest in his distribution of charity. The names which we—and the French—most highly esteem were absent—Stendhal, Flaubert, except for his *Three Tales*, Verlaine, Zola, save for a short story or so. Anatole France barely got through the sieve of purity—and with nothing of importance. Almost no contemporary material was then available in American-edited French books.

But during and immediately after the war, a few books dealing with it—not Barbusse's *Le Feu*—appeared. They were frenzied pro-French documents recounting the horrors allegedly committed by "les Boches" and detailing the misery of French families whose homes had been destroyed. Fortunately, although to the regret of the American publishers of these texts, the taste for them was soon surfeited.

But interest in France was on the ascendancy. So professors got busy editing—and expurgating—contemporary texts. Publishing houses which rarely have on their staffs any specialist in this field were ignorant purveyors of such books. No apparent attempt was made to survey the field to find out which writers really had something to offer American young men and women. The selection was haphazard and gave a picture of France that resembled Temple Bailey's sharply realistic image of America.

Who then are these French writers who were presented to the American student? And do they represent French life today?

Since 1930, and more markedly so since late 1933 and February 6, 1934, on which day great demonstrations against the fascist Croix de Feu and the policy of the French government took place, there has been a distinct cleavage. Today France is not at all one country. Class lines have divided it

sharply into two camps: on the one hand, the gentlemen of the reaction, whether they call themselves Republicans, Centrists, Fascists or Royalists: on the other hand, the People's Front, embracing Communists, Socialists and many Radical Socialists, with its Red Belt surrounding Paris. This split is of course apparent among French writers, who, much more than American writers, have always associated themselves closely with the political groups of the day.

A recent sign of this division is indicated in three proclamations, all dealing with the invasion of Ethiopia. Several months ago, a group of writers, soon to be known as "the 64," signed a statement in support of Italy. The general tenets of the manifesto entitled "For the Defense of the West," are all too familiar to those who have followed the careers of Mussolini and Hitler. The manifesto decries sanctions, claims that the League of Nations, obedient to the will of England, is "imperilling the future of civilization."

We, French intellectuals, want nothing to do with these sanctions or this war. . . . They [the European nations] do not hesitate to treat Italy as a culprit, to point it out to the world as the common enemy—under pretext of protecting in Africa the independence of a hodge-podge of uneducated tribes. . . . The undersigned therefore believe it their duty to rise up against this monstrous cause of death, calculated to ruin definitively the most precious country in our universe. . . . This fratricidal conflict which would put the security of our world at the mercy of a few savage tribes . . . would not only be a crime against peace, but an unforgivable attack upon Occidental civilization, i.e., against the only valid future which, today as yesterday, is open to mankind. We intellectuals who must protect culture . . . since we profit most from its benefits, cannot let civilization choose against its own interests. To prevent such a suicide, we appeal to all the forces of the intellect.

This declaration, widely printed in the Rightist press, was immediately answered by two manifestoes: one, entitled "For Justice and Peace," signed by a large number of Catholic writers and teachers, the other by several hundred intellectuals who definitely took sides with the People's Front.

But we are particularly interested in the identity of the signers of the first (fascist) manifesto. Their place in and influence on contemporary French literature has been on the wane for decades, if indeed it ever existed at all. Yet these are the writers who are presented to the American student as representative of life and letters in contemporary France. American editions of a score of French texts written by individuals among "the 64" reveal the predominant role played in American schools and colleges by various writers on the list of fascist signers.

Who are the writers we find when we examine the composition of the fascist list?

Eleven of "the 64," André Bellessort, Louis Bertrand, Abel Bonnard, Henry Bordeaux, André Chaumeix, Maurice Donnay, Edouard Estaunié, Abel Hermant, Claude Farrère, Louis Madelin, and Pierre de Nolhac, are members of the French Academy, that haven of the prolific French writer who conforms, of high military commanders, ranking members of the Catholic clergy and others who have distinguished themselves "pour la Patrie," the so-called Immortals. It is this same Academy, founded by Cardinal Richelieu in 1635, which failed to elect to membership Molière, Rousseau, Diderot, Stendhal, Balzac, Baudelaire, Flaubert, Verlaine, de Maupassant, Zola and Proust, i.e., those writers who have given France its true literary "immortality;" not to speak of such present-day writers as Romain Rolland, Jules Romains and André Gide.

Among the other signers of the fascist manifesto are Léon Daudet and Charles Maurras, co-editors of the Royalist Action Française and Henri Massis, author of the manifesto.

The contents of the books of a few of these fascist Academicians and their co-signers are worthy of some analysis. It would be well to begin with Henry Bordeaux, Academician since 1919, whose writings are by far the most widely edited among contemporary French texts in America. This is the same man of whom it is proverbially said in France: "In case of incurable insomnia, when all other soporifics have failed, one page of Henry Bordeaux will put the patient to sleep in five minutes." Besides two volumes published by Nelson in 1910 and 1917 respectively, his offerings to American students appear in no less than seven more recent books. These include three novels: two editions of *La Maison*, one published by Heath in 1923, the other by Ginn in 1930; *La Peur de Vivre*, Holt, 1922; and *La Nouvelle Croisade des Enfants*, Allyn and Bacon. His stories are included in a collection put out by Ginn, 1929, another by Heath, 1929, and in a Holt selection of 33 stories. This last volume has had a sale of over 2,700 copies in the colleges alone with Duke University buying 310. Columbia, William and Mary, Harvard, Hamilton, Johns Hopkins, the University of Illinois, the University of Michigan, the University of Minnesota and the University of Pennsylvania are among the 69 colleges on the list which covers 30 states, the District of Columbia and Canada.

The story of Bordeaux' *La Maison*