

workers are hardly better than sprightly abstractions. And whatever the workers of Sinclair's books are, they are never what Marx said they must always be—they are never menacing. They are, in fact, sometimes cloyingly grateful and meek and make a fine impression on the hard-headed president of the big utility company.

Sinclair knows a good deal about America. But because he lacks the essential clue, his extensive knowledge remains in the end surface knowledge. This gives his work the defect of over-simplification, not the legitimate simplification that comes from the rejection of non-essentials but the untrue simplification that results from ignoring essentials. That is why he cannot seem to see that his hope of slipping into socialism "through the back way," to use a phrase of Marx's directed long ago at just such schemes, can never be more than an illusion. Avoiding the name of socialism in the aspirations of the people will not evade class struggles. Does Sinclair think that he can dupe the exploiters with a mild slogan? The exploiters will tolerate mild slogans only so long as they do not conceal vigorous and united action.

MILTON HOWARD.

Freedom for Press Fakers

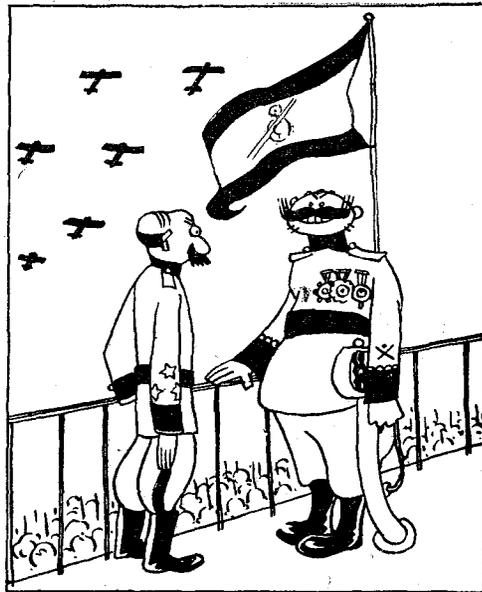
THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS, by Robert R. McCormick. D. Appleton-Century Co. \$1.

WHEN the NEW MASSES (September 29, 1936) exposed the Chicago *Tribune* as a liar it was merely using the ultimate word in print. Among newspapermen of America that fact has been known for a generation. But the fact that Col. Robert R. McCormick's newspaper violates almost every item in the publishers' code of journalistic ethics apparently has not prevented the publisher from writing a very interesting little history.

For about ten years I worked for the Chicago *Tribune*. In that period Colonel McCormick made some of the speeches in this volume. When I went to Rome, for example, I stopped the Fascist bribe of several hundred dollars a month in free cable tolls, but I still have a letter from the business office suggesting that we beg for the bribe again. At about this time Colonel McCormick was addressing the American Newspaper Publishers' Association on the freedom of the press.

Some time later I wrote a piece from Berlin about Pilsudski's armed assault on parliament, his threat to establish a fascist dictatorship. The Polish embassy in Paris threatened to withdraw its \$2000-a-year tourist advertising. I have a letter from the *Tribune* suggesting that I trim my sails, also a clipping of a published apology for the item. The dictatorship was soon established. And at this time the publisher was speaking at Yale or some other college on the freedom of the press.

Mr. "X," one of my colleagues, who was sent to Russia to "expose" the "dirty Bolsheviks," was completely won over by the pro-



"But your troops don't understand Spanish, General Franco!"

gram of production for use instead of profit and the ideology of Karl Marx, of whom he had heard nothing prior to his arrival in Moscow. Mr. X came back to Paris and began writing a mild series of articles more neutral than pro-Russian. But immediately he got his orders: either a vicious series of articles attacking the Soviets or he would lose his job. Now if the poor devil had belonged to a Newspaper Guild in those days, or if economic security existed for Americans, he could have told Chicago to go to hell, but as it was, he simply prostituted himself again, as so many journalists have done before him, and wrote a series of half-truths, distortions, inventions, and lies, all against his friends, the Bolsheviks. It was just at this time that the Paris edition reprinted a three-column speech which Colonel McCormick had just made before some advertising federation on "The Fight for the Freedom of the Press."

I can continue this chronicle *ad infinitum*. Every newspaper man who ever worked for the Chicago *Tribune* has his quota of suppressed, distorted, or perverted news stories. The recent editorials of this paper are especially vile. Misrepresentation, falsehood, innuendo are used against the Roosevelt administration and the Democratic Party, although the latter is only a few inches to the left of the Republican Party and almost as completely in the hands of the big interests. Liberals and radicals get even worse treatment.

And yet, as I have said repeatedly, the editor and publisher of this sheet, self-styled "the world's greatest newspaper," is not only a fanatical fighter for a free press, but his book is worth reading and applauding. It condenses the history of the Zenger case in colonial times, the alien and sedition laws, other famous instances, and concludes with the Liggett killing. Colonel McCormick attacks the late Governor Olson as an enemy of the freedom of the press. The reader may recall that while the governor was still alive the publisher wrote that Olson was lending "aid and

assistance to gangland in its campaign of murdering editors and all who cross his path." Olson replied: "Colonel Bertie McCormick's charge against me is false. . . . He is a faker in his alleged championship of the freedom of the press. Dozens of papers have been suppressed because of economic views expressed in their columns without a word from Bertie. It is only when a scandal sheet has difficulty that Bertie comes to the rescue. That is because Bertie is the owner of the world's leading scandal sheet."

I offer these items of an obvious Jekyll-Hyde nature as a case history for amateur psychiatrists rather than a book review.

GEORGE SELDES.

Without Malice

THREE WORLDS, by Carl Van Doren. Harper & Bros. \$3.

CARL VAN DOREN, looking back over a distinguished and generally successful and useful career, is able to record a serene life. There is very little in it of conflict, or of the mutilations of intellect and personality resulting from thwart and frustration. It is clear that his accomplishment has come satisfyingly close to the reach of his ambition, which a realistic and balanced mind could keep within constantly adjusted limits, as his remarks concerning his ventures in poetry and fiction show.

How much of this was due to temperament and how much to uniformly easy economic circumstances it would be hard to say. The influence of the latter can be overestimated, but it should not, for that reason, be underestimated. It is easy, for example, on that ground to account for the tolerant and genial tone of Van Doren's advocacy of insurgent literary forms, as contrasted with the violence of, let us say, the garret poets, to whom victory would mean not only the triumph of a literary idea but easier bread and more butter.

Granting to Mr. Van Doren a steady, genial, and tolerant temper, so poised and so consistently maintained as to be, in its way, a phenomenon, it must be noted that his continuous and even record of success is also phenomenal. From his beginnings as the son of a comfortably situated professional, he was spared the class humiliations and the hardships of poverty. His childhood was so happy and "normal" that he could not understand the almost universal complaints of an unhappy childhood, and attributed them to a fashionable predilection for unhappiness. His academic career was a brilliant one; his career as critic and editor enabled him not only to help raise the general level of a culture confined to the middle classes—the masses having been left to Hearst, Macfadden, and Hollywood—but to actually foster and support a number of the leading writers of the period. Furthermore, in his own person he accomplished the transition characteristic of the twen-

ties, the passing of critical power from the academies to the more open and flexible medium of literary journalism. And as he, like transition personified, passed from one to the other, he escaped the vices of both, the stodginess of the first, and the sensationalism of the second.

Avoided by trouble, Mr. Van Doren also avoids trouble; and this keeps him from major stature as a thinker and writer. One feels, reading some of his astute observations, that a little more strenuous delving would have made him more than an arbiter, a discoverer; and more risks for the sake of ultimates might have lifted his book from its present level of grace to higher levels. For the fact is that the book declines after its stirring and valuable first half, which recapitulates with great skill as well as charm and appraises with firmness as well as love, a past generation. In its second half, dealing with known people, it mentions only those who can be well spoken of; and it generalizes about controversies that it would have been valuable to particularize. Mr. Van Doren's motives are clear and to his credit; he escapes not only the imputation of malice but malice itself; but reality and intensity, as a consequence, escape him.

The book can be read by anyone with pleasure. Its style has a gracious eloquence; it offers frequent rewards of realities keenly perceived and pithily communicated. In its record of achievements and limitations it becomes almost an ideal presentation of the liberal, tolerant and progressive, hopeful because hope was the characteristic tropism of his generation, unable to abandon it but wisely forbearing to recommend it to the succeeding generation to whom it would be a delusion.

ISIDOR SCHNEIDER.

A Literary Event

MORE POEMS, by A. E. Housman. Alfred A. Knopf. \$2.

THE publication of more poems by the late A. E. Housman is, of course, a literary event of the first importance. The collection has been edited, with a preface, by the poet's brother, Laurence, whose statements are simple, factual, and while no doubt somewhat softer in tone than A. E. might have enjoined, still decently free from sentimentality. The material should disappoint no reasonable expectation.

They say my verse is sad: no wonder;
Its narrow measure spans
Tears of eternity, and sorrow,
Not mine, but man's.

The sorrow of the class struggle is not apparent in this verse. The agonies of hunger and work, the blacklist, the truncheon, the breadlines, are not Housman's concern. It is not so much that this last of the Victorians, and their finest poet, is above the battle, but rather beneath it; he is one whose private universe has caved in on him so com-

pletely that the fighting above and around him is largely inconsequential. Eternity may be a word somewhat grandiose to describe these tears, but Housman has achieved a paradox in time. Living in a pre-revolutionary world, he presents the image of a man without class and without economic sorrow, that is to say, a post-revolutionary man. Nor does this fact render his work unreal or Utopian. We would be foolish to imagine that solution of economic difficulties will resolve all the spiritual ones. The sumless tale of sorrow may well persist beyond the final conflict.

This is for all ill-treated fellows
Unborn and unbegot,
For them to read when they're in trouble
And I am not.

But this book is no mere exhibit of petulance. Most of its forty-nine items stand on their considerable intrinsic merit; and beyond that, all of them are of vital interest as a testament of spiritual anguish. They shift the emphasis, correct the perspective of our full view of Housman's work. It becomes increasingly manifest that the man spent his life in a hell none the less real for being intensely subjective, or of his own making. The same thing seems to have ailed him that ailed his great contemporary, Hopkins; it is possible that in time to come his three books of poetry will be read for more than one of the reasons that compel men's interest in the sonnets of Shakespeare. We are told that "consideration for the wishes of others became increasingly apparent in his last years." In this mollification of his persistent uncharity toward others we may suspect the unconscious hope of a greater sympathy toward himself, and an abatement of the fierce pride which required him, living, to permit no gesture that might be confused with self-pity. His consent to the publication of these poems, however reluctant, indicates a willingness to admit the public to more than a view of his workshop and a collection of material rejected or unfinished.

Simply as such, however, the collection is of great interest. The student of Housman's verse will find here alternative statements of old favorites, the tentative elaboration of the finally successful phrase, the novel experiment, as well as, in one or two instances only, the unfortunate plain flat failure. The collection testifies again to Housman's fine critical taste, his distrust of self-repetition, his modesty and

austerity, his moral scruple, his willingness to give himself the benefit of no doubt.

Let it be said once more: poets who propose to address themselves to the broad masses in a time of anticipated profound social change have much to learn from this man. If not from his content, then from his form; if not from his political analysis, then at least from his high regard for the poet's calling, and his respect for the niceties of linguistic technique. Not that this professor is pedantic, finical, or prone to polysyllables; on the contrary. It is his precision and simplicity that too much alleged revolutionary verse lacks. A sorry error it is to suppose that correct ideology and proper emotions excuse the absence of poetic determination and wit.

My dreams are of a field afar
And blood and smoke and shot.
There in their graves my comrades are,
In my grave I am not.

I too was taught the trade of man
And spelt the lesson plain;
But they, when I forgot and ran,
Remembered and remain.

Here, in one short lesson, we can be informed of much concerning the trade of man, the trade of comrade, and the trade of poet.

ROLFE HUMPHRIES.

Woman's Supplement

GOLDEN WEDDING, by Anne Parrish. Harper & Bros. \$2.50.

GREAT LAUGHTER, by Fannie Hurst. Harper & Bros. \$2.50.

WHEN the novel by and for middle-class women gets past variations on boy-meets-girl and looks life in the eye, what it is apt to see is the special property of women, the family; what it likes to see is the matriarchy. For at the same time that the artist was resigning from society, women were registering their own opposition to the empty world their men were building. Some rebelled against the home itself and went out to add a brick to the dismal social structure. Those who stayed home had a quiet rebellion of contempt against their foolish, coarse, money-grubbing men, whom they tolerated, while carrying on the vast processes of life in their warm female world, which their novels exalt.

Anne Parrish has a delicate malice for her weapon. It never probes very deeply, but its edge is sharp. Her rebellion is a bit old-fashioned, shuddering against a Victorian atmosphere she conjures up, of stale sweetness, smothered in black bombazine. Tireless in her exposure of the thick-skinned who galumph successfully through life, her affection for sensitive souls is both sentimental and acid. The characters she likes are opposed to bourgeois standards but they are failures: mediocre painters, flinching poetic young men, shrinking girls. In *Golden Wedding*, though there is the same setup, she takes a larger bite



A. Sopber