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tion from Mussolini, but it leads him into the embarrassing necessity of interpreting the oracular words of the Duce himself about the theater, at the same time that he must admit that "the Italian theater is [still] waiting for its Mussolini" to save it. It is not difficult to see why "lately the Italian public has been somewhat interested in the problems of moral sensuality," or why Pirandello's metaphysical sleight-of-hand has been an inspiration in the anti-intellectual atmosphere of fascist Italy, for as D'Amico says of the plays of the academician Bontempelli, in the "harsh atmosphere there appear exotic flowerings, exactly at the moments when it would be dangerous to allow the spectator to reflect too much."

It is worthwhile emphasizing again, as do the articles by Joseph Gregor and H. W. L. Dana, that one must turn to the Soviet theater for unexampled artistic supremacy and for constant progress in developing good drama for the whole population. Gregor's own evidence, however, belies his somewhat dated criticism that the Russian theater must reject "the empty formalism of slogans [and] endow itself with the life of a people"; a criticism which is inconsistent with Dana's more up-to-date conclusion that "many of the playwrights who started out as pure propagandists have come to realize that even in order to be good propaganda a play in Russia must be good art. The new audience in the Soviet Union has become so accustomed to excellence that only good art is good propaganda."

BORIS GAMZUE.

Albert Parsons: Haymarket Martyr

LABOR AGITATOR, THE STORY OF ALBERT PARSONS, by Alan Calmer. International Publishers. 35c.

THE courageous lives of America's early labor leaders have too long been confined in historical vaults. As a result, it has been comparatively easy for reaction to use the schools to create ugly myths regarding labor's heroes. It has been easy, too, for the American people, unfamiliar with their rich heritage of struggle, to fall prey to illusions and to repeat mistakes which the existence of a living heritage might have ruled out. Enthusiastic welcome, therefore, to Alan Calmer's vivid little biography of the Haymarket martyr, Albert Parsons, sections of which have already appeared in the NEW MASSES [November 17, 1937].

Parsons's experience merged when he was twenty-nine with the history of the labor movement. Fired from a typesetter's job on the Chicago Times during the railroad uprising of 1877 and blacklisted by the trade, he was quickly drawn into the leadership of the Workingmen's Party. In the ten years that remained for him, he established himself as one of the ablest organizers and orators of the time.

The ten years were critical years for the labor movement. In 1877, as a result of bloody suppression of the strike movement, the Socialistic Labor Party, former Workingmen's Party, turned to independent political action. Securing the support of trade unions, largely through the efforts of Parsons, it succeeded in electing an alderman. Victory now followed victory until in 1880 theoretical differences were crystallized in a split. Disillusioned by the ballot-stealing defeat of some of their candidates (violence versus the ballot became an issue) and angered by the party's endorsement of Greenback candidates in the national election, a group seceded and organized the Social Revolutionaries' Club. Although his experience in trade-union activity had helped Parsons to avoid the false dilemma of political versus economic action, he went with the secessionists. His influence was salutary. Together with August Spies he helped the Chicago section of what in 1883 became known as the International Working People's Association avoid the sectarianism of other anarchist groups in the country. "Principles of anarchism, socialism, and equalitarianism were hopelessly entangled in his mind," Calmer tells us, but Parsons insisted on the value of participating in elections as a practical means of bringing ideas to the masses and avoiding the leftism of a Johann Most, who opposed the struggle for immediate demands as a compromise with capitalism.

From 1884 events moved apace. A national trade-union body, which later became known as the A. F. of L., met in Chicago and adopted a resolution "that eight hours shall constitute a legal day's labor from and after May 1, 1886." The May Day celebration of that year was gigantic. It was immediately followed by lockouts. On May 3, the massacre of workers occurred outside the McCormick Reaper plant. The following day, a protest meeting was held in Haymarket Square. Parsons and Spies were the main speakers. As the meeting was breaking up at the behest of the police, a bomb was thrown into the crowd and a policeman was killed.

At the time the bomb exploded, Parsons and Fischer were in Zepf's saloon across the Square. Engel, a third defendant, was at home. Spies was just getting off the speaker's platform. But these and others were brought to trial. Parsons, who had been persuaded by friends to leave Chicago immediately after the explosion, voluntarily returned to stand trial with his comrades. The press clamored for their lives. A prejudiced jury was selected with the assistance of Judge Gary. "These defendants," said the prosecuting attorney, "are no more guilty than the thousands who follow them. They are picked because they are the leaders. Convict them, and our society is safe." Safe from the eight-hour day?

The verdict was a foregone conclusion. Intellectuals of two continents and the entire labor movement protested. But the four were hanged on the morning of November 11, 1887. Parsons began to speak as the hood

was placed over his head. As the trap was sprung, his voice rose: "O men of America, let the voice of the people be heard. . . ."

Calmer's account of Parson's life is by turns factual, analytic, and dramatic. One acquires a sense of the man; something of the color and vigor of the period's labor demonstrations; detailed information regarding the Haymarket affair; and insight into the problems and controversies that troubled the labor movement of the seventies and eighties. The labor movement today greatly needs popular biographies and histories such as *Labor Agitator*. Millions of new workers, unfamiliar with labor's traditions, are pouring into the labor movement. Here is a task for scholars and writers anxious to use their special talents in behalf of labor.

ARNOLD SHUKOTOFF.

The Sculptor In Society

RODIN, by Judith Cladel. Harcourt, Brace & Co. \$3.75.

CONCEPTIONS of sculptural form and the technical methods of achieving it have undergone much change since Rodin's time. We do not admire late Greek and Renaissance figures to the degree that he did. His humanly expressive qualities do not make up entirely for certain deficiencies in structure. The old treatment of the subject as front, rear, and two profiles, rather than in the round, is alien to the modern sculptor, to whom the discovery of Negro sculpture was a liberation.

Rodin worked almost always in clay, modeling the figure which was later to be cast in bronze or carved in stone by professional craftsmen. Most moderns work directly on the stone, wood, plaster, or even metal—in a foundry, with machine tools—and believe that this gives them a much more vital relation of form to material.

One should not imagine from this, however, that Rodin's revolution in sculpture, his telling assault on academicism, was not infinitely valuable to the artists. Some think his genius, built up by years of exhausting study, is best revealed in the thousands of amazing drawings and water colors which were almost routine practice for him. If his work does not seem as advanced as the painting of his time, it is because the tradition of sculpture was so retarded. No one could have accomplished more than he.

Mlle. Cladel's book scarcely deals with the technical aspects of Rodin's work. As his former secretary and devoted friend, she is more concerned with its effects on the people, the intellectuals, the bourgeoisie, politicians, and art and government officials of his time. Though the style of the book is a little too old-fashioned-noble, we get an appalling picture of the vileness of "society," of official insolence, cupidity, and viciousness. From the day that Rodin was refused entrance to the

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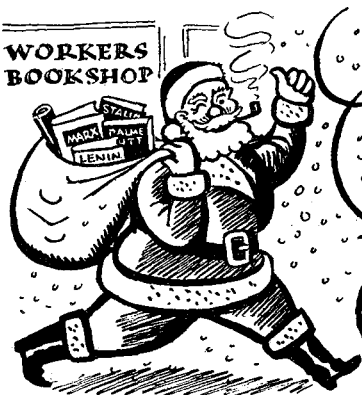
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