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Therefore society is criminal and badly organized." He clearly realized his dilemma but, unlike Van Gogh, was unable to attain even a temporary solution. His escape to the primitive was a defeat, and one feels in his later painting that he had come to the end of a blind way. Van Gogh's latest works were the beginning of a new and ever-developing creative force, which only society and his own heredity could defeat.

NANCY MACDONALD.

### Brief Reviews

MOSCOW IN THE MAKING, by Sir A. D. Simon, Lady Simon, W. A. Robson, and J. Jewkes. Longmans, Green and Co., \$2.50.

The four authors of this book spent only four weeks in Moscow, do not know the Russian language, and apologize in the preface for their inconsistencies and inaccuracies, which are numerous. They did, however, manage to amass a great amount of information which will be of value to the discriminating reader. The first chapter, by Robson, giving a general view of the Moscow city government, is the most rewarding. Mr. Robson has a real grasp of the essential democracy of the Soviet system, and of the enormous advantages of the absence of conflicting class interests in administering a city's affairs and planning its future. While he deplores what seem to him certain repressive aspects, he considers them incidental and temporary. The chapter on industry and finance by Jewkes is confused and misleading. Mr. Jewkes does not understand the functioning or know the facts about the system he attempts to describe. Lady Simon cites some interesting data on the quantitative aspects of Soviet education, but completely fails to grasp its more fundamental attributes. Sir E. D. Simon, too, is rather mixed. While constantly under compulsion to admit advantages in the Soviet system, he keeps on making rather unconvincing statements to the effect that after all we do it better in good old England. He is disturbed about the housing situation, but acknowledges that in the Soviet Union everything points toward the fulfillment of plans for improvement while in England everything is blocked by the existence of private property, conflicting class interests, and overlapping authority. He quotes some silly, unsupported gossip about repressive measures, and concludes with the following statement:

"What will the Mossoviet achieve? I believe that they have the best constitution yet devised for effective city integrity, enthusiasm, and ability, that the advantages of socialism and of the open party system for town planning purposes are of the utmost importance. If there should be no great war, if the population of Moscow does not exceed five million, if the government maintains its present integrity and strength of purpose, I believe that at the end of the ten year plan Moscow will be well on the way to being, as regards health, convenience, and amenities of life for the whole body of citizens, the best planned great city the world has ever known."

What more could anyone ask?

I SEARCH FOR TRUTH IN RUSSIA, by Sir Walter Citrine. E. P. Dutton Co., \$3.

The leader of the British Trades Union Congress writes of his brief tour of the Soviet Union in the fall of 1935 as of a slumming expedition. The book abounds in such expressions as "rather cheap and nasty," "shockingly dressed," "horrid odor." Whatever does not conform to the good old British standards of housing, dress, behavior, or whatnot is chalked up as a failure of the Soviet regime. Sir Walter spends pages and pages on meaningless computations about the real value of the ruble and of wages. These figures convey little and are all out of date anyway. He takes careful note of peeling plaster, shoddy woodwork, rough edges. Is it by

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accident that the "objective" Sir Walter records almost exclusively what strikes him as unpleasant and ignores the magnificent achievements that so impressed his distinguished compatriots, Sidney and Beatrice Webb?

Sir Walter seems to meet a great many happy people. How, he asks, in the midst of such wretched conditions can they be happy? If you will look as carefully through Sir Walter's book as he looked for peeling plaster, you will find here and there phrases such as these: "All the new factories are spacious and well laid out"—"production is for use and not for profit"—"in its attempt to care for the cultural needs of the people the U.S.S.R. is already ahead of other countries"—"wages are rising"—"material conditions are improving"—"unemployment is permanently abolished." Does that answer your question, Sir Walter?

WASHINGTON: CITY AND CAPITAL, by The Federal Writers' Project. Government Printing Office. \$3.

The most beautiful city in America and the dreariest; the most prosperous and the most wretched. It has the largest number of automobiles per capita of any city in the United States; it also has the second highest death rate from tuberculosis, the "poor man's plague." Architecturally it is the show-window of the nation, yet it is the only large city in the country that still houses its impoverished and unemployed in "jungles" reminiscent of the Hoover era.

That, in part, is the picture of Washington as revealed in this latest and, to date, most ambitious publication of the W.P.A. Federal Writers' Project. If the succeeding volumes of the project's American Guide Series are as honest and stimulating as this one, W.P.A. is going to be confronted with a creative achievement rivaling the Federal Theater's Living Newspaper in scope and originality. If only half of the projected forty-eight state guides measure up to this man-size work on the national capital, they still will represent the successful termination of the biggest job of reporting the American scene ever attempted. A. C.

MIDNIGHT ON THE DESERT, by J. B. Priestley. Harper & Bros. \$3.

Mr. Priestley does get around a bit: Hollywood, New York, Arizona, Kansas, to say nothing of the fourth dimension, which envelops him in his concluding chapters. *Midnight on the Desert* is intended as a sociological travel book. No matter that it winds up by exploring eternity, for that is all a part of Mr. Priestley's grand tour of what his publishers describe, modestly, as "all the major matters of this life and perhaps the next." N. M.



### Recently Recommended Books

- Middletown in Transition: A Study in Cultural Conflicts*, by Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd. Harcourt, Brace. \$5.
- The Soviets*, by Albert Rhys Williams. Harcourt, Brace. \$3.
- The Court Disposes*, by Isidor Feinstein. Covici, Friede. \$1.
- Three Ways of Modern Man*, by Harry Slochower. With an introduction by Kenneth Burke. International. Regular, \$2; popular, \$1.50.
- Harriet Beecher Stowe*, by Catherine Gilbertson. Appleton-Century. \$3.50.
- The Fall of the City*, by Archibald MacLeish. Farrar & Rinehart. 50c.
- False Security*, by Bernard J. Reis. Equinox. \$2.75.
- Towards the Christian Revolution*, edited by R. B. Y. Scott and Gregory Vlastos. Willett, Clark. \$2.
- Noon Wine*, by Katherine Anne Porter. Schuman's. \$5.
- Living China: Modern Chinese Short Stories*. piled and edited by Edgar Snow. Reynal Hitchcock. \$2.50.

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