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this thread is dropped, the story takes up an-  
other, the rising murmur and criticism of the  
uniform, echoes of the Revolution in the East.  
*While the German generals squabble over the  
question of a Lithuanian king, another king  
is being crowned, a king without a uniform,  
the people, who have emerged victoriously to-  
ward self-rule in the Soviet Union.* In this  
sense, Zweig's orphan generation is acquiring  
a father. Likewise, it is presented with the  
task of caring for the uniquely historical off-  
spring.

HARRY SLOCHOWER.

## Southern Agrarian

TOM WATSON, AGRARIAN REBEL, by C.  
Vann Woodward. The Macmillan Co. \$3.75.

OUT of the teeming post-Reconstruction  
days and the peculiarly ill-defined move-  
ments of early populism, Mr. Woodward has  
drawn a significant but neglected figure and  
constructed around him a story that deserves  
to be rated not only as competent biography  
but also as successful historiography. The  
Western roots of agrarianism have been pretty  
thoroughly examined, but the Southern roots  
—perhaps because of the obscurantist tactics  
of those who today call themselves Southern  
agrarians—are still largely unexposed. This  
book lays bare a great many of them, but  
while it traces down to its very beginnings  
that part of the movement which gathered  
about Tom Watson, it somehow fails to  
clarify the inner contradictions and the outer  
conditions which warped the later growth.

Watson came of a farming family which  
had fallen on evil days. He did not allow  
adversity to plague the house of Watson for  
very long; with one hand, so to speak, he  
built up one of the largest planting fortunes  
in the South. But with the other he stirred  
into action all the little farmers who were  
being left out of the Great Barbecue of  
Southern industrialization, and with whom his  
early days of struggle had given him an in-  
stinctive and genuine sympathy.

Early in his career he began to show his  
fatal faults. The movement he built depended  
to an unhealthy extent upon his own per-  
sonality; he himself lacked any real faith in  
the political sagacity of the men he was lead-  
ing. Mr. Woodward gets in all the details,  
but he hasn't the knack of showing how small  
things foreshadow greater things to come; the  
reader who is unfamiliar with Watson's de-  
velopment has to discover these things for  
himself as he goes along.

Other basic faults of the movement, as led  
by Watson, were its failure to cement an early  
and solid alliance with the industrial prole-  
tariat; its persistent blindness about severing  
itself completely from the two traditional  
parties; and its lumping of all farmers to-  
gether, regardless of the economic class to  
which they belonged. If Watson was able to  
see the shallowness of the silver issue and thus

conserve much of the energy that would have  
been dissipated if Bryan had led the Southern  
movement, he was dogged just as fatefully by  
the nemesis of political superficiality.

Bryan's ultimate degeneration occupied a  
relatively short space of time; he sputtered  
himself out in Tennessee without doing very  
much real damage. But when Tom Watson  
suddenly found himself at the end of his  
political rope he settled down to twenty-five  
years of the most extensive, deliberate, and  
unscrupulous demagoguery that America has ever  
known. His example of how to divert mass  
energy from essential aims, his example of  
Jew-baiting, Negro-baiting, and Catholic-bait-  
ing, may possibly discourage our rising fas-  
cists, for they will have to go some to surpass  
it.

Mr. Woodward is a bit apologetic about  
having favored the early, progressive part of  
Watson's career over the later, reactionary  
part; he feels that perhaps his biography as  
a whole may not convey a sufficiently bad im-  
pression of his subject. If this is true, it is  
only because of Mr. Woodward's careful  
analysis of each step in the growth of popu-  
lism. There can be no doubt whatever that  
Watson played an important and valuable role  
in these early campaigns of the rural prole-  
tariat. On the whole, the biographer ap-  
proaches Watson in a scientific spirit.

The reader may have noticed that I left  
out Red-baiting in the above list of persecu-  
tions. It is true that Watson was one of the  
earliest advocates of Soviet recognition (just  
as it is true that he was an early fighter for  
labor-hours legislation and the curbing of in-  
dustrial spies and thugs). Nevertheless, he laid  
down in his later publications, at the height  
of his demagoguery, the principle that Social-  
ism and Communism are merely extensions of  
capitalism, and that good men will have noth-  
ing to do with any of them. This is the gleam-  
ing banner now held aloft by our present in-  
finitesimal school of Southern agrarians.

RICHARD GREENLEAF.

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FOR the past few years Myron Brinig has  
been included in the fairly large category  
of "promising" young American writers. Al-  
though Herschel Brickell, of the New York  
Post, has seen his way clear to comparing  
Brinig with Proust and Brinig's seventh novel,  
*The Sisters*, with *Remembrance of Things  
Past*, the praise, on the whole, has not gone  
beyond the word "promising." It puts Brinig  
in a class containing perhaps ten or fifteen  
others and protects the critic in the event the  
young author produces something really fine.

And now Brinig has published *May Flavin*,  
his eighth novel, a novel greatly inferior to  
its predecessors but an immediate success from  
the point of view of circulation. Early in the

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nineties, May Hogan, daughter of a Chicago cop, marries Mike Flavin, an impetuous, lovable, and, for the sake of Brinig's plot, generally ineffectual young worker. To escape old associations, they move to New York and set up a newsstand on the Bowery. May tends the stand and the six children that follow, while Mike pretends he's helping her. But a prostitute wins Mike and involves him in a brawl—through no fault of her own, for she, like everyone else in the novel, has a heart of gold—and Mike runs away, thinking he has killed a man. For a dreary several hundred pages we follow May as a newspaper vendor and charwoman and the children as they become gangster, nun, school teacher, and Hollywood stars. By 1930 May's successful children are in a position to give her a River-side Drive apartment and a Hollywood mansion, and May takes them graciously, never, of course, forgetting her working-class friends; she visits the charwomen in the office building where she worked, and she relieves her ennui—the ennui of comfort—by picking up odds and ends at auctions with her old friend, Sadie Rabinowitz, prosperous wife of a former Bow-ery tailor. In the end she finds her husband destitute in a Hollywood rooming house, spending his time peering in at exclusive gatherings to watch, unnoticed, his famous children.

By now the reader, if he is even slightly familiar with formula fiction or B movies, will recognize the plot. It happens often in *The Ladies Home Journal* but seldom in life. It is the picture of the industrious, optimistic, sentimentally colorful, preciously humorous, long-suffering worker—to the reactionary a thing of beauty and a joy forever. In the movies or between the covers of a commercial magazine one cannot be unduly moved by this sort of dishonesty, for the quantity is overwhelming and removable only by a good house-cleaning. But it is peculiarly regrettable when a competent writer falls into this pattern and surrounds its triteness with some fine writing and acute observation, as Brinig has done. And one is moved to protest when the attempt is made, and abetted by the critics, to bring it into the body of serious contemporary fiction.

RICHARD H. ROVERE.



Charles Martin

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# The SUB-SELLER

## How NOT to get Subscribers

We're indebted to Manngreen's *Left on Broadway* column in the *Daily Worker* for the story of the traveling salesman (liberal) and the U. S. Army colonel who got into discussion on a train recently. The salesman, mindful of the reactionary training of army colonels, approached the subjects of politics and economics gingerly and cautiously suggested that the colonel look into liberal magazines like the N— R—. As their paths parted, the colonel thanked his friend for his information and added, "Of course you may be right about the N— R—, but personally I prefer to get my authentic news from the *New Masses* and the *Daily Worker*."

You remember Earl Browder's suggestion that the famous Red Scare is often more a case of "scared Reds."

You remember, too, I wot, how many WYFIPs have reported that the best way to sell *New Masses* to your friends is to come right out and sell it.

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Charlie Crawford

Sub Editor

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# MOVIES

WHILE I was roosting on one leg like a crane at the Fifth Avenue Playhouse's International Film Festival, the public prints were trumpeting the American debut of Gracie Fields, England's Lancashire Lass, in a movie called *We're Going to be Rich*. Matronly Miss Fields had the critical company doing patty cakes. The *New York Daily News* saw stars (4), and Frank Nugent of the *New York Times* dropped two unfinished puns on the floor while he applauded.

It must have been the brilliant comedies of René Clair I saw at the festival that kept me from joining the salvo, for I thought her first American appearance did not touch the performance of, for instance, Will Fyffe, Britain's other music hall idol, in *To the Victor*. Gracie is a lively folk character—a sort of angular Mae West—who sings her ditties in a very female voice. One of these tone poems is worth the price of admission at the Globe (25c). It goes:

Walter, WALTER!

Lead me to the altar,

And I'll show you where I'm tattooed!

The rest of the business does not match this lofty musical plea. Miss Fields has been given a broken heart by big, bad Victor McLaglen. This interferes with her waggish talents, and gives Herr McLaglen his opening to purloin the picture. A stripling named Ted Smith, as the ward of the peculiar pair, is not at all annoying. In *We're Going to be Rich* Brian Donlevy, prominent movie tavern keeper, operates his prop grogshop in South Africa. It is for the Anti-Saloon League, rather than this reporter, to appraise his film career.

This latest Twentieth-Century-Fox offering is stout (or perhaps, 'arf and 'arf) entertainment, but the brew is not rich enough for Miss Fields.

Now then, this International Film Festival is an apt idea. We need a film repertory theater and the two months' program of prize sound pictures from sixteen countries which are being screened at the Fifth Avenue Play-

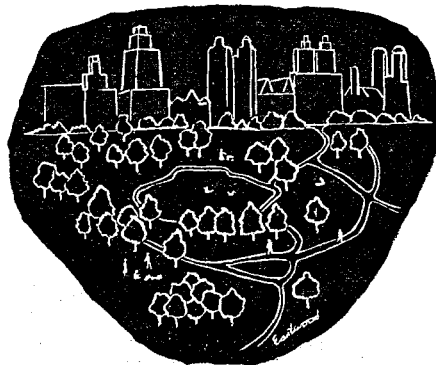
house during July and August will do handsomely until some enterprising house makes the thing permanent. In a bill which includes movies from Ireland, Sweden, Palestine, pre-Hitler Germany, England, Switzerland, Spain, the U. S., Czechoslovakia, Mexico, Denmark, Austria (before *Anschluss*), the USSR, Poland, and Hungary the management has put its best footage forward with the great films of France.

*La Maternelle*, *La Kermesse Heroique*, *Crime et Châtiment*, *Poil de Carotte*, and three of René Clair's marvelous pictures, *Sous Les Toits de Paris*, *Le Million*, and *A Nous La Liberté*, made up the French portfolio. Whether it be Clair's witty farces, the unrelieved drama of *Crime et Châtiment*, or the moving child films that are almost exclusively the province of France, these pictures hit you where you live. The Soviet film has more size and the American film better merchandising, but the French have a psychological impact, an ability to communicate with person-to-person eloquence, that brings their best film close to impeccability.

At the very birthdate of sound, when the American ear was being bent by Al Jolson's first historic gutturals of mother love, René Clair was at work on *Sous Les Toits de Paris*, the film that introduced more provocative sound film ideas than the American industry has been able to achieve since. In the street fight in *Sous Les Toits*, you do not hear the scuffling and grunting of desperate struggle. You hear a locomotive's melancholy whistle coming along the tracks in the foreground. The engine chuffs away and murky films of smoke drift across the scene. Clair realized that sound was good for more than dialogue alone; in fact, he contrives as much as possible to get his characters behind the window panes of cafes so they may speak in all the eloquence of pantomime, an art which had been quickly forgotten when the sound track was attached. To him the sound track was not a new medium, but an addition to the camera, that had to be put in its proper place in the general effect.

This ignores the wit of René Clair, who makes his pictures race along like light verse. When he kids the pants off grand opera in *Le Million*, it is movie satire the like of which is too rarely seen. This does not do justice to his handling of actors like the charm he invests in Annabella, whose American career will be remembered for that soggy pancake, *The Baroness and the Butler*.

You'll regret having missed France, but the following recommendations for the rest of the summer should be noted: July 15, 16—*The Golem*, 17, 18—*Janosik*, Czechoslovakia; 19, 20—*The Private Life of Henry VIII*, 25, 26—*The Ghost Goes West* (Directed by René Clair), 27, 28—*Man of Aran*, England; August 1—*The Wave*, Mexico; 2—*Spanish Earth*; 3—*Young Forest*, Poland; 6, 7—*Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*, 14, 15—*Scarfare*, 16—*The Informer*, 17—Walt Disney-Charlie Chaplin program, 18, 19—*They Won't Forget*, America; 25—*Road to Life*, 26, 27—



Eastwood