

to the heart with appeal to the head, is the monster LBC rallies which have taken place in the Albert Hall and in the larger towns all over the country. These rallies, addressed generally by a Liberal, a Labor, and a Communist speaker, have created a really remarkable atmosphere of youth, purpose, and enthusiasm; no one who has attended a rally can fail to have come away with the impression that here was a community of emotion, a real force being generated, which was the right and proper answer of democracy to the emotional appeal which fascism undoubtedly makes to youth.

It would, indeed, seem inevitable that the LBC must broaden itself from its purely cultural basis, even at the risk of frightening off a few lukewarm sympathizers. Sympathizers cannot be drawn into the movement simply through the printed page. Once the initial imaginative stimulus has been given, it needs to be kept alive by definite political activity. The question is therefore bound to arise soon and more acutely—what political line does the LBC actually stand for? It has already gone so far in the direction of political activity that it can no longer pretend to be merely an educative organization on a broad progressive base. We stand for a popular front, certainly; but a front that is too popular ceases to be a front; by which I do not mean that we do not want the masses, but that we have to make it clearer just what we want them for. The course of our development up to date shows, I think, what our line for the future must be. We should aim to establish ourselves as the educative branch of the labor movement as a whole, but at the same time our groups must not shrink from taking the initiative in practical political activity wherever the official Labor Party branch is showing itself lazy or reactionary. I am speaking for myself here, of course, not for the views of those who control the LBC.

If we consider the most fruitful recent activities of the groups, we will see, I think, that this is true. In the last few months they have sold 230,000 copies of John Strachey's pamphlet, *Why You Should Be a Socialist*; it would be difficult to think of any more effective way of spreading political education. The groups, also, have succeeded this summer in giving vital information on the subject of Czechoslovakia. Dr. Ida Sindelkova, a graduate of Columbia University, who is one of Czechoslovakia's most prominent spokesmen, undertook a tour in England; her meetings were organized by local LBC groups; and, although July is commonly considered a dead month for indoor meetings here, and the groups had only a fortnight in which to organize them, attendances of several hundred were obtained in many places. I have already referred to the work done by the groups in forming or recruiting for local Labor Parties. Another consistent activity of the groups this summer has been the raising of money for Spain; in districts where scarcely any labor movement exists, LBC groups have organized Spain weeks, raising sometimes as much as

£60 for the cause; while at the recent Emergency Conference on Spain the number of delegates from the groups was third highest on the list of those who attended, second only to trade-union branches and Labor Parties.

It seems evident from all this that, for the Left Book Club, cultural, educative, and directly political activities are equally necessary branches of the club's life. We set out first to educate ourselves; from this there arose the urge to spread our knowledge beyond the limits of the club membership; and this, in turn, led to the need for practical political activity. Both in theory and in practice the Left Book Club has gone a considerable way towards presenting the material and the skeleton organization for a people's-front movement. It is, therefore, all the more important that the autumn campaign to double our membership should be successful, and that we should be aiming all the time and above all at consolidating the only basis on which a people's front can stand firm—a united working-class movement.

C. DAY LEWIS.

## Liberal Junket

THE SUMMER SOLDIER, by Leane Zugsmith. Random House. \$2.50.

MISS ZUGSMITH has chosen for her new novel a theme that is highly characteristic of present-day America. Congressional junkets are a well known tradition among us. What Miss Zugsmith exposes, to our surprise I fancy, is that they have an equivalent in left-wing circles. Naturally there are differences. The radicals almost invariably pay their own expenses. But in both instances there is the same union of what looks like high purpose and what turns out to be an abysmal ignorance of the matter to be investigated.



Ida Abelman

When the subject is a labor dispute, the protagonists are plump middle-class intellectuals, whose previous contacts with the proletariat, or the police, for that matter, have been through the columns of the radical press. Now they are induced by some well-wishers of reform to leave the comfortable routine of their lives and investigate a distant violation of civil liberties or the right to organize. One, a restless woman who haunts the literary circles, goes for the sake of new adventure. A clergyman, whose radical preaching is meeting the disapproval of his trustees, is motivated by a vague suspicion that the pulpit is not enough. The professor, who is the "summer soldier" par excellence, accepts in order not to have his liberal bluff called. None of them is averse to having his name associated with great affairs in the newspapers. But they are all equally ignorant of the type of man, the type of situation, they are going to investigate. In high spirits these Galahads in sack suits take a train that dumps them upon the harsh rocks of actuality. They discover that their respectability does not automatically chasten the hearts of sheriffs and vigilantes. Pippa's song dies on lips that begin to sag with consternation. The little hotel they manage to find near the town where the outrage has been committed is infested within by bed-bugs and is patrolled without by too attentive automobiles. Two of the liberals of opposite sex forget their helplessness in a moment of passion. The rest are not so simply distracted. Before they have agreed upon a plan of action, they have been huddled into automobiles and driven to the borders of the county, where one of them is beaten up while the sheriff's back is turned. The party returns to New York with their tails between their legs and the private conviction that they had best play safe in the future.

Such a plot harbors the most devastating criticism of the parlor radical, and Miss Zugsmith has kept it admirably from degenerating into farce. She has held herself strictly aloof, and allowed the story to speak for itself. She has taken the action seriously, and evoked a climax of pain and disgust that leaves the reader permanently conditioned against a liking for sheriffs. But it is doubtful if the action is worthy of so much attention. It is essentially a story of character. Its interest lies in the differences of motive that led these various individuals to make their pilgrimage, in their different reactions to the practical emergencies that arise, and the difference in lasting effect of the experience upon their personalities. Miss Zugsmith, especially in the opening chapters, is careful to suggest these differentiations. But they are worthy of her undivided attention, and if she had given it, perhaps the reader would leave the book free of conflicting emotions. For you cannot feel much sympathy for the wounds of persons you have not come to know intimately, or who, as far as you do know them, you have come thoroughly to despise.

Miss Zugsmith has made an effort to redeem two of her characters from such an ac-

cusation. The playwright and the clergyman of the party are full of indignation at their treatment. While the rest return to New York, Miss Zugsmith leaves them legally at the bedside of the wounded man. But there is no evidence that their hatred will be of lasting quality. Perhaps the clergyman will lose his pulpit and continue to grow in understanding. Perhaps the dramatist will learn to discipline his sardonic belligerent personality to better purpose. Instead of clarifying these important points, Miss Zugsmith takes us back to the bickerings and the mounting aversions of the professor and the flirt. The douse of actuality has only left them afraid of the water and disliking the persons who dropped them in it. It is distressing that these characters are chosen to strike so clearly the final discord.

EDWIN BERRY BURGUM.

## The Big City

NEW YORK PANORAMA, *American Guide Series, Federal Writers Project, Random House*. \$2.50.

PUT down under the heading of things-I never-knew-till-now almost every page of this admirable work by the Federal Writers Project. The lively encyclopedists of the project have done a job that would be simply impossible under any other plan than the collective one by which it was prepared.

New York is an agglomerate of nations, races, communities, classes, and individuals. It is less a city than it is a super exposition of the cultural traits of the world, gathered in an indefensible jumble of illogic. No man, not even Lewis Mumford, could be this giant's Boswell. The job calls for a biographical industry—the typewriter legion of the Federal Writers Project. These larking scholars at \$23.85 per, using a method of collective writing and research, have done the city's visage in all its anthropological humors—not only the “sights” in the guide books but the smells and the sounds of the real life of New York. For a dazed reviewer to question their scope or selection or verification would require a staff as large and as perspicacious as the project's own literary troops. The facts have been checked and double-checked and found good by a jury of savants from Vladimir D. Kazakevitch, New York Chapter of the American Institute of Banking, to Dan Parker, sports editor of Hearst's New York *Daily Mirror*.

What *New York Panorama* contains is an enormous learning of the metropolis, presented under headings like: “Speech—The Local Vernacular”; “Architecture—Bricks of the City”; “Popular Music—Folk Tunes to Swing”; “The Press—Newspaperman's Mecca”; “Transport—City of Motion”; “Housing—One-third of a City”; and “The World's Fair, 1939—Perisphere and Trylon.” This is a quick dabble into twenty-six chapters which can be directly explored through a

twenty-three-page index. The bleak boredom of most fact compendiums is absent from the book. It is turned out with wit, grace, irony, and vernacular, judiciously used. It emphasizes just the points we'd want to tell our grandchildren about New York in the thirties. No old codger, writing on the stationery of the Old Bolshevik's Club to the *Times* of 1970, could safely say that he remembers the McCarthy Yankees and what a bunch of fistic bearcats they were, because right here on page 316 it says: “The Yankees are a well-mannered group of business men, highest paid on a team-average the game has ever known. They seldom have fights on the field; they are courteous, if cool, with the umps.”

Photographs in offset adorn the book. Here is Joe Marsalla, playing his clarinet in the Hickory House; the Wrigley spectacular on Times Square; the New School for Social Research; and an East Side pushcart market—the thousand and one marvels and disgraces of the city.

Naturally such a book cannot probe too deeply into these urban phenomena, but the boys have not shirked the necessary judgments and comparisons. These departures from straight exposition give the book its extra pleasure. Quite disgracefully, none of the essays are signed. I'd liked to have seen a short note in the back, giving these credits. Many people worked on this extraordinary book about the Big City and many, many more will thank them for it. JAMES DUGAN.

## Mussolini and Britain

MUSSOLINI'S ROMAN EMPIRE, by Geoffrey T. Garratt. *The Bobbs-Merrill Co.* \$2.50.

WHEN Mussolini boasts that he is resuscitating the ancient Roman empire, some people are still inclined to dismiss such blustering as pure bombast and to rely on the safeguard of the British empire. England becomes, *ipso facto*, the guardian of the Mediterranean because of her key positions in Gibraltar, Malta, and Suez, and, in the eyes of the world, Britain should form the prime obstacle to the new Caesar's imperialism. Yet in the two major raids that Il Duce has staged, in Ethiopia and in Spain, Great Britain assisted the aggressor by more or less open connivance. It is this counterpoint of Italian trumpet blasts and British echoes that this book has set out to clarify and expose.



Charles Martin

Mr. Garratt is a product of Rugby and Oxford and saw service in India and Mesopotamia. During the Ethiopian affair, he was a close observer of events as a correspondent for the Manchester *Guardian*. In January 1937 he assisted in the work of evacuating children from Madrid and in general relief work among the refugees of loyalist Spain. As honorary administrator of the National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief, he spent most of last year in Eastern Spain, with headquarters at Madrid and Valencia.

The author, therefore, knows very intimately whereof he speaks. His narrative seeks to go behind news cables in an effort to portray a troubled world in which dictators bluff and browbeat the statesmen and politicians of the so-called democracies. And the role of Great Britain is exposed with all the anger of an outraged subject who sees his country playing a double game of intrigue in an effort to placate an insatiable and irresponsible aggressor. It becomes a frank and direct indictment of British foreign policy.

The imperial game of bluffing began with the breakdown of the League of Nations in 1932, after the British refusal to support the note sent out by Secretary of State Stimson against Japan's encroachment in Manchuria. British non-intervention in the Far East gave Mussolini his cue and told him as directly as any formal note could have done that England would not interfere in any aggression so long as her own commercial interests were not affected. It meant that Italy could go on interfering in Ethiopia and round off the scattered Italo-African colonies into an imposing aggregate, thus laying the foundations of a new Roman empire. But that was not all. The game, once successful in Ethiopia, could be repeated in Spain and other parts of Europe. Il Duce's “Roman empire” would be based on a mastery of the Mediterranean—the *Mare Nostrum* of Roman times. The stepping stones in this plan would include Majorca, which would cut off France from Tunis and Algeria; pro-Arab alliances in Palestine and Syria, which would undermine French and British control in Asia Minor; and intrigues in Spain, which would give Italy control of Andalusia and North Africa, thus making Gibraltar untenable.

The chief obstacle to these schemes was Great Britain, with her control of the western and eastern extremes of the Mediterranean and with Malta hampering everlastingly the free swinging of the Italian boot. England supposedly rose to her role of world stabilizer by forging the weapons of “sanctions” in Ethiopia and “non-intervention” in Spain. Actually, both these instruments proved to be Mussolini's most valuable aids. Garratt has set himself the task of examining these tools, of showing how they foster Il Duce's plans, and of exposing England's duplicity.

The main reasons that explain the British foreign policy are the pro-fascist pressure exerted on the Foreign Office and the pursu-