

Recent Verse

LITTLE FRIEND, LITTLE FRIEND, by Randall Jarrell. Dial Press. \$2.

MAN IN THE MIRROR, by Aaron Schmuller. Harbinger House. \$1.50.

A MAN AGAINST TIME, by William Ellery Leonard. Appleton-Century. \$2.

MR. JARRELL concludes that the war in which he participated as a soldier was "in vain." It is apparently his conviction that all wars are the same, that there was no difference between 1918 and 1945; that the essence of all war is fraudulent death. I would not expect an honest soldier to come home singing the glories of war but I look for more than the smug clarity of cynicism. Though in many places Jarrell's poems strike home, in mirror-flashes, the sidelights of war, the "lost warrior" theme leads the poet down the narrow alley at whose end there is always an explosion and a catastrophe. Jarrell, it seems, encountered no soldier who knew about what he was fighting for. Since almost all of Jarrell's poems end on the same note I cite the concluding lines of "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner," which is also the concluding piece of the book:

*From my mother's sleep I fell into
the State,
And I lunched in its belly till my
wet fur froze.
Six miles from earth, loosed from
its dream of life,
I woke to black flak and the night-
mare fighters.
When I died they washed me out
of the turret with a hose.*

This current springs also from less literary founts, fascist founts among them.

Man in the Mirror is Aaron Schmuller's first collection of poems. I could not help reading it with a twinge of pain because, though the themes are broad, humane and express a lofty hope for mankind, if the reader is not fore-armed with Mr. Schmuller's convictions, these qualities may be without effect. The poems give a sense of imitative laboring. It is not the lack of smooth craftsmanship which weakens *Man in the Mirror* so much as that Schmuller tries to lace himself into well-thought-of forms. His Whitmanesque borrowing announces itself in the title poem:

*A mass of habits and hobbies, de-
sires and dreams
gathered in a single skin-sack
and thus conceived inside and out:
High-flung huge mane of hair,*

*Fuzzy thick-set maze of comb-
breaking hair forestry, brown
woven,
Wide Negroid nostrils of the
Africano,
Black brows, long black lashes
bordering round
Flashing dark-eyes, set in white-
face white-face forehead,
Looking toward all men. . . .*

*You there, Man in the Mirror,
flinging firebrand balloons
To men of all denominations—
White man, black man, yellow
man and all others!
Pauper, but not money-man, but
not prelate or potentate
nor any prince born son; . . .*

But there is ample reason to believe that the author of *Man in the Mirror* can fight his way to a more individual verse.

The sixty-seven love sonnets in William Ellery Leonard's posthumous *A Man Against Time* are the work of an experienced hand grown a little tired. They treat of the difficulties of love between two people of grossly unmatched years (the poet in the twilight of his life having married a young woman). Their three major themes are an old man's rediscovery of love's anatomy, his deep hurt at childlessness and over his wife's fear that in death he will take from her the meaning of her life.

MILTON BLAU.

A Great Teacher

RACE AND DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY, by Franz Boas. J. J. Augustin. \$2.50.

THIS volume of essays renews the pangs that every person of good will felt on the death of the great teacher, Franz Boas. It is not too much to say that Franz Boas founded the discipline of anthropology. From the department at Columbia University which he headed for almost fifty years, from the lecture platform which he graced for an even longer period, from the dozen volumes of enduring content and the over 600 articles and papers that he contributed to learned and popular periodicals, he dispersed his stimulating influence throughout the rational world. He was plagued by his share of bigoted, witch-hunting committees, but nothing deterred him from his search for, and persistent broadcasting of, the truth.

Boas did more than any other single individual to expose the vicious fallacy of racism. He recognized, too, and analyzed the basic "economic and so-

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ON MARCH 15, 1946

NEW MASSES' yearly subscription rate will be six dollars instead of five. The magazine regrets the necessity for this change, but January 1 has brought added printing, engraving, and paper costs so that in order to continue delivery to its readers, NM has no choice other than to increase sub prices.

To you who now renew, no matter what the date of expiration of your sub: we will accept your renewals at the five-dollar yearly rate for one year, nine dollars for two years, and twelve dollars for three, provided you renew not later than March 15. And, also until March 15, every new subscriber whose order is postmarked before midnight on that date will be accepted at five dollars for one year, nine dollars for two, twelve dollars for three.

In spite of the dollar increase, it is still less expensive to subscribe to NEW MASSES than to buy it from week to week. At fifteen cents per copy on the newsstands, it would cost you \$7.80 annually. Even with the new six-dollar rate, you save \$1.80.

One more thing. Watch the pages of the magazine in the next few weeks for especially interesting news of changes and improvements.

cial forces . . . [the] class conflicts" so important for an understanding of the origin and tenacity of the lie. He announced, and *demonstrated*, that "it is the way of life that dictates what the body shall do, and not the body what the way of life shall be. What is true of the body is also true of the mind and therefore of social behavior."

On a dozen other fronts he was a pioneer. He examined the high level of society attained by African Negroes prior to their spoliation by commercial capitalism, when Carter G. Woodson and W. E. B. DuBois were just launching their distinguished careers. He hailed, in 1919, "the Russian Soviets" as representing "an attempt to reach in this manner a truer and clearer expression of the wishes of the people than can be attained by the older means," and saw that a redefinition of property rights was a basic need in any modern effort to extend the meaning of liberty. He demanded true and full equality of educational opportunity, a national and adequate health, old-age, and unemployment insurance program. He excoriated trustee-control of American universities, and the hounding of radical teachers. He espoused internationalism. He denounced cynicism, pragmatism, and kindred manifestations of defeatism. He affirmed a belief in the existence of basic truths and virtues, and analyzed, in a most original and fruitful manner, the origins of the debased moralities of the propertied classes as contrasted with the uncorrupted values of the masses.

And as he aged he developed, for the militance and clarity of the papers written when he was eighty years old are even greater than those produced half a century before. It is not without significance that one of Franz Boas' last articles was written for NEW MASSES four years ago, and though his son chose not to include it in this volume it remains one of the most succinct and precise summaries of his views in print. Despite the unfortunate omission, this book brings us, in distilled form, the wisdom of one of the very greatest men of the past century.

HERBERT APTHEKER.

War Novel

THE LONG NOVEMBER, by James Benson Nablo. Dutton. \$2.50.

IF *The Long November* is any indication of the coming war books then there are good ones on the way. Mr. Nablo has written a good book and an honest one.

There has been so much nonsense

pushed between the covers of books about World War II (most of it written by newspapermen, or military public relations experts, or slogan copywriters who should be working for NAM) that I find it refreshing to read about Joe Mack, a Canadian who enlists in the Canadian Army to avert a possible jail sentence. Not that one commends such an action, but Mr. Nablo implies that Joe Mack had no conception of the war and why it was being fought, symbolizing a generation weaned on meaningless slogans. When Mack runs away to the army he does so with memories of mineowners who made millions at the expense of workers, cardsharks, rum-runners and other vicious characters, including certain nice old women who own real estate. To fight for the preservation of such contemptibles didn't make sense to Mack and he reacted as many soldiers did to the war.

The thing that made American soldiers good and brave fighters in the field was an unbreakable comradeship in the face of danger. American soldiers mostly wanted to get the war over with and go home. They were not out to destroy fascism. They did not hate the Germans for what they had done to the world. It even appears that there is less hatred for the Germans among returning soldiers than for those soldiers' allies.

The Long November finally brings Joe Mack to a besieged house in Italy where, under watchful Nazi eyes, he spends three hours thinking. Everything of any importance that happened to him seems to have happened in November. He recalls Steffie Gibson, the girl he always loved, and Granny Gibson, one of the nice old women he despises. He recalls Fern Miller, whose husband was killed in a mine accident, and Jake Levinsky. Mr. Nablo deserves a special commendation for drawing a Jewish character who sounds like a human being.

The publishers say that Nablo "has written a passionate indictment of the decade before the Second World War." It is that. But it goes beyond that. The book ends on a sweeping affirmative note.

I think Mr. Nablo made a mistake in writing his book in the first person, which sometimes makes it read like a confession story. Mr. Nablo also flings his people into the story with disconcerting suddenness. But these faults are minor. *The Long November* is exciting and has something to say and says it well.

SAM ELKIN.

January 29, 1946 NM