

advised "... no man could be more solicitous for those under him than the leaders of these mills are ..." and thought "... they have reached perfection in this way." On the other hand, another clergyman states: "The housing conditions are terrible. The work conditions, the hours of work are absolutely impossible and I think it tends to make the men become disgusted with this country." In many cases it took a good deal of courage for the pastors and priests in the steel area to speak on the strike. The president of one steel and iron company told an investigator and advised notification to whom it might concern: "I am a Presbyterian. If I thought the Presbyterian Church was spending any money on this investigation, I'd never contribute another dollar to the Presbyterian Church." It may be that practically the power of the church over industrial conditions is limited, but it is encouraging to observe the vigor of some individual religious leaders in living and acting according to the doctrine of ethical responsibility of the church for social conditions. It should also be noted that a church organization was responsible for this investigation.

It is curious how little responsibility the American citizen feels for the social conditions in the steel industry or in the mining regions of Mingo and Logan counties in West Virginia. These inhabitants are aliens or mountaineers with queer and strange customs, quite foreign to what is considered typically American. The part of the United States which he includes in his psychological self does not comprise these regions. They might as well be in Mexico or in Russia. In fact, more interest might be taken in them if they were in either of these two countries.

The follow-up work of the commission is therefore urgent. Psychologists tell us that our forgetting is highly selective, that we forget quickly the events that it is unpleasant to remember. The steel strike is a memory rapidly becoming dim. But the strike was settled by power and not by a consideration of the facts. There will be other strikes. The question heard so frequently a decade or so ago, in the era of what the comfortable classes called "muck raking magazines," is just as vital as ever, namely, "What are you going to do about it?" The commission put the matter up to Mr. Gary, the President, the Commissioner of Labor, and to Congress. But the industrial defencelessness of the unorganized immigrant worker remains. The twelve-hour day and the seven-day week are bad for the country. And particularly we should ask ourselves these larger questions: Is the nation helpless before the conditions in a basic industry? Can our democratic society be moved to do industrial justice without the pressure of crisis itself?

W. F. O.

## Liza of Lambeth

*Liza of Lambeth*, by W. Somerset Maugham. New York: G. H. Doran Co. \$1.75.

**N**OTHING shows less literary taint than this reprinted novel of Somerset Maugham's. It crosses the Thames of combed and curried London to plunge into the jungle of Lambeth. At one end of Westminster Bridge you have an educated England of subtleties and reticences, of refinement and elision. At the other end

you face this primitive, shameless, raw, naked England, this Shakespearian unexpurgated land of savory speech, brutal candor and warm desire. Here hardly less than in the seventeenth century you have the England so often disguised in low comedy but really something so natural, so pungent, so powerfully human, that it can hardly be put into print. Somerset Maugham comes to it not as a humorist but as an unsentimental humanist, looking it in the face. And with no word to show that he stands outside this scheme of life as a cold spectator, with instead a very great power to realize its intense naturalness, he frames one of its most revealing stories in this brief, idiomatic novel.

Victorian England, we are often told, was extremely respectable. A few quaint gestures of this respectability are borrowed by Lambeth. The still-life of fruit under a glass cover is there, and some of the still-life morality—the derision of the "new woman" on a bicycle, and the feeling that "a woman's place is 'er 'ome." But this comes into Mr. Maugham's narrative as only incidental to the tribal existence that he gives us with such faithfulness. Liza sails into the narrative as a spirited, spunky girl of eighteen, the little friend of all her world. She is at once fiery, indecent, proud, innocent. She can cry, "you jolly well dry up, old jellybelly" and "this is too bloomin' slow, it gives me the sick," (expurgated), and she can blush to the roots of her hair when the strange man grabs her and kisses her in a kissing game. But it is the world that surrounds her that gives Vere Street its pungency.

"It was the dead season in Vere Street as much as in Belgravia, and really if it had not been for babies just come or just about to come, and an opportune murder in a neighboring doss-house, there would have been nothing whatever to talk about. As it was, the little groups talked quietly, discussing the atrocity or the merits of the local midwives, comparing the circumstances of the various confinements." The liveliness of these comparisons is a choral voice in which are mingled the maudlin droolings of Liza's mother, the shrieked laughter of the street, the stolid recrimination of the wives whose husbands have been beating them, the wild excitement of the melodrama, the magnificent gluttony of the Chingford picnic.

But this choral voice is not heard as a discordancy. Where Mr. Maugham is emphatically not a mere naturalist, is in his appreciation of the motives behind these pointed accents of life. It is one thing to see with one's own assaulted eyes the swarming pubs of London, with men and women jammed together as they swill Saturday away; or the swarming nights of Hampstead, with men and women laced together, rows upon rows. What Mr. Maugham does is to induce us to follow Liza into exactly these scenes and to make us see them internally, not externally. So Liza, who falls in love with the burly newcomer who kisses her so resoundingly is very soon not the girl of the gorgeous picnic who says, "Well, I believe I'm boozed." She is the girl to whom this man with a wife and five children says, "Liza, will yer?" and then, shaking himself, shook her to a decision by "a violent, swinging blow in the stomach." Victorian? Not any more than the succeeding scenes in which the tribe gets wind of Liza's love affair or the scene in which her lover's twenty-year wife meets her and, "yer dirty little bitch, you," beats her to pulp.

One can imagine how tasteless and vile these incidents

would be if not understood. It is the genius of Liza of Lambeth that they are penetrated with understanding. Love comes to Liza with the shivering beauty of a new dawn. For her as well as for Jim Blakeston, this bearded man of forty, it is the transfiguration of life. But the game is loaded against them. At first they have each other in the bold anonymity of the parks. But Vere Street begins to know, and Liza begins to be cut. Then they chaff her, with a nudging, badgering brutality that leaves little unsaid. "Liza 'as all the pleasures of a 'usband an' none of the trouble.' 'Blime if I know what yer mean!' said Liza. 'Na, of course not; you don't know nothin', do yer?' 'Innocent as a bibe. Our Father which art in 'eaven!' 'Aven't been in London long, 'ave yer?' . . . 'O me darlin', I love yer fit to kill, but tike care your missus ain't round the corner.' This was particularly bold and they all laughed." They laugh, and she doesn't know what to do. There isn't anything to do. In the camaraderie of their love, (driven now to the winter hospitality of the third-class Waterloo waiting-room), they admit that they're up against it. "So yer see, Jim, we're in a bloomin' 'ole, an' there ain't no way aht of it thet I can see.'" But, like the thick, yellow November fog "which filled the waiting-room, entering the lungs, and making the mouth taste nasty and the eyes smart," their environment poured poisonously in on them, until Jim's wife dug her nails into Liza and "they swayed about, scratching, tearing, biting, sweat and blood pouring down their faces, and their eyes fixed on one another, bloodshot and full of rage."

When Liza returns after this fight to her mother, she is at last on her mother's level. It's then that the old gal gives the young gal plenty of whisky and that the young gal cries, "Buck up, old gal . . . I feel like a new woman now." In the blurred hour of drunken confidences, the mother speaks out of this hidden England. "Yus," went on Mrs. Kemp, 'I've 'ad thirteen children an' I'm proud of it. As your poor dear father used ter say, it shows as 'ow one's got the blood of a Briton in one.'" Liza forgets her trouble as the maternal voice drones to her. She sits up singing, her dress all disarranged from the fight; "her face covered with the scars of scratches . . .," leering with heavy, sodden ugliness. But from this hour she never recovers. During the night, the cold and horrible and lonely night, the anguish of her labor begins, and before she knows anything more, but to the awful droning of her drunken mother and the wild shapes of her two days' agony, she dies.

It is not pathos that Mr. Maugham creates in this masterly end, with the mother and the midwife talking coffins and insurance before the girl is dead, with Jim the lover on his knees by the bedside, calling to her who can't hear. There is pathos but it is inwoven with a plain and terrible recognition of the life force that is beyond pathos, beyond felicity. That force, so raging, so untamed in Mr. Maugham's Lambeth, is not introduced simply for its piquancy and its novelty. It is introduced, one feels, because in Lambeth Mr. Maugham found a something which in modern literature is so consistently ignored. It is the thing that made Hogarth so irresistibly interesting, the thing that flows like rich juice from any slice of Shakespeare's outspokenness. It is something deeply English, or at any rate deeply human. To have understood that and kept faith with it is the triumph of Liza of Lambeth. It is not only racy and colored, it is sincere.

FRANCIS HACKETT.

## Romain Rolland

*Romain Rolland, by Stefan Zweig. New York: Thomas Seltzer & Co. \$4.00.*

THE criticism of Dante excited by the sixth centenary of his death has taken account largely of the extraordinary unity of his conception of life, of the fact that he represents, in the literal sense, a universe. It is toward such unity that great souls have always aspired, and the apparent impossibility of achieving it has been the chief element in that *maladie du siècle* of which the literature of the late nineteenth century is full, and which recognizes itself in such terms as degeneration and decadence. Realism, impressionism, nationalism, pragmatism are all expressions of the tendency to accept the multiplicity of phenomena in a practical world, and to give over as vain the attempt to achieve any synthesis of them. It is the effort to reintegrate the world that gives Romain Rolland his distinction among the writers of today. With dramatic suddenness he was called to testify in his life to the truth of his thought, and like the other exile whose death at Ravenna we are honoring, he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

Mr. Zweig's biography is no ordinary one. The outward events of Romain Rolland's life are merely referred to in passing, and the narrative is kept on the high plane of his intellectual achievement. It is clear however from its pages that Rolland was from the first consciously possessed by his enterprise, and that the elements of his training and association contributed steadily to its fulfilment. He was an internationalist in his early enthusiasms for Beethoven, Shakespeare, Spinoza. At the Ecole Normale he was the pupil of Brunetière and the friend of Claudel, Saurès, Péguy, the group which was working for a reaction in literature from the materialism and particularism of the naturalists. He passed through his period of storm and stress, and in his doubt and perplexity he turned to Tolstoi, who accepted him as a spiritual son. Later he was appointed to a fellowship which took him to Rome where he met the great influence of his early life, Malvida von Meysenburg, then an old woman, an unconquerable idealist, whose mind was radiant with the memories of great friendships. He returned to become professor of the history of music at the Ecole Normale, and with Péguy and others to initiate that spiritual renaissance of which they saw France so greatly in need. They published an obscure periodical, "Cahiers de la quinzaine" in which all of Rolland's early work appeared, including *Jean Christophe*. He turned first to the drama, with a series of Tragedies of Faith, written for the people, "to arouse a passionate aspiration toward greatness" in them. He initiated a series of dramas of the revolution. One of these, *Danton*, was introduced by a speech from Jaurès; and *Les Loups*, which represented symbolically the Dreyfus case, was attended at its first performance by the actors in that national drama of atonement, Zola, Picquart, and Scheurer-Kestner. Nevertheless Rolland's plays spent themselves in the void. From this defeat—his marriage broken, his career checked—he fell back into solitude and poverty, and for fifteen years his name was unheard.

During this time he devoted himself to biography. In the drama of the revolution he had sought to represent a great movement, to write an Iliad of the French people, "to exhibit as it were the drama of a convulsion of nature, to depict a social storm." In his biographies of Beethoven, Michael-Angelo and Tolstoi he depicted the individual. In the drama of revolution he had set forth his distrust of the national ideal of victory. He makes Lux, the German