

Here is a book by an American woman who was run out of the country for telling a joke at Stalin's expense in *The Saturday Evening Post*. Spite books can be very amusing but this is an exception. Mrs. Grady's husband is an American engineer who was under contract with the Soviet Government as specialist in the coal fields. Being journalistically inclined she wrote the low-down on Russia for America's premier weekly journal and was given a one-way trip over the Soviet border in consequence. The incident has created publicity for her book and will encourage acceptance of her views.

Mrs. Grady doesn't like the Communist system, food tickets, waiting in line, secret police terrorism, forced labor, liquidation of kulaks, sex freedom, irreligion, inefficiency, *verboten*s, and all the rest of the paraphernalia of militant Communism. For that, nobody can blame her. It is doubtful that the Communists like it themselves. Her book is a long, and often amusing, string of observations, comments and incidents of life in Red Russia, some of which are well worth knowing. For example, one expects to see a surge of American "specialists" to Moscow when one reads that the Soviet marriage and divorce system makes it possible for American engineers to take unto themselves legal concubines while "specializing" for the Five-Year Plan. Tales of bootlegging food and other commodities emphasize the point that human nature is generally capable of finding a way around most official ordinances, even in Russia.

However, Mrs. Grady seems to miss the real point about Russia. That point is, not that Russia is under a despotism, but that that despotism is actually putting across the most impressive economic integration in world history, that the Communists are using despotism as a means to a preordained economic and political end, and that, in consequence, Soviet Russia is today the most dynamic factor in world politics and world economics. She is out to alter and has already affected the economic and political status quo.

Beyond saying that the Five-Year Plan will be completed and that "America will have to submit with what grace she can to the loss of her cotton, grain and wheat markets abroad; perhaps to the disruption of industry at home," and that when Stalin says world-revolution he means it, Mrs. Grady omits the underlying trend and purpose of the whole Red racket. It is as though a nice, well-meaning, pacifistic, middle-west-

ern dame were given a bomb-proof view of the German drive of March, 1918, and reported solely upon the shortage of shower baths in the trenches and upon the cruel inefficiency of war in general, without glimpsing the strategic principles or the political purposes which made the gigantic German effort an historical epic. And perhaps if Mrs. Grady had written that the German rank and file despised Ludendorff and hated Hindenburg, she would have been escorted rearward from the German front almost as rapidly as she was from Russia.

JOHN CARTER.

"**H**ATTER'S CASTLE," by A. J. Cronin (Little, Brown, \$2.50). This is a full-flavored novel of the three-decker type. It is the story of a brutal Scotchman and of how he brought his own life down about his ears. James Brodie is a hatter in a lowland town, and "nearly as mad as one." He is a huge fellow, a bully and a devil, obsessed with delusions of grandeur, thinking himself too good for his neighbors and dreaming of the time when he can throw his position in their teeth. He browbeats his wife to death, drives his eldest daughter to the edge of hopeless tragedy, ruins his business, takes to drink, loses his blowsy mistress to his wastrel son, and, finally, pinning his highest hopes on his youngest child, works her to madness and suicide. This, of course, is melodrama. A moment's reflection will show you that the old-fashioned novel and, I venture to say, the novel which is most commonly cherished and reread, is built upon a melodramatic plot. But the melodramatic plot, strong as it is, will never make a novel live unless it is the framework for living characterizations. The characterizations in *Hatter's Castle* are excellent. Brodie and his family and the few outsiders who play large and small parts in the story are all solid, believable, differentiated in action and speech. They all make certain appeals to the emotions. Scene after scene in the long book strikes the mind and fixes itself in the memory. If the novel had the relief of simple humor, it would truly merit superlatives. There is humor in it, but of a twisted, bitter sort, found in the pitiless sharpness of some of the scenes, such as that in which his bullying son causes Grandma Brodie to lose her false teeth which scatter, as he graciously says, like pearls before swine, and that in which Brodie's oafish son, preparing for his departure to India, sits on his bed laboriously picking out

tunes on a mandolin so that he may be prepared to serenade harem beauties on tropic nights. *Hatter's Castle* holds the interest from the first of its six hundred and five pages to the last.

So far it is the season's most welcome dish to lovers of solid, meaty fiction.

FRANCES LAMONT ROBBINS.

"**T**HE Rise and Fall of Carol Banks," by Elliott White Springs (Doubleday, Doran & Company, \$2.50). Mr. Springs' hero, like himself, was a flying ace in the War. Banks was also, according to Mr. Springs, an ace of hearts and a bartender possessed of the divine spark of genius. During his eighteen months of patriotic service he only attained perfect sobriety for three days. He brought down many German pilots and still more French nurses, dancers, and daughters of joy, in flames. The War, for Carol Banks as doubtless for other lucky young brutes, was a dazzling field day. Mud and murder could almost be forgotten in the general holocaust of vitality. In the same twenty-four hours, you saw your best friend shot to fragments by a marauding Fokker, landed your own machine riddled with bullets, stole the general's Rolls-Royce roadster, and ended up at the New York Bar in Paris with your head under the table. Mr. Springs adopts a somewhat needlessly confused form for recounting these high-pitched adventures, the majority of which must surely have been his own. The last part of his book, bearing on Carol Banks' road back to normalcy after the Armistice, savors of an all-night Hemingway orgy, without the underlying Hemingway sardonicism. There are, however, a few battles in the air and a few purple leaves to Paris which could not fail to brighten your picture of madcap, venturesome, American youth.

VIRGILIA PETERSON ROSS.

Behind the Blurbs

THE DECAMERON, in the translation of J. M. Rigg, is now published complete in 2 vols. in Everyman's Library. *** *The Omnibus Jules Verne*¹ contains four of that author's most popular stories: *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, *Around the World in 80 Days*, *The Blockade Runners*, and *From the Earth to the Moon*. *** *The Company of Shadows*² is a somewhat confused tale of a sort of vigilance committee in London, who first punished crooks that the law couldn't reach, and then took up crime itself. The mysterious Stephen Parrox and his daughter,

The publishers of *Following the Prairie Frontier*, by Seth K. Humphrey, were erroneously stated in our issue of July 8. This book is a publication of the University of Minnesota Press.

The *Mirrors of 1932* (Brewer, Warren & Putnam) and *Washington Merry-Go-Round* (Liveright) are discussed in the editorial on page 361 of this issue.

1. Lippincott, \$3.00.

2. By J. M. Walsh: Brewer & Warren, \$2.00.

Mike the reporter, Inspector Trent, Willowby Wiseman, and various other characters are extremely active but the reader can seldom figure out what they're really up to. The author conceals the twists of his plot so successfully that the denouement is superfluous. * * * Our old friend, Col. Gethryn, wasn't much upset when in *The Polferry Riddle*³, Eve Hale-Starford was found in bed with her throat cut and not a clue in sight. But when a short time later Eve's sister fell over a cliff in her car, and Hale-Starford's young cousin was drowned, and attempts were made on the life of Susan Kerr, who also had been in the house on the night of Eve's death, the Col. decided he'd have to give Scotland Yard a hand. We're a little sorry he did, for, as it turned out, the mystery wasn't worthy of him. But though the story develops a bad limp in the last chapter, it is exciting and entertaining, and we think you'll enjoy it. * * * Things looked pretty black for young Corinna Lesley when a gent with a punctured heart was found in her flat. Lucky for her that among her friends, who were a pretty night-club lot, was Philip Cavanagh, who in his efforts to prove her innocent took the law into his own hands and used modified third degree methods on several crooks to get the information he wanted. We like Philip and hope to meet him again. And for once, in a thriller, you don't have to keep your bottle of Mothersill's at your elbow to get through the love story part. *Call the Yard*⁴ is the story's name.

WALTER R. BROOKS.

3. By Philip Macdonald: Crime Club, \$1.00.
4. By Hugh Clevely: Crime Club, \$1.00.

Music

Notable New Recordings

IT'S QUEER, but the releases of the major phonograph companies do seem to go in parallel channels. If one brings out some Sibelius, so do the others, if not simultaneously, immediately afterwards. A composer may be neglected for a long time and then suddenly at least two of said major companies will issue handsome album sets of his music—often of the same compositions.

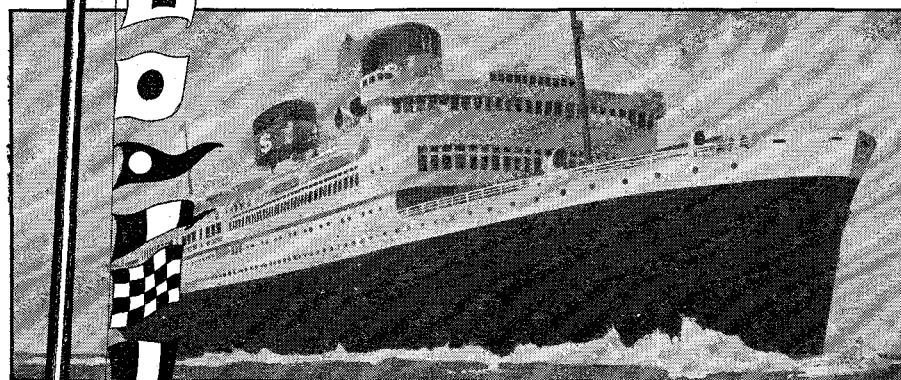
This week I was the recipient from Victor and Columbia of an album of Chopin from each. Fortunately, however, there is no overlapping on the material itself, and even more fortunately the pianists are probably the two leading living interpreters of the unhappy mallicised Pole—Ignaz Friedman and Alfred Cortot. Chopin, of course, while far from blissful in his mortal existence, has been made the subject of a most un-

pleasant sort of immortality—all bad pianists try to play his music. For Columbia Friedman plays twelve mazurkas on four twelve-inch records¹, and Cortot renders eight ballades for Victor on the same number of sides². In both cases the playing and the recording are first class in every particular. If it's a question of a choice between the sets, the brochure in the Columbia album should clinch it. Among many equally valuable facts in it we learn that so far as Chopin and George Sand are concerned "the reasonable supposition would seem to be that, the two being highly organized human beings of normal instincts, their intimacy took the course which such intimacies usually take."

Victor continue their policy of having radio favorites sung by artists who are usually above that sort of thing. John Charles Thomas gives us *Home on the Range* and *Trees*³, and I must say that there is no trace of condescension in his rendition. His fine baritone is well re-

1. Columbia Masterworks, Album No. 159.
2. Victor, Album M. 94.
3. Victor, 1525.

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The list of ten best-selling books printed on Page 376 is compiled from reports sent to the Outlook each week by wire from the following representative bookshops:

BRENTANO'S, New York; SCRANTONS, INC., Rochester; KORNER & WOOD, Cleveland; SCRUGGS, VANDERVOORT & BARNEY, St. Louis; KENDRICK BELLAMY CO., Denver; TEOLIN PILLOT CO., Houston; PAUL ELDER & CO., San Francisco; NORMAN REMINGTON CO., Baltimore; EMERY BIRD THAYER, Kansas City; MILLER'S BOOK STORE, Atlanta; BULLOCK'S, Los Angeles; STEWART KIDD, Cincinnati; J. K. GILL CO., Portland, Oregon; JOHN WANAMAKER, Philadelphia; THE OLD CORNER BOOK STORE INC., Boston, Massachusetts.

corded, too, in both. However, I still prefer Vernon Dahlhart on the former ditty. I don't think it *should* be sung by an operatic baritone, but perhaps I'm just prejudiced.

A lovely little violin solo record is given us by a fiddler previously unknown to me but of whom I hope to hear more. On a ten-inch Brunswick disk Mishel Piastro plays Albert Spalding's transcription of Schubert's *Hark! Hark! The Lark*, and *Poem*, by Fibich, the prolific Czech⁴, with great beauty of tone. That reminds me: why haven't we had any records from Albert Spalding himself lately?

O. C.-T.

4. Brunswick, 15221.