



Interregnum

IT is now about a year since the realization spread that in literature, as in business, the Golden Age was over. The final collapse of the "new economic era" can most conveniently be dated from the market break of May 1930, just after Mr. Hoover had assured us that everything was going to be all right. In the same week, Mr. Cabell's obituary on his contemporaries, appearing in the "Books," shocked the majority into recognition that the Great Twenties were ancient history. The last doubter must have been convinced when our Nobel Prize winner, broadcasting from Stockholm to the inhabited world, delivered a message that would have been timely and useful in the days of the Dingley tariff.

"One need not necessarily be a Marxian," writes Mr. Edwin Seaver in "Behold America," "to see some analogy between the political and economic situation during the decade following the war and the cultural situation." To Mr. Seaver I shall return; he writes well and thinks well, when the King Charles's head of the class struggle does not get in his way. But besides the general analogy he discerns there is a closer analogy between what happened to letters and what happened to stocks about the same time; the same thing that had happened to Florida four years earlier. To the non-Marxian eye they are all instances of inflation—overcapitalization of something pretty good, on the theory that respectable present earnings were a mere foretaste of fabulous future earnings. The Nineteen Twenties turned up, perhaps, more good and fairly good writers than any other decade in American history; but current criticism insisted that no writer was merely good; if he merited mention at all he was great, and greatness attached to everything he wrote thereafter, however dreadful it might happen to be.

Some of us had the misfortune to be unable to perceive all this greatness—a real misfortune, for the Cassandras never get so much fun out of life as the yea-sayers. But even we had the sense of living in stirring times, when there was always a good fight going on. If we doubted the divine authority of the great men of the age, we could at least feel about them as sixteenth-century Protestant theologians felt about the Pope; they were important enough to abuse if not to obey.

Now the fire has gone out. Criticism is listless and apathetic because there is no target worth shooting at, no literary figure who can be regarded by his opponents otherwise than as the Pope is regarded by Protestant theologians of 1931—a Christian brother doing the best he can, for whom we can feel fraternal sympathy even if we disagree with him. We are our own posterity, feeble epigones of our better selves. The great figures of the Heroic Age have been caught up into the Valhalla of the Metropolitan Club, there to indulge in the traditional heroic pastimes of eating, drinking, and fighting. All our pomps of yesterday are one with Nineveh and Tyre.

But what pomps they were, while they lasted! Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive; the jungle of obsolete tradition that had obstructed human progress was being cleared away, and on the site it had so long encumbered was to be built a new Wonder City of the spirit. So the Florida developers promised, too; but they spent all their money in clearing away the jungle, and when the landscape was swept and garnished they had nothing left to build with. The same thing happened to the intellectuals. They did a fine job of demolition, but it used up all their capital; when the time came for construction, they were bankrupt.

Over ruined Florida developments, the jungle is creeping back. From the Pullman window you see some huge piece of machinery which once sheared away the thickets, deserted and rusting in a tangle of wild flowers; and you think of Mencken, that Great Scarifier, retired to innocuous desuetude in a bower of orange blossoms. Reread the most admired criticism of the years when the Great Enlightenment was dawning, and you will be reminded of those miles of curbstones and lamp posts spreading across the Floridian wastes, mapping out the streets of some Wonder City that was never built.

Is the jungle creeping back on us, too? Not the same jungle; Howells and Longfellow are dead, even

if Lewis does not know it. But something is going to grow in those abandoned boulevards, and unless we do some landscape gardening it may be a more noxious and tangled vegetation than what was cleared away.

The business world, on the whole, has accepted its deflation with better grace than the "intellectual" world. But the business criterion is simple; sales charts and balance sheets tell the story. The publisher is committed to a double standard; even if his authors do not sell they may be great authors. So in some quarters the old game still goes on; they say great, great, where there is no greatness. But nobody believes them any more and they do not seem to expect anybody to believe them; publishers' publicity of 1931 has the same hollow ring as the encyclicals of brokerage houses. The *reductio ad absurdum* of current literature, from the commercial standpoint, is the appearance among the best sellers of the reissued "Bridge of Desire"; which on its first American publication, a dozen years ago, sold seven hundred copies.

WHAT has the commercial standpoint to do with it? A great deal. Inflation does not start itself; it has to have something to go on. One characteristic of the Great Twenties was that they took away the reproach that had previously attached to the best seller; they were an age when, generally speaking, the best books—at least the books most highly regarded at the moment—had the largest sale. But these early and on the whole deserved successes brought on the trade, in authors and publishers, too, the inescapable disease of prosperity. Where there is profit and glory to be won new producers rush in, and presently the field is overcrowded and only cutthroat competition can enable anybody to keep alive.

It was possible to believe that our age was adorned by half a dozen major geniuses; but when each Sunday's literary supplements discovered half a dozen new major geniuses, production soon outran the effective consumer demand. When that happened in other industries the instalment plan kept things going for a time; the book trade adopted other but equally dubious expedients. Some outstanding successes were won by importing the tactics and ethics of the movies into a trade whose traditions had been of quite another sort; and the men who stooped to conquer were imitated by others who stooped without conquering. There were firms, plenty of them, that did not stoop; but the industry as a whole lost something it may never quite recover. As production went up and sales went down, it began to be felt that the way to sell a book was to give it a title which would keep the customers from finding out what it was about. Only a bold (or a subsidized) biographer dared to call his life of John W. Smith the "Life of John W. Smith"; and a publisher who called a volume of collected essays, "Collected Essays," would have been overpowered and manacled by his salesmen and shipped off to Matteawan.

The result was inevitable; there was so much "hokey" in the trade that the customers decided it was all "hokey"; having been assured that all books were great, they decided in a huff that no books were great.

Success was even more demoralizing to the authors. That so many books were popular both with critics and with customers seemed to prove that literature was no longer something apart from the life of the nation; novelists and critics were prophets, their opinions had authority, and the herd must follow them into the Promised Land. The herd did follow for a while; witness the popularity of "Main Street" on Main Street and of "Babbitt" among the Babbitts. But long before the Great Deflation the intellectual market had a downward trend. Mr. Lewis at Stockholm complained that even the most successful American authors had to feel that what they were doing did not really matter. That he is right everyone agrees; the intellectuals say one thing (or many things), but the viscera, far more numerous, do something else. For a while there was a healthy tendency to blame the crowd for not following its natural leaders, but lately the suspicion has spread that the leaders are at fault. They weaken their power by dissensions; they have no Program. It is only

human that every man who thinks intellectual America should have a program also thinks it should have My Program. But intellectuals, as the term is commonly used, means people whose trade is ideas, or what they consider ideas; and to demand that they should all have the same ideas is to transfer the argument to the realm of dogma.

Mr. Seaver, in the survey mentioned above, finds the great test where? which American intellectual leadership broke down in the failure of the writers of the nation to rise up unanimously in defense of Sacco and Vanzetti. Well, they did not rise up unanimously because they did not feel unanimously; most of them, possibly, considered the affair an outrage, but many of them may have felt that there were outrages more urgently outrageous. A few writers did rush to the defense of Sacco and Vanzetti, got themselves conspicuously arrested on Boston Common, and thereby tightened the ropes around the victims' necks. Such qualms as had begun to stir in Boston were drowned out by this tumultuous inroad of New Yorkers, as might have been foreseen. If what was wanted was propaganda for the cause, it was a great gesture; but I presume that what was wanted was the release of two innocent men, and for that purpose the demonstration was worse than useless.

What Mr. Seaver means is that everybody should have recognized the Sacco-Vanzetti case as a dramatization of the class struggle, and that it is the moral duty of all American writers to line up on the "proletarian" side. He does not condescend to offer reasons; this is a self-evident truth perceived by the eye of faith, so it would be of little use to quote against him Mr. George Soule's recent observation in the New Republic: "At most times and in most places the class struggle exists chiefly in the minds of theorists who think it ought to be fundamental." If by an act of faith you can accept Communism, or Catholicism, or Theosophy, or Christian Science, as a full and sufficient answer, that ends the argument.

Those who lack faith and are consequently compelled to examine the evidence are more likely to find the explanation of the failure of the intellectuals in a fallacious assumption. A man who can write a good novel or a good play has a specialized talent. So has Heifetz; so has George Earnshaw; but these artists do not feel that their special talent qualifies them as authorities in all intellectual fields. "Babbitt" is generally accepted as the best novel of the decade, but when its author is not writing novels his performances are less impressive. Other Golden Ages did not make this mistake of confusing the critical and the creative gifts. What were William Shakespeare's opinions on the principal navigations and discoveries, the war with Spain, the economic issues of his day? Shakespeare was a man of discretion, so we do not know; but whatever they were, they would have gained no authority from the fact that he wrote "Hamlet."

BUT the doctrine that any writer admired by the critics (and who was not, in the Golden Age?) was also an intellectual leader prevailed for a time; if it has lost ground, writers have only themselves to blame. They said all they had to say, and then kept on saying. Further, most of the people the average author knows are authors, or editors, or publishers; so that fiction tends more and more to become a picture of the "intellectual" world from the inside. So long as the intellectuals derided the business man they were firing from cover; they sacrificed that advantage when they began to write about themselves. Like Jimmy Walker, they were willing to match private lives with anybody; the confession novelist confessed not only all about himself but all about his friends. The literary world of New York has been depicted in a hundred chronicles of cheerless drunkenness and unsatisfactory fornication; leaving morals out of the argument, this sort of life stands condemned because (in fiction, at least) people do not get any fun out of it. The picture may be true or may be false; the reader outside the trade accepts it as true, because it is painted by people who ought to know. By their own reiterated confession the mass of American writers are a lousy lot, and they cannot blame the Babbitts for rejecting their pretensions to leadership.

In this malodorous guttering the candle lit in 1919

by Elmer Davis



is going out. It would be absurd to try to add much to what Mr. Cabell has said of the major writers of the period. Even now, when the critical superlatives of the 'twenties are as ridiculous as the economic prophecies of the same era, one can recognize that there was a good deal of solid accomplishment. "Babbitt," of course, stands out above all the rest; it seems to be generally felt that this at any rate will endure. But I cannot believe that "The High Place" will be forgotten so long as there are people who prefer something done perfectly to something done only pretty well; or for that matter "The Age of Innocence"; and the history of Richard Bale of Balisand may last several decades longer than most of Mr. Lorimer's serials. To say nothing of Mr. Cabell's critical writings, in which a certain point of view has found definitive expression.

The elder writers have done their work—earned their ease, if they are wise enough to take it. But where are their successors? There is still Hemingway, of course; how much he has to say nobody knows, perhaps not even Hemingway himself, but the man who could write that story of the retreat from Caporetto ought to be able to write something more. There is the astoundingly mature talent of Pearl S. Buck sprung suddenly from nowhere; but she is only a writer, not a school. The great figures of a decade ago were like George Kaufman's wonder boy of Hollywood; they did not see the trend, they were the trend. Mrs. Buck can doubtless go on writing good novels in Nanking, but New Yorkers cannot make a cult of a woman who lives half way round the world.

I cannot share the excitement felt in some quarters over Mr. William Faulkner. He has obvious gifts, but he fakes some of his horrors; the story of "Sanctuary" impressed you, but so it would if you had read it in a tabloid. Only, you could not have read it in a tabloid, in the same detail; this land of Puritanical repression, so hostile to the creative artist, permits a novelist to say things that no newspaper would dare try to get away with. To deserve serious consideration Mr. Faulkner must do more than jump out of a dark corner shouting "Boo!"

So it does not yet appear what dynasty will succeed the Great Ones of the past. But where is the Provisional Government that ought to bridge the interregnum? What is the matter with the middle generation, ten years younger than Cabell and Hergesheimer and ten years older than the newcomers? Some of them are silent and the rest might as well be for all the consideration they get. Perhaps they were overlaid by the great reputations that preceded them; or perhaps a book that would have looked more impressive than it was, seven or eight years ago, looks even less impressive than it is, now that we have had our bellyful of superlatives; or perhaps—"You hear every reason for it," says Isabel Paterson, "except that people just write as well as they can write, and they can't do any better."

True enough, so far as it goes. But they wrote not only as well as they could but as much as they could; they glutted the market; their enthusiasm carried them dangerously near the abyss where there is nothing left to say, *unless you create it*. Most of the fiction of the Great Decade was journalistic, not creative; when it was first said it had a novelty value and seemed to mark its sayers as persons of consequence, but nothing can be new twice. Artists were mistaken for leaders; critics who might have led were mistaken for artists. Now that these mistakes have been exposed, nobody is quite sure of anything.

TILL the Great Decade transvalued all values, it had been supposed that the essential ingredients of literature were character and action. The 'twenties gave us other things, useful so far as they went; but little conclusive action (as was natural enough after the gigantic but not very conclusive action of the war) and not much significant character aside from George F. Babbitt and perhaps Leora Arrowsmith.

We are getting plenty of action now that the racketeer and gunman are the fashion, but not much character because you cannot make character out of a moron with a machine gun. That fashion will pass, as the present intellectual catalepsy will pass.

But where do we go from here? A noisy if not yet very numerous group thinks it knows the answer; we go to Moscow, bow before the tomb of Lenin, and there receive remission of our sins. Mr. Seaver seems to be one of the more ingenuous members of this faction; he tells us that the watchword of American intellectuals must be, "Toward the people!" We must see "the essential kinship between our literate discontent and the illiterate discontent of the crowd." What crowd? The crowd you see on the subway and at Coney Island and at the county fair? If so, the kinship is discernible only to the eye of faith. The illiterate discontent of the actual crowd already has its mouthpieces—the tabloids, "True Stories," and the movies.

But possibly that is not what Mr. Seaver means. The Russian intellectuals went toward the people sixty years ago and came away disappointed. Some of them relapsed into despair, but others decided that they personally were the people, and be damned to anybody who disagreed with them. So Mr. Seaver may mean the "crowd" in the Communist sense, a group of intellectuals who consider themselves trustees of the Holy Grail of proletarian dictatorship.

The enthusiasm for Communism among some of our younger literati is natural enough; it is the counterpart of the eighteenth century's enthusiasm for America, of the enthusiasm for the South Sea islands that was current a dozen years ago—longing for something remote and relatively unknown, to which at a distance you can impute all the virtues while ignoring any actual drawbacks. Communism is an organized body of dogma which explains everything once you have swallowed its major premise; embrace it, and you can feel that you have found refuge in the Everlasting Arms. As much can be said for Catholicism, but Catholicism has the practical disadvantage of being a going concern, not only abroad but here; a man who turned Catholic might find that the hierarchy expected him to live up to his professions, which would entail considerable inconvenience to the ordinary man of letters.

COMMUNISM also entails considerable inconvenience, of another sort, where it is in operation; but a man can be a Communist in New York, at present, at no greater cost than if he were a Jacobite or a Ghibelline. With none of the physical hardships of life in Russia, none of the despair that must afflict a writer when he suddenly comes up against a blank wall of dogma that shuts off the progress of his thinking, our local Communist can hug to his bosom the conviction that he alone knows the way of salvation.

It seems more likely to be the way of perdition. Fourteen years of Russian Communism, complicated by war and famine and hardship, is too short a time to be sure that Communism is poison to a writer; if modern Russia has produced little it has plenty of excuses. But what hope is there under a creed which insists that final, unalterable, and all-embracing truth has been revealed? Books that contradict the Communist Koran are false and pernicious; if any of them have been published in Russia, they have never reached the American market. And books that merely contain re-affirmations of the Marxian truth that all good Communists know already may presently be found unnecessary. As long ago as Plato's day, it was more than hinted that there would be no literature in the Perfect State.

There is room in literature for much that has nothing to do with Communism, one way or the other. So you and I might think, but not the "proletarian" theorists. Art must be proletarian, every artist must be class-conscious. Artists had a hard enough time in Russia under the Czars, but at least some criticism was permitted, sometimes; they did not all have to choose between emigration and Siberia; and there was a constant ferment of thought that gave them a public and produced new ideas and new artists. That inefficient despotism has been succeeded by a despotism which succeeds pretty well in controlling speech, and when it has educated the new generation may be able to control thought, too.

Actual proletarian literature is depressing enough, as the output of Hollywood proves; but at least the

door is not shut against improvement. Dogmatically "proletarian" literature offers little either in its doctrine—all the literature that has ever amounted to anything has dealt with individuals, not a crowd—or in its corollary of repression of dissent. Great literature may be either an enthusiastic approval of the existing order (as the "Æneid") or bitter criticism of that order (as "Babbitt") or concerned (as "Hamlet") with matters which have nothing to do with the existing order. But it can hardly flourish in a state where the existing order regulates all phases of life with its dogmas, and any serious critic is sent to chop wood in Siberia.

IF American literature must have a proletarian dictator I might prefer the synthetic proletarianism of Seaver and Max Eastman to the authentic proletarianism of MacFadden, on grounds of taste. But it is the difference between an open and a closed door. MacFadden goes with the crowd, he does not insist that the crowd go with him. Tabloid and movie literature may be bad enough, but there is no obstacle to improvement if the seeds of improvement happen to be there.

All this may be taking the Communists too seriously; but they are making a good deal of noise, and attracting some attention because they have a program, definite and all-inclusive, when the rest of us have none; their doctrine has the appeal of any patent medicine. Mr. Cabell remarks that the more important writers of his generation all perceived that "there is no cure for being human"; but minor intellectuals of the 'twenties usually believed there was, and fell into despair when they could not find it off-hand. Now come the Communists with the genuine old Russian remedy that will cure everything, and they find some customers.

There never has been any cure for being human; yet the human race has managed to worry along, and to produce some very respectable artistic by-products of its endeavors and its dissatisfaction. If Marx and Lenin have found a cure there is nothing more to write about. I can conceive a Communism that permitted freedom of thought, of speech, of experiment, as I can conceive a Christianity that expressed the spirit of Jesus; but historic Christianity and actual Communism are not like that. If the history of Christianity has taught us anything, it should be that the freedom to be wrong is better, in the long run, than compulsion to be what at the moment is considered right.

I do not know the way out of these present doldrums, but I see no point in walking into a blind alley. We shall have to find our way out by the old human method of trial and error and keeping on trying, leaving the way open for repeal and a fresh start if what seemed truth turns out to be error and we have to try again. This is a laborious and uncertain method, uncongenial to the religious-minded, the tender-minded, who must have the assurance that Lenin (or rather his victims) paid it all. It means thought instead of faith, work instead of submission. What American intellectuals need, in other words, is a little more intellect and a little more guts.

The Irish Censorship, which has been extraordinarily active in protecting Ireland from modern literature, had, up to the end of February prohibited, among others, Sherwood Anderson's "Horses and Men," Vicki Baum's "Grand Hotel," Jean Richard Block's "A Night in Kurdistan," Isadora Duncan's "My Life," William Faulkner's "Soldiers' Pay," Joseph Hergesheimer's "The Party Dress," Aldous Huxley's "Point Counterpoint," Sinclair Lewis's "Elmer Gantry," Somerset Maugham's "Cakes and Ale," Bertrand Russell's "Marriage and Morals," and Thomas Wolfe's "Look Homeward, Angel."

The University of Iowa's school of letters has opened a new field for graduate study with the admittance of imaginative or critical writing in place of the usual doctoral dissertation, according to an announcement made by Professor Norman Foerster, director of the school. One candidate has already started work under the new plan.

Books of Special Interest

The Municipal Boss

CITY BOSSES IN THE UNITED STATES. By HAROLD ZINK. Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press. 1931. \$4. Reviewed by CLINTON ROGERS WOODRUFF

WITHIN the past decade the college professor and the expert in political research have been directing their attention to the political boss, and especially to the city boss. As a consequence we are coming to know something fairly definite about him as an individual and as a leader or marshal of men for political ends. Professor William B. Munro, formerly of Harvard, now of the California Institute of Technology, was the first to cultivate this field, and his "Personality in Politics," although a slight volume, still stands at the head of the list. It is an illuminating generalization based on a long continued study of politics and political conditions and a penetrating insight into human nature and motives. Munro's colleague, Albert Bushnell, has also made some interesting contributions in the same field, his brilliant satirical defense of the boss delivered before the Los Angeles meeting of the National Municipal League and subsequently published in *The Outlook* for October 26, 1912, helps materially in understanding the boss and his methods. Lothrop Stoddard's "Master of Manhattan" is another contribution from what may be termed the literary point of view.

Zink's book is partly a study in sociology (of which he is assistant professor at De-

pauw University) and partly one of politics. It is more popular in style than Professor Rice's "Quantitative Methods in Politics," but not so scientific in form or spirit.

Twenty municipal bosses are considered, and generally speaking the author has done his work well. Were one disposed to be critical, numerous mistakes could be pointed out, but these were almost inevitable when one considers how little documented material there is available in this field. The boss, and this is one of the few universal characteristics, is not given to writing letters or articles and is very little given to speech making, so his biographer is forced to depend upon his friends, who are inclined to be over-eulogistic; upon his enemies, who are inclined to be unduly depreciatory; and upon newspapers and magazines, which are inclined to be partisan in their treatment. Notwithstanding these difficulties we have what may be considered a fairly clear and definite portrait of twenty masters of political destinies in the leading cities of America.

Seeking to determine the causes of their success, Professor Zink believes that they have few characteristics in common. Some were jovial, others taciturn, some half way between; some were habitually and naturally generous like Vare, others selfish; others generous to accomplish their ends; some were industrious, others lazy. All entered politics at a very early age and most had been poor or lived among the poor in their youth. Only ten of the eighteen on whom

data could be had died millionaires; "Doc" Ames of Minneapolis left \$1,413 and "Big Tim" Sullivan of New York died insolvent. Contrary to what one would think at first blush only three were born in Ireland; six were born in New York City; two were born in Philadelphia; ten, however, of the twenty had Irish-born fathers, and nine Irish-born mothers. Rural sections contributed only two of the American-born bosses. A somewhat distinctive feature of the municipal boss's relation to his family may probably have some political importance. A surprisingly large number lost their fathers at early ages and were forced as mere children to assume at least a part of the burden of bread winning. Another important similarity takes the form of long residence in the city dominated. Every one of the twenty bosses considered resided in his particular city by the time he was nineteen, and twelve were born in the city which they later ruled.

When it comes to personal characteristics there is the greatest dissimilarity, both mental and physical. Some dressed flashily, some nattily, and still others shabbily, and so it goes on to the end. This volume is interesting and no doubt will be used by some writer, possibly Zink himself, as the basis of an etched portrait of a boss similar to Professor Hart's or Professor Munro's, but for sometime to come the boss will have to be treated objectively rather than subjectively.

A War Tragedy

MRS. FISCHER'S WAR. By HENRIETTA LESLIE. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1931. \$2.50. Reviewed by HENRY WALCOTT BOYNTON

IN his Foreword John Galsworthy gives this book high praise for its earnest treatment of a theme of uncommon poignancy: the wartime experience of the English wife of a German who has lived long in England without being naturalized. Carl Fischer has left Germany as a boy, in order to escape military service. He is an ardent admirer of England and has made himself over into an Englishman, in speech, manner, and (he supposes) feeling. His son has been bred to the approved public school standard. His wife Janet accepts Carl without reservation as her natural mate, there appears to be not the slightest barrier between them. Carl and his son are singularly close friends, alike in character and sympathies.

A few relics of his German forbears are in Carl's possession, notably a miniature and a diary of his grandmother. It chanced that in the summer of 1914 the Fischers plan a walking tour in Germany, all three of them. They mean to visit among other quiet places the little city of Grauenburg where Carl's people had been of some account. The boy John breaks his leg and has to stay at home. The moment of war draws near, and the Fischers' friends try to dissuade them from going to Germany at such a time. But they go. They are happy at first, tramping together in a land where Carl finds himself unexpectedly at home. Their peace cannot last, it is threatened equally by the march of events and by a change that takes place in Carl himself. When the war breaks, they are among the last foreigners to start for home. And now, with a direct choice between England and Germany, Carl finds he must stand by the Fatherland of his people. Chance separates him from Janet without her learning of his choice.

She returns alone to England, not knowing what has become of him, whether he is alive or dead. Later she hears that he is in the German army. Meanwhile their son, John, fiercely English, takes the first chance to lie his way into the service: he is only a schoolboy. When he learns of his father's choice, he turns against him, can think or say nothing good of him. Janet meanwhile is trying to distract herself by taking a part in the war activities, then a duty and a fashion among the women of England. But she finds herself suspected and later rejected as the wife of an "enemy alien." Still later the known fact of her husband's militancy cuts her off entirely from her kind.

There is no happy ending possible for such a tale. John finds his father hopelessly crippled in a French hospital. Janet, who has no patriotism and is naturally, as it were, a one-man woman, becomes his permanent nurse and companion: a sort of contentment creeps back upon these two in their rustic retreat. Carl has not wanted to stay in Germany, after all. He has done his duty by her, now he prefers to return to England, blind and a cripple, to make what may be of his remaining days. John, less seriously disabled, has found a wife and gone off to Canada. The letter "c" has vanished from his name in wartime, and he carries no racial odium to the new land. Such is the tale. Galsworthy lauds it in high terms, is "deeply impressed," pronounces it "human and interesting from page to page; broad, just, tolerant; above all, warm and breathing. It makes you think."

To my ear the present performance is more tract than story; there is nothing in the treatment to lift the action from pathos to tragedy. These people do not breathe, they are merely animated types. Carl's racial reversion is an arbitrary device. John's sudden loathing of his sire is prompted by the author. And Janet herself, supreme victim of all this irony, never becomes more than a sentimental, self-centred, rather feeble object of commiseration. In mood and in style the narrative lacks restraint and finesse. It is all a little forced, over-emotional to the point of sultriness—a performance more in the vein of a Robert Keable or an A. S. M. Hutchinson than of a John Galsworthy. I conclude that Mr. Galsworthy, always eager for moralities, was taken by a certain novelty in the theme of this book and read his own workmanship into it. These generous judgments on the part of our best authors attest their kind hearts, but do not precisely help the cause of intelligent criticism. It might be interesting to compile a list of forgotten novels of the past decade which were extravagantly praised by, say, Messrs. Galsworthy, Walpole, and Bennett.

... "Another high peak in American autobiography, fit to stand with the Education of Henry Adams."

—Harry Hansen



The Autobiography of LINCOLN STEFFENS GETS THE SEASON'S FINEST REVIEWS

SOSKIN,
N. Y. Post

"Rake your reading memory for an American biographical work to equal Lincoln Steffens' in vitality and cultural significance, and you think of nothing until you come to 'The Education of Henry Adams.' For the immediately present day, I think Mr. Steffens' is the more important story, if only for the fact that his vivid personality, his intense humanity and his realistic honesty are sensitively attuned to the convulsive happenings of this new world."

GANNETT,
N. Y. Herald-Tribune

"I do not know any other book of the last ten years—not excepting Beard's 'Rise of American Civilization' and Sullivan's 'Our Times' that has more to say about America or says it as well."

GRATTAN,
Forum

"Deserves a place beside 'The Education of Henry Adams' as an American document. A book to study and ponder."

"The word autobiography is misleading. To be sure, Steffens has told here the story of his life—but like Mill and Tolstoy and Henry Adams, he has mainly done something else. He has written the psychological history and the extended epitaph of a whole generation, a whole social movement, a whole class. This book has something of the stateliness of prophecy."

ARVIN,
Nation

"Mr. Steffens' verbal snapshots and detailed portraits of the many famous Americans and Europeans his life touched; his memories of great historic events; his lavish use of anecdote, running like a vein of quicksilver through the copious text, makes a dramatic story."

BARTLETT,
Boston Evening Transcript

"He has the unusual knack of seeing the world through other men's eyes—through the eyes of Lenin, Mussolini, Wilson, Roosevelt. There are one or two books a season which no intelligent person can afford to miss. Mr. Steffens' is one of them."

N. Y. Times

Second printing, 2 vols., 100 ills., \$7.50

HARCOURT, BRACE & COMPANY  383 Madison Avenue, New York City