

Partners in Blunder

(Continued from first page)

type most dangerous to communism—those who make it look silly and ridiculous. Better save your two dollars and a half. You won't even get a thrill unless you happen to have a sly salacious bent—there is one filthy little word-picture near the end of the book—if the Postal Department lets it get through the mail. It isn't worth \$2.50 though—you can see the same kind of primitive self-expression any day drawn in chalk by some dirty little boy on brick walls, shutters, or sidewalks in any shabby street.

["Partners in Plunder" is both a politico-economic attack on our present system, and a factual study of what is going on in American business. It seemed best to the Editors to have two reviews of the book, one of its political, one of its factual aspects. We therefore asked General Hugh S. Johnson to discuss its implications, and the economic and business expert, William O. Scroggs, to examine the facts submitted as evidence.—THE EDITOR.]

A REVIEW BY WILLIAM O. SCROGGS

THIS book is not merely a criticism of modern business methods; it is an appeal for the destruction of the existing business organization and for the creation of a new system in which "all men must stand primarily in the position of consumers." It is the authors' thesis that under the present regime producers and consumers have nothing in common, and that in the clash of their opposing interests consumers invariably get the worst of it.

On superficial examination the book appears to be a product of painstaking research. It teems with carefully documented quotations from scientists, engineers, economists, government officials, trade journals, and newspapers. There is a patent effort to make it appear that the authors have assembled a great mass of facts and after weighing them carefully have formulated their conclusions in the most approved scientific manner. But on dipping further into the volume one discovers that its authors have done nothing of the kind. What they offer as the product of their research is nothing more than a skilful piece of muckraking. Now there is certainly muck a-plenty in some places, and it is well that it should be exposed to disinfectant sunlight. To the extent that the book does this fairly and honestly it serves a good purpose, though much of the evidence is only supplementary to what has been presented by other hands.

It is not the authors' purpose, however, merely to expose the shortcomings of modern business by giving illustrations of the ballyhoo of high-pressure salesmen, of the inanity and the trickery of some forms of advertising, and of various other methods of exploiting the consumer. They maintain that these evils are only by-products of a greater evil—namely, the profit system. According to their thesis, profits are the result of successful efforts to get something for nothing. They are fully aware that the destruction of profits means the overthrow of the capitalist system, and they regard such an outcome as not only desirable but inevitable.

It is not the purpose of this review to discuss the political and social philosophy of Messrs. Matthews and Shallcross, but to consider the facts which they adduce in support of their views and their method of interpreting these facts. As nearly as I can estimate, they cite approximately 750 "cases" from all kinds of sources to build up their indictment. Their method is not that of the research worker but that of the prosecuting attorney. Everything which is in any way favorable to the accused is rigorously excluded from their presentation of the evidence.

It is possible to give here only a few examples of their methods of selecting and interpreting data. Let us begin with the homely business of bottling soft drinks. Figures are taken from a food-trade journal to show that the soft-drink bottling industry gathers in \$650,000,000 annually from American consumers. Then we are told by the authors that "something like eighty per cent of this sum is profit to the bottlers and retailers." An industry with total annual costs of \$130,000,000 and profits of \$520,000,000 seems

too good to be true. But to prove their case the authors cite the same trade journal as showing that the ingredients in a bottle of soda pop cost slightly more than half a cent. Since a bottle of soda pop retails for five cents, they conclude that the profit is "something like eighty per cent." The veriest boob of a small tradesman is familiar enough with wages, interest, rent, taxes, insurance, and expenses of upkeep to know that profits are not the difference between selling prices and the cost of the materials used.

Rarely, if ever, do the authors' facts justify the conclusions drawn from them. A few more examples will suffice to show their methods. They quote one lone automotive engineer as speaking of "the desirability of building automobiles for a limited life." This statement is duly documented, and is the sole basis for this sweeping verdict: "Just how to make automobiles that will, like the famous one-horse shay, suddenly fall apart at a predetermined time is a problem which engineering skill has not yet solved, although engineering minds desire it and are planning towards it." Again, a physician is quoted as saying that preventive medicine and a lowered death rate will not diminish the people's need of doctors because "the longer they live the more medical service they require." This rather trite observation, also carefully documented, is a basis for the charge that "the mainsprings of life are poisoned in a system which suffers exploitation of any human need, whether for health, medicine, food, or clothing, for the sake of profit."

By such methods of distortion and exaggeration the authors strive to make it appear that the government, the churches, the schools and colleges, the learned professions, and the newspapers are being made to serve the interests of "the moneyed and money-making class." A diligent search has resulted in the finding of but two instances in which the authors speak a good word for anything or anybody. In the first place, they admit that the market for industrial goods is conducted on a fairly rational basis. When a manufacturer buys his industrial equipment he acts with knowledge and understanding which is lacking in the market for consumers' goods. This admission greatly weakens their plea for the abolition of the profit system; for the profit motive is just as keen in the rational market for industrial goods as it is in the irrational market for consumers' goods.

Again, the authors have a good word for the government of Soviet Russia because it placed a pair of galoshes on trial and found them guilty of shoddiness and poor workmanship. Such a thing, they say, could never happen under a capitalist regime which "thrives upon shoddiness and adulteration of goods." The authors also announce with much satisfaction that other Soviet products, including phonographs, bicycles, electric irons, and household utensils, are to be brought to trial before the bar of consumers' justice. They overlook the fact that these shoddy materials have been made under a regime where the profit system does not exist, and where experience so far has shown that the abolition of profits has not resulted in a square deal for the consumer. Indeed, in their exultation over the Russian procedure they have come very near to giving their case away.

A Story of Revolution
Told without Dogma

LEAN MEN. By Ralph Bates. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1935. \$2.50.

Reviewed by WILLIAM HARLAN HALE

A NOMADIC Englishman becoming a labor organizer for the International in Barcelona during the recent Spanish revolution—this is the character around whom the amazing narrative of "Lean Men" is built. And it is built in such a way that everyone who is interested in new proletarian fiction and the controversy around it ought to stop and take notice.

The regular objection to the working-class fiction of many writers like Michael Gold, Josephine Herbst, and Robert Cantwell has been that, despite the vigor and heroism of their themes, their characters are often mere wooden pegs of dogma, illustrative of Marxian terminology, but without blood of their own.

Here is the importance of Ralph Bates's book; he takes a group of Barcelona dockworkers, communist organizers, anarchists, and makes them come alive as individuals, without propaganda. He is able to

concerned with organizing communist industrial cells, conducting workers' meetings, and seeing the final disappointments and breakdowns of his groups, he does not fail to discover many separate individuals, both strong and pathetic. There is, in a higher economic sphere, the Trepas family of metalsmiths, inheritors of a long bourgeois tradition. There is the young cellist in a disreputable music-hall—a tender portrait of the frustrated artist. There is Teresa, a girl revolutionist, a waif of the plains, drawn with lyrical passion.

And behind all this—or opposite it, presented in a sort of counterpoint—is the Englishman's memory of England, his Browning-like nostalgia for it, and the brooding thought of two Englishwomen with whom he had become simultaneously involved, and from whom he had escaped to Spain. From them constantly come, across the sea, snatches of music and affection; and to these he turns when, in frequent moments, his faith in the Cause is at an ebb.

So varied a narrative defies synopsis; one can only say that, despite numerous blemishes of form, it is the most vivid and convincing of recent working-class novels.



THIS POLICE DOG GOES TO SCHOOL EVERY DAY
And the children use him as a model for sketching.—From "Willingly to School."

do that, in the first place, perhaps because he himself has had so much experience with revolutionary action—as opposed to word-action—that he does not have to use his fiction as a tract. He does it, in the second place, because he has a rich and virile imagination, an ear attuned to the varieties of speech, an eye for grace as well as brutality.

Incidents and characters of the novel are, we are told, largely transcribed from actual experience in Spain. The book thus takes on a loose, rambling, autobiographical flavor; but what it loses in invention here it gains in the strength of actual thrilling deed. Within the first hundred pages the author, or protagonist, has dangerously smuggled a revolutionary leader out across the Pyrenees; within the second he has joined in a high-minded hold-up of dire consequence; within the third he has celebrated Alfonso's abdication with the mobs.

But while the protagonist is anxiously

A Scrip of Joy

WILLINGLY TO SCHOOL. Photos by Wendell MacRae, text by the staff of Fox Meadow School. Foreword by William H. Kilpatrick, Teachers College. New York: Round Table Press. 1935. \$3.

Reviewed by CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

IT'S an odd thing that we generally suppose pain and death have more News Value than happiness. A book of photographs is published containing scenes of misery, disaster, and violence; fires, earthquakes, foundering; collisions, lynchings, the electric chair. It is assumed that everyone will be interested, and gape with sickly fascination; like socialice at the Hauptmann trial.

Here, at the same time, appears a book, mostly photographs, so fresh, so sane, so truly touching and healthy, so beautiful with the beauty of the commonplace, that there is danger of its being missed. This book sums up in pictures of infectious charm the whole progress of primary education in a generation. It is what Sir Philip Sidney called a Scrip of Joy; it shows children in every phase of their schooling, in and outdoors, with books, pets, flowers, machines; gay, curious, intent, unconscious, fulfilling the purest bliss of humanity—to be happy doing. Every one of these superb pictures is worth dwelling on; every one is a story in itself and in those strangely different and mysterious faces how much there is to learn. A famous educator has written a foreword for the book and other famous educators have praised it, in their humdrum way. But it's infinitely better than they say: it's laughter and pathos and fun. Forget News Value. This book has heart and soul value; it is the essence of a religion that never knew an agnostic; who touches it touches the meaning of man.

Girl in the Sun

By KATHERINE GARRISON CHAPIN

HERE on the smooth white sand, by the blue water,
Sleek brown body and limbs of a sea god's daughter,
Powerful, indolent and sophisticated,
Studied simplicity of nakedness, decorated
With scarlet mouth and toes and pointed finger tips;
Short white tunic drawn tight over breast and hips,
Small breast, strong thighs,
Anointed with perfumed oil,
Complete in the sun she lies.

Yet there is a strange kinship
With a bedecked and powdered queen, who played
Lovely and indifferent, at being a dairy maid;
Nor heard the long low wake
Of thunder. There is little sound
In a world about to break.

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On Being Sane

A correspondent objects that this Review is too sane. It was sane in the pre-Depression days (so he says) when sanity was an asset. But with one family out of five on relief and unemployment not decreasing, it still stays sane. With thousands of Americans sinking into the jungles of hand-to-mouth living, or exiled to tobacco road, it still stays sane. Yes (and we may add to his grievings) with Father Coughlin charging the radio waves with an ignorant nationalism, and Huey Long experimenting with a Balkan dictatorship, and the newspapers trying the Hauptmann case, and Hollywood turning good novelists into bad carpenters of sob stories, it still tries to stay sane.

He objects also to our dallying with the good books, good reading of yesteryear, while Rome burns (to the hoot of sirens) each day about us. Rome has burned before, many times, and there have been ages which in misery, disintegration, and danger of collapse far exceeded our own; but the New Testament was not thrown into the bonfire every time Christianity failed to work, nor was it regarded as a weakness in times of revolution to recall the books which have survived revolution, and will continue to do so, because they have in them something independent of fate.

Our correspondent may belong to that class whom Louis Adamic, himself certainly no reactionary, calls the "jittery" Americans. "Jittery" because they have no roots, no sense of stability, no inner life. We all know why, and they are not to blame. The winds of doctrine blow them about, and social upheaval topples them over. There is nothing to hold on to, and they have dropped what they held. With so much unexpected happening, it seems to them frivolous, almost sacrilegious, to think of anything but the present. If such a case of "jitters" had been on Paul's ship off Melita he would have run for a stick of wood and a rope, and let the morale of the crew go down the gale.

All this is excusable, but not quite sane. It is a mild hysteria, natural, but not helpful. Some one has to keep his head. Ours is none too steady as we view civilization speeding up its V-8 engine on a skiddy road with a hairpin turn ahead, propagandists at the wheel, super-nationalists stepping on the gas, safety-by-armor pulling the brakes out roots and all, and an isolationist in the back seat shouting "To hell with Europe," with both eyes

shut. But we try to stay sane, and are proud of the attempt, if not of the results. And if Dante, Shakespeare, Christ, Goethe, Voltaire, Dickens, and even Mark Twain and Trollope are irrelevant—why so are we, and proud of it.

The March of Time

Our old colleagues of *Time* magazine are making a stir with the release of the first "March of Time" newsreel. Pre-view observers agreed that the five sequences, comparatively long, making use of old shots as well as new, and even of staged "retakes" of events in order to tell complete stories, do a good pioneering job in explaining the facts behind the news. Other newsreels, apparently anticipating the band-wagon, have recently shown a tendency towards sequences that give the news in chapters instead of paragraphs.

This method takes editing; and the more editing, the more opportunity for expression of opinion. So far, the new type of newsreel has shown small, but still noticeable, signs of "interpreting." Will these signs multiply? Will the news-film become a journal of opinion?



"SEVEN MILLION PEOPLE IN THE CITY AND YOU HAVE TO BITE THE BOOK REVIEWER OF THE NEW YORK TIMES!"

Letters to the Editor: *The Sources of "Musa Dagb"; Samuel Butler in Taormina*

Memories of the Zeitoun Exiles

SIR:—I have just completed the reading of Franz Werfel's great novel, "The Forty Days of Musa Dagb," which you rightly describe not only as an historical novel of great significance but also a "great story of human nature in crisis."

The reading of the story, as you will readily imagine, has been a strangely moving experience to me, for it has recreated a past and brought back events which seem to belong to another life. Many of these events are a painful memory, but not a few of them revealed the finer qualities of the soul which only appear in moments of great stress.

I remember well the day on which the Zeitoun exiles reached Marash and my visit to the Mutessarif on behalf of Andreassian (Aram Tomasian of the story) which resulted in the permit which allowed him and his family to go to Yoghannoghlook. My diary gives the date as May 15th, 1915. Both Andreassian and Nokhoudian, the pastor of Bitias, were my students. I met Andreassian again in Egypt after the war, but Nokhoudian was lost at Der Zor.

The account of the Zeitoun episode is remarkably exact and could only have been derived from one or two possible sources. I knew Zeitoun very well, having frequently visited it. On the evening after reading Franz Werfel's book, I travelled back in thought over the rugged path which I had so often travelled, which leads from Marash, over Akher Dagb, to Zeitoun, and recalled many figures in that hill fortress town, who were my friends, whose homes I had known in happier days, but who had perished from hunger in the desert or at the hands of the Turks.

E. C. WOODLEY.

Quebec, Canada.

[Editor's note: Mr. Woodley appears as the American Consul in "The Forty Days of Musa Dagb."]

Butler and the "Odyssey"

SIR:—I was greatly interested to read Quercus's brief allusion in Trade Winds to Mr. Desmond MacCarthy as "some one who knew, personally and actually knew . . . our old idol Samuel Butler." It was my good fortune to have a brief personal acquaintance with Mr. Butler early in June, 1901, at Taormina. My wife and I were staying at the Hotel Timeo; the tourist season was over, and there were

only four guests besides ourselves at the long table-d'hôte: an American lady, widow of an Italian, with her two daughters, and an elderly gentleman, plainly English. As we were so few we naturally fell into conversation, the Englishman being the last to join it. The eldest lady asked us where we had spent the winter; and when I replied "in Athens" he seemed to be much interested, and we were soon comparing notes. After a while he said that he was Samuel Butler, and spoke of his interest in Greek subjects. We stayed a few days longer at the Timeo, and I had several other conversations with him. He gradually became quite friendly and talkative, and lent me reprints of a few articles by himself published in a small Sicilian periodical devoted to Sicilian history and antiquities. Also he spoke with evident pride of the compliment that had been paid him by the authorities of Trapani, where he spent a number of years, in naming a street after him.

The topic that seemed to interest him most, however, was his own extraordinary theory about the authorship of the "Odyssey"; and when I ventured, very cautiously, to suggest that possibly he was not entirely in earnest about it he bristled up at once.

EDWARD DELAVAN PERRY.

Columbia University, New York City.

In Darkest Travel Books

SIR:—As hundreds of travel books are published annually, writers should be warned that in many cases they have burst into print without eliminating inexcusable errors. Not long ago I reviewed a book in which the writer mentions seeing a rattlesnake in Southern Rhodesia. Another mentions tigers in East Africa and, although the Boer hunter in the Transvaal calls the leopard by the name of "tiger," there are no tigers on the African mainland except those in a cage at the Johannesburg zoo. Another work that was recently published confuses the Congo and Zambesi Rivers and still another speaks of the Masai tribe of East Africa as a race of cannibals. As a student of Africa, I find that errors such as these destroy my confidence in writers on African travel.

Unfortunately even the best of our modern writers seem to throw caution to the winds when they begin to write about the "Dark Continent." The late Mr. Jacob Wassermann is a very good case in point. In 1932 he published "Bula Matari," the life of Henry M. Stanley. Mr. Wassermann, in writing of his boyhood idol, seems to have known surprisingly little about him and practically nothing about the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition and the subsequent controversy over the fate of the rear column. Readers of Stanley's "In Darkest Africa" will recall the terrible fate that befell the party which Stanley was obliged to leave at Yambuya on the Aruwimi tributary of the Congo. Despite the fact that there is an extensive literature on the Rear Column, Mr. Wassermann never refers to it and his bibliography is inadequate for more than a sketch of Stanley's life. Mr. Wassermann's conclusions as to the collapse of the English personnel of this branch of the expe-

dition—he claims that these young Englishmen were lured to their fate by the blandishments of native belles—are amusing but have little foundation in fact. Near the end of the book Mr. Wassermann mentions the birth of Mr. Stanley's son when the great explorer was on the brink of the grave. It so happens that the Stanleys adopted a son but Mr. Wassermann does not seem to be aware of this.

One of the greatest travesties on human intelligence was the material published in "Trader Horn." The public should be warned that the attacks upon David Livingstone have absolutely no basis in fact. The witty asides of Trader Horn and remarks about the great missionary's moral lapses are pure smut. Dr. David Livingstone was no saint in the eyes of many but there has never been a single insinuation regarding his morals from African sources. Most of these stories had their origins in bar rooms. . . .

A little time devoted to ethnology, zoology, geography, and history would eliminate these errors. Unless authors are willing to take this extra trouble (after all a very necessary task) their works will suffer accordingly and those of us who read their books will continue to throw them aside with distaste. In a story of adventure, sensation is infinitely more important than truth. In a book of travel or biography, truth is infinitely more important than sensation. There is no happy medium. The book must be either the one or the other.

JULIAN W. FEISS.

Cleveland, Ohio.

Response

SIR:—Please allow me to express to you my deep gratitude for the generous response to my appeal for library books published in *The Saturday Review of Literature* of October 27th. It is quite evident that your intelligent readers realize that a prison library means more to the inmates than a source of entertainment; that it is of the utmost value in the rehabilitation of fallen men and, besides keeping the prisoners out of trouble and relieving the tension of close confinement, the library causes the men to absorb, either directly or indirectly, the benefits of education that they would not be able to obtain otherwise.

In addition to the thanks I owe to you, I want to acknowledge the kindness of Mr. G. B. Bingham, of Burrows Brothers, Cleveland, Ohio; Miss Edith M. Phelps, of the H. W. Wilson Company; Mr. Julian R. Tinkham, of Upper Montclair, N. J.; Mr. A. H. Heward, of Burnwood, N. Y.; Mr. Frank Henry, of Doubleday, Doran & Company; Miss Elsie C. Lieman, of New York City; Miss Caroline Pattengell, of Ann Arbor, Mich.; Mrs. Yandell Henderson, of New Haven, Conn.; and Mr. Franklin Wentworth through the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation. As a result of my appeal, these good people have enriched our library to the extent of 510 volumes, and have left a warm feeling in my heart.

Offering the thanks of 4,300 men, I am
K. E. WALL, Chaplain.

Ohio Penitentiary,
Columbus, Ohio.

The Saturday Review recommends

This List of Current Books:

- LEAN MEN. By RALPH BATES. Macmillan. A novel of modern Spain in revolution.
RATS, LICE AND HISTORY. By HANS ZINSSER. Little, Brown. A biography of typhus fever with excursions along the bypaths of literature.
R. E. LEE. By DOUGLAS SOUTHALL FREEMAN. Scribners. The concluding volumes of an outstanding biography.

This Less Recent Book:

- BARNUM. By M. R. WERNER. The chronicle of a spectacular career.