

other Jurors were the late Jesse Lynch Williams and myself. In deference to Mr. Garland, who was fifteen years older than Mr. Williams and twenty-five years older than myself, we offered to agree upon Sidney Howard's play, "They Knew What They Wanted," which might easily have won the prize in almost any other year.

In 1934, the Jury—then composed of Walter Prichard Eaton, Austin Strong, and myself—submitted an unanimous verdict in favor of "Mary of Scotland," by Maxwell Anderson, which is one of the few abiding contributions to the dramatic literature of the entire world which have yet originated in America. Without any explanation, the Advisory Board rejected this judgment and awarded the Prize to "Men in White," by Sidney Kingsley.

This piece had achieved a justified success at the box-office by reason mainly of perfect casting and impeccable stage-direction; but the Jurors realized that the Pulitzer Prize had been established, not for acting or for stage-direction, but for dramatic authorship.

A clue to this curious action of the Advisory Board was afforded when the mechanism of award was altered by the addition of a new phrase to Mr. Pulitzer's citation. This new phrase read, "dealing preferably with American life." Apparently, our journalistic leaders had turned 150 per cent American!

In commenting on this change, Professor Phelps, in accordance with his amiable habit of endorsing nearly everything, says, "It simply gave . . . assistance in deciding between . . . two plays that might be of equal artistic merit." He neglects to point out that it is rather silly to solve a problem of comparative values, not by the method of criticism, but by the method of geography; and he also fails to indicate that this new regulation might deter any American dramatist from attempting a purely imaginative play of the type of "The Blue Bird," by Maeterlinck.

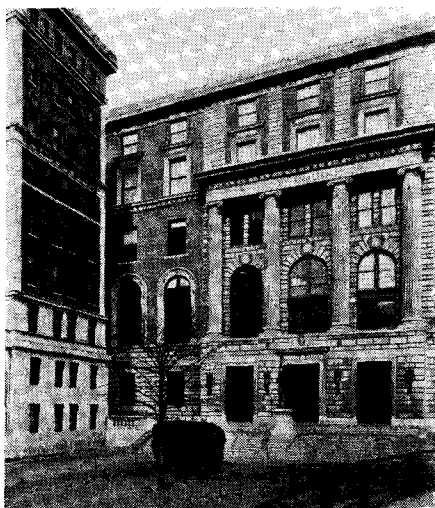
Since the members of the Advisory Board were journalists of national reputation, they were naturally sensitive to the nation-wide reaction against an indefensible decision. In order to avoid any future schism between the professional members of the Jury and the non-professional members of the Board, they decided to deprive the Jury of any vestige of authority.

By a new arrangement, they suggested that the Jurors, after dutifully devoting fifty or sixty evenings of their working time to a careful study of every American play of serious pretensions, should tactfully refrain from nominating the prize-winning play. Instead, the Jurors were invited to submit a list of three or four or half a dozen plays, to any of which the Prize might appropriately be awarded as the best play of the year. Under these conditions, Mr. Eaton, Mr. Strong, and I declined to serve again.

Since the three new Jurors who were selected to cover the season of 1934-1935

agreed to serve without authority, it would not be fair to burden them with any responsibility for the final choice. In defiance of the terms of Mr. Pulitzer's bequest, the Advisory Board awarded the prize to a piece which, under no possible interpretation of the adjective, could be regarded as an "original" play. An able dramatist, Miss Zoë Akins, had been hired—for fifty per cent of the royalties—to make a stage version of "The Old Maid," a novel by the celebrated Mrs. Edith Wharton. Miss Akins did a good job; but she was the first to acknowledge that complete credit should be assigned to Mrs. Wharton for the invention of the story, the creation of the characters, and the evocation of the old-time atmosphere which permeated the play.

But, even if "The Old Maid" had been eligible for consideration, no competent critic who had studied the theatre season with serious attention had ranked it



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"150 per cent American."

higher than sixth or seventh among the American plays of the year. Under these circumstances, the award to "The Old Maid" was preposterous.

A further regulation was promulgated last autumn, by the Advisory Board, to the effect that the Pulitzer Prize for Drama can henceforward be awarded only once to any single author. The effect of this decree is to rule out of any future competition such dramatists as Eugene O'Neill, Maxwell Anderson, Sidney Howard, George Kelly, Elmer Rice, Paul Green, George S. Kaufman, and Marc Connelly.

Presumably this annual prize is still to be given to the best play of the year; but this best play must not be written by any of our leading dramatists! Under these conditions, the serviceable project imagined by Joseph Pulitzer is reduced to the absurd.

This present volume, therefore, is peculiarly timely. It summarizes, as I have said before, a completed chapter in the history of the American theatre.

Selections from a Writer's Workshop

FORSYTES, PENDYCES AND OTHERS.

By John Galsworthy. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1935. \$2.50.

Reviewed by HOMER E. WOODBRIDGE

NOT only admirers of Galsworthy's books but all who are interested in literary craftsmanship will be grateful to Mrs. Galsworthy for publishing these selections from her husband's portfolios. Reading a new Galsworthy book after a struggle through the hubbub of contemporary literature is like meeting in the polyglot mob of a city street some noble and generous old friend whom one has scarcely hoped to see again. One's spirit is refreshed by contact with that gracious spirit, and one's faith in humanity is restored. This book offers no new and finished masterpieces, but it does something at least equally important. It takes us into the writer's workshop at different periods in his career, and shows us novels, plays, and stories in various stages of development. It tells us, too, what Mr. Galsworthy thought of a number of his predecessors and contemporaries, with penetrating obiter dicta in regard to the writer's craft.

A brief review can do no more than suggest the rich variety of interest in the book. The earliest piece, "The Doldrums," was done before Galsworthy had any idea of becoming a professional writer. In rather labored style it relates an actual occurrence on a British merchant ship—the death of an opium victim; and the author himself and Joseph Conrad, who was first mate of the ship, figure in the narrative. Here is a bit of prentice work, in substance of much biographical interest. Next in time comes the fragment of a novel, written ten years later as an opening for "The Country House." It was discarded, but the reader who knows his Galsworthy will see that a good deal of the material was utilized in "Strife."

There are half a dozen stories of varying lengths, belonging to the years 1922-1927, and showing the author's mature mastery; among them are two, "The Black Coat" and "Told by a Schoolmaster," which deserve to rank with the best tales in "Caravan." The dramatic pieces include a one-act satiric squib, a rejected episode from "Escape," and two fragments of unfinished plays, with the longer of which Mr. Galsworthy had been occupied just before his death. This last, about half completed, contains a first-rate comic character, and the plot development offers a fascinating problem. A series of "Notes on Fellow-Writers" includes much acute criticism.

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"Workers, Unite!"

MARCHING! MARCHING! By Clara Weatherwax. New York: The John Day Co. 1936. \$1.90.

Reviewed by HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

THIS novel is written in that mixture of physical description, states of consciousness, semi-articulation, and violent impressionism which is characteristic of the post-Joycean school. Nevertheless, however modernistic its husks of diction, it is the nearest approach in the current school of so-called proletarian fiction to those passionate works of the imagination which have accompanied every great attempt at reform. Those who have been reading class-conscious fiction, or books which deal with the struggles of laboring men and women to unite, will find nothing essentially new in the facts of its story. Here is the kind of mill town in the Pacific Northwest of which Robert Cantwell writes—its laborers drawn from half a dozen races, hardly able to understand each other's English. Here is the speedup in the attempt to beat the depression, the lay-off of leaders dangerous to the bosses, the account of a dangerous industry, in which accidents are frequent and economic security an illusion. Here are the mill owners, dissolute spenders in private life, who use the machinery of a corrupt local government to keep their profits flowing. Here is a town, built to be ugly, in which two nations live at each other's throats: the laborers spied upon, beaten by thugs, kept down to the subsistence level or below it, yet virile with an overplus of physical strength, and morally strong in the knowledge that if they can unite no one can stop them;—and the owners and their parasites, cruel, grasping, self-centered, or uncertain and fearful. All this in different terms has been written of before. And the mood of the writing also is familiar. It is melodrama (like "Uncle Tom's Cabin") and a dramatization of the sufferings and the virtues of the underdog.

This is no criticism. There never yet was a novel-with-a-purpose that was fair, because men and women who have been abused, tortured, betrayed, and who tell their story in a book are not fair. How should they be? One does not read a novel like "Marching! Marching!" to find out the cure of labor troubles, or to learn what to think about production for use. One reads it to get close to the laborer's life and his imagination, to see him, feel as he feels, live with him in his sweat and danger and crude satisfactions, hope and grow excited with him. One reads a novel of the lumber industry, to hear the scream of broken saws, to see the great fir crash on the devastated hillside, to tiptoe at night along the stinking water-

front with the organizers, leaving pamphlets "Workers, Unite" in dirty doorways, to sit in Nick's place in a slop of beer while Waterfront Charlie tries to teach drunken longshoremen and old Wobblies that violence never pays, to go home with Annie and Mary to filth and thwarted love and the new idea that "workers unite" may make them human again.

This novel does this. Here are real people talking in chopped off sentences. Here is what happens in the woods, in the mills, on the streets, at home, when the corrupt alliance of business with politics which these people call fascism begins its dirty work. Forced labor:—

Speedup, speedup. Logmen and crane operators swung the crushing logs onto the flat cars where the loading scaler rapidly counted and measured while his punk stamped the company mark on each butt with a heavy hammer. Even engineers and firemen hardly able to joke, they were worked so hard.

Brutality—

"Yeah, the Goddam son of a bitch! He pushed Leta so hard her head flopped back, like this, and it made her bite her tongue. And when she sort of groaned, he claimed she was talking back. Jeez! Did he yell?"

Argument—

"Wish I'd give Grogan a punch in the nose while we was there." "That Mario . . . relief for some Filipinos, too." "Aw, he's just a red." "Well, Jeez! who cares? He got the food, didn't he? And by God, if being red does it I'll be red!"

Pathos—

. . . to have clean beds, a room of her own, clothes not thin and shiny, and food, food that tasted good, that the belly would keep without protest; to be able to work with human dignity.

Whatever the cure, whosoever's the fault, one feels that this is the way these people live, talk, think. You see the world from their waterfront. The idealism of "workers unite" is their idealism. No one preaches but their leaders. No one looks in from the outside but old Granny the New Englander who steals down to the meeting, and reads leaflets hidden in the

family album. The bosses, the owners, the judges, the bought newspapers, the timorous grand jury, the President and his New Deal, are all remote forces, evil, or frightened, or weak, to be estimated only by the results of their acts. It is a workers' world seething about a new idea, spitting it down, yielding to it, frightened and exultant:—workers, unite.

And hence here is a real novel, not pleasant reading certainly, and painfully congested with confusing detail. Unhappily lacking also in that simple device of a plot with which earlier reformers put over upon hundreds of thousands of readers, perhaps more naive than we are, their stories of the fight between greed and uprising humanity. Not (thank God!) a social tract, of which we have had too many, but a narrative rich in humanitarianism (for which I trust the Marxists will not throw Miss Weatherwax out of the party), and made as rigorously true to the emotions of those who live in it, as it is unfair to many not on the workers' side.

That in a novel, is the only kind of truth that counts.

I can only wish that the author in her attempt to find an English prose which would be the right medium for these workers whose hands are more articulate than their tongues, and whose tongues speak a jargon that has to be shouted in the roar of factories or the hubbub of a saloon,—I wish she had been a little less radical in her punctuation. Her speakers seldom finish a sentence—as in life; her arguers mix up a dozen ideas in a statement—as in life; her Petes and Marios and Marys think and talk to themselves at the same time—also as in life. But she has thrown overboard a system of punctuation which has been worked out neither for radicals nor conservatives, but to keep the record straight as to who was talking and how and when. For this she substitutes italics for speaking, with a mass of half articulate or inarticulate thinking dumped into the lines without dash, dot, or comma. It is hard going sometimes and slows up the reader when he is most eager to go on.

But this is a mannerism which sometimes impairs, but never destroys, the power of the first story of the American proletariat that succeeds in conveying its passion to the reader without benefit of previous conversion to the cause.



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