

On the Labor Front

TWENTY YEARS A LABOR SPY. By GT-99. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company. 1937. \$2.50.

THE LABOR SPY RACKET. By Leo Huberman. New York: Modern Age Books. 1937. Paper: 35c; cloth, 85c.

Reviewed by CLINCH CALKINS

TO anyone who has read most of the source material on labor espionage, which is to say anyone who has closely followed the record of the Civil Liberties Committee, "Twenty Years a Labor Spy" must give the extra fillip of inquisitiveness to a solid meal of clear exposition. Who is GT-99 and why did he



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WILLIAM GREEN

write the book? The author uses for his pen name the code number which he says for twenty years he subscribed to his spy reports. He professes to have retired with his memories to a Canadian farm at the end of the 1935 convention of the American Federation of Labor when it drew up a resolution requesting a special investigation of labor espionage.

It is the author's passage on the National Guard, typical of many, that arouses doubts in the reader as to the motive of the book and even the authenticity of the spy. This passage reads in part:

Two classes of people are interested in working for a strong National Guard—the manufacturers, as represented by Chambers of Commerce and other trade associations, and the men who hold commissions in the Guard. As soon as a strike situation gets beyond the control of local police authority the governor is asked to send the National Guard to preserve order. . . . It is cheaper for an employer to receive protection from a few companies of National Guardsmen than for him to hire several hundred private guards. . . .

Our Centerville clients were anxious

to have a few companies of militia in the city, and, as my army experience in some measure qualified me for the task, the chief suggested that I look into the matter of organizing them. . . . The National Guard had never been called out for a strike in this part of the country, and union leaders offered no objection when I became identified with it. Construction of an armory, which would give work to union craftsmen, also favorably impressed the labor element.

Such a wide open statement as this, without documents, would brand the whole book as unsound and prejudiced if it were made by an author who was tackling the subject from without. But GT-99, as autobiographer, gambols on both sides of the fence. The publisher says that the book is not ghosted. All I can say is that a diabolically clever editorial job must have been done upon this life story of a spy to make it sound half the time (from internal evidence) as if it were written by a labor spy and the other half of the time as if it were written by a labor organizer.

Compared with GT-99, Mr. Huberman has the disadvantage of never having been a labor spy. The notes upon which he drew, however, enabled him to make an equally intimate and distasteful picture of the spy at work, and he has succeeded at his task of making clear to the worker the skeleton of what, previous to the Senate investigation of private detective agencies, was a diaphanous enemy. He gives names, dates, figures. He tells what a detective agency is, how it works, how it profits from trouble and therefore incites it, how it recruits spies, what they are paid, and what they do; why employers hire them. He makes usable for labor the two and a half million words of stenographic description of spies which so far lie upon the Senate Record.

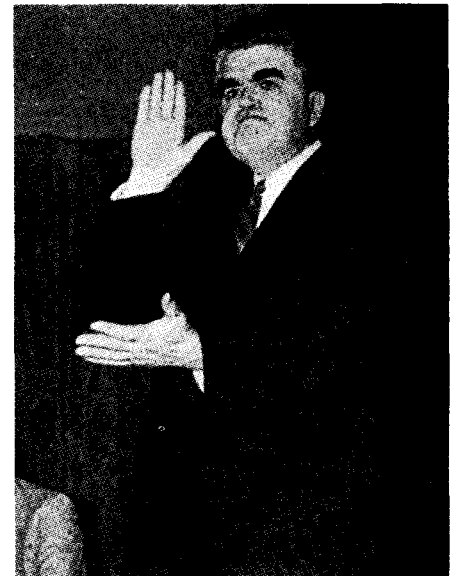
Mr. Huberman is notably successful at simplification, a much nobler and very different art from that of popularizing. This seems to be a technique compounded of logical arrangement, simple words, and almost invariable use of the specific fact as against generality. His material was wealthy and chaotic and he whipped it into small, neat shape. My one quarrel with Mr. Huberman is not over his use of material but over his attitude toward his reader. I should like to raise the question with him as to whether he feels he does a further educational service in adding a fourth ingredient, a sort of emotional instruction sheet, to go with it, as to how the reader is supposed to feel about the fact or idea once it has been communicated to him. His book is too good and too simple to need exclamation points, italics, and heavy sarcasm.

Clinch Calkins's own book, "Spy Overhead," has recently been published.

WHEN LABOR ORGANIZES. By Robert R. Brooks. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1937. \$3.

Reviewed by SELIG PERLMAN

JUST as the pioneer American work on labor, "The Labor Movement in America," by Richard T. Ely, published fifty years ago, was an appraisal of the great labor upheaval of that day, so Professor Brooks's book is a picture and interpretation of the great labor upheaval of our own day. Both chose to write for non-academic publics, both display brilliancy in exposition and mastery of factual material. In both Ely and Brooks the



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JOHN L. LEWIS. Photographs on this page from "When Labor Organizes."

interpretation is ultra-progressive. Brooks appears a left-wing New Dealer with a sizable admixture of guild socialism.

It seems foreordained that intellectuals studying the labor movement should be overpowered by the factor of technological change. So, Ely saw in the Knights of Labor of that day, a "one big union" variety of labor organization, rather than in the trade unions about to form the American Federation of Labor. Brooks assumes that the American Federation of Labor is an anachronism in the day of the conveyor system and is in fact already being speedily effaced by C. I. O. triumphs. In his enthusiasm he definitely assigns the International Typographical Union with its 80,000 members to the C. I. O. column, and while conceding that with a building boom the building unions may be expected to gain somewhat, he finds solace in the fact that "the building industry is becoming increasingly a matter of assembling prefabricated materials." Granted that the A. F. of L. of 1936 would scarcely have performed the miracle of unionizing

autos and steel, it may take more than such a conquest, however spectacular and unexpected, to determine the outcome of labor's civil war. In terms of political influence the American Federation of Labor is benefiting from the existence of a rival to the "left" of itself, producing sympathy among a lower middle class which, while refusing to believe that Franklin D. Roosevelt is a dictator, may be influenced to react differently to Lewis. Bizarre though it may sound to a reading public brought up on the concept of the proletariat—read the factory workers *par excellence*—an advanced economic society shows an occupational structure in which trades and miscellaneous special groups are no less important. Hence the friends of the labor movement as well as of American democracy ought to be straining their ears not for the tolling of funeral bells but for voices counseling compromise and reunion.

Selig Perlman is professor of economics at the University of Wisconsin.

No Two Alike

THIRTEEN O'CLOCK. *Stories of Several Worlds.* By Stephen Vincent Benét. New York: Farrar and Rinehart. 1937. \$2.50.

Reviewed by WILLIAM MAXWELL

AS the subtitle indicates, these stories are various in time and place. Several of them deal rather casually with the supernatural. In none of them does the style have the immediacy and the impact which come from first-hand knowledge, and which we now expect from the modern short story.

But there's a catch in this first-hand business. Try to remember accurately the contents of last month's *Story* magazine. You probably won't be able to do it. But you can stop anybody any time with such a story as "The Curfew Tolls," in "Thirteen O'Clock," which goes back of the realistic pattern to an earlier one where narrative is more important than first-hand knowledge of people or places or things. It is the kind of story which is better read aloud. It belongs to the tribe.

No two of Mr. Benét's stories are much alike—not even the already famous "The Devil and Daniel Webster" and "Daniel Webster and the Sea Serpent." All of them are logical and well-made. Even when they seem to be merely clever ("A Story by Angela Poe") or merely charming ("Glamour") they are not really so. When Mr. Benét approaches an important subject, when he faces the meaning of Nazi brutality, for example, he can carry that kind of story off, too. Anyone who reads "The Blood of the Martyrs" is more than likely to remember it, and if you remember a story, there is little point in worrying about the literary fashion it follows.

A Rare English Poet

EDWARD THOMAS: A Biography and A Bibliography. By Robert P. Eckert. New York: E. P. Dutton & Company. 1937. \$2.50.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

THIS account of a young and remarkable writer who from poetry in prose turned to poetry in verse at the time of the late Great War, and was killed by a German shell at Vimy ridge, is a book overdue, and constitutes a long search and a labor of love on the part of Mr. Eckert, who did not even know Thomas's identity until some seven years ago. His first introduction to him was through that most candidly beautiful of love stories told by the poet's widow, Helen Thomas, in "As It Was." Mr. Eckert did not identify the "David" in it till later. The book was simply signed "H. T."

To many American poets Thomas's work has been known for some time, though his recognition was late. Most of his life of less than forty years (he was born in the Victorian era and died on Easter Monday, 1917) was devoted to prose writing in order to keep body and soul together and support his little family. He produced some most beautiful essays concerning the English countryside, did various works of biography and jobs of editing, and wrote one novel, "The Happy-Go-Lucky Morgans." Before leaving England for the Front he gave to Roger Ingpen, the famous Shelley scholar, the manuscript of his "Poems by Edward Eastaway" (using a pen-name he had attached to six previously published poems), and this book was said to have been in the press when Thomas was killed in France on the ninth of April. It was published in 1917. Three years later Walter de la Mare wrote a foreword to the "Collected Poems."

One of the most interesting things about Thomas to Americans was his close friendship with Robert Frost and the influence Frost exerted upon him in turning him definitely to verse in the last phase of his life. They first met at the home of Dorothy and Vivian Locke Ellis in February 1913, at which time Thomas was estranged from his wife, to whom he returned, and who, throughout his life, was his most staunch and understanding comrade and lover. Mr. Eckert quotes

Not so grete feythe in al that londe
he
Fonde as in a woman; and this is no
lye.

The reader should turn to "As It Was" and "World Without End," both by "H. T."

Thomas was by nature highly sensitive and moody, and when he felt he was not properly supporting his wife and small children, though he drove himself to task after journalistic task, the acid



EDWARD THOMAS

Hoppé

ate into his soul. Even so, to the present biographer his best essays ("Rest and Unrest" and "Light and Twilight") reveal one "who was possessed of a deep spiritual beauty of character and a wide and universal sympathy for men and nature; who, with Shelley and Jefferies, was aware of the universe, that nature is vitally alive."

He and his family moved much, from home to small home over the English countryside, but never seemed truly to find a home. Thomas was given to long walking trips, mostly alone. Apparently wrapped in melancholy abstraction, he was yet a close observer of all the characteristics of the country and all manner of minute natural detail.

Edward Thomas's country poetry, in natural turns of speech, has weathered the last twenty years very well. It can be read today with delight in its freshness of observation and expression. His "Haymaking" is full of good things:

The swift with wings and tail as sharp
and narrow
As if the bow had flown off with the
arrow. . .

And here is a brief but much-admired poem of Thomas's:

COCK-CROW

Out of the wood of thought that
grows by night
To be cut down by the sharp axe of
light,—
Out of the night, two cocks together
crow,
Cleaving the darkness with a silver
blow:
And bright before my eyes twin
trumpeters stand,
Heralds of splendor, one at either
hand,
Each facing each as in a coat of
arms:—
The milkers lace their boots up at the
farms.