

Squeezing Out the Black Gold

THEN CAME OIL. C. B. Glasscock. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co. 1938. \$3.

Reviewed by PAUL B. SEARS

I KNOW no better word to symbolize the history of Oklahoma than "pressure." With ghastly, unrelenting pressure the closing ring of white man's civilization slowly crowded the red people here into one fiftieth of their original area. The pressure continuing, the flimsy communities of the red man were broken up, and have all but disappeared as significant social factors. Still unrelaxed, the terrific pressure of the white man has changed the landscape and driven its powerful tools through the crust of the earth, only to release the counter-pressure from below and literally squeeze out the fabulous wealth of black gold.

In a few brief, mechanized decades changes have been wrought which in the more deliberate days of humanity might have spread themselves out in terms of centuries. Naturally the details are not always pretty. But whether the scene is viewed as a symbol, or in its own right, it is anything but trivial.

Mr. Glasscock has sensed the sweep and direction of this great story, and told it in the tempo and vernacular of a modern newspaper man. He starts with the Trail of Tears along which the civilized Cherokees were driven from their plantations in Georgia, and brings the narrative right down to the latest oil well on the grounds of the executive mansion, the most recent foreign decoration on the lapel of a distinguished citizen, and the fairy-like skylines of Tulsa and Oklahoma City.

The pace has been breathless, and that is the way he tells of it. Even when he pauses to recount the episode of Cherokee Bill or John Stink, it is not to catch his breath. I literally found my pulses pounding at the end of the first few chapters and had to lay the book down to compose myself; nor am I subject to suggestion from phony sources.

In his story of the exploitation of the Indians and the ruthless race for oil, the author generally lets the facts carry their own moral judgment. On the rare occasions when he breaks this rule, his comments have the more force for it. Speaking of the effects of the sudden, unbelievable private wealth, he says "It is an authentically engraved invitation to folly—and to crime. At first the folly was that of children turned loose with a free hand in candy and toy shops. . . . It moved on to murder." Nor is he slow to praise those who have made good use of their money for social ends.

He has a keen sense of the economic aspects of the oil business, and includes

an interesting discussion of its relation to banking. He makes, for the first time I have seen it in print, an observation which may be heard from engineers in the oil business—that often as much money goes into the ground as comes out. He shows how the development of the new deep fields—as much as a mile and a quarter down—is business for highly organized and controlled effort, technical, financial, and industrial. With respect to society's interest in the conservation of a future oil supply, he is content to raise the question and bring it into sharp relief. It is clear that he feels encouraged by the voluntary program of restricted output which the industry has developed, although he is by no means blind to its handicaps.

The stuff is all here for a great book. We may depend upon deliberate, self-conscious literary artists not to overlook that possibility for long. But not many are likely to give as keen an emotional understanding as can be had from this, done obviously as a matter of the day's work, and honestly showing the faults as well as the virtues of quick writing.

Paul B. Sears is the author of "Deserts on the March" and "This Is Our World."

Forecasts of Disaster

THE SECRET LETTERS OF THE LAST TSAR. Edited by Edward J. Bing. New York: Longmans, Green & Co. 1938. \$3.50.

Reviewed by IRINA SKARIATINA

THIS correspondence between the Emperor Nicholas II and his mother is of intense interest and one only regrets that all the five hundred letters are not published in their entirety. Released by the Soviet Government from the public archives, they have important historical significance. The first letter written by the Tsar when he was a small boy closes with childish "kisses for Papa . . . and the rabbit," while the last is a heartbroken missive from the Dowager Empress Marie, written in November, 1917, when the Emperor and his family were prisoners at Tobolsk, shortly before their deaths. Through most of the letters there runs a note of forthcoming disaster.

Rather than "secret" they are more in the nature of "intimate" letters between mother and son deeply devoted to each

BOOK PREVIEW*

The Beginnings of Privacy

BY LEWIS MUMFORD

UP to the seventeenth century, at least in the north, building and heating had hardly advanced far enough to permit the arrangement of a series of private rooms in the dwelling. But now a separation of functions took place within the house as well as within the city as a whole. Space became specialized, room by room. In England, following the pattern of the great houses, the kitchen was broken off from the scullery, where the dirty work was done; and the various social functions of the kitchen were taken over by the living room and the parlor. The dining room was separated from the bedroom; and though in the seventeenth century a lady's bedroom still served as a reception room for her guests, whether or not the bed stood in an alcove, in the eighteenth a special room for meeting and conversation, the drawing room, the salon, came into existence. And the rooms

no longer opened into each other: they were grouped along the corridor, like houses on a street. The need for privacy produced this special organ for public circulation.

Privacy was the new luxury of the well-to-do; only gradually did the servants and the shopkeepers' assistants and the industrial workers have a trace of it. Even in the fine houses of the nineteenth century, the domestics often slept in the kitchen or in a bunk adjacent to it, or in dormitories. Now, privacy had been reserved, in the medieval period, for solitaires, for holy persons who sought refuge from the sins and distractions of the outside world: only lords and ladies might dream of it otherwise. In the seventeenth century it went with the satisfaction of the individual ego. The lady's chamber became a boudoir, literally a sulking place; the gentleman had his office or his library, equally inviolate; and in Paris he might even have his own bedroom, too. For the first time not merely a curtain but a door separated each individual member of the household from every other member.

*This week The Saturday Review presents a foretaste of Lewis Mumford's book, "The Culture of Cities," to be published March 31 by Harcourt, Brace & Co.

other. Of the two, the Empress Marie is undoubtedly the stronger personality, and in many instances is more politically foresighted than her son, owing to the experience she had gained as the wife of Alexander III.

The earlier letters have less to do with the political side of Russia, being more concerned with the little things of everyday life, travels, the fatal illness of the Grand Duke George, courtship of Princess Alix, and intimate glimpses of other members of the family and relatives such as "Willie," the Kaiser; "Uncle Bertie" of England; and "poor Uncle Willie" of Greece.

In the second part of the book the letters become far more interesting from the historical point of view. For instance, there is a very significant one in which the Dowager Empress tries to influence her son against the increasing policy of ultimate Russification of Finland, a country up to the last reign practically autonomous. "What makes me despair," she wrote, "is that it is you, my son, who is so dear to me who has been persuaded to inflict all those flagrant injustices—a thing that you never would have done of your own accord." And her apprehensions proved prophetic, for the Governor General appointed by the Tsar was assassinated the following year.

The disastrous Russian-Japanese war, the first Revolution of 1905, the mutiny of the Black Sea Fleet, assassinations, disorders in the cities and throughout the country, the railway and general strikes and the creation of the Duma are all discussed at length between mother and son. Following the Revolution there is a period of comparative calm before the outbreak of the World War, and the letters again become more personal and happier, though there are very few letters to cover this last period, and only two are dated 1917.

There can be no doubt about the authenticity of these letters. Clearly as in a mirror are reflected the familiar personalities of the Empress Mother and her son. Groping helplessly through a maze of events and conditions they could not cope with, they became victims of a system which was an anachronism in the twentieth century.

Irina Skariatina's book, *"A World Begins,"* depicts the overthrow of the Czarist regime.



THE TSAR NICHOLAS II

CONQUEST OF THE PAST: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY. By Prince Hubertus zu Loewenstein. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1938. \$3.50.

Reviewed by JAMES FREDERICK GREEN

HERE is the melodramatic story of the "Red Prince," the Bavarian noble who in 1930 joined the Reichsbanner, the green-shirted youth organization of the republican parties, in its final and futile attempts to block the triumph of Hitler. Well known in America for his impassioned writings and lectures against the Nazi regime, Prince Loewenstein describes in detail his transformation from a sheltered child of an ancient aristocracy, marching about the lawn of Schloss Schoenwoerth in tin armor, to an orator and street-fighter in the cause of the Weimar republic. His is one of those autobiographies which reviewers would label "greatly overdone" if presented as fiction; indeed, it contains all the ingredients for an exciting motion picture. As the narrative of one individual caught in the earthquake which shattered his civilization, it affords stirring glimpses of both that civilization and the earthquake.

Written with spirit and charm, delightfully illustrated and carefully indexed, "Conquest of the Past" is a profoundly moving tale of our times.

Of the past which was later to be conquered, Prince Loewenstein recalls many memories, both gay and sorrowful. He recaptures with unusual zest the spirit of childhood, with all its games and dream-worlds and even ghosts, and laments the family discipline and class prejudices

which warped his approach to life. His father, remote and austere, becomes the personification of the impoverished nobility, keeping up the pretenses of prestige and dismissing all opposition as "Bolshevism." These personal reminiscences reveal clearly the conflict of feudalism and industrialism throughout central Europe which even the World War did not wholly resolve.

To the American reader perhaps the most interesting chapters in the book are those which describe war-time Germany



PRINCE LOEWENSTEIN

and Austria, slowly starving to death behind the Allied blockade. One cannot easily forget the portrait of this descendant of kings and emperors bargaining for food with his schoolmates and mending his shoes with lead foil from cigarette boxes. To realize the physical and mental effects of the World War upon children in Europe, especially in Germany, this reviewer (four years younger than the author) has only to contrast his own memories of the conflict—a childhood lark consisting of parades, war savings stamps, and the sacrifice of sugar for Mr. Hoover. The misery of the people and the complete demoralization of the nation are here so vividly portrayed that one becomes surprised that National Socialism did not gain full power long before 1933.

To tell of his activities in the Reichsbanner, Prince Loewenstein substitutes excerpts from his diary for the formal autobiography which brings his story down to October, 1930. Although lacking continuity and explanation of the confused background, these concluding pages present a stirring account of the downfall of free government in Germany. The inaction of the government and police, the violence provoked by the extremist parties, and the sense of strain and unrest are all pictured in sentences written between speeches, meetings, and bloodshed. The brutality of the armed mobs and the horrors of the Nazi torture chamber provide grim confirmation to the recent forebodings of Harold J. Laski, that "a new and long dark age lies before us through which we have to pass before a recovery of tolerance becomes again a possible adventure."