

motif of contrast and paradox, inseparable in tempo and rhythm and power from that of chasm and contrast and quick moving change from old to new."

Realistic answers are, moreover, dependent upon theory as well as upon facts, and it is essential that such theory be stated as clearly as possible. This clarity is not always found in "American Social Problems." For example, community is defined both as an institution and as a "little society" with physical resources, people, and institutions of its own. Regionalism is described in one place as "a theory of cultural situations based upon and finding its basic theoretical importance in the fundamental considerations that all societies evolve from the region outward into larger groups and are conditioned by the circumstantial pressure of nature and the societal pressures exerted by the culture of the region." No doubt the author could unravel such confusing passages, but the test of a book is to have done it in the writing.

Regionalism is, however, worth knowing about, and "American Social Problems" provides an introduction to it. If "peace in our time" is ever to become more than a temporary lull between conflicts, such empirical social realism cannot be overlooked.

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The War to Date

HANDBOOK OF THE WAR. By John C. De Wilde, David H. Popper, and Eunice Clark. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1939. 248 pp., with index. \$2.

Reviewed by FLETCHER PRATT

IF this book had been published in September, it would have rendered superfluous a great many tiresome and hysterical newspaper articles. Published at the rim of December, it not only tells the reader practically all he will need to know about military operations till the opening of the spring campaign brings the inevitable change in methods, but it also furnishes a valuable check on all forms of propaganda and semi-propaganda. For instance, the repeated stories about the British blockade and how it is already pinching Germany for food and raw materials. The authors have gone into some hundreds of market and statistical reports and emerged with the conclusion that while Germany could be starved out after a long pull, it would be so deliberate a business that the chances of a result more favorable to the Nazis are considerable.

Why, then, do we constantly hear of German difficulties about materials? Propaganda, very likely, the authors indicate in one of the most informative chapters ever published on this much-abused but obscure art, point-

THE handsome Harbrace Editions offer more than full value for a modest price, and a wide variety of good reading. Most fascinating, perhaps, among recent additions to this series is Eugene Lyons's "Assignment in Utopia" (\$1.69), in which the author tells the story of his six years—from the beginning of 1928 to the beginning of 1934—as United Press correspondent in Russia; the story of the gradual disillusionment of a devout communist, experienced at the heart of Soviet affairs, in the shadow of the Kremlin. Timely when it first appeared in 1937, this book is priceless now as a key to the understanding of Stalinism, as a background document that makes comprehensible the present course of Russian policy. There is sound scholarship, exciting history, and vigorous writing in Lloyd Lewis's "Sherman, Fighting Prophet" (\$1.98), a thorough and dramatic biography of a soldier whose springs of action have been widely misunderstood. There is exciting history, too, in John Hyde Preston's "Revolution 1776" (\$1.69); but in his effort to communicate excitement Mr. Preston writes always at the top of his lungs, and the effort, because of lack of modulation and just shades of emphasis, ends by almost defeat-

ing out that it is a first principle of effective propaganda to convince national and neutral alike that one cannot lose. It should be noted that this, like other conclusions in the book, is presented as the result of statistics, not with statistics save those condensed into neat diagrammatic form. The authors have eaten the figures; this is the result in a narrative which is always well arranged and usually highly readable.

The remaining criterion is that of accuracy; and here there is small occasion for cavil. The chapters on the economics of war, the military geography of Europe, on armies and their training, the war in the air, bear up beautifully under every test applicable. Those on war finance, merchant shipping and what it means, and on national resources are even brilliant—remarkably effective syntheses of matters otherwise scattered through scores of obscure sources. Only the brief chapters on the war as it affects the defence of America and the naval problem are below the top cut of the roast; and in the first of these cases the reason would appear to be that the American position has not yet developed to clarity. On the naval side the authors show a disposition to tot up tonnages instead of estimating the more important questions of training and morale, but this is a minor blot on the best general summary of the war so far.

ing its purpose. In "The Black Napoleon" (\$1.49), Percy Waxman has a unique story to tell—the story of Toussaint Louverture, whose mental processes were scarcely less remarkable than his physical exploits—and he has told it competently, without calculated sensationalism. As supplementary reading regarding Haiti, one may turn to William Seabrook's "The Magic Island" (\$1.49), which relates the author's personal experiences with the weird rites and horrifying practices of Voodoo. Toussaint, by the way, loathed Voodoo and all its works.

Two volumes by M. R. Werner are solid contributions to the Harbrace collection: "Brigham Young" (\$1.69), and "Barnum" (\$1.69). The story of Mormonism is one of the strangest and most interesting chapters of our national history, and Mr. Werner, focussing his study upon the figure of Young, does the theme ample justice. It has often been said that Barnum could have risen and flourished only in America. Actually he is a distinguished member of a long line that reaches back into the shadows of pre-history. An expert showman and more than something of a charlatan, his Americanism consisted merely in adapting his talents to the scene in which he found himself. Constance Rourke's delightful biography of "Audubon" (\$1.49), whose origin remains as mysterious as his achievements are plain to view, has all the charm of informed simplicity. In this Harbrace edition it is adorned by twelve colored plates from Audubon prints, and illustrated by black-and-whites by James Mac Donald. Elswyth Thane's "The Tudor Wench" (\$1.49), has the engaging look of fictionalized biography, but into it went the careful research of the conscientious biographer and historian.

In the field of pure fiction the Harbrace Editions offer us Sinclair Lewis's "Main Street" (\$1.29) and "Babbitt" (\$1.29), Esther Forbes's "Paradise" (\$1.29), and "Gaudy Night" (\$1.29) by Dorothy Sayers. As we reread Lewis's first two popular successes we are surprised to find how much of them has remained in our memory since 1920 and 1922. They have lasted well so far; nor is their appeal simply that of photographs of the day before yesterday. They are still very much alive, and promise to live on. Esther Forbes may be artistically happier when following a simpler narrative line than that which twists and multiplies itself through "Paradise," but this novel of seventeenth-century New England is charged with drama, even melodrama, and contains some of the elements responsible for the vast popularity of "Gone With the Wind." "Gaudy Night" represents a late stage of a mystery writer who has been gradually corrupted by a passion for erudite exhibitionism.

The attractive and sturdy binding newly adopted by the Modern Library

makes its first appearance, appropriately enough, clothing two of our sturdiest contemporary literary talents. Bound in red, with black label and gold stamping, we have "Six Plays of Clifford Odets;" bound in gray, with blue label and gold stamping, we have John Steinbeck's "In Dubious Battle" (ninety-five cents each). These writers are both realists possessed by a strong poetic instinct that lifts them from the detailed, factual prose of life to its more universal, singing significance. At their best, they make the ascent without jar or jolt to their readers; at their occasional worst, the transition may seem a little strained. The six plays of Odets—"Waiting for Lefty," "Awake and Sing!," "Till the Day I Die," "Paradise Lost," "Golden Boy," and "Rocket to the Moon"—represent the body of his achievement to date; and the achievement is at once highly original and impressive. "In Dubious Battle" (1936) speaks for the John Steinbeck who was on his way towards writing "The Grapes of Wrath." There is a power in this story of California's migratory workers that foreshadows a later, fuller power, and the action of the narrative is compelling. But the novel suffers from an absence of appealing characters. Jim, the recent convert to communism, is too much of an innocent to be interesting, and his sudden access of inspired strength is less than convincing. Mac—the Party agitator who does not care how many blindly led men are killed in a strike, so long as he manages to stir up trouble for the bosses and keep labor in a ferment—can scarcely enlist the sympathies of any readers but those whose emotions have been strait-jacketed by the discipline of the Comintern.

Among recent additions to the clearly printed, handy Pocket Books (twenty-five cents each) are Pearl Buck's "The Good Earth," Edna Ferber's "Show Boat," "The Great Short Stories of de Maupassant," Dickens's "A Tale of Two Cities," and Dorothea Brande's "Wake Up and Live." Mrs. Buck's substantial novel has a great reputation, and the list of its printings is one at which to marvel. For western readers it combines the appeal of exotic detail with that of an essential theme singular to no one age or country. "Show Boat" is a costume piece, mechanical rather than alive; but it is the work of an expert craftsman, and one wonders how much the artificiality of the life described is responsible for the seeming artificiality of the narrative. The thirty-six stories by Maupassant form a representative selection. All good Dickensians will of course inform you that "A Tale of Two Cities" is not "Dickens," but even they must agree with the rest of the world that it is one of the best of the world's rattling good yarns. Most "success books" are offensive in one way or another to a realistic reader. "Wake up and Live" is a rare exception which combines much uncommon-sense with many genuinely stimulating suggestions.

B. R. R.

The New Books

Art

AMERICAN PAINTING TODAY. With an Essay by Forbes Watson. Washington: The American Federation of Arts. 1939. \$4.50.

If this volume can claim superiority among the astonishingly numerous picture-books now being issued, it is in part because of the intelligence which governed the choice of its two hundred and fifty-nine illustrations, in part because Forbes Watson has written its introductory essay. By his training as an art critic and editor of *The Arts*, and by first-hand acquaintance, as Adviser to the FWA Section of Fine Arts, with recent experiments in governmental patronage, Mr. Watson is prepared to speak with a genuine sense of the meaning of those experiments, and is refreshingly free from the extreme and unripe nationalism of many champions of "Americanism" in art. The excellent reproductions neglect no important figure in their survey of "ten good years of American painting," years which, according to Mr. Watson, are "laying the foundations of a great body of art." As he concludes, "there is a difference between times when many paint well, and a great movement produces great artists in the midst of the many, and times when progress is marked by single lonely individuals. This is the difference at which we have arrived. It is a great difference."

O. L.

Biography

BLUEJACKET. By Fred J. Buenzle. Norton. 1939. 363 pp., with index. \$3.

RECOLLECTIONS OF A TULE SAILOR. By Capt. John Leale. San Francisco: George Fields. 1939. 311 pp., with index.

The recollections of old-time sailormen, on land and sea, make generally interesting reading. And when they deal with eras now completely vanished, with the transition from sail to steam, and with the intimate details of their daily life, well and fondly lived, they go beyond interest and into valuable historical data, as first hand commentaries on the adolescence of the American Navy and Merchant Marine.

Such salty stuff, with a good deal of nostalgia, streaks the pages of the books under review. Mr. Buenzle served more than half a century in the American Navy, before he retired as Chief Yeoman, and during his lifetime he managed to survive the tradition-and-training-blasting changes that marked the switch from creaking blocks to rumbling boilers. One of the last native American youths to be completely trained in sailing ships, he

tells an absorbing tale from the seaman's side of the Navy, that covers many seas, from the period just following the Civil War through the Spanish-American engagements. His fight for recognition of the honor of the naval service by all fellow Americans, did more to popularize it with American seamen than the modernization it underwent.

In contrast to the deep-water exploits and shell-fire remembrances of "Bluejacket," Captain Leale spent the greater part of his life in the shoal water and giant cat-tails, called tules, of San Francisco Bay. He traveled more than a million miles over it, as ferryboat captain; and in this posthumous autobiography there is a philosophy of a man who loved the smell of the sea and yet was too fond of the land and people on its shores to stay away long from the ideal combination. He knew the people who rode back and forth from the city that fire and earthquake devastated, and became a practising psychologist—as in his statement on the countless suicide attempts that were made from the ferryboats: "I don't ever recall having a 'jumper' in foggy weather." An acknowledged authority on early steamboating in the west, he lived to the very end of his romantic era. The story is a first-hand account of ferryboating that has never before been told, and will never be surpassed, for the era is no more.

L. C. H.

International

BATTLE AGAINST TIME. By Heinrich Hauser. Scribner's. 1939. 386 pp., with index. \$3.

Heinrich Hauser, who is evidently an opponent of the Hitler régime, has risen above prejudice in this book and has produced a generally well balanced survey of many aspects of the new Germany. By way of introduction he has written a striking pen portrait of Berlin under the Nazis, in a chapter which epitomizes the Third Reich. On the surface he sees impressive, top-speed construction in accordance with a grandiose plan; beneath it he discerns enormous human and material costs and a tension bordering on exhaustion.

Mr. Hauser is at his best in reviewing the economic history of National Socialism. Without minimizing such achievements as the elimination of unemployment and the enhancement of labor's dignity, he stresses the lowering of living standards and the bondage of both labor and capital to the Nazi bureaucracy. Without neglecting the technical and administrative accomplishments of the four-year plan, he reveals the maladjustment, deterioration of plant and morale, and the graft which have accompanied them. For agriculture, automobile manufacture, and highway construction, the