

then read a paper on the problems of publishing poetry, saying that in this century the poet possessed innumerable avenues to his audience and frequently had made a considerable reputation before his work was issued in book-form. He cited Whitman's dictum that to have great poets we must have great audiences, but advanced no particular theory for bringing the poet to his audience.

Amy Bonner, New York representative of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, read a letter from George Dillon, the editor, asking for reasonable and necessary support, and rehearsing *Poetry's* achievements. Ralph Hayes spoke of the problems of a new magazine of poetry, *The Wheel*. It is dedicated to young and progressive poetry.

Norman Corwin, speaking on "Radio and Verse," advanced radio as a new medium for poets, a new market, a new hope. He spoke of its penetrability and intimacy as a medium and its characteristic of foreshortening—so that a scene that could run ten minutes in a theater could stand only about fifty seconds on the air. He argued for simplicity and clarity.

Aaron Copland spoke next on "Music and Verse." The modern composer wants modern poetry that will induce in him new music for the world today. He said the intensely subjective poem is no good for choral literature, and that modern composers were now most interested in choral literature.

Dorothy Parker rose to confess that she was scared, and that her past wouldn't let her alone. She was supposed to speak on "Sophisticated Verse," but she thought sophisticated verse was dead. Why, she interrogated rhetorically, doesn't somebody tell us about the world of human beings? She believes that the songs of her day are as dead as Iris March. Finally she quoted Joe Hill's dying phrase, "Don't mourn me—organize!" But Earl Robinson, who followed her, and is surely as proletarian as they come, reminded us that Gilbert (not to mention Sullivan) still has a lot on the ball. Robinson, complete with guitar, gave a grand session of chorus and verse. He sang and recited the Negro epic of John Henry and his great battle with the steam-drill, out of the Lomax anthology. Among several others, he also sang the famous Abraham Lincoln song, with the words from Lincoln's first inaugural address, which he and Alfred Hayes collaborated on; and the famous Joe Hill song.

It was a stirring finale. The long program left no time for general discussion. They say—and the present writer can well believe it—that it is the best-attended and most stimulating poetry session the League of American Writers has carried through.

## Slums in the Fields

**HOLYOKE, MASSACHUSETTS:** *A Case History of the Industrial Revolution in America.* By Constance M. Green. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1939. \$4.

Reviewed by RUTH MCKENNEY

"THE history of Holyoke is the history of Massachusetts industrialism and all its social consequences," Constance Green says in the preface to her four-hundred-page study of a small-sized New England mill town.

Then in a dry, dispassionate, clinical style, Miss Green proceeds to set down one of the most horrifying stories written in years. Holyoke was a planned city—planned by a group of Boston financiers who built a dam across the Connecticut river and built mills or sold water power. A new industrial city rose late in 1850 directly from the farmers' fields—with no gradual transition from village to country town to city. The Holyoke city fathers, starting from scratch, had no old buildings to tear down, no entrenched real estate owners to fight. They owned the real estate and they put up the buildings.

The results were downright terrifying. In ten years the Boston owners of the little city had made a hell-hole so frightful that the death rate approached that of the worst slum areas of New York City. The town manufactured cotton textiles, and a little after the first boom, paper. Cheap immigrant labor was herded into the dark four-story tenements (tenements, in the midst of farmers' fields!) Child labor flourished in all of the mills. The usual working day for the wo-

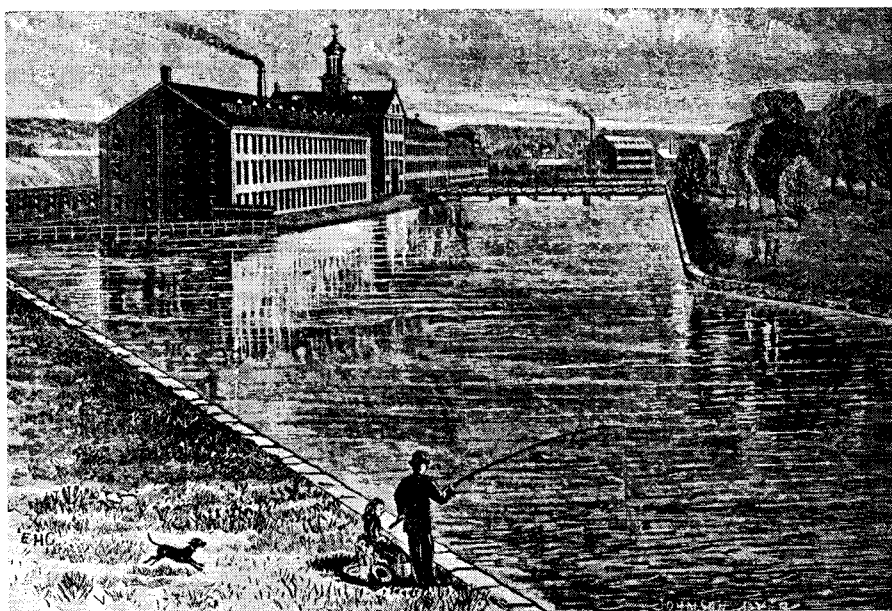
men and child operatives as well as for the men exceeded twelve hours. The agonized protests of the Irish immigrants were casually crushed—by closing the mills until the workers begged again for their miserably paid jobs.

In August, 1873, during one of the brief periods of prosperity, the *Transcript*, the conservative paper of the little town, published an article which began:

There is one pitiful sight which we have seen night after night in front of the fruit and vegetable stands since green and ripe fruit came into the market. It is droves of poverty-stricken children, often girls, clad in only one or two ragged and dirty garments, down on their hands and knees in the gutters, greedily picking out of the mud and dirt and eating bits of spoiled and decaying fruit which have been thrown out as worthless. . . .

This was prosperity in industrial Massachusetts. Depression was much worse. At quite regular periods Holyoke, a cotton and paper town, was devastated by panic and money tightness. The mills closed. The Boston owners took a loss. And the Irish, French-Canadian, and Scotch-English immigrant population literally starved. The most harrowing part of Miss Green's book is the laconic description of the ups and downs in Holyoke's industrial history. For every time the Boston industrialists took serious losses, the illiterate, underfed, frightfully housed population saw death and starvation lurking in the future.

The dark picture of Holyoke is quite unrelieved. The town never enjoyed the advantages of the capital-



Holyoke factories about 1875

ists' surplus wealth. The owners of the town lived far away from Holyoke, and if they spent some of their wealth on museums and schools and churches and charity, Holyoke never saw it. The owners built Holyoke ugly—they never even bothered to sow grass seeds on the plot marked "city square" in the original plans. And the owners kept Holyoke ugly. The city is situated among some of the most beautiful scenery of Massachusetts—a winding river, trees, rolling hills. But the population lived in airless tenements and were lucky to see a tree once a week, on Sunday. Why should the owners of the cotton mills and the paper mills bother to plant a tree in Holyoke? They didn't live there.

Miss Green takes her story only up to the early 1920s. It would be interesting to know whether the WPA has planted any trees in Holyoke or whether the CIO has organized the workers. The book would profit from even a brief epilogue. Outside of this omission, "Holyoke" is inclusive enough—its chief fault, indeed, lies in its "scientific" method. For Miss Green writes with such careful dryness, such precise lack of bias that I, at least, finally found the manner of the book infuriating. Must historians pretend they do not care whether children labor in the mills from sunup to sundown? Is it unscientific bias to attack city planners who erected tenements in the middle of farms? For my part, "Holyoke" would be a much more effective book with more fire and fewer footnotes.

Strangely enough, with all this emphasis on the scientific method, Miss Green does display a most unscientific bias in her handling of the history of organized labor in Holyoke. She presumes that the best labor unions are the ones which get along best with owners—a presumption open to question at least. She writes enthusiastically of unions which seldom called strikes and treats with casual lack of emphasis the succession of abortive, hopeless, tragic mill strikes that peppered Holyoke's early history.

Miss Green believes the workers did not effectively organize against the owners because they accepted with spiritless apathy the conditions they found in the New World. But she indicates in her own text that the owners could—and did, when necessary—starve their workers into any kind of submission.

"Holyoke" is a valuable addition to the growing body of knowledge about America. Its faults do not obscure its worth—its tragic story overshadows the manner of its telling.

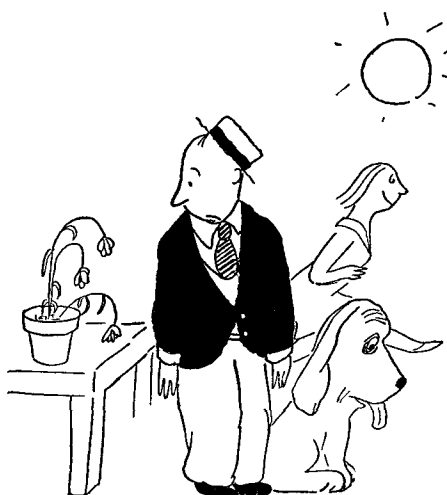
*Ruth McKenney is the author of "Industrial Valley," an account of Akron, Ohio.*

## What the Man Will Wear, Maybe

*MEN CAN TAKE IT. By Elizabeth Hawes. New York: Random House. 1939, \$2.*

Reviewed by GOULD CASSAL

**H**AWES is almost as bored with men's clothes as most men are. In 1936 she designed some emancipatory garments which were run up by Tony Williams in a limited edition. "Fashion Is Spinach" considered the problem briefly. "Men Can Take It," a bombshell that will upset the conservatives and perhaps inspire a few canny manufacturers, goes into the subject thoroughly. Indeed, Hawes covers so many related topics while preparing the background of her argument that she may become



Drawing by James Thurber for "Men Can Take It"

known as the Dorothy Thompson of designers. Like Miss Thompson, she combines a decided personality and a passion for reform with a penchant for declaration on many subjects which seem slightly outside her province. Such wild-eyed crusading, however, often increases the liveliness of the book.

Clothes as clothes are thrust aside for almost too much of the time while Hawes ponders the subversive influences which persuade men to stick to their routine hats and suits. Only by prodigious self-effort, she contends, can men free themselves from their medieval attire. They must fight their conditioned educations, middle class tradition, jealous wives, and collegians who garnish rather than make styles. There are also the manufacturers, merchants, and retailing associations who fully realize that the finicky changes they call Fashions for Men are more compatible with profits than a comfortable, stylized costume.

Hawes has no startling innovations on hand, but she enthusiastically rec-

ommends slack suits for summer wear. She is so positive about their virtues that more than one male reader will be prompted to buy one. (A check-up recently made at the World's Fair revealed that approximately every twentieth man was wearing such an ensemble in single or mixed colors). It is to be regretted that in this connection she does not apostrophize at greater length on workclothes. For comfort and grace, they are the envy of many men who must conform to type in offices.

"Men Can Take It" will have its reinforced binding tested by many conventional gentlemen this summer as they throw the book down; and fifty-five percent of the female population—herein castigated as spoiled and stupid creatures—will have hatchets out for Hawes. Altogether, a highly promising beginning for the men's style revolution Hawes humorously anticipates.

## Viennese Music

*MUSICAL VIENNA. By David and Frederic Ewen. New York: Whitteley House. 1939. \$3.50.*

Reviewed by PAUL H. LANG

**T**HIS history of Viennese music as told against the background of the cultural evolution of the Hapsburg capital is a welcome sign that the principles of modern history writing have gained admittance to quarters heretofore hermetically sealed to literature and scholarship. But while the plan is laudable, the execution still falls short of standards established in other fields of the history of art. The student will be surprised to discover that the Messrs. Ewen date the history of Viennese music from the second half of the eighteenth century, although the ancient musical traditions of Vienna are known to every American concert-goer who has heard the celebrated Vienna Choir Boys. The reader will be no less disturbed by the stock sentences, typical of the old-fashioned, uninformed, and uncritical musical essayists: "Haydn was to lay the foundation for the German symphony . . . Gluck was to create the first great music drama . . . With Schubert the German Lied was born . . ." etc. The bibliography alone will convince the initiated that this book was put together in haste. Yet with all its faults, "Musical Vienna" may prove helpful and informative to a goodly number of people accustomed to the narrow field of musical appreciation, for it will teach them that music is a part of our cultural life, and not a pastime to be indulged in after dinner.