

for his record on civil liberties—and then take his cabinet apart as follows:

No President was ever saddled with such a cabinet as that inflicted by the party leadership on Warren Harding. . . . Andrew Mellon contributed more to the wrecking of the American standard of living, to the undermining of free enterprise and to the destruction of the national economy than any other single figure in American history. Albert Fall almost destroyed the people's belief in the basic integrity of our governmental system. Charles Evans Hughes fixed upon the country a foreign policy that robbed the United States of self-respect at home and prestige abroad. Herbert Hoover elevated the science of uttering platitudes to a degree of perfection not attained by either Henry Clay or William McKinley, and spent the eight years of the Harding-Coolidge regime in seeking the presidency; he is remembered for his military victory at Anacostia over the bonus marchers.

Governor Arnall has his heroes, obvious figures like Franklin D. Roosevelt and George W. Norris, but he also lists Frank Murphy of Michigan, over whom there might be some dispute, and Roger Brooke Taney, the man who wrote the Dred Scott decision, whom the Georgian sees as an outstanding defender of human freedom. He is obviously fond of Henry A. Wallace, regards him as a man of courage and honesty, presently doing the cause of liberalism a disservice.

It is almost inevitable that Mr. Arnall, loving the South the way he does—and particularly his home state—should dig deeper to find virtues, should more often exhume its past sufferings, than he does for other sections of the nation. Maybe he errs, at this late date, in bringing up the fact that Georgia suffered a financial loss when the Continental currency was honored at par by the then new Federal government, and yet it is another reminder that in this sectional nation of ours, all sections do not read history in the same light.

New York City reminds Mr. Arnall of his home town of Newman, and he likes it, despite its "snobbish" tendency to send its middle class children to private schools and thereby subvert democracy. He thinks New York has a liberal tradition and he thinks also that it is the home of a more intelligent conservative group than any other place in the nation. Those in both camps, in New York and elsewhere, will welcome Mr. Arnall's book as honest and stimulating, even where they disagree.

Warren Moscow is using some of the information he has accumulated in reporting politics for The New York Times in "Politics in the Empire State" to be published this autumn.

Fiction. *It is a constant temptation to try to make sense of the weekly graphs of best sellers. It appears that the more disturbing the daily headlines the more firmly is Dr. Liebman's "Peace of Mind" riveted to the top of the non-fiction tree. Professor Toynbee's solid histories have reached third and eighth place on the list, due to those who seek understanding rather than relief. Fiction readers have a difficult escape. Seven out of sixteen listed best sellers are now historical novels. This week's reviews record a new novel by Frank Swinnerton, his thirtieth, in which the reader may flee to Victorian literary melodrama. There are several deft novels of contemporary perplexities and revolts, including Blythe Morley's tale of an adolescent who has a passionate affair with his foster aunt, aptly named "The Intemperate Season," and Markoosha Fischer's "The Nazarovs," a serious anti-Soviet novel.*

Back-Alley Publisher

FAITHFUL COMPANY. By Frank Swinnerton. New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc. 1948. 310 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by HARRISON SMITH

ONLY England seems to be able to produce industrious and gifted novelists who are at the same time men of letters, accomplished editors, essayists or biographers, and who become a living part of the closely-woven texture of English literary life. Frank Swinnerton is one of these enviable figures, at sixty-four industriously writing in his cottage in Surrey, apparently aloof from the neurotic violence or madness that has seized the outside world. Editor of an admirable small publishing house for nearly twenty years, after an apprenticeship with the publishers of Everyman's Library, his latest novel is concerned with one of the dismal back alleys of British publishing which assuredly has no relation to his own experience.

Faithful House was a publishing company that came straight from the eighteenth century, started its pious magazines and textbooks in Victorian days, and was languishing and decaying in the 1930's. The Goodlebys, father and son, ruled the decrepit premises with an iron hand, living together in a musty apartment in the old building, and stealing downstairs at night to pry into the desks and the letters of their subordinates. They are a pair of tyrannous villains, straight out of Dickens. Over the years the old Tom, bald, bearded, and illiterate, had reduced his son George to sycophantic impotence. George loathed and feared him though they called each other darling and dearest. One day the old monster had a stroke, but before he died man-

aged to make a sound will, leaving the firm and everything he owned to a wife of whom no one had ever heard. George never had the courage to move into his father's massive bed; echoes of Goodleby senior's thundrous laughter seemed to pursue him from his grave.

True to the Dickensian pattern the dramatic conflict in the fall of Faithful House involves the fate of an up-standing young man, Barry Fowler,

FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT: No. 260

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 260 will be found in the next issue.

PI MBLCL'F N RGA MG AL

OGTL, P NDQNEF NFH MBL

AYFPLFM KNT PT KE SNCFFB

MG MNHL PM GT NTO PM

XLMF OGTL.

BLTCE QNCO ALLWBLC

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 259

In every village there will arise a miscreant, to establish the most grinding tyranny, by calling himself the people.

SIR ROBERT PEEL.

Under the Whiplash of Soviet Terror

THE NAZAROVs. By Markoosha Fischer. New York: Harper & Bros. 1948. 373 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by ORIANA ATKINSON



—Joseph Breitenbach.

Markoosha Fischer "knows that the whole program has become a madhouse of tangled directives and lost ideals."

editor of *The Christian Wife*, *Faithful Stories*, and *Faithful Boys*. And Barry, though he is married to an over-ambitious wife, falls in love with his virtuous and lovely secretary. It is perhaps unnecessary to add that George is jealous of his able assistant and that he has cast his moist eyes on little Laura. In this atmosphere of hate and suspicion plots and conspiracies grow like mushrooms; but in the heart of the depression fearful men and women were compelled to stick to their livelihoods, to sit trembling at their desks, typing and editing the brand of piety and humbug that had gone out of fashion a half century before. Slowly Faithful House falls to pieces; and the mind of the tyrannical ogre, whom the staff has named "old horrible," disintegrates with it. The final explosion that blows the old house apart and destroys the dusty accumulation of a century of bad literature is entirely satisfying and worth waiting for.

In spite of its melodramatic and somewhat obvious plot, "Faithful Company" managed to be an absorbingly entertaining novel. It is perhaps conceivable that as fabulous an institution as Faithful House could have existed and have managed to survive in London before the German air raids blew away what was left of the picturesque and dark remnants of the Victorian past. That it seems possible is due to Mr. Swinnerton's gift for creating the dank kind of atmosphere necessary for his story. His characters, whether they are out of Dickens, or not, emerge as human beings, and in some way the worthy and the noble are neither mawkish nor silly. Even the villains, sly or devilish, have a kind of dignity and pathos about them. And then there is the comforting assurance from the very beginning that everything will turn out all right in the end, that satisfying knowledge that the world is essentially a place where good and bad people get their just deserts which was so essential to the popularity of the Victorian novel. More than one modern English writer has turned to this old and still satisfactory recipe for melodrama, half concealed under the luxuriant foliage of descriptive passages, and ruled by human beings who know which way they are going and who remain steadfast to the characteristics with which they are endowed from the first page by their creators. It is conceivable that Mr. Swinnerton in this novel has consciously created an allegory of the end of an era, though there is no indication that with Victorian piety out of the window the devil was about to enter the door.

MARKOOSHA FISCHER, author of "My Lives in Russia," has written a novel called "The Nazarovs." It bears the clear imprint of personal experience and deep understanding of the people and the situations involved. Mrs. Fischer is a Russian-born woman, whose early years spanned the Revolutionary era. In youth she recognized and rejected the social injustices of the Czarist government and allied herself with the Revolutionaries. She knew many of the great Bolsheviks who were purged in the dreadful upheaval of 1936-1939. She became sadly disillusioned with Stalinism at that time and left Russia in 1939 because she knew she would have to sacrifice all freedom if she remained there.

Her new book is about various members of the rich and powerful Nazarov family and the ways in which some of them passed from the life under the Czar to life under the Soviets. It is a good novel and an excellent story. But it is less valuable as fiction than it is for the picture it draws of the disillusionment and disintegration of the human spirit under the whiplash of Soviet terror.

The story starts in 1892, just before Czar Nicholas II came to the throne. It ends in 1942 with the Soviets firmly in control. The lives of the Nazarov family during these years are traced step by step as they move to their doom. None of them escapes. One or two save their own souls; but not until everything they hold dear is lost. Only then do they dare cleanse themselves of the foul moral compromises forced upon them.

Several of the most interesting characters are shadowy, and unfortunately pass early from the scene. Olga and her husband Gregor, pure-hearted and young, renounce the Czarist world and go out into a remote village to teach the peasants. We see and learn little of their lives.

The pre-Revolutionary, luxurious life of Anton Nazarov, father of the family and of his lovely wife, Kseniya, and of the little feather-headed daughter Vera, is shown in interesting detail. Then there is the story of Anton's son Maxim, who broke away from family ties and the pleasant Nazarov life, to throw himself passionately into the Communist cause, who rose in the Party ranks to a place of power, and who, in spite of every effort to follow

the Party line, was finally arrested and sent to the quarries in Siberia.

There is the story of Maxim's niece, Kira, who became his wife. Whole-some, honest, eager to serve, Kira, too, after many loyal years, is rejected.

Kira's sister, Katya, finds an easy way of life. Because of her Nazarov family connection, Katya is sent when young to a labor camp. But she uses her wits and her wiles and with them buys herself immunity from poverty and fear. Katya never suffers privation after that time. She learns early that honesty and loyalty to the Cause are no protection.

Natasha, daughter of the teachers Olga and Gregor, was an ardent little patriot who from early childhood gave heart and mind to the New Order. Yet, after years of selfless devotion, she, too, was coldly and brutally betrayed. Peter, her husband, knew that to exist at all daily compromises had to be made. Finally, Natasha and Peter understood that all was lost, and bowed their heads under the bitter knowledge that they were damned.

Natasha's son and daughter, Volnik and Maya, were born into the world of the Stalin god. Knowing no other, they were better adjusted than any of the older people. Volnik is a typical Soviet youth; blind in adoration of Stalin, unquestioning of the ceaseless propaganda fed to him by teachers and Party leaders; ignorant of the world outside his heavenly homeland. Maya, his gentle sister, is merely quiet and docile, understanding little of the morass which engulfs her.

Mrs. Fischer shows all the Nazarovs