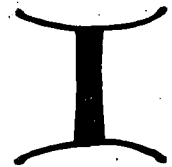


Letters & Life

In which books, plays, and people are discussed

Edited by LEON WHIPPLE

Midsummer Night's Plan



OFFER a Plan for Literature. Laissez-faire in letters is doomed. The day is done when men could just say they were authors (though many were carpenters or cooks) and go ahead and scribble what they were "inspired" to write. With no stabilization system, no graph of consumer demand, no production schedule, no dole after old Sam Johnson rebuffed Lord Chesterfield. It was mere gambling with the Muses, with of course some lucky breaks like, Dante, Shakespeare or Emerson. Is this modern or efficient? I ask you. And look what our haphazardness has brought us to: a third of this century gone—and not a genius in an anthology. This must *all* be changed!

The remedy is simple: the Planned Production of Books and Authors, with Regional Plans for the South and the reclamation of Hollywood. Thus, and thus only, can we have a genius or a classic when (or if) we need one. Thus we can break down the tyranny of "The Age" . . . the silly notion that one Period must produce only one kind of literature. That concept in economics almost ruined Henry Ford with Model T. Everybody admits we have the plant to double our capacity for anything so let's double the quota of geniuses; and flatten out these cyclic literary depressions when the Greeks did only epics, the Elizabethans only drama, and the Dark Ages nothing at all. Planned Literature will give you what you want when you want it. Our Age will be all the Ages. That is the great adventure!

The Plan will have three divisions: (1) the National Council on Literary Production to decide what books we need; (2) the Eugenic Bureau of Genius to breed authors with the right sets of chromosomes; (3) the Overseers to assign the genius to the job and make him produce. The Overseers may well study Russia and must have full police powers, especially for prevention and epidemiology. To stop sick books and epidemics of books is almost as divine as to foster good books. Censorship will, of course, be pre-natal. The Eugenic Bureau may take centuries to get going, but this is not one of these short-order plans. Moreover, laissez-faire often took a millennium to strike on a Master Mind.

We shall face opposition. Plans do. The omnipresent Economic Planners, natural monopolists, will try to fit Literature into Division III, Department XM, sub-section 7 of their Plan along with the designing of gingham prints and statuary for radiator caps. And they will have brutal control over the power that makes our paper and runs our presses (*vide* Russia). But we shall meet them with the General Strike. They seem to need an awful lot of words about their Plans (and they are rather vague on words) so we shall simply refuse to write about any other Plans until the powers-that-be (be what? be where?) accept the Book Plan. Utopias are the monopoly of poets and these usurping engineers and economists must be prosecuted for restraint of trade in the names of Plato, More, Bellamy and Herb Wells.

There are signs of Plan in the air. The publishers have the Cheney Plan and the Norton Plan but they concern the minor problem of how to keep publishers and authors from starving. That is a preliminary; the real Plan may let some of them starve. The timid experiments in the eugenics of birth control for books offer a good ideal—"Fewer and Better Books"—but say nothing on the real need of fewer and better authors. Hence Bureau II. The

Soviets began with the right doctrine, planned books for planned proletarians, but recently they have gone molly-coddle to the old opium of letting authors write anything they want to or can! Our best hope is the Literary Anarchists like Stein, Cummings, and Joyce; they know their own minds (if nothing else) so they junked the outworn grammar, punctuation and vocabulary and have a nice new Plan for Language in Progress. But they are dangerous; Society is not yet ready for Planned Anarchy. We shall welcome their advice but put the dictionary under a dictionary dictator. On with the PLAN!

THE first step in this modest proposal is a referendum on needed books. Letters & Life will welcome lists from readers. Meanwhile I'll tell the world what I want:

Item: One trilogy (at least) of historical novels on the panorama of these States, the march of the frontier from Coast to Coast. The time is ripe for an epic; we glimpse the magnificence of the theme; we feel nostalgia for our past; we muster literary pride and independence; we have even done parts of the story. All we need is a genius of the order of Virgil or Cervantes. The Eugenic Bureau might try a mixture of Walt Whitman, the Hergesheimer of Three Black Pennies, Stephen Benet, Evelyn Scott, Willa Cather, with a dash of Henry Adams. You see why planned literature needs planned authors.

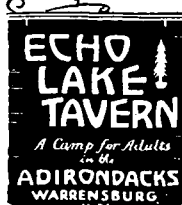
Item: Twenty volumes on The American Scene from 1880 to 1930 woven on the branches of one family. We might get the ghosts of Balzac, Zola and Dickens for this series. Matthew Josephson's Zola shows what brute energy it took to record the story of the Rougon-Macquart family. The set would start on the farm and end in the pent-house, and cover the impact on Puritan-descended rural America of science, the city, machines, big business, reform, women, and international expansion. I want a composite of the energy and psychology, philanthropy and domestic life of the empire-builders like Morgan, Frick, Carnegie, Huntington. What kinds of forces were these men? I want novels on the engineers and inventors that remold us. What of our surgeons (Mayo) or journalists (Hearst)? Of the builders of bridges and the dreamers of skyscrapers? What a novel could be written around a settlement house to illuminate our whole life! And on the women—Jane Addams, Carrie Chapman Catt, Emma Goldman! But no sex for sex's sake. I do not mean, of course, transcripts of private lives, but giant murals of these types and forces that made us. Our novelists shy off from these themes in fear, but the seed for tomorrow may be found in Lewis's Arrowsmith, Upton Sinclair's Boston, and the staccato symphonies of Dos Passos.

Item: One book from the young men, possibly in collaboration, offering a clear statement of what they think would make the "good life" in modern America, "around the corner" in 1940. We know their disillusion, now we want their illusions. Criticism and catastrophe (inner and outer) have broken society almost to its elements. Youth can rebuild the elements almost to suit themselves if they'll stop looking back, stop lambasting the natural weakness of the race, and draw up their specifications for happiness. Here's where we are, however we got here: here is a vast plant and powers: here are you with forty years of life ahead. What do you want of these years, Glenway Westcott, Michael (Continued on page 363)



ADULT CAMP

COME JOIN OUR HOUSE PARTY



"Where the Guest is Always Right"

Home Hospitality — Wholesome Food — 2 Golf Courses — 7 Tennis Courts — Horses — Water Sports — All Other Outdoor Activities. Gala Entertainment.

Modern Accommodations

1932 reduced rates **\$30** weekly in Aug.

ECHO LAKE TAVERN

The Intimate Camp

Illustrated Booklet on Request

WARRENSBURG

NEW YORK

City Office: 270 Broadway

BA relay 7-2888

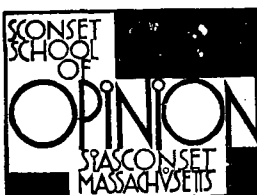
RESORTS

THE TAVERN OF THE MOORS

The Summer Place you have waited for. All Sports. Seashore life. Moderate rates. Informal talks on THE WORLD TODAY.

Herbert Adams Gibbons, Charles Obermeyer, Wm. Pepperell Montague, Harry W. L. Dana, and others.

A two weeks' vacation from New York, transportation included, from \$80 upwards. References requested.



A Charming New England Resort Chase's-on-Lake Sunapee

In the Lake and Mountain Region

Thoroughly modern in its appointments.

Golf and horseback riding nearby.

Boating, bathing, fishing.

Fresh vegetables, milk and cream from our own farms.

A DELIGHTFUL FAMILY HOUSE

ANNA CHASE

P. O. GEORGES MILLS, N. H.

Send for 1932 Booklet

Western View Farm

NEW MILFORD, CONN.

76 miles from Columbus Circle

Elevation 1,000 feet

Hospitality that is unique. It brings back friends year after year.

Swimming—Tennis—Golf—Riding—Mountain climbing

Or rest and quiet if you want it. Interesting people.

Rates: \$8 a day, \$49 a week.

Telephone: New Milford 440. Edward G. Ohmer, Proprietor.

WOODSTOCK LODGE

A place of health and recreation, of restfulness and peace, in the invigorating climate of the Adirondack region, Woodstock Lodge offers generous hospitality to a selected clientele.

Rates: \$20.00 per week adults
15.00 " " children

SEND FOR BOOKLET

East Berne, Albany County, N. Y.

Telephone: East Berne 10 F 2

Vacation Suggestions

ARE you going to be near Venice any time before November 4? The International Art Exhibition is on until then; and that means occasional fetes and music festivals in the one and only Venice. And surely no one should be close to Venice without taking the motor trip through the Dolomites—huge mountains of a sort of coral-colored rock which guard (not so successfully during the War) villages and valleys rich in vegetation.

For a simple, intimate, outdoor holiday of walking, climbing, canoeing and such in Europe, consult Oskar Bock of the Amt Für Studentenwanderungen (Vienna VII, Döblergasse 2/26).

THE International Student Service (3 Endsleigh Street, London) will tell you about joining a work camp, a small labor colony of students and workers living plainly together in a rural or industrial district and working on some pressing practical task. These camps vary from the Swiss work-colonies, organized annually in the Alpine villages to help rebuild communities damaged by natural disasters, to reconstruction schemes such as that organized last year in Bryn Mawr, Wales, to provide amenities for a derelict Welsh mining town.

If you are going to England, find out from the Travel and Industrial Development Association of Great Britain and Ireland (295 Madison Avenue, New York) what will be coming off during your stay. For instance, in July a number of celebrations of a local-atmosphere sort will take place, such as the annual procession of the Worshipful Company of Vintners in Upper Thames Street, a custom dating back to 1205; and the Haslemere Music or Dolmetsch Festival, within easy reach of London, presents an unusual chance to hear chamber music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries played upon viols, lutes, clavichords and other instruments for which this music was specially written. A series of open-air masques and dances in Hyde Park will be sponsored by the League of Arts. And on special days many of the royal and private gardens will be open to the public at a small fee collected for the Queen's Institute of District Nursing. Of general interest is the innovation of the Show Boat (or Alexandra) which will ply on the Thames daily during the season. Decorated with lights and flowers and equipped with an excellent chef and band, you can take tea, dinner or supper while sailing past some of England's landmarks.

AN international summer school will be held August 15-September 25 in the Ulmenhof Settlement, situated in a park in Wilhelmshagen, a suburb of Berlin rich in woods and lakes and consisting of newly built cottages for working-class families, a home for destitute children, one for psychopathic children, a domestic school for girls whose fathers were killed or disabled in the war, and a residential people's college. The course of study will cover conditions in Germany, England and the United States, and will be carried on in both German and English. There will be ample opportunity for recreation and the session will wind up with a week's walking tour. (Volkschulheim Ulmenhof, Berlin-Wilhelmshagen, Bismarckstrasse 24.)

Soviet Travel

THE first number of Soviet Travel, an illustrated monthly in English, published in Moscow, is an exciting jumble of stunning photographs, cartoons, sepia inserts, articles and notes on art and science, thrown together with a merciless abandon. It is unfortunate that the type is a small, tightly set bold face which discourages reading; for once over that barrier the tales of the old and new in Soviet Turkestan are fascinating. Subscriptions may be placed through Intourist, 261 Fifth Avenue, New York City. Four dollars a year—thirty-five cents a single copy.