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PROLETARIAN LITERATURE

IN THE UNITED STATES

*An Anthology*

PROLETARIAN  
LITERATURE  
IN THE UNITED STATES

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Democratic Republic

PROLETARIAN  
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*An Anthology*

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# INTRODUCTION

WHATEVER rôle art may have played in epochs preceding ours, whatever may be its function in the classless society of the future, social war today has made it the subject of partisan polemic. The form of polemic varies with the social class for which the critic speaks, as well as with his personal intelligence, integrity, and courage. The Communist says frankly: art, an instrument in the class struggle, must be developed by the proletariat as one of its weapons. The fascist, with equal frankness, says: art must serve the aims of the capitalist state. The liberal, speaking for the middle class which vacillates between monopoly capital and the proletariat, between fascism and communism, poses as the "impartial" arbiter in this, as in all other social disputes. He alone presumes to speak from above the battle, in the "scientific" spirit.

Wrapping himself in linen, donning rubber gloves, and lifting his surgical instruments—all stage props—the Man in White, the "impartial" liberal critic, proceeds to lecture the assembled boys and girls on the anatomy of art in the quiet, disinterested voice of the old trouper playing the rôle of "science." He has barely finished his first sentence, when it becomes clear that his lofty "scientific" spirit drips with the bitter gall of partisan hatred. Long before he approaches the vaguest semblance of an idea, the Man in White assaults personalities and parties. We are reading, it turns out, not a scientific treatise on art but a political pamphlet. To characterize an essay or a book as a political pamphlet is neither to praise nor to condemn it. Such pamphlets have their place in the world. In the case of the liberal critic, however, we have a political pamphlet which pretends to be something else. We have an attack on the theory of art as a political weapon which turns out to be itself a political weapon.

The liberal's quarrel with the Marxists does not spring from the desire to defend a new and original theory. After the ideas are sifted from the abuse, the theories from the polemics, we find nothing more than a series of commonplaces, unhappily wedded to a series of negations. The basic commonplace is that art is something different from action and something different from science. It is hard to understand why anyone should pour out bottles of ink to labor so obvious and elementary a point. No one has ever denied it, least of all the Marxists. We have always recognized that there is a difference between poetry and science, between poetry and action; that life extends beyond statistics, indices, resolutions. To labor that idea

with showers of abuse on the heads of the "Marxists-Leninists" is not dispassionate science but polemics, and very dishonest polemics at that.

The problem is: what, in the class society of today, is the relation between art and society, art and science, art and action. It is true that the specific province of art, as distinguished from action or science, is the grasp and transmission of human experience. But is any human experience changeless and universal? Are the humans of the twelfth century the same in their specific experience as the humans of the twentieth? Is life, experience, thought, emotion, the same for the knight of 1300, the young merchant of 1400, the discoverer of 1500, the adventurer of 1600, the scientist of 1700, the factory owner of 1800, the banker of 1900, the worker of 1935? Is there no difference in the "experience" grasped and transmitted by Catholic and Protestant poets, by feudal and bourgeois playwrights, by Broadway and the Theatre Union? Is Heine's social experience the same as Archibald MacLeish's? Is the love experience of Pietro Aretino the same as T. S. Eliot's?

We may say that these are all personal differences: experience is an individual affair and individuals differ from age to age. Yet nothing is more obvious than the social, the *class* basis of fundamental differences. Greeks of the slave-owning class, for all their individual differences, had more in common with each other than any of them has with the bourgeois poets of the Romantic school; the Romantics, for all their individual differences and conflicts, had more in common with each other than with individuals of similar temperament in Soviet letters or American fiction.

Art, then, is not the same as action; it is not identical with science; it is distinct from party program. It has its own special function, the grasp and transmission of experience. The catch lies in the word "experience." The liberal critic, the Man in White, wants us to believe that when you write about the autumn wind blowing a girl's hair or about "thirsting breasts," you are writing about "experience"; but when you write about the October Revolution, or the Five Year Plan, or the lynching of Negroes in the South, or the San Francisco strike you are not writing about "experience." Hence to say: "bed your desire among the pressing grasses" is *art*; while *Roar China*, Mayakovsky's poems, or the novels of Josephine Herbst and Robert Cantwell are *propaganda*.

Studying the life of their own country, Soviet critics observed that the poet deals with living people, not with abstractions. He conveys the tremendous experience of the revolution through the personal experience of individual beings who participate in it, fight for or against it, help to forward or retard its purposes, are in turn re-

fashioned by it. He describes people who make friends and enemies, love women and are loved by them, work mightily to transform the land. All this the artist—if he is an artist and not an agitator—does with the specific technique of his craft. He does not repeat party theses; he communicates that experience out of which the theses arose. In so far as the artist's deepest thoughts and feelings are bound to the old régime, in so far as he experiences life with the mind and heart of a bourgeois, the experience he conveys will be seen with the eyes of the bourgeois. Such a poet will best understand all those weaknesses of the revolution which have their roots in the old, that is near and dear to him; he will be blind to the greatness of the revolution which springs from the new, that is alien to him. He will create a false picture of Soviet reality; he will discourage people who read and believe him. But whether an artist grasps the true course of the revolution or is blind to it, his work is not divorced from science and action and class.

No party resolution, no government decree can produce art, or transform an agitator into a poet. A party card does not automatically endow a Communist with artistic genius. Whatever it is that makes an artist, as distinguished from a scientist or a man of action, it is something beyond the power of anyone to produce deliberately. But once the artist is here, once there is the man with the specific sensibility, the mind, the emotions, the images, the gift for language which make the creative writer, he is not a creature in a vacuum.

The poet describes a flower differently from a botanist, a war differently from a general. Ernest Hemingway's description of the retreat at Carporetto is different from the Italian general staff's; Tretiakov's stories of China are not the same as the resolution on that country by a Comintern plenum. The poet deals with experience rather than theory or action. But the social class to which the poet is attached conditions the nature and flavor of his experience. A Chinese poet of the proletariat of necessity conveys to us experiences different from those of a poet attached to Chiang Kai Shek or a bourgeois poet who thinks he is above the battle. Moreover, in an era of bitter class war such as ours, party programs, collective actions, class purposes, when they are enacted in life, themselves become experiences—experiences so great, so far-reaching, so all-inclusive that, *as experiences*, they transcend flirtations and autumn winds and stars and nightingales and getting drunk in Paris cafés. It is a petty mind indeed which cannot conceive how men in the Soviet Union, even poets, may be moved more by the vast transformation of an entire people from darkness to light, from poverty to security, from weakness to strength, from bondage to freedom, than by their own personal sensations as loafers or lovers. He is indeed lost in the morass of

philistinism who is blind to the *experience*, the *emotion* aroused by the struggle of the workers in all capitalist countries to emancipate themselves and to create a new world.

Here lies the key to the dispute current in American literary circles. No one says the artist should cease being an artist; no one urges him to ignore experience. The question is: what constitutes experience? Only he who is remote from the revolution, if not directly hostile to it, can look upon the poet whose experiences are those of the proletariat as being nothing more than "an adjunct, a servitor, a pedagogue, and faithful illustrator," while the poet who lives the life of the bourgeois, whose experiences are the self-indulgences of the philistine, "asserts with self-dependent force" the sovereignty of art. Art, however it may differ in its specific nature from science and action, is never wholly divorced from them. It is no more self-dependent and sovereign than science and action are self-dependent and sovereign. To speak of art in those terms is to follow the priests who talk of the church, and the politicians who talk of the state, as being self-dependent and sovereign. In all these cases the illusion of self-dependence and sovereignty are propagated in order to conceal the class-nature of society, to cover the propagandist of the ruling class with the mantle of impartiality.

In the name of art and by the vague term experience, accompanied by pages of abuse against the Communists, the ideologues of the ruling class have added another intellectual sanction for the *status quo*. What they are really saying is that only *their* experience is experience. They are ignorant of or hate proletarian experience; hence for them it is not experience at all and not a fit subject for art. But if art is to be divorced from the "development of knowledge" and the "technique of scientific action," if it is to ignore politics and the class struggle—matters of the utmost importance in the life of the workers—what sort of experience is left to art? Only the experience of personal sensation, emotion, and conduct, the experience of the parasitic classes. Such art is produced today by bourgeois writers. Their experience is class-conditioned, but, as has always been the case with the bourgeoisie, they pretend that their values are the values of humanity.

If you were to take a worker gifted with a creative imagination and ask him to set down his experience honestly, it would be an experience so remote from that of the bourgeois that the Man in White would, as usual, raise the cry of "propaganda." Yet the worker's life revolves precisely around those experiences which are alien to the bourgeois aesthete, who loathes them, who cannot believe they are experiences at all. To the Man in White it seems that only a decree from Moscow could force people to write about fac-



tories, strikes, political discussions. He knows that only force would compel *him* to write about such things; he would never do it of his own free will, since the themes of proletarian literature are outside his own life. But the worker writes about the very experiences which the bourgeois labels "propaganda," those experiences which reveal the exploitation upon which the prevailing society is based.

Often the writer who describes the contemporary world from the viewpoint of the proletariat is not himself a worker. War, unemployment, a widespread social-economic crisis drive middle-class writers into the ranks of the proletariat. Their experience becomes contiguous to or identical with that of the working class; they see their former life, and the life of everyone around them with new eyes; their grasp of experience is conditioned by the class to which they have now attached themselves; they write from the viewpoint of the revolutionary proletariat; they create what is called proletarian literature.

The class basis of art is most obvious when a poem, play, or novel deals with a political theme. Readers and critics then react to literature, as they do to life, in an unequivocal manner. There is a general assumption, however, that certain "biologic" experiences transcend class factors. Love, anger, hatred, fear, the desire to please, to pose, to mystify, even vanity and self-love, may be universal motives; but the form they take, and above all the factors which arouse them, are conditioned, even determined, by class culture. Consider Proust's superb study of a dying aristocracy and a bourgeoisie in full bloom; note the things which rouse pride, envy, shame in a Charlus or a Madame Verdurin. Can anyone in his senses say that these things—an invitation to a party at a duke's home, a long historical family tree—would stir a worker to the boastful eloquence of a Guermites or a Verdurin? Charlus might be angry at Charlie Morel for deceiving him with a *midinette*; could the Baron conceive what it is to be angry with a foreman for being fired?

Art at its best does not deal with abstract anger. When it does it becomes abstract and didactic. The best art deals with specific experience which arouses specific emotion in specific people at a specific moment in a specific locale, in such a way that other people who have had similar experiences in other places and times recognize it as their own. Jack Conroy, to whom a Proustian salon with its snobbish pride, envy, and shame is a closed world, can describe the pride, envy, and shame of a factory. We may recognize analogies between the *feelings* of the salon and those of the factory, but the objects and events which arouse them are different. And since no feeling can exist without an object or event, art must of necessity deal with specific experience, even if only obliquely, by evasion and flight.

The liberal critic who concludes that all literature *except proletarian literature* is equally sincere and artistic, that every poet *except the proletarian poet* is animated by "experience," "life," "human values," has abandoned the search before it has really begun. The creative writer's motives, however "human" they may be, however analogous to the motives of the savage, are modified by his social status, his class, or the class to which he is emotionally and intellectually attached, from whose viewpoint he sees the world around him.

Is there any writer, however remote his theme or language may seem at first glance from contemporary reality, however "sincere" and "artistic" his creations may be, whose work is not in some way conditioned by the political state in which he lives, by the knowledge of his time, by the attitudes of his class, by the revolution which he loves, hates, or seeks to ignore? What is the *real* antagonism involved in the fake and academic antagonism between "experience" on the one hand and the state, education, science, revolution on the other? This question is all the more significant since the best literary minds of all times have agreed on some kind of social sanction for art, from Plato and Aristotle to Wordsworth and Shelley, to Voronsky and I. A. Richards. Recent attempts to destroy the "Marxo-Leninist aesthetics" fall into a morass of idealistic gibberish. The term "experience" becomes an abstract, metaphysical concept, like "life" or the "Idea" or the "Absolute." But even the most abstract metaphysical concept, like the most fantastic dream, conceals a reality.

Let us examine one typical example of this metaphysical concept. Recently a bourgeois critic cited the following words by Karl Marx: "At a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production in society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or, what is but a legal expression for the same thing, with the property relations within which they had been at work before. From forms of development of the forces of production, these relations turn into their fetters. Then comes the period of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation, the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed." The critic commented that this was a *true scientific description of a social law*; in the future some "intellectually inventive" artist might write a poem in which this thought would be "greatly and spontaneously portrayed." But, he added, no man "can get into a position to experience a revolution concretely in those terms." Therefore, the attempt "to convey the conception in concrete images and pictures will be *normally a tour de force.*"

Our author himself underlined the word *normally*. That indeed is the significant word not only in the essay, but in the entire campaign which bourgeois ideologues have been conducting against pro-

letarian literature. If Karl Marx's law is true, as the conservative critic admits, then the process it describes involves every individual in capitalist society, even when he is utterly ignorant of Marx's formulation. The worker may never have heard of Marx, but he knows that the factory is overstocked with goods, that he is unemployed, that he is unable to purchase the goods he has produced. He may not know the phrases about the conflict between the material forces of production and the existing relations of production; he may accept the explanation of demagogues like Roosevelt, General Johnson, Father Coughlin, Huey Long, or Phil La Follette; but he knows the *facts*, his "experience" consists of those facts.

Let us now suppose that a given worker is a gifted story-teller, yet ignorant of Marxian theory. He accurately describes his own specific experiences at the moment when the social revolution breaks out, as many Russian, German, Hungarian, Mexican, and Chinese workers have done. Such a worker would not be writing an *illustration* of the *Communist Manifesto* any more than the bee's conduct is an illustration of Fabre's famous book. The worker's experience, however, would sustain Marx's theory, otherwise the theory would not be true. The worker's poetic rendering of the specific experience would be art, as Marx's summation of that experience is science. Nor would such a story be for the *worker* or the intellectual *writing from the worker's standpoint a tour de force*. It would be a "natural," "free" expression of experience.

But is the worker or the intellectual who identifies himself with the worker *normal*? Remember, the conservative critic I cited only said that *normally* the attempt to convey Marx's concept in concrete images and pictures would be a *tour de force*. From the viewpoint of the bourgeois aesthete, the worker is apparently not normal, just as the experience of the worker or of the crushed middle-classes is not experience. The "normal" poet is the bourgeois poet; "experience" is bourgeois experience. It is only if we make that false assumption that the *tour de force* becomes inevitable. Only when an aesthete lives the life of a bourgeois and attempts intellectually to be a "Communist" does the dualism here involved arise. For the Man in White art develops out of experience and experience is bourgeois; he can conceive of writing about proletarian life, which Marx has described scientifically, only as an intellectual *tour de force*, only by reading a Communist book and then "with a teacherly intention and a sufficiently deliberate ingenuity" attempt to "show" the Marxian concept, admittedly true, in images and pictures. Such a man, naturally, is compelled to a *tour de force*, to very bad "proletarian art"; he proceeds from the general to the specific instead of from the specific to the general.

We have had such writings in the revolutionary press, nearly always from intellectuals new to the movement. It is well known that American Marxist critics have fought against this tendency. We have maintained for years that to put a Comintern resolution in rhyme does not make proletarian poetry. It is better for the poet honestly to describe his real experiences, his doubts and inner conflicts, and the external circumstances which brought him to the revolutionary movement, than to fake his feelings by rehashing and corrupting political manifestoes which we prefer to read in their original form. But the intellectual who sympathizes with the proletariat in the abstract and continues his bourgeois life in the concrete is bound to resort to a *tour de force*. Such a poet can only write of his bourgeois experience; he must violate his real feelings when he attempts to translate Marxian science into art. It is when the intellectual describes his own conflicts sincerely that he can create revolutionary art; it is when he has transformed his life, when his experience is in the ranks of the advanced proletariat that he begins to create proletarian art.

Art varies with experience; its so-called sanctions vary with experience. The experience of the mass of humanity today is such that social and political themes are more interesting, more significant, more "normal" than the personal themes of other eras. Social themes today correspond to the general experience of men, acutely conscious of the violent and basic transformations through which they are living, which they are helping to bring about. It does not require much imagination to see why workers and intellectuals sympathetic to the working class—and themselves victims of the general social-economic crisis—should be more interested in unemployment, strikes, the fight against war and fascism, revolution and counter-revolution than in nightingales, the stream of the middle-class unconscious, or love in Greenwich Village.

At the moment when the creative writer sits at his desk and composes his verses or his novel or his play, he may have the illusion that he is writing his work for its own sake. But without his past life, without his class education, prejudices, and experiences, that particular book would be impossible. Memory, the Greeks said, is the mother of the muses; and memory feeds not on the general, abstract idea of absolute disembodied experience, but on our action, education, and knowledge in our specific social milieu. As the poet's experience changes, his poetry changes. The revolutionary Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey become reactionary with age and advancement by the ruling powers; the Goethe of Goetz becomes the Goethe of Weimar; the T. S. Eliot of *The Hippopotamus* becomes the T. S. Eliot of *Ash Wednesday*; the Lewis of *Babbitt* be-

comes the Lewis of *Work of Art*; the O'Neill of *The Hairy Ape* becomes the O'Neill of *Days Without End*.

The free exercise of the personality in human relations and in art is not in itself a bad thing. The social revolution aims to make these goods, like the more material goods upon which they are dependent, accessible to all rather than to a few. But as long as the mass of mankind consists of exploited workers, peasants, and "white-collar slaves," the art that springs from "love and pride" is bound to be a limited art and in times like ours a false art. Such an art can have little real meaning for those who fight for bread. It is not from the Kremlin that the worker learns to be more interested in strikes than in "love and pride," but from life itself.

When socially-owned machines will be the slaves of men instead of men being the slaves of privately-owned machines, we may begin to think seriously about a "pure" art. Until that time, art cannot help being, consciously or unconsciously, class art. The cloak of self-dependence and sovereignty no more deprives art of its class character than the cloak of self-dependence and sovereignty deprives the state of its class character, or the image of the all-knowing omnipresent god deprives the church of its class character.

Why, then, do workers in the Stadium or at revolutionary meetings enjoy Tschaiakowsky? Why was Lenin moved by the *Appassionata*? Why did Marx read Aeschylus in the original every year? Because every class, like every individual, has certain "universal" experiences. Such experience, however, changes from age to age, from land to land, from class to class. We do not really see in the tragedies of the House of Atreus what the Greeks saw in them. Something is lost to us on the one hand; on the other we understand many things about those tragedies which the Greeks did not. People brought up on modern psychology do not see Oedipus Rex with the same feelings as the Athenians; possibly there may come a generation to which the literature of antiquity will have only intellectual but no emotional significance, satisfying curiosity about the past without stirring feelings about the present. Certainly the plays of Calderon cannot have the same meaning for a twentieth-century atheist as for a seventeenth-century Catholic. But from all literature, since it deals with human experience, we are able to extract analogies. What was realism for the Greeks is metaphor for us—that is, truth apprehended through analogy. The specific external motives which prompted Beethoven to compose the *Appassionata* may no longer exist; yet the same mood of passion and longing may be aroused in us by other things, and it is that mood which we recognize in the composition. This is much more true of music than of literature, since music achieves the greatest abstraction from the specific.

More significant is the question: why do not composers today write like Beethoven or Tschaikowsky? Why do not writers compose like Aeschylus? Why is Stravinsky's setting for the three psalms so different in structure and feelings from Handel or Bach? Because our specific experiences have changed and with it our art.

However, the two do not change simultaneously, at the same speed. In some cases art leaps ahead of reality as dreams do; it utters wishes. More often it lags behind reality. Our feelings are older than our intellects. They change more slowly. The physicist continues to believe in the god which his science has demolished; the Bolshevik may weep at the *Lady of the Camelias* which evokes feelings older than the Bolshevik's intellectual concepts.

Here the problem of analogy enters. *The Lady of the Camelias* was itself at one time revolutionary. It could not have been written without Rousseau, without the romantic movement, without the successful struggle of the bourgeoisie for its own art. Once the de Goncourt brothers had to apologize for writing a novel about a servant girl. Decades later Michael Gold had to assert his right to describe in fiction the life of the tenements. Each class as it rises from the abyss to the surface as a result of changes in the basic economic relations of men, fights not only for political power, not only for the culture already achieved by its predecessors in history, but for its own contributions to world culture, for the expression of its own experiences in art.

But all previous ruling classes have been exploiting classes; their experiences were those of exploiters; their art was conditioned and limited by that basic fact. The proletariat, sole revolutionary class in contemporary society, is compelled by the conditions of its existence to see life from a wider viewpoint. Before we can create a classless society in which man will move from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom, before there can be a classless art, the proletariat, through the artists who come from its ranks or who go over to it from other social classes, must produce a class art which is revolutionary because it illumines the whole of the contemporary world from the only viewpoint from which it is possible to see it steadily and to see it whole.

Like all new art, revolutionary art is bound to start crudely, as did the art of other classes when they were new. To begin with there are bound to be revolutionary novels as sentimental as the *New Heloise*; the artist's energies are too absorbed in the search for intellectual and emotional clarity for him to achieve immediate perfection of form. As the proletariat grows stronger, as it is educated by its struggle for power, its art and literature will grow stronger and better. In Russia we have in seventeen brief years seen the

development of proletarian literature from the early agitational verses to *And Quiet Flows the Don*; in America from the sentimental socialist novels of Upton Sinclair to the mature works of the novelists represented in this volume. The vast, creative experiences of the revolutionary workers and their intellectual allies must of necessity produce a new art, an art that will take over the best in the old culture and add to it new insights, new methods, new forms appropriate for the experience of our epoch.

Every writer creates not only out of his feelings, but out of his knowledge and his concepts and his will. However crude or unformulated or prejudiced his philosophy may be, it is a philosophy and it colors his works. The revolutionary movement in America—as in other countries—is developing a generation which sees the world through the illuminating concepts of revolutionary science. The feelings of the proletarian writer are molded by his experience and by the science which explains that experience, just as the bourgeois writer's feelings are molded by his experiences and the class theories which rationalize them. Out of the experiences and the science of the proletariat the revolutionary poets, playwrights, and novelists are developing an art which reveals more forces in the world than the love of the lecher and the pride of the Narcissist. For the first time in centuries we shall get an art that is truly epic, for it will deal with the tremendous experiences of a class whose world-wide struggle transforms the whole of human society.

American writers of the present generation have passed through three general stages in their attempts to relate art to the contemporary environment. Employing the term *poetry* in the German sense of *Dichtung*, creative writing in any form, we may roughly designate the three stages as follows: Poetry and Time, Poetry and Class, Poetry and Party.

From the poetic renaissance of 1912 until the economic crisis of 1929, literary discussions outside of revolutionary circles centered on the problem of Time and Eternity. The movement associated with Harriet Monroe, Carl Sandburg, Ezra Pound, Sinclair Lewis, Sherwood Anderson, Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway was one which repudiated the "eternal values" of traditional poetry and emphasized immediate American experience. The movement had its prophet in Walt Whitman, who broke with the "eternal values" of feudal literature and proclaimed the here and now. Poetry abandoned the pose of moving freely in space and time; it focused its attention on New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Iowa, Alabama in the twentieth century.

The economic crisis shattered the common illusion that American

society was classless. Literary frustration, unemployment, poverty, hunger threw many writers into the camp of the proletariat. Once they were compelled to face the basic facts of class society, such writers of necessity faced the problem of poetry and class. It was impossible to share the experiences of the unemployed worker and continue to create the poetry of the secure bourgeois. Poetry, however, tends to lag behind reality. Suffering opens the poet's eyes but tradition ties his tongue. As a member of society he was forced to face the meaning of the class struggle; as a member of the ancient and honorable caste of scribes, he continued to be burdened with antiquated shibboleths about art and society, art and propaganda, art and class.

In the past five years many writers have fought their way to a clearer conception of their rôle in the contemporary world. At first they split themselves into apparently irreconcilable halves. As *men*, they supported the working class in its struggle for a classless society; as *poets*, they retained the umbilical cord which bound them to bourgeois culture. The deepening of the economic crisis compelled many writers to abandon this dichotomy. The dualism paralyzed them both as men and as poets. Either the man had to follow the poet back to the camp of the bourgeoisie, or the poet had to follow the man forward into the camp of the proletariat. Those who chose the latter course accepted the fact that art has a class basis; they realized that in a revolutionary period like ours poetry is inseparable from politics. The choice was influenced chiefly by the violence of the class struggle in America today; it was also influenced by echoes of that struggle in the realm of letters. On the one hand, there were writers trained in the revolutionary movement with definite ideas on the question of poetry and class, who reasoned with the hesitant and the confused; on the other, it became more and more evident that the writers who proclaimed the "independence" of poetry from all social factors were themselves passionate and sometimes unscrupulous political partisans. The poet poised uncertainly between the two great political camps of our epoch now saw that it was no longer an abstract question of art and class, but the specific challenge: which class?

The solution of this problem raised new ones. The working class is itself divided, and the poet feels the cleavage acutely. He now faces the question of poetry and party. There are those who say: I am, both as man and poet, on the side of the proletariat, but I cannot get mixed up with the party of the proletariat, the Communist Party. The poet cannot be above class, but he must be above party. There are others who say with Edwin Seaver: "The literary honeymoon is over, and I believe the time is fast approach-



ing when we will no longer classify authors as proletarian writers and fellow-travellers, but as Party writers and non-Party writers.”

Current discussions of this problem are fruitful. They would be more fruitful if the history of revolutionary literature were generally known. It is because most of us know little of that history that partisans of the old order are able to falsify the rôle of the poet. They distort the past, the present, and the future; and since they fill the pages of the conservative and liberal press, their lies and libels are bound to have some effect even on writers who are on the side of the proletariat.

The class concept of literature antedates Stalin, Lenin, and even Marx. In early bourgeois literature, the rebellious ego of the “emancipated individual” expressed itself in heroes like Werther, Rene, Obermann; in criticism, the rising progressive bourgeoisie demanded a new poetry. Denis Diderot, one of the ideological predecessors of the French Revolution, understood the class basis of the new literature and called it frankly bourgeois. Later Madame de Staël, in a book called *Literature Considered in its Relation to Social Institutions* (1800), argued the relative merits of classic and modern literature, in other words, feudal and bourgeois literature, urging a complete break with the feudal ideals of the past and calling for the development of a new, specifically bourgeois ideology. In 1809 Prosper de Barante wrote *Tableau de Littérature Française au Dix-Huitième Siècle*, which started from the premise that the course of history was determined by inexorable laws and concluded that there was a necessary connection between literature and social conditions. It is not literature that governs society, he pointed out, but society that conditions literature.

The armed insurrection of the bourgeoisie against the feudal order, Napoleon’s conquests, the restoration and reaction under Metternich, the revolutions of 1830 and 1848, the organization of the proletariat, the rise of the working class party fighting for the stage to follow bourgeois rule—these mighty social conflicts made political questions of prime importance in the first half of the nineteenth century. Since poets do not live in a vacuum, they took sides in the social and political struggles of the period. When the conflict became acute, the problem arose: to what extent should a poet identify himself with a party?

Ferdinand Freiligrath, one of the most famous German poets of that period, wrote in 1841: “The poet bends his knee to Bonaparte, the hero; yet d’Enghien’s death-cry arouses his wrath; the poet stands upon a watch-tower higher than the battlements of a party.” Another famous German poet of that period, Georg Herwegh, then identified with the revolutionary party, replied to Freiligrath

with a poem entitled *Die Partie*: "Party! Party! How can anyone reject it—Party, the mother of all victory? How can a poet slander such a word which bears the seed of all that is noblest? Speak out frankly like a man: are you for or against us? Is your slogan SLAVERY—or FREEDOM? The gods themselves descended from Olympus and fought on the battlements of a Party!"

Herwegh's verses—written half a century before the birth of Bolshevism—indicate the distance which Romantic poetry had travelled since the days of Novalis. They indicate, too, the relation of poetry to politics. Life in the epoch of dying feudalism and bourgeois revolution—as today in the period of decaying capitalism and proletarian revolution—forced the poet out of his ivory opium den into the political arena. And then, as now, the poet who deluded himself that he was standing "upon a watch-tower higher than the battlements of a party," found that this noble gesture of neutrality led, in practice, straight to the camp of the reaction. Freiligrath, who was so proud of standing above the battle, accepted a pension from the King of Prussia. When Georg Herwegh taunted him with this *definite adherence to a party*, Freiligrath understood his error, threw up his pension, joined the political poets. Eventually he became a radical, even a revolutionary poet, and worked for a time with Karl Marx on the journal which the latter edited.

The question of poetry and party which the poets of the forties raised, persisted into the eighties when Georg Brandes rose to the top of bourgeois literary criticism. Brandes himself was a bourgeois radical; he extolled the idea of nationalism, of patriotism to the bourgeois fatherland; he defended not only the right but the *duty* of the poet to adhere to the bourgeois party and to celebrate it in verse. It is important to note that the ideologues of the liberal bourgeoisie extolled party poetry when it was in the interest of their party. Today they raise the slogan of art for art's sake, of non-party poetry, because their party is retrogressive, and the progressive party, the party of the proletariat, must of necessity inspire poetry attacking the established order which the "neutral" critics and authors support directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously. In its youth the bourgeoisie demanded the right of free speech against feudal institutions; today it denies that right to the proletariat which employs it against capitalist institutions. Similarly, bourgeois critics once demanded political poetry in the interests of the progressive bourgeoisie; today they repudiate political poetry because it is in the interests of the proletariat.

In its progressive, rising phase capitalism has various groups each struggling for domination through its own party. Today, the decline of capitalism, the rising power of the proletariat, the control

of one-sixth of the earth by the working class party, the spread of Communist ideas and organizations in all countries, has compelled the bourgeois groups at the top to unify their political forces. More and more the capitalist world tends to have only two major parties, the party of the capitalists and the party of the working class.

This major division was clear to the founders of the working class party. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels pointed out toward the end of the "roaring forties" that all bourgeois parties, however they may differ in their group interests, all represented the common interests of the capitalists, the maintenance of private property and the wage-system. The party of the proletariat, on the other hand, represents a class which, by its very status in contemporary society, is forced to fight not only for its own liberation but for the liberation of all who work with hand and brain, for the liberation of the mass of mankind. Its program aims at the destruction of an antiquated, oppressive social system, and the creation of a new social system corresponding to the realities of the contemporary world. Consequently the proletarian party's ideas embrace the whole of culture; they mark an advance in economics, politics, social and personal relations, philosophy, science, art, and literature.

Only a fool or a blind partisan of the bourgeoisie will claim that the advances made in these fields by the ideologists of the proletariat are dogma; only a fool or a blind partisan of the bourgeoisie will claim that communism pretends to have discovered the ultimate truths of life which will hold good for now and evermore. The teachings of communism correspond to the realities of the contemporary world. Apart from the fact that men make mistakes, the basis of communist teaching is that we live in a changing world; our truth consists in following those changes and adapting our concepts and actions to them. What is true of politics is true of poetry. The writer who comes to the movement expecting a magic formula which will solve all his problems is doomed to disappointment. The writer who holds aloof from the movement because he believes it is rigidly dogmatic is mistaken. On the contrary, it is the bourgeois writer today who is compelled to be dogmatic. Fighting on the side of a dying class he must shut his eyes to the changes around him, he must seek consolations in "eternal" values, he deludes himself that the world he loves will not essentially alter.

To followers of Karl Marx the connection between poetry, politics, and party was so obvious, that wherever the Socialist movement developed there grew up around it groups of Socialist writers and artists. Where the class struggle was latent, the Socialist movement was weak; where the movement was weak, the art it inspired was weak. Where the class struggle was sharp, the movement was

strong; where the movement was strong, the art it inspired was strong. America has been no exception to this general rule. In 1901, for example, a group of American Socialists in New York revived *The Comrade* to meet the needs of a growing movement. Its editorial board included John Spargo and George D. Herron; its contributors included Edward Carpenter, Walter Crane, Richard Le Gallienne, Maxim Gorki, Jack London, Upton Sinclair, Ernest Crosby and Edwin Markham. The magazine—a precursor of the *Masses*—stated its aims as follows:

“Our mission is . . . to present to our readers such *literary and artistic productions as reflect the soundness of the Socialist philosophy*. *The Comrade* will endeavor to mirror Socialist thought as it finds expression in Art and Literature. . . . In spite of the fact that Socialists have achieved distinction in all departments of Literature and Art, the great mass of the world’s disinherited . . . scarcely know of the great masterpieces of Painting, Song, and Story that have been created by men and women who have worked and are working for the great cause of Socialism.” As early as 1901, *The Comrade* used the phrase “proletarian poet” to describe working class writers of verse.

The notion that poetry was a mystic *ding-an-sich* divorced from the poet’s thought, will, and action was brought into the American Socialist movement on the eve of the Wilsonian era by bourgeois liberals. In the absence of a liberal party in this country, middle-class people disgusted with aspects of capitalism were forced into the revolutionary movement. In the crisis of the World War they suddenly discovered where they really belonged and crawled back to the bourgeois camp. One or two of them who wished to retain a foot in each camp, solved their problem for a time by supporting the proletariat in politics and the bourgeoisie in poetry. In the pages of the *Masses*, which carried out the aims of *The Comrade* on a higher level, these gentlemen developed a consoling dichotomy: politics dealt with the class struggle, with will and action; poetry dealt with “life,” which presumably had nothing to do with will, action, or the class struggle.

But in the pages of the *Masses*, Floyd Dell often approached art from a definite socialist viewpoint. By the summer of 1919 he was talking specifically of *proletarian* literature. In that year he published with enthusiastic comments a Soviet document outlining plans of the Commissariat of Education for the development of proletarian art in Russia. As any real Socialist would, he approved of the projects to democratize artistic appreciation, and to lay “the foundations of a genuine proletarian Socialist art.” Moreover, on his own account, out of his Socialist convictions, Dell realised the positive qualities

which animate proletarian art. He assumed correctly that "genuine proletarian Socialist art" not only stirred the worker's imagination, but also increased his knowledge and his courage and his desire to win the fight for a new society.

In the early part of 1921, another American writer raised the slogan of proletarian art. Out of his profound devotion to the working class and to the socialism in which he believed, Michael Gold presented the idea of an art voicing the revolution. "The old moods, the old poetry, fiction, painting, philosophies"—Gold observed—"were the creations of proud and baffled solitaires. . . . The art of the capitalist world isolated each artist as in a solitary cell, there to brood and suffer silently and go mad. We artists of the people will not face Life and Eternity alone. We will face it from among the people. . . . The Revolution, in its secular manifestations of strike, boycott, mass-meeting, imprisonment, sacrifice, agitation, martyrdom, organization, is thereby worthy of the religious devotion of the artist."

Gold's essay on proletarian art continued a tradition as old as the Socialist movement. Like Edwin Markham in 1901, like John Reed in 1916, he identified the future of art with the struggles of the working class for a new society. That tradition produced American novelists like Jack London and Upton Sinclair, American poets like Joe Hill, Ralph Chaplin, and Arturo Giovannitti.

In every epoch, proletarian art is identified with the political movement of the working class. During the first two decades of our century, American revolutionary writers were influenced by or directly affiliated with the Socialist Party or the I.W.W. In the third decade, they moved in the orbit of the Communist Party which emerged as the political vanguard of the workers. They were writers, and not politicians; and they developed on the periphery of the organized movement. But their outlook on life was molded by the October Revolution, and by the struggles of the workers in all countries for a similar social transformation. Around their own, independent magazine—the *New Masses*, founded in the spring of 1926—they created the foundations of an American art and literature corresponding to the class conflicts of our epoch.

During the twenties, the *New Masses* group was small. It was isolated both from the mass organizations of the workers and from the mass of the intellectuals, who, despite liberal reservations, were at this time attached to the existing social system. One or two novels, occasional stories and poems, were all that American left-wing writers were able to produce in the creative field. Proletarian literature was in its propaganda stage. The handful of revolutionary writers active in the Coolidge-Hoover era devoted themselves chiefly to criticism.

They analyzed contemporary American literature from a Marxist viewpoint and agitated for a conscious proletarian art. They exposed the decay of bourgeois culture before it became generally apparent, and indicated future literary trends.

In this period, the revolutionary writer suffered from a dualism which forced him to be sectarian. His social allegiance was to the proletariat; his literary peers were attached to the bourgeoisie. Hence he had no literary milieu; he worked in isolation. That was why he was prolific in critical writing, an intellectual process, and backward in creative writing, an emotional-imaginative process. He was able to tell what kind of literature the revolutionary movement needed; he was rarely able to produce it. The historic conditions necessary for such a literature did not appear until the economic crisis overwhelmed the country and altered the life of its people.

Most men of letters come from the middle classes, which have both the education and the incentive for literary production. These classes shared the pangs of the crisis together with the workers and farmers. The unemployment, poverty, and insecurity which spread over the country hit the educated classes like a hurricane; writers and artists, among others, were catapulted out of privileged positions; and many of those who remained economically secure experienced a revolution in ideas which reflected the profound changes around them. And at the very moment when our own country, to the surprise of all except the Marxists, was sliding into a social-economic abyss, the new social-economic system of the Russian workers and peasants showed striking gains.

The contrast between the two worlds loomed up above the wreckage of old illusions. Writers and artists, like other members of the educated classes, began to read revolutionary books, pamphlets, and newspapers; they came to workers' meetings; they discovered a new America, the land of the masses whose existence they had ignored. They saw those masses as the motive power of modern history, as the hope for a superior social system, for a revival and extension of culture.

At first the middle-class writer who "went left" was a divided being. As a citizen he supported Foster and Ford in the 1932 elections; he went to the aid of the striking miners in Kentucky and was beaten up by the police; he called for the liberation of Tom Mooney and the Scottsboro boys. As a writer he remained where he was. He continued to hope that the old themes of middle-class personal existence would serve as well as in the old days. But the crisis became deeper; it forced him further toward the viewpoint of the workers. There came a time when many writers who had all their lives ignored politics and economics suddenly abandoned the

poem, the novel, and the play and began to write solemn articles on unemployment, fiscal policy, and foreign trade. This politicalization of the man of letters was a step toward his transformation *as a poet*.

One more thing was needed to complete that transformation: direct contact with the proletarian audience. At the beginning of the crisis, the writers and artists who had grown up in the working class movement and kept alive the tradition of proletarian literature, founded literary groups like the John Reed Clubs, dramatic groups like the Theatre Union, film and photo leagues, music and dance organizations. The growth of the workers' movement was accompanied by a growth of proletarian literature. The workers and their middle-class allies, in their struggles against capitalist exploitation, against fascism, against the menace of a new world war, furnish the themes of the new literature; they also furnish the audience of the revolutionary theatre and magazines.

In the past five years, American proletarian literature has made striking progress. The arguments against it are dying down in the face of actual creative achievement. Life itself has settled the dispute for the most progressive minds of America. The collapse of the prevailing culture, the pressure of the economic crisis, the ruthless oppression of monopoly capital, the heroic struggle of the workers everywhere for the abolition of man's exploitation of man—this whole vast transformation of the world through the inexorable conflict of social classes has produced a new art in this country which has won the respect even of its enemies. Abstract debates as to whether or not the revolutionary movement of the proletariat could inspire a genuine art have given way to applause for the type of drama, fiction, poetry, and reportage included in this anthology.

Literature inspired by the revolutionary working class is, broadly speaking, no new thing in America. It would be possible to issue an anthology taking us back to the early works of Jack London and Upton Sinclair, to John Reed, Arturo Giovannitti, and Floyd Dell. The present generation of revolutionary writers is, however, by force of circumstances, even more acutely aware of the class struggle. It is the offspring of the World War, the October Revolution, the Five Year Plan, the social-economic crisis of capitalism everywhere, the growing world-wide movement of the workers for a classless communist society. These factors have given our generation its own specific features; it is a generation sobered and strengthened by the intense conflict between two civilizations, a conflict in which all are compelled to take sides.

Moreover, the literary movement represented by the writers in this volume has already had a profound influence on American

letters. The theatre, the novel, poetry, and criticism, have felt the impact of these invigorating ideas; even those writers who do not agree with us have abandoned the ivory tower and begun to grapple with basic American reality, with the social scene.

Revolutionary literature is no longer a sect but a leaven in American literature as a whole, as was evidenced by the American Writers' Congress last spring. There, for the first time in the history of our country, leading writers met to discuss specific craft problems, general literary questions, and means of safeguarding culture from the menace of fascism and war. A literary congress was possible in this country only when in the writer's mind the dichotomy between poetry and politics had vanished, and art and life were fused. Similarly, the publishing houses, theatres, and magazines, themselves not interested in revolutionary ideas, are turning more and more to the left-wing where writers find the basic ideas which give solidity and direction to their work.

This is a recent phenomenon in American culture, arising out of the historic conditions under which we live. It has therefore been considered advisable to limit this collection of American proletarian writings largely to the past five years, to the period of the economic crisis. In a sense, the contents of this volume are a continuation of an older literary tradition inspired by the organized movement of the American proletariat. In another sense, we have here the beginnings of an American literature, one which will grow in insight and power with the growth of the American working class now beginning to tread its historic path toward the new world.

JOSEPH FREEMAN



## NOTE

THE preparation of this anthology would have been impossible without the assistance of the contributors, as well as the editors of magazines and publishers of the volumes from which selections were made. In addition to the acknowledgments made in the text of this book, the editors wish to thank the following for permission to reprint: Anvil for *Daughter*; Dynamo for *The Buddies*; Hound & Horn for *Cow*; the American Mercury for *Scab!*, Blast for *A Class in English*; Partisan Review for *The Iron Throat*; the New Masses for *Man on a Road* and *Death of a Century*; Harcourt, Brace & Company for *Anacostia Flats*, from *In All Countries*; the New Masses for *The Grasshopper is Stirring*, *I Was Marching*, *Mushrooms in the Foundry*, *Taxi Strike*, *A Letter to President Roosevelt*; Covici-Friede for *Tragedy in the Bowl*, from *Redder Than the Rose*; Vanguard Publishers for *The Fall of Shangpo* from *Chinese Destinies*; Partisan Review for *Archibald MacLeish* and *Recent Problems of Revolutionary Literature*; the New Republic for *Eagle Orator*, *Wilder*, and *American Fiction*; the New Masses for *Max Eastman's Unnecessary Tears*, *Three Radical Poets*, and *The Wobbly in American Literature*; the Saturday Review of Literature for *Huneker and the Tribe*. The poetry in this volume is reprinted from the New Masses, New Republic, Partisan Review, Dynamo, Anvil, Left-Front; and from *120 Million* (International Publishers), *We Gather Strength* (Liberal Press), *Comrade-Mister* (Equinox Press), *Between the Plow Handles* (Highlander), *Salvation and Home to Utterly* (Hagglund), *Poems* (Dynamo Press), *Chelsea Rooming House* (Covici-Friede).

Some comment should be made on the manner in which this volume was prepared. It is not entirely a collective venture; a division of labor was made in gathering the contents. Examples of each literary form were selected by a single editor. However, the contents of the book as a whole have been discussed and approved by the entire editorial staff. As stated in the various prefaces, lack of space has made it impossible to print selections from all of the writers who should be represented, as well as more than one or two excerpts from the work of each writer who is included. The book has been restricted to its present size, in order to make possible the publication of a low-priced volume within the reach of workers and students.



## FICTION



## PREFACE

FIVE YEARS ago it would have been easy to select fiction for a proletarian anthology.

There was little of such work being produced. Upton Sinclair seemed to have acquired a monopoly in the field, with perhaps half a dozen other young producers struggling far in the rear.

Sinclair's pious and schematic tracts in story form, soft with the sentimentality of middle-class Christian Socialism, attained their world fame largely because of his monopoly. With the exception of Dos Passos, he was the only outstanding novelist in America who cared about the fate of the American masses. It was their lives and problems he described, and not the futile drunkards and Paris expatriates of Ernest Hemingway, the small town philistines and business clowns of Sinclair Lewis, the papier-mâché Don Juans of the sex-merchants like Cabell, the soulful divorcees of Ludwig Lewisohn.

A great theme confers some greatness on whoever touches the hem of its garment. Some of the proletarian greatness could not but have descended on Upton Sinclair. It was obvious to anyone, however, that Sinclair had little æsthetic feeling. He was essentially a pedant and preacher, and not a broad-gauged one at that, but one whose vision was no wider than that of a fervent hill-billy Baptist. He distorted life, as if falsification were needed to prove Socialism.

All the smug æsthetic critics of the time never failed to point this out to us. Upton Sinclair was no artist, they repeated as monotonously as idiots, and, therefore, there would never be such a thing as proletarian literature.

Time has answered them. What we are seeing today is the emergence of a galaxy of young novelists who happen to be artists, even by the admission of the enemy, and who have discovered what the bourgeois critics never saw in Sinclair—that art is more than a parlor game to amuse soulful parasites, that the American workers, farmers, and professionals are the true nation, and that the only major theme of our time is the fate of these people.

Each publishing season brings forth a new crop of talent and at last even the philistine critics admit that there is a proletarian literature of sorts. One of the first yields were the novels dealing with the Southern textile workers—*Strike!* by Mary Heaton Vorse, *Call Home the Heart*, by Fielding Burke, *Gathering Storm*, by Myra Page, and *To Make My Bread*, by Grace Lumpkin. A later crop produced four of the best proletarian novels—*Parched Earth*, by Arnold B. Armstrong, *The Shadow Before*, by William Rollins, *The Disin-*

herited, by Jack Conroy, and *The Land of Plenty*, by Robert Cantwell. Among the most recent are Edward Dahlberg's *Those Who Perish*, Waldo Frank's *Death and Birth of David Markand*, Edward Newhouse's *You Can't Sleep Here*, Nelson Algren's *Somebody in Boots*, James T. Farrell's *Judgment Day*, Josephine Herbst's *The Executioner Waits*, and many others.

And this is the situation that has made it almost impossible to gather a completely representative collection of this new literature. Five years ago the space given to fiction in this anthology would have been more than enough; today it is inadequate to give more than a few of the clearest *samples* of revolutionary fiction.

In addition, there is the proletarian short story. During the past year, magazines like *Blast* and *Anvil* have published several volumes of revolutionary fiction, while *Partisan Review*, *The Magazine*, *Windsor Quarterly*, *Left-Front*, the *Monthly Review*, and the weekly *New Masses*—and even *Story* and the *American Mercury*—have recently added to the stock of proletarian literature in this country.

Most of it has been produced by a number of young writers. From all sections of the country, new authors, whose contributions often represent their first printed work, have added to our growing literature. Among them should be mentioned Joseph Kalar, Meridel Le Sueur, J. S. Balch, Tillie Lerner, John C. Rogers, Nelson Algren, Fred R. Miller, Joseph Vogel, Peter Quince, Sanora Babb, Alexander Godin, Alfred Morang, Saul Levitt, Louis Lerman, and a score of others, who have contributed to the storehouse of the American proletarian short story—which first saw the light in some of Michael Gold's pieces in *120 Million*, in that revolutionary classic *Can You Hear Their Voices*, and in Ben Field's early stories of the red farm hand like *Cow*, which is reprinted in this collection.

In addition, many of the outstanding American prose artists whose first work was not of a revolutionary character, have turned to this type of fiction. While most of their efforts have been in the field of the novel, a few of them have written distinguished stories of workers' struggles, like Erskine Caldwell's *Daughter*, dealing with a Southern sharecropper, and Albert Halper's *Scab!* based on the New York taxi strike.

# DAUGHTER\*

ERSKINE CALDWELL

AT SUNRISE a Negro on his way to the big house to feed the mules had taken the word to Colonel Henry Maxwell, and Colonel Henry 'phoned the sheriff. The sheriff had hustled Jim into town and locked him up in the jail, and then he went home and ate breakfast.

Jim walked around the empty cell-room while he was buttoning his shirt, and after that he sat down on the bunk and tied his shoe laces. Everything that morning had taken place so quickly that he even had not had time to get a drink of water. He got up and went to the water bucket near the door, but the sheriff had forgotten to put water in it.

By that time there were several men standing in the jail yard. Jim went to the window and looked out when he heard them talking. Just then another automobile drove up, and six or seven men got out. Other men were coming towards the jail from both directions of the street.

"What was the trouble out at your place this morning, Jim?" somebody said.

Jim stuck his chin between the bars and looked at the faces in the crowd. He knew everyone there.

While he was trying to figure out how everybody in town had heard about his being there, somebody else spoke to him.

"It must have been an accident, wasn't it, Jim?"

A colored boy hauling a load of cotton to the gin drove up the street. When the wagon got in front of the jail, the boy whipped up the mules with the ends of the reins and made them trot.

"I hate to see the State have a grudge against you, Jim," somebody said.

The sheriff came down the street swinging a tin dinner pail in his hand. He pushed through the crowd, unlocked the door, and set the pail inside.

Several men came up behind the sheriff and looked over his shoulder into the jail.

"Here's your breakfast my wife fixed up for you, Jim. You'd better eat a little, Jim boy."

Jim looked at the pail, at the sheriff, at the open jail door, and Jim shook his head.

"I don't feel hungry," he said. "Daughter's been hungry, though—awfully hungry."

\* From *Kneel to the Rising Sun*. Copyright 1935. Viking Press.

The sheriff backed out the door, his hand going to the handle of his pistol. He backed out so quickly that he stepped on the toes of the men behind him.

"Now, don't get careless, Jim boy," he said. "Just sit and calm yourself."

He shut the door and locked it. After going a few steps towards the street he stopped and looked into the chamber of his pistol to make sure that it had been loaded.

The crowd outside the window pressed in closer. Some of the men rapped on the bars until Jim came and looked out. When he saw them, he stuck his chin between the iron and gripped his hands around it.

"How come it to happen, Jim?" somebody asked. "It must have been an accident, wasn't it?"

Jim's long thin face looked as if it would come through the bars. The sheriff came up to the window to see if everything was all right.

"Now, just take it easy, Jim boy," he said.

The man who had asked Jim to tell what had happened, elbowed the sheriff out of the way. The other men crowded closer.

"How come, Jim?" he said. "Was it an accident?"

"No," Jim said, his fingers twisting about the bars. "I picked up the shotgun and done it."

The sheriff pushed towards the window again.

"Go on, Jim, and tell us what it's all about."

Jim's face squeezed between the bars until it looked as though only his ears kept his head from coming through.

"Daughter said she was hungry, and I just couldn't stand it no longer. I just couldn't stand to hear her say it."

"Don't get all excited now, Jim boy," the sheriff said, pushing forward one moment and being elbowed away the next.

"She waked up in the middle of the night again and said she was hungry. I just couldn't stand to hear her say it."

Somebody pushed all the way through the crowd until he got to the window.

"Why, Jim, you could have come and asked me for something for her to eat, and you know I'd have given you all I got in the world."

The sheriff pushed forward once more.

"That wasn't the right thing to do," Jim said. "I've been working all year and I made enough for all of us to eat."

He stopped and looked down into the faces on the other side of the bars.

"I made enough working on shares, but they came and took it



all away from me. I couldn't go around begging after I'd made enough to keep us. They just came and took it all off. Then daughter woke up again this morning saying she was hungry, and I just couldn't stand it no longer."

"You'd better go and get on the bunk now, Jim boy," the sheriff said.

"It don't seem right that the little girl ought to be shot like that, Jim," somebody said.

"Daughter said she was hungry," Jim said. "She'd been saying that for all of the past month. Daughter'd wake up in the middle of the night and say it. I just couldn't stand it no longer."

"You ought to have sent her over to my house, Jim. Me and my wife could have fed her somehow. It don't look right to kill a little girl like her."

"I'd made enough for all of us," Jim said. "I just couldn't stand it no longer. Daughter'd been hungry all the past month."

"Take it easy, Jim boy," the sheriff said, trying to push forward.

The crowd swayed from one side to the other.

"And so you just picked up the gun this morning and shot her?" somebody said.

"When she woke up again this morning saying she was hungry, I just couldn't stand it."

The crowd pushed closer. Men were coming towards the jail from all directions, and those who were then arriving pushed forward to hear what Jim had to say.

"The State has got a grudge against you now, Jim," somebody said; "but somehow it don't seem right."

"I can't help it," Jim said. "Daughter woke up again this morning that way."

The jail yard, the street, and the vacant lot on the other side was filled with men and boys. All of them were pushing forward to hear Jim. Word had spread all over town by that time that Jim Carlisle had shot and killed his eight-year-old daughter, Clara.

"Who does Jim share-crop for?" somebody asked.

"Colonel Henry Maxwell," a man in the crowd said. "Colonel Henry has had Jim out there about nine or ten years."

"Henry Maxwell didn't have no business coming and taking all the shares. He's got plenty of his own. It ain't right for Henry Maxwell to come and take Jim's, too."

The sheriff was pushing forward once more.

"The State's got a grudge against Jim now," somebody said. "Somehow it don't seem right, though."

The sheriff pushed his shoulder between the crowd of men and worked his way in closer.

A man shoved the sheriff away.

"Why did Henry Maxwell come and take your share of the crop, Jim?"

"He said I owed it to him because one of his mules died a month ago."

The sheriff got in front of the barred window.

"You ought to go to the bunk now and rest some, Jim boy," he said. "Take off your shoes and stretch out, Jim boy."

He was elbowed out of the way.

"You didn't kill the mule, did you, Jim?"

"The mule dropped dead in the barn," Jim said. "I wasn't nowhere around. It just dropped dead."

The crowd was pushing harder. The men in front were jammed against the jail, and the men behind were trying to get within earshot. Those in the middle were squeezed against each other so tightly they could not move in any direction. Everyone was talking louder.

Jim's face pressed between the bars and his fingers gripped the iron until the knuckles were white.

The milling crowd was moving across the street to the vacant lot. Somebody was shouting. He climbed up on an automobile and began swearing at the top of his lungs.

A man in the middle of the crowd pushed his way out and went to his automobile. He got in and drove off alone.

Jim stood holding to the bars and looking through the window. The sheriff had his back to the crowd, and he said something to Jim. Jim did not hear what he said.

A man on his way to the gin with a load of cotton stopped to find out what the trouble was. He looked at the crowd in the vacant lot for a moment, and then he turned and looked at Jim behind the bars. The shouting across the street was growing louder.

"What's the trouble, Jim?"

Somebody on the other side of the street came to the wagon. He put his foot on a spoke in the wagon wheel and looked up at the man on the cotton while he talked.

"Daughter woke up this morning again saying she was hungry," Jim said.

The sheriff was the only person who heard him.

The man on the load of cotton jumped to the ground, tied the reins to the wagon wheel, and pushed through the crowd to the car where all the swearing was being done. After listening for awhile, he came back to the street, called a Negro who was standing with the other colored men on the corner, and handed him the reins. The Negro drove off with the cotton towards the gin, and the man went back into the crowd.

Just then the man who had driven off alone in his car came back. He sat for a moment under the steering wheel, and then he opened the door and jumped to the ground. He opened the rear door and took out a crowbar as long as he was tall.

"Pry that jail door open and let Jim out," somebody said. "It ain't right for him to be in there."

The crowd in the vacant lot was moving again. The man who had been standing on top of the automobile jumped to the ground, and the men moved towards the street in the direction of the jail.

The first man to reach it jerked the six-foot crowbar out of the soft earth where it had been jabbed.

The sheriff backed off.

"Now, take it easy, Jim boy," he said.

He turned and started walking rapidly up the street towards his house.

## HILLS AROUND CENTRALIA

ROBERT CANTWELL

*The whole community was in a frenzy of fear. Travelers were wounded for not halting immediately on command from the searchers. One posseman was shot and killed by his companions. . . . Throughout the state over a thousand men were arrested without warrants in the first days after the tragedy in an effort to stifle publicity and prevent an adequate defense.*

—*Was it Murder? The Truth about Centralia*

AS SOON as they marched into school Kelly knew that something serious had happened, and for the next four days, until they met the wobblies in the woods, until they burnt the handbills and ran for their lives through the rain, he lived with a sense of danger and excitement confusing him and speeding up his life. Things happened, suddenly and unexpectedly, and everything was changed. The people became different and the town and the woods were strange. He waited for the wobblies to shoot, but they only passed out handbills. He hunted for a wobbly army but there was only a crazy old man and a logger who was running away. And on the first morning, as soon as they came into school and Miss Greer forgot to call the roll, he knew it was serious. The kids knew it. They began to whisper; even the girls whispered. Paul Collins punched him between the shoulder-blades and said,

"Progermans again." Before he could ask Paul how he knew, the assembly bell rang, loud and startling.

Miss Greer said *Rise. Stand. March.* Ever since the War they had marched in and out of class. The big phonograph played The Stars and Stripes Forever March. As Kelly turned into the assembly hall, marking time as the line swung around, he could see the little kids at their side of the hall marking time irregularly, and as the music grew louder and the classes surged up the aisles together excitement grew in him and he trembled. He marked time beside his place; the Stars and Stripes Forever played its way through; the kids stamped heavily on the oiled floor; the windows shook. Paul Collins shouted to him, "Progermans again! What did I tell you?" On the platform the principal lifted his arm slowly, bringing it down as a signal to stop marking time just as the music stopped.

Then the excitement began and did not let up. . . . The principal faced the flag on the wall and extended his arm toward it. His head was thrown back proudly. Below the platform, the teachers raised their arms toward the flag. For a long time, until the room became still, they did not stir. In the silence Kelly could hear the steady drumming of the sawmill and sometimes the shrill haulback whistle from the logging engines in the woods. Around him the hands pointed toward the flag pinned lifelessly to the wall and the stars and stripes forever marching repeated in his memory, repeated until shivers swept up and down his spine, and the grave words, obediently murmured, swelled like the roll of drums in a march. *I pledge allegiance to my flag*, the teachers said, and the children murmured in response, *I pledge allegiance to my flag.*

*And to the Republic for which it stands.*

And to the Republic for which it stands.

The words grew louder and more assured and more moving. One nation. *One nation!* he cried, holding his arm higher, *Indivisible!* With Liberty—with Liberty!—and Justice—and Justice!

For all.

They sang. Now they knew it was serious. The teachers were pale. Awed and alarmed, the children found the singing a relief. When they came to the high place their voices swelled free: *Long may thy land be bright, with freedom's holy light.* At the next song the strange and half-painful excitement that held Kelly grew stronger, lifting him with a strong, exultant pride. America! America! God rest His grace on thee! And crown thy good. With brotherhood. From sea to shining sea. From the shining seas and from the alabaster cities the brave words rose, and when the song ended a vision of the great rich fields and forests lived and glowed in his mind. Alabaster, alabaster, he thought, treasuring the strange rare word, a church word that you

could not use, putting it with the other deep words, freedom and majesty and liberty, in the hoard of precious words that could only be sung.

They sat down, and the principal faced them gravely. "Boys and girls," he said, "I do not know how to begin telling you of the terrible thing that I must tell you. A terrible thing has happened, something almost more terrible than the War—I know you will understand how terrible this crime is and when you leave here today and go to your homes—for we are not going to have school today—I know you will go quietly and not shout or play on the schoolground. For this is not a holiday for you. I want you to remember—I hope that you will never forget—that we are closing our school to-day in memory of four brave men who have died, who were killed, defending their country and all that it means. These four men are dead, and we can honor them in the only way that we can: by leaving the schoolground quietly."

He looked out over the assembly. His voice was grave and shaken. "I do not know how to tell you," he said again. "These four men did not die fighting an enemy from some foreign country. They were shot down by traitors in their own country. . . . In Centralia yesterday they were marching in a parade to celebrate the return to peace to the world. Remember that. They were not marching toward enemy trenches where they knew they faced death. No. They were not marching into battle. They were marching just as you children marched into this assembly, peacefully, to do honor to brave men, their comrades in arms, who had died in the War. At their head was a young captain whose name you all know, a very brave and very young man who had fought bravely in Siberia and faced death a thousand times without fear. His name was Warren Grimm." He paused, and the children stirred. "Suddenly, as the parade passed a radical hall, someone shot down. Warren Grimm and three others were killed."

He stopped again. The strained look came back on his features. He started to speak and stopped abruptly, moving across the platform as he sought for the right words. There was a faint rustling from the crowded hall. Kelly drew a deep breath, awed and alarmed because the principal was no longer like someone he knew, no longer the old man who taught civics and snoopied through the halls, but changed and gray and subdued—*What did I tell you?* Paul whispered, and Kelly thought it was wrong to whisper in a moment so solemn.

The principal said slowly, "I do not know what you children have heard of an organization that is called the Industrial Workers of the World, the I.W.W.—it may even be that some of your fathers are in sympathy with this organization—I do not know, and it is not my place to say. But I do know that the members of this organization, no

matter what they claim to believe, and how many innocent workmen they deceive, have been guilty of a terrible crime. I know that they killed four young soldiers who had returned safely from the terrible carnage of War. And I am sure that if those of your parents who are in sympathy with this organization could only know the truth about it, could glimpse the suffering and distress and agony that this organization has caused, and see the anguish of the parents of these poor murdered boys—I know then they would have nothing more to do with it, I know they would revile and curse whoever came to them preaching its traitorous unamerican doctrines.”

His voice became angrily accusing. Kelly watched him with an absorbed oppression and fear. He thought the principal looked at him when he said *your fathers*. He wondered if the principal knew his father had said: This is a rich man's war. “Murderers!” the principal cried. “Do you know what that means? Can you think of what it means to lie in ambush and hide and wait with murder and envy in your heart and then shoot to kill—to kill innocent, unsuspecting, men? If you have been to Centralia you will understand how easily anyone with murder in his heart could hide on Seminary Hill and in the buildings on Main Street and shoot down into a crowd and escape safely. That is what the murderers who killed Warren Grimm and Dale Hubbard have done. Warren Grimm was shot in the abdomen and died in terrible agony. Dale Hubbard was killed by a fiend who wanted one last victim before he was captured—by Wesley Everest, who has paid for his crime with his life. I do not want you to think of these murdered men as mere names that mean nothing to you. You must think of them as someone you know and love—as young Americans, like your own brothers, as young men only a few years older than you are, with mothers and fathers who are grieving for them now, just as your own parents would grieve for you if you were killed, as young men with arms and hands and clear bright eyes and ready smiles, fearless and friendly, shot down from behind, crying out in terrible agony as they died. Remember them! Remember, when you leave here today, that we have closed the school in memory of four brave Americans who died for their country—who died for you—as truly as ever four men died on the field of battle. I know I can trust you to remember and go quietly and not shout on the schoolground. I want you to rise now—quietly—and stand for a full minute in silent prayer while I repeat the names of these four men who died that America might live.”

They rose quietly. In a deep voice he read the names.

“Captain Warren Grimm.”

They bowed their heads.

“Dale Hubbard,  
Ben Cassagrande,

Alfred McAlfresh,

we pledge ourselves never to forget that you have died for us."

Never to forget! They left the building quietly. But the excitement and the exaltation and the sense of pain and grief did not go away, and by nightfall so much had happened that Kelly thought life would never get back to normal. He went with Paul Collins to look at the guns that Paul's father had stored in his closet; he saw the new watchmen standing around the mill gate and at the edge of the town. Then he delivered his papers and the boy scouts collected the progerman handbills that appeared, mysteriously, in the streets; there was a fight and a logger was driven out of town. Then his father made him keep off the streets and in the morning all the handbills they had burned were back on the streets again and they burned them again. Then they went into the hills to look for the wobblies and there was only the logger who was sick and an old man whose face was bruised. But mostly there was a sense that the woods were no longer safe, and nobody knew what was going to happen.

When they left school Paul told him: the wobblies and progermans were going to be killed. Paul's father was the town superintendent, and he knew. There was a wobbly army in the hills and the wobblies wanted to close down all the camps and mills. Paul's father had a box of army rifles in his closet, and a bullet from an army rifle would go lengthwise through a railroad tie. The wobblies who escaped from Centralia were trying to get to the logging camps in the mountains, and the woods were full of them. Kelly heard all this and looked toward the woods that had never seemed filled with menace before. The day was cloudy. At the base of the logged-off hill the sawmill drummed steadily; the morning logging train had come in from camp and the logs were being dumped into the pond. He could hear the whistle signals from the logging engines in the woods and the occasional shrill whistles from the mill as the sawyers signaled for the millwrights when something went wrong. Between the mill and the school the rows of company houses, all alike, ended in the cleared space before the company store and the church and the pool hall, where the stage from Centralia turned around. Beyond the town the fringe of big trees, left as a break for the winds that swept up the valley, stretched to the river; and beyond the river the green foothills of the Cascades repeated in ranges that grew higher and higher until they ended in the white wall of the peaks. Snow had already fallen on the higher ranges.

But now it was different. Deep in the shadows, beneath the big trees, safe in the underbrush, the treacherous unamericans moved without sound. He had heard people say, "The woods are full of wobblies." Before it had only meant that the loggers in the far camps,

always going on strike, were slackers and progerman troublemakers during the War. Now the green woods seemed crowded. The wobblies were strong in the camps, but they could not come into Paradise because Mr. Collins and all the new watchmen and the members of the Paradise Lumber Company Baseball Club threatened to horsewhip them and shoot them on sight and tar and feather them and run them out of town if they so much as shot off their mouths there. Now they were in the woods. The woods were alive with them. They slipped with unamerican stealth through the heavy salal bushes and crowded with progerman silence through the thickets of devils clubs. All day long Kelly looked at the green wall of timber and thought of the gray crowd of murderers who had buried themselves within it.

The evening stage came and he delivered his papers. There were twenty-five extra copies of the Tacoma Tribune and the Seattle Star, but no copies of the Union Record. He sold all the extra copies. The old logger who always bought the Union Record asked him, "Why don't you sell a workingman's paper?" and Kelly replied proudly, "I peddle American papers." The old logger looked at him in disgust and said, "You peddle —, you mean." The papers said that one of the wobblies, Wesley Everest, had already been lynched. There were eight more in jail. They were all going to be killed. It served them right. The papers said that Centralia was tense and the nearby communities were tense and new outbreaks were feared. They said that Governor Hart stood ready. In every paper Governor Hart stood ready, and Kelly wondered what a governor did when he just stood ready all the time.

But at night, during the movie, the trouble started again. The accident siren blew at the mill. The men ran out of the show. A car had driven through town, and in the dim light handbills lay scattered like leaves over the wooden sidewalks and in the yards of the houses. The watchmen at the no trespassing sign had fired at the car as it passed. The crowds formed in front of the movie and the people began to talk. Shadowed under the dim street light, subdued and excited, the men handed the leaflets around. Kelly read one of them hurriedly: *Governor Hart, the willing tool of the millowners*, he read. Then in big letters: *Was it Murder? The Truth About Centralia*. They were progerman handbills, and he knew it was wrong to read them. *Wesley Everest, lynched and mutilated for defending a workingclass hall. . . Workers, defend the victims of the Centralia frameup*.

The boy scouts began gathering up the handbills and burning them. The scoutmaster pulled Kelly's handbill away and tossed it on the fire. "This way, Kelly," he said sharply. He pulled Kelly over to where the other members of the Black Eagle Patrol were lined up in military formation. Kelly did not like the scoutmaster. His name was



Froggy Anderson, and he was the manual training teacher at school and a college graduate, but the kids made fun of him because he talked too much. Whenever they went on a hike Froggy Anderson would explain about the different trees and their leaves and markings, and explain that there were male and female trees just as there were male and female people. The scouts said that whenever Froggy Anderson sneaked out in the woods he sidled up on a good-looking female fir tree. He always made the little kids sit on his lap whenever he told stories around the camp fire or told scout lore after the meetings.

Now he was abrupt and determined. "All right, fellows," he said. "Pick up all the handbills you can get and bring them to me. Don't stop to argue, just get as many as you can. We'll give credits to the patrol that gets the most."

They ran through the streets until almost midnight, gathering the handbills and bringing them to the fire. Paul Collins said that his father was going to buy them all new uniforms for burning the handbills.

Sometime in the night there was a fight in the bunkhouse, and a logger was run out of town by the watchmen. A crowd gathered in the road, and someone tried to make a speech, but the engineer brought the shay out of the roundhouse and tied the whistlecord down so no one could hear what the man was saying. Kelly was still gathering the handbills when his father found him. His father had been looking for him ever since the siren blew. He made him drop the handbills and get home. In the house he shook Kelly and said in a voice that trembled with anger, "You stay out of this, son. Do you understand me? If I catch you doing anything like this again I'll beat you within an inch of your life." Kelly went to bed, half-sick with excitement and shame, while the other kids were still running in the streets and the people were still talking on the corners, his mind whirling with thoughts of the wobblers in the woods, the alabaster cities gleaming and free, and the soldiers lying dead in the streets like the four loggers who had been killed when the headrig came down, and whose bodies had been brought into town, stretched out on the floor of the freight depot until the hearsé came to take them away.

In the morning the handbills were there again, and the scouts were excused from school to gather them up. In the night someone had painted on the watertower: *Defend the Centralia boys*. There were more watchmen around the mill and a crowd of men with Mr. Collins' guns along the road. The handbills were the same as those they had burned before, but now there were more of them and it was tiresome to collect them again and burn them again after they had already burned them once. . . . At noon they hiked into the company

timber on the east side of Paradise, and Kelly and Paul Collins found the two wobblies who had escaped.

Froggy Anderson went with them. Ordinarily they made fun of him on a hike and ran on ahead, but now he was serious and military and they were awed by the way he took command. The rain began. They crossed the Newakiaum and climbed into the foothills, following the mill creek, separating into pairs at the first ridge where a tall snag made a landmark they could see for miles. Kelly and Paul went up the creek while the others spread fanwise over the hills. In the deep woods, shadowed and noisy with rain, they hurried to cover their three miles and get back before dark. They had not gone far before they met the wobblies. It happened like this: Paul wanted to go back; he was tired and his feet were wet and he thought they had gone far enough. Kelly wanted to hurry because he had to get back to town by the time the evening papers came in, but he thought it would be disobeying the scout law if they said they had gone three miles when they had only gone two. They were arguing as they came to a narrow place along the creek, and Kelly called back, "What the heck. You baby," just as he jumped from a half-sunken log in the creek to the bank, just as he looked up and in a spasm of fear saw someone, a logger, a wobbly, a ghost, hiding in the woods right beside him.

Bert and the old soapboxer had left Centralia on the night that Wesley was killed. They headed toward Klaber and Cougar Flat, but when they found the farmers frightened and unfriendly they circled back toward the foothills to try to reach the distant camps where the wobblies were strong. They had no food. The old man had been badly beaten on the last night in town, and after the first day he began agitating to the stumps and the trees. On the second he could only keep going for a few minutes at a time. On the second day Bert began to fear something else—a shape, a shadow, that moved through the woods ahead of them. Then on the third day he saw him clearly—a deputy gliding through the woods as swiftly and silently as a trout slides between the branches of a sunken tree.

Bert could see him clearly, not as a shadow, not as a movement, but as a man—a man dressed in a brown waterproof logger's jacket, his face pale and smiling, a gun swinging idly by his side, hatless and yet dry in the drenched woods, a large man and yet so light on his feet that he seemed to dance soundlessly over the tender brush. Bert saw him clearly and lifted his rifle. The deputy disappeared. Bert could see the tree where he had been standing. Beside it the brush swayed and dipped in the rain. Bert swung his rifle to where the man might have hidden, where he might reappear, but there was no other

movement and no sound but the infinite placeless rustle of the rain in the trees, a faint hissing like the sounds of insects on a summer night.

Fear overwhelmed him. He threw himself down and crawled backwards—awkwardly, spasmodically—into the brush that he had left. He could feel the sweat swelling on his flesh inside his wet clothing. He waited for some shot, some sound or sign of life; there was no place where all his body could be covered by the brush. Behind him he heard the soapboxer breaking his way loudly and fearlessly, heard him cough as he pushed against the clogged leafy underbrush. Then the old man cried out to the rain: *Beware, beware! Oh, you men who work in these camps and these little sawmill towns. Who are your friends? Are they your friends, the bosses and the company rats? Have they risked jail for you? Did they fight the massacre of war?*

Nothing answered him.

In scorn the old man cried: The Loyal Legion! Yes, the Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen! With a general for your union secretary! And a millowner for your organizer! And a thief for your treasurer! And the cops for your sergeant of arms! The Loyal Legion!

Bert crawled back toward him. He called back, "Shut up," but the old man could not hear.

He had seen nothing. His eyes had gone back on him. Nothing had moved. Yes, the old man said. The Four L is a safe union and a patriotic union and a union they will let you join. And I say there never was a union that fought for the workingman that the bosses did not hate and fight and try to destroy. And they cannot destroy.

Bert could hear the old man cough, and hear the crackling of the brush stop while the old man gagged and caught his breath.

The soapboxer was leaning against a tree, breathing hard because he had been coughing, looking up out of eyes that were sunken and dim, wearied now but normal, as if the coughing and the pain had brought him back to earth. "Stick close to me," Bert said. "I thought I saw somebody." He tried to whisper but his voice was hoarse and loud. The old man nodded. "Get down," Bert said. The old man got down obediently. The heavier drops from the leaves sprinkled over him as he sank into the brush. They waited. Bert could hear the old man breathe and hear the rustle of his water-repellent clothing when he moved. Bert raised himself slowly to where he could look out over the hillside and the patch of shadowed brush he had left. He could see the drenched leaves, the dark glistening trunks of the fir and spruce. Nothing moved.

Beyond the hill daylight showed between the trees. They were near a town, or there was a clearing or a logged-off stretch somewhere ahead. Sometimes he thought he could hear the faint deceptive hum of a mill, indistinguishable from the sound of the rain. The old man lay stretched out on the muddy soil, face down, his forehead resting on his arm. The soles of his loggers were torn and the calks stripped out and twisted. His pants and soaked heavy mackinaw were mud colored; a little pool of muddy water formed where a tiny downhill stream washed against his body. While he watched the old man's legs stiffened spasmodically, like those of a dog that sleeps and dreams that it is running.

Bert pulled at his shoulder. "Come on, Pop," he said. "We better get on." In a few moments the old man got to his feet, staggering, dazed and drunken with fatigue. Against his gray face the bruised and infected places were dark and enlarged. He forced himself into a kind of drugged alertness and Bert said silently, game old bastard, wondering how many miles the old man was good for. The old man asked, "Where are we?"

"We're in Paradise Lumber Company timber. There was a marker back there. Near Paradise or one of the Paradise Company towns. Paradise, I think."

The soapboxer swayed on his feet. "It's full of corruption," he said.

"We'll have to go in."

The old man was starting again. His eyes glazed and he began talking loudly. "Corruption," he said again. "God forsaken company town. God forsaken highball outfit." Then he began to cough and Bert quieted him.

The old man tried to whisper, "I know that town. Double rent for them leaky houses. I worked there. God forsaken place."

"I know," Bert said. "Take it easy."

"Company money," the old man said. "Jesus Christ. That God damn brass money you had to spend at their store."

Bert nodded. "We'll have to try it," he said.

The old man looked at him, straining to keep his mind clear and on the subject while his body sagged in exhaustion. "You go down there they'll kill you," he said.

"Come on."

"They'll kill you."

Bert asked, "You want to drown? You want to starve to death?"

There was a long silence. The old man strained to think clearly and not give up or forget again. "They'll kill you," he said.

"You want to stay here and drown?"

The old man pulled his drenched mackinaw around his shoulders.

"They won't only kill you," he said. "They'll cut you up. What did they do to Wesley? You want your balls cut off?"

Bert turned away from him and looked out over the brush. Hills and trees swayed as his eyes darkened. "Wesley showed them how," the old man said. "Now they know what to do. And even if nothing had happened they'd run you out of town."

That was true. And it must be worse now. Or better. What would it take to awaken the people and make them see? But the mills were still running and the men had not laid down their tools.

The old man said, "They're wiping us out, Bert. This is their way. They whip up the people and get them confused. This is their way."

He knew it was true. But he said stubbornly, "There must be somebody in them little towns. And we can't make it to camp."

"How can you find them?"

"I'll find somebody. Somebody will be friendly."

The old man said, "The people don't know, Bert. How can they know? Who will tell them? They're slow, slow, and there's a lot of cattle there. They'll kill you. They won't ask who you are. They won't give you a chance to get away."

"You want to starve? You want to wait here and starve?"

The old man's face twisted; the strength seemed to go out of him again. After a long time he said slowly, "They turn on the screws and sooner or later somebody is bound to shoot back. Maybe in Centralia or Everett or Butte—it don't make any difference because it gives them their excuse and they turn the people against us. And they are wiping us out and they won't stop now. This is their way. This is their chance. This is what they wanted."

Bert said, "They can't make these company towns without making the people friendly. They can't make them live in them houses without making them friendly. They can't make them pay double for everything without making them friendly. It don't make any difference how many guards they put around the people will be friendly. They won't do anything or they'll be friendly."

"Friendly," the old man said. "Friendly to Warren Grimm." His voice cracked; the speeches started again. He wavered and spread his arms in wide soapbox gestures as he called out to the brush. "Poor misguided bastards! Slaves in mind and body!"

Bert turned away and started down the hill, closing his ears to the anguished words and breaking through the brush without caution. Who are your friends? Are they your friends, the bosses and the company rats, you buckers and fallers, choker setters and firemen, you loaders and whistlepunks? Are they your friends, you doggers and edgermen, you off-bearers and boom-men and pilers in the rain?

Your friends? Do they work as you do? Share the same risks? Dodge under the firs when the widow-makers come down and the snags fall and the butt logs tumble from the cold deck? What have you in common with them? When the price of spruce jumped from twenty to a hundred a thousand, did the raise go to you? Did your wages go up except where we led you and forced them up? Your friends? Who are your friends? Are they your friends, the men who hate us and exploit you?

He broke away from the voice and the old man's warning. And if the old man was right? If in the little towns the workers were behind the Legion and the deputies, behind Hubbard and Warren Grimm, unstirred and inert and glad that Wesley was dead? Who are your friends? the old man asked, and he cried out in reply, Who are ours? He felt himself tear frantically at the brush because he could not stand the thoughts that flooded him when he stopped. At the base of the hill the underbrush was heavier. The tangle of salal and devils club reached to his shoulders. There was a creek at the base of the hill, swollen over its banks. The dark soil, stained with moss and decayed wood, was cut with hundreds of day-old streams. There was no cleared ground. He pushed into the tangle of brush, too stiff and cold to search for a way through it, and the thought of warmth, even the warmth of jail, pulled at him like the memory of some happy time before his life had darkened and his friends had been killed. Sometimes when he strained at the brush a red haze over his eyes blinded him, and sometimes he thought he could hear the blurred hum of a mill over the rain and the muffled sound of the stream, but he could no longer trust his eyes or his ears or his body, and he did not know if what he heard was a mill whistle in the distance or only a louder singing in his ears.

Then at a turn in the stream he saw the deputy again. This time there was no mistake. He stood in a clump of alders on the bank, pale and smiling, hatless, dry in the drenched woods, the gun still idly swinging by his side—Bert lifted his rifle and fired. His hands were stiff and he felt a moment's surprise that the trigger was so heavy. The sound awakened him. The man disappeared. The sound rolled louder through the hills, amplifying with each echo until the trees were shaken with its thunder. He stared at the place where the deputy had been and there was no one there, only a torn place on the tree where his bullet had gone through. An alder waved jerkily as the overflowing stream washed around its roots.

The soapboxer called, "What is it?" He hurried through the brush toward Bert, anxious, awake, calling to him.

Bert said dully, "I thought I saw something."

The sound hovered, holding them paralyzed. Then they ran

downstream, spending their hour of panic-driven strength, fear clearing their minds and awakening them, driving them from the doomed spot where the echoes still roared and repeated like a great bell calling their enemies. The old man collapsed and crawled into the underbrush, where he stretched out choking and coughing, his feet digging into the mud each time a spasm of coughing shook him. Bert sat down with his rifle between his knees, holding the barrel with both hands and resting his head in his arms. He did not know how long he rested. The woods were darker when he looked up again.

He could see a short way down the stream. Again in the rainy shadow someone moved behind the screen of brush. He lifted the rifle again. Two boys came up the stream. He could see them clearly. The one in front pushed on busily, hoisting himself over the fallen snags and stepping far out, sure of himself, on the tree trunks that reached over the water. He was younger, tow-headed, blank-faced, dressed in torn blue overalls and the coat of some uniform—the coat was too large for him and the shoulders sloped down on his arms. Army leggings were wrapped unevenly over the legs of his overalls. Behind him the second boy moved more slowly, with dainty awkwardness. He was taller, wearing a long raincoat, and his features, dark and thin and almost girlish, twisted with distaste when he put his hand on the wet surface of a log to hoist himself over it. The younger boy called out. He jumped from a half sunken log to the bank where Bert was standing, landing hard with a grunt of satisfaction just as he saw Bert and stiffened with fear. His face went gaping and senseless. The second boy looked up, shuddered and half-bent, as if waiting to be struck.

Bert stepped between them. He looked down the stream to see if they were being followed. From the brush the old man asked, "What's the matter?"

"Just a couple kids."

No one followed them. The old man climbed the bank; the boys stared at him and then looked into the woods to see if more were coming. The older boy made an incomplete, convulsive movement, as if he started to run and found his feet caught firmly in the mud. Bert held him. "Where do you think you're going?" The boy could not answer. His face was strained into an idiot expressionlessness. Bert shook him a little. "What are you doing up here?"

The boy gasped, "Let go. We're on a hike."

The younger boy gawked, startled but less afraid, waiting for something to happen. "We're boy scouts," he said. "Boy scouts."

Bert said, "Have you got anything to eat?"

"No."

"Nothing," Bert said. "No sandwiches."

The boy drew a deep breath and shook his head.

"Where you from?"

"Paradise."

"Where's that?"

The boy nodded backwards. "Five-six miles," he said.

"What are you doing up here?"

He hesitated. Bert could see the boy's fear give way a little, trying to think of what he should say. He said, boldly and hopefully, "We're looking for the wobblies." He stared at their faces to see what effect it had.

The old man sat down on a log and began to cough, bending over and gagging. When he straightened up he said, "That's a pneumonia cough, Bert."

Bert released the older boy. He said incredulously, "They've got the kids after us." He heard the old man clear his throat and saw the boys shuffle uncertainly. The little kids, he thought dully. Even the little boys. They were staring at the old man, at the bruised and infected places on his face. "Sending the little kids after us," Bert said. "Look."

The old man said, "They're against us. I said they'd be against us."

"Little kids," Bert said dully. "Sending the little kids out."

"I said they'd be against us. They'll kill you down there. Time and again I said." Yes, Bert thought, the little kids. He walked nervously to the younger boy.

"Who else is with you, boy? How many more? How many men?"

The boy said, "Nobody." Bert's hand tightened, black and blue, on his arm.

"You want me to throw you in the crick?"

"Nobody! Just the boy scouts! Just the troop!"

"Who put you up to it?"

"Nobody! Just Froggy Anderson."

"Who's he?"

"The scoutmaster."

"Where is he?"

"I don't know. Back at camp, I guess."

Bert said, "I ought to throw you in the crick." The older boy began to cry. Bert stood close to the boys so they would not run, listening to the rain draining through the trees and straining for some other sound. Suppose I'd shot, he thought. He felt tired and helpless, defeated more than he had been by the rain and his weariness and his hunger, more than he had been when he shot blindly into the woods. Let them come, his mind said. All the little kids. All the little



kids and all the cripples and all the old women and the old men, send them out in the woods and let them hunt for us. In a dull voice the old man asked, Where is justice for the workingman? and Bert thought: the people are against us. I thought they would be friendly and here the little kids, the little kids.

The little kids, he thought, the little devils scared and cold. The older boy well-dressed and crying, pale as a girl; the little kid gawking with his mouth open while the soapboxer started to rave. The people must be crazy, he thought, and the old soapboxer mumbled, Whose justice? Justice for the millowners, yes. Justice for the Grimms and the Hubbards and for Governor Hart, their willing tool. Why? Because the wobblies stand for the common worker. Fight for the common worker. Die for the common worker. "Shut up!" Bert cried. "How can I think?"

"Little kids," the old man apologized. "They don't even know why they're here." He put his hand tenderly on the sore places on his face. "Their minds are poisoned," he said painfully. "How can they know? That hurts me, Bert." He began to cough again. "I'll say this," he said. "I don't think much of the mother . . . You boys! Why ain't you in school?"

"They let school out."

They let school out, Bert thought. They made it a holiday. You can go home now, Wesley Everest is dead. The schoolbells ringing. Yes, and all over the state and all over the country the kids would get a holiday and run out in the schoolyards hollering and yelling while his body floated in the Chehalis and the dogs ran loose in the streets. You can go home now, he thought. The wobblies are dead.

The trees drained steadily. The older boy had stopped crying; a little life had come back to him. The old man moved over near them, leaning against a snag as he questioned them, "What's your name, son?"

The younger one said, "Kelly Hanrahan."

"What's yours?"

The boy murmured inaudibly. "You better let us alone," he said. "My father." He looked at his feet and his voice trailed off into silence.

"What's your name?"

"Paul Collins."

"What does your old man do?"

"He's superintendent . . ." The boy's voice was faint and defiant. "You better let me go!" he said. "My father . . ."

The old man murmured, "The soup's boy. . . ." He turned to Kelly. "What does your father do?"

"He's choker-setter."

"Does he know you're out here?"

The boy hesitated. "He don't care what I do."

The woods were almost dark. Bert could hear the boy's shaken breathing and see the play of muscles twitching nervously across his cheek. This was the superintendent's boy, miles from home, in the middle of the woods. . . . Suddenly his mind was clear and awake.

The old man said in a tired voice, "You boys don't know why you're here. You don't know why you're against us. You don't know what happened."

They did not answer.

The old man said softly, "Boys, listen to me. You hear things about us. You hear that we laid in wait and shot into their parade and you couldn't count all the lies they tell about us. But this is the truth. This is what happened."

The younger boy hunched his wet army coat over his shoulders and looked nervously at Bert. The little kids, Bert thought, why would they let them come out? Would they let them come out if the people were against us and hunting in the hills?

"This is the truth," the old man said softly. "Listen to me now.

"There were some men in Centralia who gave their lives to the working people. They believed that working people ought to stick together for their rights. They believed that workmen ought to get the full return for the work they did. They did not believe in the war—they did not believe the workmen of one country should go out and kill the workmen of another country—they believed that all workmen ought to stick together."

He spoke slowly and painfully, struggling to keep his voice down. "Now listen. All the people who hire men to work for them—all the millowners and the bankers and the business men and the property owners—hated these men. Do you understand that? They said they were going to drive them out of Centralia. They said they were progerman and unamerican and everything else. This is what they did. Listen. Last year there was a parade in Centralia, and when the parade went past our hall, these men, businessmen and ex-soldiers and Legionaires, they broke in the hall and smashed everything there. They smashed the tables and the chairs and tore up the books and beat up everybody there. They did that. The business men did that."

The boys stirred miserably. The trees darkened and drained; the rain had stopped. "Listen," the old man said. "Listen to me. The wobblies came back. We fixed up that place again. And this year, when those men raided it again, we were ready for them. We waited. There was nine men inside and three thousand outside. And the nine men fought the three thousand and fought them off, as long as they had ammunition. Did you know that? Did they tell you that?"

He waited. The boys did not answer. "Did they?" The younger boy said, "No," and the superintendent's boy whined, "Let go."

"Wait. There was one boy with the wobblies who would not give up when they ran out of ammunition. He had a revolver, and a few bullets left, and he ran out the back way and tried to get across the Chehalis. Now listen. He was only a few years older than you boys—five or six years, maybe. And this is what he did. He held off all those people. He said he'd surrender to the police, and Dale Hubbard kept on coming and Wesley said Stop. Stop or I'll kill you. Hubbard came on and Wesley killed him."

In the darkness Bert felt his mind awaken and the broad picture of what had happened formed clear and distinct. There had been trouble in town or the boys would not be out. They had been afraid of trouble or they would not have let out school. The people were not friendly or unfriendly, but confused and afraid. . . . They would have to start on. Someone would be out looking for these boys.

"This is what they did," the old man said. "They took Wesley, they took this boy a little bit older than you boys, and locked him up with the others. They beat him first, and broke his teeth. And this is what they did at night. They turned out all the lights in town. Then they went into the jail and dragged him out. They put him in a car and cut off his balls and took him back to the river. He was a little bit older than you boys—not much older, and they did this to him. The business men did this. They took him to the bridge and put a rope around his neck and dropped him over. He didn't die. They pulled him up again and dropped him again and still he didn't die. Then they shot him—they shot him and left him hanging there."

They waited. Bert got up. "Did they tell you that?" the old man asked. "Did they tell you that when they let you out of school?"

The boys were shivering with cold and fear. Bert said, "Come on. Someone will be looking for them." The old man got to his feet. Bert said roughly, "You boys. Was there any trouble in town?"

The older boy began to whine again. The other said blankly, "Trouble."

"Was there a fight?"

"No."

"Nothing?"

"No." Then he said. "Only some handbills."

His heart leaped. "What about?"

The boy said hesitantly, "They was progerman," and the older one said, "Nobody read them."

"Why not?"

"The boy scouts burnt them up."

He said to the old man, "There's somebody left," but the old man did not hear him. "Just a few years older," the old man said.

Bert walked to the old man and pulled him around. "They'll be out looking for these boys."

The old man said wearily, "Let them look. Let them look."

"You know what will happen if we send them back."

"A little older," the old man said in anguish. "Just a few years. And this is what they did."

"They'll be up here looking for them. If we send them back they'll be looking for us." The old man swayed on his feet. Bert pulled him roughly. "Snap out of it," he said. The old man reached over and grabbed the older boy by the arm.

"How old are you?"

The boy said, "Fifteen."

"Five years older. Four or five." He did not release the boy. "They knocked out his teeth," he said. "First. You hear me? You know how it feels? You know what they did?" The boy began to cry.

Bert said, "Listen. Cool off. You know what they'll do. If we send them back the whole town will be out here after us. And if they don't come back. . . ."

Slowly the old man understood. He released the boy. Bert began to tremble. He would not say what was in his mind. One of the boys stirred, and he moved over near them. The old man said, "Maybe . . . Could we drag them along?"

"They'd hold us back."

The old man said, "If anything happened to them they'd blame it on us. Then they'd be against us. The whole town. The whole god damn working class."

Bert said, "It would have to be different. . . . As if they'd fallen. Or the creek."

The old man did not answer him. Bert smiled into the darkness. "No," he said. "But it's what they'd do." The old man said nothing. "Think what they did to Wesley." Bert picked up his rifle and pulled the old man by the shoulder. "They knocked out his teeth," he said softly. "They cut him up before they killed him. . . . And it would help us and hold them back."

They cut into the heavy brush. The old man said, "You don't mean it."

"No. But it's what they do."

The brush closed around them. The old man started to call back to the boys, but Bert stopped him. "They won't know if we left or not. They'll wait awhile." They turned away from the stream, up the steep bank, digging their feet into the slippery soil. The rain had left the leaves cupped and soaking, and now that they began to climb the

stiffness and fatigue came back. Night closed around them, dense and heavy as the brush itself, until there was nothing left of the world but the damp tangle of vines and stalks that trapped and held them, their heavy breathing, the sound of their feet in the moist leaves and soil. It grew colder after the rain stopped and they climbed into higher ground. The underbrush thinned out; the big trees were far apart.

At the top of the first ridge they rested again. The old man stretched out on the muddy soil, face downward, his forehead resting on his arm, his legs twisting under him. Below the ridge the valley was a gulf of darkness without boundaries, silent and empty and cold, but above them they could see the mountains, lines of darker shadow against the sky, and the strange gray light of the snow. Bert sat beside the old man, holding his rifle between his knees, looking out over the spread of company timber and the county of company towns. Somewhere in the darkness the boys were fumbling back home, people were looking for them, the crowds would gather. In the morning the hills would be crowded. Now he thought of someone still working in the guard-ridden town, getting out the handbills and telling the truth. The thought came back as he dozed. It was warm and reassuring. It came back and went away; it was like a light in the window of some friend's house, seen and then lost again in the middle of a rainy and miserable night.

## A COAL MINER'S WIDOW \*

JACK CONROY

AFTER FATHER'S funeral, our house slowly quieted. For days, I had fallen asleep with the chatter of sympathetic friends and relatives still going on, but after a few nights I began to awaken when the house was so silent I could hear the clock ticking at the foot of the stairs, unless the rats in the garret were making too much racket. I had never minded the rats before, for they had been there since I could remember, but now the fear of them harried me night and day. I dreamed that my bed was an island lashed by waves of blue noses and cold, naked tails. When the wind was high, the house swayed drunkenly and its timbers groaned like a human in pain. The darkness teemed with fearsome shapes—miners moaning beneath cave-ins, graves yawning at midnight to disgorge the undead, and vampires ranging abroad to slake their grisly thirsts.

"There's nothing to be afraid of in the dark," Mother reassured

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me. She threw wide the door and revealed the black curtain of out-doors. But I was unconvinced. The kerosene lamp flickered in a draft, and Mother shut the door quickly and bolted it. Cane had been planted in the field across the road and it had grown until the blades rustled incessantly, even when the wind was not stirring. It sounded like somebody whispering stealthily. My sister slept placidly, and it irked me that she should be so unconcerned.

The nearest houses were the camp houses at the foot of the hill, and before Father had died Mother had often said that anybody could eat us up hide and hair before help arrived from the camp. The miners came home dog-tired, gulped down their suppers, and almost immediately fell into a deathlike sleep. It was said that on the Judgment Day Gabriel would not be able to arouse them with his trumpet; he'd have to go around shaking shoulders. But Mother never mentioned anything like that any more. She kept telling us that the camp houses were too close for anybody to molest us.

We heard a hesitant rapping one night, and when Mother opened the door a huge Negro staggered in and plopped heavily on a chair. He had evidently been badly beaten. One eye was closed. The other glistened chalky white. His lips were battered. Mother stood stock still, but I could see her trembling.

"'Scuse me! 'Scuse me! 'Scuse me, Missus, fo' my bad manners!" he burst out. "Some white folks like to've killed me and th'owed me in a coal car. I tumbled out at the crossin' up heah. I been askin' all the farmers fo' a drink, but they set their dogs on me. I'm so hongry an' thirsty I can't hardly stan' it. But doan' be a-skeered o' me, Missus, I wouldn' hurt you none. I ain't no bad nigger, jes' a po' boy long ways from home. From Alabama. Tha's wheah I come from, Alabam."

"Why did the men beat you?" Mother inquired, trying to appear calm.

"Dogged ef I know, Missus! I never *did* fin' out. They jes' beat me up an' called me a scab, an' tol' me not to come back no mo'."

"Oh, you were scabbing!" Mother said accusingly. "You were taking another man's job. You should expect to get beaten up for that."

I was afraid that this would incense our guest, but he appeared to be astonished. The eye which was still open widened.

"Shoot me fo' a black buzzard ef I knew I was doin' any hahm," he exclaimed earnestly. "White boss man come up to me in Mobile an' ast me how I'd lak t' wuk on a job in Missouri. I ain't never wukked in this country befo' an' I thought I'd try it. They shipped me to a little town up the line heah named Sevier, and the fust night I left the bunk house t' look aroun' a little, them white folks jumped

on me an' beat me up. They th'owed me in that air coal car, and heah I am. But I certainly didn't aim t' do nobody no dirt."

The Negro ate and drank gratefully, and departed with fervent vows never to be inveigled into such a situation again. Mother bolted the door a little more carefully, and let down all the windows, though the heat was stifling. The house was like a furnace. We all slept in the same room now, Mother and my sister on one bed, and I on another. I was afraid of the empty rooms upstairs. In the night I awakened sweating and heard a swish-swish as Mother plied a palm leaf fan over my sister's face. Then she turned to me, and I felt the stale air circulating and cooling—though almost imperceptibly. In the morning Mother looked worn out, blue shadows underscoring her eyes.

Though we had never lived luxuriously, we found that we could live on a great deal less than we had before. The miners and their wives brought small gifts for a time, but after a few weeks these ceased.

One day a group of church workers came to see us. They sat decorously in the front room, their inquisitive eyes ferreting into every crevice.

"We have come," announced a lady with a heroic bust, "to make some arrangement for the adoption of the children and for your own support and welfare. We know you are having a hard time, and we wouldn't be Christians if we didn't help you. We have been told that the children haven't enough to eat and wear, and we have talked the whole thing over. Mr. Ryerson" (indicating an angular old fellow with mutton-chop whiskers) "will take the boy, and I'll take the girl. It'll be several years before she's big enough to earn her salt, but the boy is big enough right now to work in the fields. Jethro Haines' wife has been bedfast for several years, and we have found a place for you there, doing the housework and taking care of her."

Mother's face clouded. She nervously laced and unlaced her fingers.

"You folks are mighty kind," she said, "but I don't like to break up my home. I'm going to try to raise the children the best I can. If I can't do it, then I'll have to make other plans."

The committee members made it plain that they considered themselves bitten by that keenest tooth—ingratitude. They rose collectively and stiffly, and visibly washed their hands of us, saying they were sorry that we would not allow them to help us.

Mother took my face between her hands and looked at me so earnestly I felt uncomfortable. I turned my head away.

"You've got to be a man now," she said solemnly. "You're the only man I've got left. These people will never offer to help us again."

Though I wasn't sure what being a man involved, I readily promised to be one henceforth. I was eager to run outdoors, for I heard some of the camp children on the hillside playground chanting :

*"Bushel o' wheat,  
Bushel o' rye;  
All not ready  
Holler 'I.'"*

I knew that a game of hide and seek was in progress, and I ran to join in. Before I reached the base where the boy who was "it" was hiding his eyes against a tree trunk, he gave his final warning before he began the search :

*"Bushel o' oats,  
Bushel o' clover;  
All ain't hid,  
Can't hide over."*

The next morning Mother said we must go to the communal spring to wash clothes. The spring was within the semicircle of camp-houses. Even when drought parched all the fields thereabout, the cold, clear water gurgled from a fissure in the rocks and trickled down a ravine, around which lush grass and vegetation flourished. Here the miners' wives did their washing. It saved carrying the water home, moreover there were always people coming and going so that the spot was a social center. All of the miners' wives did their own washing, but some of the men were bachelors or widowers and had to hire their washing done.

Mother went to the spring every day. She was taking in washings not only from the miners but from Koch, the butcher.

My sister and I considered the excursions to the spring quite a lark. Mother humped all day over the steaming tub, but we had only to gather firewood, help carry water, and dump suds in the creek. Crawfishes had bored their shafts in the damp earth, erecting at the mouth of them a mound of the slatish clay that lay below the stratum of gumbo. Mason wasps came for mud with which to fashion their multi-celled homes. So many came that we thought this must be the only muddy spot within miles. The wasps alighted at the rivulet's brim and buzzed earnestly, as though they were gossiping with one another.

Mother's hands were always puckered and grey while she was washing, but when they dried for a while at night, her palms were red and shiny. The wrinkles never smoothed out. Her ordinarily pale face became flushed as with a perpetual fever. Her head was en-



veloped in a cloud of steam all day. The washboard kept her waist frayed, and the front of her dress was always moist with soapy spray. She bobbed up and down, up and down, as tirelessly and as mechanically as an automaton on a peanut roaster, pausing only long enough to hang out a batch of clothes or to stir those in the boiler with a stick.

The iron boiler was propped up on flat stones, and my sister and I carried firewood to keep up the blaze under it. The ground was covered with brittle branches the wind had torn off the oak trees. Mother always cautioned us not to burn wood with ants in it. She said that anything which lives also feels. If we thrust a stick in the fire and saw ants swarming out of it, we quickly withdrew it and rubbed it in the dirt to extinguish it.

Mother had to be most careful with Mrs. Koch's clothes. She had garments the like of which we had never seen before. Mr. Koch's shirt bosoms were resplendently pleated, and each pleat had to be ironed separately. If the starch was a little lumpy or the clothes not immaculately white, Mrs. Koch complained volubly.

Mother had to iron at night, heating the heavy sad irons on a coal stove which sent a withering sirroco-like blast coursing through the house. Long after Madge and I were abed I could hear the monotonous rhythm of the irons sliding back and forth across the scorched and padded board. Sometimes, in desperation, Mother threw open the door, but the cheep of a night bird or a roving gust rustling the cane sent her scurrying to lock everything tight. I stole to the middle door and watched her standing with arm moving as inexorably as a piston. She pushed her greying hair back from her eyes with her suds-wrinkled hand. Sometimes her eyes were closed as she ironed. Blinding sweat dripped from the tip of her nose and from her chin.

Years afterward I was working with an extra gang on a track job. It was so hot that the rails were said to stretch a foot a day. The ballast heated like live coals; the rails ahead warped and writhed in the heat rays. One of the bullies, holding a spike with a pair of tongs while another started it in the tie with a maul, toppled forward sunstruck and the long point of the maul crashed through his skull as though it were an eggshell. In the morose silence we propelled the hand car back to the bunk cars. We all felt woozy and sick as we sat down to supper. The cook brought in a stew and when we whiffed the steam off it, we all felt our stomachs rolling. It stank like something dead a long time. One fellow found two flies in his dish. He sprang to his feet and flung the mess full in the cook's face, howling like a wolf. Instantly, we were electrified with unreasoning rage. The cook leaped from the car and bounded down the track with all

of us after him in full cry. We hurled rocks after him and hunted him clear to the city limits of a small town.

As we ran past a house surrounded by a baize-green lawn a fine looking lady came hurrying out. There was a small boy in a bathing suit lolling under one of those revolving sprinklers that are used to water well-kept plots. The lady hugged the wet boy to her and told him she wouldn't let the bad men hurt him. We were a hard looking lot, unshaven and ferocious. Still, we wanted to tell the mother that the sun had made us a little dippy, but we wouldn't hurt the kid for the world. Her haughty manner struck us dumb, and we didn't say a word. The anger which had buoyed us like the momentary exultation of whisky died out, and we felt only sick and shaken and ashamed. The cook disappeared around a corner, and we trudged back to the cars to get our clothes.

So when they spread the goo on Mother's Day, I don't get any lump in my throat. It seems that it was all designed for mothers like that boy's mother. What could you say to a coal town mother ironing away at midnight on someone else's clothes? I never found one of those Western Union canned greetings that fitted my mother—I never saw one that I could send her in remembrance of the nights she sweated over the irons or the days she spent bent over the steaming wash tub.

## THE BODY OF AN AMERICAN\*

JOHN DOS PASSOS

Whereasthe Congressoftheunitedstates byaconcurrentresolutionadopted onthe4thdayofmarch lastauthorizedthe Secretaryofwar to cause to be brought to theunitedstatethe body of an Americanwhowasamemberofthe americanexpeditionaryforcesineurope wholosthislifeduringtheworldwarand whoseidentityhasnotbeenestablished for burial inthememorialamphitheatre ofthe nationalcemeteryatarlingtonvirginia

IN THE tarpaper morgue at Chalons-sur-Marne in the reek of chloride of lime and the dead, they picked out the pine box that held all that was left of

enie menie minie moe plenty other pine boxes stacked up there containing what they'd scraped up of Richard Roe

and other person or persons unknown. Only one can go. How did they pick John Doe?

Make sure he aint a dinge, boys,

\* From 1919. Copyright 1932. By permission of Harcourt, Brace & Co., Inc.

make sure he aint a guinea or a kike,

how can you tell a guy's a hundredpercent when all you've got's a gunnysack full of bones, bronze buttons stamped with the screaming eagle and a pair of roll puttees?

... and the gagging chloride and the puky dirtstench of the year-old dead. . . .

The day withal was too meaningful and tragic for applause. Silence, tears, songs and prayer, muffled drums and soft music were the instrumentalities today of national approbation.

John Doe was born (thudding din of blood in love into the shuddering soar of a man and woman alone indeed together lurching into

and ninemonths sick drowse waking into scared agony and the pain and blood and mess of birth). John Doe was born

and raised in Brooklyn, in Memphis, near the lakefront in Cleveland, Ohio, in the stench of the stockyards in Chi, on Beacon Hill, in an old brick house in Alexandria Virginia, on Telegraph Hill, in a halftimbered Tudor cottage in Portland the city of roses,

in the Lying-In Hospital old Morgan endowed on Stuyvesant Square,

across the railroad tracks, out near the country club, in a shack cabin tenement apartmenthouse exclusive residential suburb;

scion of one of the best families in the social register, won first prize in the baby parade at Coronado Beach, was marbles champion of the Little Rock grammarschools, crack basketballplayer at the Booneville High, quarterback at the State Reformatory, having saved the sheriff's kid from drowning in the Little Missouri River was invited to Washington to be photographed shaking hands with the President on the White House steps;—

though this was a time of mourning, such an assemblage necessarily has about it a touch of color. In the boxes are seen the court uniforms of foreign diplomats, the gold braid of our own and foreign fleets and armies, the black of the conventional morning dress of American statesmen, the varicolored furs and outdoor wrapping garments of mothers and sisters come to mourn, the drab and blue of soldiers and sailors, the glitter of musical instruments, and the white and black of a vested choir.

—busboy harveststiff hogcaller boyscout champeen cornshucker of Western Kansas bellhop at the United States Hotel at Saratoga Springs office boy callboy fruiter telephone lineman longshoreman lumberjack plumber's helper,

worked for an exterminating company in Union City, filled pipes in an opium joint in Trenton, N. J.

Y.M.C.A. secretary, express agent, truckdriver, fordmechanic, sold books in Denver Colorado: Madam would you be willing to help a young man work his way through college?

President Harding, with a reverence seemingly more significant because of his high temporal station, concluded his speech:

*We are met today to pay the impersonal tribute;  
the name of him whose body lies before us took flight with his imperishable soul . . .*

*as a typical soldier of this representative democracy he fought and died believing in the indisputable justice of his country's cause . . .*

by raising his right hand and asking the thousands within the sound of his voice to join in the prayer:

*Our Father which art in heaven hallowed be thy name . . .*

Naked he went into the army;

they weighed you, measured you, looked for flat feet, squeezed your penis to see if you had clap, looked up your anus to see if you had piles, counted your teeth, made you cough, listened to your heart and lungs, made you read the letters on the card, charted your urine and your intelligence,

gave you a service record for a future (imperishable soul)

and an identification tag stamped with your serial number to hang around your neck, issued O D regulation equipment, a condiment can and a copy of the articles of war.

Atten'SHUN suck in your gut you c—r wipe that smile off your face eyes right wattja tink dis is a choirch-social? For-war-D'ARCH.

John Doe

and Richard Roe and other person or persons unknown

drilled hiked, manual of arms, ate slum, learned to salute, to soldier, to loaf in the latrines, forbidden to smoke on deck, overseas guard duty, forty men and eight horses, shortarm inspection and the ping of shrapnel and the shrill bullets combing the air and the sore-head woodpeckers the machineguns mud cooties gasmasks and the itch.

*Say feller tell me how I can get back to my outfit.*

John Doe had a head

for twentyodd years intensely the nerves of the eyes the ears the palate the tongue the fingers the toes the armpits, the nerves warmfeeling under the skin charged the coiled brain with hurt sweet warm cold mine must dont sayings print headlines:

Thou shalt not the multiplication table long division, Now is the

time for all good men knocks but once at a young man's door, It's a great life if Ish gebibbel, The first five years'll be the Safety First, Suppose a hun tried to rape your my country right or wrong, Catch 'em young, What he dont know wont treat 'em rough, Tell 'em nothin, He got what was coming to him he got his, This is a white man's country, Kick the bucket, Gone west, If you dont like it you can croaked him

*Say buddy cant you tell me how I can get back to my outfit?*

Cant help jumpin when them things go off, give me the trots them things do. I lost my identification tag swimmin in the Marne, roughhousin with a guy while we was waitin to be deloused, in bed with a girl named Jeanne (Love moving picture wet French postcard dream began with saltpeter in the coffee and ended at the propho station);—

*Say soldier for chrissake cant you tell me how I can get back to my outfit?*

John Doe's

heart pumped blood:

alive thudding silence of blood in your ears

down in the clearing in the Oregon forest where the punkins were punkincolor pouring into the blood through the eyes and the fallcolored trees and the bronze hoopers were hopping through the dry grass, where tiny striped snails hung on the underside of the blades and the flies hummed, wasps droned, bumblebees buzzed, and the woods smelt of wine and mushrooms and apples, homey smell of fall pouring into the blood,

and I dropped the tin hat and the sweaty pack and lay flat with the dogday sun licking my throat and adamsapple and the tight skin over the breastbone.

The shell had his number on it.

The blood ran into the ground.

The service record dropped out of the filing cabinet when the quartermaster sergeánt got blotto that time they had to pack up and leave the billets in a hurry.

The identification tag was in the bottom of the Marne.

The blood ran into the ground, the brains oozed out of the cracked skull and were licked up by the trenchrats, the belly swelled and raised a generation of bluebottle flies,

and the incorruptible skeleton,

and the scraps of dried viscera and skin bundled in khaki

they took to Chalons-sur-Marne  
 and laid it out neat in a pine coffin  
 and took it home to God's Country on a battleship  
 and buried it in a sarcophagus in the Memorial Amphitheatre in  
 the Arlington National Cemetery  
 and draped the Old Glory over it  
 and the bugler played taps  
 and Mr. Harding prayed to God and the diplomats and the  
 generals and the admirals and the brasshats and the politicians and  
 the handsomely dressed ladies out of the society column of the  
*Washington Post* stood up solemn  
 and thought how beautiful sad Old Glory God's Country it was  
 to have the bugler play taps and the three volleys made their ears  
 ring.

Where his chest ought to have been they pinned  
 the Congressional Medal, the D.S.C., the Medaille Militaire, the  
 Belgian Croix de Guerre, the Italian gold medal, the Vitutea Militara  
 sent by Queen Marie of Rumania, the Czechoslovak war cross, the  
 Virtuti Militari of the Poles, a wreath sent by Hamilton Fish, Jr.,  
 of New York, and a little wampum presented by a deputation of  
 Arizona redskins in warpaint and feathers. All the Washingtonians  
 brought flowers.

Woodrow Wilson brought a bouquet of poppies.

## THE BUDDIES \*

JAMES T. FARRELL

JACK AND Smitty drove single wagons out of the South End barns  
 for the Continental Express Company. They were clean-cut twenty-  
 one-year-old kids. Nobody could say that they were company men,  
 and they were frank, friendly, and hard-workers. They each had only  
 a grammar-school education, and their hopes of getting ahead were  
 day-dreams rather than ambitions. They wanted to end up as some-  
 thing better than teamsters, and occasionally they imagined and spoke  
 of how they might make a killing on the baseball pools and get a stake  
 so that they could make some kind of a start in life. They were  
 healthy with plenty of animal spirits, and they liked their good  
 times; but some day they figured that they would settle down, marry  
 a decent girl, have kids and give the kids a better chance than they

\* From *Calico Shoes*. Copyright 1934. By permission of Vanguard Press.

had, pay down installments on their own homes, and buy a Ford or second-hand Buick. They had quickly become well-rooted in the service of Long John Continental, and they would most likely continue on his vehicles until they had passed their days of usefulness.

They generally ate their lunch at a little restaurant near the South End barns, which all the men called Nelly's Greasy Spoon. One day, while at the counter, they happened to get talking about an idea which interested them enough to take precedence over kidding with Nelly, ragging each other, or arguing about baseball. They got to feeling how swell it would be to get all the fellows from their stables organized into some sort of a club in which they could do things together outside of working hours, where they could get to know each other better, and where they could have some really good times. They figured that such a club could run regular dances and picnics, and athletic teams that might compete with teams from other stables and company garages. They thought that they might even get an inter-stable and garage baseball league going. It was a dandy idea, so good that they feared it could never be worked out. If it did, it would make for more friendliness and sociability among all the lads from their stable, and it would give them mutual interests. While the idea remained only as a hazy and hoped-for dream, they discussed it, and soon they had other wagonmen interested. It was expanded to include a sinking fund for sick benefits, and probably for death insurance also.

The plan spread contagiously, and a meeting was held and enthusiastically attended. A constitution was drawn up and officers elected. Smitty was elected president, Jack treasurer, and Old Billy McGee secretary. Billy was one of the old-timers, liked by every one in the Wagon Department from the superintendent, Patsy McLoughlin, on down, and his election was a very popular choice. There was a lengthy debate over naming the organization, but it was finally titled *The Buddies*. Smitty appointed an entertainment committee of three, and they immediately commenced outlining plans for a picnic. They prepared raffle tickets, and conducted the raffle on the square. Jim Bates, considered by most of the wagonmen as a goddamn company stool pigeon, won the ten-dollar gold piece. In less than a month after the initial meeting, four hundred men from the five hundred odd number working out of the South End stables had joined *The Buddies*, paying their first monthly dues of a dollar.

The picnic was held out at the Forest Preserve, and there were games, dancing, and odd races, with prizes for the winners. Several kegs of beer, supplied by Jerry Looney the bootlegger who had once driven a single wagon for the old Continental before the war, were

on hand, and nobody complained of thirst. Many of the younger men brought girls, and they danced, or strolled off in the woods. Smitty had his girl there, and he took her off in the woods, and she was very willing in the soft grasses under a tree where it was very nice. A few lads got drunk, but there were no fights. And the old-timers had a good time, sitting under the trees, retailing anecdotes of the old days and drinking beer.

The first picnic was so successful that they immediately planned a second one; and it also went off to their satisfaction. The men all felt that *The Buddies* was going good, and that there was no danger of its breaking up. They realized that they were getting along better together, and that it was making their work more interesting. They had mutual affairs to talk about, an organization which was theirs, planned for their mutual and collective benefit. They discussed plans for the winter, and Smitty and Jack labored, preparing a winter program. They also began practicing baseball, hoping that for the following summer they could put a good team on the diamond. And about fifty fellows all bragged that they would win the bowling tournament planned for the late autumn. They even talked of some day building their own club-house.

For three months, *The Buddies* functioned smoothly. Several drivers and helpers were laid up sick or injured, and they received sick benefits of twenty dollars a week. The meetings were well attended, and most of the men were anxious not to miss them. Dues were paid regularly, without the use of pressure and force that was necessary in the case of the regular wagonmen's union. It, on every pay day, stationed sluggers at each stable and garage, and dues were paid up immediately. Otherwise, men would have been pulled right off their trucks and wagons. *The Buddies* was quite different from the union. It belonged to the men. They knew that the union was not theirs. It was a racket for Joey Murtry, the ex-teameo, and a few of his gangster sluggers. And the men knew, also, that Joey was always going up to sit on the laps of Charley Leonard and the other bosses and assistant superintendents. They hated Joey because they knew that at one time he had been nothing but a common ordinary manure whaler like themselves, and that now he was putting on the dog, and getting high-hat. He wore loud and expensive clothes, flashed a diamond, lived like a king in a home out on Washington Boulevard, and drove about in a Lincoln on "union business." They knew that Joey would sell them out whenever there was an opportunity. They had to pay their union dues because they wanted their jobs, and they knew that if they squawked or tried to oust Joey from his control, they would be terrorized by Joey's hired sluggers. If they tried to get radical, they would be fired, and Joey



would not go on the carpet for them, because he was working hand and fist with Long John Continental. And after all, their jobs did pay them better than they would have gotten working as teamsters and helpers for practically any other establishment in the city. The union dues were only two dollars a month, with perhaps an added dollar or two a month in special assessments for sick members, and deaths, because the union treasury was usually empty. Even with the union as crooked as it was, they could do much worse for some other company, although they had their many complaints and grumblings against Long John Continental.

But *The Buddies* was their own, different from the union. And the insurance plan of *The Buddies* paid a higher sick benefit than the company's insurance plan. The latter charged a sliding scale of rates, and paid out five hundred dollars at death, or at the end of twenty years. It also provided sick benefits if the accidents were due to personal negligence.

One day in the fourth month of the existence of *The Buddies*, Old Billy McGee told Jack and Smitty that he had to resign because the organization was taking up too much of his time, and he was getting along in years. His excuse seemed lame, and they smelled something in the air. They talked it over, and decided that nobody could do anything to them, because they were running things honestly, and not forcing men out of the union or the insurance plan. They were within their rights, and the company couldn't fire them. But still, they knew that there was something queer, because Old Billy was a square-shooter, and his resignation was funny. Finally, they decided that Billy was old now, with a wife and three kids, and that he was getting cold feet because he wanted to feel absolutely safe on the job.

A few days later, they were both called up to the general office of the Wagon Department to see their assistant superintendent, Charley Leonard. Charley was a long-nosed, falsely jovial man, and most of his men called him a rat. They knew that behind his jokes, and his air of democracy, there was a plain face and soul of a snooper who did not mean any good for them. When Jack and Smitty approached his desk in the large office, he smiled pleasantly, and cracked a joke. He laughed so enthusiastically at his own joke that all the stenographers and girls working on loading tickets in the office turned to glance at him. In his oiliest manner, and with bowing regrets to the rigors of outright necessity, he told them that the wagonmen had their union, and that the company had a well-organized insurance plan, and that, therefore, *The Buddies* was totally unnecessary. He did not blame them for having started such an organization, because they had done it evidently without thinking,

and he was not going to hold their efforts in its behalf against them. But he would have to ask them to disband it immediately.

They had no choice. They walked away after Leonard had patted them on the back. They went to the Wagon Call Department to see Heinie Mueller, one of the Wagon Dispatchers in that department. They always liked to say hello to Heinie Mueller, because he was a funny Dutchman, and he was white. They wished they were working under Heinie instead of their own boss, Mike Mulrooney, the route inspector. But Mike was not as bad as many of the other route inspectors, like Emmett Carr. Outside, they cursed, and squawked. Their disappointment cut deep because *The Buddies* was their own creation, and they had been betrayed. When they told the other men at the stables, there was more kicking. But they all knew that these gestures would get them nowhere. If they tried to pull a strike, they would simply be S.O.L., and they would see others on their wagons. *The Buddies* was disbanded. Jack paid all its debts from the treasury funds, and divided up the remaining funds equally among the members, totalling one dollar for each of them. Privately, Charley Leonard was called a pretty lousy sonofabitch. They still wondered why they could not keep their organization going. But that was hopeless.

Two weeks after *The Buddies* was disbanded, Jack and Smitty were walking from the stables to the street-car line. The rankling from their betrayal still persisted, and they walked along gloomy and silent. Joe Murtry suddenly accosted them, and four husky fellows with padded shoulders stepped out of an entrance way. Joe said:

“These two guys!”

Two of the sluggers cornered Smitty, and the other two took care of Jack. Before he was able to defend himself, Smitty was punched in the eye and the jaw. Jack was knocked down with three simultaneous belts in the face. Smitty was knocked on top of Jack. They were jerked to their feet, and knocked down again. Smitty's nose streamed with blood, and his face began to swell and discolor. Jack was punched in the mouth, and the sharp pain made him realize that one or two of his teeth had been broken. As he bent his head down to spit out the broken pieces of teeth, he received a terrific uppercut. Both of them lay on the curb, bleeding, punched into helplessness. They were kicked in the ribs for good measure. Joey Murtry leaned over their semi-prostrate forms, and told them that the next time they had better think twice before starting any of their rackets to demoralize the union.

Thus ended *The Buddies*.

Jack and Smitty were both laid up for several days, and they lost that much pay. When they returned to the stables they told the men what had happened to them. There was a general and spontaneous rage. Many talked retaliation, and of starting a movement to take the union away from Murtry. But beneath this rage and talk, most of them were cowed, and rather glad that they had not been the victims.

A month later, a special union meeting was called for a vote on a proposed special assessment to be levied in order that Joey Murtry could buy a new Lincoln which was, he explained, absolutely needed for the conducting of "union business." He also delivered a long speech, full of salve, in which he defended his work, and told them that he was always at their service. He asked the men if they had any complaints against the manner in which he was rendering his stewardship. A few chauffeurs and drivers glanced around the hall, and saw Joey's sluggers. There were no complaints. The vote was taken. Most of the men at the South End stables had determined to vote against the assessment. Jack and Smitty had kept their mouths closed, and had not attended the meeting. They later learned that there were only five votes against the special assessment.

## COW

BEN FIELD

THE FIRST summer I worked for Dan Smith we got stuck in the middle of our haying because two of the hired men went off on a drunk and remembered in that happy state not to come back.

Gnat, the shrivelled little foreman, seemed glad at first, but the boss looked more worried than ever. And his fat wife said, "Drunken bums like that hates hard work like poison. We got to git some strong farm boys now."

Gnat ogled her and whined, "Me and Mose kin finish all the haying."

She snorted when he mentioned me.

The boss picked at the broken horn of his nose and scribbled a letter to the agency in New York.

A couple of days later as the foreman and I were clearing a meadow along the road, we heard the old worm fence creaking behind us. Up rolled a tremendous Jew with a battered suitcase and stuck a slab of a hand under our noses.

"So you're the feller from the agency?" Gnat cracked a sour

smile at the card. "We'll be gitting back soon and you kin hop up and ride along."

"O. K., Captain."

While he lumbered back to drop his suitcase near the fence, Gnat whined, "Nothing more'n a cow. He won't last long."

The big Jew heaved up to us and pointed to a fork. "Boys, I'll start now." He must have heard Gnat, for he grinned. "My nickname's Cow. What's yours?"

I threw him a fork, and he went at the hay in his shirt sleeves and city clothes. He grinned when we roared at his antics.

He held his pitchfork as if there were a poison adder in front of him, and when he did get it into the hay, he tried to lift the whole earth with it like a cock of hay. The sweat streamed down his face, but he stopped for a moment only to watch how we handled our forks, and then he went on again digging up sod.

When the wagon was loaded, he refused to climb up. "It's good discipline to walk when you don't want to." He lumbered behind the wagon, chewing on a spear of grass.

When he saw the boss, he burst out laughing, "My name's Cow." The boss seemed satisfied at the first shot and ordered that the other bed be made in the room where I slept.

Disappointed that no handsome stripling stood before her, the fat missus grumbled that he could make the bed himself if he was in that hurry. But when she heard the new man's hearty laugh and felt his eyes on her, she shuffled upstairs.

Cow showed up in some faded khaki for evening chores. Clumsy at first with the cows, he showed infinite patience fiddling with their teats. He'd get up with a sort of bow and pat a kicking heifer. As it was flytime and unbearably hot, the rest of us clubbed the brutes until their muzzles ran red snot. "That ain't discipline being so nervous with your dumb sisters," he boomed across the barn at us.

Smelling of milk, he sat beside the boss's two kids at supper and patted them. "I got to get a pair, too."

"So you're married, Cow, and run away from your wife." Gnat winked at the fat missus.

Cow laughed. "Young feller, it takes more than you to get my goat. I had a grandfather in Russia, who used to call my grandma Cow, too, but hell! she was sharp as the old knives she'd sharpen on the edge of her pots. Afraid of nothing and always on the go. I come out here to be like a cow and get rid of some itches that ain't good for discipline and study farm conditions. I'm a carpenter by trade, but it's slack now. And anyway there can't be much of a revolution without the farmer horning in."

He guffawed to see the expressions on our faces.

The first night he was with us we had the regular bottling to do in the milk shed. Dead-tired, we crept down the red clay road, stable lamps swinging, while he rolled behind whistling. Gnat seemed more peevish than ever probably because the missus had looked at the big fellow two or three times across the table. As Cow leaned against the shed and admired the sky pulsing with stars, he said something about most Jews being heavy blabbers and light workers.

Cow just smiled and picked up an old bottle. He grunted a little and the bottle cracked in his hand, and then, as he shouted a shout that rolled over the hills, he shivered the bottle in his awful paw. "Only a little trick, Captain."

Gnat seemed to shrivel up more and didn't give another peep in the milk shed.

The boss sighed, "You're a pretty good man. Jesus, I was hefty myself once but never like that . . . a goddamn bull trampling a feller don't do him much good. . . ."

"So farming ain't a joke," Cow said, dusting his hands.

"It's a hell of a one. I got ruptured monkeying with a stuck wagon and then the lousy bull." He crept out into the night. "See you git everything to rights."

When the three of us were done, we waded through the wet grass up to the farmhouse.

Gnat tried to get friendly. He sniggered, "After the boss, he found he weren't going to be good for much, he crawls downstairs and gits his rifle. He used to be a feller with a terrible temper, but now he ain't got the guts of chawed sparrow grass. He begins peppering that there bull from his bedroom. He carried it on slow till the bull stood on his head and then was astraddle the fence and over in the road. Then he shoots him right through the ear fine's silk."

Cow looked at me and said nothing.

Up in our hot bedroom he undressed and stood naked, his chest slashed in places and tattooed with a splendid woman with a hammer in one hand and a sickle in the other. He said something about her being without either and without clothes, but for the sake of somebody who liked him, as he had been unable to get her off, he had had all added. Grinning, he began writing a letter on some old-fashioned paper with a mark like a sealed fountain in the corner. As he wrote he fired questions at me, and I explained I was working on the farm to get some material for some farm stories.

He grunted and little by little threw some of the clothes off his life.

When he was five, his family came to America and settled in Passaic where his father managed to make some money in the handkerchief business. He went to the public schools for about ten years

and then, after he became too big to keep away from the shopgirls and took to reading Jack London, he ran away to sea. He'd been everything but a farmer. During the war he worked in South America in a quartz mine where he lost all his hair inside of a few weeks because of the heat and sweat. He spent almost one year tramping the Andes backbone, and there were days when he was without water and had to soften his grub with his own urine. Back in the states he joined a circus as strong man, finally drifting east. Here he got married last year, still had fits of restlessness; every other day suffering hell to remember himself playing with holystones like dice on the decks of rat-infested tubs.

"Lousy system that makes a feller with guts something like an outcast. I'm a carpenter by trade and I won't quit till I help make a coffin for it." He laughed and finished his letter.

As he tried to put his part of the room into shipshape, he rumbled, "Now supposing you bowl over some pin-head publisher and get your stuff popular and get rich, won't everything be hell yet for most everybody in the same rotten system? You writers only worrying about yourselves and sticking out all your nice parts like a whore before a looking glass or a customer. Even London was like the rest sometimes. Have you read this?"

He chucked *The Iron Heel* at me and then jumped into bed, where he began reading a pamphlet. I soon fell asleep and when I woke after midnight he was still up, examining with care a little buffalo-chested moth he had caught.

I thought I'd have a hell of a job getting him up at about four o'clock for milking. He was up, however, even before the hollow-eyed boss and sniffing Gnat.

He began to get the hang of milking, and the swollen bags seemed no more than toys in his immense paws. During meals he ate more than all of us put together and between them outworked us all. The knack of pitching came to him the second day, and he had the sore Gnat buried underneath his cocks of hay more than once in the meadow next the farmhouse, to the great amusement of the fat missus.

He radiated so much energy that even the ailing boss took on another hay wagon, and in about two weeks we were far ahead of our haying schedule. Then we turned to weeding the truck on our fours, and Cow took to it like a duck to water, his shirt belling out in the terrific heat like an immense bladder full of quarts of sweat.

Though we were on our feet from four every morning until about nine at night, he would wash his clothes before going to bed (of the hired men only Gnat had his washed) and then walk two miles to the post office to mail his letters. Back from his hike he

would gab until past midnight with anyone he could keep from hitting the hay. And in spite of such prodigious tirelessness, he sighed to me once, "Nothing helps much. Now I'll roll around in bed, the flesh like a jib-boom."

Whenever he could he dragged me Sundays to town, where he got into baseball games with some of the farm boys behind the feed store or horseplayed with them and told them about señoritas sweet and bitter as Canton ginger. After such stories he'd invariably grow sarcastic about their being so dumb about a system that worked them like oxen and had some of them hopping as though they were having shotguns of rock salt spraying their hindquarters. One morning as we passed the church, he burst into gargantuan laughter and pulled me in after him. After the sermon, he talked to the minister and left him startled with, "My dear feller, you need a buglight working in such darkness." Out in the road he said, "You got to give that Jesus Christ credit. He didn't give a pinch of guano for his family or the women and just sailed without tacking for his idea with good discipline. Ever read that French feller Barbusse?"

The fat missus thought he was showing some interest in her because he washed and dried dishes for her a couple of times, and once, when she wasn't well, even kneaded dough and baked a half dozen loaves. But he explained to me that he was making a thorough study of farm conditions and added that it was good discipline for a man of his type to hang around such a splendid field of flesh.

One hot morning after the boss had driven the milk truck to the dairy, Cow and I went up to the orchard for some spicy apples which he could eat by the peck. We heard some whispering in the fencerow of the lot adjoining the orchard. We sneaked up. There lay the fat woman all spread out like a field with her two cocks of breasts and Gnat fussing around her.

Cow tightened up and stared at me.

"That's an old story," I whispered.

"And he—he lets her get away with it?"

"Can't help himself. The farm's hers. There's his condition."

"Leading a lie of a life. Hell! and they call me a cow. Why, they're the ones being jumped—all of them and you, too."

In the barn during evening chores when Gnat shrilled his favorite song about his wanting to be like boar hogs because of their tirelessness to please sows, Cow burst into a roar of bitter laughter. "Every little bug worried about its own appetite and the whole world go hang—no trying to wrestle it down even for a good cause." He spat into the drop and yanked so hard at her teats that the heifer kicked. He got up and knocked her down with a blow of his fist.

At the supper table he couldn't sit still for a moment, but

pitched in with his first bite about the working conditions on farms and how everybody didn't worry a goddamn so long as he filled his bellies and women.

The boss turned brick-red. "If you don't like it, you kin go back to Russia you're always batting so much about."

Cow only let out his rumbling laugh while the fat woman smiled at him as though she were drunk.

A couple of days later as I was sharpening some mowing machine knives in the tool house, I heard the boss and him yelling at each other as they were slopping the pigs.

"You got to have guts. She ain't bad looking and you can't blame her much. You don't even know if those kids are yours. Chuck the lie of a life you're leading and—"

There was the sound of a smack.

I looked out and saw the boss held up in those big paws like a trussed capon.

"But you're living a lie—a goddamn lie, fool you."

The boss flapped his hands helplessly and began sobbing like a kid. "What the hell diff-diffrince makes to you?"

Cow dropped him in a heap in a pig's wallow. "I'm stronger and I'm responsible for you. You're living a lie and making things rottener, little stinkbug, you."

His thumb hung down like a teat. He tugged at it and it snapped back into place while the sweat beaded up all over him and stood in wreaths on his bald head.

The boss sat in the wallow and just simply cried not only from sheer humiliation but also, probably, from remembering his helplessness and the long barren field of life still before him. After a while he got up and blinked around, but nobody was in sight.

I thought that after this scrap, Cow would be surely fired. Nothing came of it. And still, hammer and tongs, he went at the three of us. The missus, her skirts yanked up to her knees, listened with her oxlike eyes on him. The jealous Gnat tried to show his sting several times.

"They're slackers—always talking about the rich that worked for it."

The boss said huskily, "Some wants to, and they can't."

"You got the ticket now," Cow cried.

A sick grin tugged at the boss's face, the first I had seen in a long time. He spoke out and didn't mind his wife. "It ain't every day they kills a bull and throws the ballocks to the poor. Don't that show something's out of gear? Who gits the ballocks all the time?" He couldn't keep his face from creasing and stumped out into the night.



When we were up in our room, Cow smacked the slabs of his hands together. "He'll wake up yet."

I said, "You'd better hold your horses or something'll happen around here. You're so fanatic about—"

He laughed and sat down to write another letter on the paper with the mark like a sealed fountain. "My dear feller, when a man's right, he's always what you call fanatic."

"But life's too complicated to butt into other people's affairs. One should be an indifferentist like Chekhov and at the same time liberal and open and—"

"Open like a whore. Chuck your Chekhov into a cow drop. A feller's got responsibilities. Read this." He fired a pamphlet at me and went downstairs to get a drink.

He came up laughing. "Sh, sh... She ambushed me in the kitchen and said she'd do my washing for me. And I shouldn't be worried about the boss, he couldn't fire me no matter what I did."

He was a little restless, however, and went to bed instead of finishing his letter. He kept sighing, "Nothing helps much. I wonder how poor redhead looks away from me so long."

The next few days he worked around with less pep and was glad to get away to build a chicken coop for the leghorn pullets. Gnat and I finished up the last of the hay that season, some redtop in the poorest meadow, by the time he was through with his carpentering.

Our next big job was to cut the oats which we were going to use for hay. We got it down and then began filling the barn near the farmhouse with it. Gnat stayed on the wagon unloading, while I drove the team which pulled the grapnel fork full of oats up to the rail on the roof-tree and then dumped it in the mow when the trip rope was jerked. Cow was up in the mow and did the work of at least two good men.

The first day we carted the oats, his spirits seemed to have jumped over the moon. He told me that the boss had taken one of his pamphlets and had spent one of his sleepless nights trying to dope it out. Also the night before when he had come back from his hike to town, he had found the missus pattering around the kitchen in her nightgown.

"My discipline was O. K. I just patted her on her moon and sent her back to bed." Then he looked at me. "Do you believe me?"

"Sure I do."

He shrugged his shoulders and climbed up to the mow where Gnat, who was getting more jealous of him day by day, tried to swamp him under huge dumps of oats. It couldn't be done so easily to a man who could handle two full milk cans as though they were

Indian clubs. Cow began to tease him by pulling the horses back on their haunches by tugging on the rope.

Gnat started snarling at him until even the boss, who sat among the pecking chickens in the barnyard watching us, asked him in a wheedling tone to stop.

"Like hell I will. Who the hell are you?"

The boss turned red and looked down at his hands.

Cow yelled, "You little bug, shut up or I'll come down and squash you." Then, stripped to the waist, his back to the wagon, he went on with his work up in the mow.

One had to be careful how one handled the trip rope, and now Gnat, mad as the devil, jerked it so the grapnel fork slipped from its car and shot like a huge spider down on the broad back. Light as a cocksparrow on his feet when he had to be, Cow jumped and flew from under it. One of its teeth struck him and bowled him over. Gnat hurled his pitchfork into the hay on the barn floor and backed his horses until they crashed into the silo in the yard. He swung his fist and shrielled, "I seen you in the kitchen with her, I seen you last night."

With a bellow Cow picked himself up and jumped from the mow—a distance of about thirty feet. The barn floor was packed with hay; he had dived down a number of times. I expected him to bound up like a rubber ball and get Gnat with one bounce and knock hell out of him.

Something awful, however, seemed to happen. When the dust cleared, he was astraddle the pitchfork Gnat had hurled handle up into the hay. It must have gone quite a distance into him, for as he crashed to the floor he jerked his hands and feet like one of those wooden toy men with strings pulled in back.

How we managed to get that limp bulk to the bedroom is still a miracle to me. Each of us was bathed in blood. The boss, almost out of his mind, called up the veterinary first. Gnat kept on snivelling, "Lousy fork."

When the doctor came, that awful tail of wood had to be pulled out. Neither the boss nor I could stand it, and we left the room. Gnat helped and showed he had guts, and so did the missus after she had quieted the scared kids.

"It was long's a bull's rod," Gnat told us later. "And that feller wouldn't take nothing but yell 'Pull,' and then he went off."

He was the nurse that night and helped the doctor, who stayed on and gave Cow needles. The boss and I sat under a sky with a moon like a broken thumbnail and shivered. Just before milking at dawn I plucked up enough courage and climbed the spotted stairs.

He was lying still and at last opened chewed lips. "No dis-

cipline," he mumbled, "I'm a bug, too..." His face twisted as he whispered something about poor redhead, and then his muscles knotted and a great red bubble broke from his mouth.

I blundered downstairs.

Towards evening he died.

We went through his papers with the marks like sealed fountains and found his city address. In answer to our telegram the phone rang that midnight and the missus blurted out the whole story. Next morning with the first train, there appeared a tall pregnant woman, head red and cut so close that it resembled a daisy that had lost its petals; with her was an old Jew with a beard like a nose bag who kept oying continually after the first glimpse at the corpse.

They stayed up in his room all day without eating a bite while the body was in the hands of the undertaker. The wife wept only once and that was at night when we overheard her father say, "I told you not to let him go, him with strange ideas and no feelings to be a family man."

Next morning the feedman, who was also the undertaker, came in his big car, loaded on the tremendous coffin and the two mourners, and lumbered towards the city.

The whole nasty business seemed to take the starch out of us. We didn't do anything but our chores that whole day. After supper the missus and Gnat stole away into the warm evening to solace themselves.

The boss, who was trying to play with the kids on the lawn, quivered. "Now they ain't even hiding about it."

I walked over to him wearily. "Dan, I'm leaving tomorrow."

He jerked back in a scared fashion. "Going!"

"No use, I've got to go."

"You been here so long and winter we give you some time for that there writing of yourn." He blinked down at his hands. "You're part of the family."

Always suspicious of me, Gnat was glad to see me go, and the missus scratched herself and said, "We'll git from now on only real farmboys."

The boss drove me over to the station next morning with the milk. I lugged along an old suitcase, my Chekhov to read on the train, and a heavy heart. It was raining and the red clay roads and the wet grass looked as though a huge cow had been disembowelled and bled over the broad countryside.

At the station we shook hands, and he held on for a moment. "I'm sorry, Dan, but something's got a hellhold on me. I feel I need guts and I owed somebody more than money. I got to get back to the city."

We looked at each other and he probably like me saw again our fellow worker of the summer, who had come in our midst like a bomb and, bursting himself, planted his fragments in some of us, perhaps, forever.

He let go and made two fists that looked like ballocks. "I—I feel like I owe somebody something, something like a shotgun." His face broke. He ran to the truck and it bucked down the road.

I climbed into the train and tried to read some Chekhov, but I felt too miserable. I imagined hearing strange sounds. I took out my pipe and went into the smoker where I sat among mill workers on their way to the mills.

## ON THE EAST SIDE \*

MICHAEL GOLD

ON THE East Side people buy their groceries a pinch at a time; three cents' worth of sugar, five cents' worth of butter, everything in penny fractions. The good Jewish black bread that smells of harvest-time, is sliced into a dozen parts and sold for pennies. But that winter even pennies were scarce.

There was a panic on Wall Street. Multitudes were without work; there were strikes, suicides, and food riots. The prostitutes roamed our street like wolves; never was there so much competition among them.

Life froze. The sun vanished from the deathly gray sky. The streets reeked with snow and slush. There were hundreds of evictions. I walked down a street between dripping tenement walls. The rotten slush ate through my shoes. The wind beat on my face. I saw a stack of furniture before a tenement: tables, chairs, a washtub packed with crockery and bed-clothes, a broom, a dresser, a lamp.

The snow covered them. The snow fell, too, on a little Jew and his wife and three children. They huddled in a mournful group by their possessions. They had placed a saucer on one of the tables. An old woman with a market bag mumbled a prayer in passing. She dropped a penny in the saucer. Other people did the same. Each time the evicted family lowered its eyes in shame. They were not beggars, but "respectable" people. But if enough pennies fell in the saucer, they might have rent for a new home. This was the one hope left them.

Winter. Building a snow fort one morning, we boys dug out a

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litter of frozen kittens and their mother. The little ones were still blind. They had been born into it, but had never seen our world.

Other dogs and cats were frozen. Men and women, too, were found dead in hallways and on docks. Mary Sugar Bum met her end in an alley. She was found half-naked, clutching a whisky bottle in her blue claw. This was her last "love" affair.

Horses slipped on the icy pavement, and quivered there for hours with broken legs, until a policeman arrived to shoot them.

The boys built a snow man. His eyes were two coals; his nose a potato. He wore a derby hat and smoked a corn-cob pipe. His arms were flung wide; in one of them he held a broom, in the other a newspaper. This Golem with his amazed eyes and idiotic grin amused us all for an afternoon.

The next morning we found him strangely altered. His eyes and nose had been torn out; his grin smashed, like a war victim's. Who had played this joke? The winter wind.

Mrs. Rosenbaum owned a grocery store on our street. She was a widow with four children, and lived in two rooms back of the store. She slaved from dawn until midnight; a big, clumsy woman with a chapped face and masses of untidy hair; always grumbling, groaning, gossiping about her ailments. Sometimes she was nervous and screamed at her children, and beat them. But she was a kind-hearted woman, and that winter suffered a great deal. Every one was very poor, and she was too good not to give them groceries on credit.

"I'm crazy to do it!" she grumbled in her icy store. "I'm a fool! But when a child comes for a loaf of bread, and I have the bread, and I know her family is starving, how can I refuse her? Yet I have my own children to think of! I am being ruined! The store is being emptied! I can't meet my bills!"

She was kind. Kindness is a form of suicide in a world based on the law of competition.

One day we watched the rewards of kindness. The sheriff's men arrived to seize Mrs. Rosenbaum's grocery. They tore down the shelves and fixtures, they carted off tubs of butter, drums of kerosene, sacks of rice, flour, and potatoes.

Mrs. Rosenbaum stood by watching her own funeral. Her fat kind face was swollen with crying as with toothache. Her eyes blinked in bewilderment. Her children clung to her skirts and cried. Snow fell from the sky, a crowd muttered its sympathy, a policeman twirled his club.

What happened to her after that, I don't know. Maybe the Organized Charities helped her; or maybe she died. O golden dys-

peptic God of America, you were in a bad mood that winter. We were poor, and you punished us harshly for this worst of sins.

My father lay in bed. His shattered feet ached in each bone. His painter's sickness came back on him; he suffered with lung and kidney pains.

He was always depressed. His only distraction was to read the Yiddish newspapers, and to make gloomy conversation at night over the suicides, the hungry families, the robberies, murders, and catastrophes that newspapers record.

"It will come to an end!" said my father. "People are turning into wolves! They will soon eat each other! They will tear down the cities, and destroy the world in flames and blood!"

"Drink your tea," said my mother cheerfully, "God is still in the world. You will get better and work and laugh again. Let us not lose courage."

My father was fretful and nervous with an invalid's fears.

"But what if we are evicted, Katie?"

"We won't be evicted, not while I have my two hands and can work," said my mother.

"But I don't want you to work!" my father cried. "It breaks up our home!"

"It doesn't!" said my mother. "I have time and strength for everything."

At first my mother had feared going out to work in a cafeteria among Christians. But after a few days she settled easily into the life of the polyglot kitchen, and learned to fight, scold, and mother the Poles, Germans, Italians, Irish, and Negroes who worked there. They liked her, and soon called her "Momma," which made her vain.

"You should hear how a big black dishwasher named Joe, how he comes to me today and says, 'Momma, I'm going to quit. Every one is against me here because I am black,' he says. 'The whole world is against us black people.'

"So I said to him, 'Joe, I am not against you. Don't be foolish, don't go out to be a bum again. The trouble with you here is you are lazy. If you would work harder the others would like you, too.' So he said, 'Momma, all right I'll stay.' So that's how it is in the restaurant. They call me Momma, even the black ones."

It was a large, high-priced cafeteria for business-men on lower Broadway. My mother was a chef's helper, and peeled and scoured tons of vegetables for cooking. Her wages were seven dollars a week.

She woke at five, cooked our breakfast at home, then had to walk a mile to her job. She came home at five-thirty, and made

supper, cleaned the house, was busy on her feet until bedtime. It hurt my father's masculine pride to see his wife working for wages. But my mother liked it all; she was proud of earning money, and she liked her fights in the restaurant.

My dear, tireless, little dark-faced mother! Why did she always have to fight? Why did she have to give my father a new variety of headache with accounts of her battles for "justice" in the cafeteria? The manager there was a fat blond Swede with a *Kaiserliche* mustache, and the manners of a Mussolini. All the workers feared this bull-necked tyrant, except my mother. She told him "what was what." When the meat was rotten, when the drains were clogged and smelly, or the dishwashers overworked, she told him so. She scolded him as if he were her child, and he listened meekly. The other workers fell into the habit of telling their complaints to my mother, and she would relay them to the Swedish manager.

"It's because he needs me," said my mother proudly. "That's why he lets me scold him. I am one of his best workers; he can depend on me in the rush. And he knows I am not like the other kitchen help; they work a day or two; then quit, but I stay on. So he's afraid to fire me, and I tell him what is what."

It was one of those super-cafeterias, with flowers on the tables, a string orchestra during the lunch hour, and other trimmings. But my mother had no respect for it. She would never eat the lunch served there to the employees, but took along two cheese sandwiches from home.

"Your food is *Dreck*, it is fit only for pigs," she told the manager bluntly. And once she begged me to promise never to eat hamburger steak in a restaurant when I grew up.

"Swear it to me, Mikey!" she said. "Never, never eat hamburger!"

"I swear it, mamma."

"Poison!" she went on passionately. "They don't care if they poison the people, so long as there's money in it. I've seen with my own eyes. If I could write English, I'd write a letter to all the newspapers."

"Mind your own business!" my father growled. "Such things are for Americans. It is their country and their hamburger steak."

**SCABI****ALBERT HALPER**

I PULLED OUT of the Big Garage on West Fifty-fourth Street early in the morning, because I thought the pickets wouldn't be on the job yet. But they were. At the door, Mrs. Steur, the wife of the fleet manager, checked me out, holding the big book in her hand. I spoke my number so low she didn't hear me at first. She stuck her head into the cab.

"1544," I said again.

"Listen," she told me, "don't let them scare you, fella, the police are behind us, they can't do anything to you," and she gave me a big smile as I zoomed out of the garage.

Mrs. Steur is big and getting stout and knows how to give the boys a big smile. Since this strike has been going on she has done a lot of smiling, especially when we roll out of the garage in the morning, but she isn't fooling any of us. She wears a fur coat that must have cost her five hundred dollars if it cost her a nickel, and every time I look at it I think of my own wife and two kids and I get mad around the mouth. Goddam her anyway. Last week, just before the strike started, she used to give us dirty looks every time she checked us out in the morning, and her dirty looks said: "You bums are lousy drivers, you don't know how to hack, all you do is to warm your fannies in our nice comfortable cabs while Jake and me worry over the intake." But now she calls us sonny and fella and all that baloney.

I zoomed out of the Big Garage in third and saw the pickets strung all along the street with signs on their backs. But luck was with me. The green light was showing up the block so I hit the bus up to forty-five miles an hour and none of them jumped on my running-board to argue with me. I've been working for the Steurs for over two years now and every hack-man in the garage knows I'm a square-shooter, and they can't figure out why I'm driving with the strike going on. Only a few know about the hole I'm in and about the wife's operation— But what the hell, I'm not telling everybody about my troubles, everybody's got plenty of their own these days, so I don't say anything to anybody.

I whizzed up the block as fast as I could hit it up. There were two cops on motorcycles resting at the corner and though I was going way over the speed limit they didn't stop me but waved their hands and smiled. I smiled back, but it was not the same kind of smile they gave to me. My smile said, "To hell with you, beefsteaks!"



Two blocks down, three of the boys started running toward my cab, so I had to cut west on Fifty-second. This is a bad street with some deep holes in it, but I shook them off. Then I cut east again and headed toward Fifth Avenue, praying for a fare. It was already half-past seven in the morning and the city was waking up. As I sent the car along, I could see pieces of fog floating up the street. I like to drive early in the morning. There is something about cruising in an empty cab with the fog coming up the street which gets me. I don't know what it is. Sometimes I can almost smell it. A lot of times, if business has been good the day before, that is, if I make over three dollars, I will coast about in the East Sixties and Seventies for a good half hour just to get that feeling on a foggy morning. In the East Sixties and Seventies there is not even a dog in sight at 7 A.M. and most of the houses are boarded up because the rich people that own them spend their time mostly down in Florida or in Europe, so it's nice and still and quiet there early in the morning.

But I was out for business today, so I didn't stall around. I picked up a fare on Eighth Avenue and carried him to Fifth and Fifty-ninth. The fare was one of those tall rich guys around fifty who like to bend forward and act chummy with the driver, just to show you he's a regular fella. I know those kind. They tip dimes and always expect you to say thank-you twice.

"Do you mind if I turn the radio off?" he asks me, leaning forward.

I felt like telling him he could throw it out the window for all I cared. When I hear that goddam sad music early in the morning I keep on thinking about the wife and how the doctors bungled the job and it gets me nuts sometimes. Why did they have to put radios in cabs for anyway?

"How is the strike going?" the man asks me next.

"I guess it's going," I mumbled back.

He kind of laughed soft-like and said the men didn't have a chance. With my left arm I reached around and turned the radio on again, real loud, because I started feeling down at the mouth again. It was those exercises this time: "One-two, bend from the waist, three-four, take a deep breath." You know those kind of daily dozen business they have on the air in the morning.

I was glad when the fare stepped out. But he sure surprised me. I mean he gave me fifteen cents. I picked up another load and took her to Grand Central. She wore a classy shiny brown fur coat and looked to be the bucks. Just before she got out she says to me, "You men are having trouble with your employers, aren't you?" I said yes.

Then she gave me a quarter tip. "Well, I hope you win out," she said, in a kind of nice tone. "I like to see you men put up a fight."

I sat in the cab burning up after she was gone. Did she say that to me on purpose, just to get my goat? Didn't she know I was a scab?

Then I heard some one hollering at me and when I looked back I saw a big guy in a cap running toward me. I wasn't taking any chances, so I started roaring up the block away from him. When I looked back again he was still hollering and waving at me, and then I saw him step into another cab. He wasn't out to slug me after all. He was a fare. I got my nerve back, turned around in the middle of the block, and played the line on Lexington Avenue. There were only three cabs in line. In half a minute all of us got fares.

Luck was with me all morning. I mean that every single fare I carried wasn't near Times Square or downtown. It was mostly East Side business with swell tips. By eleven o'clock I took in almost seven dollars. This is swell business even in a snow storm.

But after noon the trouble started. I was passing Thirty-fourth Street and Seventh Avenue when another cab cruises up to me and the driver calls out, "They're burning and wrecking cabs downtown, don't go below Fourteenth Street."

So I turned one fare down. I told the man I'd take him as far as Eighteenth Street where he could get a subway, but he looked at me disgusted and called another cab. I wasn't taking any chances. What would happen to Ethel and the kids if I got put away in the hospital? Goddam the whole business anyway! Why can't it be worked out somehow that we men could get paid a decent wage so that we wouldn't have to go out on strike and have the papers say nasty and untrue things about us? Why can't— Goddammit, I forgot. I'm a scab! I'm a—

"Hey, you!" yelled a blonde dame. "Can you take me to Twelfth Street?"

"Sure," I hollered back, sore at myself. "I'll take you anywhere."

"What a man!" she sings out and steps high, wide, and handsome into the cab and when she gets inside she lights a cigarette and starts humming a song. I had a feeling right away she was good for a two-bit tip. "Play, taxi, play!" she sings out and turned on the radio. It was one of those damn sad songs again which I can't stand right after noon and I started thinking of Ethel and the doctors, but I didn't tell the fare to turn it off. She was painted up like hell, but I saw right away she was a good sport.

At Sixteenth Street they stopped me. There must have been over fifty of them. There were three cops, but the cops couldn't do anything.

"Come on, lady, get out," the drivers hollered.

The fare told them to go to hell. I had to hand it to her.

"Come on, get out, or we'll knock you out!"

"You and who else?" she hollers at them.

"Turn that damn radio off!" they yelled at me.

I turned it off. Then two of them hopped on the running-board and I had to kill the engine. They bunched all around me. The cops tried to get to me, but the boys kept shoving them away. They shoved in a kind of good natured way, but they meant business. It was a kind of shoving that told the cops that all they had to do was to just start to get fresh and the boys would have flattened them. Then one of the boys who jumped onto the running-board poked his head inside, and I saw it was Goldstein.

"It's Tom Davlin," he said, and he started talking to the others to let me alone.

"To hell with that!" the others told him. "Let's drag him out if he doesn't turn around and shoot back to the garage right away. Let's drag him out!"

But Goldstein kept on arguing. Goldie is one of the few fellows in the Big Garage who knows what a hole I'm in. I heard him whispering something and I felt cheap as hell sitting there, but they wouldn't listen to him. "Drag him out!" they said again. I sat there wringing wet. "Drag him out!" they hollered, and I thought they were going to give it to me for sure, and I wouldn't have put up a battle, because I knew just how they felt. But just then three patrol cars came up with their sirens screaming and the cops piled out. They started swinging their clubs and cleared a way for my cab. I shot the car into second and tore like hell down the street.

"What was that pal of yours whispering to the others?" the fare asked me when we were about a block away. "Have you fellas got a magic pass-word?"

"I don't know nothing," I said.

"Oh, so that's the way you feel about it," she said, then turned on the radio again. "Play, taxi, play!" she sang out, and Christ, what a nice long beautiful throat that woman had! She was singing happy over something and couldn't keep it down. She must have gotten a good hunk of cash from her daddy or something, I figured to myself.

"Hey, you," she called to me from the back seat, "hey, you, do you know what?"

"What?" I says, not turning around.

"I'm going to have a baby," she sings out to me, "and I feel so goddamned happy."

Then I knew she was tight. Any girl like that who feels happy over a kid must be either tight or crazy. I figured she was nutty.

She gave me the address and I stopped in front of a doctor's place.

"Here, sweetheart," she says and gives me two one-dollar bills. "Keep the change, handsome," and then she goes up to the door and rings the doctor's bell. A girl dressed like a nurse opens it. Then the door closed again.

What a tip! A dollar and twenty cents! I took time out and went into a coffee pot on Bank Street for some grub. There were two or three guys at the counter looking funny at me, so my meal was spoiled. I got up and paid and walked out. Goddammit, I'm a scab! I said to myself.

I shot the car into third and cruised east. When I hit Fourth Avenue I heard a lot of yelling and hollering. I got off at University Place and let the motor run. Then I hoofed it to Fourth.

There was a mob there, almost three hundred drivers. They were burning three taxi-cabs, while a big crowd of people were watching on the sidewalks. The cops couldn't do anything. They hit a few of the boys, but the boys socked them back. I saw them stepping on one policeman. They got him down and started tearing his overcoat to pieces. You ought to have seen their faces when they were doing that! The cop reached for his gun, but they stepped on his hand. They were yelling and screaming at him all the time. I got into the crowd and started helping them. A cop came for me, but I cracked him one. Then I got a sweet blow behind the ear and the next thing I knew I was laying on the street. Two of the boys helped me up and I sat on the curb for a while with my head in my hands. I was half-unconscious but I could smell burnt rubber, burnt paint, and the stink of gasoline. And all the while the crowd was yelling crazy.

I got up again, but by this time the cops on horseback came up. They started hitting the boys right and left. It was terrible. One fellow's ear was hanging by a piece of flesh and he kept holding his hand to his ear trying to put it back. The cops went for him and cracked him another one. There were a few women, and nice looking ones, standing on the curb who started screaming at the cops to let the poor boy alone. One of them even came over to the horses and started to argue.

Then the fire engines came. They tried to put out the flames. They lay hoses from Tenth and Eleventh Street, but by the time the water was turned on the cabs weren't worth a dime. Then the gang started toward Union Square. I started with them, then suddenly remembered I had my bus parked up the street. I started thinking of Ethel and the kids again. Goddammit anyway!

I walked back to the cab and shot it west. I picked up a fare and took her uptown to Forty-fourth Street. She tipped me twenty

cents. My pockets were heavy with silver so I got out and went into a restaurant and had it changed to paper money. The cashier looked funny at me. I felt so lousy that I didn't count my money twice and maybe he gypped me out of a quarter or so, because I remember—

Then I heard yelling on Seventh Avenue. I ran out and started the bus in a hurry. I didn't stop until I got to the Sixties. I cruised up and down those side streets until I got my nerve back. It started raining a little. A fare hailed me, but I didn't stop because I didn't have a good grip on myself yet. But in another minute I got another, this time for Ninety-second Street.

When I dropped that fare the rain stopped for a while. I was good and hungry again, because I had only taken a few bites out of my sandwich in that coffee pot on Bank Street, so I went into a place on Ninety-third, but first I put my hat in the cab.

But when I came in, some truck drivers at the counter recognized that I was a hack-man anyway. You can always tell one if you know them. We all have clothes shiny around the seat, and that shininess is a special cab driver's gloss. I can't just describe it, but the gloss gives us away. I can be walking down the street with the missus and if I see a fellow walking ahead of me with that gloss on his rear-end, I can turn to the wife and say, "Two to one that guy is a hacker." Ethel knows that I am not the betting kind, but she gets sore at me sometimes. "Can't you forget your lousy business even when you're not working?" she asks me. This gets me sore sometimes, but I know she hasn't been herself since the operation. So I just keep quiet.

Anyway, when I sat down and ordered a bowl of soup I saw the truck drivers giving me the once-over. Then one of them started talking louder. "I bet he's a scab," he said. I turned around with murder in my eye. "Goddam you, what if I am?" I hollered at him and I was so worked up that I started spilling all about my wife and the kids and the deep hole I'm in. The cook came out from the kitchen and looked at me. By the time I was through I was almost screaming. The guy who had called me a scab didn't know what to say and sat there looking at the counter.

"All right, all right," he says kind of quiet and he wanted to let the matter drop.

"All right hell!" I screamed at him and got up and went out.

The cook hollered at me to pay the check, but I told him to come outside and I'd beat hell out of him, and he didn't make a move when I told him that.

I got into the bus and had to cruise around for a good fifteen minutes to cool off. I was so hopping mad I felt like speeding the car up to sixty miles an hour and driving square into a building.

But when a fare hailed me, I calmed down. I started to think of Ethel and the kids and I realized I couldn't act like a damn fool.

So I picked up the fare and cooled off. It started to rain again. When I dropped the fare, I got another right away. I kept uptown. Business was heavy and I was on the jump all the time.

I worked straight through until eight o'clock, then I bought a newspaper to see how the strike was coming on. The headlines said the strike was still dead-locked. There was a lot of stuff written about what the fleet owners said about company unions, but we all know what those company unions are. The boys were still putting up a fight. I parked my bus in a side street and read the piece to the last line. When I read about the fights and the riots and the burning of the cabs I felt so thrilled I wanted to sing and scream with happiness. Then all of a sudden I remembered I wasn't in it, and the feeling flopped inside of me.

A half hour later, when I pulled into the Big Garage, Mrs. Steur let out a big sigh of relief. "Oh thank God," she said, "I thought they burned your cab."

Then she saw the dented fenders and the broken windows and her face fell. She started cursing the strikers to beat the band. I never heard her swear like that before. Then she told me to check in and go home and get a good night's rest and report for duty in the morning. When she saw the meter reading she complimented me, but she was still swearing at the drivers.

I got home an hour later, tired as a dog. The first thing when I closed the door, Ethel asked me how much I made. I put eleven dollars on the table. It was the most I had ever made in a single day's hacking. She looked at my face and didn't say anything. I started to tell her I was through until the strike was over, when I heard Sonny start to bawl in the bedroom. Then I kept my mouth shut.

When we sat down to eat Ethel got me to talk. I told her how I had seen the burning cabs, how they had stopped me, and how Goldie and the cops had saved me from getting slugged. I didn't tell her how I got out and socked a cop and then got flattened out. Women sometimes can't see things a man's way.

"You'd think they'd let a man work in peace," she said finally, and then I got sore as hell. I started to holler. I couldn't help myself. I told her how I had gone to the coffee pots and couldn't eat because I was looked at in a funny way, I told her how I felt about it, and I said something about the fog drifting up the street and the East Sixties and the Seventies where the houses were boarded up with the rich people spending the winter down in Florida or over in Europe,

and the first thing I knew I was standing up and screaming at her across the table.

The kids started bawling in the bedroom. Ethel hollered at me, but I couldn't stop.

"Goddam it to hell," I screamed, "I'm through! I'm not the only guy driving a hack with a wife and kids on his hands. I'm through, I tell you. How do you suppose I feel at the wheel of my cab making money with my buddies out on strike? I tell you I'm through. I'm not reporting in the morning, nor the day after. I don't care if we starve. I'm going tearing through the streets with the other drivers because that's where I belong. I'm going to help them burn and wreck every goddam cab in sight!"

And then I told Ethel something I promised myself I would never tell to anybody.

I told her about how just before I started back to the garage I parked in a side street and took out my tire-wrench and bashed in the fenders of my cab and then broke every goddamned window with my own hands. I screamed that out to her. She asked me why I had done it, and I didn't know what to answer.

Then I hollered out, louder than ever: "A man's got to keep some of his self-respect, don't he? What do you take me for, a scab?"

## CLOUD OF FIRE\*

JOSEPHINE HERBST

JERRY STAUFFER had no idea of working up in the packing house industry. There were men in his own department who had been faithful and industrious for years and who still held very minor jobs. He had always believed that if he had more education he would have stood a better chance at life, but he was surprised to find that a number of men pulling down only \$25 a week at Cumley's were college grads. At least six or seven of them. One fellow had graduated from Princeton and before the war got \$300 a month. He had been a civil engineer in Detroit and had lived only six blocks from where Jerry and Rosamond had lived. He was gassed in the war and had a pale skin and often a dry cough. For a while he had been civil engineer for road work but that had been stopped and he was laid off with the rest. When Jerry came home at night he liked to relate these stories. Sometimes the whole Wendel family sat around the fireplace in which a few logs were burning, not for heat as the

\* From *The Executioner Waits*. Copyright 1934. By permission of Harcourt, Brace & Co., Inc.

furnace was enough for that, but for cheerfulness, and the unfortunate histories of others gave them the feeling they weren't alone in unhappiness.

But still you couldn't sit around the fire every night. Amos Wendel was getting to be a first rate story teller, pulling out old recollections and swapping yarns with Jerry. For years his wife and the girls had monopolized things, all unknowing, but now they liked to listen to him. "Why, I never realized Papa could talk so interestingly," said Nancy. "Oh you should have heard him when I first knew him," said Anne Wendel, proudly tossing her head. "Why, he's a wonderful talker but in late years saves it I guess for men at the store."

Sometimes Jerry would pull himself away from the family group and go to see his own mother. The hungry eyes of the two mothers made him feel cornered. He wished he had the guts to pull out, to go away. When one of his old friends talked of driving a car to California, he was all on fire to go. "What do you think of that for an idea?" he asked the Wendels. Nancy was all for it. She thought Jerry was in a terrible rut and after all he could earn \$100 a month anywhere. He should get out, meet other people, start living again. She yearned over her brother-in-law and tried to spur him on in his plan. She and Anne Wendel actually quarreled a little about it.

"It's no time to strike out," Anne Wendel said. "He should save his money first, look around, and try to locate something first."

"He'll never save enough, he'll just get cautious. I think you shouldn't try to hold him back, Mother, he's so wretched."

"I wouldn't hold him back, the idea," said Anne. "I'm only thinking of his welfare. It's no time for changes like that, let him wait a little. I hear jobs are scarce on the coast."

It didn't take much discouragement to drive the idea out of Jerry's head. All the same when his friend started off on the train, after giving up the idea of driving, Jerry kept tab of his trip. "Tom's at Kansas City now," he would say, looking up with his bright alert eyes, his voice falsely cheerful. And the next day, "I guess he gets into Denver today. He'll be at Salt Lake tomorrow."

When good music came to town you couldn't keep Jerry away. His only purchases for himself were victrola records of Beethoven and Bach. One night after a fine concert he was walking out of the auditorium alone and at the door hesitated looking at the sky, hating to go home. One of the young musicians came out carrying his instrument in its case. He asked Jerry where the Hotel Martin was. His English was bad and Jerry, proud of his accomplishment, answered him in the German spoken in his home for years. The two young



men delighted at their talk walked along the street talking of the old country.

"Were you in the war?" said Jerry.

"Yes," said the other. "And you?"

"I didn't see any fighting but I was in France. Stationed at Limoges."

"I was in Paris once, what a jewel of a city," said the German.

"I didn't see much of it but I'd sure like to see it again, don't suppose I ever will." He thought he would never see it again, he had the feeling nothing would ever happen to him. Everything important that he wanted was done for. He could have little pleasures, like music and books. The cloud of fire that led some people was not for him. He had not been able to manage his life, had not been able to keep Rosamond. He thought of his life as a long dreary road and yet as he listened to the young musician talking of the Rhine country and his home at Köln, he longed for a sight of the slow moving Loire again gliding through the vineyard covered hills of Burgundy at Nevers or down past the lush gentle country at Tours. He longed for a sight again of the river that his angry repressed rebellion at that time had not let him enjoy. In memory he enjoyed it and longed for it as he longed for the anticipation of a future that had come only to vanish.

At the hotel door he said goodnight, they shook hands cordially. He envied the musician pushing his way into the brightly lighted lobby. Tonight here, tomorrow in Omaha, the next day Kansas City, Denver, Salt Lake, San Francisco. He lit a cigarette and a woman in a white coat and furs smiled straight at the young face under the hat pulled down. A newsboy sang out, "Big Strike at Cumley's, night crew walk out, big strike threatened, mayor urges arbitration."

He bought the paper, read it as the street car jogged toward home. Talk of strike had been going around for weeks. He hadn't taken much stock of it. He was too sunk in his own trouble. Everything that happened lately seemed to be going on behind glass. It was as if nothing could possibly concern him any more. He remembered now talk that went right on under his nose. The higher-ups treated the office men as if they were dummies. They were certainly darned sure of them. The strikers didn't even bother with office help. He could tell them a thing or two like the talk he'd overheard about wage cuts scheduled for next summer. If they took it now, they'd get it in the neck again when summer came. Perhaps they did know and that was what blew the lid off.

For the first time he was interested to get to work the next day. It was bitter cold and he kept thinking of one of Rosamond's letters describing the Seattle general strike. He had been on the woodcutting

job at Limoges and he had quit work, dog tired. When he read the letter he had tingled all over with a kind of reflected excitement, and a guy from a Washington State outfit had gassed for hours. That fellow had boasted that he had bummed all over the Northwest but you couldn't ride the rods if you didn't have a Wobbly card.

It was a little disappointing when he got out to the yards to find only a few men bunched near the gates. No one challenged him as he went in. But once inside, he could see the place was practically empty. Klingan the office boss was nervously fretting from one room to another. About a dozen office men stood around trying to look helpful.

"Now I'm going to need all you boys today and we'll eat here. I've arranged for stuff to come in. They're quiet out there now, but no telling what will happen. This will all blow over but we've got some important shipments that can't wait." The men were assigned jobs and went off down the hall. Jerry went to the scales room with Klingan. The room was down to 29 degrees. There were no windows. An electric bulb burned in a mean hard way. The two began weighing the meat. In a half hour Jerry's hands felt numb, his feet heavy as frozen clods.

"Get yourself a pair of wooden-soled shoes," said Klingan. Jerry went to the storeroom, stuck his feet in the heavy wooden-soled shoes, like peasants' sabots. Putting on the wooden shoes, pretty good. He came back clumping along the hall, wearing a pair of clumsy mittens he had found on a chest.

Klingan was raging at the office crew who were trying to cut up the meat. "Look at those hams, they're so thin you could eat them with a paring knife. Call that a cut? Why, my god, you've left the tenderloin on the cheap cut and there's not more than a cube of high-priced stuff on that hunk." He couldn't get very sore at the men though or they might quit. "Listen, men, we've got to do this job, so hammer along on it but try to make those hams life-sized, not as if they were dying of t.b."

By the end of the day Jerry was all in. When he got home Anne Wendel was very indignant. "Look at you, frozen, why you'll get pneumonia at that rate. You're not used to it." In bed he couldn't sleep for several hours. He wondered how in hell the regular men stood it. The next day he chose the lard-rendering department. The temperature was 92 degrees and he got out of his suit into a pair of overalls in double quick time. That night he came home with a band of blue from the overalls sweated to his skin across his shirt and back.

Amos Wendel told him the papers said work was practically normal.

"They lie," said Jerry. He was all in, but reached for the paper.

PACKERS ASSERT CONDITIONS PRACTICALLY  
NORMAL

"Why there's no killing to speak of, every department is at a standstill except for the office men."

"Then if it wasn't for you fellows, things would be shut up tight," said Amos Wendel. He sucked his pipe with an audible sound and Jerry turned his head to look at him. "Oh we don't amount to anything," he said. "No one pays any attention to us. The strikers don't. Say they're holding out though, they haven't let a strike breaker in. We can't hear inside but I went outside this morning and it was noisy by the gates. I'm just afraid the packers will stir up something to break it, because the way it's fixed now those boys aren't going to weaken."

In spite of being so dead on his feet, Jerry got to work on time each day. Each day he lined up with something different. He helped load meat for Portland, Maine, destined for Europe. Then he chose to inject salt solution into the hams with a hypodermic. A dose squirted in his eye and half closed it. The best job was copped by Klingan himself. It was the box-making department in the basement where the temperature was normal. There was no end to the strike after two weeks, and one day when he got off the street car in the morning the packers had a truck for the office boys. They weren't going to take any chances.

Going to a movie late one night, he was surprised at how bored he was. He felt nervous and impatient, anxious to get out on the street, to be home, to be asleep, to be up and at the packing plant. The strike stirred up the whole Wendel family and for the first time since Rosamond's death they did not sit around the fire talking. Anne Wendel cooked extra muffins for breakfast because Jerry needed more nourishment now, she said.

It began to get under Jerry's skin that he knew so little of what was going on. He was a dummy going and coming, owned by the packers. When it was his turn again at the scales room, he put on the wooden shoes and tried to feel good humored and above it all. Clumping down the hall he heard a skirmish outside and yells and somewhere a whistle was blowing frantically. Klingan came in and said if they made trouble it would be reason enough to call out the militia. Rolling out in the truck with guards bristling with guns on the running board, the gang at the gate yelled "Scab." Someone threw a stone. Jerry was quiet all evening and about eight-thirty decided to take in a late movie. Coming out the newsboys were shouting extras. He bought one. A night watchman, an old fellow with a tobacco stained moustache, had been stabbed.

Anne Wendel was the only one up when he got home. "They've stabbed a man at the yards," said Jerry. "An old fellow who doesn't know what it's all about." He couldn't sit still, kept walking up and down, smoking, and finally went out to the kitchen to find something to eat.

"Who did it?" said Anne. "Who could do a thing like that? That's what comes of those packers giving such little wages and look what we pay for meat? Why, I paid nearly ninety cents for that tough piece we had tonight."

"I bet my hat no striker stabbed that fellow," said Jerry. "I've got a hunch, don't know why. But if I'm right, I'm getting out myself."

"What'll you do?" said Anne. "Times are bad now." She didn't want him to quit and maybe get discouraged, drift around, and then leave home. The home was empty enough without that.

"I don't know what I'll do and it doesn't matter," said Jerry. The idea of being out of work excited him. If he was fired or quit, he'd have to go away. He would be forced to live again, not stay here forever brooding about the past. Rosamond would hate him if she could see him now, spineless as a jellyfish.

Bluecoats stood near the entrance gate next morning as the truck rumbled in under a yell of "Scab" and a few stones. Jerry wondered why Klingan was not more upset at the stabbing. He shrugged instead and said what could you expect. A strike was like war, someone was certain to get it in the neck. That night, at dusk, a shipment of guns came in packing cases out of a high-powered car.

"Hope we won't have to use these," said Klingan busily, ordering the placement of the guns in a cupboard, "but if the scratch comes, guess it's up to the office crew, hey Jerry."

"Not me," said Jerry firmly.

"What, you'd turn yellow?"

"It's not a question of color," said Jerry, "but you don't get me to use a gun on strikers." Klingan turned around. His face turned ugly. "Jesus, don't begin any baby talk, I've got my hands full with worry as it is. The guns aren't to play with, that's certain, but who says they are going to be used. They were brought in in case of trouble. After that stabbing—"

"Who did the stabbing—"

"God, how should I know? Some striker, naturally."

Naturally nothing, thought Jerry beginning to feel too wise for the office. He started down the hall toward the cold room, even put the wooden shoes on his feet. There was a lot of shouting going on outdoors. A big truck was bucking and grunting at the gates. They were trying to high power through with scabs. "Scabs," "sons of

bitches," "hey, cut that out," "look out for the brick," "watch it," then a shrill whistle, another, a shot. Jerry straightened and kicked his feet out of the shoes. Put on his coat. Found his hat. At the door he was stopped by Klingan. "Where you going, for god's sake, we got that weighing to do."

"I'm quitting," said Jerry. He felt lighthearted. A chorus of shouts and jeers came from beyond the gate. Klingan looked at the door nervously. "I haven't time to argue if you want to be a fool."

"No one asked you to," said Jerry, "so long." He walked almost jauntily down the corridor. Not since they had grabbed him into the army away from Rosamond had he felt so light-hearted. The war hadn't been his war, but then he hadn't known how to get out of it. He could get out of this. He was getting out. He got out into the clear cold air. "Scab," yelled a voice seeing him. A big hunkie picked up a piece of brick.

"Not on your life," yelled Jerry ducking. He didn't know what he intended to do with himself now. A policeman jabbed him from the rear. "Clear the gate," he was saying. He tried to walk with dignity away from the gate but a new truckload of cowering men came rumbling up. "Scab," yelled the crowd massing and getting ready. Someone had ripped out a fence with barbed wires, the poles stuck up like stiff legs. The contraption was flung across the road, Jerry found himself pushing and shoving with the rest. He felt a little awkward but no one noticed him. He couldn't stand watching and he wasn't going back inside. He pressed with the men and when they yelled, he yelled too. His hat got crushed and he fumbled for a cigarette. There was no time to light. The cigarette was knocked from his mouth and the truck bucked a little, stood head toward the plant, like a bull pawing ready to charge. Police began whacking through the crowd.

"Hold ranks, stand together, push," and locking arms the men held, gave like rubber where a vicious blow from a cop knocked the line. "Hold now, for Christ's sake." The fellow next to Jerry had his overseas cap knocked off. He let his arms go to pick it up automatically, smiled, and said, "Don't want to lose that, it's all I got out of the damned war."

"They got a shipment of guns in there, did you know?" said Jerry.

"We guessed. What do you s'pose the old fellow got stabbed for except a good excuse to turn them loose?"

"You mean . . ."

"Sure, watch out, here she comes," and the truck bucked again. Stones chipped its nice red sides. The windshield bent and cracked in grinning zigzags. The police patrol clanged up and cops poured

out. A blow hit Jerry from the rear. He tripped, fell, was lifted, flung, hit, kicked, raised himself painfully on all fours, and found himself on the floor of the patrol bumping over the narrow streets leading from the packing house district. As he looked up a cop hit him over the head. Someone near him was bleeding, drops of blood were plumping down on the floor near Jerry's hand.

"Hey," the cop by the door yelled to one on the seat, "did you see we got that big bastard?" Jerry did not lift his head; he looked at the feet, all old shoes. Another guy was crouched on the floor and looking at Jerry from a bloody face. He grinned faintly as Jerry looked at him. "You got it pretty bad," he said leaning toward Jerry. "Hey, shut up, you bastards," yelled the cop, leaning over and whacking the guy. The guy crumpled and lay still. Someone on the seat began to sing. Jerry wished he knew the words. If he wasn't kicked to death, he'd learn them. The other guys were joining in, even the fellow in the corner. It nearly drove the cops crazy. They couldn't hit everybody at once but they began clanging the foot bell on the patrol and busting through the streets like a house on fire.

## A CLASS IN ENGLISH

LOUIS LERMAN

"BUONA SERA," Shapiro hollered cheerfully, when he came into the club, "buona sera, comrades."

"Buona sera, comrad'a teacher," they answered, voices coming through a thick dull ache. Not like always, not with a joke, not smiling.

Shapiro stamped the snow off his shoes and hung his wet coat on a nail. The yellow walls of the club were warm and close. The watercan on the round pot-belly stove sizzled, quietly satisfied.

Under a sharp white light at the far end of the long room, Prentiss was carefully, painstakingly, glasses close to the white cardboard, painting red letters with a thin black brush.

"Hello, Prentiss," Shapiro yelled across, "hello, any of the placards finished? I want to use them for the class."

Prentiss's voice reached him low. "Right away," he said without raising his glasses from his work.

Shapiro rubbed his hands over the warm glow of the stove. "What a night," he said. "Giovanni stayed home," he said in a question. "Afraid to get his feet wet?" he laughed.

They were sitting around the stove, arms loose, bodies heavy-

weighted. Italiano lifted his eyes from the floor and said haltingly, "Giovanni—his baby—she dead."

The words froze on the warm yellow walls, the room became cold and hollow. Shapiro tried to warm his hands over the stove that was slowly turning greycold. He sat down at the table. Sharp dots of dust grated screeching under his fingers, on the scrape of the tabletop, on the littered old magazines and torn *Dailies*.

Prentiss brought one of the placards. Shapiro said, "Giovanni's kid is dead."

Prentiss, quietly, "I know. I was over there today. He was sitting near the bed, watching the kid die. I've been trying to collect money for the funeral. He hasn't got a cent, no food in the house. The kid died early this evening. Italiano was there. He told me."

Shapiro said, "The goddam bastards." Prentiss didn't answer. He went back to his work.

Shapiro looked at himself holding a white cardboard painted with red letters. His eyes fixed themselves on the single words. His body slouched down in the chair. His back pushed itself down into the chair. He sat for a long time.

"Italian Workers Club Demands A CWA Job For Every Unemployed Worker."

He brushed aside the litter of newspapers and magazines impatiently, angry. "Comrades," he said, "tomorrow morning is the demonstration of the CWA. Tonight we are going to talk about the demonstration." He was speaking quickly, angry. The class looked up at him. Shapiro repeated slowly, pronouncing each word distinctly, "We—are—going—to talk—about—the demonstration," each word tied in a hard knot.

Castrovinci, who always repeated after him, said, "Demonstrash'—." He left off the last syllable. Shapiro corrected him. "De—mon—stra—shon," he said, "de—mon—stra—shon."

"Look, comrades," said Shapiro, pointing to the words on the placard, "Italian Workers Club—." He pointed to himself and waved his hand to them in a circle. "We—"

Their heads nodded, agreeing. "We—member—Italian Work' Club." Castrovinci ended, "—Work' Cloob."

"Good," said Shapiro, "very good. Listen to me first." He read, "Italian—Workers—Club—demands—a CWA job—for—every—unemployed—worker."

They read the words, stumbled over, "—jop—for—every—unemploy'—work'," one word after another in a flat chain, one word falling flat after another, like one shovel of wet black earth after another.

"Good," said Shapiro. "Comrade Castrovinci," said Shapiro, "tell us, what does the sign say?"

Castrovinci looked up at him trapped, and said confused, "Sign—" He looked at Shapiro, his mouth moving. He said "Demonstrash'—sign—non lavoro—voglio un impiego."

"No Italian, comrade," said Shapiro, "no Italian. Tell me in English."

Castrovinci picked up the words, painfully, one by one, "I—no work. I wan' jop."

"That's fine," said Shapiro. "You are not working. You want a job."

Castrovinci repeated, "I no work. I wan' jop."

The words only struck Shapiro's ear and went no further. "You are not working. You demand a job," strongly. Castrovinci repeated after him tonelessly, "I not work. I deman' jop."

"O. K.," said Shapiro, "all right, comrade Castrovinci. Italiano, will you read the sign?"

Italiano read through easily, quickly, in a monotone. He did not smile. He stopped. Finished.

It was very cold here tonight. Steady monotone cold. It was very hard here tonight. Shapiro poked the ashes in the stove and threw coal on the fire. He wrote the words on the blackboard. They took out their notebooks and began to write with tightened fingers, labored elbows on the table, heads close to the table.

Inside it was light in the corner of the room where they sat around the table writing. Outside the snow was falling on the grave of the empty street. It was a bad night. The wet snow was falling on the body of the still dead street, on Giovanni sitting by a dead cold stove watching his baby die. The black cold fingers of the stove reach out to the far corners of the bare room, reach Giovanni and his baby sitting for years cold, watching his baby die.

They were finished. They were waiting for him. He came back to the table. He looked through the books. He looked at the sentence of words in Castrovinci's book. He looked at the blue lines of the notebook and tried to read. He brushed his hand across his eyes. The class stirred heavily. He looked through the other books quickly. He showed Colombo how to write the word "job." He straightened his back against the chair, "All right," he said, "let's read the sign again."

They said the words again, not as they always read, as if they wanted the words for themselves, to read them off the paper into themselves. They read with their mouths, "Italian Work' Club deman'—" Shapiro raised his hand for them to stop. "That's not the way to read it, comrades," Shapiro said, strangely angry, "we DEMAND," he shouted, "we DEMAND, we will have, we will take."



He quieted down. "When you say demand say it, shout it." They looked at each other disturbed. Castrovinci said something in Italian. Shapiro looked at him quietly. He did not tell Castrovinci to talk in English.

"Comrades," said Shapiro, "tonight we will stop early. I want to go and see Giovanni." He continued, "Tomorrow morning at half past nine is the CWA demonstration. Everybody is coming. Tell every unemployed worker to come to the demonstration. Bring everybody to the demonstration. We start from the club at half past nine tomorrow morning."

He put on his coat, "Good night, comrades."

"Good night," they said. Castrovinci's voice hung on, "Good ni'."

"See you tomorrow, Prentiss," Shapiro shouted across the room.

"O.K.," Prentiss did not raise his head from his work.

Italiano walked down the stairs with him. Through the half-open door of the dark building the icy snow slapped at their faces with wet hands. They walked with backs bent to the wet ice, feet slopping through. The slush crept in through their shoes. They walked on, eyes watching the pools of cold grey water in the cracked sidewalk. They walked on, without talking.

Shapiro stopped off at the grocery store.

They climbed up the narrow chill stairs in single file and knocked on the door. They walked in and saw Giovanni. He was sitting at the table looking at them as they came in. They looked around to see the pink blanket that covered Giovanni's baby on the bed.

In the corner, Mrs. Italiano was watching over the stove that did not warm the naked room. She nodded to them. Giovanni said, "Buona sera," his eyes were cold, dry, and distant. Shapiro gave the groceries to Mrs. Italiano, took off his coat and hung it over a chair. He was tired. He sat down in a chair.

Italiano's wife went home. Italiano busied himself over the stove. The room was quiet except for Italiano scraping the pot clean, pouring water into the pot, lighting a match.

Shapiro thought, "The goddam bastards. The goddam bastards."

Italiano put rolls and butter on the table and filled three glasses of coffee. He brought a glass of coffee to Giovanni.

"Grazia," said Giovanni. He drank the coffee. Then he put butter on a roll and ate it hungrily.

Italiano washed the glasses and put them away, trying to keep the stillness.

After a long time Prentiss came in. Shapiro picked himself up out of the chair and got up. Prentiss said, "Got any money, Shapiro? We'll need more money." Shapiro gave him three dollars. Prentiss

said to Italiano, "Tell Giovanni we have fixed it up for the funeral. Tell him I'll be here tomorrow morning."

Italiano spoke to Giovanni in Italian. Giovanni looked at Prentiss and Shapiro. He was crying slowly, the tears rolling slowly from the corner of his eyes. "Grazia, compagni," he said and turned his head away.

Italiano and Prentiss went away. Shapiro stayed on for a while, hunched into the chair.

When Shapiro came to the club next morning, he was late. The workers had already gone. He sat down for a minute breathing heavily. He started to run again, breath coming in spurts. Running one block, walking the next, he caught up with the end of the line of marchers a block away from the CWA station. He walked along quickly, looking for the white placard with the red letters. A long line of march. Workers carrying familiar placards. "WE WANT HOMES. NO CAMPS. NO BARRACKS." "NO DOLES. UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE." "JOIN THE UNEMPLOYED COUNCIL. FIGHT FOR JOBS." A thousand workers carrying placards, walking along tensely but laughing with movement.

Shapiro ran along. Way ahead he saw the placard. Castrovinci was carrying the placard of the Italian Workers Club. He was marching along, holding the placard straight up, high; smiling, laughing. Shapiro fell in behind him.

"Buon' giorno, comrada teacher," Castrovinci laughed to him. He pointed upward to the placard he was carrying. "We demand jop," he laughed.

"Fine, comrades," said Shapiro, "fine." He laughed inside. "Fine."

He looked around him at the faces he knew and smiled with them. They shouted to him, "Buon' giorno, comrada teacher." He was happy with them.

They marched along, demonstrating for Giovanni and his baby. Giovanni was burying his baby while the workers marched for him. The drawn frozen face of Giovanni warmed in the laugh of the workers demonstrating for him.

Behind they suddenly fell away. From behind suddenly came cries and shouts. Shapiro stood on the steps of a house and yelled. "Workers, keep your ranks. Workers, keep your ranks." The police struck out with clubs to clear a way to the head of the demonstration. Shapiro began to speak. "Workers," he yelled, "we demand a job for every unemployed worker. Workers," he said, his voice ran high, "we demand work for the millions of unemployed in this country. Workers," he said, "we demand—" A cop struck out.

Castrovinci standing on the step below took up the word. His voice boomed out, carrying way over the heads of the workers. "DEMAN' jop for every unemploy' work'." The cry was carried along in a wave of sound. Rise and fall—"we DEMAND a job for every unemployed worker."

Shapiro heard the sound rising, rising through a heavy black curtain that was falling before his eyes. He wanted to say, "That's fine, comrade Castrovinci, that's fine," but he was very tired.

## THE IRON THROAT

TILLIE LERNER

THE WHISTLES always woke Marie. They pierced into her sleep like some guttural voiced metal beast, tearing at her; the sound meant, in one way, terror. During the day if the whistle blew, she knew it meant death—somebody's poppa or brother, perhaps her own—in that fearsome place below the ground, the mine.

"Goddam that blowhorn," she heard her father mutter. Creak of him getting out of bed. The door closed, with yellow light from the kerosene lamp making a long crack on the floor. Clatter of dishes. Her mother's tired, grimy voice.

"What'll ya have? Coffee and eggs. There ain't no bacon."

"Don't bother with anything. Haven't time. I gotta stop by Kvaternicks and get the kid. He's starting work today."

"What're they going to give him?"

"Little of everything at first, I guess, trap, throw switches, maybe timberin'."

"Well, he'll be starting one punch ahead of the old man. Chris began as a breaker boy." (Behind both stolid faces the claw claw of a buried thought—and maybe finish like him, buried under slaty roof which an economical company had not bothered to timber.)

"He's thirteen, ain't he?" asked Marie.

"I guess. Nearer to fourteen."

"Marie was tellin' me, it would break Chris's heart if he only knew. He wanted the kid to be different. Get an edjiccation."

"Yeah? Them foreigners do have funny ideas."

"Oh, I dunno. Then she says that she wants the girls to become nuns, so they won't have to worry where the next meal is comin' from, or have to have kids."

"Well, what other earthly use can a woman have, I'd like to know."

"She says she doesn't want 'em raising a lot of brats to get their heads blowed off in the mine. I guess she takes Chris's . . . passing away pretty hard. It's kinda affected her mind. She keeps talking about the old country, the fields, and what they thought it would be like here—'all buried in da bowels of earth,'" she finishes.

"Say, what does she think she is? a poet?"

"And she talks about the coal. Says it oughta be red, and let people see how they get it with blood."

"Quit your woman's blabbin'," said Jim Holbrook, irritated suddenly. "I'm goin' now."

Morning sounds. Scrunch of boots. The tinkle of his pail, swinging. Shouted greetings to fellow workers across the street. Her mother turning down the yellow light and creaking into bed. All the sounds of the morning weaving over the memory of the whistle like flowers growing lovely over a hideous corpse. Mazie slept again.

Mrs. Holbrook lay in the posture of sleep. Thoughts, like worms, crept within her. Of Marie Kvaternick, of Chris's dreams for the boys. Of the paralyzing moment when the iron throat of the whistle shrieked forth its announcement of death, and women poured from every house to run for the tippie. Of her kids. Mazie, Will, Ben, the baby. Mazie, for all her six and a half years was like a woman sometimes. It's living like this does it, she thought, makes 'em old before their time. Thoughts of the last accident writhed in her blood. There were whispered rumors that the new fire boss, the super's nephew, never made the trips to see if there was gas. Didn't the men care? They never let on. The whistle. In her a deep man's voice suddenly arose, moaning over and over, "Gawd, Gawd, Gawd."

The sun sent its grimy light through the window of the three room wooden shack, twitching over Mazie's face, filtering across to where Anna Holbrook bent over the washtub. Mazie awoke suddenly, the baby was crying. She stumbled over to the wooden box that held it, warming the infant to her body. Then she dressed, changed the baby's diaper with one of the old flower sacks her mother used for the purpose, and went into the kitchen.

"Ma, what's there to eat?"

"Coffee. It's on the stove. Wake Will and Ben and don't bother me. I got washing to do."

Later. "Ma?"

"Yes?"

"What's an edication?"

"An edjiccation?" Mrs. Holbrook arose from amidst the shifting vapors of the washtub, and with the suds dripping from her red hands, walked over and stood impressively over Mazie. "An edjiccation is what you kids are going to get. It means your hands stay

white, and you read books, and work in an office. Now, get the kids and scat. But don't go too far, or I'll knock your block off."

Mazie lay under the hot Wyoming sun, between the outhouse and the garbage heap. From the ground arose a nauseating smell. Food had been rotting in the garbage pile for years as there was no such thing as a garbage collection. There was no other place for Mazie to lie, for the one patch of green in the yard was between these two spots. She pushed her mind hard against the things half known, not known. "I am Mazie Holbrook," she said softly, "I am a knowen things. I can diaper a baby. I can tell two ghost stories. I know words and words. Tipple. Edjication. Bug dust. Superintendent. My poppa can lick any man in this here town. Sometimes the whistle blows and everyone starts a runnen. Things come a blowen my hair and it's soft, like the baby laughin." A phrase trembled into her mind, "Bowels of earth." She shuddered. It was mysterious and terrible to her. "Bowels of earth. It means the mine. Bowels is the stummy. Earth is a stummy and mebbe she ets the men that come down. Men and daddy goin in like the day, and comin out black. Earth black, and pop's face and hands black, and he spits from his mouth black. Night comes and it is black. Coal is black. It makes a fire. The sun is makin a fire on me now, but it is not black. Some color I'm not a knowen, it is," she said wistfully, "but I'll have that learnin someday. Poppa says the ghosts down there start a fire. That's what blowed Sheen McEvoy's face off so it's red. It made him crazy. Night be a comen, and everythin becomes like under the ground. I think I could find coal then. And a lamp like poppa's comes out, but in the sky. Momma looks all days as if she thinks she goin to be hearin somethin. The whistle blows. Poppa says it is the ghosts laughin cause they have hit a man in the stummy, or on the head. Chris, that happened too. Chris, who sang those funny songs. He was a furriner. Bowels of earth they put him in. Callin it dead. Mebbe it's for coal, more coal. That's one thing I'm not knowen. Day comes and night comes and the whistle blows and payday comes. Like the flats runnin on the tipple they come, one right a floowen the other. Mebbe I am black inside too. The bowels of earth . . . I am a knowen things, and I am not knowen things, and somethings I know, but am not knowin . . . sun on me, and bowels of earth under. . . ."

(Andy Kvaternick stumbles through the night. The late September wind fills the night with lost and crying voices, and drowns all but the largest stars.

Chop, chop, goes the black sea of his mind. How wild and stormy inside, how the shipwrecked thoughts plunge and whirl.

Andy lifts his face to the stars and breathes, frantic, like an almost drowned man.

But it is useless, Andy. The coal dust lies too far inside, it will lie forever, like a hand squeezing your heart, choking at your throat. The bowels of earth have claimed you.

Breathe and breathe. How fresh the night. But the air you will know will only be sour with sweat, and this strong wind on your body turn to the clammy hands of sweat tickling under your underwear.

Breathe and breathe, Andy, turn your eyes to the stars. Their beauty, never known before, pricks like tears. You belong to a starless night now, unimaginably black, without light, like death. Perhaps the sweat glistening on the roof rock seen for an instant will seem like stars.

And no more the sweet rain, Andy, child now of the earth's bowels. Soggy water slushing underfoot, water dripping through a niggerhead, these are yours. No more, Andy, rain for you, or wind, or stars, or clean air.

And no more can you stand erect. You lose that heritage of man too. You are brought now to fit earth's intestines, stoop like a hunchback underneath, crawl like a child, do your man's work lying on your side, stretched and tense as a corpse.

The rats shall be your birds, and the rocks plopping in the water, your music. And death shall be your wife, who woos you in the brief moments when coal leaps from a bursting side, when a crosspiece falls and barely misses your head, when you barely catch the ladder to bring you up out of the hole you are dynamiting.

Breathe and lift your face to the night, Andy Kvaternick. Trying so vainly in some inarticulate way to purge your bosom of the coal dust. Your father had dreams. You too, like all boys, had dreams, vague dreams of freedom and light and cheering throngs, and happiness. The earth will take these too. You will leave them in, to replace the coal, to bear up the roof instead of the pillar the super ordered you to rob. Earth sucks you in, to spew out the coal, to make a few fat bellies fatter. Earth takes your dreams, that a few may languidly lie on couches and trill, "How exquisite," to paid dreamers.

Someday, the bowels will grow monstrous and swollen with these old tired dreams, swell and break, and strong fists batter the fat bellies, and skeletons of starved children batter the fat bellies, and perhaps you will be slugged by a thug hired by the fat bellies, Andy Kvaternick, or perhaps death will take you to

bed, or you will strangle with the old crony of miners, the asthma.

But walk in the night now, Andy Kvaternick, lift your face to the night, and desperately, like an almost drowned man, breathe and breathe. "Andy," they are calling to you, in their lusty voices, your fellow workers; it is an old story to them now, and they are strong men. "Have a drink on us?" The stuff burns down your throat, the thoughts lay shipwrecked and very still far underneath the black sea of your mind, you are gay and brave, knowing that you can never breathe the dust out. You have taken your man's burden, and you have the miner's only friend that earth gives to her children, strong drink, Andy Kvaternick.)

For several weeks Jim Holbrook had been in evil mood. The whole household walked in terror, he had nothing but heavy blows, for the children and he struck Anna too often to remember. Every payday he clumped home, washed, went to town, and returned hours later, dead drunk. Once Anna had questioned him timidly, concerning his work; he struck her on the mouth with a bellow of "Shut your damn trap."

Anna too became bitter and brutal. If one of the children was in her way, if they did not obey her instantly, she would beat them, as if it were some devil she were exorcising, in a blind rage. Afterwards, in the midst of her drudgery, regret would cramp at her heart at the memory of the tear-stained little faces, "twasn't them I was beating up, something just seems to get into me, when I have something to hit."

Friday came again. Jim returned with his pay, part money, most company scrip. Little Will, in high spirits, ran to meet him, not noticing his father's sullen face. Pulling on his pants, Willie begged for a ghost story of the mine. He got a clout on the head that sent him sprawling. "Keep your damn brats from under my feet," he threatened in a violent rage, while Anna only stared at him, almost paralyzed, "and stop looking at me like a stuck pig."

The light from the dusk came in, cold, malignant. Anna sat in the half dark by the window, her head bent over the sewing. Willie huddled against her skirt, whimpering. Outside the wind gibbered and moaned. The room was suddenly chill. Some horror, some sense of evil, seemed over everything. It came to Mazie like dark juices of undefined pain, pouring into her, filling her heart in her breast, till it felt big, like the world. Fear came that her heart would push itself out, roll out like a ball. She clutched the baby closer to her, tight, tight, to hold the swollen thing, inside. Her dad stood in the washtub, nude, splashing water on his big, chunky body. The menacing light

was on him, too. Fear for him came to Mazie, yet some alien sweetness mixed with it, watching him there.

"I would be a cryen," she whispered to herself, "but all the tears is stuck inside me. All the world is a cryen, and I don't know for why. And the ghosts may get daddy. Now he's goen away, but he'll come back, with somethin sweet but sicklike hangin on his breath, and hit momma, and start the baby a bawlen. All the world, and I don't know for why. If it was all a dream, if I could just wake up and daddy be smilin, and momma laughin, and us playin. All the world a cryen. . . . Mebbe daddy'll know why, he knows everythin." Some huge question rose in her, impossible to express, too huge to understand. She ached with the question. "I'll ask daddy." The desire came to ask him, to force him into some recognition of her place, her desire, her emotions.

As Jim Holbrook strode down the dirt street, he heard a fine patter, patter, and a thin "Pop." He wheeled. It was Mazie.

"You little brat," he said, the anger he had felt still smouldering in him. "What're you running away from home for. Get back or I'll skin you alive."

She came toward him, half cringing. "Pop, lemme go with you. Pop, I wanna know, what . . . what makes people a cryen. Why don't you tell us ghost stories no more, Pop? . . ." The first words had tumbled out, but now a silence came. "Don't send me home, pop."

The rough retort Jim Holbrook had meant to make vanished before the undersized figure of Mazie, outlined so clearly against the cold sunset. In some vague way the questions hurt him. "What call's a kid got," he thought, "asking questions like that." Though the cramp in his back from working, lying on his side all day, shot through him like hot needles, he stopped and took her hand.

"Don't worry your head about those things. Wait'll you grow up."

"Pop, you said there was ghosts in the mine, black, not white, so's you couldn't see them. And they chased a feller, and then when they got 'em, they laughed, but people think it's just the whistle. Pop, they wouldn't chase you, would they?" The fear was out at least.

"Why," chuckled Jim, "I'd just throw 'em over my shoulder, like this." He lifted her, swung her over his shoulder, set her down. "My right shoulder, or it wouldn't work. And then I'd pin 'em down with the crossbar. Now, how 'd you like to ride to town on poppa's horse and buggy and get served with a sucker?"

Mazie smiled, but her heart was still sad. "Pop, does the boss man honest have a white shiny tub bigger than you too was in, and he turns somethin and the water comes out? Or is it a story? And



does he honest have a toilet right inside the house? And silks on the floor?" She held her breath.

"Sure, Mazie. And they eat on white tablecloths, a new one, every night."

"How come he ain't livin like we do, how come we ain't livin like him, Pop?"

Why, indeed. For a moment, Jim was puzzled. "Cause he's a coal operator, that's why."

"Oh," another wall of things not understood gone up. Something made the difference. A big word. Like what happened to Miss' Tikas when she was cut up. But how could he cut up a mine, his knife would have to be awful big.

"Pop, you could lick him, couldn't you? Couldn't you lick anybody?"

"Sure." He launched into an elaborate story of three dogs fought, each big as a horse, and, quite happy at the child's excited face, finished triumphantly, "Now, do you think anybody could lick your daddy?"

"Pop, I can make the bacon when I stand up on the box, and I can wash the baby, honest. Pop, momma sez I'm gonna get a edjicca, and my hands be white. Is that a story, Pop?"

Fillin the kid's head with fool ideas, he thought wrathfully. But she could become a teacher. Smart rascal. Guess she gets it from Anna's kike blood. Then aloud. "Sure you are. You'll go to college, and read books, and marry a—" his stomach revolted at the thought of a mine boss "—a doctor. And," he finished, "eat on white tablecloths."

She trotted along. Somehow the question she had meant to have answered could not be clamped into words. They reached the one street. Her dad went into the company store to buy her a sucker. Afterwards, when he went into the saloon, she slipped out to the culm bank that rose like an enormous black mountain at the end of the street. One side was on fire, and weird gorgeous colors flamed from it. The colors swirled against the night, reds and blues, oranges and yellows. "Like babies' tongues reachin out to you. Like what happens to the back of your eyes when you close 'em after seein the sun, only that hurts. Like all the world come a colored," she whispered softly to herself. "Mazie Holbrook is a watchin you," she whispered, "purty tongues." And gently, gently, the hard swollen lump of tears melted into a swell of wonder and awe.

It was cold and damp. Mazie shivered a little, but the shiver was pleasant. The wind came from the north, flinging fine bits of the coal dust from the culm against her face; they stung. Somehow it

reminded her of the rough hand of her father when he caressed her, hurting her, but not knowing it, hurting with a pleasant hurt.

## JOHN STEVENS\*

GRACE LUMPKIN

THEY BOUGHT a ten-dollar grave for Emma. The funeral parlors had nothing in the way of coffins that were cheap. Bonnie and John went down, and Bonnie selected a gray one lined with satin, and a satin shroud. The undertakers seemed to expect that people would wish a fine funeral, and everyone usually did. It was the one time they could, without thinking that the money should be spent on something else, use without stint; for the insurance money would cover the costs.

John found this to be true. There was no cheap funeral. Looking at Emma, he thought, "Give me some pine boards, and I could put away what I loved without any of this." They dressed her up in satin, when she was dead. They laid her back on soft pillows, satin pillows, to rest—when she was dead, and could neither see nor feel any more. And they let what she was down into the ten-dollar grave, so that she was finally gone.

Mr. Turnipseed was there, and spoke soft words above the grave.

"Rich and poor, we come to it just the same," he said. "What does it matter, aristocrats and those who live by the sweat of their brows—all must come to the same end. So we know that only righteousness counts. In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you."

"Jesus went before," he told them, "and he has prepared a place for Emma McClure. She has reached the Promised Land where we all hope to go."

"She was always looking for better things," Ora said to Bonnie after the funeral. "She thought once that down here money grew on trees. Maybe now she's found that place."

There were two bunches of flowers, and after they had been put on the grave, John saw Zinie go over to the mound and rearrange them as if she wanted, herself, to touch something that was Emma's to show her affection and sorrow.

It was Saturday afternoon. They had hired carriages to take them to the cemetery, but except for the one that carried the preacher,

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they had hired none to take them back. John gave Mr. Turnipseed his fee for the prayers, and walked slowly to the village with Grandpap who was almost prostrated by Emma's death. But he had insisted on going to the cemetery. It was the best he could do, and the last thing possible to show her honor.

On Sunday John got up early in the morning and went to stand out on the road, the one that led towards Sandersville. There was a need in him, and he was going to search out John Stevens, if he was still in that village. A farmer in an old car took him almost there, and he covered the rest of the way on foot. There he inquired about John Stevens, who was a watchman, as he told those whom he questioned. The third person showed him the way. The Stevens house was on the further side of the mill, near some woods. It was a little distance from the other houses.

John knocked at the door, and a woman came. Behind her stood three children, each one only a little taller than the other.

"Does John Stevens live here?" he asked.

She was about to answer when a voice from in the room called out, "Who is it, Nellie?"

"I'm John McClure, from the Wentworth Mills," John said to her.

She went back into the room and the young ones stood together, staring at John. The woman came back and smiled at him. "He's still in bed," she said, "but he'll get up in a minute. He'll be glad to see you."

"I don't wish to disturb him."

"It's about his usual time of getting up," she said comfortably. "Come in, now, and sit down in this room. When he's up we'll go in there and sit. This room is where the children sleep and play, and it looks like it." He could see that she was rather ashamed because the house was not cleaned up for a stranger.

He sat on a chair from which she took some jeans.

"Johnnie," she said to the oldest boy, "go put on these old jeans while I wash your good ones."

The boy took the jeans and went into the other room. John looked after him, for he walked with a peculiar hitching motion.

"He's got tuberculosis of the bone," Nellie Stevens said, "so I've got two that limp."

She did not say this with shame as someone else might have done, but very simply as if she had long ago accepted what was before her.

The door opened again and John Stevens himself limped into the room.

"I'm glad to see you," he said to John.

"I thought maybe you might have forgotten me."

"No," John Stevens said. "I'd never forget you."

"Hit's right kind of ye to say that," John told him. They were not at home with each other. Now he was there, John was not at all sure what he had come for, or whether he would find what he wanted. He had come and must wait to see what the day would bring forth.

He had remembered that John Stevens seemed a person who possessed a knowledge of events and people, and in himself kept something hid that he did not give out to everyone but kept it secret because it was precious; knowledge, that was not to be given lightly, or without preparation.

Mrs. Stevens had the dinner ready and they all sat down around the kitchen table. There was a feeling of understanding in the whole house that was something John had not often felt when among people. They seemed to take him for what he was, a young man they might like or might not like, but one who had with them some common interest that drew them to him, and held them all together; just as the food for the time being held them together around the table.

After dinner John Stevens said: "Would you like to walk out along the big road?"

"You don't wish to sleep again?"

"I've had enough for the day."

"Then I'd like t' go."

"Come back in time t' get a little supper before work time," Mrs. Stevens said to her husband.

He smiled at her from the door and she nodded to him.

The road led them down near a swamp. They did not turn to the left when the road forked, but took the outside road that skirted the swamp instead of that which went through. It was better in the sunshine.

"How are you getting along?" John Stevens asked, as a beginning. "And how are your people?"

John spoke of Emma's death, and repeated as far as he could remember what she had said the night before she died.

"A death seems worse," he said. "And hit seems to stay in you bitter and hard, when somebody dies wanting a thing like she wanted a good life."

"And, too," John Stevens said, "when you know she needn't have died."

"Needn't have died?"

"Didn't you say she had pellagra?"

"She had it."

"Do the rich have pellagra?"

"I never heard."

"It's a poor man's disease. Haven't you heard that?"

"Yes, I've heard that."

"If she had the right nourishment, she needn't have died. You see the mill owners killed her."

"I don't know that I'd go so far. Everybody thinks a lot of the Wentworths, and they are too kind to want anybody to die."

"I don't doubt that. There's plenty that are kind, and good. But during the time I was in the village, I saw grown people, young children, and babies die from lack of right food, and from lack of the right way of living, and I lay their deaths to the owners of the mill, and all those that get money from the mills."

John walked along in silence. He kicked a rock down the road, and saw it roll into the dry grass at the edge.

At last he spoke. "Those are hard words," he said.

"They are hard words. But they are true ones. You might say old Mr. Wentworth began the factory, but young Mr. Wentworth, what has he to do with the blame? He inherited it and must go on with the business. But I tell you, John, they are all to blame—from our side.

"You take a rattlesnake, or the copperheads. From their side, they shouldn't be blamed. They grew up on earth, but just because I know they can harm me or mine, I know I've got to kill one when I see it: and it isn't because I hate the snake as a snake, but because of the poison in his mouth.

"These owners have power, and their power is poison to our young ones and to us. If you can take away the power, like you would cut the fangs from a snake, then you needn't have a grudge against the person. They're probably kind hearted (well, some of them), and full of good wishes to the world."

"Maybe," John spoke, "sometime they'll come to see they are doing us harm, and do better by us. I remember hearing a preacher who was a preacher to the rich say that some day the rich would get the love of God in their hearts and share everything half and half with the poor."

"As well expect a snake to come up and open its mouth gentle and humble for you t' take out the fangs."

They made a turn in the road. John Stevens looked back at the sun, as if he was trying to make out the time, but he did not suggest that they go back. John was glad, for he was not ready to go back.

"You know, John, I've traveled to the east and traveled to the west, as the ballad of John Hardy says. I have talked to many people, and with my eyes I've seen many things, curious, and some of them almost unbelievable. It's the same everywhere.

"Once in the West there was a strike of mining people. The owner of that mine was a God-fearing churchgoing man. He is one of the richest in the country. The miners struck for a better living,

for they lived mighty poor—and this rich man that is good to his own children, and kind, and a builder of churches, had those people—who hadn't broken a law except the unwritten law that the poor must not speak for something better without crawling on their bellies before their owners—he had those people thrown out of their cabins. And when they put up tents to live in he sent soldiers down there and had two women and eleven children, I think it was, shot down. And not only were they shot, but those that were wounded were burned up with the tents. That man is what is called a good man."

"He must have been a hard man."

"No, he was just usual. And he didn't have t' use his own hands. There were paid servants to do this for him."

"You talked of a strike. There was one here, wasn't there? Hit's one of the things I wanted t' ask ye. I had almost expected t' find ye discharged, for there were some that came to our mill to get work that were discharged."

"I wasn't discharged," John Stevens said.

"Were you not in it?"

"I was in it, and in two before in the North, run by the same crowd. But my heart wasn't in it."

"Is it true they went off with the dues?"

"It's true. But that, to my mind, is a small thing compared to another thing I have against them."

"What was that?"

"Well—they want you to go up to a rattlesnake coiled in the middle of the road, and fondle him on the head, and say, 'Please, Mr. Rattlesnake, can I go by?'"

"You see, they go on the supposition that I and the snake have got something in common. We have. We've got the road, and it's a public road, but unless I've got a gun or a big rock the snake has all the advantage.

"It's this they won't understand. They don't want you to fight. They simply ain't interested much in people that can't pay big dues. Sometimes they make a show of being interested, like here, but it peters out very soon. And then—they've got no further message. We have enough fear in us as it is. And they don't aim t' give us courage."

"Fear?" John asked.

"Yes, fear."

"I have not any fear," John said emphatically. It was something a man could not stand very well, to be told he was a coward. John himself was slow about getting up his anger but when he did, no man could walk over him.

He spoke again. "I'm not afraid of any man, not Mr. Wentworth or no one."

It was some time before John Stevens answered. "No," he said. "You are not afraid of Mr. Wentworth as a man. If he came down and tried to do harm to Bonnie, say, you would stand up to him. What you fear is his power, his poison. Don't you fear to lose your work? And if you were married with young ones, you'd fear that more. And don't Bonnie fear losing her work, and don't your Granpap fear his old age with no money? If it was demanded of him he would grovel in the dust at Mr. Wentworth's feet to keep the work he has. To get away from that fear, to show I was independent, I've traveled all over, and everywhere I've found my owner."

John Stevens looked back, squinting at the sun that shone almost straight in his face from the west. "We'd best turn back," he said.

They walked with their heads down, away from the sun, until some trees cut off the strongest rays.

"There are some," John said, "who seem to get on, by themselves."

"And there's less chance of that than there was. This country used to be open for those that wanted to get another chance. Now it's crowded with those struggling to make their way up. So if you want to get up you've got to push somebody down unless the start has been made before you, and then, ten to one, it was done in the same way."

John Stevens began to limp faster toward the house that was now where they could see it, through the trees that had no leaves on them. John was not ready to talk. There were things that had happened to him, and they had forced him to consider what was happening to himself and to others. He was trying to put events together, and make something of them.

Now he had received some words from John Stevens and those must be sorted out, so that he could try to fit them with the things which had happened. If he could do so, well and good. If he could not, he would perhaps try something else.

He ate supper with the others, then walked with John Stevens to the mill, which was not far off, and leaving him there found the road. He walked along it in the darkness that was getting blacker.

## MAN ON A ROAD

ALBERT MALTZ

AT ABOUT four in the afternoon I crossed the bridge at Gauley, West Virginia, and turned the sharp curve leading into the tunnel under the railroad bridge. I had been over this road once before and knew what to expect—by the time I entered the tunnel I had my car down to about ten miles an hour. But even at that speed I came closer to running a man down than I ever have before. This is how it happened.

The patched, macadam road had been soaked through by an all-day rain and now it was as slick as ice. In addition, it was quite dark—a black sky and a steady, swishing rain made driving impossible without headlights. As I entered the tunnel a big cream colored truck swung fast around the curve on the other side. The curve was so sharp that his headlights had given me no warning. The tunnel was short and narrow, just about passing space for two cars, and before I knew it he was in front of me with his big, front wheels over on my side of the road.

I jammed on my brakes. Even at ten miles an hour my car skidded, first toward the truck and then, as I wrenched on the wheel, in toward the wall. There it stalled. The truck swung around hard, scraped my fender, and passed through the tunnel about an inch away from me. I could see the tense face of the young driver with the tight bulge of tobacco in his cheek and his eyes glued on the road. I remember saying to myself that I hoped he'd swallow that tobacco and go choke himself.

I started my car and shifted into first. It was then I saw for the first time that a man was standing in front of my car about a foot away from the inside wheel. It was a shock to see him there. "For Chrissakes," I said.

My first thought was that he had walked into the tunnel after my car had stalled. I was certain he hadn't been in there before. Then I noticed that he was standing profile to me with his hand held up in the hitch-hiker's gesture. If he had walked into that tunnel, he'd be facing me—he wouldn't be standing sideways looking at the opposite wall. Obviously I had just missed knocking him down and obviously he didn't know it. He didn't even know I was there.

It made me run weak inside. I had a picture of a man lying crushed under a wheel with me standing over him knowing it was my car.

I called out to him "Hey!" He didn't answer me. I called louder.



He didn't even turn his head. He stood there, fixed, his hand up in the air, his thumb jutting out. It scared me. It was like a story by Bierce where the ghost of a man pops out of the air to take up his lonely post on a dark country road.

My horn is a good, loud, raucous one and I knew that the tunnel would re-double the sound. I slapped my hand down on that little black button and pressed as hard as I could. The man was either going to jump or else prove that he was a ghost.

Well, he wasn't a ghost—but he didn't jump, either. And it wasn't because he was deaf. He heard that horn all right.

He was like a man in a deep sleep. The horn seemed to awaken him only by degrees, as though his whole consciousness had been sunk in some deep recess within himself. He turned his head slowly and looked at me. He was a big man, about thirty-five with a heavy-featured face—an ordinary face with a big, fleshy nose and a large mouth. The face didn't say much. I wouldn't have called it kind or brutal or intelligent or stupid. It was just the face of a big man, wet with rain, looking at me with eyes that seemed to have a glaze over them. Except for the eyes you see faces like that going into the pit at six in the morning or coming out of a steel mill or foundry where heavy work is done. I couldn't understand that glazed quality in his eyes. It wasn't the glassy stare of a drunken man or the wild, mad glare I saw once in the eyes of a woman in a fit of violence. I could only think of a man I once knew who had died of cancer. Over his eyes in the last days there was the same dull glaze, a far away, absent look as though behind the blank, outward film there was a secret flow of past events on which his mind was focussed. It was this same look that I saw in the man on the road.

When at last he heard my horn, the man stepped very deliberately around the front of my car and came toward the inside door. The least I expected was that he would show surprise at an auto so dangerously close to him. But there was no emotion to him whatsoever. He walked slowly, deliberately, as though he had been expecting me and then bent his head down to see under the top of my car. "Kin yuh give me a lift, friend?" he asked me.

I saw his big, horse teeth chipped at the ends and stained brown by tobacco. His voice was high-pitched and nasal with the slurred, lilting drawl of the deep South. In West Virginia few of the town folk seem to speak that way. I judged he had been raised in the mountains.

I looked at his clothes—an old cap, a new blue work shirt, and dark trousers, all soaked through with rain. They didn't tell me much.

I must have been occupied with my thoughts about him for some

time, because he asked me again. "Ahm goin' to Weston," he said. "Are you a-goin' thataway?"

As he said this, I looked into his eyes. The glaze had disappeared and now they were just ordinary eyes, brown and moist.

I didn't know what to reply. I didn't really want to take him in—the episode had unnerved me and I wanted to get away from the tunnel and from him too. But I saw him looking at me with a patient, almost humble glance. The rain was streaked on his face and he stood there asking for a ride and waiting in simple concentration for my answer. I was ashamed to tell him "no." Besides, I was curious. "Climb in," I said.

He sat down beside me, placing a brown paper package on his lap. We started out of the tunnel.

From Gauley to Weston is about a hundred miles of as difficult mountain driving as I know—a five mile climb to the top of a hill, then five miles down, and then up another. The road twists like a snake on the run and for a good deal of it there is a jagged cliff on one side and a drop of a thousand feet or more on the other. The rain and the small rocks crumbling from the mountain sides and littering up the road made it very slow going. But in the four hours or so that it took for the trip I don't think my companion spoke to me half a dozen times.

I tried often to get him to talk. It was not that he wouldn't talk, it was rather that he didn't seem to hear me—as though as soon as he had spoken, he would slip down into that deep, secret recess within himself. He sat like a man dulled by morphine. My conversation, the rattle of the old car, the steady pour of rain were all a distant buzz—the meaningless, outside world that could not quite pierce the shell in which he seemed to be living.

As soon as we had started, I asked him how long he had been in the tunnel.

"Ah don' know," he replied. "A good tahm, ah reckon."

"What were you standing there for—to keep out of the rain?"

He didn't answer. I asked him again, speaking very loudly. He turned his head to me. "Excuse me, friend," he said, "did you say somethin'?"

"Yes," I answered. "Do you know I almost ran you over back in that tunnel?"

"No-o," he said. He spoke the word in that breathy way that is typical of mountain speech.

"Didn't you hear me yell to you?"

"No-o." He paused. "Ah reckon ah was thinkin'."

"Ah reckon you were," I thought to myself. "What's the matter, are you hard of hearing?" I asked him.

"No-o," he said, and turned his head away looking out front at the road.

I kept right after him. I didn't want him to go off again. I wanted somehow to get him to talk.

"Looking for work?"

"Yessuh."

He seemed to speak with an effort. It was not a difficulty of speech, it was something behind, in his mind, in his will to speak. It was as though he couldn't keep the touch between his world and mine. Yet when he did answer me, he spoke directly and coherently. I didn't know what to make of it. When he first came into the car I had been a little frightened. Now I only felt terribly curious and a little sorry.

"Do you have a trade?" I was glad to come to that question. You know a good deal about a man when you know what line of work he follows and it always leads to further conversation.

"Ah ginerally follows the mines," he said.

"Now," I thought, "we're getting somewhere."

But just then we hit a stretch of unpaved road where the mud was thick and the ruts were hard to follow. I had to stop talking and watch what I was doing. And when we came to paved road again, I had lost him.

I tried again to make him talk. It was no use. He didn't even hear me. Then, finally, his silence shamed me. He was a man lost somewhere within his own soul, only asking to be left alone. I felt wrong to keep thrusting at his privacy.

So for about four hours we drove in silence. For me those hours were almost unendurable. I have never seen such rigidity in a human being. He sat straight up in the car, his outward eye fixed on the road in front, his inward eye seeing nothing. He didn't know I was in the car, he didn't know he was in the car at all, he didn't feel the rain that kept sloshing in on him through the rent in the side curtains. He sat like a slab of moulded rock and only from his breathing could I be sure that he was alive. His breathing was heavy.

Only once in that long trip did he change his posture. That was when he was seized with a fit of coughing. It was a fierce, hacking cough that shook his big body from side to side and doubled him over like a child with the whooping cough. He was trying to cough something up—I could hear the phlegm in his chest—but he couldn't succeed. Inside him there was an ugly scraping sound as though cold metal were being rubbed on the bone of his ribs, and he kept spitting and shaking his head.

It took almost three minutes for the fit to subside. Then he turned

around to me and said, "Excuse me, friend." That was all. He was quiet again.

I felt awful. There were times when I wanted to stop the car and tell him to get out. I made up a dozen good excuses for cutting the trip short. But I couldn't do it. I was consumed by a curiosity to know what was wrong with the man. I hoped that before we parted, perhaps even as he got out of the car, he would tell me what it was or say something that would give me a clue.

I thought of the cough and wondered if it were T.B. I thought of cases of sleeping sickness I had seen and of a boxer who was punch drunk. But none of these things seemed to fit. Nothing physical seemed to explain this dark, terrible silence, this intense, all-exclusive absorption within himself.

Hour after hour of rain and darkness!

Once we passed the slate dump of a mine. The rain had made the surface burst into flame and the blue and red patches flickering in a kind of witch glow on a hill of black seemed to attract my companion. He turned his head to look at it, but he didn't speak, and I said nothing.

And again the silence and rain! Occasionally a mine tinkle with the cold, drear, smoke smell of the dump and the oil lamps in the broken down shacks where the miners live. Then the black road again and the shapeless bulk of the mountains.

We reached Weston at about eight o'clock. I was tired and chilled and hungry. I stopped in front of a café and turned to the man.

"Ah reckon this is hit," he said.

"Yes," I answered. I was surprised. I had not expected him to know that we had arrived. Then I tried a final plunge. "Will you have a cup of coffee with me?"

"Yes," he replied, "thank you, friend."

The "thank you" told me a lot. I knew from the way he said it that he wanted the coffee but couldn't pay for it; that he had taken my offer to be one of hospitality and was grateful. I was happy I had asked him.

We went inside. For the first time since I had come upon him in the tunnel he seemed human. He didn't talk, but he didn't slip inside himself either. He just sat down at the counter and waited for his coffee. When it came, he drank it slowly, holding the cup in both hands as though to warm them.

When he had finished, I asked him if he wouldn't like a sandwich. He turned around to me and smiled. It was a very gentle, a very patient smile. His big, lumpy face seemed to light up with it and become understanding and sweet and gentle.

The smile shook me all through. It didn't warm me—it make me

feel sick inside. It was like watching a corpse begin to stir. I wanted to cry out "My God, you poor man!"

Then he spoke to me. His face retained that smile and I could see the big, horse teeth stained by tobacco.

"You've bin right nice to me, friend, an' ah do appreciate it."

"That's all right," I mumbled.

He kept looking at me. I knew he was going to say something else and I was afraid of it.

"Would yuh do me a faveh?"

"Yes," I said.

He spoke softly. "Ah've got a letter here that ah done writ to mah woman, but ah can't write very good. Would you all be kind enough to write it ovah for me so it'd be proper like?"

"Yes," I said, "I'd be glad to."

"Ah kin tell you all know how to write real well," he said, and smiled.

"Yes."

He opened his blue shirt. Under his thick woolen underwear there was a sheet of paper fastened by a safety pin. He handed it to me. It was moist and warm and the damp odor of wet cloth and the slightly sour odor of his flesh clung to it.

I asked the counterman for a sheet of paper. He brought me one. This is the letter I copied. I put it down here in his own script.

My dere wife——

i am awritin this yere leta to tell you somethin i did not tell you afore i lef frum home. There is a cause to wy i am not able to get me any job at the mines. i told you hit was frum work abein slack. But this haint so.

Hit comes frum the time the mine was shut down an i worked in the tunel nere Gauley Bridge where the govinment is turnin the river inside the mounten. The mine supers say they wont hire any men war worked in thet tunel.

Hit all comes frum thet rock that we all had to dril. Thet rock was silica and hit was most all of hit glass. The powder frum this glass has got into the lungs of all the men war worked in thet tunel thru their breathin. And this has given to all of us a sickness. The doctors writ it down for me. Hit is silicosis. Hit makes the lungs to git all scab like and then it stops the breathin.

Bein as our hom is a good peece frum town you aint heerd about Tom Prescott and Hansy MCCulloh having died two days back. But wen i heerd this i went to see the doctor.

The doctor says i hev got me thet sickness like Tom Prescott and thet is the reeson wy i am coughin sometime. My lungs is agittin scab like. There is in all ova a hondred men war have this death sickness frum the tunel. It is a turible plague becus the doctor says this wud not be so

if the company had gave us masks to ware an put a right fan sistem in the tunel.

So i am agoin away becus the doctor says i will be dead in about fore months.

i figger on gettin some work maybe in other parts. i will send you all my money till i caint work no mohr.

i did not want i should be a burdin upon you all at hum. So thet is wy i hev gone away.

i think wen you doan here frum me no mohr you orter go to your grandmaws up in the mountens at Kilney Run. You kin live there an she will take keer of you an the young one.

i hope you will be well an keep the young one out of the mines. Doan let him work there.

Doan think hard on me for agoin away and doan feel bad. But wen the young one is agrowed up you tell him wat the company has done to me.

i reckon after a bit you shud try to git you anotha man. You are a young woman yit.

Your loving husband,  
Jack Pitckett.

When I handed him the copy of his letter, he read it over. It took him a long time. Finally he folded it up and pinned it to his undershirt. His big, lumpy face was sweet and gentle. "Thank you, friend," he said. Then, very softly, with his head hanging a little—"Ahm feelin' bad about this a-happenin' t'me. Mah wife was a good woman." He paused. And then, as though talking to himself, so low I could hardly hear it, "Ahm feelin' right bad."

As he said this, I looked into his face. Slowly the life was going out of his eyes. It seemed to recede and go deep into the sockets like the flame of a candle going into the night. Over the eyeballs came that dull glaze. I had lost him. He sat deep within himself in his sorrowful, dark absorption.

That was all. We sat together. In me there was only mute emotion—pity and love for him, and a cold, deep hatred for what had killed him.

Presently he arose. He did not speak. Nor did I. I saw his thick, broad back in the blue work shirt as he stood by the door. Then he moved out into the darkness and rain.

## STRIKE! \*

WILLIAM ROLLINS, JR.

MICKY STOOD at her bench, her hands ready. With lowered head she watched Ramon at the front of the room, his fingers on the switch, his eyes on the clock.

Seventhirty. He threw down the switch—

Clamp them on; snap them off; UP; down. UP and down. She saw him run up the three steps, push through the doors and disappear; she snapped one on; snapped another on. *Ramon*, she whispered. Her head was lowered between upraised moving arms to hide her eyes.

He was probably in Watkins' office now, sitting on her desk, swinging his legs, "Micky?" he'll be saying, "You mean Micky Bonner? oh, she's allright; and as I was saying—" Only that lady didn't come to work until nine o'clock. She raised her eyes to her spindles; her tightpressed lips quivered as she clamped a bobbin on, snapped one off, thinking of him up there, leaving her here in the darkness of the sunlit room, in the silence of the clamp, clamp, girls, girls, snapping them off, clamping them on— But she'd pay him back! A wave of anger swept her, and she glared at the closed doors; he could talk to Watkins all he wanted to, and then he'd turn around and find he was boss of an empty room; *in just a couple of hours!* she exalted . . . and then she was limp, snapping a bobbin off. She gazed at her bench with a chuckle, half a whimper; what difference would it make to him what *she* did?

She snapped a bobbin off, and thought of that cottage just out of town on the little hill back from the road. They had walked out that way one sunny Sunday, and Ramon, seeing the *for rent* sign, suddenly pulled her up the path. He didn't say a word; just grinned, his eyes shining; and they stood at the foot of the steps talking to the old Italian with the tight collar and unbuttoned black vest; talking to him, arm in arm, like an engaged couple.

"Look at that grapevine, Micky!" Ramon pointed to the vine-covered terrace and swung around to her. "See?" His eyes were so eager! "You can make the wine, and we can sit out and have supper there after I get home from work!" . . . And then there was that time just after she met him.

She thought of him only as a nice Portugee kid then; and they were walking through the shortcut, up to the highroad, home, swishing

\* From *The Shadow Before*. Copyright 1934. By permission of Robert M. McBride.

through the dead autumn leaves. He was behind her, talking; and all at once he grabbed her arm and swung her around.

"I'm in love with you," he said, and his eyes were terribly intent; "you're more than a sister to me, you're more than my own mother!" Seeing her amazement, he stamped impatiently. "You understand?" he cried.

She blinked the tears away, giggling at the memory, snapping a bobbin off, snapping another off. Moving her hands up and down, she stared at the closed door above the three steps; and an emptiness gnawed at her, so that she felt dizzy in the swirling, clashing, shouting. The room was a sweep of dead gray, spotted black by the machines, the noises; the world beyond was dead gray, stretching on, without one break, one hope. She had to cry out (she snapped a bobbin off), she had to run to him, throw herself on her knees, Ramon, *Ramon*—

"Well, are you all set?"

Marvin was grinning there beside her. She grinned back as her fingers played along the spindles.

"All set." She cleared her throat "Yeh."

"All the girls going out?"

"All the ones I dared talk to. I ain't had a chance to talk to them today."

"Better get them ready. The committee in this building's going to meet just outside of Thayer's office. Eleventhirty sharp, you know." He winked back at her as he walked up the aisle, toward the doors.

And slowly, as she watched him go, as her fingers mechanically played up and down, a new feeling was born in her.

She felt it grow. Surprised, a little unsure at first, she stood very still (save for her moving hands). She felt it spread warmly inside her, she knew very consciously when it rose to flicker in her eyes. It was something new; not like love, cloying, fearful, heart-rending; it was fresh, clear, like cold air deep in her lungs, it was overwhelming, pitiless, like the triumphant march of an unvanquished army, like the rise to crescendo of drums and bagpipes! it was vast, it was as dazzlingly bright as the pain had been dark, it was one word:

**STRIKE!**

She laughed in surprise. She looked at the closed doors, and for the first time her hands stopped their mechanical motion. She thought of Ramon, sitting on Miss Watkins' desk, dangling his legs, and she laughed with conscious wistfulness, as one should be wistful about the dead. "Ramon," she whispered, tempting, challenging, the old love. She looked at the bobbin in her hand, then slung it on the bench.

She crossed to the girls on the other side of the aisle.



Clamp them on: snap them off . . .

The sound, muffled by the closed doors of the mill rooms and his office, seeped into Thayer, an overtone to his conversations, his work, his thoughts. Like the rhythm of his pumping blood, the rhythm of his respiration, came this dull sullen rhythm, unnoticed, but life-sustaining; and when it stopped, as when his breathing and his heart stopped, that would be the end. But there would be no end.

Clamp them on; snap them off. And across the room was the more intimate snap, yap, of Miss Watkins' typewriter: *tickatactack-tack, tickatactack-tack* . . . Thayer laid down his pen, straightened himself, and looked up at the wall clock (tick . . . tick . . . tick) above him.

"Miss Watkins." His voice was low; he did not turn.

Miss Watkins glanced around, her fingers motionless above the typewriter. She waited, eyebrows respectfully raised.

"Has there been . . . have you heard any complaints about the cut?"

"No, sir, I haven't."

He nodded slowly to the clock.

"There's probably . . . a little discontent, though . . ." He turned slightly, looked now at the wall calendar; "lowering their income like that?"

"Yes sir . . . Still, the cut wasn't very large, sir."

He nodded imperceptibly to the calendar; turned back to the clock. Miss Watkins waited, fingers suspended.

Clamp them on; snap them off— She turned back to her machine: *tickatactack-tack, tickatactack-tack* . . .

A moment longer Thayer stared at the clock; then he took up his pen, and recommended his listing of the production for the week of the 26th.

In 1637, William Thayer, with his wife, Hannabel (Smith) landed in Salem. Through a bitter cold winter, they cut down the trees, husband and wife along with their neighbors; they trimmed the logs and built their cabin. They built a city by the power of their muscles, the swing of their arms, saw it slowly rise into a community of comfort; and William Thayer's sons moved on, hewed their way westward through a forest wilderness and a race of savages. They moved on again two generations later, leaving towns, villages, behind them: Fitchburg, Deerfield, Greenfield. They moved west, then up into Vermont. They fought off the Indians and the French, and then the Indians and the British; they were carpenters, builders; and then, their building done, millers, wheelwrights, tradesmen, in their solidly, bitterly, built communities . . . and sipping their scarlet wine in cafés, lolling beneath cool arbors or on sunwarmed meadows, in Portugal, Sicily, the African islands, these people lazed away their lives, soft

guitars strumming, indolent voices calling across the still blue waters of the Mediterranean and South Atlantic; (he drew a block of paper toward him to commence his report;) *and now they're discontented!*

His head jerked up.

Oh, yes, they're discontented, all right, when they find themselves suddenly halted in their easygoing joyride! He smiled, tightlipped, at the clock and a shiver passed over him. They come here, soft, flabby, to the Land of Plenty, made plentiful by lean hard labor—(he looked at his clenched fist; why, that could knock out any of them!) They play around, tail around, while we work, work, pull—(his muscular neck tightened against his stiff collar;) and then they're discontented, they stick out their hands for more of our sweat money, and get it, GET IT, THE GODDAMNED—

Cut it.

His hand, clutching the pen, trembled.

Stop. Relax, like Doc said.

He slumped in his chair, mouth fallen open, hands carefully limp. He waited a half minute, watching the clock... and then he drew himself up, stomach in, tight, solid, his collar gripping his firm neck. He pulled in his belt, sensing his slimness. He leaned over his work.

Spinningroom. Production for the week of July 5th. Frame No. 1...

But this may be the beginning of rejuvenation. All over the country wages are being lowered, and once again America will start at rock bottom and build itself up, slowly, solidly, giving the best in brain and brawn, and receiving in exchange the coin merited. I am worth, in coin of the nation, so much per hour, so many days in the year; I am higher in the scale than they because I have proven by intelligence and diligence I am worth just so much more, as Ramon is worth more—and do they think they can slobber along and keep up with him do they think they can fool around loaf grow fat and make his intelligence and hard work show for nothing, well by Christ they can't, we'll show them, I'll, by GOD I'LL—. He checked himself; held his mind suspended.

Clamp them on; snap them off; clamp them on; snap them off.

Quieted, he glanced at the clock.

"Tenthirty, Miss Watkins."

"Yes, sir. I just noticed it." She rose, went to the window and opened it. Dark windclouds were crossing the sky, the wind rushed in, and she contracted against it. She turned and waited until Thayer reached her side, and they both faced the gray sky above the tenements across the court. Miss Watkins, shivering in the cold air, jerked in her chin, threw out her stomach, and with noisy breaths, flapped her

outstretched arms, up and down, up, down, dispiritedly, eyeing darkly the windowframe.

But Thayer's eyes glittered. He smiled grimly as he felt the keen air cut into his lungs, searching out and purifying his whole body. He felt his muscles ache, pressed back his shoulders and neck until it was nearly unbearable; and held them there. He pulled at his belt, but there were no more notches. (Have to cut another.) For five minutes he stood, stretching every muscle, his toes, legs, thighs, one after another, until he reached his head; he worked his jaw and even his eyebrows. Then he turned back to his seat.

The window slammed down and Miss Watkins returned to her desk, blowing on her fingers.

"Feel a million times better now," murmured Thayer.

"Yes, sir; one feels refreshed," she replied, sitting on her hands.

He took up his pen, rubbed it along his lips, gazing at the wall. But against his will he peered at her, sitting there on her hands.

Warm there; almost touching. But she's not thinking about it, not conscious what it means to me. He turned back. Pure girl, untouched, unbroken—clothes stained with hot acrid blood—. He stood up.

He loosened his belt, crossing to the window, where he stared down at the gray windswept court.

But the picture, the smell, was still there; like that time in the bathroom he found Marjorie's—JESUS!

*pebbles, pebbles, gray gray pebbles, buildings, windswept sky . . .*

He tightened his belt and went back to his desk.

The door noiselessly opened (*clamp them on; snap—*) and shut again, and Thayer looked up. Ramon was standing there, his eyes uneasy.

He smiled to the young man; fresh, cleanlimbed, no sex business. "Good morning, Ramon!"

Ramon smiled back.

"Good morning sir." He glanced at Miss Watkins. "Good morning," he murmured.

She looked up brightly. "Good morning, Ramon." *Tickatactack-tack, tickatactack-tack*. Thayer leaned back.

"Well, what's new, young man?"

Ramon's smile faded. He glanced at his foot and up again.

"I guess they're sort of sore, sir," he said in lowered voice. "About the cut." He jerked back his head in the direction of the muffled rumble.

Thayer's smile did not disappear; it tightened. He watched Ramon with sharp humorous eyes.

"They are, are they?" he asked, slowly. "But I guess we're ready for them, hey, Ramon?"

Ramon looked down again, kicking at the floor.

"Oh, they're just shooting their fac—just talking, that's all," he murmured.

"Yes, but . . . if they start anything, Ramon . . ." He waited for Ramon to look up; Ramon looked up; "we're ready for them, you and I. Hah?"

Ramon still kicked at the floor; but his eyes were caught by his boss's. He forced a flickering smile.

"Yes, sir . . ." he said in a low voice.

Clamp them on; snap them off . . .

and clamp them on and snap them off and clamp them on and snap them off—

First to those beside her she talked with lowered voice; and then to those beyond. The girls she talked with gathered in a huddle, whispering when she left them, leaving their spindles darting UP and down; UP, down.

Clamp them on and snap them off and clamp them on and snap them off—

The second watched her furtively, and then found business somewhere else. And she circled wider; leaving behind small groups of girls, whispering, murmuring, grumbling; clamp them on and snap them off—. She watched the clock.

And at last she started up the aisle, up the steps; turned, grinned, with a farewell wave to the girls below who all stood along the aisles with no one now at "their" machines, that worked alone, UP and down; with no one there to clamp them on and snap them off and clamp—

She banged open the doors, leaving them open. Three boys, committeemembers, were coming quietly up the corridor; and then she saw Doucet come out of the spinningroom, leaving those doors open too. She waited for them, giggling, while they grinned sheepishly back; and hearts pounding, without a word, they continued along the corridor; halting in silence at the foot of the stairs for the two young men and the girl who came noiselessly down to join them.

*Clamp them on; snap them off . . .*

Louder, now that the mill room doors were open, came the rumble to the three people in Thayer's office.

*Clamp them on; snap them off . . .*

Silent, ears alert, Miss Watkins' fingers held motionless above the keyboard, they listened to the footsteps that came hesitating up

the corridor. Thayer half rose. Then he sank back and lifted his telephone receiver.

"Mr. Holbrook," he said in a low voice into the mouthpiece. He gazed at the bare floor, feeling the two faces watching him. *Clamp them on; snap them off; clamp them on—*; he turned back to the mouthpiece.

"Holbrook? Thayer." His voice was quiet. "Any trouble in your building? . . . Little uneasiness here . . . No; paying no attention to it unless they force—what? The final decision, hah? No conference, no nothing?" A slit of a smile spread on his lips. "Good! . . . Oh, it'll be all right, I'm not worrying . . . Yeah . . . See you later." He put down the receiver and looked at Ramon, still smiling.

"The cut is the final decision of Mr. Baumann and the directors," he said. "No conference, no nothing. Take it or leave it." Ramon looked down at his wriggling foot.

*Clamp them on; snap them off; clamp them on; snap them off.* The footsteps had halted outside the door. Now there was a knock.

"Come in!" The door opened.

CLAMP THEM ON; SNAP THEM OFF; CLAMP THEM ON; SNAP THEM OFF.

Six men and two girls pushed in and huddled near the open door. Most of them looked uneasily at Thayer, and then dropped their eyes under his direct cold gaze; all save Doucet and Micky. Doucet's grin was selfconscious, but his blue eyes were as hard as the superintendent's as he returned his gaze. Wondering, pitying, Micky regarded Ramon who had eased back against the wall, kicking his heel against it and looking down.

CLAMP THEM ON; SNAP THEM OFF; CLAMP THEM ON; SNAP THEM OFF.

"You wanted to see me?"

A silence; then a low hissing *yessir*, scarcely audible.

"And you left your machines running to do it?"

Micky swung around to him.

"It's the sectionhand's job to turn them off," she snapped; "and he wasn't there." Her eyes shone, her face was tense with conscious triumph. Ramon cleared his throat.

"I'll go turn—"

"*Ramon!*" Thayer waved his hands, his eyes on the committee. Ramon, who had stood upright, again slouched back. "It's the sectionhand's job," said Thayer, evenly, "to turn them on at seven-thirty in the morning, and again at one in the afternoon; and to turn them off at noon and at five-thirty. No other time. And it's your jobs to stay by them and work them, the men in their rooms as well as the girls in Ramon's."

"It's our job to stay by them, is it, after you cutting us ten percent, and you and Ramon hanging around here leading the life of Riley!"

"Aw, Micky..."

Thayer looked down at his carefully drumming fingers, then up again.

"I'm not used to having the hands talk to me in that fashion, young lady," he said slowly; "however, if you—"

"Then lead us to somebody what is! That's what we've come here for like the committees in the other buildings!"

"—however, if you have any complaint to make, I will hear it and see what can be done about it."

"Complaint to make! We ain't making no complaint!" she cried, glaring at him and feeling her passionate voice batter the helpless boy against the wall; "we're just here demanding what's ours, and then you bosses here can take the gravy and wallow to your necks in it, it's nothing to me, I ain't in your class! I'm just after what's coming to me, and so are the rest of us!"

"Aw, Micky..." Ramon looked up, to see Doucet's cold eyes turned on him. Sullenly, he tried to return the gaze, and then looked down again. I'll murder you, you bastard, he thought.

Thayer was tapping his pen, slowly and thoughtfully, on his desk. Now, smiling, he looked up at Micky.

"You're going to get what's coming to you, young lady." He dipped his pen in the ink and drew a pad toward him. "What is the young lady's name, Ramon?" he asked, his pen poised.

Ramon's heel, about to tap the wall, stopped short. He glanced swiftly up at Micky. Micky was smiling; her triumphant eyes were like needles in his. He dropped his eyes.

"Ramon? I asked you..."

"Kathleen Bonner..." he murmured.

"Kath— You spell it with a K?" Thayer politely asked her.

"I spell it with a K. K-A-T-H-L-E-E-N! and C-A-T, CAT!"

"Yes... thank you." He was writing, "and d-o-g, dog. Kathleen, Bon-ner... Well Miss Bonner." He looked up. "You won't have any more cause for complaint about wages in the Baumann-Jones Mill after today. If you will see the paymaster on your way out." Avoiding Doucet's gaze, leveled again on him, he turned to the group huddled behind Micky. "And is there anything I can do for you?" he asked.

Micky turned to look at them. They looked at her, at one another, glanced at Thayer from the corner of their eyes. Her hands rose to her hips; she tapped her foot, holding herself in.

"Nothing at all, gentlemen?"

Silence; while Micky waited. The other girl wet her lips; then closed her mouth again.

"WELL? Why don't you open your face, you poor fishes, what do you suppose God gave you a tongue for?"

"You know what He gave it for, don't you, young lady?" Thayer said pleasantly.

"Damn right and I do—WELL?"

Doucet, suddenly aware, glanced at her, and then stepped quietly forward. But Thayer held up his hand.

"Before you speak, however," he said, "I might as well tell you it's a waste of time talking about the wagecut. I've just received notification that it's the final decision of Mr. Baumann and the directors. No conferences; no anything at all. I'm afraid you must take it, or—like this young lady—leave it."

Doucet turned questioningly to the others. Thayer's face tightened.

"There's no need of conferring here—or anywhere. Take it or leave it— And if you don't like it, if you want higher wages, get to work, use a little elbow grease *and a little gray* MATTER AND—" His mouth clamped shut; he looked down at his desk.

"Well?" Micky turned to the group behind her. "You heard what he said, didn't you?" A grin flickered beneath her glaring eyes.

They looked quickly at one another; nodded to her. Doucet herded them out the door.

At the threshold Micky turned back.

"Goodbye to you, Mr. Thayer," she said, her eyes shining; "and I'm thinking the Baumann-Jones Mill won't have to worry about paying the hands for a while yet! And goodbye to you, Mr. —" She stopped as she saw the lonely figure slouched against the wall, wistful eyes on her. "And you won't come along with the crowd, Ramon?" she asked, softly.

He looked down; kicked back at the wall. Thayer's face hardened.

"Well, Ramon?"

"Yes, sir—I—" He looked up at Micky. "I guess I'll stay here, Micky," he said.

They hurried back down the corridor, their feet clattering now, their voices sharp, excited. As they passed the windingroom, the girls were bunched at the opened doors; their machines were turned off. "Come on!" called the committee; "everybody out to the court!" The girls' hushed voices leaped shrilly. Shouting, chattering, laughing, they fell in behind. The men from the spinningroom joined them; from the weavingroom. They came pouring down from the third and fourth floors where they had been eagerly waiting. The scuffle of their feet,

their excited voices, vibrated hollowly in the machinestilled silence. They went down the stairs, out to the court.

They were pouring out from the other doors. They closed in a tight mass in the center that widened, widened, as more and more poured out; until at last they filled the court, a dark, agitated, compact mass. They were like animals released from a cage, a little frightened in the unaccustomed freedom of the windy, cloud-darkened court, but exhilarated; laughing, punching, kidding, giddy; their voices, sharp, deep, or shrill, fused in a mighty rumble, to rise to the officials and officeworkers watching in the windows above.

"*Fellow workers!*" The thin highpitched voice pierced the swollen rumble, rising faint but clear to the listeners behind the closed windows. The noise subsided. The crowd looked up, to see Marvin standing on a box in their middle. He waited, his hand upheld for silence.

"*Fellow workers,*" he commenced again; "*we've just come from the bosses. Our committees have gone to all the bosses in every building of the Baumann-Jones Mill. They went to them to ask them if we couldn't have a conference with them. Just a conference to talk over this wagecut they've given us. And do you know what they said?*"

"*They said there wouldn't be no conference. They said we could take the wagecut or leave it. They wouldn't talk to us. Kicked us out their offices and told us to go back to our looms and slave for them. They got to make sure of their dividends. To HELL if we starve. All right, fellow workers; are you going to take that lying down?"*

"NO!"

"*Are you going to take the wage cut, or leave it?"*

"LEAVE IT!"

"*All right. Come up here, Fellow Worker Thumado . . .*"

"*Fellows and Girls.*"

"*I have been working at the Baumann-Jones Mill since before the War. I was making \$24 a week in 1921. Then they cut us four times: They cut us in 1924, cut us so I was only making \$19 a week. Then they cut us in 1926—all right, Marvin, I'm hurrying. Well, I'm only making \$11 now and I got a wife and two kids to feed. Is that fair?"*

"NO!"

"*I work like hell nine hours a day and my kids are hungry. And they live on the dividends what we make for them and they got automobiles and beautiful homes up on the hill. Is that fair?"*

"NO!"

"*All right. All right, Micky . . .*"

"*Fellows and girls, let's cut the talk. We didn't come out here to talk, did we?"*

"NO!"



*"We come out here because our bosses want to cut our wages what are too low already. We come out here because we tried to talk to them and they wouldn't talk to us. Allright, fellows and girls, there's just one thing we can do, and you know what it is. Are we going to do it, are we going to show them? What is it, fellows and girls?"*

A moment's dead silence. Then, with the fearful impact of the word itself :

"STRIKE!"

From up near the gate sounded a girl's clear voice.

*"C'est la lutte finale—"*

Immediately it was taken up in English by Marvin's original committee. A few old Portuguese followed; a halfdozen Poles.

*"Let each stand in his place . . ."*

It rose here and there in the crowd. In English, Portuguese, French, Greek, Polish. Some remembered it dimly from the past and hummed it; some followed and hummed it; everybody made some kind of sound. And it blended, rose to the listening watchers at the windows, to the lowhung clouds that scuttled darkly, silently by.

"THE INTERNATIONAL  
SHALL BE THE HUMAN RACE!"

They crowded through the gate, singing, yelling, whistling through their teeth. Someone jerked the watchman's cap over his nose, and when he raised it, another jerked it down, and then another jerked it down. They swept along the street behind their leaders, a dark formless unwieldy mob, fiercely exultant.

## AARONS\*

EDWIN SEAVER

AFTER AARONS left the office we all felt much better. Not that Aarons was a bad sort. On the contrary we all liked him quite a lot even though he was a Jew. Yet somehow we felt relieved when one day, out of a clear sky, Aarons rose from his desk and slamming a drawer shut with such a bang we all jumped in our chairs, said :

"I'm through."

Then he took his hat and coat and without saying goodbye to anybody closed the door behind him.

We were all so surprised nobody even thought of asking Aarons where he was going. We simply sat there staring at each other. It

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was so still in the office you could hear the clock on Mr. Mold's desk ticking away patiently.

Suddenly we all began talking and laughing at once. We actually became hilarious and laughed at each other's remarks as if everything that was said was unbearably funny.

"The crazy Jew," Mr. Mold said, his mouth still open in amazement, "now what do you suppose has bitten him?"

"Oh lord," gasped Miss Childe, throwing up her hands and leaning back in her chair so that her skirt came up way over her knees, "that's the richest yet."

As for Mr. Nash, he was beside himself. Taking a handful of papers from his wastebasket he hurled them into the air and cried:

"Hurrah for Aarons! There's one Jew less in the Company."

It was as if a load had suddenly dropped from our shoulders. The very atmosphere of the office seemed lighter now and when we returned to our typewriters we all felt unusually elated. Nothing so remarkable had happened in the office for years.

When you come right down to it I guess we didn't like Aarons so much after all. He was a strange yid; we could never make him out.

I suppose Aarons was what you might call a Red. I mean he was a born trouble maker. Before he came to the office we all got along together fine. As members of the editorial bureau we felt that we were important factors in the Company. After all it was we who presented the Company to the public; it was we who wrote the bosses' speeches for them. In our way we were, as the vice president-commercial relations once said to us in conference, artists.

As soon as Aarons came all that went by the board. What I mean is he made us all feel kind of foolish and before we knew what had happened we were all playing up to him. It wasn't any one thing in particular that he did. I guess it was just the fact that he was among us upset the whole morale of the office. We began to make fun of our work. We would read aloud to each other the most serious parts of a speech or an article we were preparing just to get a laugh.

"How's that for bunk?" we would say, winking to one another or sticking our tongue in our cheek and pulling a sly face.

Now I ask you, is that right? It seems to me a fellow owes something to the Company that's hiring him. Deuce take it, if we don't like our jobs we know what we can do. A man's got to feel some respect for himself and his work. Aarons robbed us of our self-respect. Every day we took our jobs more and more as a joke. We made out to each other we were getting real reckless and didn't give a hang for anything or anybody but underneath it all I think we were beginning to get scared of ourselves.

You see, it was affecting our work. We no longer could turn

out copy the way we used to. It became harder and harder to write inspirationally the way the boss wanted us to and we would sit for hours before our machines tearing up sheet after sheet of paper and cursing ourselves and our jobs. But the more fun Aarons made of his work the better copy he turned out. You had to hand it to him.

"When you're a harlot you have to know how, eh boys?" he would say, banging away at his machine and talking all the time. And he would grin down his long nose as if we were the big joke.

Now what kind of way is that for a fellow to talk about his work, especially with ladies in the office. That's the trouble with these Jews; they never know when to stop. It used to make me sick to see Miss Childe shining up to Aarons and trying to appear clever just to get him to say something nice about her copy.

But the climax came one day when the boss called us into conference. What do you suppose he said? He said we were all letting up on our jobs except Aarons and that Aarons was the only one that was worth anything to him.

"You could all take a lesson from Aarons," the boss said. "When he writes he puts his whole heart into it. He convinces you in whatever he does because he's convinced before he puts down a word on paper. I want to see more of his conviction in your work hereafter."

And there was Aarons sitting there all the time as cool as you please. It's a wonder we didn't choke on the boss' words. Believe me we felt pretty cheap, I can tell you.

After we got back to our desks Aarons didn't say anything for some time. He sat there holding his head in his hands as if he had a headache. He had never been so quiet before.

"There's no fool like an old fool, eh Mr. Aarons," Miss Childe said sort of laughing, but you could see she was bursting with envy for what the boss had said to him.

Aarons didn't even answer her. He lifted his head and speaking in a voice we had never heard before, almost as if he were begging Mr. Mold to listen to him, he said :

"Mold, you've got a wife and child, you'll understand me. Suppose you couldn't get a job, suppose no matter how hard you tried you couldn't fit in anywhere, would you let your wife walk the streets for you?"

Mr. Mold was so surprised he actually turned pale.

"Why, what do you mean?" he stammered.

"Don't get angry please," Aarons went on in that strange pleading voice that was so new to us. "Look at it another way. Suppose you didn't want another job, you just couldn't stick it any longer, see, and you knew you could never be satisfied with another job, would

you let your wife and child go shift for themselves sooner than go on humiliating yourself?"

Mr. Mold stared at Aarons and then a broad grin broke over his face.

"Say what are you up to now, Aarons?" he said, and we all laughed with relief to think Aarons was only joking again.

But Aarons didn't laugh at all. He merely shrugged his shoulders and suddenly he looked extraordinarily sad as if he were going to cry. Then he got up, went over to the washstand in the corner of the office and began washing his hands.

Mr. Nash rapped his forehead with his knuckles and nodded to us as much as to say: "I told you so."

And the next thing we knew Aarons had quit.

## DEATH OF A CENTURY

PHILIP STEVENSON

NEXT DAY, the reactionary press—there was still a reactionary press in those days—came out and said we'd murdered him. Now I was there and saw the whole thing. Not that it made any difference, unless you take it, like I do, as a typical case. Seems to me that old James T. stands pretty well for his whole time and his whole class. Anyhow, here's the truth. Make what you can out of it.

Old James T. is almost forgotten now. Chances are, our kids never heard of him. So I better remind you.

He was born about the time the factory system began to dominate production in this country. Marx and Engels hadn't written the Manifesto yet, and Lincoln, out in the Illinois Legislature, hadn't yet said, "Any people anywhere have the right to rise up and shake off the existing government and form a new one." The only hurdle between the capitalists and the most ruthless exploitation was the Declaration of Independence, and that had gone into the grave along with Jefferson. Old James T. had grown up with the system and been in his prime when the system was in its prime—at the peak of long hours, low wages, and child labor. As soon as reforms began to weaken the system as a means of getting supreme power, he dropped that tool and went in for high finance instead—combines and trusts and cutthroat competition all over the world. He made more money by this kind of speculation than he ever could have got by sweating a few thousand wage slaves in factories. Then the trusts were busted—or seemed to be—and he retired and began to pave his road to St. Peter's gate with gifts ranging from new Lincoln pennies to

million-dollar blocks of bonds. This way the people were fooled into thinking the old skinflint had reformed.

But the whole system was on the down grade. You know how things have been for the past few years—the banks flat busted, riots, dictatorships, compromises, new governments every five minutes. Old James T. seemed out of it—you never heard a thing about him except once a year. Then the tory press would come out with a statement that ran something like this:

Plans are going quietly forward for the celebration of James T. Hamstringer's ninety-sixth birthday tomorrow.

The birthday dinner will be served at eight o'clock as usual, and the guests will in all probability include Mr. Hamstringer's three sons, James T. Jr., Ernest Hamstringer, Frank Lee Hamstringer, and their children, James T. 3rd, Faith, Hope, Charity, and Watt Price Hamstringer. It is rumored that James T. Hamstringer Jr., will blow out the ninety-six candles and cut the ninety-six pound cake for his venerable father.

Then, if you remember, the statement would tell how James T. was going to spend every minute of the day, getting up at six, breakfasting heartily, having telegrams of congratulation read aloud to him by his private secretary, transacting business, getting in a round of golf on his private course at Hamstring Hills, and going for an auto ride through our town, Hamstring Falls, and distributing Lincoln pennies to the kids. After dinner there'd be an organ recital by his old friend Minnie Potbergh, aged 87, playing all James T.'s "classical" favorites, like "The Rosary," "The Old Grey Mare," and "Brighten the Corner Where You Are." There'd be a lot about how vigorous the old guy was at ninety-six, how shrewd he was in business matters and how he made his 9 hole course in eight strokes or something.

Yeah. Well, that year old James T. was going to be a hundred. The statement read about the same, except that on account of "unsettled conditions" and the "protests of the nation against allowing Mr. Hamstringer to expose himself," he wasn't going to appear in public. Matter of fact he hadn't appeared in public, not even in Hamstring Falls, for six years at least.

You remember what happened that day. We took power in New York, Washington, Chicago—and a lot of the smaller towns on the outskirts had baby revolutions. Our town had one. Hamstring Fell, if you get me. As soon as we had the town where we wanted it, the boys suggested we go and take over James T.'s estate as a hospital and sanatorium for sick or wounded workers from the big city.

That sounded fair enough, so we started for Hamstring Hills in commandeered cars. At the gate we had quite a scrap with James

T.'s private army, but our farmer boys and workers had the right spirit, and pretty soon the Hessians were on the run and we got in. Later I was told that the Hamstringer family were heading out sixty miles an hour through the gates on the other side of the estate.

The "mansion" had a deserted look. Most of the boys had never been inside the grounds before, and they thought it was something the movies had invented. One or two of them even took off their hats, and I had to remind them that as workers they were good enough for any goddam "mansion" in the cock-eyed world. Then they straightened up and marched through the dozens of rooms like they'd lived there, planning what they'd do with all the space.

By that time we were sure the place was deserted. We went upstairs. I was scribbling figures on a door jamb, estimating we could put a thousand beds in the house, when a kid off the farm came and told me he'd found a locked room. I investigated and found a second door into it, but that was locked too. I told the boys to be ready for trouble, and then we burst the lock with our shoulders.

I remembered hearing a woman scream. As we fell through the busted door a blousy wench was unlocking the other door and hustling out. We let her go. We were too dumb to stop her. Because in the middle of the floor was an old guy on his knees, his hands joined, his eyes turned up and streaming tears. He had on a goddam uniform and was trembling so hard that all his gold buttons and doodads clanked like a suit of armor. But the thing that froze us all was at the side of the room. There was a big carved bed with a canopy and curtains and pink silk sheets and pillows. One of the curtains was pulled back and lying against the pillows was something I mistook for a man-sized lizard. It had a crusty skull and a spiky, beaky nose. Oh, it was a man, all right, but all dried up, with thick cracked skin like a turtle's neck, and yellow like old cardboard. His black glasses made him look like something that's gone blind from living in a cave, and he didn't move, except for his mouth. He had no teeth, but his lips kept sucking in and out sunkenly, making weak little whining noises.

We stood dumb for maybe a full minute. It took us that long to work out that the thing we were looking at was human, and then to connect it up with the old robust old man we read about in the papers.

Eventually the guy in buttons decided we weren't going to cut his throat. He got up on his feet and fawned and bowed, calling us "Gen-tul-men" with a Limejuicer's accent, and "prayed" us not to "distress the mahster fuhther." That was the way he talked.

Bill—the kid who'd found the locked door—couldn't believe his eyes. "Is that old James T.?" he kept saying. "Is it, honest?"

The lizard in bed must have noticed strange voices, because now

his lips began to suck and twist harder. This got old Buttons all excited.

"Gen-tul-men, *gen-tulmen!* Ryahly, I beg of you!" he said, crying again and fluttering his old hands. "Ew, dyah me, dyah, dyah me!"

Seems like we were distressing the "mahster" on his hundred "baathday." Seems like the "mahster" had a message to give the world today, but none of the family had been able to get it. Old Buttons had hopes, though. He wanted to be the one to catch the "mahster's hundredth baathday message" and give it to posterity. "I appeal to your sense of values, gen-tul-men! Think! if the mewment should pahss and this wisdom be lost to mankiyund!"

One of the boys pooped and we all laughed. Buttons had a fit.

"Gen-tul-men, please! I beg of you! His distress is acute!"

The funny little infant's cry was coming pretty regular now, and a skimpy tear trickled out from under the black glasses. You couldn't feel any pity for it, but I was curious—like you might be curious about anything disgusting—a bearded lady or a man with breastworks.

"How long has he been like that?" I asked.

"Ew dyah, I . . ." Buttons acted embarrassed. But I guess he realized the cat was out of the bag. "Some six yahs now, sir."

"You mean he ain't been out of bed for six years?"

"New, sir."

The boys had overheard, and they came crowding round.

"Well, what's all that in the papers about him playin' golf?"

"What about him doin' business every day?"

"Yeah! How about his bein' so goddam vigorous?"

"Tut, tut, gen-tul-men, tut-tut." Buttons was all diplomatic now—didn't act scared no more. Maybe he thought a long story would keep us busy till help came. Anyhow, he seemed plenty ready to talk. He explained—like we was all kids—how the country couldn't afford to know the truth about James T., how it would cause a panic on the stock market and pervert the youth of America to let out that "our most famous citizen," James T. Hamstringer, had gone into his second childhood, like—"like any common laborer!"

He came close to being shot for that remark. There was a scuffle, and Buttons got out in the hall. But we caught him easy enough, and he forgot to be diplomatic after that. He kept raving that we had interrupted James T. "in the act of partaking of 'is narrishment." He said the old mummy would die and he'd be blamed.

"Well fercrysakes," Bill said, "what can he eat? He ain't got any teeth."

Believe it or not, Buttons blushed to the top of his bold scalp.

"I bet he drinks milk like a goddam baby," another said.

"Yeah, out of some special prize cow, too!"

"Cow, sir?" Buttons was up on his dignity now. "Cow, indeed!"

"Well, goat, then. Ordinary milk ain't good enough for His Royal Majesty, is it."

"Goat, sir!" (He pronounced it Gewt.)

I was getting fed up with this. I grabbed his shoulders and shook him.

"Snap out of it," I said. "It *is* milk, ain't it?"

"Ew yes, sir!" Buttons squealed, up high like a woman.

"All right, pop out with the mystery, or I'll bust you one!"

Buttons shrieked for mercy and was all for getting down on his knees again, but we held him up.

"Yooman milk, gen-tul-men! God forgive me for betraying the Secret! Yooman milk! For the pahst three yahs!"

I guess we made him say it a dozen times. I was so dumb it took me awhile to put two and two together—the baby whimper, the wench who'd been here when we came, the way the old lizard's lips moved. But when the boys got it, I had a tough time keeping discipline. They were for wringing the old buzzard's neck on the spot. All his life he'd exploited people, and even now, when he was completely helpless, he was exploiting motherhood, babyhood, stealing the very milk out of the mouths of workers' kids.

I'd wasted too much time out there already—you know all the organization work there was to do that day. So as soon as I got the boys quieted down, I locked up Buttons, posted a guard with him and another with the lizard, and hoofed it into Hamstring Falls.

I didn't get back till late that night. On my way I made up my mind old James T. would have to find a new diet. I didn't want to kill him; I'd already decided to let him keep his bed for the time being, though he'd have to share the room with the wounded who would arrive tomorrow. But if the only way he could keep alive was by using mother's milk, then it was time he kicked off. If the wench gave more milk than her own kid needed, there were always plenty of undernourished workers' babies to feed. I was choosing between a useless old mummy and the kids of the generation that would build a decent society in America, and I was sure that not even the most hard-boiled capitalist journal, if it knew the facts, would object.

I arrived at Hamstring Hills with a truckload of bed and bedding and found a terrible rumpus going on.

It seemed that Buttons had gone cuckoo. At first he'd pleaded with the boys to go to the phone and call up the wench and get her to come out and finish her job. Then he'd call us murderers and threatened that we'd all be shot some day for this. The boys hadn't exactly weakened, but they were farm boys, soft-hearted, and didn't



want the responsibility of old James T. kicking out on them against my orders. They tried to get me by phone, but you know what the phone service was that day.

Meanwhile the lizard was raising his particular feeble kind of hell, whimpering and crying, till his guard, a young farmer with a baby of his own, got nervous and called in the others to discuss in committee what ought to be done.

Jesus! when I think of the energy wasted that day over an old parasite that ought to been butchered years ago! I wish I'd let the boys "wring the buzzard's neck" like they wanted.

Well, the committee decided not to send for the wench. One of them went out and milked one of the Hamstring herd of Jerseys and brought in a can of milk, all foaming and fresh, and started to feed the lizard through a funnel.

I expect you won't believe this, but it's true. The old devil knew the difference. He wouldn't take cow's milk. He gagged and spit and wailed so loud you could almost hear him in the next room. But he wouldn't swallow a drop.

Then the boys thought maybe if Buttons fed him he'd take it. So they brought Buttons in and made him wheedle James T. into taking a swallow or two. But it wasn't no more than that—just a couple of swallows. James T. had another tantrum, and not all Buttons' diplomacy could make him take a drop more.

That was when the boys' patience gave out.

It seems that somewhere in the 21-car Hamstringer garage they found a brand new pressure grease-gun, never used. They brought that in, filled it with milk, struck the tube down the lizard's throat, and pumped milk into him.

It worked fine. Of course Buttons yowled like a maniac, and they had to tie him to the radiator, but afterwards old James T. seemed a lot stronger and began to try to talk. When I came in he was making all kinds of funny noises, interrupted by sucking smacks of those dry papery lips, and Buttons had his ear within an inch of the lizard's mouth, straining to catch the words.

"It's the same!" he yelled at me. "The same thing he's been saying all day!" His face was all lit up like he'd seen the Queen Sheba in her step-ins. "Once more, sir! Oh, just once more!" he said, bending down to the pink silk pillow again.

"Ah O oo O."

That's all I could make out of it, though the old mummy seemed to be trying awful hard to make sense, twisting his mouth into knots and following up with a couple of sucking smacks—*Mff! Mff!*

"Ah O oo Ah ig guee ungd!"

And damned if he didn't try to smile!

Old Buttons' eyes were almost falling out of his head by this time. "It's on the tip of my tang!" he yelled. "Once more, Mr. Hamstringer sir! Your faithful owld retainer prays you! Just *once* more—Ah!"

A kind of spasm had shaken the lizard just then, and he'd belched right in Buttons' ear. Apparently the prize Jersey's milk wasn't so good. Buttons jumped like he'd been shot, wiped his ear, and screamed at us:

"'E's dying! You've killed him! Ah, my sewl, I must try a-gain! Please, Mr. Hamstringer! For the lavv of Gawd and your cantry—once more!"

For a while it didn't look like old James T. would ever do anything again except puke and gag and belch. He made a terrible mess. The old lizard was going out, all right. But Buttons, smeared with filth and sweating like a cart-horse, was bound he wouldn't give up. He kept wiping his ear on the pink silk sheet and "praying" for a repeat of the Message to Posterity.

When James T.'s face suddenly went three shades yellower and the gagging and belching quit, I thought it was over. But it seemed the old boy had one more surprise for the world up his sleeve. Just as we were sure he'd stopped breathing for good, he filled his lungs to the limit and bellowed—at least it was so much louder than his earlier noises that it sounded like a bellow:

"Ah hole you ho! Ah hole you. Ah hib guee a humb'd!"

He ended with a cracked cackly laugh that used up the air in his lungs, and he never filled them again.

I doubt if Buttons realized for five minutes that the old buzzard was dead. His face was—well, like if the Queen of Sheba had took off her step-ins. He was down on his knees again, his arms stretched up and out, his eyes rolled up to the whites, saying over and over in a strangled voice:

"I tewld you sew! I tewld you I'd live to be a handred!—Ew mahster, mahster! Thenk Gawd, I understood!"

# POETRY



## PREFACE

NO ATTEMPT is made here to present a comprehensive historical selection. With some exceptions only the poetic production of the last three or four years has been drawn upon.

It was in this period that a number of relatively established poets (along with critics, playwrights, and novelists, reacting similarly to similar conditions) came to the most important decision taken in recent literary history. This decision was that the art for art's sake doctrine (now made a little more respectable by transformation into the new scientific-sounding term, "objectivity") had proved itself sterile, that literature and social awareness were not incompatible, that poets cannot be asocial at their writing tables and social minded elsewhere, and that to write as whole men they must take their drive from their political convictions and their subject matter from the class struggle whether in its present actual battlegrounds, the industrial strikes, or its effects far behind the lines.

In the same period many of the new talents that have appeared in poetry are proletarian. They have matured in the still rather atmospheric tradition of proletarian poetry, but in the concrete revolutionary realities of the crisis-sharpened class struggle.

Some of the established poets who have at one time or another announced proletarian sympathies are still midway in the process referred to above. It is difficult, at this time, to foretell where their emergence will be. And their work has the same indecisiveness. Therefore, although technically their poetry has often been so good that it meant a wrench to give it up, it had to be omitted. Its colors were too iridescent, the red tints too faint and too vanishing.

Other established poets in making the change have shared a fault common to a large proportion of the newer men, that of mistaking the rapture felt for rapture communicated. Whole sections of their poems and in some cases whole poems are no more than literal revolutionary statements or anecdotes written down in lines. Most of this type of poetry has been omitted, although it might have had a place in an ampler sort of collection. It may be expected that the authors of this type of poetry will, in a development that has already provided examples, either leave poetry for a more direct form of agitation, or accept the labors of poetry.

In the last sentence the word "agitation" is used although it will, very likely, be quoted against us in the bourgeois press. What can we do here, but restate the truism that all poetry agitates for something, that the very choice of a subject states a preference. We are told that

intensity is one of the most desirable qualities of poetry, and that there is nothing in life unfit to be used as a subject for poetry; yet we are told that intensity over a phase of the class struggle is agitation and therefore not poetry.

Lately, however, this type of criticism is being displaced by another. The complaint is made that all proletarian poetry sounds alike, that it is written all in the same mood, that it is all an explosion of wrath against the capitalists, and this makes the reading of it as wearying as firecrackers at 6 P.M. on July Fourth. The answer to this is simply that it is untrue as a reading of these pages will show. Those who make the charge betray either their prejudice or their indifferent acquaintance with proletarian poetry.

Three years ago the fashionable charge against proletarian poetry was that it was one long lamentation over the lot of the worker. The charge was untrue then also, but the difference in the indictment is significant. Then some capitalist opinion considered the revolutionary movement the sort of protest movement customary to hard times, and its literature the customary hard time crying at the gates. Now it hears and resents the disquieting note of rage.

The lamentation is still here, although it has become quantitatively as well as qualitatively, a minor note; and the outburst of anger is here, though not in the frenzied tone that bourgeois critics (to whom all such expression will sound too loud) hear it. With these there are many other expressions—there are orations, descriptions, exhortations, narratives, reveries, satires, epigrams, songs. And in form the diversity is as abundant as in the moods. From the simple tap rhythms of workers songs we go into echoing mazes of counterpoint; and from statements as direct as outcries we go into a diction as subtle, and at times, unfortunately, as obscure, as anything to be found in contemporary poetry.

Before any of the bourgeois critics who will, in spite of the preceding, work out a rationalization to enable him to say over again that this proletarian poetry is all in one mood, and monotonous; before he composes the witty sentences in which this will be expressed with aloof tolerance, let him, we suggest, do one thing: let him pick up his favorite anthology of modern verse, or for that matter any anthology of verse, let him read in it an equal number of lines, and then ask himself, is there less variety in one than in the other? We leave the answer to his own conscience. In fact, if we had more space here it would be used principally for the work of a number of poets whose diversity is such that adequate representation is impossible in the pages at our disposal.

## TO A REVOLUTIONARY GIRL

Violets peer out in streaks  
On the covered ribs  
Of hills, and meet the air  
In a million trembling  
Lips on fields throughout the world:  
Stretch along the highways,  
Small and mighty in the drip of rain:  
Dot the base of mountains,  
Equal purpose in disguise:  
Signal friendship  
To the rocks,  
Take the darkness  
From cave-outlets  
And ravines—

                  you are a girl,  
A revolutionist, a worker  
Sworn to give the last, undaunted jerk  
Of your body and every atom  
Of your mind and heart  
To every other worker  
In the slow, hard fight  
That leads to barricade, to victory  
Against the ruling swine.  
Yet, in the softer regions of your heart,  
The shut-off, personal, illogical  
Disturbance of your mind,  
You long for crumpled 'kerchiefs, notes  
Of nonsense understood  
Only by a lover:  
Long for colors on your dresses,  
Ribboned sleeves, unnecessary buttons:  
Bits of laughter chased and never  
Dying: challenge of a hat  
Buoyant over hair.  
Youth and sex, distinctions  
Still unmarred by centuries of pain,  
Will not be downed, survive  
In spite of hunger, strikes, and riot-guns,  
Sternness in the ranks.  
We frown upon your sensitive demands:  
We do not like romance

In our present time—to us  
 It reeks of flowered screens  
 Over garbage-cans, of pretty words  
 Bringing hollowness, not flesh,  
 To every skeleton.  
 It stamps the living death of Hollywood,  
 The tactics of a factory  
 Shipped in boxes round, price-marked  
 With lying sweetness, trivial  
 Melodrama doping eyes and ears.  
 And yet romance, expelled from actual life,  
 Sneaks back in middle age,  
 Impossible in groan and taunt.  
 Their guilt on top, mould underneath,  
 Revolts us—

but you are a girl.

Your problem cannot be denied.  
 In the Russia of the past  
 Women once pinned flowers  
 To their shoulders, chained to lovers,  
 Flogged by snarling guards  
 In the exile to Siberia,  
 And in the Russia of today  
 Men and women, proud of working-hours,  
 Sturdy, far from blood-steeped tinsel,  
 Take their summer vacations  
 On the steppes, in cleaner games,  
 In flowers, pledges, loyalties,  
 Clear-growing, inevitable,  
 Deepening in their youth.  
 Steal, for an hour, now and then,  
 To your time of violets, the hope  
 Of less impeded tenderness  
 In a freedom yet to come,  
 Then fold it in your heart for unapparent,  
 Secretly unyielding strength  
 On every picket-line throughout the world,  
 Revolutionary girl.

MAXWELL BÖDENHEIM



I, JIM ROGERS (*Mass Recitation for Speaker and Chorus*)

I, Jim Rogers, saw her  
 And I can believe my eyes  
 And you had better believe me  
 Instead of the sugary lies  
 You read in the papers. I saw her  
 Slip into our waiting-room  
 Among us thin blank men  
 And women waiting our turn.  
 But none of us looked like her  
 With her starved-in face, dazed eyes,  
 And the way she clung to the thing  
 Her arms pressed against her bosom.

Somebody told her at noon:  
*Come back tomorrow! Too busy!*  
*Too many here already!*

And she walked out, clutching the thing  
 (In these days of marking time,  
 While the whole tense land marks time),  
 And crept in again the next morning.  
 (None of us knew she had trudged  
 Two times three cold miles;  
 And I can't explain how she did it . . .  
 But I guess her desperate question  
 Made enough of fire to fuel  
 The parcel of flesh and bones  
 And breath that stood for her body).  
 She needed to know why the thing  
 Warmed by the rags in her arms  
 Wouldn't answer her any more,  
 Wouldn't make sound or movement.

She uncovered a pale limp baby.  
 The man who looked at it gasped—  
 Its arms as thin as my finger,  
 The filmy blue eyes staring . . .

"It's dead," he told her. She looked,  
 Glared, and fell to the floor.  
 Some gathered up her body,  
 Others entered a record:

*One infant, American, starved.*  
*Address—?* They'd wait to ask.  
 They waited, asked; she answered:  
 "What do you mean, she's dead?  
 I'll never let you thieves  
 Bury my child alive.  
 Show her to me!" That evening  
 She escaped to god-knows-where—  
 But I've been trying to learn  
 In these days of marking time,  
 While the whole tense land marks time;  
 And I've heard enough already  
 To hold some people guilty.  
 All through Charles Street I trailed her,  
 Where she'd lived the last half-year  
 In a dank, windowless room  
 Feeding the year-old baby  
 Her husband had planted in her  
 On a frantic anniversary:  
 One year his Jersey mill  
 Had closed down its lists of men . . .  
 (In these days of marking time,  
 While the whole tense land marks time).  
 One morning he walked to South Ferry,  
 Begged a nickel from someone  
 And jumped aboard. The ferry  
 Whistled five minutes later,  
 Screamed out: *Man overboard!* . . .

But I guess it didn't surprise her:  
 There's something in being twenty.  
 She rolled up her things, and somehow  
 Made a new home, and somehow  
 Gave birth to child . . . then, of all things,  
 Landed a job—as a wrapper  
 Of toys, stockings, and whatnot  
 In a Fourteenth-street store basement . . .  
 (In these days of marking time  
 While the whole tense land marks time).

Every day: 8 till 8 . . .  
 Not much time for a mother  
 To bring up the young of a nation  
 And make them fit for living. . . .

But she would never complain :  
 'Twas they complained about her :  
*Too weak, too slow, wastes time.*  
 "You'll be so much happier, Miss,  
 In a job that won't drain all your strength!  
 Good-day, and the Firm's best wishes!"

And that's how she came to Charles Street :  
 Too proud to beg, too weak  
 In blood or mind to rebel  
 Alone against this fierce world  
 That fell down over her head  
 And now has caved in her heart  
 And maybe blacked out her mind—

Somewhere on streets of this town,  
 In these days of marking time,  
 Alone and maybe thinking  
 To follow her man in the sea,  
 But maybe to live instead,  
 She's walking now. And if I  
 Knew where to point my voice to  
 I'd yell out : Where are you? Answer!  
 Don't run away!—Wait, answer!  
 Whom are you hiding from?  
 The miserly dog who fired you?  
 Listen : you're not alone!  
 You're never alone any more :  
 All of your brother-millions  
 (Now marking time) will stand by you  
 Once they have learned your tale!

—If any of you who've listened,  
 See some evening walking  
 A frail caved-in white figure  
 That looks as if one time  
 It flowed with warm woman-blood,  
 See her ghosting the street  
 With a film of pain on her eyes,  
 Tell her that I, Jim Rogers,  
 Hold out whatever I own  
 A scrap of food, four walls—  
 Not much to give but enough  
 For rest and for arming the bones—

And a hard swift fist for defence  
 Against the dogs of the world  
 Ready to tear her down. . . .  
 Tell her I offer this  
 In these days of marking time,  
 Till our numberless scattered millions  
 In mill and farm and sweatshop  
 Straining with arms for rebellion,  
 Tie up our forces together  
 To salvage this earth from despair  
 And make it fit for the living.

STANLEY BURNshaw

## NO CREDIT

Whether dinner was pleasant, with the windows lit by gunfire, and  
 no one disagreed; or whether, later, we argued in the  
 park, and there was a touch of vomit-gas in the evening  
 air;  
 whether we found a greater, deeper, more perfect love, by  
 courtesy of Camels, over NBC; whether the comics amused  
 us, or the newspapers carried a hunger death, and published  
 a whitehouse prayer for mother's day;  
 whether the bills were paid or not, whether or not we had our  
 doubts, whether we spoke our minds at Joe's, and the receipt  
 said "Not Redeemable," and the cash-register rang up "No  
 Sale,"  
 whether the truth was then, or later, or whether the best had  
 already gone—  
 Nevertheless, we know; as every turn is measured; as every unavoi-  
 dable risk is known;  
 as nevertheless, the flesh grows old, dies, dies in its only life,  
 is gone;  
 the reflection goes from the mirror; as the shadow, of even a  
 communist, is gone from the wall;  
 as nevertheless, the current is thrown and the wheels revolve;  
 and nevertheless, as the word is spoken and the wheat  
 grows tall and the ships sail on—  
 None but the fool is paid in full; none but the broker, none-but the  
 scab is certain of profit;  
 the sheriff alone may attend a third degree in formal attire; alone,  
 the academy artists multiply in dignity as a trooper's bayonet  
 guards the door;

only Steve, the side-show robot, knows content; only Steve, the mechanical man in love with a photo-electric beam, remains aloof; only Steve, who sits and smokes or stands in salute, is secure;

Steve, whose shoobutton eyes are blind to terror, whose painted ears are deaf to appeal, whose welded breast will never be slashed by bullets, whose armature soul can hold no fear.

KENNETH FEARING

## DIRGE

1-2-3 was the number he played but today the number came 3-2-1; bought his Carbide at 30 and it went to 29; had the favorite at Bowie but the track was slow—

O, executive type, would you like to drive a floating-power, knee-action, silkupholstered six? Wed a Hollywood star? Shoot the course in 58? Draw to the ace, king, jack?

O, fellow with a will who won't take no, watch out for three cigarettes on the same, single match; O, democratic voter born in August under Mars, beware of liquidated rails—

Denouement to denouement, he took a personal pride in the certain, certain way he lived his own, private life,

but nevertheless, they shut off his gas; nevertheless, the bank foreclosed; nevertheless, the landlord called; nevertheless, the radio broke;

And twelve o'clock arrived just once too often,  
just the same he wore one grey tweed suit, bought one straw hat,  
drank one straight Scotch, walked one short step, took one long look, drew one deep breath,

just one too many,

And wow he died as wow he lived,  
going whop to the office, and blooie home to sleep, and biff got married, and bam had children, and oof got fired,  
zowie did he live and zowie did he die,

With who the hell are you at the corner of his casket, and where the hell we going on the right-hand silver knob, and who the hell cares walking second from the end with an American beauty wreath from why the hell not,

very much missed by the circulation staff of the New York Evening Post; deeply, deeply mourned by the B.M.T.,

Wham, Mr. Roosevelt; pow, Sears Roebuck; awk, big dipper; bop, summer rain;

bong, Mr., bong, Mr., bong, Mr., bong.

KENNETH FEARING

## LULLABY

Wide as this night, old as this night is old and young as it is young,  
 still as this, strange as this,  
 filled as this night is filled with the light of a moon as grey,  
 dark as these trees, heavy as this scented air from the fields,  
 warm as this hand,  
 as warm, as strong,

Is the night that wraps all the huts of the south and folds the  
 empty barns of the west ;  
 is the wind that fans the roadside fire ;  
 are the trees that line the country estates, tall as the lynch  
 trees, as straight, as black ;  
 is the moon that lights the mining towns, dim as the light  
 upon tenement roofs, grey upon the hands at the bars of  
 Moabit, cold as the bars of the Tombs.

KENNETH FEARING

## TO THE OLD WORLD

If your forefathers have been wise and brave,  
 And lit a thousand lights, it little matters :  
 You are an aged king before his grave  
 Whom his own folly has reduced to tatters.  
 While the world tumbles down about your head,  
 Your royal cloak, inherited of old,  
 Slips from your shoulders by a broken thread,  
 And gathers dust into its woven gold.  
 There let it lie, entangled in itself.  
 Write the last footnote to your history,  
 And, laying the volume on Time's iron shelf,  
 Sit back to muse on days that are to be,  
 When laughing boys, turning to sober men,  
 Shall build your ruins into a world again.

JOSEPH FREEMAN  
1921

## PRINCE JERNIKIDZE

Prince Jernikidze wears his boots  
 Above his knees ; his black mustache  
 Curls like the Kaiser's ; when he shoots  
 Friend and foe turn white as ash.

The movements of his hands are svelt,  
Ivory bullets grace his chest,  
The studded poignard at his belt  
Dangles down his thigh. The best

Dancers in Tiflis envy his  
Light Lesginka's steady whirl,  
He bends his close-cropped head to kiss  
The finger-tips of every girl.

Over the shashleek and the wine  
His deep and passionate baritone  
Directs the singing down the line,  
And none may drain his glass alone.

When morning breaks into his room  
He dons his long Circassian coat,  
Marches to the Sovnarkom,  
Knocks at the door and clears his throat,

Opens the ledger with his hand,  
Bows to the commissars who pass,  
Calls the janitor comrade, and  
Keeps accounts for the working class.

JOSEPH FREEMAN  
1926

## CROSS OF FLAME \*

*"Torgler and Könen left the Reichstag that evening between 8:10 and 8:15 P. M."—"The Brown Book."*

*Six days before election—not a poster up!*

We sat in the Fraction room, bouncing our pencils on the blotter

I've gone each day to Braschwitz, stuffed in his uniform,  
Sitting in Alexanderplatz as though he were Hitler.

"Herr Commissioner—" Paugh! I hate repeating his name—

"The party's not outlawed, you have no legal right..."

And he'd sit smiling officiously.

Some day the sides of that desk will be exchanged and then—

\* This poem is the winner of the award offered by The New Republic for the best poem on the Reichstag Fire Trial.

Well, we went to Karl Liebknecht surrounded by detectives;  
*Ach*, Torgler, you should see what they have done in there.  
 The desks apart lie hushed among the papers  
 And the rooms unsprung like when schoolboys had tinkered with a  
 clock;  
 What kids—swooping on themselves (they held the fort).

Well, this time he let the comrades tie some bundles up,  
 Small parcels hardly enough for Wedding alone.  
 I asked him where the catacombs were that Göring saw  
 And, Torgler, as the flag is red, he struck his finger  
 At the hole in the porter's place.

A comrade laughed:

"Man, that's the trapdoor to our old beer cellar!"

"And the instructions to burn down museums," I asked,  
 "The flames to signal for a Bolshevik reign of terror?"

He had no answer.

Our pencils hit thoughtfully and the echo died.  
 On numb November we had felt the pulse of the polls:  
 Eleven quickened ours; theirs fell off thirty-five.

And now

*Six days before election—not a poster up!*

I stood by the window while he talked. It was dark already  
 And the fibers of his voice swelled, rising with his plea.  
 This begging—paugh! When will the vote be cast with lead?

The porter struck his head in with our coats—fine skull  
 He had, old Franco vet, shaven as smooth as his big buck teeth.  
 At eight I heard far below the sound of the door  
 Closing, the massive frame-bone settling down for the night.

So, Torgler, ready now? My stomach's angry, come,  
 The Aschinger has *Hasenpfeffer*, comrades, talk;  
 There, *Fräulein*, your coat . . . it's not as frayed as mine.  
 You limp, sciatica? It's the plague of the times we walk.  
 Well, we will move forward slowly down the corridor of this tomb;  
 Look how plush the curtains hang and carpets close.  
 Stuffy, isn't it? The chairs sit quietly.  
 The dim light here seems pregnant like the street's in here.  
 Six days and we will know who holds this Bastille prize.



Goodnight, porter; here's the air. Smell, comrades, now:  
 Do you not feel the night, the fog there brewing?  
 Last month it was a chimney fire in the Berliner Schloss  
 Yesterday a railway near the Corridor  
 And now the catacombs in Karl Liebknecht.  
 Paugh! Tell the Press. They know it! Tell the Sportpalast:  
*Assassination Coming! Admission Free!*  
*Starring Hitler in Christ-on-the-Cross!*

The night stood ready and the sound of autos died  
 And swelled along the street.  
 We stood, heavy on the top step, like three ocean divers  
 And descended slowly,  
 The frame above us looking down without farewell

Goodnight, *Fräulein*, we all go Underground tonight;  
 Bathe your leg in salt tears and tomorrow run.  
 Friedrichstrasse's overstrolled with three-mark girls;  
 I wonder if they feel this air—vital now—closing in

There, Torgler, are the comrades at the corner table.  
 Beers around! Where's the *Hasenpfeffer*? Come,  
 You sit like three old maids at a wedding; life is hope.  
 They haven't nailed our coffin yet. Let's eat—*prost!*

The table tops got white toward ten; two comrades left.  
 Hans shifts his corner to Otto, so we called the bill  
 To let the fellow buy coke lumps with his ten percent.

Then Otto came up running, his new apron starched,  
 Looking like the puppet waiter in the play:

*Herr Comrade, have you heard, the Reichstag is on fire!*

We sat stiff, we hired sitters in the play,  
 Sitting in our electric chairs, strapped in and masked:

*Man, are you mad?*

*No, it's true*—his eyes reflect the flame—*the taxis say*  
*It's true. Thousands are already throbbing there!*

Outside was the glow and the distant hum of men  
 Near Königsplatz black snakes of hose wormed on the street  
 No general call and the fire-brigade was fumbling late.  
 The building looked as though it wanted now to burn.

But above stood Hitler smiling from his cross of flame  
Torgler saw and marched erect.

*No! I cried.*

*His grin of victory is a trap of blood-toothed hate!*

He knew and his voice was steady in the rising roar :

*My life's a step; let it display our innocence.*

He moved forward, my eyes glazed with the fire and tears  
And the mouth expanding closed on him and Germany.

ROBERT GESSNER

## A STRANGE FUNERAL IN BRADDOCK

*Listen to the mournful drums of a strange funeral.*

*Listen to the story of a strange American funeral.*

In the town of Braddock, Pennsylvania,  
Where steel-mills live like foul dragons, burning, devouring man and  
earth and sky,  
It is spring. Now the spring has wandered in, a frightened child in  
the land of the steel ogres,  
And Jan Clepak, the great grinning Bohemian, on his way to work  
at six in the morning,  
Sees buttons of bright grass on the hills across the river, and plum-  
trees hung with wild white blossoms,  
And as he sweats half-naked at his puddling trough, a fiend by the  
lake of brimstone,  
The plum-trees soften his heart,  
The green grass-memories return and soften his heart,  
And he forgets to be hard as steel and remembers only his wife's  
breasts, his baby's little laughters and the way men sing when  
they are drunk and happy,  
He remembers cows and sheep, and the grinning peasants, and the  
villages and fields of sunny Bohemia.

*Listen to the mournful drums of a strange funeral.*

*Listen to the story of a strange American funeral.*

Wake up, wake up! Jan Clepak, the furnaces are roaring like tigers,  
The flames are flinging themselves at the high roof, like mad, yellow  
tigers at their cage,

Wake up! it is ten o'clock, and the next batch of mad, flowing steel  
 is to be poured into your puddling trough,  
 Wake up! Wake up! for a flawed lever is cracking in one of those  
 fiendish cauldrons,  
 Wake up! and wake up! for now the lever has cracked, and the steel  
 is raging and running down the floor like an escaped madman,  
 Wake up! Oh, the dream is ended, and the steel has swallowed you  
 forever, Jan Clepak!

*Listen to the mournful drums of a strange funeral.*

*Listen to the story of a strange American funeral.*

Now three tons of hard steel hold at their heart the bones, flesh,  
 nerves, the muscles, brains and heart of Jan Clepak,  
 They hold the memories of green grass and sheep, the plum-trees,  
 the baby-laughter, and the sunny Bohemian villages.  
 And the directors of the steel-mill present the great coffin of steel and  
 man-memories to the widow of Jan Clepak,  
 And on the great truck it is borne now to the great trench in the  
 graveyard,  
 And Jan Clepak's widow and two friends ride in a carriage behind  
 the block of steel that holds Jan Clepak,  
 And they weep behind the carriage blinds, and mourn the soft man  
 who was slain by hard steel.

*Listen to the mournful drums of a strange funeral.*

*Listen to the story of a strange American funeral.*

Now three thinkers are thinking strange thoughts in the graveyard.  
 "O, I'll get drunk and stay drunk forever, I'll never marry woman,  
 or father laughing children,  
 I'll forget everything, I'll be nothing from now on,  
 Life is a dirty joke, like Jan's funeral!"  
 One of the friends is thinking in the sweet-smelling graveyard,  
 As a derrick lowers the three tons of steel that held Jan Clepak.  
 (LISTEN TO THE DRUMS OF THE STRANGE AMERICAN  
 FUNERAL!)

"I'll wash clothes, I'll scrub floors, I'll be a fifty-cent whore, but my  
 children will never work in the steel-mill!"

Jan Clepak's wife is thinking as earth is shoveled over the great  
 steel coffin,

In the spring sunlight, in the soft April air,

(LISTEN TO THE DRUMS OF THE STRANGE AMERICAN  
 FUNERAL!)

"I'll make myself hard as steel, harder,  
 I'll come some day and make bullets out of Jan's body, and shoot  
 them into a tyrant's heart!"  
 The other friend is thinking, the listener,  
 He who listened to the mournful drums of the strange funeral,  
 Who listened to the story of the strange American funeral,  
 And turned as mad as a fiendish cauldron with cracked lever.

LISTEN TO THE MOURNFUL DRUMS OF A STRANGE  
 FUNERAL.

LISTEN TO THE STORY OF A STRANGE AMERICAN  
 FUNERAL.

MICHAEL GOLD

## EXAMPLES OF WORKER CORRESPONDENCE

Indianapolis, Ind.

We held a red funeral for a child who died of hunger.  
 We marched in thousands to her grave.  
 Red roses came from the Communist Party  
 A wreath of lilies from the Unemployed Councils.  
 Our banners flashed in the sun  
 But our hearts were dark with anger.  
 When at the grave like red soldiers  
 We swore to end the world's poverty  
 Brave comrades were seen to weep  
 Fathers and mothers of hungry children.

Ashtabula, O.

I am resigning from the American Legion  
 It reminds of a dog I used to have  
 That picked up toads in her mouth  
 And was sick of the yellow acid in their glands  
 But did it again and again, the dumb fool  
 And the more misery and famine and bunk  
 The more the Legion seems to like it.  
 But I am not a dog and can understand  
 That now is the time to end capitalism.

MICHAEL GOLD

## DEMPSEY, DEMPSEY

Everybody give the big boy a hand,  
a big hand for the big boy, Dempsey,  
failure king of the U.S.A.

Maybe the big boy's coming back,  
there's a million boys that want to come back  
with hell in their eyes and a terrible sock  
that almost connects.

They've got to come back, out of the street,  
out of some lowdown, lousy job  
or take a count with Dempsey.

When he's on his knees for a count  
and a million dollars cold,  
a million boys go down with him  
yelling :

Hit him again Dempsey,  
kill him for me Dempsey,  
Christ' sake Dempsey,  
my God they're killing Dempsey,  
it's Dempsey down, Dempsey, Dempsey.

The million men and a million boys,  
come out of hell and crawling back,  
maybe they don't know what they're saying,  
maybe they don't dare  
but they know what they mean :

Knock down the big boss,  
o, my little Dempsey,  
my beautiful Dempsey  
with that God in heaven smile  
and quick, god's body leaping,  
not afraid, leaping, rising—  
hit him again, he cut my pay check, Dempsey.  
My God, Dempsey's down—  
he cut my pay check—  
Dempsey's down, down,  
the bastards are killing Dempsey.  
Listen, they made me go to war  
and somebody did something wrong to my wife

while I was gone.  
 Hit him again Dempsey, don't be a quitter  
 like I am Dempsey,  
 o, for Jesus Christ, I'm out.  
 I can't get up, I'm dead, my legs  
 are dead, see, I'm no good,  
 they got me and I'm out,  
 down for the count.  
 I've quit, quit again,  
 only God save Dempsey, make him get up again,  
 Dempsey, Dempsey.

HORACE GREGORY

## IN A COFFEE POT

Tonight, like every night, you see me here  
 Drinking my coffee slowly, absorbed, alone.  
 A quiet creature at a table in the rear  
 Familiar at this evening hour and quite unknown.  
 The coffee steams. The Greek who runs the joint  
 Leans on the counter, sucks a dead cigar.  
 His eyes are meditative, sad, lost in what it is  
 Greeks think about the kind of Greeks they are.

I brood upon myself. I rot  
 Night after night in this cheap coffee pot.  
 I am twenty-two I shave each day  
 I was educated at a public school  
 They taught me what to read and what to say  
 The nobility of man my country's pride  
 How Nathan Hale died  
 And Grant took Richmond.  
 Was it on a summer or a winter's day?  
 Was it Sherman burned the Southland to the sea?  
 The men the names the dates have worn away  
 The classes words the books commencement prize  
 Here bitter with myself I sit  
 Holding the ashes of their prompted lies.

The bright boys, where are they now?  
 Fernando, handsome wop who led us all  
 The orator in the assembly hall  
 Arista man the school's big brain.  
 He's bus boy in an eat-quick joint

At seven per week twelve hours a day.  
 His eyes are filled with my own pain  
 His life like mine is thrown away.  
 Big Jorgensen the honest, blond, six feet,  
 And Daniels, cunning, sly,—all, all—  
 You'll find them reading Sunday's want ad sheet.  
 Our old man didnt know someone  
 Our mother gave no social teas  
 You'll find us any morning now  
 Sitting in the agencies.

You'll find us there before the office opens  
 Crowding the vestibule before the day begins  
 The secretary yawns from last night's date  
 The elevator boy's black face looks out and grins.  
 We push we crack our bitter jokes we wait  
 These mornings always find us waiting there  
 Each one of us has shined his broken shoes  
 Has brushed his coat and combed his careful hair  
 Dance hall boys pool parlor kids wise guys  
 The earnest son the college grad all, all  
 Each hides the question twitching in his eyes  
 And smokes and spits and leans against the wall.

We meet each other sometimes on the street  
 Sixth Avenue's high L bursts overhead  
 Freak shows whore gypsies hotdog stands  
 Cajole our penniless eyes our bankrupt hands.  
 "Working yet?" "The job aint come  
 Got promised but a runaround."  
 The L shakes building store and ground  
 "What's become of Harry? and what's become  
 Of Charley? Martinelli? Brooklyn Jones?"  
 "He's married—got a kid—and broke."  
 And Charley's on Blackwell's, Martinelli's through—  
 Met him in Grand Central—he's on the bum—  
 We're all of us on the bum—"  
 A freak show midget's pounding on a drum  
 The high L thunders redflag auctioneers  
 Are selling out a bankrupt world—  
 The hammer falls—a bid! a bid!—and no one hears . . .

The afternoon will see us in the park  
 With pigeons and our feet in peanut shells.  
 We pick a bench apart. We brood

And count the twelve and thirteen tower bells.  
 What shall we do? Turn on the gas?  
 Jump a bridge? Boxcar west?  
 It's all the same there's nothing anywhere  
 A million guys are sitting on their ass  
 We always land  
 Back where we started from—a parkbench,  
 Cold, and spitting in the sand.

Who's handing us a runaround?  
 We hold our hands for sale arms brain  
 Eyes taught to figure accurate ears  
 We're salesmen clerks and civil engineers  
 We hang diplomas over kitchen sinks  
 Our toilet walls are stuck with our degrees  
 The old man's home no work and we—  
 Shall we squat out our days in agencies?  
 Or peddling socks shoelaces ties?  
 We wrench green grassblades up with sudden hands  
 The falling sun is doubled in our asking eyes . . .

And evening comes upon us there  
 Fingering in the torn pocket of our coat  
 The one cold nickel of our subway fare . . .

Night after night in this cheap coffee pot  
 I brood upon our lives. I rot. They rot.  
 The Greek's awakened from his dream. The dead cigar  
 Drops ash. He wipes the coffee bar.  
 He goes to fill the boiler once again.  
 The clock hand moves. A fly soars down  
 And stalks the sugar bowl's bright rim.  
 And I compare myself with him—this fly and I—  
 He crawls head downwards down a peeling wall  
 And I crawl after him.  
 You ask "Tomorrow?" . . . Go ask Fernando in the  
 eatquick joint.

Ask Jorgensen pounding Sixth Avenue. Ask Martinelli  
 too,

Watching the hole enlarging in his shoe.  
 And ask me here—alone with the crawling flies—  
 And I . . . I have seen the pain there in their eyes.  
 We shall not sit forever here and wait.  
 We shall not sit forever here and rot.  
 The agencies are filing cards of hate.



And I have seen how men lift up their hands  
 And turn them so and pause—  
 And so the slow brain moves and understands—  
 And so with million hands.

ALFRED HAYES

## TO OTTO BAUER

Go Bauer praise their patience now  
 Walk in the ruined gardens of the Karl Marx Hof  
 Speak to these dead speak to them now  
 Next year this court may blossom iron trees  
 Flowers of steel spring up to trim the future lawns  
 Old corpses underground the Heimwehr plants  
 Next Spring may rise as shrubberies of bone.  
 But Spring can wait. These dead belong to February alone.

Listen. Beyond the waltztime river the city glows  
 Ascend your ministerial balcony again  
 Apologize to all these gentlemen  
 The shopkeepers forced to shut their shops four days  
 The ruined business in the street cafés  
 Her ladyship disturbed the maid in tears  
 Assure her she can wear her jewelry tonight  
 Then right the chairs and calm the chandeliers.  
 Behind the last of windows the last sniper falls  
 The trolleys run the provinces subdued new order reigns  
 Except for that routine the dark night hides—  
 The quick and muffled hangings in the prison yards  
 And here—the burials with black holes through their brains.

Yes, Bauer, Austria has need of you  
 The speculator businessman the summer bride  
 The daughter in the private school the dancing master  
 The lovers in the drawing rooms the cupids carved in plaster  
 The president of banks the little Richelieu  
 Who juggles class and state—have need of you.  
 But not these dead, not Florisdorf, not Linz, not Steyr,  
 Not the women with drawn faces, not the men with fire  
 In their unbeaten eyes, not these,  
 Who walk upon their feet, Bauer, not upon their knees.  
 They are not crushed, Bauer. The corpse upon the barricade—  
 Behold! is that of the betrayer not the betrayed!  
 The feet that dangled when the trapdoor clanged  
 Behold! is of the hangman not the hanged!

In the ruined gardens of the Karl Marx Hof  
 These dead keep here their final discipline,  
 The iron front, the last republican defense,  
 That Heimwehr bullets now have locked them in.  
 No proclamations on the city's walls repeal,  
 No parliament can outlaw or suppress,  
 These unions of the dead, these cadres formed by steel.  
 You taught them patience, Bauer, to wait, wait,  
 Until the clock was over-run, the time long past  
 Until the hour when they struck, they struck too late.  
 But in the end these sightless eyes saw clear  
 Upon the barricade before the machine gun belt ran dry  
 In that huge moment, in the hot and reeking hour,  
 They knew at last how gun and hand grenade  
 Prepare the last great pathway into power!

All honor to them, Bauer! For you  
 History prepares a shameful grave  
 A nameless spot buried under weeds and stones  
 Where creeping jackals shall come down to howl  
 Stirred by an ancient kinship with those bones!  
 But they—they sleep with Communards,  
 Their brother Spartacists lie at their side,  
 They marched forth Social Democrats but Bolsheviks they died!

ALFRED HAYES

## BALLAD OF LENIN

Comrade Lenin of Russia,  
 High in a marble tomb,  
 Move over, Comrade Lenin,  
 And give me room.

I am Ivan, the peasant,  
 Boots all muddy with soil.  
 I fought with you, Comrade Lenin.  
 Now I have finished my toil.

Comrade Lenin of Russia,  
 Alive in a marble tomb,  
 Move over, Comrade Lenin,  
 And give me room.

I am Chico, the Negro,  
Cutting cane in the sun.  
I lived for you, Comrade Lenin.  
Now my work is done.

Comrade Lenin of Russia,  
Honored in a marble tomb,  
Move over, Comrade Lenin,  
And give me room.

I am Chang from the foundries  
On strike in the streets of Shanghai.  
For the sake of the Revolution  
I fight, I starve, I die.

Comrade Lenin of Russia  
Rises in the marble tomb:  
*On guard with the fighters forever—  
The world is our room!*

LANGSTON HUGHES

## SHARECROPPERS

Just a herd of Negroes  
Driven to the field,  
Plowing, planting, hoeing,  
To make the cotton yield.

When the cotton's picked  
And the work is done  
Boss man takes the money  
And we get none.

Leaves us hungry, ragged  
As we were before,  
Year by year goes by  
And we are nothing more

Than a herd of Negroes  
Driven to the field—  
Plowing life away  
To make the cotton yield.

LANGSTON HUGHES

## PARK BENCH

I live on a park bench.  
 You, Park Avenue.  
 Hell of a distance  
 Between us two.

I beg a dime for dinner—  
 You got a butler and maid.  
 But I'm wakin' up!  
 Say, ain't you afraid

That I might, just maybe,  
 In a year or two,  
 Move on over  
 To Park Avenue?

LANGSTON HUGHES

## CLEAVAGE

We have grown  
 into our families softly, imperceptibly,  
 the woman who bore us, the father the brothers  
 the ways and the hearts  
 the household with a name.  
 We have grown inward softly, imperceptibly,  
 but we must break, break,  
 as lava breaks the crater,  
 to go outward.

I came late  
 to question the desperation of millions,  
 to hate with the mass,  
 to demand with the mass will.

The love of blood is a true thing  
 and its cutting gives pain, and they said:  
 You are bent on destruction, a wrecker,  
 come back, come back, you are you, you are we,  
 you are not an organization!—

—*But destruction is here,  
 beneath you is wreckage,  
 the wombs feed death,  
 and life is an organization.—*

They looked away, they looked piously at the sky,  
 their ears heard the dry shiver in the twigs,  
 they went to the spiritualist meeting.

When I stepped down from the house  
 where a few in their white years  
 had climbed above care,  
 my feet caught in the hurrying tide of history,  
 the wind blew furiously against me,  
 my feet were many feet and carried me far.  
 I heard the roar of new men  
 who had never known triumph before,  
 and tasted it now.

The pain, the loss, the hunger were less keen,  
 I grew into the ways and hearts  
 of many brothers,  
 I knew mothers who bore the future in their arms.

ORRICK JOHNS

## PAPERMILL

Not to be believed, this blunt savage wind  
 Blowing in chill empty rooms, this tornado  
 Surging and bellying across the oily floor  
 Pushing men out in streams before it ;  
 Not to be believed, this dry fall  
 Of unseen fog drying the oil  
 And emptying the jiggling greasecups ;  
 Not to be believed, this unseen hand  
 Weaving a filmy rust of spiderwebs  
 Over these turbines and grinding gears,  
 These snarling chippers and pounding jordans ;  
 These fingers placed to lips saying shshsh ;  
 Keep silent, keep silent, keep silent ;  
 Not to be believed hardly, this clammy silence  
 Where once feet stamped over the oily floor,  
 Dinnerpails clattered, voices rose and fell  
 In laughter, curses, and songs. Now the guts  
 Of this mill have ceased their rumbling, now  
 The fires are banked and red changes to black,  
 Steam is cold water, silence is rust, and quiet  
 Spells hunger. Look at these men, now,  
 Standing before the iron gates, mumbling,  
 "Who could believe it? Who could believe it?"

JOSEPH KALAR

## WORKER UPROOTED

The slow sleepy curl of cigaret smoke and butts  
 glowing redly out of moving smiling mouths ;  
 now a whisper in the house, laughter muted,  
 and warm words spoken no more to me.  
 Alien, I move forlorn among curses,  
 laughing falsely, joking with tears  
 aching at my eyes, now surely alien and lonely.  
 Once I rubbed shoulders with sweating men,  
 pulled when they pulled, strained, cursed,  
 comrade in their laughter,  
 comrade in their pain,  
 knowing fellowship of sudden smiles  
 and the press of hands in silent speech.  
 At noon hour, sprawled in the shade,  
 opening our lunches, chewing our sandwiches,  
 laughing and spitting,  
 we talked of the days and found joy  
 in our anger, balm in our common contempt ;  
 thought of lumber falling with thump of lead  
 on piles geometrically exact ; of horses  
 sweating, puffing, bulging their terrible muscles ;  
 of wagons creaking ; of sawdust  
 pouring from the guts of the mill.  
 Now alien, I move forlorn, an uprooted tree,  
 feel the pain of hostile eyes  
 lighting up no more for me ;  
 the forced silence, the awkward laugh,  
 comrade no more in laughter and pain.

And at dawn, irresolutely,  
 into the void . . .

JOSEPH KALAR

## RED, WHITE AND BLUE

Red face gone white,  
 A hole in his head,  
 They've left in the gutter  
 A small man, dead,

Who'd joined a slow mob  
 In a hunger parade  
 To get a small job  
 And his kids some bread :

A flurry of blue  
 And he got instead  
 A quick little blow  
 Of our Law's best lead.

A muddled old bum,  
 With a laugh and a tear,  
 Blew in his snot-rag  
 And vomited beer,

Saluted the cops  
 And vomited gin,  
 Slipped in the blood-pool  
 And fell on his chin :

My country 'tis o' thee,  
 He tried to sing,  
 Sweet land o' liberty,  
 God save the King.

ALFRED KREYMBORG

## AMERICAN JEREMIAD

It's pretty hard to sing of moonlight now,  
 Of benches in the park and lovers' lanes.  
 I'd like to if I could, but here somehow  
 Are shadows, beggars, shadows, and the rain's  
 A dripping, sappy, clammy winding-sheet  
 Indifferent to the tragedies of men,  
 Indifferent as the many passing feet  
 That maké the beggars rise and drop again.

What shall a lover sing when half the land  
 Is driven cold and lives on dank despair?  
 As long as inhumanity's in the hand  
 That runs the race and whips the poor apart,  
 Lovers must all embrace a bloody air  
 And strangle men who starve the human heart.

ALFRED KREYMBORG

## UNHOLY ROLLER

Of those who muck in Mammon's total mess  
 For various little lumps to overstress,  
 Who damn the morsels but condone the maker,  
 Bellows a certain sacrilegious faker.

A one-time Socialist, not quite so punk  
 About *the* most entrancing *bit* of Bunk;  
 Then on the ship that needs a bolder crew  
 Than simpering bastards of the parlor hue,  
 He craned at eddies. . . . One, Agnosticism,  
 Whirling upon the route to Socialism,  
 As foxes whirl beneath the roosting prey,  
 Enthralled his weakness,—got the stowaway.

Full-windedly he's floating yet, a spoil  
 Calming the *status quo* with ooze of oil. . . .

Why pound its flea then give the cur a hug?—  
 For "capitalism works"—to feed the bug!  
 Why boot the shade then kiss the fact, of Pelf?—  
 Only to make sensation, further self!  
 Vile hypocrite, all unction when it's due,  
 A fascist-hearted liberal through and through,  
 He's Mammon's court-diverter, very odd  
 With the mauled old dummy known as God.

His Atheist Church, avowed to set us free  
 As rational souls amid demockracy,  
 Has comfy tenets for the bourgeoisie.  
 They come, mere futile puffs of literate pride,  
 To clap his BUNK, amen his Godicide.  
 Here swells a convert who, if born to need  
 And lammed to work before he learned to read,  
 Had never known these sacrilegious thrills  
 And the "poised breadth of mind" above the "nils."  
 Now see him scorn the "rabble"—yet he owes  
 As much to leisure as a dude to clothes.  
 And here's a college kid *almost persuaded*,  
 Tugged by the schismic ghosts, by each upbraided;  
 He doubts, he dampens: oh, the trial's intense  
 "To make the world safe for intelligence."

How many spirits can caper on a pinpoint?  
 As many as there are Atheists at the din-point!—  
 Fanatic nothings who can only scoff  
 And jig likewise to keep the others off;



Proving that metaphysics can result  
In either a Christian or an Atheist cult.

Though *here* the Wolf, quite godless for the scene,  
Drags Destitution in and all between;  
Though cynic Vultures darken like a cloud  
To batten *here* *unhated*; though the loud  
Maniacal laughter-clap and hoot of Mars  
Peal from his paper-prison, mock the bars,  
Resound above this "rationalism,"—though  
Heaven's the *consolation*, not the woe.

How does it help the social situation  
To worship either GOD or GOD-NEGATION?  
Can more "free thinking" drive the fascists out,  
Put hunger, war, and millionaires to rout?  
Why throw up barricades against the Lord?  
To clown for the pleased plutes ho-hoing hard?

Is Mammon not proprietor of the show  
And God his dummy? Answer here below.  
Say it, you scotched avoiders, yes or no!

H. H. LEWIS

## I'LL SAY! \*

Plowin' undah cotton,  
Plowin' undah cotton,  
Gee, yeou 'fraidy hawah,  
Helping "man fuhgotten."

Uh needs a paiah o' britches,  
Mirandy needs a skuht,  
Lil Da-Da needs a diddy  
Aroun' its nekid butt:—

Dis donkey, uset tuh middles  
En' 'fraid o' ruinin' rows,  
He needs tuh luhn dat cotton  
Ain't really meant fuh clothes.

Plowin' undah cotton,  
Plowin' undah cotton,  
Haw, yeou 'fraidy geeah,  
Sumpin' sho is rotten . . .

H. H. LEWIS

\* "Haw" means "come to the left," "gee" means "come to the right."

## COAL STRIKE

The darkened hills around the mine at Coverdale  
 Curled like a blacksnake whip to break us  
 But our picket line was dangerous  
 As white hot cables of steel in the factory  
 Of our revolt. The shaft of the coal mine  
 Was a black silence in the early morning.  
 There were no scabs could penetrate the cordon  
 Of strikers. The deputies were yellow faced  
 In the grey dawn: it was too early for them to be out  
 With the dark brown memory of debauchery  
 Before them. For courage they needed  
 The tin hats mounted behind them. Their rifles  
 Were rested up the horns of their saddles  
 And their faces were unwashed of their adolescence,  
 Too young and yet weakly brutal.  
 We were stronger than the coal operators  
 And the mounteds and scabs, because we had many years  
 In the mines to harden us. Shoulder to shoulder  
 We had come to know our common purpose.  
 We were not fuel as the coal but a welded metal  
 And we could flash death like any steel.

NORMAN MACLEOD

## APPLEBAUM'S SUNDAY

Applebaum's Sunday is a thing of cautions and carpet-slippers.  
 In the room sits Applebaum, five feet four.  
 Be careful of draughts. In the room,  
 Waiting, wrapped in his sweater like a mummy in a tomb,  
 sits Applebaum coaxing, begging the heat  
 to crawl through the radiator. Every crack, every chink in the floor  
 is death's mouth sucking at Applebaum's feet.  
 Why no heat?  
 Coal is fire, coal is power, coal is heat, caressing heat.  
 Coal is money, Applebaum. Understand?  
 It is Sunday, Applebaum's Sunday. And the landlord's.  
 All week is a waiting and working for Sunday, all week is an aching  
 for Sunday,  
 for carpet-slippers, for soft caressing heat like woman's hands crawl-  
 ing, crawling over body, into blood and heart and brain  
 (Coal is money).

Applebaum remembers yesterday.

Yesterday was a red thick neck, waves of fat saying:  
Believe me, Applebaum, it hurts me more than it hurts you.  
But can you blame me? Even Ford can't help himself.  
It's the system, Applebaum, the cut-throat competition.

How many garments did you get out yesterday heh?  
After sixteen years I know it's tough, but—  
You know what Ford says:  
Production, Applebaum, PRODUCTION.  
Of course I realize believe me it hurts me more than it's the system  
even Ford can you blame me CAN YOU BLAME ME.

The clock ticks in Applebaum's room:  
CAN YOU BLAME ME CAN YOU BLAME ME  
A thousand clocks tick in Applebaum's brain.  
Waves of fat quiver:  
PRODUCTION (Applebaum) PRO-DUC-TION  
It is Sunday, Applebaum's Sunday.

All week is a waiting, a slaving and aching for Sunday.  
No work, today is a holiday—Sunday.  
And tomorrow will be Sunday  
and tomorrow  
and tomorrow.  
Every day will be Sunday, Applebaum's Sunday (and the landlord's)  
CAN YOU BLAME ME CAN YOU BLAME ME  
Long days  
YES I DO  
empty days . . .  
YES I DO YES I DO  
cold, aching, carpet-slipped days  
bursting into flame in Applebaum  
flame that is heat  
that is power  
power in a thousand Applebaums  
in a million  
POWER

A. B. MAGIL

## THALASSA, THALASSA

*“—twenty-five Greek freighters in the harbor of Buenos Aires . . . on strike . . . and in spite of the actions of the police and the reformist agencies, and with the assistance of revolutionary trade-unions on shore . . . won all demands.”*

—Runa press-dispatch.

Mariners, seabirds, sailing-ships of the lustrous early annals,  
 And the prow-scarred waves, and the seas, wine-dark to jewel-bright,  
 Known of all suns and moons and winds and weathers and waves :  
 Bravers of dragon'd watery abysses beyond the Pillars of Hercules,  
 Record-breakers in the Tyrrhenian, the Adriatic, the Dodecannese,  
 Cargoes of spices, gods, feathers and strange barbaric trophies :  
 They, these star-steerers and salt-bearded darlings of our scholars,  
 First sheeted home squaresails, in the shadows of templed headlands,  
 First triumphantly raced dolphins, and parrot-eyed pink squids !

O mariners, seabirds, Greeks !

Perhaps and maybe : that was a long time ago. Ask the professors.  
 Here, in the anchorage at Buenos Aires, are twenty-five sooty  
 Greek freighters, riding high and black and empty, out on strike,  
 Black gangs and deckhands, stewards and cooks, all out on strike,  
 The crews of twenty-five arguses named for gods and owners' wives,  
 Out solid ; no scabs and no rats but those below and the officers :  
 Against what, mariners of Greece ?—fifteen dollars a month, bad meat,  
 Wormy bread, lice-stuffed mattresses, twelve-hour watches. . . Life ?  
 —White rum, and naiads, at ten drachmas a throw, and doctor-bills,

O malcontents, roughnecks, reds !

And in the old days, yearned after by poets and schoolmasters  
 —Well, maybe it wasn't all amber and beryl, or “ivory and apes” :  
 What were the Boeotian words for “crimp,” “fink” and “doghouse” ?  
 What were the Attic phrases for “on the beach” and “decasualize” ?  
 Sold over the counter, and shipped out to sea to fetch home gems,  
 Velvets, wines, whores for the temples and slaves for the vineyards :  
 Butchered by State enemies, on the decks of floating meat-markets,  
 At the command of State pederasts, the philosophers and priests  
 —Well, maybe it wasn't all milk and honey, all culture and art,

O drudges, blindmen, Greeks !

"Romance, travel, adventure." So what?—saleswords for slavery.  
In Buenos Aires, they went out on strike and they went out solid,  
They sat on deck and stared at their officers, sang the Comintern.  
Two went down under a third-mate's Colt. The sharks got another.  
They went out solid, they didn't scab, they stayed out and they won;  
For the first time since the first oaken keel slid down the ways,  
In our treasured ancient Greece, Greek seamen lifted their arms  
Together and for themselves, pitched overboard their lying history,  
Struck once and won the first small part of what shall be theirs,  
The Red Internationale of  
Seamen and Harborworkers!

JAMES NEUGASS

## THE MAN AT THE FACTORY GATE

A man is tortured in a cell in Germany.  
He is an innocent man. He committed no crime.  
There are men like that in the prisons of America.  
Men like that walk the streets of America.  
Millions of men in the streets await death.

Do you know this man? He is the son of poor workers.  
He was a dock worker in the port of Hamburg,  
He was a soldier in the war. He committed no crime  
And he is tortured in a cell in Germany.

They gouge his eyes. They tear at his genitals.  
They beat him with steel rods.  
They burn matches under the soles of his feet.  
Sit down. Stand up. Confess. Who was it?  
Who was it burned the Reichstag?  
Who?

Do you remember the man at the factory gate in the early morning?  
Do you recall the leaflets he gave you and your comrades?  
Do you recall the slogans:  
"Strike Against Wage-cuts! Fight Against Hunger!  
Fight Against War and Fascism! Our cause is your cause!"?  
Do you remember this man?

A man in a top-hat hacked his head on a block in Berlin  
His head was stuck on a pike in the streets of Shanghai.  
His limbs were found in a shark in the Bay of Havana.  
His body was burned under a tree in Alabama.  
For good-luck charms, the citizens kept his fingers.

Do you remember the man at the factory gate in the early morning?  
 Do you recall?  
 He was a good shoemaker. He was a poor fish peddler.  
 He was an organizer in a labor union in San Francisco.  
 He committed no crime, he is an innocent man.  
 He is a Communist. He is a leader of an oppressed people.

They gouge his eyes.  
 They burn matches under the soles of his feet.  
 They beat him with steel rods.  
 Sit down. Stand up. Confess. Who was it?  
 Who burned the Reichstag?  
 Who played with fire and lit an unquenchable flame?

CHARLES HENRY NEWMAN

## UPROOTED

The lamp-post pokes out of the dark street  
 A bare toe from a torn shoe.  
 He stands, at the age of twenty-two, in the shadows.  
 He thinks he is worthless.  
 What has he done that men will be glad to remember him by?  
 His friend's humor hides a sneer:  
 "On the barricades, comrade, you will be good enough to stop a bullet."  
 And his girl:  
 "You make me happy. I love you.  
 That's all I care about, dear."  
 But, unhappy between kiss and kiss,  
 What is there to do?

Eleanora Sack is a shock-brigadier.  
 She is twenty-two and constructs blast furnaces in the Ukraine.  
 She is beautiful, too. She directs a crew of twenty men  
 And they melt iron and puddle steel for the people of Ukraine.

Here in America,  
 He wants something to do, to work machines,  
 To be joyful among fellow workers,  
 To write beautiful songs and stories  
 They will understand and remember.  
 Tormented by the world and his desires  
 He dreams upon the lips he kisses  
 And the dreams are lies.

The shadows of silent machines spread on the walls of the city.  
 Amid upturn pavement of the broken street  
 A blanketed steamroller,  
 Stranded, waits.  
 Hands in pockets, he stands at the corner, waiting,  
 Or walks, a brooding figure, through the streets.

CHARLES HENRY NEWMAN

## JOE HILL LISTENS TO THE PRAYING

Look at the steady rifles, Joe.  
 It's all over now—"Murder, first degree,"  
 The jury said. It's too late now  
 To go back. Listen Joe, the chaplain is reading:

*Lord Jesus Christ who didst  
 So mercifully promise heaven  
 To the thief that humbly confessed  
 His injustice*

throw back your head

Joe; remember that song of yours  
 We used to sing in jails all over  
 These United States—tell it to him:  
 "I'll introduce to you  
 A man that is a credit to our Red, White  
 and Blue,  
 His head is made of lumber and solid as  
 a rock;  
 He is a Christian Father and his name is  
 Mr. Block."

Remember, Joe—

"You take the cake,  
 You make me ache,  
 Tie a rock on your block and jump  
 in the lake,  
 Kindly do that for Liberty's sake."

*Behold me, I beseech Thee, with  
 The same eyes of mercy that*  
 on the other

Hand we're driftin' into Jungles  
From Kansas to the coast, wrapped  
    round brake beams on a thousand  
    freights; San Joaquin and Omaha  
    brush under the wheels—"God made the summer  
    for the hobo and the bummer"—we've been  
    everywhere, seen everything.  
Winning the West for the good citizens;  
Driving golden spikes into the U. P. ;  
Harvest hands, lumbermen drifting—  
    now Iowa, now Oregon—  
God, how clean the sky; the lovely wine  
Of coffee in a can. This land  
    is our lover. How greenly beautiful  
Her hair; her great pure breasts  
    that are  
The Rockies on a day of mist and rain.

We love this land of corn and cotton,  
    Virginia and Ohio, sleeping on  
With our love, with our love—  
O burst of Alabama loveliness, sleeping on  
In the strength of our love; O Mississippi flowing  
Through our nights, a giant mother.

*Pardon, and in the end*

    How green is her hair,  
    how pure are her breasts; the little farms  
    nuzzling into her flanks  
    drawing forth life, big rich life  
Under the deep chant of her skies  
And rivers—but we, we're driftin'  
Into trouble from Kansas to the coast, clapped  
    into the stink and rot of country jails  
    and clubbed by dicks and cops  
Because we didn't give a damn—  
    remember Joe  
How little we cared, how we sang  
    the nights away in their filthy jails;  
and how, when  
We got wind of a guy called Marx  
    we sang less, just talked  
And talked. "Blanket-stiffs" we were  
But we could talk, they couldn't jail us



For that—but they did—

remember Joe

*Of my life be strengthened*

One Big Union:

our convention in Chi; the Red Cards,  
leaflets; sleeping in the parks,  
the Boul Mich; “wobblies” now, cheering  
the guys that spoke our lingo, singing  
down the others. “Hear that train blow,  
Boys, hear that train blow.”

*Now confessing my crimes, I may obtain*

Millions of stars, Joe—millions of miles.

Remember Vincent St. John

In the Goldfield strike; the timid little squirt  
with the funny voice, getting onto the platform  
and slinging words at us that rolled  
down our chins and into our hearts,  
like boulders hell-bent down a mountain side.

And Orchard, angel of peace  
—with a stick of dynamite in either hand.  
Pettibone and Moyer: “The strike  
Is your weapon, to hell with politics.”

Big Bill—remember him—

At Boise—great red eye rolling like a lame bull  
through the furniture and men  
of the courtroom—“This bastard,  
His Honor.”

Hobo Convention:  
(Millions of stars, Joe—millions of miles.)

“Hallelujah, I’m a bum,  
Hallelujah, I’m a bum.” His Honor,  
the sonofabitch!

One Big Strike, Lawrence, Mass—  
23,000 strong, from every neck  
of every woods in America, 23,000,  
Joe, remember. “We don’t need  
a leader. We’ll fix things up  
among ourselves.”

“Blackie” Ford and “Double-nose” Suhr in  
Wheatland—“I. W. W.’s don’t destroy

property"—and they got life. "I've counted  
The stars, boys, counted a million of these prison bars."

San Diego, soap boxes,  
Hundreds of them! And always  
their jail shutting out the sky,  
the clean rhythm of the wheels  
on a fast freight; disinfectant getting  
into the lung-pits, spitting blood  
But singing—Christ, how we sang,  
remember the singing  
Joe, One Big Union,  
One Big  
hope to be

*With Thee*

What do they matter, Joe, these rifles.  
They can't reach the towns, the skies, the songs,  
that now are part of more  
than any of us—we were  
The homeless, the drifters, but, our songs  
had hair and blood on them.  
There are no soap boxes in the sky.  
We won't eat pie, now, or ever  
when we die,  
but Joe  
We had something they didn't have:  
our love for these States  
was real and deep;  
to be with Thee

*In heaven. Amen.*

(How steady are  
the rifles.) We had slept  
naked on this earth on the coldest nights  
listening to the words of a guy named Marx.  
Let them burn us, hang us, shoot us,

Joe Hill,

For at the last we had what it takes  
to make songs with.

KENNETH PATCHEN

## THE AVIATORS

Looking through the clean lens of sunlight  
this wonderful struggle of hills and sky

is a flashing signal of rhapsodic fragments  
in the storm of wings released and flying.

The flock of aerial birds cleaving the blue air  
the mechanical arrows with a twang of cut air

over the bright constellations of hotels and cinemas  
and cables strung in the air like steel nerves

somersaulting the slightly visible bridges  
over the groaning and snoring tugboats.

Silver zeppelins carrying warmakers, the daredevil  
stunt makers ballooning a mushroom canvas.

Most of all the air designs swiftling cloudward  
(someday to carry bombs and disaster).

Miles of clear blue hillspace photographed  
a platinum streak roaring through altitudes

the slight framework of new steel  
the blue duraluminum and the chromo-molybden.

And the windy fugue thundering the control strings  
nor for sport but for murder.

WILLIAM PILLIN

## HAYMARKET

Sunrise to sunset bondage, that was our portion,  
we rose to refute it: 8 hours of labor,  
8 to rest from labor and 8 for the pleasantries,  
solace, enlightenment, with friend or in family.  
We asked for the kettle and the lamp at evening,  
a chair in the corner, a pipe and the homage  
of simple affection. We struck for an hour of sun:  
6 workers . . . murdered . . . by the Harvester Trust.  
Out to the Haymarket! proclaim against murder.  
Into the mass of workers protesting,  
the burst of a bomb, four workers slain—  
by McCormick the Reaper!

Don now the robe and the periwig,  
 master of provocation, Pinkerton of prey,  
 the law is the nuance of murder.  
 Slander the murdered, libel the dead,  
 burden your guilt on the innocent dead,  
 sort out the men who asked for an hour of sun,  
 call them "barbarians," you who have murdered,  
 bind them, imprison men of the people,  
 send to the gallows, remember that May!

Voices well, cordial their resonance,  
 far is it heard, returning the May song,  
 memorial answer: There is no lapse,  
 only replenishment, urging new motion,  
 gathering impetus, further momentum,  
 fury well-ordered, securely ascendant.  
 Green are the Haymarket graves.

Masters of provocation, Pinkertons of prey,  
 O "Board of Trade men, merchant princes,  
 railroad kings and factory lords,"  
 balance your ledgers and take your rewards,  
 these are the days of liquidation!

HARRY ALAN POTAMKIN

## POEM FOR MAY FIRST

Not Christmas nor the new year white with snow  
 and cold with dying names emasculate  
 marks for our lives the *new* year. Only spring  
 arrived at its fulfillment, at the peak  
 or verdurous blossoming  
 connotes the quick  
 deep breath of hope  
 again—the sharp release  
 of man grown tense with winter, now set free  
 to soar again (this day when our grasp,  
 grown powerful, foretells  
 its final fusion with our scope), to surge  
 in multitude toward greatness.

On this day  
 the small deeds of the year, infinitesimal,  
 unnoticed in the smoke of skirmish, cleave  
 fiercely together. The edifice grows huge,  
 becomes unvanquishable mass: the voice

and eyes and ears of us who have grown strong  
on bitter bread, dry root.

And now we march!

The brain will not deny  
the days that come with verdure nor the eye  
ignore the splendor of the changing year  
invested with surprise: bells clanging in the ear  
with sound that drowns the singing of the birds  
and voices rich with prophecy—the words  
fraught with great deeds.

Down countless avenues  
the senses feel impending change: the clues  
that guide our burdened hearts, heavy with pain,  
awakening class-memories—

they burn again!

O comrades of my dawns and days and nights  
O you who live with me  
you at my side in battle  
and at midnight talk  
after the fruitful day  
learning to meet the challenge of tomorrow's foe—  
welcome this spring!  
this burning first of May  
this ever-recurring day pregnant with history  
born in this land which witnessed our birth—  
*this land will be our own!*

Remember now—  
delve backward through the years' accumulated dust:  
*Haymarket—Spies, George Engel, Albert Parsons—*  
the noose drawn tightly—gasping "I have nothing,  
nothing, not even now, that I regret..."  
*Fisher and Lingg*, their shadows on a wall  
magnified a millionfold, cast by a setting sun  
westward to California, east to Hatteras  
where embattled workers sought an added hour of day.

Mark their names well: their death

and now recall

the spring that came the next year and the years that followed  
and the wars that bled us and the war that bore  
shining through the mud and mangled limbs the dawn,

*life* for the men of Russia

and for us

victory in sight, a star grown clear in the skies!

Mark their names well: now feel the memory  
that coursed in action through your father's veins,  
given to you at birth, to a million others:  
the dereliction of our youth, the sordid  
childhood ripening to bitterness,  
the aimless wandering from place to place  
seeking—what? You did not know, nor I.  
But scattered images remained, grew sharp  
and deep, indelible: Wisconsin farmhouse,  
barn wall sagging inward into emptiness,  
Chicago midnights on the lakeshore, beauty  
trampled on by hunger, no rest, no rest—  
icy roads across the Alleghenies,  
the clear bright brittle air of winter  
and at night we hugged the walls of public buildings  
but could not sleep.

Back to New York again:

there was warmth there was food there was time to think,  
to merge the broken images, to synthesize  
Mendota's midnight beauty and New York by day—  
Haymarket and Union Square in 1933 . . .

Nothing has been lost. The photographic plates  
grow clear in the solution—the worlds at war—  
unforgettable—

the image looms and casts

a huger image on the growing screen,  
projection of our lives and struggles.

Comrades

here is my hand! Here's all of me, my friends,  
brothers in arms and fellow builders! We  
together through the long transition marching  
will notch the trees along the way.

This May

has deeper meaning now than ever.

Close your ranks,

touch shoulders—ready?

There's our signal—  
March!

EDWIN ROLFE

## UNIT ASSIGNMENT

Now the beginning: the block divided,  
I choose my tenement,  
press bells that do not ring, ascend  
by feeling stairs where no lamps shed  
light to guide a stranger and am led  
by banisters towards a door.

Again a futile bell. I knock,  
hear scuffling through the wood, a voice  
gruff and questioning. I explain.  
Enter. Am home.

"This is my block," I say. It is.  
"Just four doors down." "And this," he says,  
"is my wife, and this my son, my daughter.  
Here is the living room."

He clears the best chair for me,  
momentary host, curious, proletarian;  
the family—my son, my daughter—gather  
around me, listen to the familiar word  
*Communist* falling from unfamiliar lips.  
Strange, too, they must have mused,  
its sound is good when he says it  
and what he says it means is good.

The evening passes quickly: tea is drunk  
from glasses, cups, an old cheese jar.  
My host, John Winter, fifty-four,  
asks questions, listens, deep in thought.  
I tell him what I know, I cite  
stories in *The Daily*, demonstrate  
items killed, never to appear  
elsewhere. "What is this?" he asks—  
the word *unity* is in his brain.

My son, my daughter listen too.  
They who were most suspicious now  
join us, and all I say  
enters them in images of food,  
of jobs, the wanted weekly pay.  
They too see what I mean is good.

The skyscraper bells ring out eleven.  
I leave a copy of The Daily. Am asked  
again to spend an evening with them. Rise.

John Winter walks me to the door, holds  
my hand in his a moment, saying goodnight.  
"These things you were saying—  
They're good."  
He fumbles for words.  
"I shall return," I say.

EDWIN ROLFE

## CITY OF MONUMENTS

Washington, 1934

Be proud you people of these graves  
these chiseled words this precedent  
From these blind ruins shines our monument.

Dead navies of the brain will sail  
stone celebrate its final choice  
when the air shakes, a single voice  
a strong voice able to prevail:

Entrust no hope to stone although the stone  
shelter the root—see too-great burdens placed  
with nothing certain but the risk  
set on the infirm column of  
the high memorial obelisk  
erect in accusation sprung against  
a barren sky taut over Anacostia:  
Give over, Gettysburg! a word will shake your glory—  
blood of the starved fell thin upon this plain,  
this battle is not buried with its slain.

Gravestone and battlefield retire,  
the whole green South is shadowed dark,  
the slick white domes are cast in night.  
But uneclipsed above this park  
the veteran of the Civil War  
sees havoc in the tended graves  
the midnight bugles blown to free  
still unemancipated slaves.



Blinded by chromium or transfiguration  
 we watch, as through a microscope, decay:  
 down the broad streets the limousines  
 advance in passions of display.  
 Air glints with diamonds, and these clavicles  
 emerge through orchids by whose trailing spoor  
 the sensitive cannot mistake  
 the implicit anguish of the poor.

The throats incline, the marble men rejoice  
 careless of torrents of despair.

Split by a tendril of revolt  
 stone cedes to blossom everywhere.

MURIEL RUKEYSER

## PORTRAIT OF A FALSE REVOLUTIONIST

He has the watery desire  
 to quench our fire,  
 to wilt the firm,  
 to soak in us until  
 we sink to our lowest level.

He has the indoors art  
 to catch you in a chair  
 and drug the air;  
 all motion under balk  
 that he may talk.

He'll chant red song  
 like a cricket all day long,  
 if you let him hum  
 safe and warm  
 out of the storm.

"Oh, see the other side!"—  
 and if we ride  
 that pendulum's idle arc  
 his aim is won;  
 nothing will be done.

But most beware  
 when he calls you rare,  
 better than the others;  
 that is his knife  
 to stab your brothers.

ISIDOR SCHNEIDER

## IN A HOTEL LOBBY

These are the well-to-do, the managers of the nation.  
 Trains from the North and West and South,  
 ships from the East, planes through the sky  
 from capitals and emporiums have rushed them here.  
 Porters with ironic eyes and automatic, sirring lips  
 escort them here to sit, lined deep in plush.

Beside them stir their imperious women.  
 Their hair threatens like lions' manes;  
 their eyes rove like killing eagles;  
 their lips look cut from stone;  
 their hands take lightly like the hands  
 of Aztec priests who timed fresh human hearts  
 beating on their palms.

Strange beside their cruel beauty are the mutilated men.  
 Bushmen chiefs with knives and spikes and stains  
 have not more marred themselves, than have these chiefs  
 of the capitalist jungle, gouged and torn  
 with pointed worries and with hooking scorn.

Here anxiety has almost split a cheek; and here  
 suspicion digs trenches round the eyes;  
 here arrogance has filed the lips like blades;  
 and here indulgence pulled them out like tongues;  
 and greed has sliced and envy burned  
 and graft has squeezed and flattery turned.

And do they know their doom? Out of the jungle to be driven?  
 The jungle of Capital is being cleared;  
 in Russia first and soon to thrive the world.

In the morning, following their razor's traces  
 do they see the omens on their faces?

ISIDOR SCHNEIDER

## TO THE MUSEUMS

Come to the museums, workers; and under every landscape  
 paste this label: "Workers! Is the earth as beautiful where you live?  
 you on the poverty farms, boarded to hogs,  
 your sore fields scratched to the stone by the chickens?  
 You in the slums who can span between two fingers  
 all you can have of the free horizon; who must lean,  
 somehow, over a tenement's shoulder to see the sun?  
 This is your homestead, farmer. Worker, this is your summer place.  
 It has been kept beautiful by your labor. Enjoy its grace.

Come to the museums, workers; under each gleaming nude  
 paste this label: "This is the working woman, this is her worker's  
 body,  
 undeformed,—by anxiety uneaten, undisordered by too many births,  
 the flesh unbloated by the puffing food  
 of eight cent diets; her smile is a discharge of health;  
 it spreads comfort upon us, calms us within a laughing peace.  
 Gracious she is in native dignity, at last untied  
 out of the cringe of poverty, straightened to full stature, pride  
 in the workers' world.

Come to the museums, workers, and under each madonna and child  
 paste this label: "Workers, in this fable, see, they damned our bodies;  
 here they cursed our sex. Worship for motherhood, reverence for life  
 they sought with a maternal virgin and a baby god!  
 And Joseph the carpenter is scorned and pushed aside.  
 Not of a worker's blood this child; too good for a worker such a bride.  
 Oh Comrades, our madonnas smile, invite their lovers' seed,  
 welcome the ripening, are brave to bring forth  
 children into the free, unharried, workers' world.

Come to the museums. On all the gates, the pillars, put up posters:  
 "Workers enter here. Claim what is stored here. It is yours.  
 Labor of artists; for the mind must be worked before it yields,  
 plowed, hoed, watered and weeded, till the ripened vision  
 is plucked by the acting hand; and for what use?  
 Not to be wiped on aching eyes; not to be draped  
 a shroud of dreams upon a stillborn day!  
 but plans to be enacted; visions to be made real  
 within the workers' world.

ISIDOR SCHNEIDER

## TIMECLOCK

a big mack rolling and rumbling down the long street,  
 and lo, morning!  
 pavements glisten with cold assurance of concrete  
 achievement; cash-confidence exudes from roughspores of stone  
 (bigtime belching out of black funnels,)  
 and milliondollar plants white, virginal in the sudden sun,  
 tiers of windows rising sightless from moist sorrows of night;  
 radios fermenting blood with jazz.

john hawley awakes, an old weariness in young bones.  
 minutes are decisive units of salary,  
 looming large upon the hideous timeclock,  
 ticking regularly.  
 he looks out the window, past the twisting el . . .  
 the scene is always the same:

each morning john hawley adorns his meekness  
 with a necktie flamboyant as a hollywood movie,  
 and emerges, whistling blithely, from a musty hallway,  
 the iridescent answer to a maiden's prayer.

each morning john hawley jaunts to the job  
 via streetcar in the summertime,  
 absentmindedly proffers his fare  
 (the motorman has a sweaty face),  
 turns to the sportsection of the paper with habitual indifference.

morning sizzles like something toothsome in vats,  
 preparing miraculous fodder for the keen appetite,  
 and the refreshed mind sniffs . . .

but he tracks timidly in unctuous labyrinths,  
 uprooted, clamped to revolving mechanisms  
 until evening comes

an incubus,  
 stale with the stink of sweat, forgetful,  
 cold.

(a white collar clerk: an amorphous slug,  
 found in abundance in mire,  
 in fecund, obfuscate cities . . . disgusting to the touch.  
 thus the political dictionaries.)

laborers have souls that writhe  
 to the clattering crescendo of power-machines,  
 and little hunchbacked men dream and moan  
 where the wheels spin in rhythms upon the brain  
 like surf beating on the sloped shores,  
 but john hawley, a fileclerk, a catholic christian,  
 number 178, punching IN and OUT,  
 a pale young man wearing a kleenkut suit  
 and a straw hat in the summer  
 has been perforated, stamped :  
 AMERICAN MADE.

drugged by the clock portentously measuring  
 stingy minutes of salary,  
 the mind deformed and poisoned by headlines  
 ("a paper for people who think")  
 to become the cruel convenience of capitalists :  
 the slave echoing the masters wish.

but at evening  
 john hawley, dropped like a plummet  
 past thirty-odd floors  
 reaches the street, and (somewhat dizzy),  
 feels the blood flowing back into veins  
 sapped by gestures of obeisance and meaningless  
 frivols of toil,  
 and bulbs enunciate time's wealth  
 out of confusion and weariness.

now the city froths insane at night ;  
 its panting, throbbing breath  
 fogs the solitary lamps ;  
 a restless humming underneath,  
 music of its peculiar fever . . .

john hawley is an entity  
 stifled by bricks and steel and electric-  
 lights,  
 wandering aimless, alone, through the ghoulish  
 squares.

freedom is a girl with tangled hair  
 whose breasts are worthy of caresses,  
 whose eyes, imperious with a larger lust,  
 vitriol the tissues of the virtuous ;

out of the night, impassive, saying there is no god,  
 no caesar,  
 no allembacing goodness;  
 nothing, nothing, only stone . . .  
 she is a pretty piece  
 throwing kisses from a necessary distance,  
 singing throaty, sentimental songs  
 in a jazzband voice.

john hawley glimpsed,  
 through movies of incessant reels  
 (all-talking-dancing-whoring),  
 the dwindled whiteness of her thighs—  
 a super-super-nymph,

and walked  
 far  
 seeking her bed

the sky was endless, glimmering  
 into dawn . . .

and he crept, vanquished, an old weariness overcoming his bones,  
 past the garish sconce in the musty hallway,  
 painfully up the carpeted flights  
 to his room.

on the twisting el  
 trains scudded and droned;  
 he slept, respiring with the wind,  
 haggard as the gray, pitiless world  
 that called him citizen.

HERMAN SPECTOR

## HARLEM RIVER

by the huge dead yards  
 where freight trains wait  
 and brood, warehouses' vacant eyes  
 stare out at a world made desolate;  
 but the tugs *blot* their egregious pride,  
 and the scummy waters twinkle with light.

they've suicided from this bridge—  
 ginks out of jobs, and the dames for love—  
 their peaked, pale faces rise in the dark  
 futile with yearning, tear-wet, stark:  
 i wonder what vast, dim dream of peace  
 they sought, in the susurrant waves' embrace.

night's breasts were soft, cajoling sleep...  
 her lewd eyes beckoned their weariness.  
 and now they are ground to the ultimate dust  
 that settles between red tenement bricks;  
 and now they are one with the particled past  
 siltering up weird, hopeless streets.

but high spires glow in the lonely gloom.  
 trains clatter and roar, and softly, laugh.  
 the pavements, endless in grim contempt  
 of hunger and lust, glitter like glass.  
 in the brief white glare of the smart arc-lamps  
 strange shadowshapes loom, and threaten, and pass.

HERMAN SPECTOR

## LIFE OF THE MIND, 1935

*The words in the books are not true  
 If they do not act in you.*

Fret fools the days away,  
 Best-sellers for their food,  
 And bad philosophy,  
 Fret fools.

But we,

We dare not read for long.  
 We snatch our thought, our song,  
 As soldiers do their meat.  
 Necessity to eat,  
 Necessity to act,  
 And act aright, renews  
 The mind's link with the arm.  
 Imperative to choose,  
 Imperative to do,  
 Our time's dynamic form.

Once we were students—then  
 Grave faces hours poured  
 Over the activity stored—  
 The energy of great men.

That time must come again.  
 If not for us, for those  
 We will to endow once more  
 With the tested word-in-deed.  
 Poetry and the great prose  
 Born in a like uproar  
 Where someone had to bleed.

The battle of the mind,  
 Tranquillity, too, the kind  
 Quick teacher's face, the jest,  
 Keen argument with a friend,  
 That sport and the sweet zest,—  
 All fall, must fall, behind.  
 That time is at an end.

Now action like a sword.  
 Now to redeem the word.  
 Now blood for stubborn proof  
 No one may cut apart  
 Word from the living deed,  
 Or live this life aloof.  
 Fear is a flimsy creed.  
*"I believe with all my heart."*  
 In the one way to believe:  
*"This thing is good—I give  
 My living to see it live."*

Bleak thought and a bastard art,  
 How easy to relinquish both!  
 So to be wise, so learned  
 If never more returned  
 To temporary peace.  
 So not to die of sloth  
 Or live best-sellers' ease.  
 But to stand upon our oath.



## INTERIOR

A middle class fortress in which to hide!  
 Draw down the curtain as if saying *No*,  
 While noon's ablaze, ablaze outside.  
 And outside people work and sweat  
 And the day clangs by and the hard day ends.  
 And after you doze brush out your hair  
 And walk like a marmoset to and fro  
 And look in the mirror at middle-age  
 And sit and regard yourself stare and stare  
 And hate your life and your tiresome friends  
 And last night's bridge where you went in debt;  
 While all around you gathers the rage  
 Of cheated people.

Will we hear your fret  
 In the rising noise of the streets? *Oh no!*

GENEVIEVE TAGGARD

## PROSPERITY

An overland limited  
 Chalks a streak of gold  
 Across the blackboard of night.  
 Sleepers groan under the impact of flying steel,  
 Life trembles in the wake of dust and wind.  
 Prosperity lounges in pullman coaches,  
 Eats roast turkey in dining cars, and schemes  
 Ways and means of robbing farmers  
 Out of next year's grain crops;

While American jobless  
 Ride the flecks, the rods of the coaches  
 And nurse a great hunger with dreams  
 Of wheat cakes and coffee steaming  
 On the counter of a coffee-an' joint  
 Somewhere in Omaha, Denver, Colorado Springs.

JIM WATERS

## DARK WINDS

Dark winds,  
Winds creepin' down frum th' mountins  
To stinky mills,  
Callin' my longin's  
Back to th' hills.

Smoke winds,  
Fouled with dirt frum th' suttu stacks  
Of a fac'try,  
A-scrougin' fer room  
An' blackin' me.

Deep winds  
I feel them blowin' in th' streets  
An' when alone,  
Dulled by th' fac'try's  
Dull monotone.

Sad winds,  
They've blowed sorrow an' sufferin'  
Frum northern mills,  
An' drug my people  
Down from th' hills.

DON WEST

## SOUTHERN LULLABY

*(For Lillian)*

Suck, little baby, suck long,  
Body mustn't be frail.  
Muscles growing firm and strong—  
Daddy's in the Fulton Jail.

Laugh, little baby, laugh light,  
Two little eyes of blue  
Kindle a blaze to fight—  
Daddy is waiting for you.

Sleep, little baby, sleep sound,  
Under the southern stars.  
Body growing hard and round  
To break the prison bars.

Eat, little baby, eat well,  
 A Bolshevik you'll be,  
 And hate this bosses' hell—  
 Sucking it in from me . . .

Hate, little baby, hate deep,  
 You musn't know my fears.  
 Mother is watching your sleep,  
 But you don't see her tears.

DON WEST

## AUGUST 22, 1927

From Ellis Island, over the guarded fence,  
 what grasp against the smoky bay,  
 index electric for the immigrant,  
 bright as the panes where Wall St. lifts the sky?

—Of Liberty, the Statue. And of her golden land  
 draped like a mother in the neon veils,  
 two men asked innocently food. Bruised  
 mouth they got at the iron nipples.

Then Boston: a hawker of fish; in the last alley  
 his pennies stank in the twilight.  
 August; the fire escapes a-heave with sleepers;  
 a cobbler clops in his shop till midnight.

Chained are the days, fatigue and blistered rooms,  
 stuporous nightfall on the bodies chained.  
 "Workmen, unite! Nothing to lose but chains—,"  
 under the harsh bulb, fishman and cobbler read;

And sang them with living fist in the mill streets,  
 for which they were framed into the cynical bars  
 7 years, watching approach the electric gavel.  
 Now burn them for murder, said the murderers.

While U.S.S.R. brightens with Lenin's voltage,  
 socialist engines suckling the cemented river;  
 long past such playthings, capital restrains  
 Niagara to electrify a chair.

Thayer has shaved Nicola Sacco's skull;  
 Lowell on Vanzetti fits the wet iron.  
 Morgan, Mellon, Ford, and Rockefeller  
 at the copper switch twice clamp death down.

You, masters of New England! land and wheel  
squeeze in your perfumed thumbs, but on your  
cuff is the stink of burning skin;  
class toward class, we name you murderer.

SACCO: VANZETTI: twice in that hour,  
twice our banners were branded. Now when mills hush  
in Massachusetts, moves our ruddy storm  
from whose first height the deadly truth must flash.

DAVID WOLFF

## THE FRONT IN DARKNESS

The market offers no better radio. At this price  
every family can afford one. Notice 6 special features 6  
(turn over)

the Junkers raised the lard. Hitler gapes  
and smashes the plain air. How long, proletarians,  
will you dry in the swastika's web?  
The banners will not do for clothes. Prepare  
sudden, short strikes...

In locked sub-cellars  
underneath Germany, or comrade by comrade  
fearless in quiet woods, assembled the hectographs:  
leaflets go everywhere of the invincible root.  
In seat, or left beside, or bursting up the street:  
"Your Party lives!" Toward Alexanderplatz the harsh  
train rushes to a close, explodes  
handbills from the utmost car. Empty  
everywhere the storm-troops' catch.  
Who spoiled the Nazi fest on the white  
summery river, when among fine shells,  
the clean racers stolen from the Labor Sport,  
ran red flags floating on the supple stream?

Each week the headsman hacks the final stem;  
the Party lives: the red cells sprout underground.  
Grouped like a fist in powerful fives,  
christian and socialist meet with reds,  
and under the moustache of the secret police,  
sharpen new actions and new silences.  
On May Day '34 when Hitler bawled,  
a monstrous nothing bogged the microphones;

he leaned toward millions in an elegant suit,  
 bright shoes, and sweaty anguish lest he see  
 the granite Thaelman pace behind their lips.  
 O workmen of all lands, lastly we honor here  
 a simple man who bought a radio,  
 barred up his doors, and drew the windows high  
 into the suburbs of the glowing Ruhr.

—station KOMINTERN stands on the air. You  
 German and every worker, red clasp  
 from the free Soviet! Dimitrov and his two  
 you forced from the Nazi pincers; today  
 out of the shouting sky they rose to Moscow—

The crowd of streets below  
 greets like a trumpet the great radio;  
 miners and moulders silent attend;  
 the special-stormers slam with bars  
 and new machine guns: bomb the radio!

—courage, brothers! In New York,  
 Shanghai, Havana, cries the rescue on  
 for you and Thaelman. We shall yet go free  
 all in one union, Maine to Turkestan.  
 Shove out the rich: on Stinnes' thumb  
 you see brown Hitler move.  
 Together strike—

The automatic gripes in the twitching arm  
 of the gross captain. Three men with rods  
 hammer the simple man who has died.  
 A grenade blooms; the radio  
 is singing now:

Arise, you prisoners . . . !

DAVID WOLFF

## REMEMBERING HART CRANE

Great is your grave; the muting waters  
 piled on your eyes; the riveters of the real  
 bridges invisible to you forever.

Their cables are your first memorial, Hart Crane,  
 strong poet whom I hoped to walk with near your deadly sea,  
 fearless at last; whom the first-class of U.S.A.,

whose coin, like gilt, is lethal on the skin, encouraged  
 into their smooth imperial Caribbean;  
 whom in pajamas last seen madly smiling,  
 the smiling shark drew under;

Dead poet: bitter in the nighttime with our cheap fatigue,  
 we younger write, who have seen gloriously today  
 in the face of a workmate bleached in the stretch-out,  
 our approach blast open, live eyes elect  
 our hands, our swinging towers; our rivets shock  
 men into class among broad fierce machines.

True, to the world riveted, immutable  
 till billions pass, Hart Crane, new  
 bridge we project:  
 O Party of one weld, O living steel,  
 arc whose first pier destroys the tenements!

DAVID WOLFF

## BETWEEN THE WORLD AND ME

And one morning while in the woods I stumbled suddenly upon the  
 thing,  
 Stumbled upon it in a grassy clearing guarded by scaly oaks and elms.  
 And the sooty details of the scene rose, thrusting themselves between  
 the world and me . . .

There was a design of white bones slumbering forgottenly upon a  
 cushion of ashes.  
 There was a charred stump of a sapling pointing a blunt finger ac-  
 cusingly at the sky.  
 There were torn tree limbs, tiny veins of burnt leaves, and a scorched  
 coil of greasy hemp;  
 A vacant shoe, an empty tie, a ripped shirt, a lonely hat, and a pair of  
 trousers stiff with black blood.  
 And upon the trampled grass were buttons, dead matches, butt-ends  
 of cigars and cigarettes, peanut shells, a drained gin-flask, and a  
 whore's lipstick;  
 Scattered traces of tar, restless arrays of feathers, and the lingering  
 smell of gasoline.  
 And through the morning air the sun poured yellow surprise into the  
 eye sockets of a stony skull . . .  
 And while I stood my mind was frozen with a cold pity for the life  
 that was gone.

The ground gripped my feet and my heart was circled by icy walls  
of fear—  
The sun died in the sky; a night wind muttered in the grass and  
fumbled the leaves in the trees; the woods poured forth the  
hungry yelping of hounds; the darkness screamed with thirsty  
voices; and the witnesses rose and lived:  
The dry bones stirred, rattled, lifted, melting themselves into my  
bones.  
The gray ashes formed flesh firm and black, entering into my flesh.  
The gin-flask passed from mouth to mouth; cigars and cigarettes  
glowed, the whore smeared the lipstick red upon her lips,  
And a thousand faces swirled around me, clamoring that my life be  
burned . . .

And then they had me, stripped me, battering my teeth into my throat  
till I swallowed my own blood.  
My voice was drowned in the roar of their voices, and my black wet  
body slipped and rolled in their hands as they bound me to the  
sapling.  
And my skin clung to the bubbling hot tar, falling from me in limp  
patches.  
And the down and quills of the white feathers sank into my raw flesh,  
and I moaned in my agony.  
Then my blood was cooled mercifully, cooled by a baptism of gasoline.  
And in a blaze of red I leaped to the sky as pain rose like water, boiling  
my limbs.  
Panting, begging I clutched child-like, clutched to the hot sides of  
death.  
Now I am dry bones and my face a stony skull staring in yellow  
surprise at the sun . . .

RICHARD WRIGHT

## FOLKSONGS:

### MILL-MOTHERS SONG

We leave our homes in the morning,  
We kiss our children good-bye,  
While we slave for the bosses  
Our children scream and cry.

And when we draw our money  
Our grocery bills to pay,  
Not a cent to spend for clothing,  
Not a cent to lay away.

How it grieves the heart of a mother  
You everyone must know,  
But we can't buy for our children,  
Our wages are too low.

It is for our little children  
That seem to us so dear,  
But for us nor them, oh, workers,  
The bosses do not keer.

But listen to me workers,  
A Union they do fear.  
Let's stand together workers  
And have a union here.

ELLA MAY WIGGINS

## A SOUTHERN COTTON MILL RHYME

I lived in a town a way down south  
By the name of Buffalo  
And worked in a mill with the rest of the trash  
As we're often called you know.

You factory folks who sing this rhyme  
Will surely understand  
The reason why I love you so  
Is I'm a factory hand.

While standing here between my looms  
You know I lose no time  
To keep my shuttles in a whiz  
And write this little rhyme.

We rise up early in the morn  
And work all day real hard  
To buy our little meat and bread  
And sugar tea and lard.



We work from weeks end to weeks end  
And never lose a day  
And when that awful pay day comes  
We draw our little pay.

We then go home on pay day night  
And sit down in a chair  
The merchant raps upon the door  
He's come to get his share.

When all our little debts are paid  
And nothing left behind  
We turn our pockets wrong side out  
But not a cent can find.

We rise up early in the morn  
And toil from soon till late  
We have no time to primp and fix  
And dress right up to date.

Our children they grow up unlearned  
No time to go to school  
Almost before they've learned to walk  
They learn to spin or spool.

The Boss men jerk them round and round  
And whistle very keen  
I'll tell you what, the factory kids  
Are really treated mean.

The folks in town who dress so fine  
And spend their money free  
Will hardly look at a factory hand  
Who dresses like you and me.

As we go walking down the street  
All wrapped in lint and strings  
They call us fools and factory trash  
And other low down things.

Just let them wear their watches fine  
And golden chains and rings,  
But when the great Revolution comes  
They'll have to shed those things.

## RAGGED HUNGRY BLUES

I'm sad and weary; I've got the hungry ragged blues;  
 I'm sad and weary; I've got the hungry ragged blues;  
 Not a penny in my pocket to buy one thing I need to use.

I woke up this morning with the worst blues I ever had in my life;  
 I woke up this morning with the worst blues I ever had in my life;  
 Not a bite to cook for breakfast, a poor coal miner's wife.

When my husband works in the coal mines, he loads a car on every  
 trip,  
 When my husband works in the coal mines, he loads a car on every  
 trip,  
 Then he goes to the office that evening and gits denied of scrip.

Just because it took all he had made that day to pay his mine expense,  
 Just because it took all he had made that day to pay his mine expense,  
 A man that'll work for coal-light and carbide, he ain't got a speck of  
 sense.

All the women in the coal camps are a-sitting with bowed-down head,  
 All the women in the coal camps are a-sitting with bowed-down head,  
 Ragged and barefooted, their children a-crying for bread.

No food, no clothes for our children, I'm sure this ain't no lie,  
 No food, no clothes for our children, I'm sure this ain't no lie,  
 If we can't git more for our labor, we will starve to death and die.

Listen, friends and comrades, please take a friend's advice,  
 Listen, friends and comrades, please take a friend's advice,  
 Don't load no more that dirty coal till you git a living price.

Don't go under the mountains with the slate a-hanging over your  
 head,  
 Don't go under the mountains with the slate a-hanging over your  
 head,  
 And work for just coal-light and carbide and your children a-crying  
 for bread.

This mining town I live in is a sad and lonely place,  
 This mining town I live in is a sad and lonely place,  
 Where pity and starvation is pictured on every face.

Ragged and hungry, no slippers on our feet,  
 Ragged and hungry, no slippers on our feet,  
 We're bumming around from place to place to git a little bite to eat.

All a-going round from place to place bumming for a little food to eat,  
 Listen, my friends and comrades, please take a friend's advice,  
 Don't put out no more of our labor till you git a living price.

Some coal operators might tell you the hungry blues are not bad;  
 Some coal operators might tell you the hungry blues are not bad;  
 They are the worst blues this poor woman ever had.

AUNT MOLLY JACKSON

### DO LAK ALABAMY BOYS \*

Rooster git de worm, bring it to de hen  
 Squirrel fin' him hick'ry nut, to take back to his den  
 Wha'cher gwine do nigger, when yo' pantry all gi' out  
 Keep suckin' on yo' milk tooth, 'til dey falls out of yo' mouff?

Ev'y livin' creacher mus' have somewheres where to crawl  
 Out ob de rain, out ob de snow, no dif'rence how long it fall  
 Wha'cher gwine do nigger, when on yo' do' dey nails a sign  
 Git packin' de ol' grip sack an' leave yo' place behin'?

White folks git yo' money, scraps f'om offen yo' fahm  
 He take mos' ev-thin' you has, 'cept de power dats in yo' ahm  
 What you gwine do nigger, wit' de power dat's in yo' ahm  
 Git wipin' yo' eye tear, 'til de strenff is dead an' gone?

Bowed down on yo' knees, askin' Lawd please gi' mah due  
 Sho' keep you on yo' knees, 'til turkey buzzard git through wit' you  
 Wha'cher gwine do nigger, ain' nothin' lak what ah said  
 Do lak Alabamy boys an' win or be foun' dead.

### DEATH HOUSE 'BLUES †

Paper come out  
 Strewed de news  
 (repeat)  
 Seben po' niggers  
 Moanin' death house blues

\* From L. Gellert's collection of *Negro Songs of Protest*.

† *Ibid.*

Seben nappy heads  
Wit' big shiny eye  
All boun' in jail  
An' framed to die

Messin' white woman  
Snake lyin' tale  
Dat hang an' burn  
An' jail wit' no bail

Worse ol' crime  
In dis damn lan'  
Black skin' acoverin'  
Po' workin' man

Jerge an' Jury  
All in de stan'  
Lawd biggity name  
Fo' same lynchin' han'

White folks asetting'  
In great Court House  
Lak cat down cellar  
Wit' no-hole mouse

Seben nappy heads  
Wit' big shiny eye  
All boun' in jail  
An' framed to die.

# REPORTAGE



## PREFACE

EVERY AGE produces its characteristic literature. We need not elaborate this truism here. We can no more conceive of Richardson or Thackeray writing in this time than we can picture John Dos Passos in Elizabethan doublet and frilled collar. The twentieth century—history in seven league boots—has evolved a variety of forms, all characterized by the swiftness of the time. One of these—and it assumes greater importance as the tempo of this age increases—is reportage.

The term reportage has come to us from Europe, particularly from the Soviet Union; yet it is a peculiarly American form. John Reed was a master of it; *Ten Days That Shook the World* is its classic example. A great deal of the most stirring writing these days is reportage. Much of the best writing in revolutionary literature is reportage.

What is it? A report, first of all: a report that is written for a deadline. A magazine or a newspaper is waiting to go to press—tens of thousands are impatient for its appearance on the stands, in their mailboxes. They are waiting for it to come to answer their questions. Everybody is asking questions today. Everybody wants to know the answer. Everybody demands an answer—and he wants it today, this week, not a year hence. Then, he will have other, newer questions.

The writer of reportage is not merely an observer, a recorder. He is not just the scribe, getting history down on paper. Not only must he get the sound of the bullet; not only the cries of the wounded and the songs of the marchers. He must explain the strategy of the armies—and altogether his writing must result in an experience, which in turn induces a mode of action. All this must be done in time for the deadline. The world, asking questions, is waiting for the answer—and next week brings new questions.

Reportage must do much more than merely answer the questions, who, why, when, where. That is not enough. It must answer these questions—plus. That plus makes all the difference. It helps the reader *experience* the event recorded. Reportage is three-dimensional reporting. The writer not only condenses reality; he must get his reader to see and feel the facts. The best writers of reportage do their editorializing via their artistry. They do not themselves tell you why these men acted thus and so: the characters they describe do that job for them. And all this is done swiftly, surely, for the editors are impatient, the copy boy is waiting at the door.

A world making for the barricades leaves little time for leisure.

This is the time for the newspaper, the magazine, the pamphlet, the short story, the shorter novel. Periods of revolution, of transition, have always favored the short form. Pamphleteering was a high art in the French Revolution; the essays of Tom Paine in America have never been forgotten. Today the columnist is one of the most important molders of opinion. He imparts ideas and explanations to people marching double-quick. The writer of reportage must react to the immediate political questions immediately. His writing must thunder with today. The headlines must be fresh. Revolutions a week ago are almost forgotten for today's revolution. Hence the emergence of the Reeds, the Smedleys, the Spivaks. These are masters of reportage. They have encountered the deadlines and have mastered them. The cry still sounds concerning the arduousness of art—how long and painstaking a process creation is. The real writer of reportage—he who really understands his task—has probably the most difficult job of all artists. He must record the facts for *this* issue—and do it with artistry.

Some of our novelists bemoan the popularity of reportage as some bastard literary form passing itself off as a legally begotten son of belles lettres. The popularity of reportage is not at the expense of the novel, of fiction. On the contrary—reportage requires many of the same characteristics as the novel, the short story. It requires delineation of character, of locale, of atmosphere. And it must do these things swiftly, even more trenchantly. In brief, reportage is the presentation of a particular fact, a specific event, in a setting that aids the reader to experience the fact, the event. This is the best reporting. It is a form which has sprung up because the revolution requires it: no one person sat down and devised it. But we can improve it, sharpen it up to be one of the best weapons in the literary arsenal.

The collection of reportage in this book has necessarily been limited by space. The editors, therefore, have been obliged to omit fine reporting by Ella Winter, Sender Garlin, A. B. Magil, Myra Page, Leon Dennen, Michael Quin, Bruce Minton, and others. The materials chosen are examples with the most typical qualities of reportage: aesthetic, dramatic, descriptive qualities which are akin to all works of literature.

Reportage has the world as its audience. To say we have too much reportage and not enough of the novel, of "fiction," is to misunderstand the function of the first. We have here a division of function: it is like strategy in battle. The infantry attacks and the tanks advance to clean up machine gun nests for the foot soldiers. To dispute which is more important, the tank or the doughboy, is absurd. We need every available weapon in this greatest of all wars—the war of the classes.



# ANACOSTIA FLATS

JOHN DOS PASSOS

June 1932.

"HOME, BOYS, it's home we want to be," we sang in all the demobilization camps. This was God's country. And we ran for the train with the flags waving and a new army outfit on and our discharge papers and the crisp bills of our last pay in our pockets. The world was safe for democracy and America was the land of opportunity.

They signed you up in the American Legion and jollied you into voting for Harding and the G. O. P. Beaucoup parades, beaucoup speeches, run the slackers and the pacifists and the knockers out of the country, lynch them Wobblies, tell the Reds to go back where they came from. The G. O. P. took care of the Civil War vets and the Spanish War vets, didn't it? Well, it'll take care of youse boys.

You went to work if you could get a job; some kinds of jobs you made big money on, on others the bosses gyped you, but anyway you could eat, you could save up a little, get married, start payments on a home; boom times ahead.

When things slackened and you began to look a little democratic around the gills, they handed you the bonus. The G. O. P. and the nation are behind youse boys. Well, we got some of it and we spent it and we didn't reckon on cyclic depression No. 8b. And now look at us.

A bunch of outofwork ex-service men in Portland, Oregon, figured they needed their bonus right now; 1945 would be too late, only buy wreaths for their tombstones. They figured out, too, that the bonus paid now would liven up business, particularly the retail business in small towns; might be just enough to tide them over until things picked up. Anyway, everybody else was getting a bonus: the moratorium was a bonus to European nations, the R. F. C. was handing out bonuses to railroads and banks, how about the men who'd made the world safe for democracy getting their bonus, too? God knows we're the guys who need it worst. Every other interest has got the lobbyists in Washington. It's up to us to go to Washington and be our own lobbyists. Park benches can't be any harder in Washington than they are back home.

So three hundred of them started east in old cars and trucks, hitchhiking, ride on freight trains. (Maybe the words "direct action" still hovered on the air of the Pacific slope, left over from the days of the Wobblies.) By the time they reached Council Bluffs they found that other groups all over the country were rebelling against their

veterans' organizations and getting the same idea. It was an army. They organized it as such and nicknamed it the B. E. F.

Now they are camped on Anacostia Flats in the southeast corner of Washington. Nearly twenty thousand of them altogether. Everywhere you meet new ragged troops straggling in. A few have gone home discouraged, but very few. Anacostia Flats is the recruiting center; from there they are sent to new camps scattered around the outskirts of Washington. Anacostia Flats is the ghost of an army camp from the days of the big parade, with its bugle calls, its mess-lines, greasy K. P.'s, M. P.'s, headquarters, liaison officers, medical officer. Instead of the tents and the long tarpaper barracks of those days, the men are sleeping in little leantos built out of old newspapers, cardboard boxes, packing crates, bits of tin or tarpaper roofing, old shutters, every kind of cockeyed makeshift shelter from the rain scraped together out of the city dump.

The doughboys have changed, too, as well as their uniforms and their housing, in these fifteen years. There's the same goulash of faces and dialects, foreigners' pidgin English, lingo from industrial towns and farming towns, East, Northeast, Middle West, Southwest, South; but we were all youngsters then; now we are getting on into middle life, sunken eyes, hollow cheeks off breadlines, pale-looking knotted hands of men who've worked hard with them, and then for a long time have not worked. In these men's faces, as in Pharaoh's dream, the lean years have eaten up the fat years already.

General Glassford again has played the perfect host; his entertainment committee of motorcycle cops has furnished iodine and CC pills, helped lay out the camps, given advice on digging latrines (the men call them Hoover Villas), and recently set out some tents and bedding. One of the strangest sights Pennsylvania Avenue has ever seen was a long line of ex-service men, hunched under their bed-ticking full of straw, filling up a long stairway in the middle of a particularly demolished four-story garage that the police department had turned over to them. The cops and ex-service men play baseball together in the afternoon; they are buddies together.

In the middle of the Anacostia camp is a big platform with a wooden object sticking up from one corner that looks like an old-fashioned gallows. Speaking goes on from this platform all morning and all afternoon. The day I saw it, there were a couple of members of the bonus army's congressional committee on the platform, a Negro in an overseas cap and a tall red Indian in buckskin and beads, wearing a tengallon hat. The audience, white men and Negroes, is packed in among the tents and shelters. A tall scrawny man with deeply sunken cheeks is talking. He's trying to talk about the bonus

but he can't stick to it; before he knows it he's talking about the general economic condition of the country:

"Here's a plant that can turn out everything every man, woman, and child in this country needs, from potatoes to washing machines, and it's broken down because it can't give the fellow who does the work enough money to buy what he needs with. Give us the money and we'll buy their bread and their corn and beans and their electric iceboxes and their washing machines and their radios. We ain't holdin' out on 'em because we don't want those things. Can't get a job to make enough money to buy 'em, that's all."

When he was through speaking a congressman was hoisted up on the platform, a stout representative from Connecticut with that special politician's profile that's as definite in its way as the standardized face of a dick. He announced that the bonus bill had passed the House and that he was the only congressman from Connecticut that had voted for it. Everybody cheered. He added that he thought it would pass the Senate, but he doubted if the Lord Himself knew what the distinguished gentleman in the White House was going to do about it.

"Now I'm not a Red, God damn it," said somebody near me, "but. . ."

The arrival of the bonus army seems to be the first event to give the inhabitants of Washington any inkling that something is happening in the world outside of their drowsy sunparlor. Maybe it's the federal pay cuts that have made them take notice. In the Anacostia streetcar two mail carriers and the conductor started to talk about it. "Well, they say they'll stay here till they get the bonus if they have to stay here till 1945. . . I guess they ought to get it all right, but how'll that help all the others out of work? . . . Terrible to think of men, women, and children starvin' and havin' to beg charity relief with all the stuff there is going to waste in this country. Why up home. . ." Then began the stock conversation of this year 1932 about farmers not shipping apples, cabbage, potatoes, because they couldn't get any price, about loads of fresh fish dumped overboard, trainloads of milk poured out, and babies crying for it. One of the mail carriers was from Texas and had just come back from a trip home. He'd seen them plowing under last year's unharvested cotton. "We got the food, we got the clothing, we got the man power, we got the brains," he said. "There must be some remedy."

## THE GRASSHOPPER IS STIRRING

BEN FIELD

As you approach the prairies, you hear and read more about the grasshopper. The newspapers are full of him. Advice on how to use poison bait. Feverish articles on how scientists have plumbed the belly of grasshoppers and found nematodes coiled within. Perhaps the farmer could raise nematodes or digger wasps that kill grasshoppers. Maybe seagulls could be imported in coops to swallow and vomit out millions of them to save the precious grain. In South America there are grasshoppers that catch birds and eat them, grasshoppers big enough for the devil to ride. A single grasshopper is not such a bad bug, but let millions of him mob together, his temperature rises, his color changes, and as he swarms through the land set for him by the drouth, nothing can stop him, absolutely nothing can stop him.

The prairie on a hot Sunday. Along the horizon wooden churches with steeples like probes stuck into the empty sky. Grain elevators, looming over towns, stand stupidly like giant robots. This day of rest, rusty farmers are bailing water from muddy waterholes, are bunched around threshers spitting yellowish chaff and straw, are strewed into combines and reapers shearing through long acres of bitten wheat. And everywhere the plague, whirling, soaring, crackling like a great fire, breaking into huge waves, leaving greenish thousands crushed, twitching on roads and fields, pushing on like a mighty bellow, tireless wings an army of knives stabbing savagely in the burning sun.

From early morning he has been shocking wheat. Head to head you put the sandy bunches, bound so they have hourglass shapes. His shirt is soaked, his hands grimy. The boss has forgotten to send him his lunch. It is late afternoon already. He stumbles through the stubble to the fence. A covered wagon creaks over the dusty road stuffed with the belongings of a poor farmer. A horse limps behind, hipbones jutting. The hand turns around, his face simple and open as an ingersoll watch.

Sure, the farmers here are having a hell of a time with the hoppers and drought. The hoppers were so bad one day they bagged the sun and it was black as a bat till night. The farmers are talking of a big strike. They'd better start something before their hides are hanging on half the fences in the country. Hired men are getting a dollar and a quarter shocking. It hasn't rained for a month so you get a chance to make money every day, even Sunday. You might

just as well work Sundays. You got no place to go when you're on the prairie.

He goes back to his shocks. Head together, head together. Under a sun like a bloated bloodsucker, he swims in sweat until it's far too dark to see his torn thumbs.

There are thousands of these men on the prairie, working for farmers next door to starvation themselves. Boss and help caught as if in a wild sea, the stronger clambering to the backs of the most downtrodden for a last suck of air. You see these migratory workers walking the tracks, riding freights; on roads, thumbing the air for a lift; lying in scant grass with feet red and swollen as if picked out of boiling pots. In the villages they loiter in shadows, dusty as if vomited out of thresher funnels, with big belts like the ones motorcyclists wear to strengthen their backs, dispossessed, less at home here than the flickertail and the hawk, watching fresh clean girls go by, the mansap turning bitter in their hot entrails. And here and there, alone or in groups, some with ears pricked and bodies taut as if waiting for the yelling bugle's first signal and the booming shotgun.

The hired man straightens himself for a moment. He waves a weary friendly hand. The grasshoppers fall back in a drizzle.

In spite of her being as busy as a fly in a dirty corner, she seems thankful for the break in her day's work. She lets the screen door clap behind her. Her face is sourlooking like old milk, flabby as a sucked breast.

Thirty years' homesteading in this spot. It's a terrible hard fight to keep the home their own. She shades her eyes and looks out over the section of land and then at the machinery and buildings in the barnyard—drags, grain wagons, sprayers, silo like a broken swill barrel, sheds where some pigs are grunting. A half dozen chickens cheep halfheartedly in the heat.

The hired men are really better off in a way. They get seventy-five cents a day and meals and lodging. They don't have to wait for their pay. They want it right away. She doesn't blame them. But all these responsibilities. The hired men, coming first, with feed and pay. The cows that have got to be fed and milked. In thirty years of homesteading she's never had a day off, never really a single day off. She wouldn't mind it so much if they could hold on and call things their own. She blinks at the withered house and at a dry stalk in a flowerpot on the window.

They had to borrow money for seeding from the government. They're mighty sorry now. The crop is so mean, prices poor, that it wasn't worth it at all. They're poor fools, that's what they are. Taxes are high as that windmill but bring no water from the ground. They

bought poison against the hoppers, but it didn't help a bit. They came just the same. And the harder you work—ain't it peculiar?—the less you get. You keep rolling like a stone that's started down hill, doing yourself no good and nobody else.

She stops her lifeless droning. She listens. Never heard of Ella Bloor. We talk to her of Bloor's work among the grain farmers, of the program of the United Farmers' League. She brightens up a little and takes an application card. Can we come again?

We turn to the road. Around us are heaps of manure like mounds and dugouts raised quickly up against the grasshopper.

This farm consists of a quarter section. Nelson a Swede has been farming it since 1900. He takes us over the land. The wheat is so poor it won't yield more than two bushels to the acre. It'll probably score three or four, and he'll be lucky to get ten to fifteen cents a bushel. Will he thresh? He doesn't know what to do. Last year he cut it for feed. One of the horses died from the thistles. Doesn't know what to do. May just as well give his team and farm to the only hired man he can pay and hide himself in a badger hole.

For a second the sky darkens. Nelson stiffens. It's only a cloud. Not grasshoppers. The sun comes out again like a redhot rivet head. Nelson's blue eyes flicker. "I want to go to town. Goddam it, I can't go to town at all. I go to town. The policeman stops me in the car. I say, 'You know, Bill, how it is with us farmers. We ain't got the money for a license.' He says, 'You can't stay here without a license. You come again without a license and I'll stick you in the coop.'"

Nelson waves his first copy of Producers' News. He handles it like a crowbar to help shove him out of the hole in which millions like him are stuck. "You right. We got to fight," he cries. "We got to fight," he cries in his hard guttural way with a throat of sudden brass.

The colt is driven into the stable yard. The five of us squat in the sun. It's pretty hot. At moments you feel yourself twirling round like the stick in the paws of an Indian making fire.

The farmer is a handsome fellow, lean as a grassrake, tough as horsehide. He's been working a half section here since he was mustered out of the army in 1919. He's voted Farmer Labor, been an I.W.W., and knows that between Republicans and Democrats there's as much difference as between a jackass and a mule. He's sick and tired of organizations. There's the Farmer's Union, the last he'll ever join, advocating a strike. That'll do something.

He rolls a cigaret. Hat jammed down over his eyes, he answers doggedly: "Everything in Russia ain't what it's cracked up to be,

you know. Now here I am running this farm. I can outwork any man I ever hired. Why the devil should he get as much as me? There was a fellow come from town for threshing. He bellyached and farted around till my hands were dancing themselves sweaty to belt him square in the nose. Yes, and he was asking fifty cents an hour. There's your honest workingman for you."

The stable door is open. The little colt pokes its head out and bolts through the yard. In the nearby range a bunch of horses, the broodmare among them. The hired man jumps up and drives the colt back.

The farmer puffs. "It ain't so simple as you guys think. They'll always be the lazybones. You're all wrong. I ain't got it twisted up. And I don't talk that way because I'm a rich farmer. My wheat's so poor I couldn't afford to cut. We'll have this strike. We'll hold what little grain we got for a dollar a bushel. We got to fix moratoriums on debts. I owe a feed bill of \$129. I can't pay it to save my neck. I won't too. That's as far as we got rope to go. You fellows'll never swing in your kind of government."

He chucks his butt away. "I've knocked around quite a bit. And here's my motto: every man for himself and the devil pitchfork the hindmost."

In spite of his mulishness, he takes a *Daily Worker*. He'll read and see for himself what we're drumming for. He heaves up and helps chase the colt into the stable. We leave, wondering whether he'll ever reach the wisdom of the colt that makes no bones about what it wants and goes directly for it in its simple honest way.

The Dahlfields are cutting their wheat. Fred yanks at the levers of the binder. The tractor lurches. He yells to the boys at the wheel. He jumps off. Again something the matter with the canvas. He grins. If they had the money, they'd invest a few cents in new machinery. Their neighbors are still worse off. The cows of one of them are actually starving because grass is too thin. The girls have to stay with them all day in the pasture to see they don't break through the fences. At night they're locked up in the barn. Fred fixes the patched canvas. Off again cutting the tenfoot swath.

With Charles his older brother we go through a field of sage. Charles has been working for the Western Electric in Cicero. Lost his job and is back where he started with his wife and two children. Fred had been working in Chicago in a printing shop, trying to rake a few dollars together to get into the university. They cut him until he too was driven back to the farm.

We peek into the barn for a minute. Holes in the roof big enough to shove a leg through. Once it housed fourteen horses and was

stocked with fat cows. The section of land has dwindled down to a quarter, and that's theirs no longer. Even the old barn belongs to the government.

On the east branch old Dahlfield is reaping with a fourhorse team, one horse borrowed. He leans from his high seat to shake hands.

"Been making the rounds, boys? Seen the exsoldier? Doesn't know enough to spit tobacco over his chin. The kulaks and merchants in town have been puffing him up. He's still got a crumb in his gut and a rag on his back. Give him time, give him time. When he's starving, he'll come our way. They'll all come our way. Why in this whole township I don't believe there are more than three farmers can call the boots they wear their own. Few weeks ago we had a meeting of the Farmers' Union. The president said, 'Don't worry so much, go home and relax.' I piled into him like a bullsnake. 'If we hadn't been worrying all the time, we'd been long dead.' That faker! Well, we took the meeting over. Fred spoke for an hour. And do you know these farmers listened like they were tied. If we'd had a program of the United Farmers' League there, we could have turned the whole bunch Red. Only one of the kulaks came up to Fred after. 'You're lying. What do you know about Russia? Have you been there?' 'Well, have you?' said Fred."

Charles shakes his head. "That Farmers' Union won't ever even reach first base. Their kind of strike will hurt the unemployed in the towns. Milk, bread, eggs will get higher. The only way out is for farmers and workers to strike together. Farmers' Union, the devil! Don't we remember the dirty trick they played on us when we had to auction off most of our stock and machinery and they posted signs they hadn't authorized us, members of the Union, to go into it? They wanted us to sit back and starve."

The old man tightens on his whip and then eases up a little. Charles fingers a spear of marcus wheat. It breaks in his hands, it's so brittle. Around him thistles are thick but below a slew the grain looks good. In the distance a single house like a treehopper and other bent farmers with tractors and reapers.

Dahlfield says, "Here we have some of the richest land in the world, and yet we're a pack of beggars. Soon our only belongings a louse or two. And still you got to keep on working. It's pretty bad here summers as well as winters. Winter no feed for cows, wind blows from all directions, drifts eighteen twenty feet high and snow in the roads up to your neck. Once we couldn't get out into the fields until May 8 and then there was snow water in lots of places. Talk to some of these kulaks. They think that all is the fault of nature, and you can't buck up against nature. They're like the colored contractor. He hired a man for two and a half dollars. He himself got



only two dollars. Someone pointed that out to him. He said, 'But I'se the boss.' These farmers will starve so long as they can hang on to a farm and lord it over a few pigs and a hired man they exploit. I thought I was on the right track when I was a socialist. You live and learn. Only direct action will put us on our feet. Only direct action."

We go back to the house for water. The drouth's been so bad it's killing the grove around the house. On a shelf in the kitchen a stack of *Communists* and *New Masses*. Fred is a Y. C. L. Charles was bothered over the Negro question, but he's straightened it out and now feels happy he's going to vote Red the first time. He points to an item in the local paper—"Harvest is going forward slowly as the farmers are financially unable to handle what little crop there is. They have no money for twine, repairs, combining, or threshing. What they will do is a question. Those that have headers are heading the grain and stacking, some are talking of cutting with a mower and raking, others to handle it like flax."

"But we know what we'll do," says Charles. "They don't dare mention how some farmers asked Washington for a dollar an acre to help with harvest. They were turned down flat."

We get into the Ford and drive down the road which is nothing but a dead furrow. Thousands of farmers like the Dahlfields are beginning to find out that Communism is sweeter than water in a dry land, deeper rooted than the groves shading on endless prairies their hunched houses, stronger than all the poison bait in a shaken world. The grasshopper is stirring.

## TRAGEDY IN THE BOWL

ROBERT FORSYTHE

IN MY researches into the semi-cultural manifestations of the upper classes I have come upon a curious phenomenon known as college football. Naturally the sport is no stranger to me because I was once a movie critic and have seen as many last minute touchdowns by Frank Merriwell as anyone of my years but I was rather astonished at what is still to be discovered in such archaeological excavations as the Yale Bowl. The world may change but football remains the contest played by teams of eleven men and attended by patrons who sit in the stands and drink out of bottles and utter plaintive, defiant, and meaningless sounds at intervals.

For those who have not been able to get the raccoon coat out of pawn, I may report that the cheer leaders are as agile and acrobatic

as ever and the treasurers remain harassed by thoughts of the interest in the stadium bonds. What has happened in the interval between my academic training and my return to the scene of battle has been an access of frankness. When Harvard some years ago scheduled a game with Centre College of Kentucky, there was a disposition to stress the cultural results to be expected from contact with the finer flowers of the Blue Grass section. In the course of the yearly seminars, it developed that Centre had a team known as the Praying Colonels which practically chased the Harvard team into the Charles River and filled the stadium to the brim but unfortunately the fine educational alliance was to wither after two years because either Centre had sucked Harvard dry culturally or Centre has ceased to be a football attraction.

When I went up to New Haven last Saturday I was thinking not so much of these things as how to get through Westport. It is plain that New York will never be attacked from the north by land unless the invaders are content to march in single file through Connecticut. If Communism could do no more for Connecticut than capitalism has done, we should be glad to trade the place back to the Indians and throw in Jasper McLevy for bad measure. However, the journey made it possible not only to view the hot dog stands of lower New England but to see our fellow citizens who were also bent on reaching New Haven by nightfall. With my usual good fortune I managed to see a gentleman who could only have come out of an early cartoon by F. Opper. He weighed upward of 300 pounds and he wore a fur coat and he lolled on the back seat of his limousine like somebody posing for Carl Sandburg's poem—*Chicago, Hog Butcher of the World*. After the experience with the paunchy gentleman who jingled the coins while hearing Lucienne Boyer at the Little Theatre and the honorable sir just described, I am at the call of any radical illustrator who needs help with his critics.

The game itself was a tragedy. Dartmouth has never beaten Yale and multitudes had come down from the hills of New Hampshire with their hearts full of hope. The weather turned warm and many of the young gentlemen stood about in their fur coats with tears running down their faces and perspiration down their spines. It was a sad thing and one could only hope that Jehovah would relent in his determination to chasten the brethren from the mountains. The final score was Yale, 7; Dartmouth, 2, which might be accepted as an indication of God's affection for New Hampshire.

As I sat waiting for the kickoff I was reminded of the dream which always haunts me at the beginning of a football game. It has to do with a conflict in dates and confusion in the shifting of railroad trains. Instead of Dartmouth I was quite prepared to have The

University of the South, Sewanee, Tenn., trot out upon the field. As far as the Dartmouth stands were concerned, they might well have preferred it. As I looked about me at the tortured faces, it was easy to see why Kipling is the favorite poet of American graduating classes and Herbert Hoover the favorite President. There were aged ladies and gentlemen suffering acute agonies from what was happening before them.

There were individuals about me who undoubtedly are interested in things more vital than another defeat for Dartmouth, but I believe it would be safe to say that the deaths in the textile strike meant far less to the assembled multitudes than a blocked kick behind the goal line.

And this, by the oblique way the human mind works, brought me to another thought which I should never have countenanced in the Yale Bowl. It had to do with a trip I made several weeks ago to an industrial town in Pennsylvania where I once lived, but it also had to do with football. The young lads of that town were extremely college-conscious and only one of the bunch who played football in high school managed to go further. The others went into the steel works, which at that time was paying  $13\frac{1}{2}$  cents an hour for  $10\frac{1}{2}$  hours a day. The night shift was  $13\frac{1}{2}$  hours with twenty minutes out for midnight lunch. But we had a football team which went under a fake preparatory school name, practised under the arc light on Friday night, and played our games on Saturday afternoon.

Prominent on the team was a young fellow named Luke, who was a fine player. Of all of us he felt most keenly the fact that he never got to college. He played football for years after I left town, dressing in collegiate style, following all the prep school players and college stars and doing everything but matriculating. Instead of that he became a good machinist. When I saw him three weeks ago the world seemed to have fallen in on him. He had just lost his home after paying on it for twelve years. When I found him he was sitting in an apartment which he had rented with the money of another boy from that team. He was sitting in the dark, without lights, without money, without water. It was necessary to post a \$10 deposit for lights. For water the same deposit was required.

I'm afraid I became sentimental about it as I thought back on such things while waiting in the Bowl for the teams to come out for the second half. Everything seemed so pleasant and settled in that crowd of fur coated ladies and gentlemen. The sun was shining, the bands were down on the field going through their maneuvers, and the cheering sections were alive with old grads meeting other old grads and young ladies taking swigs out of bottles. Outside the cars were parked in thousands.

The head well up, Forsythe, I said to myself, and none of these doleful memories. Are we to forget that there is youth in the world and valor and excitement and \$3 seats and stadium mortgages to be met just as your young friend failed to meet his? As a matter of truth, he probably prefers the apartment without water and without light. There is nothing quite so romantic as a meal by candle light. If he had gone to college instead of to the steel works, he might now be out of work entirely and forced to live with the folks at Southampton. After all the Law of Compensation is a pretty good old law. My friend may be out of food but think of the state of mind of the Dartmouth student body and alumni. They have never beaten Yale in the Bowl. They have never beaten Yale at all.

## I WAS MARCHING

MERIDEL LE SUEUR

Minneapolis, 1934.

I HAVE never been in a strike before. It is like looking at something that is happening for the first time and there are no thoughts and no words yet accrued to it. If you come from the middle class, words are likely to mean more than an event. You are likely to think about a thing, and the happening will be the size of a pin point and the words around the happening very large, distorting it queerly. It's a case of "Remembrance of things past." When you are in the event, you are likely to have a distinctly individualistic attitude, to be only partly there, and to care more for the happening afterwards than when it is happening. That is why it is hard for a person like myself and others to be in a strike.

Besides, in American life, you hear things happening in a far and muffled way. One thing is said and another happens. Our merchant society has been built upon a huge hypocrisy, a cut-throat competition which sets one man against another and at the same time an ideology mouthing such words as "Humanity," "Truth," the "Golden Rule," and such. Now in a crisis the word falls away and the skeleton of that action shows in terrific movement.

For two days I heard of the strike. I went by their headquarters, I walked by on the opposite side of the street and saw the dark old building that had been a garage and lean, dark young faces leaning from the upstairs windows. I had to go down there often. I looked in. I saw the huge black interior and live coals of living men moving restlessly and orderly, their eyes gleaming from their sweaty faces.

I saw cars leaving filled with grimy men, pickets going to the

line, engines roaring out. I stayed close to the door, watching. I didn't go in. I was afraid they would put me out. After all, I could remain a spectator. A man wearing a polo hat kept going around with a large camera taking pictures.

I am putting down exactly how I felt, because I believe others of my class feel the same as I did. I believe it stands for an important psychic change that must take place in all. I saw many artists, writers, professionals, even business men and women standing across the street, too, and I saw in their faces the same longings, the same fears.

The truth is I was afraid. Not of the physical danger at all, but an awful fright of mixing, of losing myself, of being unknown and lost. I felt inferior. I felt no one would know me there, that all I had been trained to excel in would go unnoticed. I can't describe what I felt, but perhaps it will come near it to say that I felt I excelled in competing with others and I knew instantly that these people were *NOT* competing at all, that they were acting in a strange, powerful trance of movement *together*. And I was filled with longing to act with them and with fear that I could not. I felt I was born out of every kind of life, thrown up alone, looking at other lonely people, a condition I had been in the habit of defending with various attitudes of cynicism, preciousness, defiance, and hatred.

Looking at that dark and lively building, massed with men, I knew my feelings to be those belonging to disruption, chaos, and disintegration and I felt their direct and awful movement, mute and powerful, drawing them into a close and glowing cohesion like a powerful conflagration in the midst of the city. And it filled me with fear and awe and at the same time hope. I knew this action to be prophetic and indicative of future actions and I wanted to be part of it.

Our life seems to be marked with a curious and muffled violence over America, but this action has always been in the dark, men and women dying obscurely, poor and poverty marked lives, but now from city to city runs this violence, into the open, and colossal happenings stand bare before our eyes, the street churning suddenly upon the pivot of mad violence, whole men suddenly spouting blood and running like living sieves, another holding a dangling arm shot squarely off, a tall youngster, running, tripping over his intestines, and one block away, in the burning sun, gay women shopping and a window dresser trying to decide whether to put green or red voile on a mannikin.

In these terrible happenings you cannot be neutral now. No one can be neutral in the face of bullets.

The next day, with sweat breaking out on my body, I walked

past the three guards at the door. They said, "Let the women in. We need women." And I knew it was no joke.

At first I could not see into the dark building. I felt many men coming and going, cars driving through. I had an awful impulse to go into the office which I passed, and offer to do some special work. I saw a sign which said "Get your button." I saw they all had buttons with the date and the number of the union local. I didn't get a button. I wanted to be anonymous.

There seemed to be a current, running down the wooden stairs, towards the front of the building, into the street, that was massed with people, and back again. I followed the current up the old stairs packed closely with hot men and women. As I was going up I could look down and see the lower floor, the cars drawing up to await picket call, the hospital roped off on one side.

Upstairs men sat bolt upright in chairs asleep, their bodies flung in attitudes of peculiar violence of fatigue. A woman nursed her baby. Two young girls slept together on a cot, dressed in overalls. The voice of the loudspeaker filled the room. The immense heat pressed down from the flat ceiling. I stood up against the wall for an hour. No one paid any attention to me. The commissary was in back and the women came out sometimes and sat down, fanning themselves with their aprons and listening to the news over the loudspeaker. A huge man seemed hung on a tiny folding chair. Occasionally some one tiptoed over and brushed the flies off his face. His great head fell over and the sweat poured regularly from his forehead like a spring. I wondered why they took such care of him. They all looked at him tenderly as he slept. I learned later he was a leader on the picket line and had the scalps of more cops to his name than any other.

Three windows flanked the front. I walked over to the windows. A red-headed woman with a button saying, "Unemployed Council," was looking out. I looked out with her. A thick crowd stood in the heat below listening to the strike bulletin. We could look right into the windows of the smart club across the street. We could see people peering out of the windows half hidden.

I kept feeling they would put me out. No one paid any attention. The woman said without looking at me, nodding to the palatial house, "It sure is good to see the enemy plain like that." "Yes," I said. I saw that the club was surrounded by a steel picket fence higher than a man. "They know what they put that there fence there for," she said. "Yes," I said. "Well," she said, "I've got to get back to the kitchen. Is it ever hot?" The thermometer said ninety-nine. The sweat ran off us, burning our skins. "The boys'll be coming in," she said, "for their noon feed." She had a scarred face. "Boy, will it be a

mad house?" "Do you need any help?" I said eagerly. "Boy," she said, "some of us have been pouring coffee since two o'clock this morning, steady, without no let-up." She started to go. She didn't pay any special attention to me as an individual. She didn't seem to be thinking of me, she didn't seem to see me. I watched her go. I felt rebuffed, hurt. Then I saw instantly she didn't see me because she saw only what she was doing. I ran after her.

I found the kitchen organized like a factory. Nobody asks my name. I am given a large butcher's apron. I realize I have never before worked anonymously. At first I feel strange and then I feel good. The forewoman sets me to washing tin cups. There are not enough cups. We have to wash fast and rinse them and set them up quickly for buttermilk and coffee as the line thickens and the men wait. A little shortish man who is a professional dishwasher is supervising. I feel I won't be able to wash tin cups, but when no one pays any attention except to see that there are enough cups I feel better.

The line grows heavy. The men are coming in from the picket line. Each woman has one thing to do. There is no confusion. I soon learn I am not supposed to help pour the buttermilk. I am not supposed to serve sandwiches. I am supposed to wash tin cups. I suddenly look around and realize all these women are from factories. I know they have learned this organization and specialization in the factory. I look at the round shoulders of the woman cutting bread next to me and I feel I know her. The cups are brought back, washed and put on the counter again. The sweat pours down our faces, but you forget about it.

Then I am changed and put to pouring coffee. At first I look at the men's faces and then I don't look any more. It seems I am pouring coffee for the same tense, dirty sweating face, the same body, the same blue shirt and overalls. Hours go by, the heat is terrific. I am not tired. I am not hot. I am pouring coffee. I am swung into the most intense and natural organization I have ever felt. I know everything that is going on. These things become of great matter to me.

Eyes looking, hands raising a thousand cups, throats burning, eyes bloodshot from lack of sleep, the body dilated to catch every sound over the whole city. Buttermilk? Coffee?

"Is your man here?" the woman cutting sandwiches asks me.

"No," I say, then I lie for some reason, peering around as if looking eagerly for someone, "I don't see him now."

But I was pouring coffee for living men.

For a long time, about one o'clock, it seemed like something was about to happen. Women seemed to be pouring into headquarters

to be near their men. You could hear only lies over the radio. And lies in the paper. Nobody knew precisely what was happening, but everyone thought something would happen in a few hours. You could feel the men being poured out of the hall onto the picket line. Every few minutes cars left and more drew up and were filled. The voice at the loudspeaker was accelerated, calling for men, calling for picket cars.

I could hear the men talking about the arbitration board, the truce that was supposed to be maintained while the board sat with the Governor. They listened to every word over the loudspeaker. A terrible communal excitement ran through the hall like a fire through a forest. I could hardly breathe. I seemed to have no body at all except the body of this excitement. I felt that what had happened before had not been a real movement, these false words and actions had taken place on the periphery. The real action was about to show, the real intention.

We kept on pouring thousands of cups of coffee, feeding thousands of men.

The chef with a woman tattooed on his arm was just dishing the last of the stew. It was about two o'clock. The commissary was about empty. We went into the front hall. It was drained of men. The chairs were empty. The voice of the announcer was excited. "The men are massed at the market," he said. "Something is going to happen." I sat down beside a woman who was holding her hands tightly together, leaning forward listening, her eyes bright and dilated. I had never seen her before. She took my hands. She pulled me towards her. She was crying. "It's awful," she said. "Something awful is going to happen. They've taken both my children away from me and now something is going to happen to all those men." I held her hands. She had a green ribbon around her hair.

The action seemed reversed. The cars were coming back. The announcer cried, "This is murder." Cars were coming in. I don't know how we got to the stairs. Everyone seemed to be converging at a menaced point. I saw below the crowd stirring, uncoiling. I saw them taking men out of cars and putting them on the hospital cots, on the floor. At first I felt frightened, the close black area of the barn, the blood, the heavy movement, the sense of myself lost, gone. But I couldn't have turned away now. A woman clung to my hand. I was pressed against the body of another. If you are to understand anything you must understand it in the muscular event, in actions we have not been trained for. Something broke all my surfaces in something that was beyond horror and I was dabbing alcohol on the gaping wounds that buckshot makes, hanging open like crying mouths. Buckshot wounds splay in the body and then swell like a blow. Ness,



who died, had thirty-eight slugs in his body, in the chest and in the back.

The picket cars keep coming in. Some men have walked back from the market, holding their own blood in. They move in a great explosion, and the newness of the movement makes it seem like something under ether, moving terrifically towards a culmination.

From all over the city workers are coming. They gather outside in two great half-circles, cut in two to let the ambulances in. A traffic cop is still directing traffic at the corner and the crowd cannot stand to see him. "We'll give you just two seconds to beat it," they tell him. He goes away quickly. A striker takes over the street.

Men, women, and children are massing outside, a living circle close packed for protection. From the tall office building business men are looking down on the black swarm thickening, coagulating into what action they cannot tell.

We have living blood on our skirts.

That night at eight o'clock a mass-meeting was called of all labor. It was to be in a parking lot two blocks from headquarters. All the women gather at the front of the building with collection cans, ready to march to the meeting. I have not been home. It never occurs to me to leave. The twilight is eerie and the men are saying that the chief of police is going to attack the meeting and raid headquarters. The smell of blood hangs in the hot, still air. Rumors strike at the taut nerves. The dusk looks ghastly with what might be in the next half hour.

"If you have any children," a woman said to me, "you better not go." I looked at the desperate women's faces, the broken feet, the torn and hanging pelvis, the worn and lovely bodies of women who persist under such desperate labors. I shivered, though it was 96 and the sun had been down a good hour.

The parking lot was already full of people when we got there and men swarmed the adjoining roofs. An elegant café stood across the street with water sprinkling from its roof and splendidly dressed men and women stood on the steps as if looking at a show.

The platform was the bullet riddled truck of the afternoon's fray. We had been told to stand close to this platform, so we did, making the center of a wide massed circle that stretched as far as we could see. We seemed buried like minerals in a mass, packed body to body. I felt again that peculiar heavy silence in which there is the real form of the happening. My eyes burn. I can hardly see. I seem to be standing like an animal in ambush. I have the brightest, most physical feeling with every sense sharpened peculiarly. The movements, the masses that I see and feel I have never known before. I

only partly know what I am seeing, feeling, but I feel it is the real body and gesture of a future vitality. I see that there is a bright clot of women drawn close to a bullet riddled truck. I am one of them, yet I don't feel myself at all. It is curious, I feel most alive and yet for the first time in my life I do not feel myself as separate. I realize then that all my previous feelings have been based on feeling myself separate and distinct from others and now I sense sharply faces, bodies, closeness, and my own fear is not my own alone, nor my hope.

The strikers keep moving up cars. We keep moving back together to let cars pass and form between us and a brick building that flanks the parking lot. They are connecting the loudspeaker, testing it. Yes, they are moving up lots of cars, through the crowd and lining them closely side by side. There must be ten thousand people now, heat rising from them. They are standing silent, watching the platform, watching the cars being brought up. The silence seems terrific like a great form moving of itself. This is real movement issuing from the close reality of mass feeling. This is the first real rhythmic movement I have ever seen. My heart hammers terrifically. My hands are swollen and hot. No one is producing this movement. It is a movement upon which all are moving softly, rhythmically, terribly.

No matter how many times I looked at what was happening I hardly knew what I saw. I looked and I saw time and time again that there were men standing close to us, around us, and then suddenly I knew that there was a living chain of men standing shoulder to shoulder, forming a circle around the group of women. They stood shoulder to shoulder slightly moving like a thick vine from the pressure behind, but standing tightly woven like a living wall, moving gently.

I saw that the cars were now lined one close fitted to the other with strikers sitting on the roofs and closely packed on the running boards. They could see far over the crowd. "What are they doing that for?" I said. No one answered. The wide dilated eyes of the women were like my own. No one seemed to be answering questions now. They simply spoke, cried out, moved together now.

The last car drove in slowly, the crowd letting them through without command or instruction. "A little closer," someone said. "Be sure they are close." Men sprang up to direct whatever action was needed and then subsided again and no one had noticed who it was. They stepped forward to direct a needed action and then fell anonymously back again.

We all watched carefully the placing of the cars. Sometimes we looked at each other. I didn't understand that look. I felt uneasy. It was as if something escaped me. And then suddenly, on my very

body, I knew what they were doing, as if it had been communicated to me from a thousand eyes, a thousand silent throats, as if it had been shouted in the loudest voice.

THEY WERE BUILDING A BARRICADE.

Two men died from that day's shooting. Men lined up to give one of them a blood transfusion, but he died. Black Friday men called the murderous day. Night and day workers held their children up to see the body of Ness who died. Tuesday, the day of the funeral, one thousand more militia were massed downtown.

It was still over ninety in the shade. I went to the funeral parlors and thousands of men and women were massed there waiting in the terrific sun. One block of women and children were standing two hours waiting. I went over and stood near them. I didn't know whether I could march. I didn't like marching in parades. Besides, I felt they might not want me.

I stood aside not knowing if I would march. I couldn't see how they would ever organize it anyway. No one seemed to be doing much.

At three-forty some command went down the ranks. I said foolishly at the last minute, "I don't belong to the auxiliary—could I march?" Three women drew me in. "We want all to march," they said gently. "Come with us."

The giant mass uncoiled like a serpent and straightened out ahead and to my amazement on a lift of road I could see six blocks of massed men, four abreast, with bare heads, moving straight on and as they moved, uncoiled the mass behind and pulled it after them. I felt myself walking, accelerating my speed with the others as the line stretched, pulled taut, then held its rhythm.

Not a cop was in sight. The cortege moved through the stop-and-go signs, it seemed to lift of its own dramatic rhythm, coming from the intention of every person there. We were moving spontaneously in a movement, natural, hardy, and miraculous.

We passed through six blocks of tenements, through a sea of grim faces, and there was not a sound. There was the curious shuffle of thousands of feet, without drum or bugle, in ominous silence, a march not heavy as the military, but very light, exactly with the heart beat.

I was marching with a million hands, movements, faces, and my own movement was repeating again and again, making a new movement from these many gestures, the walking, falling back, the open mouth crying, the nostrils stretched apart, the raised hand, the blow falling, and the outstretched hand drawing me in.

I felt my legs straighten. I felt my feet join in that strange

shuffle of thousands of bodies moving with direction, of thousands of feet, and my own breath with the gigantic breath. As if an electric charge had passed through me, my hair stood on end. I was marching.

## MUSHROOMS IN THE FOUNDRY

JOHN MULLEN

Greensburg, Pa., 1934.

I SEE some queer things happen during strikes. Just little things, but interesting.

Today, about two o'clock, walking around the picket line at the foundry, I find things are kind of slow. Most of the pickets are sitting around out of the hot sun; some playing cards and others just talking in little bunches. The State Police are up in their barracks about a mile from the foundry—I guess it's too hot even for them today.

Jimmy Romola and I are walking slowly, returning the smiling nods of the pickets as we pass them and as we come to the east side of the plant, the side that faces the highway, Jimmy says:

"Here's the department I worked in before the strike," and he points to a row of wire-meshed windows, all blackened from the inside by the heat and dust. We walk over to the windows and start looking for a crack or something to see through to the inside. Jimmy is anxious to see what his department looks like after being idle through the strike for over a month. As we try to find a peephole, he says:

"I bet it'll look funny, with the sandblowers just sittin' there and not kickin' up that racket; with the place all quiet and no heavy dust flying around like it used to."

Pretty soon I find a spot on a window through which I can get a fairly good view of the inside. I say to Jimmy:

"Here—you'd better look instead of me. I can't make much out—it's kind of dark in there."

Jimmy looks. He seems anxious to see the old place he used to work in, even though he did strike along with everybody else against the fierce conditions. But I know how he feels. You sometimes get to like certain shops—that is, you get to like some of the smells, some of the machines, and some of the noises, even though you hate the bosses' guts and often cuss the whole company.

Jimmy takes my peephole, squints through it for a minute until he gets used to the dark inside and then begins to sort of talk to himself.

"Yeah—there's my shakin' machine. Yep, that's it, and it looks funny as hell standing there dumb like instead of bangin' and raisin' a fuss." He keeps on looking, discovering machines, benches, and so on as if he were running into a bunch of acquaintances he hadn't seen for years. He keeps looking, chuckles once in a while, clucks his tongue, having a good time.

"They're standing there—all of them—just as helpless as the company. Jesus, we got some power, us workers, when we make up our mind to use it!"

All of a sudden he presses his nose harder against the glass through the mesh and lets out a low whistle. I get excited and say—what is it? For a minute I think he sees somebody in the plant—maybe even some scabs—and am wondering how the devil they got in. Our pickets have kept this plant closed tighter than a new rivet on a tank-plate.

Jimmy straightens up and says to me:

"Take a peek in there, as far over to the left as you can see." I do and then he says:

"Now look on the ground floor all around those pits and moulds—what do you see?" I look, but it's pretty dark over on that side and I can't make things out for a minute. But soon I begin to see that the floor is covered with a whole lot of little dirty gray bumps in clusters. I look closer and then it begins to dawn on me.

The whole foundry floor is lousy with mushrooms, growing in the damp, blue-black dirt! Jimmy looks again to make sure and then starts to laugh until tears run down his face.

He runs off to tell the pickets and they start coming. You'd think the way they fought to get at that little peephole in the foundry window that there was a naked woman in there posing. They laugh, slap each other on the back, and some go back to take a second look.

Some company stool must have got alarmed and tipped off the police, as a squad car soon drives up and the cops start shoving us away from the windows. They didn't shove long. One of our boys, a big pit man, shoved back at a cop and for a second it looks like a battle. But more pickets are coming up, thinking there's trouble, and the cops decide they ought to go home and eat or something. Anyway, they left after warning us not to destroy any property.

## TAXI STRIKE

JOSEPH NORTH

So you ride the streets all day long and at five o'clock you look at the meter and what do you see? A soldier. [I] "Good Christ," you say, "you gotta make three bucks more before you turn in." So you cruise the streets round and round and finally you get desperate and you open the door and say, "Come on in. Anybody." And who should walk in? A ghost. So you say to the ghost, "Where to?" And the ghost says, "Drive me around Central Park." So you drive the ghost around Central Park till the meter hits four bucks. Then you ask him for the dough. Then the ghost tells you he's broke. So you t'row him out and you go back to the garage. You shell out t'ree bucks of your own so you don't get the air. When you get home, the wife says, "Where's the dough?" Then you tell her, "Today I gave it to the company to keep the job." So she says, "Keep your job hell. You're keeping the company. Well, pick. Who's it you gonna keep? Me or the company?" So you gotta pick. Who you gonna keep, men, the wife or the company?

—*Hackie's Fable.*

MEN WHO ply the streets for their livelihood develop a characteristic attitude: the highways belong to them. When they go on strike, be they taxicab drivers, or traction employees, the authorities may well expect the major pyrotechnics of revolt. The police nightstick can flail from day to night, it cannot dislodge the idea. The Mayor may cajole and storm in turn from dawn to dusk but the men of the streets stay on the streets. The streets are theirs—not only the gutters. As the New York cabbies say in their juicy lingo that springs partly from their slum derivations, partly from their enforced association with the night-life characters of a big city, and partly from the peculiar conditions of their trade: "What? Them weasels tell us to get off the streets? Spit on them! Push me off, rat!"

The strike of the New York cabmen stands unique in American labor history: it is, to date, the biggest in the industry and possesses connotations of great importance to all American workingmen. Forty thousand cabmen abandoned their wheels for the sake of an independent union, and against the strait-jacket of a company union. They symbolize most spectacularly the rebellion of the American workers—700,000 of whom have been weaseled into company unionism under the pressure of finance capitalism and the N.R.A.—against the flumduddery of "employee-representation" organizations.

The trio of policemen bivouacked across the street and dawn found them cracking slats to heap on the fire. Three ruddy faced cops

—"mugs"—pretended to ignore the hackies picketing the Parmelee garage at 23rd Street and Eleventh Avenue. One patrolman picked a carrot from the gutter and fed a blanketed horse, deliberately turning his massive blue-coated back on the strikers. Across the street this hackie, Leo Chazner, strike placards flapping against his chest and back, eyed him obliquely. "I been in the racket seventeen years," he told me. "I never seen a strike like this one. The beauty part of it is, kid, we're making history for the whole world. The eyes of the world is on us—the New York hackies."

He marched up and back, hackman's cap and worn overcoat. Every time he passed the garage entry he peeped inside. "What a sight! Look at them, kid, look at them! Two hundred and fifty of 'em crowding the walls." Within, shiny cabs, row on row, stretched a full block to the next wall—phalanxes of beautiful cars—eerily silent, something uncanny about them like all machines when the human factor is extracted. He boasted of the Parmelee cab. "Wonderful engine. Hums like a boid. Don't know you're riding. No bumps." We had tramped all over lower Manhattan that morning from garage to garage, picketing and checking up on the turnout. Radio police cars swept up and down West Street. Across the boulevard, ocean liners trumpeted in from the harbor. The first trucks lumbered their route, but no taxis rolled. "Look at the avenoo," Cabby Chazner gloated. "Clean as a whistle."

That was Saturday morning. The previous night the strikers had swirled across Broadway, leaving a wake of wreckage which plunged the iron deep in the Parmelee, Radio, and Terminal fleet operators. Cabs lay on their sides, the wheels grotesquely whirling; here and there they burst into flames, scabs fled down the street pursued by strikers, while mounted police picked their way through the streets at the fore and rear of the demonstrations. The cabbies' "Educational Committee" was on the job. Parmelee, Radio, and Terminal fleet owners spent thousands of dollars for full paid advertisements in the commercial press moaning "Vandals!" and calling for the military. "Take the scabs off the street and there won't be no violence," the hackies responded. "Who's driving them cabs? Chicago gunmen wit' soft hats: say, did you ever see a hackie on duty wit' a soft hat? That's the Parmelee Chicago gunmen..."

The next day when the strikers took a night off, I heard a detail of mounted police at Fifteenth Street and Irving Place taunt a crowd of hackies, "Well, well, them Chicago boys got you on the run now, ain't they?" The strikers retorted, "Say, mug, look, look—there goes Dillinger! See if you can catch Dillinger."

The New York hackie is a man in whom revolt has been festering for many years. Every policeman has the right to commandeer his cab at any moment without compensation—for police duty. The city officialdom has raised his tax, his license fee, forced him to plaster his photo in the cab in a sort of Bertillon system, libeling him a semi-underworld man. Pugnacious and independent by nature, he has resented the need to live off the tip, which always carries with it a smack of mendicancy. He found redress nowhere; neither the press which he has learned belongs to those who "give him the woiks"; nor the government, for who but they elected Fiorello, the self-announced hackies' "friend," they ask.

The hackies are bad men when riled. Like all long-enduring workers, they are not finicky about scabs or company property. They have developed a technique in this strike: the Education Committee—"Better teachers than Yale professors"—which is a guerilla picket line well adapted to the needs of a big city strike of this sort.

Scab drivers halted by a red light often find the committee of "professors" waiting on them. To the epithet "Rat!" or "Mouse!" or "Weasel!" the scab finds his car doorless or even in flames—a lit match flicked into the engine beneath the hood does the trick.

How race hatred melts in the crucible of class struggle was poignantly evidenced when a Negro hackie from the Harlem detachment of strikers addressed the strikers at Germania Hall. "Boys," he said, "when you say you're with us, mean it. Mean it from the bottom of your hearts! We been gyped ever since 1861 and we're from Missouri. If you show the boys up in Harlem you mean what you say, then you're getting the sweetest little bunch of fighters in the world: for them spades driving the Blue and Black taxis up there can do one thing—and that's fight!" The hats began to fly in the air. He gestured for silence. "And when we fights together, us black and white, man, they ain't nobody can stop us!" The ovation he received from these recently politically-uneducated workers was tremendous; it signified to me how deeply-inured prejudices and hatreds fostered among the proletariat can vanish overnight when solidarity is needed in common struggle.

Returning to strike headquarters after the meeting (it was necessary to run a gauntlet of files of bluecoats, mounted horsemen, radio cars, and riot trucks), Hackie Chezar clapped his hand to his forehead. "Oh, for a couple hours of shut-eye," he groaned. "I been up three days straight now." At leaflet-littered strike headquarters on 42nd Street I read the placard in rude hand-printed letters, "Watch Out for These Cars: Yellow Cab Large Sedan—Penna Plates; Terminal Cab 021-644; Couple N. Y. Plates I-T-5469." Chezar



watched me. "Gangsters and dicks riding them cabs," he commented.

A massive youth, pug-nosed and Irish, they called him Pondsie, was recounting the demonstration the delegation of cabbies received at the Communist district convention in the Coliseum the other night. "We walks in and the Communists go crazy. They stand up, about a million of 'em, and start singing. We go up on the platform and they give us the spotlight." The crowd about him listened intently. "Then when they come to the chorus of the song they're singing they give us the Communist salute." His left fist—a huge affair—goes up in a sort of short uppercut. "Know what their salute is?" he asks, looking around the room, "The left hook." And he demonstrates it again and again. The others in the room watching him, try the salute, too. I notice a youth with a palm cross on his lapel, giving the left hook. (It was Palm Sunday.) "And then," Pondsie finishes his story, "they have a collection. Man, they raked the coin in wit' dishes on broom-sticks. 'Bout three hundred bucks them Communists give us."

The lad with the palm cross on his lapel raises his eyebrows. "Three hundred bucks!" He shoots a few left hooks in the air. "If them Communists are wit' us, I'm wit' them. Left hook!" he shouts. The others chorus, "Left hook . . . left hook . . ."

## THE FALL OF SHANGPO

AGNES SMEDLEY

To a million peasants of south Kiangsi the very name of Shangpo was a thing of evil. There were other walled cities just like it in Kiangsi and other provinces, to be sure, but this knowledge gave no comfort. For within these city walls lived the great landlords, the eighteen powerful families who owned the hundreds of thousands of *man* of land around the hundreds of decaying villages.

In this town they lived, and the members of their families totaled fully three thousand. They were the landlords, the bankers and money-lenders, the magistrates and tax-collectors, the merchants, the members of the Kuomintang and of the Chamber of Commerce; and their members were the officers of the *Min Tuan*, or militia, and the police. Apart from these families there were perhaps twenty thousand other souls in the city, but these twenty thousand, like the million peasants beyond, lived only by grace of the great families.

The richest of the big families lived in great sprawling houses with series of enclosed courtyards where scores of men and women of many generations lived under one roof. The roofs of the buildings were gorgeous with gargoyles of dragons or other mythical creatures,

and the broad white fortress-like outer walls were decorated with many designs and colors. Then there were the magnificent ancestral temples where stood the ancestral tablets of fifty generations of landlords before them; and before these temples stood stone monuments to men who had passed the State examinations and risen to be great Mandarins under past dynasties.

The big families were the rulers of Shangpo and all that belonged to Shangpo. The strong city walls, pierced by five gates, sheltered and protected them. In periods of unrest, as during the great revolution of 1926-27 when the peasants tried to form Peasant Unions, machine guns guarded the city gates and the city walls were patrolled by *Min Tuan*. Later, when the great revolution was betrayed and the reactionary forces established their own government at Nanking, the landlords of Shangpo were furnished machine guns, modern rifles, bullets, and other weapons from Nanking and Shanghai, or from the chief provincial cities of Kian or Nanchang to the north. The small arsenal of the landlords within the city walls of Shangpo was kept furnished with material for the repair of rifles, and the workers there could even manufacture single-bore rifles.

In the villages beyond the city walls were grown three chief crops: opium, "yellow smoke" tobacco, and rice. Of these, opium was the chief. It was the main article of commerce for the landlords, and to it they owed their wealth and power. With it their sons were educated in Nanking and Shanghai and in foreign countries; with it they traveled. It was opium that enabled them to rise to their positions of authority in the government. It was with opium that they were able to purchase from ten to thirty concubines each, to fill their great houses with slave girls, to build their homes and their ancestral temples. And the hundreds of thousands of peasants who cultivated their land for them grew this opium, and many of them sank themselves in its fumes of forgetfulness. There were entire villages where every man, woman, and child smoked opium.

As the homes of the great landlords were magnificent, so was it but natural that the villages were piles of mud and stone held together by rotten timbers, sides of rusty tins, and old dirty rags. The village streets were open sewers in which pigs and naked children with scabby heads played. Debt weighted upon the peasant families like the corpse of dead centuries.

Few owned their own land, although once they had owned bits of it. But in recent years there had been heavy taxation, the countless surtaxes imposed for this and that, and military requisitions, and, although it was said the landlords paid this, they settled this problem by raising the rent of the tenants. The share of the crops which the peasants had to pay the landlords as rent had soared upward beyond

the usual fifty per cent to two-thirds and three-fourths. No man could live the year around on what was left. So the peasants borrowed—and the money-lenders were none other than the landlords themselves. As the peasants grew less and less able to furnish guarantee for loans, the rate of interest soared also, so that if a man borrowed twenty dollars, before the year had passed the interest was five to ten times that, and he could not pay. His bit of land went to the landlords, and then his daughters, as household slaves, while he himself became land-laborer, serf, or even actual slave.

Opium numbed the sorrows of many. But others not. These others were known as "bad characters," and in times of unrest they were always said to be creating "trouble." This "trouble" meant that they kept recalling the Peasant Unions of 1926-27 and saying the peasants must unite against the landlords.

To see the villages around Shangpo it would seem that nothing human could live here. They were like the delirious dreams of a sick man. It would seem that only the human animal, man, could sink to such depths and still live. Animals die more quickly. There was but one thing that belied this external appearance—the black eyes of many peasant men and women that burned with some hidden fire. They were the "bad characters," and the heads of many such had decorated the city wall of Shangpo as a warning to others.

It was in the spring of the year 1929—the nineteenth year of the Republic—that the Red Army of China first marched toward this stronghold, Shangpo. The news had spread that a town named Mau-chih, some miles distant, had fallen to the Red Army and every landlord in the place had been slaughtered.

This news sent a thrill of horror through the landlords of Shangpo and they immediately took council. Some of them were sent scurrying through the night to Kian and Nanchang to the north, and on through them to Nanking and Shanghai, to bring back more guns, ammunition, radio machines. Others remained behind and prepared the city for defence. Still others set to work, and before the same day had ended their agents had gone through the villages far and near and posted proclamations.

These proclamations read that it was the policy of the Kuomintang to care for the livelihood of the people in accordance with the principles of the *San Min Chu I* of "our late reverend leader, Dr. Sun Yat-sen." The landlords, therefore, from the depths of their own generous hearts, had decided to lower the rents by twenty-five per cent, and even in some instances by thirty or forty per cent. The proclamation ended with many a flowery flourish, and at the bottom was a great red official seal.

That night, the peasants could hardly sleep for excitement, and

to their excitement was added the stimulus of too much wine. For the landlords had sent jars of wine to many of the villages. And to others they had also sent pigs to be slaughtered for a celebration on the following day.

But on the next day agents from the landlords of Shangpo went through the villages, posting new proclamations. It seemed an army of bandits was approaching, slaughtering the population and burning everything in its path. Able-bodied men willing to fight were told to go within the city walls; others were told to bar their doors and not come out, or to flee to the hills if the bandits came that way.

Thousands of peasant men went inside the city walls, and masses of others fled to the mountains, to live for days in terror. Others crept into their hovels and waited, not caring much one way or the other. Still others thought things over and decided that they had nothing much to lose anyway, since all they had ever possessed had already been taken by the landlords. So they merely opened their doors and curiously watched all routes to see if the bandits were really coming. After all, the landlords had always been liars and robbers themselves!

Then came the "bandit" army. It had perhaps four thousand men, and it carried great red banners. This army marched into villages, but instead of looting and killing it looked about and began calling mass meetings. To the stupefaction of the peasants, it even announced that it was the Red Army of workers and peasants of China, and was marching on Shangpo for the specific purpose of wiping out the landlords and freeing the peasants! It even invited the peasants to join them!

Some of the "bad characters" in the villages just went right over to the Red Army without a word, without a question, without an argument. But as peasants came running from other villages, there were masses of them who began to ask questions of the Red Army. They asked: After the landlords were wiped out, then what? Suppose the White troops came from Kanchow to the west, as they had two years before when the walls of Shangpo had bristled with the heads of peasants who had joined the Peasant Unions? How long would the Red Army remain to protect Shangpo and the villages?

The Red Army replied that it would form peasant and other unions of all kinds of workers. These should form their own Red Guards, their own defence corps, take over the arms of the *Min Tuan* and take over the arsenal; the workers and peasants should hold Shangpo and the villages as their own. This was the way of the revolution.

Some peasants listened and had long thoughts. Many had little confidence, and many had little will to fight because their minds were

deadened by opium. They said: "The fate of us poor ones has always been bad. Our eight characters are unfortunate. We must now be content. The landlords have lowered the rent by one-fourth, and in some cases by one-third or even more. This is good for us. We should not tempt fate."

Others did not talk about fate. They just said: "When you are gone, the White troops will come. We have never used rifles and, then, what shall we do with those machines that shoot a myriad of bullets within one minute? No—if you go away, it will be bad for us."

The Red Army argued: "Look, we are also peasants just like you. There were men in our villages who talked just as you talk. The landlords are deceiving you. They lowered the rents only out of fear—because we were coming."

Still the peasants argued: "Let us wait and see. When you go they will still fear you."

The arguments continued for a long time, until at last the Red Army said it was useless to attack Shangpo without the help of the masses. And as the hours dragged and the peasants still feared, the Red Army gave up hope. So at last it went away and left the peasants with their proclamations from the landlords as comfort.

When the Red Army was gone, things simmered for a month or so in and around Shangpo. Then as the weeks passed messengers brought the news that the Army was fighting with the White troops in Fukien. The landlords considered: the Reds were few, the Whites many, the masses unarmed, and therefore unable to help the Reds. Their messengers had returned from Nanking with new arms and ammunition, and with radios. And before long new proclamations were posted in all the villages, announcing that because of the hard times, new high taxes and internal loans, bad harvest prospects, national disasters such as famine and flood, the old land rents must be re-introduced. This proclamation also ended with flowery phrases and a red official seal.

The peasants were dumbfounded. They complained and protested, and some of them wept like children. Had the landlords not promised? Had they not talked of the livelihood of the people and of Sun Yat-sen? So they, the haggard, ragged men, sent deputations of men to Shangpo, to plead and even to kneel in supplication. But when the harvest time came, the landlords and their agents went riding in sedan chairs over the land, armed *Min Tuan* marching by their sides. They supervised the harvests, taking their old shares, leaving the peasants not enough to live even half the year. In some villages the peasants refused to pay their old shares. But they had nothing but their spears, hoes, and knives, while the *Min Tuan* had the latest

rapid-firing rifles brought from Nanking, and on the hips of the landlords or their agents hung heavy mausers. Actual fighting broke out in some of the villages, the men called "bad characters" leading. But the struggle ended in their capture, and they were driven like cattle to Shangpo, where they lay in chains in the empty rooms in the homes of the big families. Those who were especially defiant were beheaded, and their heads stuck on bamboo poles in the villages as a warning to others.

But instead of acting as a warning, they only incited the peasants, and a number of landlords or their agents were mysteriously killed. There were savage whippings of peasants in some of the villages, and at last the radios within Shangpo called to Kanchow for help.

White troops came marching in. It did not take them long to teach the peasants a lesson—in some villages they left not a house standing and not a soul alive. The revolt came to an end. "Law and order" was restored. The peasants bowed their heads and their backs to the old vicious burdens, their black eyes shielding murderous hatred.

Two years passed and the autumn of 1931, the twenty-first year of the Republic, approached. Again a full division of the Red Army stood before the walls of Shangpo. As Shangpo was better armed by weapons from Nanking, so was the Red Army better armed by weapons it had captured from the defeated armies of Nanking. The Red Army now had regular uniforms, and caps with a red star in front; their feet were clad in grass sandals made by the women and girls of Kiangsi; and the red flag with the hammer and sickle floated proudly over them. From a ragged, bare-foot partisan army, it was now uniformed, disciplined, well-armed. And instead of fleeing within the walls of Shangpo, the peasants now flocked to the red standard in such numbers that it seemed the earth had erupted and thrown up myriads of desperate ragged men and women.

The landlords closed and fortified all the gates of Shangpo and permitted no man to leave or enter. The walls were high and thick and could not be battered down. So the Red Army and the peasants settled down to a blockade and siege until, before the month had finished, there was hardly a peasant far and near but that had taken his turn in the fighting.

The knives and hoes and the long spears of the peasants availed not at all against the strong city walls. When, during the dark nights, the peasants and the Red Army tried to scale the walls, the enemy kept great torches burning, and in the light of these they shot down the besiegers. Sometimes the cannons of the Red Army tried in vain to batter down the city gates. The peasants had never fought

in a real battle before, and the roar of these guns terrified them at first. But soon they watched and studied them curiously and intently, and their hard hands fearlessly caressed them, as one caresses a thing one loves.

Then bands of these peasants went away to the hills and hewed down great trees. These they burned or hewed out from one end, leaving the other solid. Near the end of the burned-out cavity, next to the solid end, they bored a small hole right down through the bark and wood—the hole for ignition. Then into the mouth of these wooden cannons they hammered gunpowder, and on top of that they hammered old nails, bits of tin cans, steel shavings, broken glass, sharp stones. They ripped the Standard Oil tins from their hovels, and some of them smelted down their hoes. Then into the ignition hole over the gun powder they dropped fire. The roar shook the very heavens and struck terror to the hearts of the *Min Tuan*. Some of the cannons split wide open and did as much damage to the peasants as to the enemy; but they merely made new ones and enthusiastically continued their bombardment.

The peasants swarmed over the hills, cutting down trees. Then dozens of them lifting great tree trunks in their arms, with rhythmic yells dashed with these against the city gates, hammering. They chose the dark nights for their attacks, but the torches of the enemy lit up the night and the deadly machine guns on the city wall went into action. Dozens of peasants fell, dead and wounded, but new dozens came forward to take their place. And so the siege continued.

The peasants experienced a wonder in the siege of Shangpo. Formerly the Red Army had captured seven aeroplanes from the White Armies. The division attacking Shangpo had one. Never had the peasants seen such a thing. When, one day, loaded with bombs, it soared upward like a bird and circled over Shangpo, dropping its deadly missiles, the peasants stood petrified in amazement. Messengers ran like mad over the hills carrying the news: The Red Army could conquer the heavens! The Red Army could fly in the air!

There arose dissension in the Red Army about the bombing of Shangpo, and it was said that the bombs killed the innocent and not just bad landlords. Thereafter, the plane soared once only and this time only to drop propaganda leaflets over the city, calling upon the population to revolt against the landlords and open the gates of the city to their brothers.

Inside the city, the radios cried to the White Armies for help. But all south Kiangsi was in the hands of the masses, there were Soviet governments in villages and towns far and near, and there were Red Guards of workers and peasants guarding all routes into Soviet territory. No White troops could pass without meeting the

Red Army. And the Red Army had no fear of death, not to mention White soldiers.

But one day, from the west, in the direction of Kanchow, a city that still remained in the hands of the Whites because it was on the river, there appeared a White aeroplane. The peasants were terrified. But the Red Army sharpshooters chose the highest hills and mountains, and from all directions peppered into the air at the enemy. The plane swirled and dashed to the earth, burying its nose in the fields.

It was not loaded with bombs—but with bags of salt and boxes of bullets for the landlords of Shangpo! Then the Red Army knew that Shangpo was short of bullets and without salt. So new thousands of peasants began a furious attack on the city gates.

On the following day, three aeroplanes came out of the west, flying high. They reached Shangpo and circled in the air, dropping their cargo. But of every hundred sacks of salt and every hundred boxes of bullets dropped, eight fell in the fields in the midst of the besiegers. Hilarious laughter arose.

“Our transportation corps are again coming to our assistance,” cried the Red Army members.

Then came the day when the population of the city and the *Min Tuan* opened the gates of Shangpo. And it was the peasants, spears and knives in hand, who dashed through first and rushed upon the homes of the great landlords. Some of the landlords killed themselves, but most of them, with their entire families, fell into the hands of the peasants. When the Red Army tried to take the prisoners into their own hands, the peasants refused, claiming them as their own.

“As they have slaughtered our brothers, so will we slaughter them!” they cried. The Red Army protested, saying: “Wait—execute them only after they have been tried by the people.”

Only in this way did the Red Army prevent a wholesale massacre of the big families, and with them the officers of the *Min Tuan*.

All the members of the great families were fat and healthy. They had not suffered from the siege. But nearly half of the population of the city had died of starvation. Dead bodies lay in the streets unburied and it was the Red Army that buried them. The poor had died after but a few days of the siege. And still the storehouses of the great families remained bulging with rice and other food. When the peasants, taking charge of the fine homes, the ancestral temples, and the storehouses, saw this stored food, their hatred grew harder. These food stores were taken charge of by the Confiscation Committee of the Red Army, and thereto was added nearly two million dollars in gold and silver dug from the walls and tiled floors of the buildings.



The hatred of the peasant masses was like an all-consuming flame, and it turned against everything that belonged to the landlords. They began the eradication of all the earthly possessions of the big families. They gutted the buildings, ripping from the walls every scroll, every picture, giving them to the flames lit on the meadows beyond the walls. They carried out all furniture, every strip of cloth, every dish, every pan from the kitchens. The old vases, the huge carved candlesticks, the ancient oil lamps, the old pottery, and the carved ivory-chopsticks—all were piled on the leaping fires or smashed into dust. Not even a gown of the enemy would the women keep to cover their own miserable nakedness.

Blind with hatred, they even carried out rifles from the buildings, and were busily engaged in breaking or burning them, when Red Army men yelled and fought: "Keep them—arm yourselves! Don't be fools like this!" And when peasants came rushing along, carrying the hated radio machines with which the landlords had talked to Nanking and Kanchow, the Red Army had to take them by force from their arms.

Then there were the great ancestral temples where ancestral tablets told a tale of generations of wealth and power. With a hatred so deep that it was at times perfectly silent, the peasants seized these tablets, and the scrolls, paintings, the carved tables and altars, and took them to the flames. Before the temples stood the stone monuments to the great Mandarins. Over these the peasants swarmed like ants and for hours they labored, hammering them until nothing remained but piles of granite bits on which an occasional lone character shone.

In the big houses, in some of the rooms of the ancestral temples, in the storehouses, were found the chief stores of wealth of the great families—opium. Fully ten thousand piculs were here stored. The Confiscation Committee of the Red Army stood back and raised no voice of protest when men and women loaded themselves with it and ran with it to the leaping fires on the meadows. It burned for days, a flame lighting a path to emancipation.

The Red Army took up positions guarding all sections of the city, all public buildings, the city gates, the city walls. When the buildings of the great landlords were almost gutted, they stepped in and took possession, to save what remained and to preserve the buildings for future use.

The news of the fall of Shangpo flashed through the hills and mountains. And before the first night had finished, all the paths leading to the former stronghold were black with people. They came by the endless thousands, men and boys naked to the waist, without hats, without shoes; women in rags, patched until there was nothing

but patches; old men and even young children with the unmistakable ravages of opium upon them. The news had gone far and wide that on this day mass meetings would be held, and unions of peasants, workers, women, apprentices, and goodness knows what, would be formed; and that a Soviet government of workers and peasants would be organized in Shangpo. Such tales had never been heard of by the ear of man, and the peasants came to experience them.

Over the city walls floated the red flag with the hammer and sickle—symbol of the toiling masses. Through the gates the masses poured, their eyes big with excitement. And the Red Army—the fighting members with the red stars in their caps? Yes, there they stood, grinning and poking fun—and the peasants who had not seen them before knew that they were really just like themselves.

The streets of Shangpo really could not hold the swarming masses. The meadows and fields beyond became black with them. Everywhere from their midst sprang platforms, and the crowd cried: "Look, how clever the Red Army is! They are building platforms right among us!" Just as if they had never seen such a wonder! If a Red soldier just walked past, the crowd gazed upon him admiringly, as if they had never seen a man walk on his hind legs before. Of their own men, their own village comrades who had fought in the siege, they were so proud they could hardly contain themselves. And the women made them tell over and over again just how they besieged the city, just how they finally broke through the city gates. Such events!

Through the crowds wandered slave girls from the great houses. With dull eyes and often with scarred faces and bodies, they went, asking: "Have you seen anyone from the family of Chen Chung-hua, from the village of Liangshui?" Thus they sought their families.

Before the sun had hardly risen the mass meetings began, and when the night descended they had hardly ended. It seemed the people could not have enough of talking, once their tongues were loosed. Of course, the men from the Red Army, especially from the Political Department, started it all. For talking was one of their weapons, second only to their rifles. And how they could talk! What they said sounded as if they were reaching right down into the hearts of the peasants and demanding that which they had always wanted—land, the abolition of debts and taxes, rice; why, even schools where the children and even the older people could learn to read and write! Then there would be the unions of workers and peasants, and armed Red Guards to defend them!

When they had talked, these Red Army men urged peasants to come up and say what was in their hearts. One or two tried it bravely,

but they became scared and got down without saying a word. Finally one started:

"Now, they even took our pigs and chickens on the New Year. It was not enough, the two-thirds of the crop and the high interest, but they had to strip us of everything but our teeth! Of what use were our teeth after that?"

That speech made a great impression. It emboldened other men. There was a hard old peasant who had been the first to rush through the east gate after the siege. He now stood on the platform, spear in hand, and said:

"The landlords told us that they were landlords and rich because their eight characters were fortunate, and we were poor because our eight characters \* were bad. That was a lie. Now we know that *ming* and *keh ming* are the same thing. We must make our own *ming* by *keh-ming!*" †

What a speech! What ideas!

Another man took a chance: "The landlords pretended to lower the rents by one-fourth or even more. That was because the Red Army was before the walls. They cheated us and we were fools. We were stupid, we peasants. But now we are not! We will kill the landlords and divide up the land!"

The thunder of applause followed.

Then a woman began talking from the crowd. She was lifted up to the platform and, once finding herself there, felt she might as well continue: "Yes, we paid even two-thirds and three-fourths and even the taxes of the government were loaded on us. We were fish and meat for the big houses. When we said no, we were whipped or killed. Our sons were beheaded. The landlords are murderers and cheats. They must be killed!"

One old fellow expressed himself: "Look now at me! Two years ago when the Red Army came I said to my neighbor Wu: 'Wu,' I said, 'we are stupid as pigs. We should have helped the Red Army.' But Wu, he said: 'No, it is fate. Our eight characters are bad.' Now I ask you all—was I right or was my neighbor Wu right?"

The audience boomed: "Wu was as stupid as a pig himself!"

So they talked all day long, and men who had just discovered the power of speech moved from one platform to the other. Sometimes they repeated as much as they could of what the Red Army men said, but of course in a different way. And they always ended by demanding that the landlords be killed.

To the killing of the landlords the Red Army commanders

\* "Eight characters" here used always means the eight characters of destiny.

† This is a play on words: *ming* means fortune, or fate; *keh-ming*, means, literally, break order, i. e., revolution.

agreed if the masses wanted it. But they made one request: they said that only the chief heads of the big families should be executed—that the women and children should be spared; nor should the sons be killed just because they were sons. All day long Red Army commanders talked like this. At first the peasants could not believe their own ears.

“What is this?” they exclaimed. “It is the *family* that owns the land!”

It was true—the family, not the individual, was the unit. The family owns the lands, owns everything. The head of the family is but a branch on a big tree. Yet the Red Army commanders came with new and strange ideas. They talked about Communism, telling how it would change conditions so that no person could own anything personally upon which others depended for life. But the peasants only heard that the big families should not be killed.

“You say we shall kill only the heads of the family—that means we leave the roots to grow into a tree again!”

Another interrupted: “No—you would leave the little snakes to grow into big snakes! Never was there such an idea under the heavens!”

One was more practical still: “Out there beyond are the White armies,” he said. “If they come, they will give back the land to the big families. Even if one member remains alive, they will give it to him and he will avenge the death of his father. But if the White troops find not one member alive, they cannot take the land away from us again.”

Some of the Red Army commanders went out and talked to the people. There came first the secretary of the Communist party in the Army, the commander Mau Tse-tung. His name was a legend. But when he talked he also talked about Communism and what it will do to the social system. He talked for a long time. His ideas were good. But about the families he was all wrong! From the audience men angrily accused him of trying to protect the landlords from the peasants. Nor could any of his replies silence them.

“Have we forgotten how the landlords whipped us with bamboo? Have we forgotten how we lay in chains in the big houses? Have we forgotten how they stuck the heads of our brothers and sons on the city walls? Have we forgotten how they grew fat and we grew thin and even our sons died of hunger at the mother’s breast? Have we forgotten the debts and the rents and the land they took from us? Or their lying and cheating?”

Then they complained against the Red Army commanders, until these commanders, hearing the endless suffering of the peasants, stepped back and said: “Why should we try to save the big families

from them? These three thousand are but a small number compared to the tens of thousands who have died from the cruelty of the landlords."

Others interposed: "Our party order is not to execute any but the heads of the big families!"

"Theoretically good, but in practice impossible—today in these conditions; you have heard, have you not?"

"Yes, but we have the order of the party."

"Yes—but I have heard some of our own fighting members talking. They are peasants also, and they say the peasants are right—the landlords must be killed. They say they will support the peasants! If we press this further we will face a mutiny in our own ranks!"

Yes, that was it! The peasant soldiers in the ranks of the Red Army were themselves supporting the peasants against their higher elected committees, against their commanders. More: the landlords were in the hands of the peasants, who claimed them as their own, as the landlords in the past had claimed peasant lives. So at last the Red Army kept silent, thus turning the big families over to the will of the peasant masses.

It was late in the day, when the sun was low in the west, that the eighteen great families were paraded through the streets and brought before the platforms where peasant men and women denounced them and demanded their death. Those who approved of their execution were asked to raise their hands. Like the sound of the sea the request went through the crowds—passed on from mouth to mouth. Up went the hands of every living soul except that of the landlords and their families and the Red Army commanders who remained silent observers in the background. The prisoners stood, the men with their hands tied behind them as once they had tied peasants. Many were the color of chalk, and one talked and screamed at the top of his voice without ceasing.

Then the prisoners were marched beyond into the meadows, and at each platform they were condemned to death anew. One big landlord even fell to his knees and had to be kicked upright by the guards.

Sometimes a peasant would shove his way through the crowd and stand before the head of a family.

"I am Yang Yu-ching, from the village of Lungkiao. Do you remember my brother? Do you remember his head over the east gate? Do you remember that your *Min Tuan* tore his jacket from him before you killed him? Now listen! I am going to strip your *Ishang* from you so you can go naked to your death as did my brother!"

And Yang Yu-ching's hard bony hands began ripping the clothing from the landlord, tearing the buttons, until it hung about his

bound hands. Naked to the waist the fat prisoner was driven forward toward the meadow.

There were three thousand prisoners assembled on the meadow—the heads of the great families, their sons, chief wives, concubines, uncles, brothers, children, and officers of the *Min Tuan*. The thousands of peasant guards, armed with spears, arranged them in death squads, so to speak—arranged them nicely, carefully, and then forced them to kneel. Those who refused were kicked to the earth.

Once into their midst dashed a peasant woman, as gaunt and wild as a lone hungry wolf in winter. She ferociously fought her way to one of the kneeling landlords. He did not even see her, for he was bent in terror to the earth. But this woman knew him, and the watching peasants knew her. They recalled that she had borne eight children, but now she stood alone. Of her eight children, seven had died at the breast, and but one lived to work in the fields by the side of his father. The father and son had taken part in the harvest struggle two years before, and both had been captured by this landlord and driven by him to Shangpo. Their heads had decorated the city gate. Afterward, this gaunt old woman had wandered from village to village and people treated her kindly because words of wisdom are said to come from the lips of the demented.

She had regained her reason, but insanity had been more merciful. Now she fought her way to the side of the landlord responsible for the killing of her son and husband. She passed him by and stood before his chief wife, who knelt, a baby clasped in her arms. The old peasant woman reached down and ferociously ripped the baby from the mother's arms, then lifted it above her and dashed it to the earth. Repeatedly she picked it up and hurled it to the earth anew until, exhausted, she turned and pushed her way through the crowd, screaming. She had returned kind for kind, son for son.

Then the peasant guards set to work with grim, hate-laden determination. Time and again they plunged their spears, and the air was rent with screams of fearful terror and agony. Some of the prisoners died of terror before the spears reached them. The meadows became covered with the dead. There they lay through the night and on the dawn of the following morning were carried to the fields and buried in the raw earth, becoming fertilizer for the crops. There were those who said it was the only good they had ever done to any man. And when it was finished a million peasants drew the first deep breath that they had ever known, then turned to the Red Army and asked:

“Now what shall we do? We will listen to your ideas now. You tell us what to do and we will do it.”

In Shangpo in the days that followed there arose unions of peas-

ants, apprentices, hand-workers, arsenal workers, women, fishermen, transportation workers, and many others, and there sprang to life the Young Guards, the Communist Youth League, the Pioneers, and the Communist Party. Red Peasant guards took the place of the *Min Tuan*, and were armed with their weapons. And from their delegates was elected the first Soviet Government of Shangpo.

The city hummed with a new life. Red Army commanders were training the new Red Guards on the meadows beyond the walls. The arsenal workers bent their backs over their anvils and machines with new energy and enthusiasm. In the buildings that had once been the homes of the great families there now moved crowds of men and women, for here were the headquarters of the people's organization. The great clan house of Tsai was the headquarters of the Soviet government with a red flag floating over it. The buildings of three of the great families were turned into schools, and teachers came down from Hsinkou to the north, bringing new textbooks and new ideas. Then doctors appeared and the ancestral temples became hospitals, where the wounded from the long siege lay and where anyone could get free treatment and buy medicine for a few coppers at most.

In such a way did the Red Army reach into the hearts of the masses and start the long work of creating that which the peasants seemed to have always longed for. People would say to each other: "Now look! Didn't I tell you we must have a hospital there?" But he had never told that at all—it only seemed he had, for this was just what should be.

But above and beyond all, the land had been divided, and the men and women and youth were given land according to their cultivating power. There were serious problems about this division, but these problems were taken to the unions and the Soviet government and there they were solved. For they had to be solved. And as new problems arose, they were also discussed and solved, until the masses became accustomed to considering and discussing and solving all their problems.

As the first decree of the Soviet government was about the division and redistribution of the land, so was its second decree against the cultivation or traffic in opium. Opium smokers were told to cure themselves of the habit within a time limit, for opium had been one of the chief weapons in the hands of the landlords. Opium dealers were ordered to get new occupations; the small ones were to be argued with, the big ones arrested and either imprisoned or killed. They were the enemies of the people, the agents of the landlords and of the White government in Nanking.

Six weeks after the fall of Shangpo, delegates were elected to go to the first all-China Soviet Congress in Shuikin. This was on the

historic day of November seventh, and it marked the first day of the first year of the Soviet Republic of China. There would be hundreds of delegates from towns and villages like Shangpo, where the masses had arisen and established their own power.

From Shangpo were sent one arsenal worker, one peasant, one woman teacher, and with them went many to keep them company and to form the unofficial delegation to witness the formation of the first government of the people. On the day of departure Shangpo was decorated as for a great festival, and thousands upon thousands of peasants and workers had come from the villages beyond. The Red Guards stood at attention, proud and stern with their new responsibility, the pride of Shangpo. Squads of these guards guarded all the routes far and wide.

When the delegation stood ready to leave they stuck little three-cornered red flags in big jagged bundles before them. In these bundles were masses of grass sandals, woven by the women and girls in the villages. The campaign for grass sandals for the Red Army had been answered by the women and girls of this new Soviet district and they were proud of their presents. But they merely said to the delegates:

"Greet our brothers, the Red Army, and tell them the sandals are so few and so bad because of the recent fighting and the work of the harvests."

The broad-shouldered men stuck the little red-banners deeper into the bundles, laughing, then lifted them at the ends of bamboo carrying-poles over their shoulders, and with enthusiastic cries of farewell began their long, slow rhythmic run that would take them over the ranges of the hills and mountains and through the valleys to far-away Shuikin.

In such a manner, by such means, in such strange times, did the peasants and workers of Shangpo become masters of their own lives.

## A LETTER TO PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT

JOHN L. SPIVAK

Fresno, Calif., 1934.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

I DON'T suppose you will ever see this but I am writing to you to keep a promise I made to a little fifteen-year-old Mexican girl. She wanted to write to you because she had heard you were doing things for poor workers. She didn't write because she did not have three cents for a stamp and because she never went to school to learn how to write.



Her earliest memories are of wandering about in an old, rattling, wheezing Ford from vegetable field to fruit field, from fruit field to vegetable field, and you can't go to school if your father needs your labor in the fields as soon as you are seven years old.

I cannot give you her name because when I told her I would write to you for her she became frightened and pleaded with me not to mention her name. She was afraid maybe you'd write the boss and her family would be denied the privilege of working in the fields all day for thirty-five cents. She said it was all right, so I'll tell you how to find her.

Just take the main highway from Fresno, Calif., to Mendota which is about thirty miles away and turn west at Mendota for about four miles. You can't miss it because you'll see a big sign "Land of Milk and Honey." When you've passed this sign you'll see against the horizon a cluster of houses and when you come to the sign "Hotchkiss Ranch—Cotton Pickers Wanted" turn up the side road a few hundred yards beyond the comfortable farm house with its barns and cotton shelters. There's a row of fifteen outhouses along the road. That is where the migratory workers and this little girl live, Mr. President.

There are two more outhouses a little way from these and those are the ones actually used for outhouses. You can tell that by the odor and the swarms of flies that hover around these two especially. This is a typical migratory workers' camp, only some have five outhouses for the workers and some have thirty. It depends upon the size of the farm.

You'll recognize a migratory workers' camp because each outhouse—"homes" they call them out here—is made of plain wooden boards, dried by years of tropical sun.

The little girl lives in the third house from the front as you approach. You can't miss it. It has a large sign: SCARLET FEVER.

But don't worry about that because the health authorities here are not worrying. They just tacked up the sign on this outhouse door and on that one there near the end of the row and went away. They didn't tell anyone to be careful about a contagious disease because that might have had the camp quarantined and the whole crop lost to the farmer, for all the cotton pickers and their children have been in that outhouse. I don't imagine it's very dangerous though for only two more children have caught it. If it had been dangerous I'm sure the health authorities would have warned them.

In this outhouse where a baby girl has scarlet fever you'll find an iron bedstead. That's where the baby sleeps, the one that's tossing around in fever while the mother tries to shoo the flies away. That's the only bed and it's one of the five in the whole camp, so you can't

miss it. The other six in this family sleep on the floor huddled together; father, mother, two grown brothers, a little brother, and the fifteen-year-old girl. They sleep like most everybody else in the camp: on the floor.

That barrel and rusty milk can in the corner of the room where everybody sleeps on the floor holds the water they bring from Mendota to cool the child's fever. It is four miles to Mendota and four miles back and eight miles costs a little for gas so they have to be very sparing with the water. That's why they all look so dirty—it's not because they don't like to wash. It's because it costs too much to get water—water needed for cooking and drinking. You can't waste water just washing yourself when it costs so much to get. After all, when you make thirty-five cents for a full day's work and spend some of that for gas to get water it leaves you that much less for food.

The mother isn't in the field today because the baby is pretty sick and those children playing in and out of the houses marked with SCARLET FEVER signs are too young to go into the field but everyone else is there. That's where I found the little girl for whom I am writing this letter.

Perhaps I had better tell you exactly how I found her and what we talked about so you can understand just what she wants. It would be a big favor, she said, and she would be very grateful.

She doesn't mind picking cotton bolls for thirty-five cents a day and she doesn't mind the filth and dirt and starvation but she is worried about that electric light in the shack. You noticed it, didn't you? The one with the dusty bulb right in the middle of the outhouse they live in? Well, you have to pay twenty-five cents a week if you want to use that electric light and twenty-five cents is a lot of money when you get only thirty-five cents a day and you need that twenty-five cents for food and for gas for the car so you can go get water.

It's not that she wants the light at night. She and her family get along without it but you see they've discovered that it's awfully hard to tend the sick baby in the darkness. And it's always dark when the baby seems to cry the most. And in addition, this little girl is worried about herself. She is going to have a baby and suppose it comes at night and there is no light? She is going to have a baby in this little outhouse where her mother and father and brothers live, this little outhouse with the sign SCARLET FEVER over its door.

What she wanted to ask you is if you could possibly get in touch with somebody and have them not charge them twenty-five cents for the use of the electric light—especially when somebody's sick or expecting a baby. It's not so bad when you're well, but it's awfully hard

when you have a little sick sister tossing and crying and you yourself are expecting a baby.

I explained to this little girl that you would understand about her not being so moral. She is such a frail little thing working so hard in the fields all day and you know after you get through working and you just don't know what to do with yourself and your youth just cries out to forget the days that have gone and the long years that stretch ahead of you, well—you sort of forget that maybe it isn't just quite moral to have a baby when you're not quite fifteen.

I told the little girl that you had a daughter, too, grown up now of course and she thought that if your girl had gotten into trouble when she was fifteen that you wouldn't have liked her to have a baby in a little wooden outhouse with another baby tossing in fever and no light to see anything by. I told her I didn't think you would, either, and so sitting there in the cotton field in this "Land of Milk and Honey" she cried.

But I started to tell you what we talked about and here I've gone telling you what she wanted me to write. You see, when I walked out in the field there was this little girl dragging a huge sack along the furrow, and stuffing the brown bolls into it. She looked so tired, so weary and then I noticed that she was with child.

"How old are you?" I asked.

She looked up and smiled pleasantly.

"Fifteen."

"Working in the fields long?"

"Uh-uh."

"How old were you when you started?"

She shrugged shoulders. "Dunno. Maybe eight. Maybe nine. I dunno."

"What do you make a day?"

"Sometimes in first picking dollar and a half. We get seventy-five cents a hundred. Used to get sixty cents but red agitators got us fifteen cents raise. But for third picking get only forty cents a hundred and there ain't so much to pick."

You may be interested in her phrase "red agitators." That's what the Communists were called here by the newspapers, so now everybody calls a Communist a "red agitator." This little girl didn't know what a "red agitator" was; she knew only that "red agitators" got them a raise of fifteen cents on the hundred pounds by organizing them and calling a strike.

Forty thousand out of the 250,000 agricultural workers in California have taken out cards in the Communist union. They call it the Cannery and Agricultural Workers' Union. And most of the 40,000 are from the 100,000 migratory workers—those who live in

the camps like this little girl. They don't pay dues often but they carry their cards and they are strong on organization and very militant, especially the Mexicans.

You probably read in the papers about the fruit and vegetable pickers' strike in the Imperial Valley and around Sacramento and Alameda and in the San Joaquin Valley right here in Tulare and Kern counties. There have been violence and killings but the strikes were almost always won. That's because the workers felt a lot like this little girl: no matter what happened it couldn't be worse than it was. If the Communists would help them then they would be Communists. Nobody else seemed to care for them, nobody ever tried to organize them until the "red agitators" came. Business men and bankers and farmers are terrified by "red agitators"; you understand, of course, why when you read this letter that the little girl wanted me to write you.

"Last year when 'red agitators' make strike in Tulare and get seventy-five cents a hundred so we get seventy-five cents here, too," she added laughing.

Her father, a tall, dark-skinned man with a week's growth of black beard, saw me talking to her and came over.

"Someth'ing wrong, eh?" he asked.

"No. Nothing wrong. Just talking to your daughter. I want to find out how much you people make a week."

A slow smile spread over his features.

"We make nodding," he said definitely.

"How much?"

"Me, my wife, my girl here. Last week we work from Monday to Thursday night and make \$2.50—all of us."

"Your daughter is only fifteen. I thought there was a law against child labor."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Nobody come here. All children work in field soon big enough. Only time man come here is when put up sign 'Scarlet Fever.' Nobody care."

"Things any better now than they were last year or two years ago?"

"No. No better. Lots worse. Last year we buy 100 pounds cheapest flour for \$2.45. Now I pay \$3.10 same kind. Last year before President make N.R.A. I make more money dan I make now. Made lots more in '32, less in '33, in '34 hardly don't make nodding."

"I thought you fellows got a raise for picking cotton?"

"Yes. But we no get it. We make strike before we get it. 'Red agitators.' They make for us."

"How about before the depression?"

"Good times. Get \$1.50 a hundred. Very bad now. Yes, sir. Very bad."

"Now that you've finished picking these acres what do you do?"

"Go to peas field. Everybody go in car or truck. We take everything except house. We get nodding but house when we come. When finished peas fields we come back for grapes."

"What do you make a week when the whole family is working? In good times?"

"In good times? Oh, sometimes make \$8, maybe if work very hard, make \$10."

That seemed to be the height of his earnings and he sounded very pleased that he and his family were able on occasions to earn that much.

"Well, I got to go back pick bolls." He said something to the girl in Spanish. She flushed and started picking again.

"My father he say better work," she said.

"Yes; well, you go ahead and work while I walk alongside and talk to you. Are you married?"

She flushed again and shook her head.

"No. No marry."

"Looks like things are not so good for you people, eh?"

"Oh, they awright. Things gettin' better—everybody say. The President, he take care of poor people."

"Is he taking care of you?"

"No, sir. Not yet. Things very bad for us. But he got lots to do and he never hear about cotton pickers. I wanted write and tell him hurry up because I going to have a baby and things very bad for us. He do something for poor people if he know how things very bad, eh?"

"Why didn't you write to him, then?"

She blushed again.

"No got stamp."

"Oh," I said, "I'll give you a stamp."

"Thank you but no can write."

"Sure, you go ahead. The President will be glad to hear from you."

"No can write," she repeated. "No go school; work in fields all the time."

"If you'll tell me what you want to write, I'll do it for you."

She looked at me with a swift smile and giggled.

I took out a pencil and some paper and asked her name. A look of terror spread over her face.

"No! No! No write the President!" she begged.

"Why not? Didn't you want to write to him?"

"No! No! I just talk. Just talk."

"What are you afraid of?"

"No write the President, Mister, please." She straightened up and looked at me pleadingly. "If you write for me to the President my father get in trouble. Maybe the President get mad and my father, he no get no more work."

"I don't think so," I assured her. "But if you don't want me to tell who you are I can write to him and tell him about it without mentioning your name."

She looked up with a sudden hope.

"You do that?"

"Sure. I don't have to give your name. I'll just say a little Mexican girl in a cotton field four miles from Mendota."

She looked earnestly at me for a moment.

"Please, you write the President. Tell him my baby is coming," she said in a low tone. "I dunno when the baby come. Maybe at night and we got no light. Please, you tell the President things very bad. We no make maybe nothing. My little sister she sick and if baby comes I no can have bed. I got to have baby on floor and if it come in night how I have baby?"

I nodded, unable to speak.

"You please tell the President maybe he tell boss here not charge us twenty-five cents a week for electric light so I can have my baby."

"I'll tell him exactly what you said," I promised.

"You no fool me?"

"No, I'm not fooling you. I promise."

That is all, Mr. President. I don't know whether you will ever see this but I just wanted to keep my promise; and if you do see it you'll know why "red agitators" are making more headway here than anywhere I've been so far in this country.

# DRAMA





## PREFACE

DURING THE last year the American theatre world has awakened to a new phenomenon. This is the working-class theatre which exists in its midst—or rather, on its geographical fringes. If the new phenomenon isn't liked, it is at least respected. It has vitality, drive, and a fresh slant on life. You can pick up no theatre journal without reading about it. The critic of the New York Times states that the revolutionary play is the "most obvious recent development." *Theatre Arts* publishes learned tracts about it. And *Variety*, the trade sheet, whoops it up for the new left drama.

As a matter of fact, working-class theatre in America, though still in its infancy, is not new. It has more than ten years of history behind it. During this time it has been testing itself, outgrowing certain infantile weaknesses, developing its technique, clarifying what it has to say. What happened in the last year is simply that it has found its range and has begun to sing out boldly and clearly. Even the reluctant have to listen.

One of the first organized workers theatre was founded in 1926 by Michael Gold. It rehearsed in a loft on Washington Square and eventually produced, in a Second Avenue hall, a comedy called *The Biggest Boob in the World*. A crude play, still cruder acting; yet this was the seed of an organization which today includes nearly a thousand amateur and professional theatre groups.

The following year Gold gathered about him a small band of insurgent writers, among them John Howard Lawson and John Dos Passos, who invaded Broadway under the name of the New Playwrights. With the exception of Gold, who alone had a grasp of what proletarian drama meant, the New Playwrights were primarily concerned with shocking the bourgeoisie. But the bourgeoisie wasn't shocked. America was then riding high and giddy on real estate booms and stock market rockets. The time wasn't ripe. Of some half dozen plays, only Paul Sifton's *The Belt* got beyond mere technical innovation.

Meanwhile the amateur groups were making headway. Organized in the League of Workers Theatres, they sprang up everywhere in the big industrial cities. They rarely had theatres or stages of their own. With a few props, a drape, a screen, a home-made spotlight, they jogged around to the workers clubs, to union halls, to street corners, and factory gates. They enacted short plays, written generally in doggerel, with stylized characters representing the boss, the worker, the militarist, the imperialist nations. Each was really

an animated cartoon, with a specific political message delivered in schematic form. At times very crude, these "agitprops" occasionally achieved a high order of wit. Among the best were *We Demand, Charity* (containing some of Jack Shapiro's most hilarious couplets), and *China Awakes*.

Perhaps the most popular of all these groups was the Workers Laboratory Theatre, or the WLT, as it was affectionately known among the left-wing workers of New York City. A close rival was the German-speaking Proletbuehne, which, under John Bonn, whittled dramatic lectures like *Tempo, Tempo* into exciting, beautifully-paced performances.

The Proletbuehne introduced with *Scottsboro* a new type of worker theatre. This was the mass chant, consisting of a simple factual story, or a poem, which builds to a direct agitational appeal. Recited with tonal effects by a group of workers standing stock-still—or making simple mass movements—these chants often managed to lift you out of your seat.

This period, up to 1932, might be called the "morality play" stage of the workers theatre. At first many false theories prevailed: for example, the theory that, since bourgeois content had reached a stalemate, all bourgeois form, even bourgeois technical equipment, had to be ditched. The proscenium arch was denounced as bourgeois; the very structure of the theatre as a "bourgeois peepshow." When, however, the groups grew in numbers and prestige, when they began to perform four and five times a week, these fallacies were quickly sloughed away. The agitprop, the mass chant, became more subtle, more artistic in form. Impetus was lent by the founding, in 1933, of America's first professional workers theatre, the Theatre Union. (Artef, the Yiddish workers theatre, has a claim to being considered not only the first, but the most mature of the entire movement; this outline, however, is limited chiefly to English-speaking groups).

More competent writers now took up the simple forms and gave them literary distinction. Out of the old mass chant came Langston Hughes' *Scottsboro Limited*, the WLT's *Free Thaelmann*; and Alfred Kreyborg's *America, America*, which is reprinted in this volume. Out of the old agitprop came the WLT's *Newsboy*: bits of the ballet, of music, song, poetry, snatches of scenes from 1931—and *Merry-Go-Round*, all woven together by Alfred Saxe and his companions into a production so fluid, so tense and electric, so fresh and unforeseen, that a thousand people stood up one night and cheered in recognition of a new form of dramatic art. The agitprop theatre had come of age.

To fill out an evening's bill at the old "Civic Rep," the WLT developed a sort of workers' vaudeville. *Who's Got the Boloney?*,

*LaGuardia's Got the Boloney*, and *Hot Pastrami* show the beginnings of rich political satire done in traditional revue style.

With the advent of the Theatre Union the tendency, even among the amateur groups, has been toward realism. Examples are Peter Martin's *Daughter*, Philip Stevenson's *God's in His Heaven*, and Philip Barber's *The Klein-Orbach Strike*.

A milestone in the development of the shorter form was the appearance of *Waiting for Lefty*, a fifty-minute play on the New York taxi strike, written by Clifford Odets of the Group Theatre. Brilliantly enacted by the Group company, this drama, with its head-on union meeting scenes, its flashbacks into the homes of cab drivers, its action whirling from stage to orchestra pit and back to stage again, swept the audience off its feet. It was played again and again in numerous theatres throughout the country. The most directly agitational of all working-class plays written to date in America, it added stature to revolutionary drama.

The League of Workers Theatres has just been reorganized into the New Theatre League. It is now prepared to broaden its scope. Its organ, *New Theatre*, is certainly the liveliest theatrical journal on the market. The WLT has been re-formed as the Theatre of Action; it maintains a permanent company in a collective apartment; and it has just invaded the professional theatre with a full-length play, *The Young Go First*.

On Broadway itself working-class drama is not unknown. Plays like *Gods in the Lightning*, *Precedent*, 1931—, and *We the People*—some of them, it is true, imperfectly thought out—have rarely appeared and invariably failed. Even John Wexley's *They Shall Not Die*, lavishly produced by the Theatre Guild, could not draw big enough audiences to meet the enormous costs of a Broadway show.

The Theatre Union began with the assumption that there *was* an audience for working-class plays. It believed this audience stayed away from the theatre because it was bored and disgusted with Broadway; or because it could not afford to pay Broadway prices. A low scale; plays voicing the aspirations of the workers as a class: these are the two fundamental principles upon which the Theatre Union is established. It has now sustained itself for two seasons, during which it staged four plays: *Peace on Earth*, by George Sklar and Albert Maltz; *Stevedore*, by Paul Peters and George Sklar; *Sailors of Cattaro*, by Friedrich Wolf; and *Black Pit*, by Albert Maltz.

During this short period the Theatre Union has crystallized, in terms of dramatic art, a new type of cultural expression. In other countries, notably in the Soviet Union and in pre-Hitler Germany, this cultural expression—the expression of an emergent working

class—brought to life a magnificent flowering in all the arts. Now, in Chicago, in San Francisco, in Los Angeles, in Boston, Philadelphia, and Milwaukee, theatres like the Theatre Union are being formed to prepare for a similar flowering in America. Much of the young and vigorous playwrighting talent of the nation is turning to these theatres for an outlet. There is, unfortunately, no room in this volume to publish excerpts from such interesting unproduced plays as Albert Bein's *Let Freedom Ring*, Samuel Ornitz' *In New Kentucky*, Wallace Waite's *Mine Gang*, Paul and Claire Sifton's *Red Kate*, Loretto and J. O. Bailey's *Strike Song*, and Philip Barber's *If This Be Treason*.

What all this means is that the theatre will cease to be a toy for the rich, a business for real estate dealers, or a racket for ticket speculators. It means that the theatre will become what in its great days it always was: a school, a forum, a communal institution, a weapon in the hands of the masses for fashioning a sound society.

# AMERICA, AMERICA!\*

ALFRED KREYMBORG

*(Characters: Part I: Soap-box orator. Part II: Rich kids, Jack and Jill. Part III: Poor couple, Jim and Jane.)*

## I

What have you done with all your gold,  
America, America?

What have you bought and calmly sold  
of human flesh and misery;  
what has it cost the growing poor  
to earn their cornered liberty:  
The right to live awhile and wed,  
the right to share a loaf of bread,  
the right to one dark room and bed,  
the right to love before they're dead,  
and all the children comforted—

Why are the children thin and cold,  
America?

What is it makes the young grow old,  
America:

The young who marry young, grow old,  
caught in a daily strangle-hold:

The man in a ditch, the woman a witch  
who swings a broom and makes a room  
shine as if the room were rich—  
only to drop her hands and weep  
as she sees her husband creep,  
every muscle uninspired,  
hired brain and body tired,  
up the stair, up the stair—  
every step a deadly echo:  
"I've been fired, fired."

What is it makes her run to him,  
drag him in, what's left of him,  
hug and kiss him back to life?

Doesn't she need him as well,  
weary of the wifely hell  
of doing things she's had to do  
to make one stipend carry two,

\* For permission to produce this play, request must be made to the author, care of his publisher, Samuel French, 25 West 45th St., New York City.

and carry three and drag on four?—

(God help them if there are more!)

Ah, but how she needs the man!

Now he's holding her and she

smiles upon him dreamily:

He is up where he belongs,

mumbling silly things and songs

as the morrow in their lives

gathers hope and love revives.

Shake them, wake them, make them rise,

America, America,

ere the animal arise,

and the phallus and the womb

one more child of theirs entomb!

They were careless once before—

twice before—slam the door—

Thank you for that shutter, Wind—

that was harsh and kind of you—

the poor are never blind to you—

Slam the shutter—that'll do!

What is it makes the pair go pale,

America, America?

Why has their home become a jail

where the wolves of poverty

wall them in and lose the key—

What have they done—what crime is theirs—

what do they see that makes them look,

look as if their lives were done,

lives the pair have scarce begun?

And what is the line along the street,

a line a million lines repeat,

where the most heroic feet

join the zeros and the mob

looking for a little job

good enough—my god how good

if it buy their women food!

What in god's name can it be,

America, America,

has robbed them of their liberty?

II

What do I see go rolling by,  
 America, O land of mine,  
 racing along and joy skyhigh,  
 boys and girls and all skyhigh,  
 everyone drunk with youthful health,  
 bedizened and mad with Daddy's wealth,  
 sailing along in a blinding car,  
 making the earth a dancing star,  
 rending the day from moon to sun,  
 their dizzy hearts a barrel of fun  
 that doesn't give a damn for what we are,  
 doesn't give a damn for what you are,  
     O land of mine,  
     so long as they can sail and kiss,  
     drink and kiss, kiss and love,  
     the girl below, the boy above,  
 drunk with each other  
 and drunk for a while  
     mile after mile,  
 earth and air and underground  
 where nobody dies while they're around!

Ah what a joy-ride, boy-ride, girl-ride,  
 girl-wide boy-ride,  
 world-wide joy-ride!

Nothing in the world to worry about,  
 the old Harry's in and the old Harry's out,  
 nothing in the world to be sorry about—

"Who the hell cares what Mother'll say?—" *"Daddy's got a bank and the bank will pay—"*  
 "Jesus Christ, I could almost pray—  
 Never knew a girl could be so gay!" *"Never knew a dame  
 Who'd go the whole hog and then not blame—"*  
*"I shoulda worn a wedding ring—"*  
 "Cut out the giggling—get up and sing—" *"Turn on the radio—let's us dance—"*  
 "What have I done with my silly pants?" *"My, you're naughty—my dress is gone—"*  
 "Why not dance in what you've got on?" *"Turn on the light, Jack—isn't it late?"*  
 "Long after daylight—half past eight."

"Mother'll throw a fit—" "And Dad.  
 We'd have been good if we hadn't had—"  
 "Let's have another drink—" "Let's have two—"  
 "I never knew what a drink could do—"  
 "I never knew a girl I'd just met—"  
 "A boy in respectable evening dress—"  
 "Could bow like an iceberg and then let—"  
 "You do what you did—" "I did?—" "Yes."  
 "What did I do that you didn't do?"  
 "Come a little closer and I'll tell you."  
 "Jill—you're a lady—don't lie on your back—"  
 "And you're no gentleman—Jack—oh Jack!"

## III

"What have you got for dinner, Honey?"  
 "Yesterday's soup—I'm out o' money—"  
 (America, America.)  
 "What'll we do when the rent comes round?"  
 "Butter's gone up ten cents a pound."  
 "I've been all over—no job in sight."  
 "Jim—you were awfully late tonight."  
 "Every bone o' mine's done in—"  
 "Sit down now an' let's begin."  
 "Jane, I'm too tired—can't eat a mite—"  
 "Jim, you're trembling—an' oh so white!"  
 "I'd like to lay right down an' die—"  
 "Don't wake the kids—you'll make 'em cry."  
 "I don't deserve a woman like you."  
 "Don't say that after all you've been through—"  
 "I'm not through yet—tomorrow I—  
 Christ Almighty!—" "Jim, don't cry—  
 Sit a little closer—poor old dear—"  
 "You're tired too—" "Not while you're near."

"Blow out the lamp—I love the dark—"  
 (America.)  
 "Remember how we first met in the park—"  
 (America?)  
 "I sat beside you—" "An' I beside you—"  
 "An' you began—" "You began, Howdoyou do?"  
 "Jane, you were flirting—" "No, you were—"  
 "Well, I was lonely—" "So was I, sir."  
 "You looked so cold there, sitting alone—  
 An' when I sat down you looked like a stone."



"It's not for a girl to encourage a man—"

"You coulda got up when I began—"

"I hadn't the strength or will, I suppose."

"An' how long we sat there nobody knows."

"It seems like a hundred years ago—"

(America)—

"More than a thousand years and oh—"

"You kissed me before you knew my name—"

"An' you never stopped me—did you, Jane?"

"We got married an' the Five an' Ten—"

"Sold us a load o' funny stuff when  
I had a job—" "An' I had one too—"

"An' we were so young an' happy you—"

"You, Jim—" "You, Jane—" "You an' I—" "Yes—"

"Jumped aboard a crazy express—"

"An' kids came out of our happiness!"

"Christ, I could smash such a lousy town—"

(America!)

"Don't get up, Jim—come back, sit down!"

"Look at me, Jane—do I look like a slob?—

I tried an' I tried—not a goddamn job."

"Be patient, Honey—don't get the blues—

"Hundreds an' thousands are in our shoes."

"Where's all the money gone—who's to blame—"

(America?)—"Yes, who's to blame?"

"Who owns the earth an' what have we got?

What right have they to make us rot?"

"Please don't cry, dear—" "I'm not cryin'—

I'm sick an' tired o' seein' you tryin'

To make one meal last a week or two—"

"Don't you know I'm in love with you?—"

"Don't tell me that—" "But I will, I do—"

"You're tearin' my heart out—" "I don't care—

I work as you work, fair an' square."

"Work as I work?—I don't do a thing

But try great bastards, king after king,

Who tell me the whole wide world is poor,

Act down an' out an' show me the door.

Who wants a handout?—I wanta work—

There's not a job on earth I'd shirk.

Bring back my slavery—let me earn

Enough to come home an' see you turn

With the light of old—the light that stops—  
Turns to other things—an' then drops!"

"Never mind, Jim—tomorrow I'll  
Hunt for a job—" "Like hell you will!"  
"Jim, what's the matter?—don't look that way—  
You look as if—" "Will you be still?"  
"You'll wake the kids, dear—what did I say?"  
"Hell with the kids—to hell with it all—"   
"Honey—you're crazy—Honey—" "Don't bawl!"  
"I'm not bawlin'—please come to bed—"   
"Not on your life—I'd sooner drop dead."  
"Jim—God in heaven—" "I've had my fill—"   
"You haven't eaten the soup or bread—"   
"Say one more word about bread an' I'll kill—"   
"Jim—let go o' me—what did I do?"   
"One more word an' I'm through—through."  
"Honey—I'm sorry—I musta meant—"   
"Butter's gone up—we can't raise the rent—"   
"No, Jim, never—I never said that—"   
"Christ, how I hate this lousy flat—  
The table an' chairs—the sink an' stove—"   
"Jim—come back—you no longer love—"   
"Say one more word about love an' I'll—"   
"Take to the streets!—" "Like hell you will!"

"Oh but we're mad, we're raving mad!"  
"Ah my poor darling!" "My starving lad!"  
"How could I turn on my girl, an' knife—"   
"Jim—you still love me—" "Love you for life!"   
"Somebody—somebody—" "Send us a job—"   
"Down on your knees, Jim—send us a job—"   
"Down on your knees, Jane—I've never prayed—"   
"Don't turn to God, Jim—I am afraid."  
"Where is your hand, Jane—hold me tight—"   
"Christ, save my lover—so thin' an white—"   
"Jane—what makes you shiver so cold?—"   
"What have they done with all the gold?"   
"Jane—they're killing you—where have you gone?"   
"Jim—they're killing you—what have we done?"   
"Why can't they give us a bite to live?"   
"The right to earn a loaf o' bread?"   
"The right to love before we're dead?—"   
"An' our poor children comforted?"

"Up on your feet, Jane—up again now!  
 Now we'll start fighting—" "*How, dear, how?*"  
 "Tomorrow I'll tear down the whole damn sky!"  
 "*An' we'll run beside you—the children an' I!*"  
 "Tomorrow we'll start all over and ah—"  
 "*Die if we have to—*" (America)!

## BLACK PIT\*

ALBERT MALTZ

*(When Joe Kovarsky comes home after serving three years in a West Virginia prison on a frame-up for union activities, he finds himself blacklisted. As time goes on and he cannot get work in the mines, cannot even get relief, cannot get medical care for his wife who is pregnant, must share the meager compensation his brother-in-law draws from a mine injury that has paralyzed his limbs,—Joe becomes desperate and takes a little "loan" from the superintendent. He thinks he can fool the "super," but he quickly discovers that he is trapped and has become a stool pigeon in exchange for a job and an occasional ten dollar bill "for the baby." Little by little he is forced to do the company's dirty work. Suspicions begin to spread. When the organizer, who is secretly building the miners' union locally, is beaten up by company thugs, one of Joe's buddies accuses Joe of being a "rat." The following scene takes place in the brother-in-law's home.)*

*(A few minutes later. The quarters of Tony Lakavich. The room is empty except for the baby lying on the bed. MARY opens the outside door and pushes TONY in. TONY looks around the room.)*

TONY. —Joe! (*Silence*) Joe! (IOLA comes out of the inner room) What be matt'r, Iola? Joe busy, maybe?

IOLA. He don't feel right, Tony. He's lyin' down.

TONY. Hoh—no feel right. All quick he no feel right. (IOLA *doesn't answer*) Iola, how you lak you man be call stool pigeon?

IOLA (*hysterically*). Tony, you ought t' know better than t' care for what a drunken man says.

TONY. Iola, dere be miner go on strike now. Why Joe run lak he be scare? Why he hide in odern room now no come out talk lak

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man? (JOE comes out. His jaws are clenched in his effort to keep calm.)

TONY. Hoh!—You no feel good, hah? Maybe I get dohctor for you, hah?

JOE (*bursting out*). What you wan' from me, Tony?

TONY. Joe—you be my bruder—I know you from leely feller—I wan' have you be stan' oop lak man.

JOE. Dronk feller call me stool pigeon. What dat say? Say he be dronk, dat's all. What you wan' me do?

TONY. I no wan' you run 'way, Joe. Whole patch be hear what Barolla say—you got stay dere—show he be lie.

JOE (*sitting down*). Hoh! I no care what Barolla say. (*A pause.*)

TONY. Joe—why you say Anetsky go in condam' room?

JOE. He go, Tony.

TONY. You see check off, Joe?

JOE. What diff'rence mak'! Super tell me he go in condam' room.

TONY. Super say! Hoh! (JOE is silent.)

TONY. Joe, how mooch cost you buy kag beer?

JOE. Why you wan' know?

TONY. You be 'fraid tell me, Joe?

JOE. Why I be 'fraid? Cost four dohlor.

TONY. Where you gat four dohlor, Joe? Las' pay day all mohney go cohmpany store pay for tic.

JOE. No. Cohmpany geev me five dohlor cash. (*A long pause.*)

TONY. I see you ticket, Joe. Saw one dohlor twonty-five cent cash—not five dohlor. You mak' lie to me, Joe. Joe—why you be lie? (JOE doesn't answer.)

TONY. Joe, why you no tell me Super come howse? Why Super come here, Joe?

JOE. He come for see Iola. . . I forgot tell you, dat's all.

MARY. Sure, Tony, I be here. . . He wan' see Iola.

TONY. You forget too, hah? Maybe you bot' peoples tink I be Vincey maybe? I know Super. Super care—(*he marks out the end of his fingernail*)—dis much 'bout Iola. Super care for Super. Super come here he wan' get sometings. Joe, why he come? What Super get from you, Joe?

MARY. You crazy, Tony. Super no wan' noddings. He wan' say "Hallo Iola." Why you no see?

TONY. No. No see. Before I no tink 'bout dese tings. Now I wan' know. I wan' know why Joe run way when we be organize union. I wan' know how Joe get mohney for buy beer. I wan' know why Joe tell lie 'bout Super come here to howse. I wan' know, Mary.

MARY. Joe, I gone tell Tony.

JOE. No!

MARY. What be matt'r, Joe? I tell heem he know everytings be awright.

TONY. Go 'head, Mary! I wan' hear! (JOE'S face sets in a hard mask. His hands are clenched together.)

MARY. Super geev baby prasant, Tony. Joe say, we no gone tell you—gone buy you sometings for you bird-day. An' Iola say tak' lil' bit buy beer for peecnic. Now you see, Tony.

TONY (*afraid of the answer*). How mooch Super geev?

MARY. Ten dohlor!

TONY (*in a whisper*). Ten dohlor! Ten dohlor baby mohney! Joe tell you dat, hah? (*His voice changes*) I tell you bett'r, Mary. I know Super! Ten dohlor! Ten dohlor stool pigeon mohney! Ten dohlor tell who be organize here.

IOLA. No, Tony, no. Joe didn't do that.

TONY (*swinging his chair around violently*). How you know? (*Silence—he turns back to JOE*) Joe, you be my bruder. I know you from leely feller. (*In agony*) Joe, tell me true!

JOE (*shrugs—his tone is artificially unconcerned*). Man wan' get some place, he got tink 'bout self.

TONY (*so shocked he can hardly talk*). Joe Kovarsky say dat? Kovarsky say he be stool pigeon?

JOE. What you tink, I be union organize'? I got belly full union. I go prison for union. Now I wan' have some lil' bit good tings—wan' have howse, have—

TONY. Joe Kovarsky say dat? Kovarsky say he no care 'bout union, no wan' union, no care 'bout odern miner? (*With rising anger*) Joe Kovarsky say he lak live on blood mohney, hah?

JOE. Hoh—you no holler. I be stool for you too. You eat my mohney. You live in howse wit' my mohney. You be all same lak me.

TONY (*with a roar*). No! Jesus Chris' you be lie. I no be lak you. I gone sleep on groun'. I gone eat coal, I gone die from starve 'fore I be cheat on odern miner. You wan' be stool pigeon? You lak be stool pigeon? Okay! (*he spits*) I no gone stay in same howse wit' stool pigeon. (*He starts for the door.*)

IOLA. No, Tony, don't do that—everybody'll know.

TONY. Jesus Chris', dey don' know now I gone tell dem. I gone say "Everybuddy watch for Kovarsky—he be stool pigeon—he be suck for boss—boss buy Kovarsky for wan kag beer—"

JOE (*with a cry of pain*). Tony, I no wan' do dis. (TONY stops. JOE'S mask of indifference has crumpled away. He holds out his hands beseechingly and his voice is broken) No go, Tony. . . . You got halp me—you got tell me what do. . . . Super got me tight

lak trap, Tony . . . no can move ahrm, no can move lag. . . Super tell me "do" I got do. . . I be lie, Tony. I got sooch hurt in here, got sooch shame on me I wan' die now. (*A pause.*)

TONY (*brokenly*). Joe, why you do dis?

JOE. You got halp me, Tony. (*A pause.*)

TONY. Joe . . . I tink . . . maybe bett'r siddown, talk quiet . . . Christus!

IOLA. (*going to JOE*). Joe—

JOE. Iola—we say gone get lil' bit sun . . . now sun be black lak night—black lak Pit be. . . (*He moves away from her and sits down. IOLA sobs quietly. MARY stands with her handkerchief pressed to her mouth, one hand grasping her crucifix.*)

TONY. I wait for you speak, Joe. (*JOE makes a few aimless, helpless gestures with his hands and then begins.*)

JOE. I be blacklis', Tony . . . nevair can get job. . . Super come say "I gone geev you good job, you be friends wit' cohmpany. . . You no do, he say, "I'm gone tak' way howse from Tony."

TONY. Hoh—no say you go be stool for me! You know all time I bett'r no live in howse.

JOE. No, Tony, I no say . . . but Iola gone have baby . . . she got have dohctor. . . I tink maybe I fool Super, get job. . .

TONY. By be stool pigeon, hah? Joe, bett'r be Iola die from baby—bett'r be you die from starve. . .

JOE. I no wan' do, Tony. . . I be wan' lil' bit sometings have . . . have awright lil' bit. . .

TONY. Have awright? How you wan' awright? By self, hah? By lie, by cheat, by crawl on belly. . . Jesus Chris, Joe, miner no can get by self . . . when cohmpany got everytings miner no can have noddings . . . you wan' sometings you got go wit' odern miner, tak' cohmpany by t'roat, fight. . .

JOE. Yah, Tony, but I no tink den. . .

TONY. No tink, hah? You tink tell who be organize here . . . tink say no gas in mine. . .

JOE. Tony, what I'm gone do? Now I walk in patch I tink everybuddy know I be stool pigeon. I see ol' fren' tink maybe tomorreh he gone spit at me.

TONY. Joe, now you no bett'r from odern stool pigeon . . . you be rat now. . .

IOLA. No, Tony. . .

TONY. Yah, Iola—no bett'r . . . now miner got hate heem . . . all miner got spit at heem. . .

JOE. Oh by gosh I feel lak die now.

IOLA. Joe. . . (*She goes to him.*)

JOE. Iola, no be wort' Iola. What good get tings by be false to odern miner? Now I no lak you, no lak lil' baby, no lak noddings . . . bett'r be starve, Iola, bett'r be live in hole lak animal. (*He turns away from her. IOLA stands transfixed with pain. From offstage comes the sound of weeping. They listen to it. It becomes louder.*)

JOE (*in a whisper*). What be? What be dat? Mary, go 'head, go see. (*MARY opens the door. A pause.*)

MARY. Pauline go wit' Miss Floyd. She cry.

JOE (*in terror*). What be? Go 'head, fin' out.

MARY. Pauline . . . what be matt'r?

PAULINE'S VOICE. Tom Floyd just died, Mary . . . on the way to the hospital. (*Silence, MARY closes the door. The weeping dies away.*)

JOE (*in a whisper*). Now, I be kill odern miner.

MARY. No, Joe . . . the company left the gas in the mine. You didn't do it. . . .

TONY. But Joe tell lie . . . he say no gas in mine.

JOE (*suddenly*). Christus, why I do dis? I no wan' do. . . . Listen, everybuddy, I be good feller. Why I got mak' lie out myself get piece bread eat? Why I got cut heart out of wooman? Goddam cohmpany, I gone smash cohmpany.

TONY. No—too late now!

JOE. Tony, I wan' do . . . gone be strike when whistle blow, Tony. . . . I wan' strike . . . I wan' fight now, Tony. . . .

TONY. No—now miner no can trus' you.

JOE. I gone be true now. . . .

TONY. No. Miner no can b'lieve you now. . . . (*A pause.*)

JOE. What I'm gone do?

TONY. Go 'way . . . go odern place.

JOE. Where I'm gone go?

TONY. I no care. You no can stay here.

JOE. How I'm gone tak' Iola an' lil' feller?

TONY. I no care. You be dead man here. (*A pause.*)

JOE (*brokenly*). Yah, I got go awright.

IOLA. No, Joe. . . .

TONY. No talk, Iola!

IOLA. Take me, Joe. . . .

JOE. No good, Iola . . . you got stay here, tak' care leely feller.

TONY. Go 'head now. . . . (*JOE stands for a moment, then goes to MARY.*)

JOE. Maria. . . . (*He starts to embrace her, then stops and turns away. Then he goes to the baby.*) Lil' Tony . . . you grow oop got be a good union feller. . . . (*A pause—he turns to IOLA*) You hear? He grow oop . . . he got fight cohmpany, Iola. . . .

IOLA (*in a whisper*). Yes, Joe. . . . (JOE stands looking at the people and the room.)

TONY. Go 'head, Joe. . . . (*Falteringly* JOE goes out. There is a moment of silence and then IOLA draws a deep sobbing breath and bolts to the door.)

TONY. No, Iola, stay here! You got tak' care leely feller . . . go 'head now . . . geev baby milk . . . geev all milk you got. . . . (*A pause. IOLA walks back to the baby—MARY is praying silently with the crucifix in her hands. Then the siren screams from the mine.*)

TONY (*in a whisper*). T'ree 'clock! (*The sound of men calling and yelling begins to be heard*) Strike! Dey go on strike now! (*The cries are louder. TONY wheels to the door*) Dey mak' line. Dey mak' picket line! (*Suddenly he yells*) Go 'head. Go 'head, everybuddy. 'Go head. (*The siren screams again. IOLA weeps.*)

TONY (*turning to her*). Never min', Iola . . . nevair min'. . . . Leely feller gone grow oop . . . he no got crawl on belly get piece bread eat . . . outside miner be fight. . . . (*His voice becomes fierce*) By God, miner gone raise head oop in sun. . . . (*He turns to the door*) . . . Holler out loud "Jesus Chris', miner got blow whistle—not boss blow—miner blow." . . . Jesus Chris' I nevair gone die. . . . I gone sit here wait for dat time. (*The siren screams.*)

## WAITING FOR LEFTY\*

CLIFFORD ODETS

(*As the curtain goes up we see a bare stage. On it are sitting six or seven men in a semi-circle. Lolling against the proscenium down left is a young man chewing a toothpick: a gunman. A fat man is talking directly to the audience. In other words he is the head of a union and the men ranged behind him are a committee of workers. They are now seated in interesting different attitudes and present a wide diversity of type, as we shall soon see. The fat man is hot and heavy under the collar, near the end of a long talk, but not too hot; he is well fed and confident. His name is HARRY FATT.*)

FATT. You're so wrong I ain't laughing. Any guy with eyes to read knows it. Look at the textile strike—out like lions and in like lambs. Take the San Francisco tie-up—starvation and broken heads. The steel boys wanted to walk out too, but they changed their minds. It's the trend of the times, that's what it is. All we workers got a

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good man behind us now. He's top man of the country—looking out for our interests—the man in the White House is the one I'm referrin' to. That's why the times ain't ripe for a strike. He's working day and night—

VOICE (*from the audience*). For who? (*The gunman stirs himself.*)

FATT. For you! The records prove it. If this was the Hoover régime, would I say don't go out, boys? Not on your tintype! But things is different now. You read the papers as well as me. You know it. And that's why I'm against the strike. Because we gotta stand behind the man who's standin' behind us! The whole country—

ANOTHER VOICE. Is on the blink! (*The gunman looks grave.*)

FATT. Stand up and show yourself, you damn red! Be a man, let's see what you look like! (*Waits in vain.*) Yellow from the word go! Red and yellow makes a dirty color, boys. I got my eyes on four or five of them in the union here. What the hell'll they do for you? Pull you out and run away when trouble starts. Give those birds a chance and they'll have your sisters and wives in the whore houses, like they done in Russia. They'll tear Christ off his bleeding cross. They'll wreck your homes and throw your babies in the river. You think that's bunk? Read the papers! Now listen, we can't stay here all night. I gave you the facts in the case. You boys got hot suppers to go to and—

ANOTHER VOICE. Says you!

GUNMAN. Sit down, Punk!

ANOTHER VOICE. Where's Lefty? (*Now this question is taken up by the others in unison. FATT pounds with gavel.*)

FATT. That's what I wanna know. Where's your pal, Lefty? You elected him chairman—where the hell did he disappear?

VOICES. We want Lefty! Lefty! Lefty!

FATT (*pounding*). What the hell is this—a circus? You got the committee here. This bunch of cowboys you elected. (*Pointing to man on extreme right end.*)

MAN. Benjamin.

FATT. Yeah, Doc Benjamin. (*Pointing to other men in circle in seated order*) Benjamin, Miller, Stein, Mitchell, Philips, Keller. It ain't my fault Lefty took a run-out powder. If you guys—

A GOOD VOICE. What's the committee say?

OTHERS. The committee! Let's hear from the committee! (*FATT tries to quiet the crowd, but one of the seated men suddenly comes to the front. The gunman moves over to center stage, but FATT says:*)

FATT. Sure, let him talk. Let's hear what the red boys gotta

say! (*Various shouts are coming from the audience. FATT insolently goes back to his seat in the middle of the circle. He sits on his raised platform and re-lights his cigar. The gunman goes back to his post. JOE, the new speaker, raises his hand for quiet. Gets it quickly. He is sore.*)

JOE. You boys know me. I ain't a red boy one bit! Here I'm carryin' a shrapnel that big I picked up in the war. And maybe I don't know it when it rains! Don't call me red! You know what we are? We're the black and blue boys! We been kicked around so long we're black and blue from head to toes. But I guess anyone who says straight out he don't like it, he's a red boy to the leaders of the union. What's this crap about goin' home to hot suppers? I'm asking to your faces how many's got hot suppers to go home to? Anyone who's sure of his next meal, raise your hand! A certain gent sitting behind me can raise them both. But not in front here! And that's why we're talking strike—to get a living wage!

VOICE. Where's Lefty?

JOE. I honest to God don't know, but he didn't take no run-out powder. That Wop's got more guts than a slaughter house. Maybe a traffic jam got him, but he'll be here. But don't let this red stuff scare you. Unless fighting for a living scares you. We gotta make up our minds. My wife made up my mind last week, if you want the truth. It's plain as the nose on Sol Feinberg's face we need a strike. There's us comin' home every night—eight, ten hours on the cab. "God," the wife says, "eighty cents ain't money—don't buy beans. You're workin' for the company," she says to me, "Joe! you ain't workin' for me or the family no more!" She says to me, "If you don't start . . ."

(JOE and EDNA.)

(*The lights fade out and a white spot picks out the playing space within the space of seated men. The seated men are very dimly visible in the outer dark, but more prominent is FATT smoking his cigar and often blowing the smoke in the lighted circle.*)

(*A tired but attractive woman of thirty comes into the room, drying her hands on an apron. She stands there sullenly as JOE comes in from the other side, home from work. For a moment they stand and look at each other in silence.*)

JOE. Where's all the furniture, honey?

EDNA. They took it away. No instalments paid.

JOE. When?

EDNA. Three o'clock.

JOE. They can't do that.

EDNA. Can't? They did it.

JOE. Why, the palookas, we paid three-quarters.

EDNA. The man said read the contract.

JOE. We must have signed a phoney . . .

EDNA. It's a regular contract and you signed it.

JOE. Don't be so sour, Edna . . . (*Tries to embrace her.*)

EDNA. Do it in the movies, Joe—they pay Clark Gable big money for it.

JOE. This is a helluva house to come home to. Take my word!

EDNA. Take MY word! Whose fault is it?

JOE. Must you start that stuff again?

EDNA. Maybe you'd like to talk about books?

JOE. I'd like to slap you in the mouth!

EDNA. No you won't.

JOE (*sheepish*). Jeez, Edna, you get me sore some time . . .

EDNA. But just look at me—I'm laughing all over!

JOE. Don't insult me. Can I help it if times are bad? What the hell do you want me to do, jump off a bridge or something?

EDNA. Don't yell. I just put the kids to bed so they won't know they missed a meal. If I don't have Emmy's shoes soled tomorrow, she can't go to school. In the meantime let her sleep.

JOE. Honey, I rode the wheels off the chariot today. I cruised around five hours without a call. It's conditions.

EDNA. Tell it to the A & P!

JOE. I booked two-twenty on the clock. A lady with a dog was lit . . . she gave me a quarter tip by mistake. If you'd only listen to me—we're rolling in wealth.

EDNA. Yeah? How much?

JOE. I had "coffee and—" in a beanery. (*Hands her silver coins.*) A buck four.

EDNA. The second month's rent is due tomorrow.

JOE. Don't look at me that way, Edna.

EDNA. I'm looking through you, not at you. . . . Everything was gonna be so ducky! A cottage by the waterfall, roses in Picardy. You're a four-star-bust! If you think I'm standing for it much longer, you're crazy as a bedbug.

JOE. I'd get another job if I could. There's no work—you know it.

EDNA. I only know we're at the bottom of the ocean.

JOE. What can I do?

EDNA. Who's the man in the family, you or me?

JOE. That's no answer. Get down to brass tacks. Christ, gimme a break, too! A coffee cake and java all day. I'm hungry, too, Babe. I'd work my fingers to the bone if—

EDNA. I'll open a can of salmon.

JOE. Not now. Tell me what to do!

EDNA. I'm not God!

JOE. Jeez, I wish I was a kid again and didn't have to think about the next minute.

EDNA. But you're not a kid and you do have to think about the next minute. You got two blonde kids sleeping in the next room. They need food and clothes. I'm not mentioning anything else.—But we're stalled like a flivver in the snow. For five years I laid awake at night listening to my heart pound. For God's sake, do something, Joe, get wise. Maybe get your buddies together, maybe go on strike for better money. Poppa did it during the war and they won out. I'm turning into a sour old nag.

JOE (*defending himself*). Strikes don't work!

EDNA. Who told you?

JOE. Besides that means not a nickel a week while we're out. Then when it's over they don't take you back.

EDNA. Suppose they don't! What's to lose?

JOE. Well, we're averaging six-seven dollars a week now.

EDNA. That just pays for the rent.

JOE. That is something, Edna.

EDNA. It isn't. They'll push you down to three and four a week before you know it. Then you'll say, "That's somethin'," too!

JOE. There's too many cabs on the street, that's the whole damn trouble.

EDNA. Let the company worry about that, you big fool! If their cabs didn't make a profit, they'd take them off the streets. Or maybe you think they're in business just to pay Joe Mitchell's rent!

JOE. You don't know a-b-c, Edna.

EDNA. I know this—your boss is making suckers outa you boys every minute. Yes, and suckers out of all the wives and the poor innocent kids who'll grow up with crooked spines and sick bones. Sure, I see it in the papers, how good orange juice is for kids. But dammit, our kids get colds one on top of the other. They look like little ghosts. Betty never saw a grapefruit. I took her to the store last week and she pointed to a stack of grapefruits. "What's that!" she said. My God, Joe—the world is supposed to be for all of us.

JOE. You'll wake them up.

EDNA. I don't care, as long as I can maybe wake you up.

JOE. Don't insult me. One man can't make a strike.

EDNA. Who says one? You got hundreds in your rotten union!

JOE. The Union ain't rotten.

EDNA. No? Then what are they doing? Collecting dues and patting your back?

JOE. They're making plans.

EDNA. What kind?

JOE. They don't tell us.

EDNA. It's too damn bad about you. They don't tell little Joey what's happening in his bitsie witsie union. What do you think it is—a ping pong game?

JOE. You know they're racketeers. The guys at the top would shoot you for a nickel.

EDNA. Why do you stand for that stuff?

JOE. Don't you wanna see me alive?

EDNA (*after a deep pause*). No . . . I don't think I do, Joe. Not if you can lift a finger to do something about it, and don't. No, I don't care.

JOE. Honey, you don't understand what—

EDNA. And any other hackie that won't fight . . . let them all be ground to hamburger!

JOE. It's one thing to—

EDNA. Take your hand away! Only they don't grind me to little pieces! I got different plans. (*Starts to take off her apron.*)

JOE. Where are you going?

EDNA. None of your business.

JOE. What's up your sleeve?

EDNA. My arm'd be up my sleeve, Darling, if I had a sleeve to wear. (*Puts neatly folded apron on back of chair.*)

JOE. Tell me!

EDNA. Tell you what?

JOE. Where are you going?

EDNA. Don't you remember my old boy friend?

JOE. Who?

EDNA. Bud Haas. He still has my picture in his watch. He earns a living.

JOE. What the hell are you talking about?

EDNA. I heard worse than I'm talking about.

JOE. Have you seen Bud since we got married?

EDNA. Maybe.

JOE. If I thought . . . (*He stands looking at her.*)

EDNA. See much? Listen, boy friend, if you think I won't do this it just means you can't see straight.

JOE. Stop talking bull!

EDNA. This isn't five years ago, Joe.

JOE. You mean you'd leave me and the kids?

EDNA. I'd leave you like a shot!

JOE. No . . .

EDNA. Yes! (*JOE turns away, sitting in a chair with his back to her. Outside the lighted circle of the playing stage we hear the*

other seated members of the strike committee. "She will . . . she will . . . it happens that way," etc. This group should be used throughout for various comments, political, emotional, and as general chorus. *Whispering. . . The fat boss now blows a heavy cloud of smoke into the scene.*)

JOE (*finally*). Well, I guess I ain't got a leg to stand on.

EDNA. No?

JOE (*suddenly mad*). No, you lousy tart, no! Get the hell out of here. Go pick up that bull-thrower on the corner and stop at some cushy hotel downtown. He's probably been coming here every morning and laying you while I hacked my guts out!

EDNA. You're crawling like a worm!

JOE. You'll be crawling in a minute.

EDNA. You don't scare me that much! (*indicates a half inch on her finger*).

JOE. This is what I slaved for!

EDNA. Tell it to your boss!

JOE. He don't give a damn for you or me!

EDNA. That's what I say.

JOE. Don't change the subject!

EDNA. This is the subject, the EXACT SUBJECT! Your boss makes this subject. I never saw him in my life, but he's putting ideas in my head a mile a minute. He's giving your kids that fancy disease called the rickets. He's making a jelly-fish outa you and putting wrinkles in my face. This is the subject every inch of the way! He's throwing me into Bud Haas' lap. When in hell will you get wise—

JOE. I'm not so dumb as you think! But you are talking like a Red.

EDNA. I don't know what that means. But when a man knocks you down you get up and kiss his fist! You gutless piece of boloney.

JOE. One man can't—

EDNA (*with great joy*). I don't say one man! I say a hundred, a thousand, a whole million, I say. But start in your own union. Get those hack boys together! Sweep out those racketeers like a pile of dirt! Stand up like men and fight for the crying kids and wives. Goddammit! I'm tired of slavery and sleepless nights.

JOE (*with her*). Sure, sure! . . .

EDNA. Yes. Get brass toes on your shoes and know where to kick!

JOE (*suddenly jumping up and kissing his wife full on the mouth*). Listen, Edna. I'm going down to 174th Street to look up Lefty Costello. Lefty was saying the other day . . . (*he suddenly stops*) How about this Haas guy?

EDNA. Get out of here!

JOE. I'll be back! (*Runs out. For a moment EDNA stands triumphant. There is a blackout and when the regular lights come up, JOE MITCHELL is concluding what he has been saying:*)

JOE. You guys know this stuff better than me. We gotta walk out! (*Abruptly he turns and goes back to his seat.*)

BLACKOUT.

(THE YOUNG HACK AND HIS GIRL. *Opens with girl and brother. FLORENCE waiting for SID to take her to a dance.*)

FLOR. I gotta right to have something out of life. I don't smoke, I don't drink. So if Sid wants to take me to a dance, I'll go. Maybe if you was in love you wouldn't talk so hard.

IRV. I'm saying it for your good.

FLOR. Don't be so good to me.

IRV. Mom's sick in bed and you'll be worryin' her to the grave. She don't want that boy hanging around the house and she don't want you meeting him in Crotona Park.

FLOR. I'll meet him anytime I like!

IRV. If you do, yours truly'll take care of it in his own way. With just one hand, too!

FLOR. Why are you all so set against him?

IRV. Mom told you ten times—it ain't him. It's that he ain't got nothing. Sure, we know he's serious, that he's stuck on you. But that don't cut no ice.

FLOR. Taxi drivers used to make good money.

IRV. Today they're makin' five and six dollars a week. Maybe you wanta raise a family on that. Then you'll be back here living with us again and I'll be supporting two families in one. Well... over my dead body.

FLOR. Irv, I don't care—I love him!

IRV. You're a little kid with half-baked ideas!

FLOR. I stand there behind the counter the whole day. I think about him—

IRV. If you thought more about Mom it would be better.

FLOR. Don't I take care of her every night when I come home? Don't I cook supper and iron your shirts and... you give me a pain in the neck, too. Don't try to shut me up! I bring a few dollars in the house, too. Don't you see I want something else out of life. Sure, I want romance, love, babies. I want everything in life I can get.

IRV. You take care of mom and watch your step!

FLOR. And if I don't?

IRV. Yours truly'll watch it for you!

FLOR. You can talk that way to a girl. . . .

IRV. I'll talk that way to your boy friend, too, and it won't be with words! Florrie, if you had a pair of eyes you'd see it's for your own good we're talking. This ain't no time to get married. Maybe later—

FLOR. "Maybe later" never comes for me, though. Why don't we send Mom to a hospital? She can die in peace there instead of looking at the clock on the mantelpiece all day.

IRV. That needs money. Which we don't have!

FLOR. Money, Money, Money!

IRV. Don't change the subject.

FLOR. This is the subject!

IRV. You gonna stop seeing him? (*She turns away*) Jesus, kiddie, I remember when you were a baby with curls down your back. Now I gotta stand here yellin' at you like this.

FLOR. I'll talk to him, Irv.

IRV. When?

FLOR. I asked him to come here tonight. We'll talk it over.

IRV. Don't get soft with him. Nowadays is no time to be soft. You gotta be hard as a rock or go under.

FLOR. I found that out. There's the bell. Take the egg off the stove I boiled for Mom. Leave us alone, Irv. (*SID comes in—the two men look at each other for a second. IRV exits.*)

SID. Hello, Florrie.

FLOR. Hello, Honey. You're looking tired.

SID. Naw, I just need a shave.

FLOR. Well, draw your chair up to the fire and I'll ring for brandy and soda . . . like in the movies.

SID. If this was the movies I'd bring you a big bunch of roses.

FLOR. How big?

SID. Fifty or sixty dozen—the kind with long stems—big as that . . .

FLOR. You dope . . .

SID. Your Paris gown is beautiful.

FLOR (*acting grandly*). Yes, Percy, velvet panels are coming back again. Madame La Farge told me today that Queen Marie herself designed it.

SID. Gee . . . . !

FLOR. Every princess in the Balkans is wearing one like this. (*Poses grandly.*)

SID. Hold it. (*Does a nose camera—thumbing nose and imitating grinding of camera with other hand. Suddenly she falls out of the posture and swiftly goes to him, to embrace him, to kiss him with love. Finally:)*



SID. You look tired, Florrie.

FLOR. Naw, I just need a shave. (*She laughs tremulously.*)

SID. You worried about your mother?

FLOR. No.

SID. What's on your mind?

FLOR. The French and Indian War.

SID. What's on your mind?

FLOR. I got us on my mind, Sid. Night and day, Sid!

SID. I smacked a beer truck, today. Did I get hell! I was driving along thinking of US, too. You don't have to say it—I know what's on your mind. I'm rat poison around here.

FLOR. Not to me . . .

SID. I know to who . . . and I know why. I don't blame them. We're engaged now for three years . . .

FLOR. That's a long time . . .

SID. My brother Sam joined the Navy this morning—get a break that way. They'll send him down to Cuba with the hootchy-kootchy girls. He don't know from nothing, that dumb basket ball player!

FLOR. Don't you do that.

SID. Don't you worry, I'm not the kind who runs away. But I'm so tired of being a dog, Baby, I could choke. I don't even have to ask what's going on in your mind. I know from the word go, 'cause I'm thinking the same things, too.

FLOR. It's yes or no—nothing in between.

SID. The answer is no—a big electric sign looking down on Broadway!

FLOR. We wanted to have kids . . .

SID. But that sort of life ain't for the dogs which is us. Christ, Baby! I get like thunder in my chest when we're together. If we went off together I could maybe look the world straight in the face, spit in its eye like a man should do. Goddamit, it's trying to be a man on the earth.

FLOR. But something wants us to be lonely like that—crawling alone in the dark. Or they want us trapped.

SID. Sure, the big shot money men want us like that—

FLOR. Highly insulting us—

SID. Keeping us in the dark about what is wrong with us in the money sense. They got the power an' mean to be damn sure they keep it. They know if they give in just an inch, all the dogs like us will be down on them together—an ocean knocking them to hell and back and each singing cuckoo with stars coming from their nose and ears. I'm not raving, Florrie—

FLOR. I know you're not, I know.

SID. I don't have the words to tell you what I feel. I never finished school. . . .

FLOR. I know. . . .

SID. But it's relative, like the professors say. We worked like hell to send him to college—my kid brother Sam, I mean—and look what he done—joined the navy! The damn fool don't see the cards is stacked for all of us. The money man dealing himself a hot royal flush. Then giving you and me a phony hand like a pair of tens or something. Then keep on losing the pots 'cause the cards is stacked against you. Then he says, what's the matter you can't win—no stuff on the ball, he says to you. And kids like my brother believe it 'cause they don't know better. For all their education, they don't know from nothing.

But wait a minute! Don't he come around and say to you—this millionaire with a jazz band—listen Sam or Sid or what's-your-name, you're no good, but here's a chance. The whole world'll know who you are. Yes sir, he says, get up on that ship and fight those bastards who's making the world a lousy place to live in. The Japs, the Turks, the Greeks. Take this gun—kill the slobs like a real hero, he says, a real American. Be a hero!

And the guy you're poking at? A real louse, just like you, 'cause they don't let him catch more than a pair of tens, too. On that foreign soil he's a guy like me and Sam, a guy who wants his baby like you and hot sun on his face! They'll teach Sam to point the guns the wrong way, that dumb basket ball player!

FLOR. I got a lump in my throat, Honey.

SID. You and me—we never even had a room to sit in somewhere.

FLOR. The park was nice. . . .

SID. In winter? The hallways. . . . I'm glad we never got together. This way we don't know what we missed.

FLOR (*in a burst*). Sid, I'll go with you—we'll get a room somewhere.

SID. Naw. . . . they're right. If we can't climb higher than this together—we better stay apart.

FLOR. I swear to God I wouldn't care.

SID. You would, you would—in a year, two years, you'd curse the day. I seen it happen.

FLOR. Oh, Sid. . . .

SID. Sure, I know. We got the blues, Babe—the 1935 blues. I'm talkin' this way 'cause I love you. If I didn't, I wouldn't care. . . .

FLOR. We'll work together, we'll—

SID. How about the backwash? Your family needs your nine bucks. My family—

FLOR. I don't care for them!

SID. You're making it up, Florrie. Little Florrie Canary in a cage.

FLOR. Don't make fun of me.

SID. I'm not, Baby.

FLOR. Yes, you're laughing at me.

SID. I'm not.

*(They stand looking at each other, unable to speak. Finally, he turns to a small portable phonograph and plays a cheap dance tune. He makes a motion with his hand; she comes to him. They begin to dance slowly. They hold each other tightly, almost as though they would merge into each other. The music stops, but the scratching record continues to the end of the scene. They stop dancing. He finally unlooses her clutch and seats her on the couch, where she sits, tense and expectant.)*

SID. Hello, Babe.

FLOR. Hello. *(For a brief time they stand as though in a dream.)*

SID *(finally)*. Good-bye, Babe. *(He waits for an answer, but she is silent. They look at each other.)*

SID. Did you ever see my Pat Rooney imitation? *(He whistles Rosy O'Grady and soft shoes to it. Stops. He asks:)*

SID. Don't you like it?

FLOR *(finally)*. No. *(Buries her face in her hands. Suddenly he falls on his knees and buries his face in her lap.)*

BLACKOUT.

**(LABOR SPY EPISODE.)**

FATT. You don't know how we work for you. Shooting off your mouth won't help. Hell, don't you guys ever look at the records like me? Look in your own industry. See what happened when the hacks walked out in Philly three months ago! Where's Philly? A thousand miles away? An hour's ride on the train.

VOICE. Two hours!!

FATT. Two hours . . . what the hell's the difference. Let's hear from someone who's got the practical experience to back him up. Fellers, there's a man here who's seen the whole parade in Philly, walked out with his pals, got knocked down like the rest—and black-listed after they went back. That's why he's here. He's got a mighty interestin' word to say. *(announces)* TOM CLAYTON!

*(As CLAYTON starts up from the audience, FATT gives him a hand which is sparsely followed in the audience. CLAYTON comes forward.)* Fellers, this is a man with practical strike experience—Tom Clayton from little ole Philly.

CLAYTON (*a thin, modest individual*). Fellers, I don't mind your booing. If I thought it would help us hacks get better living conditions, I'd let you walk all over me, cut me up to little pieces. I'm one of you myself. But what I wanna say is that Harry Fatt's right. I only been working here in the big town five weeks, but I know conditions just like the rest of you. You know how it is—don't take long to feel the sore spots, no matter where you park.

CLEAR VOICE (*from audience*). Sit down!

CLAYTON. But Fatt's right. Our officers is right. The time ain't ripe. Like a fruit don't fall off the tree until it's ripe.

CLEAR VOICE. Sit down, you fruit!

FATT (*on his feet*). Take care of him, boys.

VOICE (*in audience, struggling*). No one takes care of me. (*Struggle in house and finally the owner of the voice runs up on stage, says to speaker:*) Clayton, where the hell did you pick up that name! Clayton! This rat's name is Clancy, from the old Clancys, way back! Fruit! I almost wet myself listening to that one!

FATT (*gunman with him*). This ain't a barn! What the hell do you think you're doing here!

VOICE. Exposing a rat!

FATT. You can't get away with this. Throw him the hell outa here.

VOICE (*preparing to stand his ground*). Try it yourself... When this bozo throws that slop around. You know who he is? That's a company spy—

FATT. Who the hell are you to make—

VOICE. I paid dues in this union for four years, that's who's me! I gotta right and this pussy-footed rat ain't coming in here with ideas like that. You know his record. Lemme say it out—

FATT. You'll prove all this or I'll bust you in every hack outfit in town!

VOICE. I gotta right. I gotta right. Looka *him*, he don't say boo!

CLAYTON. You're a liar and I never seen you before in my life!

VOICE. Boys, he spent two years in the coal fields breaking up any organization he touched. Fifty guys he put in jail. He's ranged up and down the east coast—shipping, textiles, steel—he's been in everything you can name. Right now—

CLAYTON. That's a lie!

VOICE. Right now he's working for that Bergman outfit on Columbus Circle who furnishes rats for any outfit in the country before, during, and after strikes.

(PHILIPS, *the man who is the hero of the next episode, goes down to his side with other committee men.*)

CLAYTON. He's trying to break up the meeting, fellers!

VOICE. We won't search you for credentials . . .

CLAYTON. I got nothing to hide. Your own secretary knows I'm straight—

VOICE. Sure. Boys, you know who this sonovabitch is?

CLAYTON. I never seen you before in my life!!

VOICE. Boys, I slept with him in the same bed sixteen years. HE'S MY OWN LOUSY BROTHER!

FATT (*after pause*). Is this true? (*No answer from CLAYTON.*)

VOICE (*to CLAYTON*). Scram, before I break your neck! (*CLAYTON scrams down center aisle. VOICE says, watching him:*) Remember his map—he can't change that—Clancy! (*Standing in his place says:*) Too bad you didn't know about this, Fatt! (*After a pause.*) The Clancy family tree is bearing nuts!

(*Standing isolated clear on the stage is the hero of the next episode.*)

BLACKOUT

(THE YOUNG ACTOR.)

(*A New York theatrical producer's office. Present are a stenographer and a young actor. She is busy typing; he, waiting with card in hand.*)

STEN. He's taking a hot bath . . . says you should wait.

PHILIPS (*the actor*). A bath did you say? Where?

STEN. See that door? Right through there—leads to his apartment.

PHIL. Through there?

STEN. Mister, he's laying there in a hot perfumed bath. Don't say I said it.

PHIL. You don't say!

STEN. An oriental den he's got. Can you just see this big Irishman burning Chinese punk in the bedroom? And a big old rose canopy over his casting couch . . .

PHIL. What's that—casting couch?

STEN. What's that? You from the sticks?

PHIL. I beg your pardon?

STEN. (*Rolls up her sleeves, makes elaborate deaf and dumb signs.*) No from side walkies of New Yorkie . . . savvy?

PHIL. Oh, you're right. Two years of dramatic stock out of town. One in Chicago.

STEN. Don't tell him, Baby Face. He wouldn't know a good

actor if he fell over him in the dark. Say you had two years with the Group, two with the Guild.

PHIL. I'd like to get with the Guild. They say—

STEN. He won't know the difference. Don't say I said it!

PHIL. I really did play with Watson Findlay in *Early Birds*.

STEN (*withering him*). Don't tell him.

PHIL. He's a big producer, Mr. Grady. I wish I had his money. Don't you?

STEN. Say, I got a clean heart, Mister. I love my fellow man! (*About to exit with typed letters.*) Stick around—Mr. Philips. You might be the type. If you were a woman—

PHIL. Please. Just a minute . . . please . . . I need the job.

STEN. Look at him!

PHIL. I mean . . . I don't know what buttons to push, and you do. What my father used to say—we had a gas station in Cleveland before the crash—"Know what buttons to push," Dad used to say, "And you'll go far."

STEN. You can't push me, Mister! I don't ring right these last few years!

PHIL. We don't know where the next meal's coming from. We—

STEN. Maybe . . . I'll lend you a dollar?

PHIL. Thanks very much; it won't help.

STEN. One of the old families of Virginia? Proud?

PHIL. Oh not that. You see, I have a wife. We'll have our first baby next month . . . so . . . a dollar isn't much help.

STEN. Roped in?

PHIL. I love my wife!

STEN. Okay, you love her! Excuse me! You married her. Can't support her. No . . . not blaming you. But you're fools, all you actors. Old and young! Watch you parade in an' out all day. You still got apples in your cheeks and pins for buttons. But in six months you'll be like them—putting on an act: Phoney strutting "pishers"—that's French for dead codfish! It's not their fault. Here you get like that or go under. What kind of job is this for an adult man!

PHIL. When you have to make a living—

STEN. I know, but—

PHIL. Nothing else to do. If I could get something else—

STEN. You'd take it!

PHIL. Anything!

STEN. Telling me! With two brothers in my hair! (MR. GRADY *now enters*; *played by FATT.*) Mr. Brown sent this young man over.

GRADY. Call the hospital: see how Boris is. (*She assents and exits.*)

PHIL. Good morning, Mr. Grady...

GRADY. The morning is lousy!

PHIL. Mr. Brown sent me... (*Hands over card.*)

GRADY. I heard that once already.

PHIL. Excuse me...

GRADY. What experience?

PHIL. Oh, yes...

GRADY. Where?

PHIL. Two years in stock, sir. A year with the Goodman Theatre in Chicago...

GRADY. That all?

PHIL (*abashed*). Why no... with the Theatre Guild... I was there...

GRADY. Never saw you in a Guild show!

PHIL. On the road, I mean... understudying Mr. Lunt...

GRADY. What part? (*PHILIPS cannot answer.*) You're a lousy liar, son.

PHIL. I did...

GRADY. You don't look like what I want. Can't understand that Brown. Need a big man to play a soldier. Not a lousy soldier left on Broadway! All in pictures, and we get the nances! (*Turns to work on desk.*)

PHIL (*immediately playing the soldier*). I was in the ROTC in college... Reserve Officers' Training Corps. We trained twice a week....

GRADY. Won't help.

PHIL. With real rifles. (*Waits*) Mr. Grady, I weigh a hundred and fifty-five!

GRADY. How many years back? Been eating regular since you left college?

PHIL (*very earnestly*). Mr. Grady, I could act this soldier part. I could build it up and act it. Make it up—

GRADY. Think I run a lousy acting school around here?

PHIL. Honest to God I could! I need the job—that's why I could do it! I'm strong. I know my business! YOU'll get an A-1 performance. Because I need this job! My wife's having a baby in a few weeks. We need the money. Give me a chance!

GRADY. What do I care if you can act it! I'm sorry about your baby. Use your head, son. Tank Town stock is different. Here we got investments to be protected. When I sink fifteen thousand in a show I don't take chances on some youngster. We cast to type!

PHIL. I'm an artist! I can—

GRADY. That's your headache. Nobody interested in artists here. Get a big bunch for a nickel on any corner. Two flops in a row on this lousy street nobody loves you—only God, and he don't count. We protect investments. We cast to type. Your face and height we want, not your soul, son. And Jesus Christ himself couldn't play a soldier in this show . . . with all his talent. (*Crosses himself in quick repentance for this remark.*)

PHIL. Anything . . . a bit, a walk-on?

GRADY. Sorry; small cast. (*Looking at papers on his desk.*) You try Russia, son. I hear it's hot stuff over there.

PHIL. Stage manager? Assistant?

GRADY. All filled, sonny. (*Stands up; crumples several papers from the desk.*) Better luck next time.

PHIL. Thanks . . .

GRADY. Drop in from time to time. (*Crosses and about to exit.*) You never know when something—(THE STENOGRAPHER *enters with papers to put on desk.*) What did the hospital say?

STEN. He's much better, Mr. Grady.

GRADY. Resting easy?

STEN. Dr. Martel said Boris is doing even better than he expected.

GRADY. A damn lousy operation!

STEN. Yes . . .

GRADY (*belching*). Tell the nigger boy to send up a bromo seltzer.

STEN. Yes, Mr. Grady. (*He exits.*) Boris wanted lady friends.

PHIL. What?

STEN. So they operated . . . poor dog!

PHIL. A dog?

STEN. His Russian Wolf Hound! They do the same to you, but you don't know it! (*Suddenly*) Want advice? In the next office, don't let them see you down in the mouth. They don't like it—makes them shiver.

PHIL. You treat me like a human being. Thanks . . .

STEN. You're human!

PHIL. I used to think so.

STEN. He wants a bromo for his hangover. (*Goes to door*) Want that dollar?

PHIL. It won't help much.

STEN. One dollar buys ten loaves of bread, Mister. Or one dollar buys nine loaves of bread and one copy of The Communist Manifesto. Learn while you eat. Read while you run. . . .

PHIL. Manifesto? What's that? (*Takes dollar*) What is that, what you said. . . . Manifesto?



STEN. Stop off on your way out—I'll give you a copy. From Genesis to Revelation, Comrade Philips! "And I saw a new earth and a new heaven; for the first earth and the first heaven were passed away; and there was no more sea."

PHIL. I don't understand that . . .

STEN. I'm saying the meek shall not inherit the earth!

PHIL. No?

STEN. The MILITANT! Come out in the light, Comrade.

BLACKOUT.

(INTERNE EPISODE.—DR. BARNES, *an elderly distinguished man, is speaking on the telephone. He wears a white coat.*)

DR. BARNES. No, I gave you my opinion twice. You out-voted me. You did this to Dr. Benjamin yourself. That is why you can tell him yourself. (*Hangs up phone, angrily. As he is about to pour himself a drink from a bottle on the table, a knock is heard.*)

BARNES. Who is it?

BENJAMIN (*without*). Can I see you a minute, please?

BARNES (*hiding the bottle*). Come in, Dr. Benjamin, come in.

BENJ. It's important—excuse me—they've got Leeds up there in my place—he's operating on Mrs. Lewis—the historectomy—it's my job. I washed up, prepared . . . they told me at the last minute. I don't mind being replaced, Doctor, but Leeds is a damn fool! He shouldn't be permitted—

BARNES (*dryly*). Leeds is the nephew of Senator Leeds.

BENJ. He's incompetent as hell!

BARNES (*obviously changing subject, picks up lab jar*). They're doing splendid work in brain surgery these days. This is a very fine specimen . . .

BENJ. I'm sorry. I thought you might be interested.

BARNES (*still examining jar*). Well, I am, young man, I am! Only remember it's a charity case!

BENJ. Of course. They wouldn't allow it for a second, otherwise.

BARNES. Her life is in danger?

BENJ. Of course! You know how serious the case is!

BARNES. Turn your gimlet eyes elsewhere, Doctor. Jiggling around like a cricket on a hot grill won't help. Doctors don't run these hospitals. He's the Senator's nephew and there he stays.

BENJ. It's too bad.

BARNES. I'm not calling you down either. (*Plopping down jar suddenly.*) Goddamit, do you think it's my fault?

BENJ. (*About to leave*) I know . . . I'm sorry.

BARNES. Just a minute. Sit down.

BENJ. Sorry, I can't sit.

BARNES. Stand then!

BENJ. (*Sits*) Understand, Dr. Barnes, I don't mind being replaced at the last minute this way, but . . . well, this flagrant bit of class distinction—because she's poor—

BARNES. Be careful of words like that—"class distinction." Don't belong here. Lots of energy, you brilliant young men, but idiots. Discretion! Ever hear that word?

BENJ. Too radical?

BARNES. Precisely. And some day like in Germany, it might cost you your head.

BENJ. Not to mention my job.

BARNES. So they told you?

BENJ. Told me what?

BARNES. They're closing Ward C next month. I don't have to tell you the hospital isn't self supporting. Until last year that board of trustees met deficits. . . . You can guess the rest. At a board meeting Tuesday, our fine feathered friends discovered they couldn't meet the last quarter's deficit—a neat little sum well over \$100,000. If the hospital is to continue at all, it's damn—

BENJ. Necessary to close another charity ward!

BARNES. So they say . . . (*A wait.*)

BENJ. But that's not all?

BARNES (*ashamed*). Have to cut down on staff too . . .

BENJ. That's too bad. Does it touch me?

BARNES. Afraid it does.

BENJ. But after all I'm top man here. I don't mean I'm better than others, but I've worked harder—

BARNES. And shown more promise . . .

BENJ. I always supposed they'd cut from the bottom first.

BARNES. Usually.

BENJ. But in this case?

BARNES. Complications.

BENJ. For instance? (BARNES *hesitant.*)

BARNES. I like you, Benjamin. It's one ripping shame—

BENJ. I'm no sensitive plant—what's the answer?

BARNES. An old disease, malignant, tumescent. We need an anti-toxin for it.

BENJ. I see.

BARNES. What?

BENJ. I met that disease before—at Harvard first.

BARNES. You have seniority here, Benjamin.

BENJ. But I'm a Jew! (BARNES *nods his head in agreement.*  
BENJ. *stands there a moment and blows his nose.*)

BARNES. (*Blows his nose.*) Microbes!

BENJ. Pressure from above?

BARNES. Don't think Kennedy and I didn't fight for you!

BENJ. Such discrimination, with all those wealthy brother Jews on the board?

BARNES. I've remarked before—doesn't seem to be much difference between wealthy Jews and rich Gentiles. Cut from the same piece!

BENJ. For myself I don't feel sorry. My parents gave up an awful lot to get me this far. They ran a little dry goods shop in the Bronx until their pitiful savings went in the crash last year. Poppa's peddling neckties. . . . Saul Ezra Benjamin—a man who's read Spinoza all his life.

BARNES. Doctors don't run medicine in this country. The men who know their jobs don't run anything here, except the motormen on trolley cars. I've seen medicine change—plenty—anaesthesia, sterilization—but not because of rich men—in *spite* of them! In a rich man's country your true self's buried deep. Microbes! Less . . . Vermin! See this ankle, this delicate sensitive hand? Four hundred years to breed that. Out of a revolutionary background! Spirit of '76! Ancestors froze at Valley Forge! What's it all mean! Slops! The honest workers were sold out then, in '76. The Constitution's for rich men then and now. Slops! (*The phone rings.*)

BARNES (*angrily*). Dr. Barnes. (*Listens a moment, looks at BENJAMIN.*) I see. (*Hangs up, turns slowly to the younger Doctor.*) They lost your patient.

BENJ. (*Stands solid with the shock of this news but finally hurls his operation gloves to the floor.*)

BARNES. That's right . . . that's right. Young, hot, go and do it! I'm very ancient, fossil, but life's ahead of you, Dr. Benjamin, and when you fire the first shot, say, "This one's for old Doc Barnes!" Too much dignity—bullets. Don't shoot vermin! Step on them! If I didn't have an invalid daughter—

BARNES. (*Goes back to his seat, blows his nose in silence.*) I have said my piece, Benjamin.

BENJ. Lots of things I wasn't certain of. Many things these radicals say . . . you don't believe theories until they happen to you.

BARNES. You lost a lot today, but you won a great point.

BENJ. Yes, to know I'm right? To really begin believing in something? I wanted to go to Russia. Last week I was thinking about it—the wonderful opportunity to do good work in their socialized medicine—

BARNES. Beautiful, beautiful!

BENJ. To be able to work—

BARNES. Why don't you go? I might be able—

BENJ. Nothing's nearer what I'd like to do!

BARNES. Do it!

BENJ. No! Our work's here—America! I'm scared. . . . What future's ahead, I don't know. Get some job to keep alive—maybe drive a cab—and study and work and learn my place—

BARNES. And step down hard!

BENJ. Fight! Maybe get killed, but goddam! We'll go ahead!  
(BENJAMIN *stands with clenched fist raised high.*)

BLACKOUT.

AGATE. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, and don't let anyone tell you we ain't got some ladies in this sea of upturned faces! Only they're wearin' pants. Well, maybe I don't know a thing; maybe I fell outa the cradle when I was a kid and ain't been right since—you can't tell!

VOICE. Sit down, cockeye!

AGATE. Who's paying you for those remarks, Buddy?—Moscow Gold? Maybe I got a *glass eye*, but it comes from working in a factory at the age of eleven. They hooked it out because they didn't have a shield on the works. But I wear it like a medal 'cause it tells the world where I belong—deep down in the working class! We had delegates in the union there—all kinds of secretaries and treasurers. . . . walkin' delegates, but not with blisters on their feet! Oh no! On their fat little ass from sitting on cushions and raking in mazuma (*Secretary and Gunman remonstrate in words and actions here.*) Sit down boys. I'm just sayin' that about unions in general. I know it ain't true here! Why no, our officers is all aces. Why, I seen our own secretary Fatt walk outa his way not to step on a cockroach. No boys, don't think—

FATT (*breaking in*). You're out of order!

AGATE (*to audience*). Am I outa order?

ALL. No, no. Speak. Go on, etc.

AGATE. Yes, our officers is all aces. But I'm a member here—and no experience in Philly either! Today I couldn't wear my union button. The damndest thing happened. When I take the old coat off the wall, I see she's smoking. I'm a sonovagun if the old union button isn't on fire! Yep, the old celluloid was makin' the most god-awful stink: the landlady come up and give me hell! You know what happened?—that old union button just blushed itself to death! Ashamed! Can you beat it?

FATT. Sit down Keller! Nobody's interested!

AGATE. Yes they are!

GUNMAN. Sit down like he tells you!

AGATE (*continuing to audience*). And when I finish— (*His speech is broken by FATT and GUNMAN who physically handle him. He breaks away and gets to other side of stage. The two are about to make for him when some of the committee men come forward and get in between the struggling parties. AGATE'S shirt has been torn.*)

AGATE (*to audience*). What's the answer, boys? The answer is, if we're reds because we wanna strike, then we take over their salute too! Know how they do it? (*Makes Communist salute*) What is it? An uppercut! The good old uppercut to the chin! Hell, some of us boys ain't even got a shirt to our backs. What's the boss class tryin' to do—make a nudist colony outa us? (*The audience laughs and suddenly AGATE comes to the middle of the stage so that the other cabmen back him up in a strong clump.*)

AGATE. Don't laugh! Nothing's funny! This is your life and mine! It's skull and bones every incha the road! Christ, we're dyin' by inches! For what? For the debutant-ees to have their sweet comin' out parties in the Ritz! Poppa's got a daughter she's got her picture in the papers. Christ, they make 'em with our blood. Joe said it. Slow death or fight. It's war!

(*Throughout this whole speech AGATE is backed up by the other six workers, so that from their activity it is plain that the whole group of them are saying these things. Several of them may take alternate lines out of this long last speech.*)

You Edna, God love your mouth! Sid and Florrie, the other boys, old Doc Barnes—fight with us for right! It's war! Working class, unite and fight! Tear down the slaughter house of our old lives! Let freedom really ring!

These slick slobs stand here telling us about bogeymen. That's a new one for the kids—the reds is bogeymen! But the man who got me food in 1932, he called me Comrade! The one who picked me up where I bled—he called me Comrade too! What are we waiting for . . . Don't wait for Lefty! He might never come. Every minute—

(*This is broken into by a man who has dashed up the center aisle from the back of the house. He runs up on stage, says:*)

MAN. Boys, they just found Lefty!

OTHERS. What? What? What?

SOME. Shhh. . . Shhhh . . .

MAN. They found Lefty . . .

AGATE. Where?

MAN. Behind the car barns with a bullet in his head!

AGATE (*crying*). Hear it, boys, hear it? Hell, listen to me! Coast to coast! HELLO AMERICA! HELLO. WE'RE STORM-BIRDS OF THE WORKING-CLASS. WORKERS OF THE

WORLD...OUR BONES AND BLOOD! And when we die they'll know what we did to make a new world! Christ, cut us up to little pieces. We'll die for what is right, put fruit trees where our ashes are! (*To audience.*) Well, what's the answer?

ALL. STRIKE!

AGATE. LOUDER!

ALL. STRIKE!

AGATE and OTHERS on Stage, AGAIN!

ALL. STRIKE, STRIKE, STRIKE!!!

## STEVEDORE\*

PAUL PETERS AND GEORGE SKLAR

*(During a back-alley quarrel with her lover, Florrie Reynolds, a young married woman in New Orleans, is beaten up. To her husband and the neighbors who come rushing out at the sound of her screams, she cries: "It was a nigger." New Orleans now has a brand new "rape case" and the hunt is on. Lonnie Thompson is among the Negro stevedores on the wharves who are arrested, quizzed, and badgered by the police. He is released, but his resentment at the treatment he has received leads him to organize a delegation to the superintendent of the wharves, in protest against being cheated on hours of pay. Though compelled to grant the additional money, Walcott, the superintendent, is enraged by Lonnie's quiet insistence upon his rights, raps the Negro in the face and flies into a rage about "bad niggers" who "don't know their place." At the end of the scene which precedes the following he is calling the police to ask why they can't get the "nigger" who "raped" the Reynolds woman.)*

*(In the dark an auto horn, then the voice of the police car radio: "Calling all cars above Jackson Avenue. Calling all cars above Jackson Avenue. Renew search for Reynolds case assailant. Pick up all suspicious Negroes. Renew search for Reynolds case assailant. Pick up all suspicious Negroes. Renew search for Reynolds case—" Ship whistles and wharf sounds. Then a Negro voice singing wearily.*

*Lights go up on the wharf at noon. Brilliant sunlight in the background. The dock is piled with bales, sacks, and boxes. The Negroes are lying around or sitting against bales, eating lunch.)*

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ANGRUM (*singing wearily*).

Mammy brought me coffee  
 Mammy brought me tea  
 Mammy brought me everything, babe,  
 But the jail house key.

Oh, turn me over easy,  
 Turn me over slow,  
 Turn me over easy, babe,  
 Cause de bullets hurts me so.

RAG WILLIAMS. (*On the words: "jail house key"*) M—m. Dem boys sho' need dat jail house key! (*A pause. ANGRUM sings quietly ahead.*)

JOE CRUMP. I bet dat jail just chuck full.

JIM VEAL. You know dat li'l Crawford boy dat work in de barber shop on de corner? Dey run him in too.

RAG WILLIAMS. Dat li'l skinny boy! Lawd, he couldn't rape nothing.

BLACKSNAKE. What difference dat make? He got black skin, ain't he?

BOBO. Man, dem cops come down my street and pick up everybody in sight. They pick 'em off de corner, pull 'em out de pool rooms, pull 'em out de barber shops even. Dey nearly bust in de do' at Jerry's. Good thing I was upstairs with Phyllis.

RAG WILLIAMS. What you doing upstairs wid dat Phyllis?

BOBO. What de hell you think I doing upstairs wid Phyllis?

JOE CRUMP. Why dey have to go and start dat rape stuff up again? Reynolds case, Reynolds case! dat's all dey got in dat paper today.

BLACKSNAKE. Reading dem papers about de black man, de black man doing all de wrong, dat make my blood boil.

ANGRUM. M-m. Trouble coming. (*He improvises a tune.*) Just a great big black cloud of trouble.

JOE CRUMP. You see dat Mitch's gang hanging around front de viaduct dis mawning? Boy, I don't like dat.

ANGRUM. Dem babies is tough.

RAG WILLIAMS. Mitch! Who's afraid of dat Mitch? He just a big hunk of horse rump, dat's all. Boy, I show you what I do to him. Come on, put up yo' mitts, boy. (*He begins to shadow box, then flails out with his fist.*) Wham! Wham! Look out fo' dat jaw. Boy, I show him.

## NEGROES ON WHARF.

Right on de button.

Give 'em dat uppercut, Rag. Give him dat right.

Slug him, Rag. Slug him.

You ruin him, boy.

RAG. (*Lifting his hands in a boxer's acknowledgment, then wiping his hands, pointing to an imaginary victim on the floor*) Take him away. Take him away.

ANGRUM. Bet he couldn't hit no mouse.

BOBO. Boy, dat Mitch come after you, you run so fast you break de train record from here to Yazoo County.

BLACKSNAKE. Dat red-headed bastard. I gwine lay him out cold one of dese days. I see him down in Walcott's office dis mawning. He strut too much.

JIM VEAL. Dat Lonnie sho' pick de right time to start all dis fuss about a union. Gwine call a meeting in de Elks' Hall wid dat Lem Morris speaking.

BOBO VALENTINE. Ain't satisfied getting a bust on de nose from Mr. Oceanic Stevedore Company. He want to start a war or something.

JIM VEAL. And dat fool Sam Oxley gotta trot right along up to Union Hall wid him.

BOBO. Get yo' four bits ready, boys. Dey gwine sell you dem union cards.

BLACKSNAKE. What's wrong about dat?

JIM VEAL. I suppose you gwine join right up, ain't you now?

JOE CRUMP. De boys on de Munson dock, dey joined up.

RAG WILLIAMS. Coffee dock, too.

JIM VEAL. Anybody who join dat union just plain crazy. Who ever heard of black and white getting together in a union, anyhow? What you all listen to dat gabby fool fo'?

JOE CRUMP. What Lonnie say make sense.

JIM VEAL. Craziest sense I ever heard.

RAG WILLIAMS. Lonnie say we stick together, we get some-whar.

JIM VEAL. Yeh: you get yo' head right in a rope.

JOE CRUMP. We got dem two hours back, didn't we?

RAG WILLIAMS. Lonnie say we get better pay, we join a union.

JOE CRUMP. We won't have to work all night, either.

RAG WILLIAMS. Lonnie say—

JIM VEAL. Lonnie say! Lonnie say! What am dat nigger, anyhow? De fo' gospel and de 'pocalypse.



BOBO VALENTINE (*getting up, prancing, clapping his hands*).

Lonnie say de moon am brown,  
Lonnie say de square am roun',  
Lonnie say just stick around.  
And hear what Lonnie say.

(NEGROES *laugh*.)

BLACKSNAKE. Well, he got one thing you ain't got, Jim Veal, and dat's guts. He stand right up and talk back to Walcott. You never catch him licking de boss' shoes, like some white folks' niggers I know.

JIM VEAL. (*Going over to BLACKSNAKE belligerently*) Who you talking about, Blacksnake Johnson?

BLACKSNAKE (*calm*). What you getting so het up fo', Jim Veal?

JIM VEAL. Now look-a-here. I ain't letting nobody—

BLACKSNAKE (*pulling himself up slowly*). You ain't letting nobody what? (*Quietly, almost friendly*) Sit down, black boy. Sit down befo' I set you down hard. (*He pushes JIM VEAL down on a sack*.)

JIM VEAL. Guess I'm de captain of dis gang.

BLACKSNAKE. Dat's all right. I ain't gwine take it away from you. (*The NEGROES who have moved up in a circle, ALL laugh*.)

ANGRUM. M-m, dat boy talk right back to him, don't he?

RAG WILLIAMS. Dat Jim Veal! He just a fighting fool!

JIM VEAL (*turning on RAG*). Shut yo' face, you! (*The NEGROES all laugh*.) Shut up. (*He goes toward them; they scatter in mock fear, laughing and shouting*.)

NEGROES. Watch out!

He going to eat you up alive.

He's a wild man.

RAG WILLIAMS (*clapping his hands and chanting*).

Jim Veal, he a fighting man,

Do his fighting on his can.

(*They all roar with laughter*.)

BOBO VALENTINE. Dar Sam Oxley coming. Look at dat man run, will you?

ANGRUM. Something wrong.

BLACKSNAKE. What's de matter, Sam?

RAG WILLIAMS. Whar's Lonnie?

JIM VEAL. Ain't you brought Black Jesus wid you?

SAM OXLEY. I don't know whar Lonnie. Dey chase us.

NEGROES. Chase you!

Who chase you?

SAM. (*They all gather about him*) Dat Mitch's gang. We come out de union hall and all of a sudden dey jumps out yelling "Get dem niggers." Dey throw stones at us and chase us down de street. Everybody run just like crazy.

BLACKSNAKE. You think dey catch Lonnie?

SAM. I don't know what happen to Lonnie.

RAG WILLIAMS. What do you suppose dey chase you fo'?

JOE CRUMP. Dat rape business—I know it gwine start trouble.

BLACKSNAKE. I bet Walcott got something to do with it. Dey was buzzin' around about something in dat office dis mawning.

JIM VEAL. Dat's just what you get fo' going up to dat union. Organizing! Black and white unite! I told you dat fool make trouble.

NEGROES. M-m. It sho' look bad.

What we done to 'em anyway?

Whyn't they let us alone?

I'd like to break dat Mitch's neck.

BOBO VALENTINE. Look, dar Lonnie. Dar Lonnie coming now.

RAG WILLIAMS. Christ alive! Looks like dey split his head open. (*LONNIE enters, bruised and cut. ALL flock about him.*)

NEGROES. What dey do to you, Lonnie?

Boy, look at dat po' man's head.

What dey hit you wid, Lonnie? (*LONNIE ignores them, searches the wharf, and picks up a crowbar.*)

SAM OXLEY. Whar you gwine, Lonnie? (*LONNIE, making no answer, moves off.*)

BLACKSNAKE (*seizing him*). Whar you gwine with dat crowbar?

LONNIE (*quietly*). I knows whar I gwine.

BLACKSNAKE. Put dat crowbar down, boy.

LONNIE. Leave me alone. (*BLACKSNAKE grapples with him.*) Take yo' hands off I tell you. (*BLACKSNAKE takes the crowbar away.*)

SAM OXLEY. Dey kill you, boy.

LONNIE. Let 'em kill me. It's high time somebody show 'em dar one black man ain't afraid.

JIM VEAL. You burned out, Lonnie. Go on home.

JOE CRUMP. How he gwine home wid dat Mitch's bunch laying fo' him across de viaduct?

LONNIE. Give me dat crowbar.

SAM. Pull yo'self together, Lonnie.

JIM VEAL. Go on home and sleep it off!

LONNIE (*lashing out at the NEGROES*). Look at 'em. Look at 'em standing dar. De white boss spit in deir faces. De white boss make slaves out of dem—cheat 'em—rob 'em—laugh at 'em. And dey just stands dar. "Beat me some mo', white boss. Sho', I like it. Beat me some mo'." Lawd, when de black man gwine stand up? When he gwine stand up proud like a man? (*A silence.*)

BLACKSNAKE. I gwine cross de viaduct wid Lonnie.

JOE CRUMP. I gwine too.

RAG WILLIAMS. Me too. Come on, Lonnie. Come on, men.

MEN. Let's all go.

Us'll show dat Mitch's gang.

Let's clean up de street wid dat white trash.

(*A few dissent.*)

Dey kill you, man.

Dat's suicide, sho's you bo'n.

LONNIE (*picking up the crowbar again, shouting*). Arm yo'self, men! Get yo' crowbars, men! (*A scramble for weapons: shovels, crowbars, club, canthooks.*)

MEN. Whar my axhandle?

Give me dat shovel, Big Boy!

I'se gwine use dis canthook.

Man, just look at dat club! (*whizzing it down*) U—umph!

RAG WILLIAMS (*shrieking at the top of his lungs*). Yip! Look out dar, you Mitch's gang. Rag Williams and de wharf hands coming! (*With a grunt he spears his canthook into the wharf; shrieking he leaps after it. The blood of the longshoremen is up. They raise their weapons, roaring.*)

NEGROES. De wharf hands coming! De wharf hands coming! (*They start forward. The wharf whistle blows, a sharp, insistent blast. They falter; there is a moment of indecision.*)

BOBO. Dar de whistle.

JIM VEAL. You boys better get back to work.

BLACKSNAKE. We don't care fo' dat whistle.

LONNIE. Come on, men; let's go.

NEGROES. Now wait a minute!

De hell wid work.

Dar ain't no use in dis.

Aw, shut up, man. Move on.

(*The whistle blows again. The men are now divided into two groups, those in the lead urging the others on.*)

JIM VEAL. You boys gwine get fired. You gwine lose yo' jobs.

BLACKSNAKE. De brave black man! Lawd, just look at dem niggers pushing to fight.

NEGROES (*in the lead*). De hell wid dat whistle.

Come on, you guys.  
 What you waiting fo'?  
 Don't let dat stop you.  
 Come on, come on!

(WALCOTT *enters with two men.*)

WALCOTT (*roaring*). What the hell's going on here? Why aren't you men at work? (*The men quiet down and stand indecisive.*)

BOBO VALENTINE. I's working, Mr. Walcott. (*He seizes a truck and rattles it over the wharf.*)

WALCOTT. Didn't you hear that whistle blow? Where's Jim Veal?

NEGROES. Hey, Jim Veal!

Whar Jim Veal?

Hyar he is, boss.

Hyar Jim Veal, cap'n.

(*They push JIM VEAL out.*)

WALCOTT. A hell of a gang captain you are. What's the trouble?

JIM VEAL. Ain't no trouble, boss.

WALCOTT. Damn you, Jim Veal. That whistle blew ten minutes ago. Come on, step on it, before I fire every god-damn one of you.

JIM VEAL (*shouting*). Get yo' trucks, you men! Come on, pull dem trucks. Shake it up.

MEN. Yassuh, cap'n.

Yassuh, boss.

Whar my truck?

Get yo' hands off. Dat my truck.

What you stepping all over me fo', man?

(*All in a chorus*) Let's get moving, let's get moving, let's get moving.

ANGRUM (*singing as the trucks start rolling*).

Dar ain't no rain to wet you,

Ain't no sun to burn you,

O push along, believer,

I wants to go home.

(WALCOTT *watches the men as they work. Then he rejoins the two men, and whispers to them for a moment.*)

WALCOTT (*to LONNIE*). Come here, Thompson.

LONNIE. Me?

WALCOTT. Yes, you. (*LONNIE goes over slowly.*) These men want to talk to you.

DETECTIVE. Your name Lonnie Thompson?

LONNIE. Yes.

DETECTIVE. Weren't you in the Poidras St. Police station about a week ago?

LONNIE. Yes.

DETECTIVE. In connection with the Reynolds case, wasn't it?

LONNIE. Yes.

DETECTIVE. Where'd you get that cut on your head?

LONNIE. I got hit wid a rock.

DETECTIVE. Who hit you?

LONNIE. Gang up de street.

DETECTIVE. What'd you do? Start a fight with them?

LONNIE. No.

DETECTIVE. You're always getting in a fight, ain't you?

WALCOTT. That boy's a trouble maker. He's a bad nigger.

DETECTIVE. I think I'd like to talk to you some more about that Reynolds case, Thompson.

LONNIE. I don't know nothing about dat Reynolds case.

DETECTIVE. Well, I think you better come along with us, anyhow.

LONNIE. What fo'?

DETECTIVE. You know what for.

LONNIE. What I done? I ain't done nothing.

SAM. He ain't done nothing, Cap'n.

DETECTIVE. Shut up. (*Takes hold of LONNIE'S arm.*)

LONNIE. Wait a minute. You can't arrest me dat way.

DETECTIVE. What do you want, nigger? A warrant?

BLACKSNAKE. Leave him go. He ain't done nothing.

DETECTIVE. Shut your trap, nigger, or I'll run you in, too. (*He seizes LONNIE by the arms.*) Come on! Grab hold of him, Joe. (*They both seize LONNIE and start to pull him off.*)

LONNIE (*breaking away*). You can't arrest me dis way!

DETECTIVE. Don't you pull any funny stuff on me, you black bastard!

LONNIE. Let go of me! Let go!

DETECTIVE (*pushing his head down*). Shut up, nigger! Shut up!

LONNIE (*shouting and struggling as they drag him off*). Let go of me! God-damn you, let go!

(*The MEN on the wharf surge forward as if to help LONNIE. They stop as they become aware of WALCOTT, who turns and looks at them. There is a tense silence. WALCOTT starts moving slowly across the wharf. As he approaches them, they return sullenly to work. The grinding of a winch is heard from the wharf apron. Then men are silently lifting sacks as the curtain falls.*)

## THEY SHALL NOT DIE\*

JOHN WEXLEY

(They Shall Not Die follows closely the facts of the internationally known Scottsboro case. Nine Negro boys have been dragged from a freight train in Alabama following a fight with some white boys. Among the white boys are two who prove to be girls in overalls. Bullied by the officials, frightened, desiring the notoriety, the girls accuse the nine Negro boys of rape. The Negroes are all to be tried for their lives.)

(The Negro death-cells in Pembroke Prison. . . .)

In the cells, from stage—left to right are: Cell one: PURCELL and ROBERTS. Cell two: ANDY and ROY WOOD. Cell three: MOORE and WALTERS. Cell four: WARNER and MORRIS. Cell five: HEYWOOD PARSONS. . . .)

WARNER. Whut was yuh makin' sech a noise last night fo', Moore?

MOORE (a deep resonant voice). I was havin' a dream. . . .

MORRIS (irritably). He's allus havin' dreams, that boy.

MOORE. I dreamed of . . .

MORRIS. Don't tell us. That boy skeers me to death with his bad dreams.

MOORE. I dreamed theah was some crows aflyin' over a corn-field. . . .

MORRIS. C—rows! Didn't I done tell yuh all? Crows an' buzzards.

WARNER. Shet up theah, Clarence. Let him talk.

MOORE. An' the co'n was nice an' high, maybe six foot high an' full of ears (someone laughs nervously) . . . an' the farmer come along an' he shot at these heah crows wid his double-barrelled gun . . . an' some of them crows fall down on the field, wounded but not all dead. . . .

MORRIS (irritably with just a note of hysteria). Quit it theah, boy! Why the hell don't yuh dream of some watermelon or somethin'?

MOORE. An' the farmer . . . he walked over to these heah wounded crows an' lo an' behold . . . the crows was not crows at all but they was little nigger-boys wid wings . . . li'l nigger-angels. . . .

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PURCELL (*yelling*). Hi... Hi! Stop that talk, Olen... stop it...!

(*A signal is heard and the GUARD rises and opens the door. The PRINCIPAL KEEPER, A COLORED PREACHER, MR. LOWERY, and a mulatto WILLIAM TREADWELL, enter.*)

PRINCIPAL KEEPER (*expansive*). This is wheah we keep the boys, Mr. Lowery. (*He addresses the white man.*) Not so bad, huh?

LOWERY. I think it's a damn fine Negro death house, suh.

PRINCIPAL KEEPER (*passes along the cells*). Hi, theah. Wake up, theah. (*Activity in the cells.*) Wake up. Some friends tuh see yuh all... (*He points out the visitors.*) This heah is the Preacher Jackson and heah is yo' friend Treadwell who was heah with you yesterday an' he's brought 'long with him Mist' Lowery, the Birmingham lawyer who's come to help yo' case if he kin fo' the A.S.U... What do yuh call it, William?

TREADWELL (*he is a college graduate and speaks with a slight affectation*). The A.S.P.C.P. The American Society for the Progress of Colored Persons.

PRINCIPAL KEEPER. Yeah. An' he's come tuh speak tuh yuh wid some papers fo' yuh to sign. Now listen tuh him an' keep yo' ears open 'cause he ain't goin' tuh say it twice.

TREADWELL (*clears his throat*). Well, as you've heard, boys, this gentleman here is one of the finest attorneys in the South, and our organization has managed to secure his able services together with those of Mr. Brady who defended you in Cookesville to try an appeal for you boys...

PRINCIPAL KEEPER. I don't reckon they kin understand yuh, William. These heah niggers are pretty young and dumb...

TREADWELL. Why, I'm sure they understand. (*Addressing the prisoners.*) Don't you, boys? (*No answer.*)

PRINCIPAL KEEPER (*to MOORE and WALTERS*). Do yuh understand what this man just said, 'bout an appeal?

WALTERS. No suh...

PRINCIPAL KEEPER. I'm tellin' yuh... 'tain't no use, Mist' Lowery.

TREADWELL (*quickly worried*). An appeal... is a chance for a new trial and we can only get that from the Supreme Court of this state. (*To PARSONS.*) Do you understand that?

PARSONS. Sho', I understand yuh. But how yuh goin' tuh git it?

TREADWELL. Well, you just leave that to Mr. Lowery. He's the attorney. But I would like to prepare you in case we don't get

it... do not become discouraged. We still have another resort and that is the Governor.

PARSONS. What he goin' tuh do?

TREADWELL. Well, he can do a great deal for you. He can have mercy on you and commute your sentences from death to life imprisonment.

MORRIS. He kin do that?

TREADWELL. Yes, that's in his power. But he won't do it unless he feels you deserve it. Unless he feels that you're innocent.

PARSONS. Well, if he feels we is innocent then why should we be gittin' life?

LOWERY (*stepping forward*). Now listen heah... you... don't ask too many questions. You heard the Keeper heah tell you as he was too busy to waste much time... so shet up an' listen. What we come fo' is tuh git yo' permission, yo' O.K. that the A.S.P.C.P. an' I an' Mr. Brady take yo' case to the Supreme Co't for an appeal. Now we got this heah paper... (*waves it*)... an' we want yuh all tuh put yo' names on it. That's all.

PARSONS. Kin I say somethin', please suh?

PRINCIPAL KEEPER. Go 'haid.

PARSONS. Well, this Mist' Brady was the lawyer fo' us in Cookesville an' he were no good at all. Fact is... we never knowed he was workin' fo' us 'til they tol' us... and that was *after* the trial. (*Sounds of corroboration from other cells.*)

TREADWELL (*trying to stop the voices*). Now, you listen to me, boys. We've helped many a colored person out of many a difficulty. And we've been fortunate enough to find that there are white gentlemen like Mr. Lowery and Mr. Brady who are willing to go to all sorts of trouble to help you...

PARSONS. But theah was a white man heah day 'fo yestidy from the No'th who asked tuh help us out. He said he was from the... He wrote it down on a piece of paper... Hi... you got it theah, Andy...

ANDY. Yeah... I got it... (*Pushes out between the bars, a small white piece of paper.*)

TREADWELL (*takes it and examines it*). The National Labor Defence. The N.L.D. (*Looks up at the PRINCIPAL KEEPER worried.*)

PARSONS. Yes... that's it. The N.L.D.

TREADWELL. Were they here again, sir?

PRINCIPAL KEEPER. Yes, theah was that young Yankee feller heah a coupla days ago...

TREADWELL (*concerned*). What did he say to them?

PRINCIPAL KEEPER (*annoyed*). Oh, I don't remember that.



But as I tol' yuh . . . we promised him another chance wid the boys today.

TREADWELL (*very concerned, to the prisoners*). What did he want with you boys?

ANDY. Well, he said as he was comin' back. Yassuh, he said as he was likely to be back heah today an' have papers fo' us tuh sign. Ain't that right, Roy?

ROY. Yes. Tha's right, Andy.

PARSONS. That sho' is. He said fo' us to give his N.L.D. man a chance to talk wid us befo' we sign anything at all. . . .

TREADWELL (*quickly*). Just a moment, boys. . . . We've brought with us the Reverend Mr. Wendall Jackson all the way from Chattanooga to console you and he will now say a few words for you. . . . (*Nods toward PREACHER.*)

PREACHER (*takes from pocket a prayer book and speaks to them. After a few words he begins unconsciously to chant rhythmically*). My chillun! I want tuh put the Lo'd in yuh. I want yuh tuh feel that the Lo'd Almighty is in us an' is in the great A.S.P.C.P. An' wherever the Lo'd is, don't yuh feah tuh tread. This N.L.D. is a contraption of the devil's an' Satan. He sent them tuh make trouble an' bring down hate an' prejudice on God's colored chillun. An' I want yuh tuh know that Mist' Brady who fo't fo' yuh up theah in Cookesville, helped yuh an' fo't fo' yuh 'cause we ministers come tuh him in Chattanooga an' made him see that the Lo'd would reward him with Heavenly love an' Christian spirit if he would help yo' po' nigger boys. An' he did! An' he labored fo' yuh up theah in Cookesville an' he didn't lose, my chillun. No! 'Cause if yuh all is 'lectrocuted an' dies yuh'll all go tuh Heaven sho' as yuh're born if yuh're sho' yuh ain't had a hand in this terrible crime. That's my lesson tuh yuh. An' Mist Lowery heah who has come tuh help yuh fo' a small amount, 'cause he feels the Lo'd in him too . . . he is gonna work hard fo' yuh like yo' own mudders an' fadders would. An' so I bless yuh and warn yuh tuh fergit that N.L.D. devil's bunch an' sign up with the blessed A.S.P.C.P. Oh Lo'd, looka down on these po' misguided nigra chillun an' lead 'em safe an' holy tuh yo' kin'ly light. Amen, Oh Lo'd. Amen. (*Two or three of the boys murmur reverently: Amen.*)

LOWERY. Now you heard what the preacher jest said. You got to sign this paper if you want us to help you.

WALTERS. Kin I ask yuh somethin', Mist' Treadwell?

TREADWELL (*kindly*). Yes indeed. . . .

WALTERS. Well, I'd jest love tuh see my mudder. Yuh know we ain't seen our folkses sence we ben 'rested.

PURCELL. That's right.

ROY. I'd like tuh, too. (*Other voices repeat the same wish.*)

ANDY. Cain't yuh do that, please suh?

LOWERY. No...no. The jedge wouldn't think of permittin' it. He wouldn't issue no order for sech goin's-on.

TREADWELL. And besides it might only increase the anger and feeling against you boys. Now we'll pass around this paper and you boys sign it as best as you can. Is that all right with you, sir?

PRINCIPAL KEEPER (*shrugs*). What do I care? Take the paper around, Ira. (*The GUARD takes the paper and pen from LOWERY and crosses to cell One. ROBERTS takes the paper and prepares to put his cross on it. PURCELL pokes him with his elbow and indistinct words are heard from the cell. The PRINCIPAL KEEPER crosses down, truculently.*) Whut's goin' on in heah? What fo' yuh nudgin' him, Ozie?

PURCELL. I weren't nudgin' him, please suh.

PRINCIPAL KEEPER. Was he nudgin' yuh, Willie?

ROBERTS. Well, I reckon it didn't feel like a tickle....

PRINCIPAL KEEPER. If yuh want tuh sign, go 'haid. If yuh don't it's all the same tuh me an' I don't keer. But hurry up.

ROBERTS. I'm signin' it, please suh. (*Does so and returns paper.*)

PRINCIPAL KEEPER. Whut 'bout you, Ozie?

PURCELL. I'm fixin' tuh wait 'til that other feller gits heah. I'd like tuh heah whut he has tuh say....

TREADWELL (*annoyed and impatient.*) Well, I'm warning you, boys. There isn't much time.

PARSONS. We kin wait. We wanna sleep on it awhile.

PRINCIPAL KEEPER (*to PARSONS*). You pull yo' mouth in, Nigger.... (*To MORRIS.*) Yuh wanna sign, now?

MORRIS. Yassuh. (*Does so.*)

PRINCIPAL KEEPER. What 'bout you, Gene?

WALTERS. I reckon I'm follerin' Clarence, please suh.... (*IRA hands in paper. He signs.*)

PRINCIPAL KEEPER. What 'bout you, Charlie?

WARNER. Well... I dunno, please suh....

TREADWELL. You may not realize it, boys, but you are behaving in an ungrateful way... remember your date of execution is only a short time off and we must work fast....

WARNER. I'm signin' please suh.... I'm signin'.... (*IRA gives him the paper.*)

MOORE. I'll put my cross on... Mist' Keeper.... (*GUARD gives MOORE paper to sign.*)

PRINCIPAL KEEPER. Who else? (*Signal at door.*) Open up, Ira.... (*He does so. Sound of voices. The WARDEN enters,*

followed by CHENEY, ROKOFF, and TRAVERS. PRINCIPAL KEEPER and GUARDS salute him.)

WARDEN (*sees LOWERY*). Why, how do, Mist' Lowery. . . . (*Grunts "hullo" to PREACHER and TREADWELL.*) Meet Attorney General Cheney, Mist' Lowery. (*They shake.*) Mist' Rokoff of the N.L.D. from New York City. . . . Mist' Lowry is one of our best attorneys in Birmingham.

ROKOFF (*shakes with LOWERY*). Pleased to meet you. . . .

TREADWELL. I beg your pardon, Warden Jeffries, but I. . . . I thought. . . .

WARDEN (*sharply*). What's the matter. . . ? (*TREADWELL, confused, looks appealingly to LOWERY.*)

LOWERY. Well, Warden, we were almost through heah with gettin' the boys' signatures and. . . .

ROKOFF (*firmly*). I was under the impression, Warden. . . . that I would have my opportunity to speak to the boys. . . .

WARDEN (*embarrassed*). Well, gentlemen. . . . this matter of attorneys is not in my jurisdiction, however I did promise Mist' Rokoff. . . .

TREADWELL. But this is certainly most unusual. . . .

WARDEN (*sternly to TREADWELL*). What's that you said. . . ? (*TREADWELL wags his head negatively. To ROKOFF.*) Well, Mist' Rokoff. I guess we got as good a death-house as any of yourn up No'th, huh?

ROKOFF (*looking around*). Pretty nice.

WARDEN (*proudly*). This jail ain't mo' than five yeahs old. Yuh was tuh the openin' weren't yuh, General?

CHENEY. Yes, I remember that opening very well.

WARDEN. You was Attorney General then. Too bad yuh lost the 'lection. . . .

CHENEY. Oh, I was getting sort of weary of it anyway, Warden. I like my peace of mind.

WARDEN (*chuckling*). Well. . . . you certainly picked a queer way of gittin' it with this nigger case now. . . .

CHENEY. Oh. . . . I like to see every human being, black or white, get a fair deal. This isn't my first colored case, you know.

ROKOFF. You see, Warden, General Cheney has generously consented to help us on this case since he has known some of the boys' parents for a number of years.

WARDEN. Sho'. Well, Mist' Rokoff, yuh don't have so many niggers up No'th I reckon. . . .

ROKOFF (*smiling amiably*). I don't think so. . . .

WARDEN (*shrewdly*). Don't yuh. . . . smell anythin' 'round heah?

ROKOFF (*sniffs*). No. I don't. Why?

WARDEN. I guess you got a Yankee nose. Don't yuh know theah is a natural smell 'bout niggers?

ROKOFF. There may be . . . but I don't smell anything.

WARDEN (*with a chuckle*). Sho' yuh don't. This prison has got one of the finest shower bath systems in the South. That chases away the smell.

ROKOFF (*with a twinkle in his eye*). But if it's a natural odor, Warden . . . how do you make it disappear?

WARDEN (*perplexed*). Ain't I jest told yuh we gives them baths to chase it away?

CHENEY (*tactfully*). Mist' Rokoff is not so familiar with our ways, Warden Jeffries. . . .

WARDEN (*offended*). I was jest tryin' tuh explain our institution to the gentleman. . . .

ROKOFF. Sure, I appreciate that, Warden. (*Smiles pleasantly*.) Well, can I speak to the prisoners now?

WARDEN. Sho'. Go right ahaid. (*Gestures towards the cells*.)

ROKOFF. Would you mind, you see, it's pretty hard to talk to them this way. Would you mind letting them out where I could at least see them?

WARDEN (*perplexed for the moment*). Yuh mean open up the doors an' carry 'em out heah?

ROKOFF. Yes, if they're going to be our clients we would at least like to see what they look like.

WARDEN. Well, I dunno. I ain't never done that yet with niggers. Whut do you think, General?

CHENEY. I think you could make an exception, Warden. It cain't do any harm.

WARDEN (*Slight pause*). All right. I'll do it. (*To the GUARD*.) Open up the doors, Ira. An' keep yo' hands on yo' guns. (*IRA begins to open up the doors*.) Listen, niggers . . . jest step outside of yo' cells 'bout two feet an' stay still in front of them an' don't move. (*The doors are opened and the Negroes step out slowly, almost afraid to do so. They remain standing stiffly in front of their respective cells*). Go 'haid, Mist' Rokoff, but please make it quick-like.

ROKOFF. I will, Warden. Thank you very much. You've been very kind. (*He crosses to one of the Negroes and shakes his hand*.) What's your name, boy? (*WARDEN and CHENEY exchange significant glances*.)

ANDY. Andy Wood, please suh.

ROKOFF. And is this your brother? (*Points to ROY*.)

CHENEY. Er . . . Mist' Rokoff. (*ROKOFF turns. CHENEY beckons to him and crosses half-way to meet him. He then whispers*

something to him and ROKOFF nods, smiling. ROKOFF turns to WARDEN.)

ROKOFF. Excuse me, Warden. I guess I'm not used to the ways down here.

WARDEN (*with a magnanimous gesture*). Oh, that's all right, Mist' Rokoff. It jest ain't done, thassall. (ROKOFF nods and returns to the prisoners. As he speaks he paces up and down the line of them, never more than three feet from them. He speaks rather conversationally.)

ROKOFF. Well, boys . . . my name is Joe Rokoff and I'm the chief attorney for the National Labor Defense, the N.L.D., the same thing that Mr. Travers spoke to you about. (*Turns to WARDEN.*) Do you mind if I smoke, Warden?

WARDEN. 'Course not. Go right ahaid. I'm about tuh smoke myself. (*Lights a cigar.*)

ROKOFF (*nods his thanks and takes a cigarette from a package and lights it. He observes WARNER looking at the package with an intense expression of desire*). Would you like to have these?

WARNER. Please suh . . .

ROKOFF. Here you are. (*Extends the package. WARNER timidly extends his hand.*) Go on, take 'em all. (*WARNER takes them and pushes them into his shirt-pocket quickly.*) Now, boys, you can choose to represent you anybody you like. That's your right and your privilege. But before you do that, let me tell you who we are, what we stand for and what we want to do for you. (*He notices some disturbance between WARNER and MORRIS.*) What is it, fellers? What's the trouble? Don't you understand me?

WARNER. Sho'. We understand yuh, suh . . . but this nigger heah done axes me for some of them cigarettes an' yuh gave 'em tuh me . . .

ROKOFF. Well, what of it? Give him some. He's your friend, isn't he? He likes to smoke, same as you . . .

(*WARNER quickly gives MORRIS a few cigarettes, ROKOFF continues. From now on there are no serious interruptions and the prisoners all listen very attentively and become absorbed. The speaker increases his tone and temper as he goes on until he quite loses himself and everyone on the stage including the WARDEN and CHENEY are quite absorbed by the power of his speech.*) Now, you boys are in a jam but there are a lot of other fellers, black and white, all over this country and they're in jams, too. And we're an organization that tries to get these fellers out and free. Now you just saw how this boy here . . . (*Points to WARNER*) . . . refused to give his buddy any of those cigarettes I gave him. You've got to understand right away that that's the wrong idea to have. Men

should stick together. Now, I'd like to show you what I mean and how we work. Just suppose there are two men on this side of me . . . (*He demonstrates with gestures his meaning*) fighting against a certain thing and they're being licked. And on this other side, are three men fighting against almost the same kind of thing and they're being beaten, too. But if these two fellers and these three fellers would get together . . . (*He holds up two fingers on one hand and three on the other*) . . . then there would be five . . . and nobody could lick 'em. That's what we work for. You see, up North and out West and here in the South there are white workers fighting for liberty and justice and a right to live happy. And down here in the South you black workers are fighting for the same thing. But you're all fighting apart. Now, if you will fight for the white workers in the North and the South and the East and West then they'd get together and fight for you black fellers down here. Now, you know as well as I do that it's going to be very hard for you boys to get a fair trial down here. I don't have to tell you that. I can't fool you with promises and fine words. You know you didn't get a fair trial in Cookesville.

PARSONS (*with feeling*). No, we didn't. . .

TREADWELL (*somewhat excited, unable to contain himself*). Listen to me, boys! I'm one of you and God-willing. I'd like to be darker than I am if that would help my people. And therefore I want to warn you against this dangerous N.L.D., this radical organization which only wants to use you boys as a cat's paw to pull their chestnuts out of the fire. You poor children are too young to know it but they are about the worst, insidious group of traitors to this country. . . . They not only want to spread rebellion and revolt through your case but they also want to destroy and ruin the great benevolent A.S.P.C.P.

WARDEN (*to LOWERY, in a low voice*). That high yaller ain't sech a bad talker.

PARSONS. Well, whut do yuh want tuh do fo' us?

TREADWELL. We have only one object. *One object*. And that is to get you boys a fair trial. We have no ideas of overthrowing the government as they have.

PARSONS. How . . . how yuh gonna git this fair trial?

TREADWELL (*annoyed*). We . . . we will not spare any effort to protect you from the death penalty. . . .

ANDY. Well . . . We don't want no lip-talk.

ROKOFF. And I'm not going to give you any lip-talk. I'm not going to say you're going to get that fair trial that these high-sounding organizations will try to get. And you know why you can't get it. You can't get it because the South wants you to burn. They want to teach you blacks a lesson, they want to frighten you blacks with

the burnt-up bodies of nine Negro boys. They want to make you shut up and keep quiet. They want to keep the nigger in his place . . . that's why. . . . And so . . . the only thing fair that you'll ever get will be a fair amount of electric juice to burn you alive on the chair in there. . . . (*Points to door leading to electrocution chamber.*)

LOWERY (*striding forward, angrily*). Now, don't you pay attention to this talk. You better be white man's niggers, or . . .

ROKOFF. I object to these interruptions, Warden Jeffries. . . .

WARDEN. Well. . . .

LOWERY (*simultaneously with WARDEN*). But Mr. Jeffries. . . .

ROKOFF. I'm an attorney, Warden, and I'd like to finish what I have to say! . . .

LOWERY (*interrupting*). I never heard sech kind o' talk to niggers. . . .

ROKOFF (*with some irony*). But I've heard of Southern courtesy. . . .

WARDEN. Well, make it quick-like, Mist' Rokoff. . . .

ROKOFF. I will. (*To the boys.*) Now you're thinking if things are as hard as I say they are, what can be done? What can the N.L.D. do? I'll tell you what we can do. First, we'll get the finest lawyers in this country to fight the courts at their own game . . . but more important than that, we'll go to the workers of America, to the workers of the world. We have proof that you're innocent of these rape charges. We'll show them this proof. Then we'll say to them: Black and white workers of the world! Workers of America! Down in the South nine innocent boys are being put to death because they have black skins. Are you going to stand for that? And they will answer with a shout that will ring around the whole world. . . . NO. We will not. Yes, we will force the South and those in the South who are trying to murder you . . . we will force them to free you. Yes, they will. They'll be afraid to keep you, afraid to kill you . . . they'll be afraid of fifteen million black workers who will stand shoulder to shoulder with fifty million white workers and who will roar. . . . Don't you touch those boys! Don't you dare touch those black children workers. . . . !

WARDEN (*shaking himself as if to rid himself of a trance or spell. Then shouting, red with fury*). Stop! Stop that. . . . ! (*Strides over to ROKOFF who stops as suddenly as if hit by a bullet. He shakes his fist under ROKOFF'S nose.*) Stop! Yuh, yuh cain't stir up no niggers in my jail, suh!

ROKOFF (*who has himself been under the spell of his own oratory. He tries to regain his natural diplomacy*). Why, excuse me,

Warden. You see . . . I just forgot myself. I'm not accustomed to the ways down here. . . .

WARDEN (*spluttering*). Well, sho'. But that ain't no way to talk tuh niggers. Yuh know that, Mist' Rokoff. . . . (*He cools off a bit.*)

ROKOFF. You see, I didn't realize . . . er. . . . But now . . . how about their parents?

WARDEN. Whut parents?

CHENEY (*following a glance from ROKOFF*). Well, I thought we told you, Warden . . . that we brought some of the boys' parents and kinfolk to see them. You know, they've not had a chance to do that sence they ben arrested.

WARDEN. Oh yes, yuh did tell me. I plumb forgot. . . . (*To ROKOFF jocularly.*) An' it was your own fault, Mr. Rokoff. . . . But I'm afraid you'll have tuh have an order fo' that.

CHENEY (*hands him a document*). We have that, Warden, from Judge Townsend over in Cookesville. (*WARDEN takes it and examines it quickly. Turns to one of the guards.*)

WARDEN. Go down stairs, Cyril, an' bring up them visitors heah. (*GUARD crosses to door.*) See that they ben well frisked, first. . . .

CYRIL. Yes suh. (*Exits.*)

WARDEN. Now, Ira . . . you git these niggers locked up. . . . (*IRA proceeds to do so.*) Git back in yo' cells, now. Hurry up. (*The Negroes re-enter their cells and IRA locks the doors on them.*)

ROKOFF. I'd like to say just a few more words to the boys, Warden. . . .

WARDEN. Well now . . . Mist' Rokoff. You don't want tuh talk the way yuh did. (*Signal outside.*) How 'bout after the visitors leave? (*ROKOFF nods. WARDEN to IRA.*) Open up, Ira. (*He does so. About ten Negro men and women enter, timidly. Most of them are elderly.*) Now folks . . . I'm willin' tuh give yuh two minutes tuh see yo' chillun but don't go too near tuh them. Ira, show these heah persons to the correct cells.

MRS. PARSONS. You don't have tuh show us, please suh. We know our own chillun good 'nuff. . . .

WARDEN. Okay. Go 'haid. (*The parents hurry to the proper cells like homing pigeons. They talk excitedly to their children.*) Now stan' back theah, folks. Don't go too close. Stan' back. (*The ATTORNEYS look on sympathetically. CHENEY chats with the WARDEN who holds his watch in hand.*) Tha's enough now. Time is up. All out now. . . . (*The parents begin to leave and as they do so, they call parting advice to their sons.*)



MRS. PARSONS. Good-bye, Heywood, an' God bless yuh. Don't give up yo' hope, an' keep a-lookin' at the Lo'd. . . .

MRS. WOOD. Don't worry, my chillun . . . we got the N.L.D. wid us . . .

MRS. PURCELL. Don't fo'git tuh pray, Ozie. . . .

MRS. WILLIAMS. Yes, pray . . . chile. Pray fo' yo' life an' fo' the blessed N.L.D.

WARDEN. Come 'long. Tha's enough now. All out. All out. (*Finally all the visitors are out and the guard closes the corridor door.*) Yuh wanted tuh say somethin', Mist' Rokoff . . . ?

ROKOFF. If you'll permit me, Warden. . . . (*Pleasantly.*)

WARDEN. Sho'. But careful-like, huh?

ROKOFF. Of course. Thank you. (*Takes paper from TRAVERS and approaches nearer to the cell-doors. Walks up and down in front of them so that all the boys can see and hear him.*) Now I want to ask you if you want to sign this paper which will make us your defense attorneys. Remember . . . I didn't bring your fathers and mothers these many hundreds of miles to see you because I wanted to buy you with that. No. If I wanted to do that I would have brought them in first. But I didn't do that. First I wanted you to hear and understand who and what we are. And even if you turn us down and choose this other organization we will still bring your folks to see their children. Now you do what you think is right. You say no to us, or yes. But whatever you say, we'll always be on your side and fight for you. Now your parents have signed this paper and they all want us to represent you. But it's up to you, anyway. If you say you don't want us . . . we'll step out. We'll be sorry but we'll step right out.

(*A pause. ROKOFF looks around. He is unable to see through the close mesh the faces of the Negro boys. Worried, anxious. What will they decide?*)

WARDEN (*stepping forward a bit*). Well niggers, yuh heard both sides now. What do yuh want to do? Who do yuh want tuh have tuh represent yuh?

MORRIS. Well suh. . . . We know yuh want tuh help us . . . but I figger we bet' stick tuh our own color . . . an' the Preachers. . . .

(*A pause. ROKOFF searches the inscrutable corridors. Worried, anxious, tense.*)

ANDY (*suddenly*). Kin we talk it all ovah, Mist' Warden, please suh?

WARDEN (*turns and hesitates, then . . .*) Huh? Well, I reckon so. Let 'em talk it ovah, Ira. But not so loud. . . .

LOWERY. Well, listen heah, Treadwell, I can't be comin' heah every time from Birmingham. . . .

TREADWELL. Why of course not . . . ! I hope you understand, boys, that Mr. Lowery's time is very valuable and my own time is quite taken up too . . . and I hope you will not make us regret the expense and trouble we have made ourselves to help you. . . .

ROKOFF. Don't worry, fellers . . . it's okay . . . take your time, talk it over . . . another day won't hurt. But I'll be waiting right here in town for your answer . . . and if you want us I'll come up here with the Commissioner of Deeds of this prison to witness your signatures so that nobody can say we forced you to sign. . . . So long and good-luck. (*He crosses to exit talking with CHENEY and TRAVERS. He exits, followed by LOWERY arguing with TREADWELL and the PREACHER. WARDEN exits last. The GUARD shuts the door and seats himself. There is a brief pause.*)

ANDY. Whut did yuh wanna go an' sign that fo', Clarence?

MORRIS. Well, I figger if a preacher tells me tuh sign then I bet' sign. It cain't be bad, Andy.

ANDY. Hmm. Well, I wouldn't trust 'em preachers too far. They lookin' out for themselves most the time. . . .

PURCELL. Sho'! Whut they got tuh lose? They got warm seats an' gettin' in money. . . .

ROBERTS. Yeah . . . but they do git along wid the white folk purty good, Ozie. That show they gits respect 'cose the Lo'd's in 'em.

PARSONS. Then whut fo' them preachers didn't come tuh see us onct up in Cookesville?

ROBERTS. That's so, Andy.

PURCELL. Sho'. They cain't help us. Preachers on'y niggers themselves.

MORRIS. An' whut 'bout this A.S.P. . . . this colored company? Whut 'bout that, Andy?

ANDY. Well, I dunno' 'bout dat. But I don't perticular keer fo' that high yaller . . . Mist' Treadwell. He's too slick fo' me. An' I cain't hardly understan' his talk. Huh! Maybe he ain't even a nigger.

PURCELL. Yeah, I didn't like dat 'bout him wishin' his skin was blacker. Did yuh done ketch dat?

PARSONS. We sho' did. An' if yuh keer whut I say, I'd ruther go wid dat Yankee lawyer from the N.L.D. I ain't so hot fo' havin' that Mist' Brady agin. Everybody in Chattanooga knows he was in the crazy house twict. Ain't that so, Andy?

ANDY. Sho'. Folk say he went crazy ev'ry week from too much co'n.

WARNER. Well, I'm fo' stickin' tuh our own color an' takin' up wid this high yaller's company. Yuh wid me, Willie?

ROBERTS. Yeah. . . . I'm wid yuh, Charlie. Stick tuh yo' own people. Them's good talk.

MORRIS. I'm wid yuh too. I liked that preacher. He talked fo' the Lo'd.

PARSONS. Who wid me?

ANDY. That No'th'n man sho' kin talk like hell an' if he kin talk thataway right in front o' dat Warden den he ain't no white-liver an' he kin save us. So I'm wid yuh, Heywood.

ROY. Me too. . . .

PARSONS. Whut 'bout you, Gene?

WALTERS. Well my mudder allus tought me tuh feah the Lo'd, Heywood.

MORRIS (*triumphant*). He wid us! An' you, Olen Moore! Who you wid?

MOORE: I'm on top o' de fence, chillun. Who git mo', them I goes wid.

PARSONS (*after a brief pause. In a low voice with suppressed feeling*). Listen tuh me, you niggers! When we asked that high-yaller if we could see our kin-folk, he said, we couldn't. But this man . . . from the No'th he didn't wait to be asked. No suh! He knowed we wanted tuh see our mudders an' fadders an' he didn't wait a bittie. He jest brought 'em 'long wid himself. An' listen tuh me, you niggers! Yuh all purty dumb. Maybe yuh don't understan' his talk. But it 'peared tuh me he was talkin' our own language an' I understood ev'ry word he say. An' he say a-plenty! He ain't no yaller-belly tuh sell us out. Lo'd A'mighty . . . when he talked I felt jest as strong as a bull. I felt I could bust open these heah bars. An' I'm a-tellin' yuh all dat I don't keer if Gawd or the debbil or the N.L.D. saves me, I wanna be saved. An' this heah man kin do dat. . . . Yes, right down heah in the South. So I say tuh yuh all . . . Sign up! Sign up, niggers, befo' he gits angry an' changes his min' wid us dumb bastards.

ANDY. Yeah. We sign. We sign wid the N.L.D. . . .

ROY. Me too. . . .

WARNER. Right. The N.L.D. Sign up, niggers. . . .

MORRIS. Count me too, Heywood. . . .

ALL (*together*). We sign. The N.L.D. Sign up. Right. Sho'. Sign, sign, sign. . . .

WARNER (*with fervor*). The Lo'd be wid us an' the N.L.D. Come on, Olen, sing us somethin' fo' the Lo'd tuh heah us. . . .

MORRIS. Sing dat Gabriel's trumpet, Olen. . . .

WARNER. Yeah . . . throw us down that trumpet, Gabriel. . . .

ANDY. Go on, Olen. It do my heavy heart good. . . .

MOORE (*sings*).

*Oh, han' me down, throw me down. . . .*  
*Han' me down a silver trumpet, Gabriel.*  
*Oh, han' me down, throw me down. . . .*  
*Anyway yuh git it down. . . .*  
*Han' me down a silver trumpet, Gabriel.*  
*If religion was a thing money could buy,*  
*Han' me down a silver trumpet, Gabriel. . . .*  
*Oh, the rich would live an' the po' would die. . . .*  
*Han' me down a silver trumpet, Gabriel.*

*So, han' me down, throw me down. . . .*  
*Han' me. . . .*

PARSONS (*his hands gripping the bars; with intense feelings*).  
 Dat's it! You heerd dat, niggers. If religion was a thing money could  
 buy. . . . (*Singing continues.*) . . . You heerd dat? . . . Well it do. It  
 do. . . . It do buy it. . . . (*Singing continues.*) . . . the po'r would  
 die. . . . (*Singing*) . . . NO. . . . No, niggers! We ain't gonna die. No.  
 No. . . . NO. . . . NO!

(*Singing continues. Curtain.*)

# LITERARY CRITICISM



## PREFACE

MARXIST CRITICISM is not new, even in America. Marxism actually involves methods of analysis and standards of judgment which are foreign to those of the bourgeois critics, but politically advanced writers have often synthesized various elements of bourgeois æsthetics with various elements of Marxian social analysis. Much of the criticism in the old *Masses* was of this sort, and even before the *Masses* was founded, writers in socialistic and liberal journals often revealed a considerable indebtedness to Marx.

In a more exact sense, however, Marxist criticism has developed in this country only since the founding of the Communist Party. During the twenties Joseph Freeman and Joshua Kunitz indicated, for the first time in America, what this type of criticism is. Kunitz's book, *Russian Literature and the Jew*, and his many articles on Soviet culture, admirably exemplify Marxist method. Freeman has applied the same method in analyses of the literatures of both the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. The introduction which he has written for this volume is an excellent example of the vigor, erudition, and power of analysis that have made him an important influence in the development of Marxist criticism in America. Kunitz's discussion of Max Eastman shows both his mastery of Marxism and his knowledge of Soviet literature, two qualities that were rare in the nineteen-twenties.

With Freeman and Kunitz there stood Michael Gold, poet and novelist rather than critic, but shrewd analyst of bourgeois weaknesses and merciless castigator of bourgeois hypocrisy. His review of Thornton Wilder (1930) startled and shocked the placid readers of the *New Republic* into sudden and distressing awareness of modes of thought and feeling altogether foreign to their complacent liberalism. Its personal vigor made it, at that historic moment, amazingly effective, but re-reading shows how sound, as well as vigorous, it is.

Gold's review and the controversy it aroused played a conspicuous part in the development of a goodly number of intellectuals who had just begun to be conscious of the unhappy state of American literature and the instability of American capitalism. This reminds us that some of the critics represented in this volume turned toward Marxism after they had already begun their critical careers. Other and younger critics, however, have developed from the first as Marxists.

The diversity of this selection deserves comment. Some of the pieces are formal critical essays; others are reviews. Several are pre-

dominantly expository; others are polemical. All are concerned in some measure with æsthetic principles.

The scope is also notable. Hicks' essay is a general survey of the realistic novel in America from the Civil War to the present. Smith discusses the impressionistic critics. Brooks deals with an outstanding figure in recent poetry; and Cowley disposes of a much-touted newcomer. Burgum analyzes three widely discussed young poets of England. Calmer occupies himself with the tradition of labor literature. The literary editorial by Phillips and Rahv deal with some of the immediate problems of revolutionary writing.

The majority of the selections were written within the past year. In the limited space allotted for criticism in this volume, it seemed wise to emphasize contemporary issues. Moreover, since Marxist criticism consciously responds to the changing social situation, essays from an earlier date would ordinarily demand such revision as to become virtually new pieces. This should be remembered in reading the various articles. A great deal of excellent proletarian fiction, for example, has appeared since Hicks wrote his essay, more than two years ago, and the emphasis in the closing paragraphs would necessarily be changed if the essay were to be re-written today.

The section could not be made completely representative. It was impossible to obtain some work that the editors desired to include. Certain critics are not represented because, though their work is as a whole important, they have written no single essay or review that conformed to the plan of the volume. Other critics were omitted simply because of the absence of space. Such practical considerations also made it necessary to limit the amount of space allotted to each critic, though several of the critics represented have written many essays that deserve to be reprinted in such a collection as this.

We believe, however, that the reader of this section will gain some idea of the methods and achievements of Marxist criticism. It is not our purpose to propose these selections as models. There is plenty of room for controversy about each of them. What we do believe is that these essays and reviews show the inclusiveness, flexibility, subtlety, and incisiveness of Marxist criticism.



# ARCHIBALD MACLEISH \*

OBED BROOKS

WE KNOW what Archibald MacLeish thinks about Marxism. He has said it in several poems and in several essays. He has made images to express his feeling. He has spoken of Marxism as seagulls' dribbling, or the attack of a dangerous sow. His malice has been such that he has, in much recent work, abandoned his poetry to it. These attacks have been ably answered, or characterized, from the Left, but they have had the effect of making MacLeish perhaps the first poet to be mentioned when one is listing the writers of the vocal opposition or when one is thinking about Fascism in America. For this reason it is profitable to look through MacLeish's work before he began, as he puts it, to bear arms and mix in maneuvers, to see what qualities he lacks or possesses as a poet that might consign him to this rôle.

It is noticeable that those who have complained most loudly and with the least impressive logic at the release of new social forces in literature, have been, like MacLeish and Krutch, the champions of an insulated art. I mean those who make the only legitimate effect of a work of art the perception of its qualities, who make it remain an identity inside and outside the mind of the observer, and not translatable into any terms of non-artistic experience. "A poem should be palpable and mute as a globed fruit," MacLeish writes in *Ars Poetica*. "A poem should be equal to: not true." There is a distinction, of course, between this purism as it is developed in MacLeish's work, and other contemporary forms of aestheticism where art is made, in fact, to carry more than its proper load, where it is made the solution to non-artistic problems. In Proust, mastery of experience, of the objective world, is possible only through the passive and idealistic re-ordering of it in art. In many of the conservative poets and critics, volitional and intellectual values have been transferred from the content, which is largely negative and nostalgic, to the form. In MacLeish, aestheticism is not a solution, but an evasion, and beauty is not a result, but an alternative. At the end of the famous *Frescoes* after a good deal of unpoetic invective, he anticipates the expected replies by stating his pleasure in sensation: "There is too much sun on the lids of my eyes to be listening."

This flight from meaning to a beauty without significance is reflected not only in the larger content of MacLeish's poems, but in his rhetoric, his rhythms, his imagery. His words are never symbols, they are kept as free as possible from suggestive accretions, and images are almost never intensified by the effect of juxtaposition,

\* *Poems: 1924-1933*, by Archibald MacLeish, Houghton Mifflin Co.

although these are the familiar methods of poets by whom he has otherwise been influenced. Sometimes his words hit hard because of this care. In straight narration or description this connotative barrenness, the steady clicking of bright counters, grows often monotonous and unrewarding. In emotional passages it can lead to vacuity. Consider the end of this selection from the *Hamlet*:

... I have suffered. I have lost  
 A child, a brother, friends. And do foreknow  
 My own corruption. There are also stars  
 But not to listen to. And the autumn trees  
 That have the habit of the sun and die  
 Before times often. And at night. And skies.  
 And seas. And evening.

At times this "and" rhetoric, the "words clean of the wool," the spacing, the Anglo-Saxon and Middle-English effects are used very beautifully, as many critics have pointed out. But they permit no intellectual participation on the part of the spectator. They permit one only to look and to wonder, as at the sequent events of chivalric romance. "Such a sequence of images and ideas has nothing chaotic about it," T. S. Eliot wrote of Perse's *Anabasis*, a poem to which MacLeish through all his work is greatly indebted. "There is a logic of the imagination as well as a logic of concepts." But in MacLeish's poems there is neither a conceptual nor an imaginative development; they are as static and circular as his globed fruit.

Only in the elegiac poems like *You*, *Andrew Marvell*, *Immortal Autumn*, and *The Too-Late Born* do these methods support the intention. In them the remoteness of the object and the unchanging quality of the perception make such a manner right. In a poem like *Einstein*, however, which is conceptual, which plays with the irreducibility of the living Einstein to physical formulae, the lack of progression makes the elaboration merely fanciful after the first statement of the theme. In *Hamlet*, the most personal of the long poems, the same defect makes the emotionalism seem gratuitous and self-indulgent, like the posturing of O'Neill's weaklings. Because the emotions are uncontrolled and uncomprehended, they are forced to borrow implication. Not even so passive a quality as sensitivity is personal and directional in MacLeish. In this poem the Hamlet frame is used as such frames are used by other moderns like Eliot and Joyce, partly for contrast, partly to hold the thing together. The poem is essentially undramatic.

MacLeish is not unaware of the lack of meaning, of significance, within his poems. Although in his critical theories it is expressed as a virtue, emotionally it becomes a defect, a sterility. But the problem is

faced only emotionally, not intellectually. MacLeish makes no attempt to find meaning in his own experience, in the experiences of the men of his time. Meaning is always stated as something outside himself, a quality residual in nature and savages and the past, something almost physical and alive. But the key word that may unlock the secret is, in these times, unutterable. He reproaches dead poets for not transmitting it. He gropes for it in the racial unconscious.

*It is always the same. It is always as though some  
Smell of leaves had made me not quite remember;  
As though I had turned to look and there were no one.  
It has always been secret like that with me.  
Always something has not been said.*

In *Conquistador* the intellectual detachment from experience and the emotional quest for meaning find their most unified expression. The mood of the narrator is elegiac; despite all the shining immediacy of the imagery, the actions seem dream-like and arbitrary. And the nostalgia is really carried to the second degree. For although MacLeish has let us fight at the hot gates and in the salt marshes of Eliot's dry old man, although he has given us a heroism that is not of the mind, but of the muscles and intestines, we are confronted with something still more vital and abysmal in the life of the Aztecs:

*... and the boy was slain!  
The belly arched to the stone knife: I remember  
They sang and were glad as a small child in the sunlight  
And they ate the limbs for a feast and the flesh trembled...*

This respect for the wise hands of savages, the significance of names, the divination by birds, the cults of heroism and blood, comes largely from Frazier's *Golden Bough* and from Perse's *Anabasis*. It runs through the *Hamlet*, the *Pot of Earth*, and the many earth passages in the other poems. Because of MacLeish's abject intellectual surrender (remarkably demonstrated in a review of Stephen Spender's poetry in the *Hound and Horn*) it has served to give a sense of mystery and emotion and terror to poems in which there is no response to the more significant experiences of reader or author. In his use of this Romantic device, MacLeish has allied himself, despite the purity of his poetic intentions, with a tendential philosophy. It is the philosophy of occultism, of the myth, the night, the chthonic denial of the reason, that Thomas Mann has described so well in his essay on Freud. It is the philosophy of Fascists.

We are interested, because of this, in noticing that with the

changes in the political situation, there have been changes in the location of MacLeish's earth. In the earlier poems it was Asiatic in geography, and remote in time. The *American Letter* announces the poet's return to America where he must remain unless he is to live as a shadow, but a country, as MacLeish describes it, that is neither a land nor a people, a country where they do not keep words spoken in common, and where they are not like in their ways of love. And although he is not "a sold boy nor a Chinese official," the poet is filled with nostalgia for countries of a richer past. In the *Frescoes*, however, he has sifted the American soil, and found in it many things—Indians and explorers, laborers and capitalists, exploitation, struggle, and hope. But as in all his work he is incapable of resolving these elements aesthetically. He presents merely imagistic evasion. To the financier brigands he can only say:

*Men have forgotten how full clear and deep  
The Yellowstone moved on the gravel and grass grew  
When the land lay waiting for her westward people!*

To the revolutionaries:

*It may be she can change the word in the book . . .  
It may be that the earth and the men remain . . .*

In 1933 we find more active counsels. Elpenor tells the migratory Ulysses of the depression, of plenty contrasted with want, of the impossibility of returning to what we had before, of the need of moving forward. But the way is blocked by adolescent revolutionists, by doctrinaires, teachers of hate and class war with Heaven-on-earth at the end of it, by determinists:

*Or Tiresias: he that in Hell  
Drunken with blood: foretelling the*

*Future day by the past:  
Serving time for a master:*

*Teaches your living selves  
That the dooms of the Fates are inevitable?*

*You have only to push on  
To whatever it is that's beyond us*

*Showing the flat of your sword and they'll  
Lick sand from before you!*

The destination of Ulysses is not stated; it is simply another blank image, a clean place, an unploughed land under the sun.

I think it is this quality in his solution—as much as his manifest hatred for Marxism—that makes one uneasy about MacLeish. There are obvious objections to calling such poetry Fascist; even the validity of such a classification may be in doubt. Certainly there are many bourgeois writers whose intellectual positions are much stronger bulwarks of reaction. That is because they have had will enough to give some meaning to their experience, either in terms of the bourgeois past, or of socially isolated individualism. In Germany and Italy many of them, after indirectly helping Fascism to seize power, have had too much intellectual integrity to come to terms with it. But MacLeish seems to lack the will to resolve his experience. For his non-poetic experience he demanded a program from the young men of Wall Street. In his verse there have been complementary emotional demands. And reading the poems in this volume one can imagine how the terror, the authority, the ritual, the patriotism—subrational and impulsive—that he has so constantly sought outside himself, could come at last with the marching feet of the storm troops.

NOTE: With the perception expressed in his play *Panic*, performed in March 1935, that capitalism is inevitably willing its own destruction, and in certain public statements made at about the same time, Archibald MacLeish left the position he had occupied in such articles as *To the Young Men of Wall Street*. Critics have seen a comparable shift of emphasis in the poetry of *Panic*. With his changed attitude toward capitalism, MacLeish's will has been partially freed from the sensual and subrational evasiveness of his former social writing. The play ends with the promise of mass revolution.

*Panic* is not, however, a proletarian play and by no means represents a complete break with former attitudes. The writer's interest and, in a sense, his sympathy are still with his vigorous and articulate capitalists rather than with his dim and anonymous workers. We hear from McGafferty, the banker, the rhetorical scorn of materialism, determinism, and revolutionaries that came formerly from MacLeish himself and made him so often referred to as a Fascist. But it is balanced now, by the prophecies of the Blind Man and by the exultation of mass movement (what kind of mass movement is not clear; it is only of marching feet and wind through a ruined house). Capitalism is not overthrown—it dies of its own spiritual ills as in Auden's *Dance of Death*—but there is joy in its passing.

O. B.

## THREE ENGLISH RADICAL POETS

EDWIN BERRY BURGUM

DURING the last three or four years three radical poets have come into prominence in England. These three poets, Stephen Spender, W. H. Auden, and Cecil Day Lewis, are alike in one respect, which puts them into sharp and perhaps unfortunate contrast with American revolutionary writers. They are from the aristocracy. They are Oxford graduates who, sensing the sterility of their class and accustomed to think of their class as synonymous with England, have become dependant over the disorder and lack of promise in their lives, and have turned to Communism as a way out. Since they had found their pessimism increased by its representation in *The Waste Land*, they were at first hailed by T. S. Eliot as a new group, of promise at least in poetry. But though they had borrowed somewhat from Eliot for the technique of their poetry, they have developed ideologically in an opposite direction. While their logic has led them to Communism as the theoretical solution for the ill-functioning of modern society, the athletic tradition of Oxford playing fields (which T. S. Eliot missed) has caused them to idealize the healthy nerves and sturdy physique of the working man. But this admiration, though genuine, has been too romantic, too much from the outside looking down, and too much limited to this one quality of the proletariat. With the possible exception of Lewis they can scarcely be said to have allied themselves with the proletariat as a class, and they have directed their writing to their fellow intellectuals. Doubtless they are not at the end of their development and should not be criticized for what is for them the inevitable beginning. Their problem has been first of all a personal one, to straighten out their own inner discords by allying themselves with some external strength and order. And it is in the light of this present and necessary limitation that their work should be approached.

Of the three it is not surprising that the one who is still the most confused, who has come least far, is the one who is the most widely read. A poet's reputation in modern society continues to be made by bourgeois readers, and bourgeois readers will naturally prefer the poet who reflects their own vacillations from liberalism to pessimism. One looks in vain, I think, for a true progression in Stephen Spender towards a radical position. The first poem in his only published volume sets the tone. It is a sportsmanlike farewell to the aristocratic tradition. "This aristocrat, superb of all instinct, Had paced the enormous cloud, almost had won War on the sun; Till now, like Icarus mid-ocean-drowned, Hands, wings, are found." But though the day of the

aristocrat is done, not a little of his deceptive idealism remains in Spender, and is merely transferred to the proletariat. The poet seeks to escape pessimism by discovering the old aristocratic virtues in the lower classes, and especially, it should be noted, in their leaders. The great man in one of his most characteristic poems, like his old-time aristocrats, Spender describes as born of the sun, travelling a short while towards the sun, and leaving the vivid air signed with their honor. Now in all likelihood, honor can be translated into a Communist virtue, though it will remain a term of dangerous connotations, but what shall one say of a Communist leader who, like Shelley, abandons the materialism of earth to travel towards the sun even in a metaphor. Shelley is in fact a profound influence upon Spender, only it is a Shelley whose conception of love has become less platonic under the influence of Lawrence and of Whitman. The craving for the love of those who are stronger than him, is the most valid among the motives that have led Spender into radicalism. "An 'I,'" he writes, "can never be a great man." Introspective egoism ends in the desire for suicide. But finding no aristocrats to embrace, Spender offers himself to the embrace of the proletariat. Unlike Whitman, his is the passive rôle. The affinity of "Oh young men, oh young comrades" is with Shelley's *West Wind* rather than Whitman's cosmic egoism. The poem is an appeal to others, the stronger than him, whom he therefore loves. These he approaches less hysterically than Shelley precisely because he has no intention, feels no capacity, for becoming a man of action himself. He belongs not only to a decaying class, but half the time, like Lawrence, he is convinced, to a lost generation. And when he is not buoyed up by a love that is always at bottom a personal affair, he reverts towards his original pessimism.

*The city builds its horror in my brain,  
This writing is my only wings away.*

There is the urge, it is true, survival of interest in these able-bodied proletarians, pulling the other way. He will not escape into the beauty of traditional art and life, finding no consolation there for poverty seen in railway halls and on the crowded pavements. And in his thirty-third poem he is strictly Marxian. Capitalistic war carries the flame of its own destruction, promotes the emerging revolution. "Our program, like it, yet opposite; Death to the killers bringing light to life." Yet we can never count on Spender. The vital forces he feels in the present are all individual. He senses no hopeful conjunction of them, no mass solidarity, only the mass weakness of despair and poverty. When he is conscious of the power of the radical workers, it is paradoxically, when in the sad tone of elegy he describes them returning

from a Red funeral. He states their present hope, but he cannot share it. His proletarian sympathy is an escape into an imaginary future, which this hopeless present is good only to breed.

*Oh comrades, let not those who follow after  
—The beautiful generation that shall spring from our sides  
Let not them wonder how after the failure of banks  
The failure of cathedrals and the declared insanity of our rulers  
We lacked the Spring-like resources of the tiger  
Or of plants who strike out new roots to gushing waters.  
But through torn-down portions of old fabric let their eyes  
Watch the admiring dawn explode like a shell  
Around us, dazing us with its light like snow.*

Now I think it no anomaly that this uncertain propagandist should also be the weakest technically of these three revolutionary poets. His vacillation as to when a revolution is worth fighting for, as to who is fit to do the fighting, his vacillation between a realistic despondency and an idealistic conception of love that would be as vague as Buchmanism if it were not for the Whitmanian infusion of personal sensuality: just as this vacillation is knit up with an emotional oscillation between optimism and pessimism, so technically Spender's poetry is a confusion. And the technical confusion is equally agreeable to the educated English reader. Spender in an essay has complained that the English audience wishes only the familiar cadences and metaphors in its poetry. But he has himself satisfied this demand to the full. On the technical side he is only another cultivated English poet, whose assorted recollections of the ways of writing of earlier poets set up in the cultivated reader the established responses. All the more skillful, because quite unconscious, such poetry has its conservative pull into the past that often disarms if it does not belie its meaning. And in Spender the reminiscences of Whitman and Lawrence occasionally, but more often the elegiac tone of Milton and Shelley's cheerful flight into the sun are so interwoven that the reader scarcely recognizes in the smoothly turned cadences either the ideational content or the insufficient rhetoric of its expression. It is no novelty in metaphor to speak of the pulsing arteries of towns. The line, "for ever to blow upon the lips of their loved friends," begins as pure Keats and ends as poor Shelley. "Well-fed, well-lit, well-spoken men are these. With bronze-faced sons, and happy in their daughters," is a couplet reading like a standard translation of Greek epic. But I am more concerned to show how such a technique is a "misleader," since it sets up a pretense of aesthetic activity, but in reality only awakens a generalized emotional pattern already existing in the bourgeois reader and dis-



tracts him thus from recognizing the ambiguity of its meaning. The following lines are certainly, for all their brave sound, inadequate as an account of the way in which a revolution should appeal to a revolutionary poet :

*through torn-down portions of old fabric let  
their eyes  
Watch the admiring dawn explode like a shell  
Around us, dazing us with its light like snow.*

The passive position of watching the dawn is hardly fitting to the revolutionary; nor should the dawn daze like snow those who under self-discipline have known what to expect and are ready for the next move. A revolution is not to be described in the terms appropriate to Dante's mystic union with God. But perhaps most significant of the poetic habit of Spender is his pretentiousness or mere carelessness in adopting the technical cliché that produces an appearance of intricate thought by the transfer of the adjective "admiring" from the observer to the observed. Uncertainty of attitude is always accompanied by vagueness of expression. And the one is as displeasing to the critic as the other to the philosopher. When the style of a poet is not the adequate indispensable vehicle for the communication of meaning, it becomes as thoroughly a distraction from the insufficiency of the meaning as the irrelevant vituperance of a Socialist orator from the plain point at issue in a debate. Unfortunately there are those who desire to be distracted. But just as a training in logic cannot fail to arouse some suspicion in the one case, a training in the nature of good art makes one at least uneasy in the presence of the other.

I do not come away from reading Auden with similar reservations. Here there is no oscillation between nostalgia for the aristocratic past and a blind grasp after some future state of Communism. Auden is at once less sensitive and less confused. But if the aesthetic and ideational confusion of Spender has dissipated his sensitivity, the robust temperament of Auden, less involved in a poetic tradition, has the more readily assimilated the vocabulary and the cadences of modern poetry. Even when under the influence of *The Waste Land* in his early volume *The Orators*, his cynicism lacked both the morbidity of Spender's and the cold hatred of Eliot's. This burlesque intermixture of narrative, of lyric and epigram, owes to Eliot its method of juxtaposing two statements into a union of the irrelevant and the ridiculous. Both works are bitter commentaries upon the utter disorder of modern life and thought. But the difference in title of the two works reveals the approaching cleavage between their authors. For Auden's title suggests a definite explanation

for the waste land of contemporary society. It is not in the lack of a dominating religion, a dominating aristocracy, as Eliot has since come to believe, but in the universal cant masquing our immense activity and supported precisely by the vestiges of a once dormant religion and aristocracy. The headmaster's address for a prize day insidiously under cover of a quotation from Dante promotes the very vices it warns against. The war diary satirizes not only innumerable aspects of the Great War but also the ancient literary tradition that has accompanied and justified war throughout history. The epitaph,

*His collar was spotless, he talked very well;  
He spoke of our homes and duty, and we fell.*

not only mocks the hypocrisy of declared purpose in war; it is also a satire on the Greek grave inscription, dripping with patriotism. In the epigram, "Three kinds of enemy eye—the lobster—the boot-button—the submarine," Auden parodies the scientific precision and inhumanity of the army airman. But he is also giving vent to a quite personal love of grotesque associations. He exposes the mechanical efficiency of the army mentality. Before the attack the airman's admonition to his diary is: to get the life of Count Zeppelin, to destroy all letters, and to take deep breathing exercises instead of smoking. War with its indifference to the values of peace-time existence becomes a form of insanity with a deadly insufficient tyrannous logic of its own. But behind all its excess lies a purpose that is utterly selfish and unfortunately quite sane. Many of Auden's terms have double meaning, and here the hidden meaning is that the chief enemy is at home, the sane and protected director of the general insanity. "Three signs of an enemy country—licensed hours—a national art—nursery schools." Auden does not yet perceive this enemy to be chiefly the capitalist. He is still obsessed by one aspect of capitalism, its unctuous Victorian mortality. Hence the book is for Auden transitional, expressing a type of revolt now being submerged in more basic problems. Only in certain of the six odes at the end do these basic causes behind the cant show through; in the fourth, a political ode to the son of a fellow poet, Auden says plainly that what must be rejected is not simply war. It is the upper classes, a crumbling social system now desperate; it is the false radicals, the MacDonalds, the Mosleyites, and the Independent Labour Party. But it is above all the rejection of the fear to advance towards a new system that will "Illumine and not kill."

As the Epilogue shows by its allegorical form, Auden has not yet made his own union of courage and conviction. Nor ought we expect from an Oxford-bred poet, apparently of a family of Welsh squires, an untroubled acceptance of the radical program. He, too, sometimes

fears (as in a poem appropriately published in *The New Republic*) that he belongs to a lost generation. But his temper is not normally elegiac. He is too vigorous and pagan to remain for long inactive. He must throw his abundant energy in some positive direction. His disposition shares the personal recklessness of the cavalier, whilst his clear head drives his energy into the disciplined channel of Marxian philosophy. If Auden objects to Fascism, it is not that he objects to aristocratic assurance, but that finding none of it in the aristocracy, he is determined to seek out the class that can share it with him.

*Shut up talking, charming in the best suits to be had in town.  
Lecturing on navigation while the ship is going down.  
If we really want to live, we'd better start at once to try;  
If we don't, it doesn't matter, but we'd better start to die.*

Auden rejects his own class with a disdainful impatience that dissolves his poetry into jingle. But he would take with him into the new activity all those whom he has loved. For him, like Spender, the love of humanity is only the necessary correlative of what begins as personal friendship.

*we know that love  
Needs more than the admiring excitement of union,  
Needs death, death of the grain, our death,  
Death of the old gang; would leave them  
In sullen valley where is made no friend.*

But Auden's expansive temperament leads him to dwell in the larger relationship, to recognize that the old self must die out of its old environment and be reborn in conscious union with the virile solidarity of the proletariat. Here its essential strength meets its natural reinforcement. But the affinity which Auden thus recognizes has not yet become a real union in his poetry.

Since Auden's urge is always to lose self in the broader social movement, his most characteristic work has been in dramatic form. *Paid on Both Sides* he calls a charade. It is, I should say, an attempt to vivify the waste and barbarism of capitalistic competition by personifying it. In real life between the bourgeois or the intellectual and the actual working of the capitalistic system stands the impersonal appearance, the huge impersonal organization of the system itself. If instead of viewing in the abstract two cartels employing various kinds of subterfuge and of direct violence to gain their end of profits and then viewing in complete detachment the manner of life made possible for those who get these profits, a dramatist wishes by a short cut to bring home the relationship, what method could be more vivid than

picturing the family life of the capitalist in conjunction with his business methods? He has only to assume the old situation when the owner lived near his mill and add to it the methods of violence practised under its modern expansion. The capitalist is then clearly disclosed as a feudal brigand in constant guerilla warfare upon his neighboring capitalistic opponents. The irony of the situation becomes the more vivid since its protagonists are unconscious of it. A baby is born into the capitalistic family while reports of the progress of the counter-attack upon a neighboring gang flow in to distract attention. And at the end a younger son migrates to the colonies to symbolize the development of imperialistic capitalism. The opportunity for fantastic contrast is great, and Auden has pursued it into the very nature of his style, which, now reminiscent of the medieval ballad, now of the abrupt epic swing of Old English poetry, deepens the ironic innuendo to the point where only the sophisticated reader can enjoy it. *The Dance of Death* is more fit for actual dramatic production because its style is as that of a comic opera. The allegory is simple and consistent throughout. The dancer, who is death, is also capitalism, which is therefore defined as having the seeds of death within it. The play represents the Marxian understanding of the present moment in world history, in which the most orthodox Marxian could find no flaw except one. The death of capitalism is not accompanied and promoted by any conscious and accelerating mass pressure. Its theoretic deficiency is that of the intellectualistic, deterministic approach. But granted this limitation, the humor of its situations and its parodies of familiar songs and social attitudes make it a most cheerful interlude in the serious reality of the social situation. Despite the fact that its setting is entirely English, it might easily be produced in vacation camps or convalescent homes patronized by American radicals. There the antics and fallacies of social fascist misleaders could be laughed at, and the demoralization of the bourgeoisie at the dancer's final collapse viewed simply as dialectic prophecy.

However attractive to the politically minded the work of Auden, to the literary critic, the poetry of Day Lewis must seem more satisfying. Technically he combines what is good in Spender and Auden without repeating their weaknesses. He is as sensitive to English literary tradition as Spender, but he has borrowed from nearer sources and has better assimilated them into his own poetic fibre. He is more capable of a good poetic cadence and a clear poetic image than Auden. But at the same time he has a strength and an optimism that never wavers into irresolution and self-pity. And like Auden, he has developed both poetically and politically in a consistent direction. Every poet's growth into Communism is today by an individual path. Each starts from the point of the compass where circumstance has placed

him; then finds himself propelled into political radicalism by the understanding his poetic sense of form gives him of the actual conditions under which he and his contemporaries express their lives. Lewis began as a poet of nature in the blithesome tradition of Keats and Meredith and more remotely still, of Marvell.

*Our joy was but a gusty thing  
Without sinew or wit,  
An infant fly-away; but now  
We make a man of it.*

Radicalism interfered to make a man also out of this care-free poetic style. It did not wipe out his whole past experience, his established predilections, but only matured them by affording a satisfactory focus. But it is not enough to say of Lewis (as one might hazard of Auden) that a vivid sense of joy in living made Lewis a Communist because, incapable of a shift into decadence, he could discover no alternative source of optimism. As Lewis drew closer to the world about him, radicalism only brought uppermost another English poet of nature to define his style and attitude. And this poet, strangely enough, was Gerard Manley Hopkins.

*Passion has grown full man by his first birthday,  
Running across the bean-fields in a south wind,  
Fording the river mouth to feel the tide-race—  
Child's play that was, though proof of our possessions.*

Stylistically this quotation is Hopkins diluted by the earlier Marvell influence: fewer telescoped metaphors, fewer Bacchic and Choriambic feet, but a similar conscious use of alliteration and economy of adjectives and participles, of merely grammatical elements. But to an aesthete the importance of this literary influence is that it is, in this case paradoxically, another example of the correspondence between a poet's meaning and his prosody. It is evident that Hopkins, who was a Catholic priest, and Lewis, who is a Communist sympathizer, do not meet at these points. Where they do meet is in a similar basic attitude. Their ideologies, though different by themselves, are but different inferences from a similar attitude towards nature. For Hopkins Catholicism was fundamentally a natural religion, its supernatural rites and beliefs only the supplement and steadier to a natural Wordsworthian morality, to the discipline and obedience the seasons exact from all peasants. In a similar way Communism for Lewis is only an extension, a superstructure upon a natural system of scientific law. It is the latest and now-compelled assistant to natural law, which

is for him the foundation of economic law. He sees the Marxian law of history in the intimate terms of poetic description of natural phenomena.

*Beauty breaks ground, O, in strange places  
Seen after cloud-burst down the bone-dry water courses,  
In Texas a great gusher, a grain-  
Elevator in the Ukraine plain;  
To a new generation turn new faces.*

Industrialism, economic order, to Lewis is not a violation of natural beauty, but a new and beautiful cooperation, under the law of history, between earth and human activity.

This same love of nature accounts for the symbolism in the title of his *Magnetic Mountain*. In this poem, the best probably of Communist poetry that has yet been written for an audience of intellectuals, the magnetic mountain is the absolute of Marxian philosophy. It symbolizes the classless society, the universal soviet that shall be the human race, towards which we are drawn by the irresistible flow of history as to a magnet under the cooperation of our own desire, the urge of our iron-like nature. That this objective is an absolute, Lewis has no doubt.

*Near that miraculous mountain  
Compass and clock must fail  
For space stands on its head there  
And time chases its tail.*

But it is an absolute which functions solely in the world of sensory experience, as Lewis says, "riveting sky to earth." It is free from Spender's taint of Platonism. In the confidence of this objective Lewis calls upon his generation to take heart. Without any consciousness of class distinctions, he bids his readers cease from their capitalistic delusions and follow frankly by what may seem an almost mad break with the past the course dictated by the virile demand for constructive activity and fraternal joy in action of what is to Lewis the undegenerated nature of man. Marxism is for him the next stage in the development of Rousseauism. It is romantic naturalism developed under the pressure of an industrialized society. But there are obstructions to this new union of cheerful energy and clear logic. The second and third sections of the poem are as detailed and trenchant a satire as the most dialectic radical could wish of the two orders of temptation in the way of English Communism. First stand in opposition the defendants of the old order: the individualistic squire who for generations has be-

lieved his own will to be natural law; the aristocratic imperialist who justifies by imposing codes of English law upon backward nations, his conquest of them for his own profit; the Christian who is a little down-hearted and petulant since his support of the powers that he has met with so trifling a return in loyalty to the old faith; and finally the utilitarian philosopher who makes a principle of never confessing to look beyond his nose, and fails to see that his doctrine of the immediate advantage is only from the Marxian viewpoint the doctrine of the lesser evil; indeed, this last defendant is perhaps rather the typical Englishman who has glorified the practice of muddling through and does not yet see that it is now failing to bring the hoped-for results. The second order of temptations is from within, psychological: the appeal of sensuality that distracts from social problems and saps vitality; the appeal of romance, the living under delusion promoted by conservative education, sensational newspapers, misleading and corrupting advertisements; the irrelevancy of the scientist or technocrat, who, ignorant of economics and philosophy, appends a mystic God to his researches; and last of all, what must have been the greatest of tempters to Lewis himself, the old tradition of English romantic naturalism, now become advocate of the return to an agrarian culture. These temptations are met and argued away; and the final section of the poem is in the technical Greek sense a paean to the accomplishment of the revolution. The train reaches its destination and the riders alight to take their place in the construction of the classless society under proletarian guidance. Lewis therefore is the only one of these three poets who senses the strategic office of the proletariat in revolutionary action. And his conviction is the deeper in that he is never attracted (as so many American writers have been) merely by the crude exterior sometimes found in the working class, but ignoring mere description goes directly to what in old language would be called its spiritual power. Successful in their revolution, Lewis and his fellow radicals, in the final poem of *The Magnetic Mountain*, sing a work song as they join in the comradely competition of establishing the material ease of the classless society. The technique of Gerard Manley Hopkins shares the exultation.

*Beckon O beacon, and O sun be soon,  
Hollo, bells, over a melting earth!  
Let man be many and his sons all sane,  
Fearless with fellows, handsome by the hearth.  
Break from your trance; start dancing now in town,  
And, fences down, the ploughing match with mate.  
This is your day, so turn, my comrades, turn  
Like infants' eyes like sunflowers to the light.*

## THE WOBBLY IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

ALAN CALMER

DURING its heyday, the Wobbly movement was violently distrustful of intellectuals. But this does not mean that it sneered at all intellectual endeavor. Contrary to most beliefs, the "official" attitude of the I.W.W. toward culture was by no means a negative one. It regarded highly any kind of literary or artistic expression—when such work praised the manual worker, or sniped at anybody hostile to the working class.

This respect for culture is shown by the four-sheet Wobbly newspapers, which frequently featured verse, embellished with drawings, on the first page. The *New Solidarity*, for example, ran a stanza on capitalist justice, by M. Robbins Lampson, in the center of its front page during one week in 1919. *The March of the Hungry Men*, a poem by Reginald W. Kaufmann, was featured in the *Industrial Worker* during the preceding year.

According to John Reed, the Wobbly movement created intellectual groups throughout the western section of the country. "Wherever there is an I.W.W. located," he wrote, "you will find an intellectual center—a place where men read philosophy, economics, the latest plays, novels; where art and poetry are discussed and international politics." They were also interested in the theatre: "And there are playwrights in the I.W.W. who write about life in the jungles and the Wobblies produce the plays for audiences of Wobblies." In *Rambling Kid*, a novel of the I.W.W., Charles Ashleigh tells of heated discussions in Midwestern saloons "as to whether Sinclair and Dreiser were revolutionary writers."

As a matter of fact, the I.W.W. glorified any writings that dealt favorably with the workers—no matter how mediocre such efforts were. If we can speak of a Wobbly aesthetic, it might almost be summarized in these terms: on the one hand it eulogized writings of the type we have mentioned; on the other, it sneered at all other forms of literature. This primitive approach to culture resulted in exaggerated praise of mere doggerel and jingles and tendentious compositions of the most blatant character—entirely because they expounded the point of view of the militant labor movement.

However immature this method of evaluation was, its bias is quite understandable. It was simply a spontaneous expression of the pride which the workers felt for the incipient literature of their own class. Certainly the panegyrics of the rising bourgeoisie for their own didactic dramas were not less extravagant.



It is true that this vulgarized attitude—the confusion of aesthetic with ethical categories, as well as the lack of understanding of the problem of cultural heritage—hampered the development of working class literature. But its low level was due even more to the absence of first-rate poets in the Wobbly movement. Its rhymesters were of a distinctly minor character. Nevertheless, the poems and songs of the I.W.W. marked an advance in American labor literature, when compared with the verse of the obscure worker-poets and poetasters of labor in the nineteenth century.

The development of social conditions in the United States was just beginning to turn a few minor poets into the organized working class. In addition, a talented songbird arose out of the American labor movement for the first time in our history. Despite its youth and ignorance, American labor literature, as expressed in the I.W.W., made a few blundering steps forward.

Poetry to the Wobblies was usually conceived as a tool for direct action, as a naked "weapon" in the most obvious sense of the word. During 1917 the Industrial Worker carried a news item dealing with a prison episode in Moscow, Idaho, which illustrates the way the Wobblies used their verse. The story was captioned, *Songs Get Sheriff's Goat*, and read: "Since Saturday we have received no papers. The fellow-workers made up a parody on T. P. Jones, the potlatch scabherder, to the tune of Casey Jones. One Wobbly sent out a copy in a letter which the sheriff read. We have been kicking about not receiving our papers; and finally the sheriff told us that if we will stop writing such songs he will let us have the papers again." For them, the motto of V. D. Scudder, "Great literature is always the record of some great struggle"—which they quoted in their newspapers—was interpreted in the most literal fashion, as a rigid formula. Here is another example of a minor, but no less direct manner in which they employed verse—this time to raise funds for the defense of Bill Haywood:

*Remember our Joe Hill,  
And brave Frank Little, too;  
If you would save the boys and Bill!—  
PUT YOUR DONATIONS THROUGH!*

The Wobblies used the breezy lyrics of Joe Hill and other I.W.W. songsters in every strike and free speech fight. In his play, *Singing Jailbirds*, Upton Sinclair has tried, with some small success, to capture the spirit with which they enlisted their songbooks in the class struggle.

Not only did they use their old songs to drum up the courage of

the workers on the picket line. Every new conflict evoked some form of poetic response. The battles of the I.W.W. furnished the inspiration for new songs, which were immediately put into service. An early example is Joe Hill's satire on a labor misleader in the Lawrence strike of 1912—sung to the tune of *A Little Talk with Jesus*. Some of the last instances of this sort are found in the prison songs and poems written in the post-war period, when Wobblies edited "shop" papers from their cells in Fort Leavenworth, under such titles as *Wire-City Weekly* and the *Can-Opener*.

The best of the rather stilted verse of the Wobbly poets dealt with their heroes who were killed in battle. The martyrs of the free speech fight at Everett, Washington, were memorialized by one of the Wobbly prison poets. Taking his theme from the report of a witness—"And then the fellow worker died, singing *Hold the Fort. . .*"—Charles Ashleigh wrote:

*Yet, the mad chorus from that devil's host,—  
Yea, all the tumult of that butcher throng,—  
Compound of bullets, booze and coward boast,—  
Could not out-shriek one dying worker's song!*

Some of these poems were defiant challenges hurled at the ruling class. Arturo Giovannitti's long recitation, *When the Cock Crows*, written in "memory of Frank Little, hanged at midnight" in Montana during 1917, warns:

*. . . someone will bear witness of this to the dawn.  
Someone will stand straight and fearless tomorrow  
between the armed hosts of your slaves, and  
shout to them the challenge of that silence you  
could not break.*

Ralph Chaplin's sonnet to Wesley Everest, murdered at Centralia two years later, is softer, but in the same mood. So is his elegy to Joe Hill.

Hill was the successor to the miner-bards of the Molly Maguire period in American labor history who improvised songs to cheer the workers in the midst of their strikes. Like them, he was a genuine worker-poet, who wrote always as a worker rather than as a writer. From the day he landed in New York, a Swedish immigrant, he spent his time in the harvest fields, construction camps, machine shops, and mines—or in the jungles and Wobbly locals. "I have always worked hard for a living," he said just before he was murdered, "and my spare time I spent by painting pictures, writing songs, and composing music." One of his first compositions, written in the midst of a rail-

road strike, is a little masterpiece of narrative labor poetry. Its story of how Casey Jones went to heaven after scabbing on the "S.P. Line" only to be re-routed to hell for scabbing on the angels, illustrates Joe Hill's lively imaginative gifts, which were revered by Wobblies of every type.

In addition to his narrative songs, which include the well-known "Tramp, tramp, tramp, keep on a-tramping, Nothing doing here for you," Hill will be remembered for his marching, lilting songs like "Should I ever be a soldier, 'Neath the red flag I would fight" and "There is power, there is power, in a band of workingmen," which were sung throughout the world.

Like Old Quiz—an Irish labor poet who died of starvation in New Orleans during the eighteen-seventies—Hill was a literary martyr of the American proletariat. When he was framed and put up against a wall in the Salt Lake pen to face a firing squad, he died "game." "The cause I stand for means more than any human life—much more than mine," were his last words. "Let 'er go!" And to Bill Haywood he wrote just before his execution: "Don't waste any time in mourning. Organize." His will, composed in verse form, was carried out to the letter. "I have met men carrying next their hearts, in the pockets of their working clothes," wrote Jack Reed years later, "little bottles with some of Joe Hill's ashes in them."

Joe Hill was in the thick of the Wobbly struggles to the very end. It is significant to point out that both Ralph Chaplin and Arturo Giovannitti, the ablest of the minor poets around the I.W.W., practically stopped writing when they withdrew from the forefront of the labor conflict. Their well of inspiration apparently ran dry once they lost contact with the revolutionary labor vanguard. Ralph Chaplin's early verse, printed in the labor press under the signature "A Paint Creek Miner," is more fiery if less polished than his later efforts. His first work, collected in *When the Leaves Come Out*, is full of defiance thrown at the enemy class. In one early poem he addresses his comrades with proletarian cocksureness:

*They laid their crafty traps for us to trip and stumble in,  
But when we stick together, hell how can we help but win?*

*Bars and Shadows*, which contains the poems Chaplin wrote during his long imprisonment in Cook County jail and Leavenworth, includes the famous *Mourn Not the Dead*:

*But rather mourn the apathetic throng—  
The cowed and the meek—  
Who see the world's great anguish and its wrong  
And dare not speak!*

However, most of the verse in this volume is cluttered with an outmoded imagery and a pliant mood that are rarely suited to revolutionary subject-matter.

Giovannitti's first contact with the Wobbly movement was made in the Lawrence strike of 1912, where he learned to write his revolutionary anthems. One of his first poems was written while he sat on the prisoners bench with Joseph Ettor :

*And now we, too, must sit here, Joe. Don't dust  
These boards on which our wretched brothers fell,  
They are clean, there is no reason for disgust,  
For the fat millionaire's revolting stench  
Isn't here, nor the preacher's saintly smell,  
And the judge never sat upon this bench.*

His unrhymed recitations like *The Senate of the Dead*, on Karl Liebknecht (written in 1918), scarcely belong to social poetry, although they showed signs of poetic talent. But apparently even these efforts ceased when Giovannitti became identified with a reactionary section of the labor movement.

One of the rhyming contributors to the Wobbly papers who deserves mention is Covington Hall. His poems, collected in the volume, *Songs of Rebellion* (New Orleans, 1913), consist largely of moralistic comments on the mass martyrs of humanity. Some of them, like *God Said*, emulate the Casey-Jones type of Joe Hill song :

*If you want the land, go take it!  
I am wearied of your need:  
I have filled the earth with plenty:  
Have your brains all run to seed?*

The Wobbly was represented not only in his own literature, but also in occasional writings by liberal men of letters of the time. The scene in O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* which describes an episode in a Wobbly headquarters is presented rather realistically. William E. Leonard's poem, *The Heretics*, displays genuine sympathy for certain victims of the red raids.

In sharp contrast are the popular novels which dealt with the Wobblies. Zane Grey's *Desert of Wheat* and Robert W. Chambers' *The Crimson Tide*, both written during the Palmer raids, are full of vile defamations and scurrilous attacks. In the latter, the plot is completely forgotten for entire pages while the author raves at the militant sections of the American proletariat. *Beyond the Desert*, a novelette by Alfred Noyes, written at the same time, is a more subtle

attack; it is the story of a former Wobbly leader who sees the light in time to stop a great strike planned by the I.W.W.

It may truthfully be said that the Wobbly found no permanent corner for himself in American literature until after the I.W.W. had disintegrated, in post-bellum days. With the dispersing of the Wobbly movement, its literary school followed the same course. When class issues grew sharper after the Russian Revolution, some Wobbly authors turned reactionary; many retired from the revolution; the most courageous continued ahead. Post-war writers who were first attracted to labor literature by the I.W.W.—Keene Wallis, in his *Bughouse Square* and earlier poems, and Louis Colman in his novel, *Lumber*—joined the Communist literary movement. Only in recent years, with the rise of revolutionary literature, has the heroic fight of Wesley Everest been commemorated in an enduring form, in one of Dos Passos' prose etchings; or a Wobbly character added to American fiction, in *Forty-second Parallel*.

More recently, Josephine Herbst has taken a note which Bill Haywood voiced long ago—"Joe Hill is dead, but his songs live to greet the Red Dawn"—and woven it into one of the best revolutionary short stories, *You Can Live Forever*. The same theme is the subject of a poem by Alfred Hayes, one of the younger poets who has developed inside the Communist movement. Adept at handling many moods, this young Communist poet salutes his predecessor in his own idiom, *I Dreamed I Saw Joe Hill Again*:

*And standing there as big as life,  
And smiling with his eyes,  
Joe says, "What they forgot to kill  
Went on to organize."*

*"Joe Hill ain't dead," he says to me,  
"Joe Hill ain't never died,  
Where workingmen are out on strike,  
Joe Hill is at their side."*

*"From San Diego up to Maine,  
In every mine and mill,  
Where workers fight and organize,"  
Says he, "You'll find Joe Hill."*

The Wobbly literary movement was buried long ago. Its revolutionary heritage has passed on to the Communist men of letters.

## EAGLE ORATOR\*

MALCOLM COWLEY

REGRETFULLY I have to bring in a dissenting opinion. Paul Engle is not, as Stephen Vincent Benét says he is, "a new voice—and the voice of a new generation—in American poetry." He is not any of the fine things that he has been called by J. Donald Adams of *The New York Times*. Except in a few passages where he speaks in a sharp homely fashion, he is not a poet at all. He is an eagle orator, a thumping good, tub-thumping Fourth of July congressman. He says all the proper things for a congressman to say when he wants to make his constituents forget about high prices and low wages and remember only that they are free-born Americans. He makes the eagle scream, the bison bellow, the welkin ring, and the Pioneer Woman beat out the flames of a burning cabin with her dying husband's bloodstained hunting shirt. He roars out his hatred for skeptics and his contempt for the degenerate nations of Europe that drag their "worn-out bellies on the sun-warmed rock." He feels God stirring within his heart. He assures us that he is young and rich in spirituality and strong with a primitive old strength that "men have called courage and that we call guts." Standing with one hand outstretched toward the sky at sunset and the other thrust deep into the Iowa loam, he wraps himself in the red, white, and blue starry folds of the American dream, while his kleagle voice resounds from klavern to klavern throughout the broad American land. Lord, how they love it, those hicks and rubes on the New York newspapers!

Like every true orator, he has a message. It echoes through most of the poems collected in this book, but it becomes clearest and loudest at the very end, in "America Remembers." This long declamation won—and richly deserved to win—the prize awarded by Poetry Magazine for the best poem about the Century of Progress Exposition at Chicago. Here was a subject that would have embarrassed most poets. To Engle, on the contrary, it was an opportunity for displaying all his forensic gifts and for writing in his most characteristic manner. Let us examine the poem for clues to his popularity.

It begins with America personified vaguely as someone, probably a Greek-robed full-bosomed woman with an olive branch in her hand, who sits on the shore of Lake Michigan among the "buildings shaped with light" of the Chicago Exposition. Here she dreams of her past, remembering "the strange way I have had in this land, the incredible

\* *American Song: A Book of Poems*, by Paul Engle. New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company.

trail I have followed." She remembers the wild continent as it was when the red men called to their gods in the gusty rain (twenty-one lines). She remembers the first Spanish ships landing (five lines), and the English settlers planting their corn with a rotten fish in each hill (nineteen lines). She remembers the Jesuits teaching in the North (eleven lines), and the colonists who rebelled on the seaboard—

*the English soul*

*Plunged seven years in flame and steel and become  
The American soul—O strange, strong thing! And over  
The land ranged the unique American dream  
Of the common man and his right before all men  
To shape his own peculiar single self  
Tempered in the wild flame of beating out  
On the huge anvil of the wilderness  
A young and iron nation.*

In other words, she proudly remembers Mr. Hoover's wrought-iron individualism. There follow two eloquent pages in which she remembers the myth of the pioneers, the land-hungry men of the Wilderness Road and the gold-hungry men who crossed the Sierras—always westering, always sun-following, till at last they "struck the Pacific and the force of their traveling flung them back over the way they had come." In a dull page, she remembers the Indian dead. In two pages not much brighter, she remembers the Civil War, the rise of industrialism and the years when "the fatal Horsemen rode." She somehow feels that the Great War should have uplifted us—but instead the American

*Soul, that should have soared, flapped in the driving wind  
That blew with the stench of sweat and oil and the fetid  
Fat breath that cried for gold.*

She refers scornfully to the materialism of the post-war years, when American ships circled the oceans and American eyes "could not see beyond the diamonds flashing their hands." She says nothing, nothing about these later years when the wind no longer stinks of sweat and oil and the diamonds are pawned. Miss America, grown old and smug, has no eyes or ears or nose for the present. Indeed, she assumes that our material problems have been solved and that all of us now have "shoes for our feet, shirts for our backs" and a fat chicken in the pot. The real problem facing us today is that of finding a spiritual destination. With all the country settled, "Where shall they go now," she asks, "the forever westward-wandering people?"

*They cannot be quiet, they cannot rest, they would not  
Be American if they could do that. I tell them: You  
Shall fit again the curved felloe, and with the bucket  
Swinging under the wagon, the slouch-gaited hound  
Following its restless shade patch, plunge  
Into that vaster and more savage West,  
The unfamiliar country of your heart.*

Having loaded our possessions into a prairie schooner, and having nowhere else to go, we are asked to drive it into our vast, savage breasts and, I suppose, to build ourselves subsistence homesteads somewhere in the high heart-mountains between the auricle and the ventricle. Seriously, this prospectus for a spiritual dude-ranching trip is Paul Engle's message and his solution for all our troubles. It doesn't offer much hope to those of us who have no wagon to hang a bucket under, nor even a bag of meal with which to make hoe-cakes in the ashes of the campfire.

The spirit of pioneer individualism, the search for gold and land that Paul Engle glorifies as the true American dream, has ended by laying our country waste. It has butchered the timber north and south, it has killed off the game, wasted the coal, crippled the men who mined it, poisoned the streams, exhausted and eroded the rich farmland. After a hundred years it has left us with only the dry crust of the continent that our fathers possessed—and not even that, for other people own it now and continue to gnaw it away. The children of the pioneers, and of the immigrants who followed them, are faced with the task of winning back the land from the people who stole it, and of living in it together, and of helping one another to make it rich again. This is a real adventure and one for which people are being jailed and shot. But Paul Engle wants us, instead, to continue pioneering in the imaginary mountains and prairies of our souls—comfortably, after dinner, thanking God in our hearts that we aren't drab materialists—that we can forge our own “singular vision of eternity” and, with “the American faith” proudly behind us, can discover “the deep spirituality of man.” Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller, Sr., used to talk a great deal about spirituality; it saved them embarrassment when paying low wages. Paul Engle's American muse speaks in the familiar Sunday voice of the robber barons—and perhaps this explains why he is praised by critics who ought to recognize that the voice is harsh and bombastic and full of awkward intonations.

Technically Engle has two accomplishments, both of them rare in young poets: he knows how to build a poem in big square solid chunks and he is able to keep it moving. But his verse is inferior in



metrical texture; it alternates between the two extremes of awkwardness and monotony without his ever being able to find a middle passage. His figures of speech are intellectual rather than visual; most of them come out of books. But his real fault as a poet is one of inflation. He started with an honest and admirable emotion, a love for the rich Iowa acres where he was reared, but he has tried to expand this emotion through space and carry it backward through time, until he ends by windily declaiming about things that he has neither felt nor accurately imagined. He has issued too much watered stock on his real assets. Like any overextended business man, he has been forced to go to the bankers, and he has made considerable loans from Whitman, from Stephen Vincent Benét, from Archibald MacLeish and, I suspect, from McGuffey's Fifth Reader. "Here," says Mr. Benét, "is somebody walking in America in proud shoes." The trouble is that the shoes are borrowed and they don't fit.

## WILDER: PROPHET OF THE GENTEEL CHRIST\*

MICHAEL GOLD

HERE'S a group of people losing sleep over a host of notions that the rest of the world has outgrown several centuries ago: one duchess's right to enter a door before another; the word order in a dogma of the Church; "the divine right of Kings, especially of Bourbons."

In these words Thornton Wilder describes the people in his first book, *The Cabala*. They are some eccentric old aristocrats in Rome, seen through the eyes of a typical American art "pansy" who is there as a student.

Marcantonio is the sixteen-year-old son of one of the group; he is burned out with sex and idleness, and sexualizes with his sister, and then commits suicide. Another character is a beautiful, mad Princess, who hates her dull Italian husband, falls in love with many Nordics, and is regularly rejected by them. Others are a moldy old aristocrat woman who "believes," and a moldy old Cardinal who doesn't, and some other fine worm-eaten authentic specimens of the rare old Italian antique.

Wilder views these people with tender irony. He makes no claim as to their usefulness to the world that feeds them; yet he hints that their palace mustiness is a most important fact in the world of today. He writes with a brooding seriousness of them as if all the gods

\* *The Cabala, The Bridge of San Luis Rey, The Woman of Andros, The Angel That Troubled the Waters*, by Thornton Wilder. (From *New Republic*.)

Vol. 64, 22 October 1930. Edmund Wilson's "The Economic Interp."

were watching their little lavender tragedies. The style is a diluted Henry James.

Wilder's second novel was *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*. This famous and vastly popular yarn made a bold leap backward in time. Mr. Wilder, by then, had evidently completed his appraisal of our own age. The scene is laid in Lima, Peru; the time is Friday noon, July 20, 1714. In this volume Wilder perfected the style which is now probably permanent with him: the diluted and veritable Anatole France.

Among the characters of San Luis Rey are: (1) A sweet old duchess who loves her grown daughter to madness, but is not loved in return; (2) A beautiful unfortunate genius of an actress who after much sexualizing turns nun; (3) Her tutor, a jolly old rogue, but a true worshipper of literature; (4) Two strange brothers who love each other with a passion and delicacy that again brings the homosexual bouquet into a Wilder book, and a few other minor sufferers.

Some of the characters in this novel die in the fall of a Bridge. Our author points out the spiritual lessons imbedded in this Accident; viz.: that God is Love.

The third novel is the recent *The Woman of Andros*. This marks a still further masterly retreat into time and space. The scene is one of the lesser Greek islands, the hour somewhere in B. C.

The fable: a group of young Greeks spend their evenings in alternate sexual bouts and lofty Attic conversations with the last of the Aspasias. One young man falls in love with her sister, who is "pure." His father objects. Fortunately, the Aspasia dies. The father relents. But then the sister dies, too. Wistful futility and sweet soft sadness of Life. Hints of the coming of Christ: "and in the East the stars shone tranquilly down upon the land that was soon to be called Holy and that even then was preparing its precious burden."

Then Mr. Wilder has published some pretty, tinkling, little three-minute playlets. These are on the most erudite and esoteric themes one could ever imagine: all about Angels, and Mozart, and King Louis, and Fairies, and a Girl of the Renaissance, and a whimsical old Actress (1780) and her old Lover; Childe Harold to the Dark Tower Came; Prosperina and the Devil; The Flight into Egypt; a Venetian Prince and a Mermaid; Shelley, Judgment Day, Centaurs, God, The Woman in the Chlamys, Christ; Brigomeide, Leviathan, Ibsen; every waxwork in Wells's Outline, in fact, except Buffalo Bill.

And this, to date, is the garden cultivated by Mr. Thornton Wilder. It is a museum, it is not a world. In this devitalized air move the wan ghosts he has called up, each in "romantic" costume. It is an historic junkshop over which our author presides.

Here one will not find the heroic archæology of a Walter Scott or Eugene Sue. Those men had social passions, and used the past as a weapon to affect the present and future. Scott was the poet of feudalism. The past was a glorious myth he created to influence the bourgeois anti-feudal present. On every page of history Eugene Sue traced the bitter, neglected facts of the working-class martyrdom. He wove these into an epic melodrama to strengthen the heart and hand of the revolutionary workers, to inspire them with a proud consciousness of their historic mission.

That is how the past should be used: as a rich manure, as a springboard, as a battle cry, as a deepening, clarifying, and sublimation of the struggles in the too-immediate present. But Mr. Wilder is the poet of the genteel bourgeoisie. They fear any such disturbing lessons out of the past. Their goal is comfort and status quo. Hence, the vapidness of these little readings in history.

Mr. Wilder, in a foreword to his book of little plays, tells himself and us the object of his æsthetic striving:

"I hope," he says, "through many mistakes, to discover that spirit that is not unequal to the elevation of the great religious themes, yet which does not fall into a repellent didacticism. Didacticism is an attempt at the coercion of another's free mind, even though one knows that in these matters, beyond logic, beauty is the only persuasion. Here the schoolmaster enters again. He sees all that is fairest in the Christian tradition made repugnant to the new generations by reason of the diction in which it is expressed. . . . So that the revival of religion is almost a matter of rhetoric. The work is difficult, perhaps impossible (perhaps all religions die out with the exhaustion of the language), but it at least reminds us that Our Lord asked us in His work to be not only gentle as doves, but as wise as serpents."

Mr. Wilder wishes to restore, he says, through *Beauty and Rhetoric, the Spirit of Religion in American Literature*. One can respect any writer in America who sets himself a goal higher than the usual racketeering. But what is this religious spirit Mr. Wilder aims to restore? Is it the crude self-torture of the Holy Rollers, or the brimstone howls and fears of the Baptists, or even the mad, titanic sincerities and delusions of a Tolstoy or Dostoievsky?

No, it is that newly fashionable literary religion that centers around Jesus Christ, the First British Gentleman. It is a pastel, pastiche, dilettante religion, without the true neurotic blood and fire, a daydream of homosexual figures in graceful gowns moving archaically among the lilies. It is Anglo-Catholicism, that last refuge of the American literary snob.

This genteel spirit of the new parlor-Christianity pervades every phrase of Mr. Wilder's rhetoric. What gentle theatrical sighs! what

lovely, well composed deaths and martyrdoms! what languishings and flutterings of God's sinning doves! what little jewels of Sunday-school wisdom, distributed modestly here and there through the softly flowing narrative like delicate pearls, diamonds, and rubies on the costume of a meek, wronged Princess gracefully drowning herself for love, (if my image is clear).

Wilder has concocted a synthesis of all the chambermaid literature, Sunday-school tracts, and boulevard piety there ever were. He had added a dash of the prep-school teacher's erudition, then embalmed all this in the speciously glamorous style of the late Anatole France. He talks much of art, of himself as Artist, of style. He is a very conscious craftsman. But his is the most irritating and pretentious style pattern I have read in years. It has the slick, smug finality of the lesser Latins; that shallow clarity and tight little good taste that remind one of nothing so much as the conversation and practice of a veteran cocotte.

Mr. Wilder strains to be spiritual; but who could reveal any real agonies and exaltations of spirit in this neat, tailormade rhetoric? It is a great lie. It is Death. Its serenity is that of the corpse. Prick it, and it will bleed violet ink and *apéritif*. It is false to the great stormy music of Anglo-Saxon speech. Shakespeare is crude and disorderly beside Mr. Wilder. Milton, Fielding, Burns, Blake, Byron, Chaucer or Hardy could never receive a passing mark in Mr. Wilder's classroom of style.

And this is the style with which to express America? Is this the speech of a pioneer continent? Will this discreet French drawing-room hold all the blood, horror, and hope of the world's new empire? Is this the language of the intoxicated Emerson? Or the clean, rugged Thoreau, or vast Whitman? Where are the modern streets of New York, Chicago, and New Orleans in these little novels? Where are the cotton mills, and the murder of Ella May and her songs? Where are the child slaves of the beet fields? Where are the stockbroker suicides, the labor racketeers, or passion and death of the coal miners? Where are Babbitt, Jimmy Higgins, and Anita Loos's Blonde? Is Mr. Wilder a Swede or a Greek, or is he an American? No stranger would know from these books he has written.

But is it right to demand this "nativism" of him? Yes, for Mr. Wilder has offered himself as a spiritual teacher; therefore one may say: Father, what are your lessons? How will your teaching help the "spirit" trapped in American capitalism? But Wilder takes refuge in the rootless cosmopolitanism which marks every *émigré* trying to flee the problems of his community. Internationalism is a totally different spirit. It begins at home. Mr. Wilder speaks much of the "human heart" and its eternal problems. It is with these, he would

have us believe, that he concerns himself; and they are the same in any time and geography, he says. Another banal evasion. For the human heart, as he probes it in Greece, Peru, Italy, and other remote places, is only the "heart" of a small futile group with whom few Americans have the faintest kinship.

For to repeat, Mr. Wilder remains the poet of a small sophisticated class that has recently arisen in America—our genteel bourgeoisie. His style is their style; it is the new fashion. Their women have taken to wearing his Greek chlamys and faintly indulge themselves in his smart Victorian pieties. Their men are at ease in his Paris and Rome.

America won the War. The world's wealth flowed into it like a red Mississippi. The newest and greatest of all leisure classes was created. Luxury-hotels, golf, old furniture, and Vanity Fair sophistication were some of their expressions.

Thorstein Veblen foretold all this in 1899, in an epoch-making book that every American critic ought to study like a Bible. In *The Theory of the Leisure Class* he painted the hopeless course of most American culture for the next three decades. The grim, ironic prophet has been justified. Thornton Wilder is the perfect flower of the new prosperity. He has all the virtues Veblen said this leisure class would demand: the air of good breeding, the decorum, priestliness, glossy high finish as against intrinsic qualities, conspicuous inutility, caste feeling, love of the archaic, etc. . . .

All this is needed to help the parvenu class forget its lowly origins in American industrialism. It yields them a short cut to the aristocratic emotions. It disguises the barbaric sources of their income, the billions wrung from American workers and foreign peasants and coolies. It lets them feel spiritually worthy of that income.

Babbitt made them ashamed of being crude American climbers. Mr. Wilder, "gentle as the dove and wise as the serpent," is a more constructive teacher. Taking them patiently by the hand, he leads them into castles, palaces, and far-off Greek islands, where they may study the human heart when it is nourished by blue blood. This Emily Post of culture will never reproach them; or remind them of Pittsburgh or the breadlines. He is always in perfect taste; he is the personal friend of Gene Tunney.

"For there is a land of the living and a land of the dead, and the bridge is love, the only survival, the only meaning." And nobody works in a Ford plant, and nobody starves looking for work, and there is nothing but Love in God's ancient Peru, Italy, Greece, if not in God's capitalist America 1930!

Let Mr. Wilder write a book about modern America. We predict

it will reveal all his fundamental silliness and superficiality, now hidden under a Greek chlamys.

## AMERICAN FICTION: THE MAJOR TREND

GRANVILLE HICKS

ALTHOUGH THE realistic novel appeared in England in the middle of the eighteenth century and within a hundred years had made great advances in both England and France, it was not firmly established in the United States until after the Civil War. Our first three important novelists worked outside the realistic tradition. Cooper, influenced of course by Scott, introduced the romantic novel of frontier adventure, fathering a numerous but undistinguished branch of American fiction. Hawthorne, though an incomparably greater artist, left no direct descendants, perhaps because the very perfection of his delicate and bloodless allegories demonstrated the impossibility of further progress in that particular direction. Melville, too, stands alone, not merely our first but our only metaphysical novelist. The indirect influence of these men has doubtless been considerable; their direct influence has been slight.

For certainly, whether we consider numbers or distinction, it is the realistic tradition that has dominated American fiction. Realism, in the sense of the term that was current at the time in England and on the Continent, appears, after the Civil War, in the work of William Dean Howells and Henry James. But there were differences apparent in the first novels of the two men, and these differences defined two schools within the one tradition. For James's conception of realism much can be said, but the application of his theories, quite as much as temperamental predilections, took him abroad and alienated him from his native land. Howells was left, armed with a definite theory of the novel and a clear-cut program for the American artist. For three decades he dominated American literature; for half a century he was a figure to be reckoned with.

As Howells saw it, the task of the novelist was to reproduce as exactly as possible the kind of life he observed about him. To support his theories he drew, in critical discussion, upon a knowledge of his French and Russian contemporaries; but his own affiliations were with the English realists, from whom he selected Jane Austen for special admiration. He admired her because she wrote simply and exactly of the kind of experience she had known. That was what, all his life, he tried to do, first in his sketches of Italy, then in his sketches of Boston and Cambridge, then in his little novelettes of travel, and

finally in such novels as *A Modern Instance*, *The Rise of Silas Lapham* and *A Hazard of New Fortunes*.

It is this attempt to describe what he regarded as central elements in American life that distinguishes him from many authors of his time. It separates him not only from Henry James, but also from the local-color writers. To this flourishing school Howells, seeing in its work an attempt to deal honestly with American realities, gave his blessing. To an extent he was right, but there was a distinction he should have made. Most of these local colorists, though professing adherence to the canons of fiction Howells had advocated, were actually writing, not about contemporary life in the various sections, but about the life that had gone on a generation before. The much discussed weaknesses of the local-color novels come not so much from their authors' provincialism as from their nostalgia, their refusal to contemplate the changing character of the section, their preoccupation with the glories of an earlier, pre-industrial age. To some of Eggleston's novels, to such a book as Howe's *Story of a Country Town*, to Mary E. Wilkins Freeman's *Pembroke*, Howells could legitimately have given his approval. Such regionalism as this, with its honest portrayal of existing conditions, was laying the foundation for a true national literature, which would come when it was fully recognized that the section could be understood only in its relation to the larger unit. Retrospective regionalism, on the other hand, was a retreat from contemporary confusion; as a movement it ended in mere quaintness.

Howells' failure to distinguish between the two types of sectionalism did not prevent him from carrying out his program, and as the local-color school declined, the vigor of the tradition he had founded became more and more apparent. He began, as did the better regionalists, with the portrayal of the life about him, but, because of his urban experience, he came much more quickly than they to the realization that he was depicting a nation in the throes of revolution. He saw that the country was changing from a federation of relatively isolated sections to a centralized nation, was losing its racial homogeneity, was becoming a stratified plutocracy. Because he felt, however confusedly, that there was no other way of understanding men and women he tried to reveal these changes and the forces behind them as they affected the lives of his characters.

If he failed, it was not because his aims were wrong, but because the task was too much for his powers. Howells suffered from two sorts of disabilities. On the one hand, he fully shared the prudery of his age, temperamentally preferred to deal with the more cheerful aspects of life, and seldom mingled with either the ruling class or its direct victims. For these reasons he could render only in part the kinds of experiences that were most representative of the struggle

he sought to describe. On the other hand, he had no fundamental clue to the meaning of that struggle; he had never undertaken the studies that would have equipped him to understand the changes he perceived. At times he caught a glimpse of the real issues, but there was no steady light to illuminate his pages. As a result, his most ambitious books, such as *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, are the least unified and, in their totality, the least effective.

The story of American literature in the last forty years is primarily the account of the struggle to overcome these weaknesses. As was natural and perhaps necessary, the first victories were those that led to the broadening of the scope of the novel. In the nineties Victorianism and the genteel tradition were breaking down, and new schools of fiction arose. But the most enduring work of the decade was done by three writers who remained loyal to Howells, and were praised by him, though they sought to transcend his limitations.

Hamlin Garland, his awareness of the sufferings of his family and friends sharpened by his experiences in the East, gave, in his early short stories, a bitterly honest account of hardships on the middle border. Knowing well the kind of life he described, and refusing to compromise with sentimental optimism in his account of it, he simply swept away, in *Main-Traveled Roads*, the old habits of timidity and misrepresentation. In *Maggie* Stephen Crane performed the same task, and took a short step towards the breaking down of hypocrisy and prejudice. Frank Norris, after first yielding to the romantic qualities in his nature, stiffened the realistic method with a strong mixture of Zolaesque naturalism.

For one reason or another none of these writers accomplished so much as he had promised, but they had brought into fiction great segments of experience that, despite their obvious importance, Howells had ignored. They were, however, no more successful than he in discovering a point of view that would help them to understand the American chaos. Crane, journalist to the end, was scarcely aware of the problem. Garland, relying at first on bitterness to give point to his fiction, lost himself, once that bitterness had been dispelled by his personal success, in a vaguely humanitarian patriotism. Norris, who clearly saw what the problem was, confessed his defeat when he wrote that extraordinary passage at the end of *The Octopus* that hymns the inevitable triumph, through the mechanical operation of natural forces, of right over wrong.

During the muckraking decade the bulk of fiction was concerned with the contemporary scene, and at last the real rulers of America began to appear in novels. If the controlling phenomenon in American life was the rise of industrialism, then the fiction of



Herrick, Phillips, Sinclair, and Churchill was establishing itself at the very center. Whatever else had happened, Howells' conception of the province of the novel had triumphed over every other tradition. And yet the first decade of the century was almost barren of real literary achievement. The blame could no longer be placed on lack of experience, for most of the muckrakers had had direct contact with both political and industrial struggles. For the most part they did not hesitate to portray ugliness and cruelty. Even prudishness, though strong, was losing ground in its attempt to restrain literary expression. But their failure is obvious and the reason for their failure is clear: the muckraking decade was the muddled decade. Whether the novelists of that decade followed Roosevelt as Churchill did, or attempted like Upton Sinclair the unimaginative application of socialist dogmas, or shrank with Herrick from the consequences of industrialism, or vacillated as Phillips did between sensational journalism and the preaching of panaceas, they betrayed their confusion on every page, and the centrality of their themes only called attention to their bewilderment. They could not master the chaos of American life, and that explains the chaos of their books.

If, then, the superficial obstacles to the realistic novel had been eliminated, if the novelist was able to write with both authority and frankness about the major movements in American life, and if the result was nevertheless thoroughly disappointing, it is no wonder that the validity of Howells' aim began to be questioned. Certain of the more recent novelists have more or less completely broken with the tradition he established. Edith Wharton, for example, has continued the Jamesian tradition, an awful indication of what James might have become if he had stayed in America. Hergesheimer and Cabell have, in their different ways, given us romantic fiction, more sophisticated and slightly more palatable than that of the nineties because based on avowed rather than unconscious disillusionment and defeat. Willa Cather, unable to make the transition from the West of her childhood to the West as it exists today, has achieved a kind of synthetic beauty by writing about the remote past. One by one these writers have demonstrated that, difficult as it may be to write about the central movements in American life, it is nothing short of disastrous, if one has any concern for artistic integrity, not to write about them.

Beside these writers we may place three of their contemporaries—Dreiser, Lewis, Anderson. Here, despite all changes, the old patterns repeat themselves. In the attempt to give the exact accents of common speech and to reproduce the precise mannerisms of familiar conduct, pages of Lewis' novels echo pages of Howells', though they differ often enough in the judgments they pronounce on what they

both portray. Dreiser works out on a larger scale the objectivity of Crane's *Maggie* and Norris' *McTeague*. Both Lewis and Anderson share with Howe and Garland the desire to show how the real life of agricultural sections differs from the pretty pictures of sentimental local colorists. And of course the fundamental intention of these writers, setting them off from their contemporaries, links them with the muckrakers, with the rebels of the nineties, and ultimately with Howells. What more than anything else they have wanted to do is to write about American life as representative Americans, as representatives of the two great classes of the exploiters and the exploited, are living it.

All three of these men have done work that the immediate future is not likely to forget, but the last five years have been full of indictments of their failures. Their failure is the same old failure: the failure to achieve order, form, significance. But too often the critics do not recognize that the problem is not exclusively literary. After all, one cannot achieve form by fiat; it is not something that is imposed upon materials from the outside; rather, it is the literary expression of perceived relationships. What is commonly called and what in this essay we have termed the American chaos is not really chaos; there is order, but it is not perceived. Unless order is seen, all talk of imposing form is folly. Dreiser, Lewis, and Anderson, perceiving no fundamental relationships, seeing no unity in the phenomena they portrayed, would have been dishonest if they had attempted to impose an artificial unity. Dreiser, muddle-headed though he is, has perhaps been the clearest-sighted in practice, for he has admitted his confusion, massing his materials in a disorder of which his style is symbolic. Anderson, struggling against his own impulses to shrink from all that our industrial civilization involves, has given plentiful evidence of the way in which the conflict has checked creative activity. Both he and Dreiser have recently disavowed their old confusions and hesitations, but their earlier attitudes seem likely to continue to dominate their fiction. *Beyond Desire*, certainly, though it reveals a kind of progress, marks no drastic change in Anderson's way of thinking or style of writing and, whatever he may do in the field of action, it is doubtful if he can ever free his imagination from its burden of doubt and bewilderment. As for Lewis, he shows no sign of realizing that he is in the same maze as the people he describes; and it cannot be denied that his condition explains the superficial verisimilitude of his descriptions.

When one thinks of how much effort has been expended in this kind of writing and of how little it has directly achieved, it is not surprising that many of the authors who have come to maturity in the

last decade have rejected the aims of the Dreiser-Anderson-Lewis group. The fact that they have so obviously failed to achieve formal significance has encouraged writers such as Thornton Wilder to work for perfection of form at the expense of all else. The weakness of novels about industrialism has confirmed Elizabeth Roberts and Glenway Wescott in their choice of other topics. And, as Miss Roberts has revived regionalism—with many of the earlier faults, by the way—so Faulkner has appeared in the tradition of Poe and Bierce. Surveying the twenties at their close, critics argued, and with much justification, that the Howells' tradition had been momentarily, and perhaps permanently, submerged.

But there was a writer in that tradition, one whose importance is receiving growing recognition. Curiously enough, Sinclair Lewis singled him out in 1925, saying that John Dos Passos' *Manhattan Transfer* was a suggestion of what the future might develop in fiction. Dos Passos stands squarely in the major tradition, for, far more than any other recognized writer of our generation, he is dealing with representative men and women in representative situations. And not only is the tradition continued in his work; it moves toward its consummation. Equipped with a many-sided knowledge of American life, and unhampered by either reticence or superficial optimism, he is also feeling his way towards an interpretation of American life that enables him to bind together in a literary unit its diverse phenomena.

It is not to be supposed that Dos Passos has completely triumphed over his difficulties. He has found ways of portraying the complexity of American life, but he has not altogether succeeded in showing the unity that underlies that diversity. Yet he has been successful enough to indicate the point at which an artist must stand if the pattern of our life is to take shape in his imagination. Dos Passos' fundamental discovery is that American life is a battleground, and that arrayed on one side are the exploiters and on the other the exploited. He has seen that the alignment is not always clear, that many men are divided in their loyalties, that each side is rent by internecine conflicts. But the great fact is none the less real, and for the patient mind and the active imagination it is the key to the labyrinth. If there is any other working interpretation of the apparent chaos than that which presents itself in terms of the class struggle, it has not been revealed. On the other hand, the pragmatic value of that interpretation is apparent in *The 42nd Parallel* and *1919*. Nor does Dos Passos stand alone. The same attitude is apparent in some of the work of John Herrmann, Erskine Caldwell, and Robert Cantwell, and it is the shaping spirit of two recent novels of Southern labor—Fielding Burke's *Call Home the Heart* and Grace Lumpkin's *To Make My Bread*. Such books

show that this interpretation is not an open sesame to literary excellence; they show that even a skillful writer may meet with difficulties that he cannot solve. But at the same time they indicate that, as the conception of the class struggle permeates the imaginations of artists, as they come to look naturally and effortlessly at events in its light, the liberation of American literature from confusion, superficiality, and despair will have begun.

The discovery of the class struggle as the fundamental interpretation of American life presents a further problem to the artist, the problem of his own position in the conflict. Not only Dos Passos but the other novelists of the struggle have solved that problem by placing themselves on the side of the proletariat, working for and with them and seeking to see life as they see it. Is not this the only logical position for the artist who understands the implications of the class conflict? After all, the American artist for over a century has constantly criticized the ideals of the bourgeoisie, and this criticism has steadily increased in bitterness. Long experience shows that for the artist there is no health in the bourgeois way of life. If, then, the issue is clearly presented, if it is fully realized that in this war, as in any war, there is no such thing as neutrality, can artists hesitate to ally themselves with the proletariat? Of course they can and will, many of them, impelled by forces stronger than reason or the desire for understanding; but is not the price they will pay sufficiently indicated in the history of our literature?

After all, for the realistic novelist the idea of an alliance with the proletariat is not new. Intellectually, Howells was not far from that solution of his difficulties, as his *Traveler from Altruria* shows, though it was impossible for him imaginatively to accept the consequences of his theories. Garland, for a few years, thought and wrote as one of an oppressed class. The muckrakers, confused as they were, saw the failings of the capitalists, and some of them saw the failings of capitalism. The sympathies of Anderson and Dreiser have always been, and now of course more strongly than ever, on the side of the exploited. Dos Passos, then, and his fellow pioneers, by finding in the proletarian point of view a solution for their problems, have not gone outside the tradition. Rather, they have fulfilled it the more richly, not merely carrying out its aims, but also more completely expressing its spirit. Thus they make doubly clear what the basis of the tradition is and give double assurance that in it lies the hope of our literature.

## MAX EASTMAN'S UNNECESSARY TEARS

JOSHUA KUNITZ

MR. EASTMAN'S laments over the "crude humiliation of arts and letters, the obsequious and almost obscene lowering of the standards of the creative mind" in the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics are on a par with his other startling revelations about revolutionary literature. Read his opening paragraph in the August, 1933, *Modern Monthly*: \*

"Diego Rivera's notion of the artist as supplying nourishment for the nervous system of the revolution is a mild one compared to the views about art which prevail in Soviet Russia. Nerve nourishment after all verges toward 'recreation', and might even let in 'beauty', unless the doors were carefully watched. (These were the two terms on Lenin's lips when he talked about art.) In Stalin's Russia no such loopholes are left open. Art is there viewed, managed, and spoken of in the same terms as mechanical engineering or any kind of commodity production. The 'five-year plan in poetry,' the 'Magnitostroy of art and literature', 'the literary hegemony of the proletariat', 'the seizure of power in the arts', 'poetic shock troops', 'collective' or 'collegiate creation', 'the art-job', 'word-craft', the 'turning out of literary commodities', 'poetry as socially responsible labor', the 'creative duty to the socialist fatherland', the 'militant struggle for party-ism in the arts', 'the Bolshevik creative line'—for eight years the slogans have held the field in Russia without competition."

A modern reader familiar with Soviet psychology and not immune to the emotional appeal of Magnitostroy may not find anything very objectionable in such expressions as "Magnitostroy of Literature." He would most likely recognize it, not as a symptom of the "Taylorization" or "Fordization" of the arts, but as a refreshingly novel, typically Soviet figure of speech. Magnitostroy, to him, would convey the feeling of something grandiose, magnificent, imagination-stirring. As regards mechanical, engineering, or industrial terms applied to literature, one need not go to the Soviet Union for illustrations. What about "literary *technique*," "sentence *structure*," "*construction* or *architecture* of a novel," the "building" of a character, the "polishing" of a piece of writing. Mr. Eastman himself has a chapter in his *Literary Mind* entitled "Division of Labor." And only today the writer of these lines heard an American publisher speak of "the literary market being glutted with such stuff." Urging Mr.

\* Reprinted in *Artists in Uniform*.

Eastman's line of reasoning, a Soviet critic might turn round and declare that in *America* "art is viewed, managed, and spoken of in the same terms as mechanical engineering or any kind of commodity production"; and he would come immeasurably closer to the truth about America than does Eastman to that about the Soviet Union.

It is not, we suspect, the mechanical or industrial content of the Soviet literary terms, but the newness of them, the revolutionary tinge of them that repels our aging critic. For Mr. Eastman is tired; Mr. Eastman is languid. He shrinks from the mere suggestion of "party-ism" in the arts. "Art is a weapon" is a slogan altogether too harsh and raucous for his worn, frazzled nerves. "Dialectical materialism" is an unmitigated bore. Mr. Eastman longs for "play," "humor." He sighs for "recreation," "beauty," and perhaps a little bit of love.

"Recreation" "beauty"—these, Mr. Eastman tells us, were the terms on Lenin's lips when he talked of art. And Mr. Eastman agrees with Lenin, and thus, by implication, pays homage to him. But Lenin, whose liberal æsthetic judgments Mr. Eastman reveres, is gone, and now, "in Stalin's Russia," weeps Mr. Eastman, "no such loopholes are left open." Too bad. Too bad.

There is, however, a somewhat ludicrous side to Mr. Eastman's grief. For if the truth must be divulged, it was Lenin, and not Stalin, who was the first to frankly demand "party-ism" in art; it was Lenin, and not Stalin, who first unqualifiedly enlisted art as a weapon in the class struggle. Had Mr. Eastman, before shedding needless tears, consulted volume IV of Lenin's *Collected Works* he would have come across the following incredible passage:

"The socialist proletariat"—Lenin wrote in 1905—"must establish the principle of party literature; it must develop this literature and realize it in actual life in the clearest and most concrete form . . . Down with non-partisan writers! Down with the supermen-litterateurs! Literature must become a part of the general proletarian movement, a cog in that vast unified Socialist mechanism which is set in motion by the conscious advance guard of the entire working class. Literature must become a component part of the organized, planned, unified Socialist party work."

A piquant performance: to extol Lenin for everything one *has* read of him, and to blame Stalin for everything one *hasn't*. Not only does Mr. Eastman denounce Stalin for *Lenin's* thoughts (there is some justification for *that*: Stalin is the foremost follower and interpreter of Lenin), but, preposterously enough, he also denounces him for the thought or lack of thoughts of all kinds of Ivans and Stepan and Profans in the Soviet Union. Forsooth, Selvinsky (a poet!) said:

*"Let's ponder and repair our nerves  
And start up like any other factory;"*

and Tretiakov (a litterateur!) said: "We assume that book production can be planned in advance like the production of textiles or steel." While I do not wish to say anything derogatory about either Tretiakov or Selvinsky, I cannot but wonder what has Stalin to do, what has the Communist Party to do, what has Illes or Auerbach or the *New Masses* or the John Reed Club to do with their fanciful literary theories?

As it happens Tretiakov belonged to the Lefts, a now defunct literary grouping; and Selvinsky belonged to the Constructivists, another now defunct literary grouping. Both the Lefts and the Constructivists were direct descendants of the Futurists and had their period of efflorescence long before the rise of Stalin. They were characteristic expressions of the NEP, of the bourgeois elements in the NEP. They groveled before American *business*, American efficiency, American technology. They attempted to transfer these concepts to art. Unable to fully orient themselves in the complex and ever changing Soviet reality, they attempted to simplify that reality for themselves by reducing to mechanics, technology, craft, mass production in the arts. To these scions of the bourgeoisie, psychology was worse than poison; for psychological writing would reveal their utter hollowness and lack of inner comprehension of the proletarian world about them. Both the *Lefts* and the *Constructivists*, though loudly proclaiming their revolutionism, had not a Communist amongst them, not a worker amongst them. The literary groupings that had Communists, had workers, and were close to the Party, regarded Leftism and Constructivism as bourgeois anathema, and fought it tooth and nail. This being the case, it seems incomprehensible why Mr. Eastman insists on placing at the door of Stalin, the Politbureau, Auerbach, etc., the literary fantasies of a Tretiakov or a Selvinsky.

On the contrary, the whole struggle on the literary front in the Soviet Union has been waged against the attempts to "Fordize and Taylorize" art by those who found simplification easier than the tackling of the kaleidoscopic, rapidly changing, bewilderingly complex Soviet reality. To call a work of art schematic was enough to damn it. To say of an author that he treated his heroes mechanically was to brand him as a cheap vulgarizer. "Zhivoy Chelovek"—"Living Man"—was a literary slogan around which many a bitter battle was fought. And Fadeev, one of the foremost novelists in the Soviet Union, a Communist and the editor of the leading literary monthly *Krania Nov*, proclaimed Leo Tolstoy as his master.

The Kharkov Conference, suggests Mr. Eastman, is merely a

reflection of what is taking place in Soviet letters generally—a distressing picture of “sacerdotal bigotry on the one side and sacrosanctimonious prostration to the priesthood, the repositories of the sacred dogma—sacred just so long as it is backed up by the secular, armed and priest-employing power—on the other.” Yet a mere perusal of the twenty or so novels translated into the English language—novels ranging from the extreme right to the extreme left, from Ilf and Petrov’s *Little Golden Calf* and Kataiev’s *Embezzlers* to Gladkov’s *Cement* and Panferov’s *Brusski*—should have been sufficient to induce greater caution in a conscientious commentator. But, undeterred, Mr. Eastman, who prefers to remain disconsolate with respect to Soviet literature, plunges into melancholy ruminations over “sacred dogmas,” “sacerdotal bigotry,” and the “obsequious and almost obscene lowering of the standards of the creative mind” in the U.S.S.R.

Altogether, to weep over the “crude humiliation of arts and letters” in a country where playhouses, concert halls, museums, and art schools, despite their unprecedented growth, are always filled to their utmost capacity, where tickets to the Moscow Art Theatre are sold out a year in advance, and where moving pictures of the quality of *The Road To Life*, *Shame*, *26 Commissars*, and *Deserter* are produced in increasing numbers is, to express it mildly, unmitigated nonsense. To shed crocodile tears over the crude humiliation of letters in a country where more significant novels, poems, plays, and children’s books are being published than in any other country in the world, and where editions, however large, are swallowed up overnight, is worse than nonsense. Seeing such absurdities in cold print, while one’s memory is still filled with living images of workers, *in the midst of the supreme exertions and endemic shortages of the Five Year Plan*, assembled in large meetings to discuss novels, plays, poems, movies; of peasants in the Urals formulating in writing for the State Publishing House their reactions to books and pictures; of Red Army men at a literary gathering making tumultuous ovations for poets and prose-writers and calling out dozens of favorite stories and verses which they want the guests to read, is, frankly speaking, a bit shocking. One wonders: is this lack of information, obtuseness, or deliberate distortion?

One need not be an “obedient doggy . . . lapping up every word dropped from the lips of any Russian Bolshevik” to realize the tenuousness of Mr. Eastman’s intellectual criteria when he says (*in the sixteenth year of proletarian dictatorship!*) that “Soviet Russia, notwithstanding her successful revolution, is behind the intellectual standards of other countries.” By other countries Mr. Eastman, we take it, means Hitler’s Germany and Washington-Merry-Go-Round America. The truth is, there is no other country in the contemporary



world where the arts are so vital, so earnest, where the creative artist, even the beginner, enjoys such prestige and economic security as in the Soviet Union. The "priesthood," the "repositories of the sacred dogma" of the arts in the Soviet Union are the readers. The qualities which the Soviet masses and critics expect from their creative artists and writers and which the latter are striving with varying degrees of success to achieve are artistic verisimilitude, social awareness, revolutionary dynamism.

In the ceaseless give and take between life and art, the Soviet artists and writers have been contributing to the intellectual and aesthetic development of the masses and the masses to the vitality and earnestness of the arts.

During their brief stay in the U.S.S.R., the American delegates to the Kharkov conference had one unforgettable moment of vitalizing contact with the Soviet proletariat, when the Dnieprostroy workers, after listening to the revolutionary speeches of various foreign delegates, respectfully informed the guests, through two workers' representatives, that their speeches were not satisfactory. "We thought," declared the workers, "that as artists, you would give us vivid pictures, artistic descriptions of how the workers live and struggle in your countries. Revolutionary phrases we can deliver ourselves. We have been thirteen years in the revolution. We are telling this simply because we know that the other workers whom you are likely to address during your stay in the U.S.S.R. will feel similarly. We have outgrown vague phrases. We want facts, and from artists, artistic presentation of such facts."

Such is the "sacred dogma" of Soviet art: *We want facts, and from artists, artistic presentation of such facts.* At a factory club in Moscow, the writer of these lines once had the instructive experience of hearing a large assembly of workers tell a prominent Soviet writer, Urii Libedinsky, that the life story of one of their colleagues, a shock-brigader, as written up by the novelist was not nearly so interesting and moving as the story told at that meeting by the worker protagonist himself. In other words, the workers criticized the author for inadequate artistic treatment of facts. On the other hand, as an expression of their appreciation of a book of sketches describing kolkhoz "Beacon" the peasant members of that kolkhoz sent in to the State Publishing House 187 individual orders for that book.

The extent of mass interest in the arts is clearly reflected in the Soviet daily press. Now it is a demand from a village that Dreiser's *American Tragedy* be printed in a large popular edition, now it is a demand for more Russian translations of the literatures of the minority peoples, now it is the spoofing of a futuristic horse drawn on the cover of a booklet dealing with domestic animals ("How can we

believe the contents of your book, when you don't even know what a horse looks like?") I have before me the last number (August 11, 1933) of the *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, the official organ of the Union of Soviet Writers. Almost two complete columns are devoted to suggestions of topics sent in by various worker-correspondents. T. Baturkina, a worker of a stocking factory, writes: "Give us a portrait of the Soviet woman. Of the woman who is in the vanguard. Show her as she is, in her family relations, with her new psychology, demands, aspirations. Show her as a mother. We expect from our writers the portrait of woman as producer, social being, mother." Comrade Smolianinov suggests Bobriki as "an exceptionally rich and thankful field for the study of the new processes that are taking place in the working class." Bobriki, a new industrial city with a population of 40,000, has been neglected by the creative writers, complains the worker correspondent. The writers Alexeev, Dementiev, and Demidov have done something, but not enough. "Bobriki," concludes Smolianinov, "should serve as an important object for depiction in a number of literary works, as well as a place for the development of new poets, writers, dramatists from the ranks of the working class, new masters of culture." The other letters are all in the same vein. Even the builders of the Moscow subway feel that their work and their lives have been too much neglected by the creators of literature. The Soviet workers want to see themselves, their heroes, their achievements reflected in their literature. The "Fordization" and "Taylorization" of the arts, moans Mr. Eastman.

In his book of essays entitled *The Literary Mind*, Mr. Eastman expounds the pale, escapist, art-for-art's sake aesthetic typical of the tired petty-bourgeois radical who stands bewildered amidst the deafening clashes of two opposing worlds. By erecting a fictitious contradiction between art and science and insisting that it is the advance of science into fields heretofore occupied by literary eloquence—rather than machinery, the World War, or the break-down of capitalism—that is responsible for the woes of the arts in the capitalist world, Mr. Eastman very characteristically rationalizes a subconscious, class-conditioned evasion of the real problem. His article in the *Modern Monthly* reveals the underlying motive of his aesthetic. This is succinctly expressed in an alleged remark of John Reed's "made on the north-west corner of Greenwich Avenue and Tenth Street: 'This class struggle plays hell with your poetry.'" We do not know about John Reed—the topographical evidence adduced by Mr. Eastman makes us a bit skeptical as to the authenticity of the quotation—but that that quotation fully expresses Mr. Eastman's sentiments there can be little doubt. Since the class struggle plays hell with your arts, to hell with the class struggle and long live the arts! No wonder

Mr. Eastman speaks so feelingly about the obscene lowering of the standards of the creative mind in the Soviet Union. According to him, it appears, the creative mind should function in the purity of an absolute social vacuum.

As a contrast to Mr. Eastman's escapist aesthetic I should like to reproduce the comments of a group of North Caucasian peasants who deprecated a playlet (*agitka*), produced by a troupe of young actors from Rostov-on-Don, on the ground that it was wanting in verisimilitude and psychological subtlety. "To show us a Kulak with a big belly, heavy gold chain, and loud bossy voice," argued one peasant, "is not to show us the enemy as he actually behaves nowadays. To recognize such a Kulak is easy, and we don't need the play for that. These days, a Kulak, even if he had a belly, would make every effort to pull it in, if he had a gold chain, he would take care to hide it, and his voice he would try to make as soft and sweet as possible. He would try to get into the kolkhoz, and bore from within. This is the enemy, and this is the way he is to be shown. By simplifying the problem, you are disarming us, you are putting us off our guard."—And it seems to me that this Russian peasant, for all his "primitive equipment and naive habit of mind," reached out toward a philosophy of art infinitely more virile, exacting, and fruitful, particularly in a period of gigantic revolutionary struggle, than that promulgated by Mr. Eastman in his highly sophisticated and polished *The Literary Mind*. Mr. Eastman endeavors to deracinate art, to detach it from the basic all-pervading struggles of life and thus ultimately to deprive the revolution of one of its powerful weapons. The Soviet peasant-worker, a Bolshevik, wants to bring art close to earth and earth's struggle, and to pour into it the spirit, the energy, the rhythms of a fresh, throbbing class, struggling for the final emancipation of itself and all humanity.

## RECENT PROBLEMS OF REVOLUTIONARY LITERATURE

WILLIAM PHILLIPS AND PHILIP RAHV

THE last year (1933-34) has seen a quickening in the growth of revolutionary literature in America. The maturing of labor struggles and the steady increase of Communist influence have given the impetus and created a receptive atmosphere for this literature. As was to be expected, the novel—which is the major literary form of today—has taken the lead. Cantwell, Rollins, Conroy, and Armstrong have

steered fiction into proletarian patterns of struggle. In the theatre, *Peace on Earth, Stevedore*, and *They Shall Not Die* show a parallel growth. The emergence of a number of little revolutionary magazines, together with the phenomenal success of the weekly *New Masses*, has provided an outlet for the briefer forms of writing. *The Great Tradition*, by Granville Hicks, has launched us on a reevaluation of American literary history.

This new literature is unified not only by its themes but also by its perspectives. Even a casual reading of it will impress one with the conviction that here is a new way of looking at life—the bone and flesh of a revolutionary sensibility taking on literary form. The proletarian writer, in sharing the moods and expectations of his audience, gains that creative confidence and harmonious functioning within his class which gives him a sense of responsibility and discipline totally unknown in the preceding decade. Lacking this solidarity with his readers, the writer, as has been the case with the aesthetes of the twenties and those who desperately carry on their traditions today, ultimately becomes skeptical of the meaning of literature as a whole, sinking into the Nirvana of peaceful cohabitation with the Universe. Indeed, it is largely this intimate relationship between reader and writer that gives revolutionary literature an activism and purposefulness long since unattainable by the writers of other classes.

However, despite the unity of outlook of revolutionary literature, it contains a number of trends embodying contradictory aims and assumptions. It would be strange indeed, if the class struggle did not operate *within* revolutionary literature, though it is most clearly defined in the fight against bourgeois literature. The varying backgrounds of revolutionary writers and the diverse ways through which they come to Marxism set the frame for this inner struggle. Moreover, since forms and methods of writing do not drop like the gentle rain of heaven, but are slowly evolved in creative practice conditioned by the developing social relations, it is only natural that sharp differences of opinion should arise. To a Marxist such differences are not personal and formal, but actually reflect the stress of class conflict. Thus, the development of revolutionary literature is not unilinear; its progress is a process unfolding through a series of contradictions, through the struggle of opposed tendencies, and it is the business of criticism\* to help writers resolve these contradictions. Unless criticism fulfils this task, the progress of revolutionary literature is retarded and certain writers may even be shunted off their revolutionary rails.

\* By "criticism" we do not mean the body of formal analysis alone. Throughout this editorial most of our references to "critics" and "criticism" are meant to include the whole organizational and editorial leadership of revolutionary literature, the writer's critical attitude to himself and to others, as well as formal analysis.

Thus far Marxian criticism in this country has not faced the problem squarely, nor has it stated the diverse tendencies. The illusion has been allowed to spread that revolutionary writers constitute one happy family, united in irreconcilable struggle against capitalism. To a considerable extent, therefore, an atmosphere of empiricism has resulted, where writers clutch at the nearest method at hand without conscious selection, unfortified by criticism with the Marxian equipment necessary for coping with the problems of creative method. Some incidental pieces of criticism have helped to guide writers and readers, but on the whole no attempt has been made to place such theoretical work in the center of our discussions.

Neither have critics given writers adequate guidance in their quest of realistic revolutionary themes. Many young writers have declared themselves for Communism, and have joined the John Reed Clubs, but with few exceptions, they have not shown as yet a sufficient understanding of the meaning of such declarations in practice. What does the present paucity of authentic revolutionary short stories prove? Most of our writers have not grasped the fact that workers' struggles cannot be written about on the basis of inventiveness or a tourist's visit. The profile of the Bolshevik is emerging in America, heroic class battles are developing, new human types and relations are budding in and around the Communist Party; obviously, therefore, revolutionary fiction cannot be produced by applying abstract Communist ideology to old familiar surroundings. The assimilation of this new material requires direct participation instead of external observation; and the critic's task is to point out the dangers inherent in the *spectator's* attitude. The critic is the ideologist of the literary movement, and any ideologist, as Lenin pointed out "is worthy of that name only when he marches ahead of the spontaneous movement, points out the real road, and when he is able, ahead of all others, to solve all the theoretical, political, and tactical questions which the 'material elements' of the movement spontaneously encounter. It is necessary to be critical of it [the movement], to point out its dangers and defects and to aspire to *elevate* spontaneity to consciousness." (*A Conversation With Defenders of Economism*).

The most striking tendency, and the most natural one in a young revolutionary literature, is what is commonly called "leftism." Though it has seldom been explicitly stated in literary theory, its prejudices and assumptions are so widespread that at this time its salient features are easily recognized. Its zeal to steep literature overnight in the political program of Communism results in the attempt to force the reader's responses through a barrage of sloganized and inorganic writing. "Leftism," by tacking on political perspectives to awkward literary forms, drains literature of its more specific qualities. Unac-

quainted with the real experiences of workers, "leftism," in criticism and creation alike, hides behind a smoke-screen of verbal revolutionism. It assumes a direct line between economic base and ideology, and in this way distorts and vulgarizes the complexity of human nature, the motives of action and their expression in thought and feeling. In theory the "leftist" subscribes to the Marxian thesis of the continuity of culture, but in practice he makes a mockery of it by combating all endeavors to use the heritage of the past. In criticism the "leftist" substitutes gush on the one hand, and invective on the other, for analysis; and it is not difficult to see that to some of these critics Marxism is not a science but a *sentiment*. This tendency has been so pervasive that even some of our more important works suffer from elements of "leftism." (It is obviously beyond the scope of this editorial to analyze the subtle way in which "leftism" has affected various revolutionary works.) The long article on *Revolutionary Literature in the United States Today*, published in the *Windsor Quarterly* (Spring 1934) is a critical complement to "leftism" in poetry and fiction. It fails to see literature as a process, so much so that it absurdly identifies the "coming of age" of American literature with the unemployed demonstration of March 6, 1930. Though it shuttles from a purely literary to a purely political point of view, never integrating the two, its emphasis throughout is schematically political.

"Leftism" is not an accidental practice, nor can it be regarded merely as youthful impetuosity. Its literary "line" stems from the understanding of Marxism as mechanical materialism. In philosophy, mechanical materialism assumes a direct determinism of the whole superstructure by the economic foundation, ignoring the dialectical interaction between consciousness and environment, and the reciprocal influence of the parts of the superstructure on each other and on the economic determinants. The literary counterpart of mechanical materialism faithfully reflects this vulgarization of Marxism. But its effects strike even deeper: it paralyzes the writer's capacities by creating a dualism between his artistic consciousness and his beliefs, thus making it impossible for him to achieve anything beyond fragmentary, marginal expression.

At the other extreme we find a right-wing tendency, which is equally unsuccessful in imaginatively recreating the proletarian movement. The right-wing writer is usually very productive, but his work differs but slightly from that of liberal bourgeois writers. His acceptance of the revolutionary philosophy is half-hearted, though he makes sporadic use of it. The source of his attitude and practice is political fence-straddling, disinterest in Marxism, and lack of faith in the proletariat.

We realize, of course, that on their way to the revolution many fellow-travelers must inevitably tread this path. Nor would it be correct for Marxists to taunt and bludgeon them when their pace is slow. But passivity is equally incorrect. It must always be remembered that the fellow-travelers are trailing, not leading the literary movement, and our critics must not only make this clear but must give them concrete direction in order to help them solve their problems as quickly as possible. No doubt many fellow-travelers resent criticism, especially Marxist criticism, and some of our revolutionary editors and critics, unfortunately, in their endeavor to strike the proper note in their relations with fellow-travelers, frequently seem unable to distinguish between diplomacy and analysis, or between those who lead and those who trail behind—not that diplomacy has no place in literary criticism, but, generally speaking, *it should be put in its place*.

It should not be assumed that by elimination those writers who do not swing in either of these two directions have solved the problems of revolutionary writing. There is a large and diverse group who plunge into *easy* forms, drifting on the current of chance, without any sharp consciousness of their problems. The implication of their practice is that for the purposes of revolutionary literature, one form is as good as another, and that in general the old forms can be taken over bodily. For all practical purposes, they, as well as the other groups, have shown little audacity in reaching out for the vast raw material of art that the proletarian struggle is constantly erupting.

In this editorial, some of our problems have been implicitly touched upon. In the main they consist of: 1) The degree of the writer's awareness of *strata* in his audience, 2) The method of imaginatively assimilating political content, 3) The differentiation between class-alien and usable elements in the literature of the past, and 4) the development of Marxist standards in literature.

Not a few proletarian writers have grappled with these problems. In his recent series of articles on *Revolution and the Novel in the New Masses*, Granville Hicks has probed these problems in fiction. However, though Hicks has helped to clarify our approach, his method of classifying unimportant details, as well as his choice of critical subjects, is removed from the way the writer faces these problems. The writer does not decide *a priori* whether he will write a dramatic or complex novel; his choice is determined by a number of psychological and thematic factors. In general Hicks has given us a class analysis of the more obvious elements in fiction without first establishing essential Marxian generalizations about the relation of method to theme and form in terms of expanding audiences and new standards.

Obed Brooks is another critic who has concerned himself with

some aspects of these problems. Michael Gold and Joseph Freeman are the earliest pioneers of Marxian criticism in America, and their work has been mostly in the nature of direct *general* class warfare against bourgeois literary ideology. They fought valiantly to win a place for proletarian writers in American literature. Joshua Kunitz brought to America some of the experiences of Soviet writers. Some of our poets have been searching for poetic forms and themes that adequately express the emotional equivalents of the social-economic scene. But only in the novel, the most successful genre of our literature, have any far-reaching attempts been made toward the solution of these problems.

These problems cannot be solved by decree or dogma. Solutions will be made step by step, in the course of the continuous interaction of literary theory and literary practice. In this editorial, however, we wish to indicate several means of approach.

The very existence of two main types of revolutionary writing, the more intellectual and the more popular, shows that there is a division in our audience in terms of background and class composition. Workers who have no literary education prefer the poetry of Don West to that of Kenneth Fearing, whereas intellectuals reverse this choice. The proletarian writer should realize that he is functioning through his medium within the vanguard of the movement as a whole. As such, his task is to work out a sensibility and a set of symbols *unifying* the responses and experiences of his total audience. Insofar as this cannot be done overnight, his innovations must be constantly checked by the responses of his main audience, the working class, even while he strives to raise the cultural level of the masses.

The question of creative method is primarily a question of the imaginative assimilation of political content. We believe that the sensibility is the medium of assimilation: political content should not be isolated from the rest of experience but must be merged into the creation of complete personalities and the perception of human relations in their physical and sensual immediacy. The class struggle must serve as a premise, not as a discovery. This the "leftist" does not do on the grounds that such a method dilutes the political directness that he aims at; actually, however, he defeats his purpose, inasmuch as he dissolves action and being in political abstractions. To a Marxist the bourgeois claims of universality are an empty concept; those elements in art that have been called universal are merely those that have recurred so far. The problem of the revolutionist is not to seek universals but usables, for his task is to create a synthesis and not merely an innovation. Ultimately, of course, the question of usables involves, first, the retaining of the cultural acquisitions of



humanity as a *background of values*, and secondly, a selection of specific contributions by individual bourgeois writers.

Unless we are acutely aware of the body of literature as a whole, no standards of merit are possible. The measure of a revolutionary writer's success lies not only in his sensitiveness to proletarian material, but also in his ability to create new landmarks in the perception of reality; that is, his success cannot be gauged by immediate agitational significance, but by his recreation of social forces in their entirety. This becomes specific literary criticism when applied to choice of theme, character, and incident. And here it is necessary to stress what many writers tend to forget: literature is a medium steeped in sensory experience, and does not lend itself to the conceptual forms that the social-political content of the class struggle takes most easily. Hence the translation of this content into images of *physical life* determines—in the aesthetic sense—the extent of the writer's achievement.

## HUNEKER AND THE TRIBE

BERNARD SMITH

IF YOU study American criticism since the 1890's from a genetic point of view, the names that mean more to you than all others are these: James Huneker, J. E. Spingarn, and Van Wyck Brooks. It does not matter what your own aesthetic bias may be: after you have listed the critical ideas, principles, and sentiments which first matured in this country during the twentieth century, you will find that the most significant and potent of them arose from one or another of these three men. From the first came impressionism and Mencken; from the second, expressionism; from the third, the application to literature of the liberal's criticism of American society.

Of the three, Brooks and Huneker were the more important, for they alone of the host of critics who have written books, edited magazines, and taught classes in universities during the past thirty years were able to create schools and attract followers. Spingarn startled the academicians for a while, and no doubt his Crocean ideas have seeped deeply into the thinking of a considerable part of our literary population, but as a leader, a personality, he was never prominent and is now almost forgotten. Today his sole descendants are the few aesthetes who still somehow manage, in the shelter of precious magazines, to keep themselves aloof from reality and to shirk the responsibilities of the intellectual in a community that needs philosophical decisions, ideals, and purposes. To them the artist is

still answerable to nobody for what he chooses to do, and so, of course, nobody cares what they choose to do. In the Brooks and Huneker schools, however, there is yet some vitality, although now, perhaps, it is the vitality of desperation.

If, finally, an attempt is made to pick the one man who most affected American taste and criticism in the past three or four decades, it is probable that not too many dissenting votes would greet the nomination of Huneker. The fact is that Brooks' force has been confined within relatively narrow limits. Since at one time or another Randolph Bourne, Waldo Frank, Lewis Mumford, Matthew Josephson, and Newton Arvin were among his allies or disciples, it would be silly to deny that he has affected the intellectual life of the country, so far as literature is concerned, enormously. But, after all, how much weight does that carry to the reading public at large? Even a superficial examination of the mass of journalistic criticism and reviewing which until about the end of the twenties determined the literary preferences and prejudices of the nation, will prove that Huneker and his friends—particularly Mencken—had by far the greater influence. The causes and origins of that influence are perfectly understandable.

There were only respectable critics until the 1890's. "Culture"—which means the universities and the publishing houses—was a possession of the provincial aristocracy. Hence the moral conventions of a pre-industrial middle-class society, dedicated to the protection of private property and the preservation of the family, almost invariably determined judgments of art. Poe, who had attacked the habitual intermingling of aesthetic and moral opinion, had left no disciples, and nobody (certainly not Poe) had ever attacked, even by implication, the system of morality itself. Critics, as a rule, looked backward, and when they looked at the present they looked at the England of Victoria. Gentility throttled the slightest hint of heresy. Henry James introduced Flaubert and Turgenev, but failed to alter the dominating principle. Howells introduced the Russians, but bowed to Boston. The end was a wilderness of Hamilton Wright Mabie and Henry Van Dyke.

The traditions of a mercantile community are incompatible with empire. When the United States became rich and heterogeneously populous, when it began to feel its strength and take an interest in the spoils of China's exploitation and in Spain's presence on the North American continent, the parochial upper classes could no longer hope to impose their social dogmas upon the arts. A new bourgeoisie was arising, a class founded upon industrial capitalism and international trade and removed from the immediate sources of its income. It was a city class, with several racial strains, cosmopoli-

tan, acquisitive, conscious of its power, eager to enjoy the fruits of its wealth and with sufficient leisure to do so. It was, moreover, a class susceptible to the mood of nineteenth century science, to which it was indebted for its material possessions and social rank. It expressed its temper in mildly disillusioned, experimental, epicurean, and pragmatic attitudes. It was, in the arts, at once unafraid of sensual experience and willing to investigate realities. It is this that has been called the "modern spirit."

In criticism this spirit found its way into the work of such men as Harry Thurston Peck, Percival Pollard, Vance Thompson, and James Huneker. For example, there was *M'lle New York*—a magazine founded in 1895 by Thompson and Huneker on the style of the Parisian boulevard papers. Thompson stated that "*M'lle New York* is not concerned with the public. Her only ambition is to disintegrate some small portion of the public into its original component parts—the aristocracies of birth, wit, learning, and art, and the joyously vulgar mob." A noisy, brash, crudely snobbish announcement, it explains adequately why his paper was not distinguished. It is memorable only as the fertile seed of a pose that was afterwards immensely fashionable—a pose that was doubtless inevitable, and curable only by disaster. For, twenty-five years later, when the United States found itself literally sitting on top of the world, and all the luxuries and vanities of a diseased civilization were made available for the amusement of the metropolitan bourgeoisie, the latter began to take on a certain assurance and ease, but lost nothing of its egotism until it was stripped, in the early thirties, of its wealth and security and left embittered and bewildered.

*M'lle New York* is well forgotten. It was adolescent and postured, its pranks were undergraduate, its bohemianism fake. Yet it was an indication of a growing worldliness in our letters and a disposition to explore the world without benefit of clerical guidance. Its aesthetic catholicity, its hostility toward the "Puritan," and its interest in Nietzsche and Stirner were healthy, as were its scoffing at the business man's piety and its determination to describe women as something less than saints. But all of this smacked of naughtiness rather than considered intelligence, for while it is undeniable that the industrial middle classes injected some of the elements of realism and rationalism into our traditional *mores*, they did so not because of superior understanding, but because the psychology created by their life and social status was antipathetic to the traditions. And like all who first taste strange and sinful fruit, they were a little too conscious of their unconventionality. Thus Thompson's magnum opus, *French Portraits*, a volume of superficial appreciations of the younger French and Belgian writers, was excessively ecstatic. In

manner and taste it was wholly indigenous to the nineties—the work of a dazzled American cosmopolite, graduated proudly from the impressionist school. There is no reason why anyone should read it today.

It was exactly that degree of literary development which Huneker represented and of which he became the master. He did not go beyond it; he merely improved it. He made it—by virtue of his own brilliance—synonymous with the standpoint of what is often called “the civilized man.” It would be difficult to find anything in his fifteen books that would not fit the pages of Thompson’s magazine, but it would be equally difficult to find anything that is not expressed more plausibly, with greater wit, with neater phrase, than it might have been by any of his contemporaries.

There is no need here, however, to extol him, for he has already been recommended to posterity. Mencken’s essay in *A Book of Prefaces* is a warm and persuasive tribute to a friend. He has even been deified—by G. E. De Mille in *Literary Criticism in America*. It is no effort to grant that some of his efforts were praiseworthy. He introduced to us a host of European writers, painters, and musicians, and made the commonplaces of European intellectual life familiar to at least our “cultured” circles. He fought against provincialism and the bias of Victorian morality, and fought for an elementary sophistication and tolerance. His epitaph may justly be the label that Mencken applied to him—“anti-Philistine.”

But in spite of all that, no one is amazed to find that re-reading him in the 1930’s is a depressing exercise in fortitude. The time has long passed when the “foreign devils” of the arts were loathed and feared, and the war against gentility and censorship seems remote. The truth is that the thrills which he supplied are beyond recall; his job was well enough done to leave him, in the form of his books, nothing else to do. There was no substance in him, no depth, no wisdom. He was not, in the real sense of the word, an “intellect.” To observe him when he left the narrow sphere of aesthetic sensation was to witness a shower of smart platitudes. His papers on other themes than the purely aesthetic, with rare exceptions, were empty; they were in the glib journalese of a man who had read a great many books on these various subjects, but too many of them second-rate.

His surviving friends remind us that he was more than anything else a “personality,” sparkling, keen, colorful—one, nevertheless, that is not impressive to the cool scrutiny of a new generation. The man may be summed up in two words: “sympathy” and “enthusiasm.” The first trait presumably made him an amiable companion and a superb café conversationalist; because of it, too, he was receptive

to new ideas and new ways of looking at life, unlike the spinsters of the old academies. But it was also responsible for his preposterous discovery of gold in innumerable ores of the basest metal; he was one of those who helped bring over here the puny poets and philosophers of a decadent European society, and he helped encourage their American imitators.

His was an epoch of revolt by the bourgeois leisure classes against the tyranny of the Protestant ethic and hence of experimenting with novel sensations. The epoch ended with the rejection of "sympathy" as a principle of criticism. There is no longer cause for boasting in a willingness to lend an ear to every new prophet, nor is there distinction in a capacity for discovering entertainment in the esoteric and exotic. Everybody's doing it now, and serious critics often wonder whether the American reading public has any definite taste or discrimination at all. As for his "enthusiasm"—the books themselves bear testimony to the ephemeral attractiveness of so personal a quality. The piquant bubbles are mostly gone and the drink is more than a little stale. It is the privilege of a child to be, simply, "enthusiastic," but the subject of his "enthusiasm" is the test of an adult.

As long ago as 1917 Mencken was hard put to it to name a really sound and permanent book among the many that Huneker had already published, finally taking refuge in the damning statement that "one no longer reads them for their matter, but for their manner." The two he did choose—*Chopin* and *Old Fogy*—are volumes of musical commentary. His instinct was correct: a large technical knowledge combined with the rhetorical virtuosity of a superior impressionist may produce pretty fair musical criticism. Much more is demanded in the criticism of literature: it is trivial if it is not a critique of men and of men's philosophies. Mencken himself, as a literary critic, was once a better contender for survival than Huneker—first because the range of his interests was by far the wider, and secondly because he sought occasionally to settle certain issues and to praise and blame, thereby disregarding that fundamental precept of Huneker's which he had often applauded and professed to obey. Mencken collapsed when in the lean years it became clear that at bottom he was no wiser and no better informed than his master and that his judgments were as unreliable and inconsistent as the social order that gave them their false dignity.

Who today does not realize that the impressionist—the critic who, in Huneker's own words, attempts no more than "to spill his own soul" and "humbly to follow and register his emotions aroused by a masterpiece"—is no critic at all? He is, of course, only a painter

of self-portraits. That is all that Huneker was, although in his case the portrait was particularly charming and likeable, even if it revealed a little of that ridiculous mixture of snobbishness and eager aping which is the mark of the parvenu.

Indeed, no one of the new critics of that period wrote what we, let alone the future, can seriously regard as criticism. Percival Pollard, for example, is less than a name today, and there is no possibility of resuscitation. He was a robustly talented and "liberated" person, and though he lacked Huneker's originality and wit, he was the more vigorous and masculine. But what remains of all his gusto? Who reads now his *Masks and Minstrels of New Germany* and *Their Day in Court*? The former, especially, was in its time an exuberant and amusing work. Unfortunately, both were romantic, epicurean, and impressionistic, and neither had anything in it more lasting than the aesthetic fashions of their day.

And Peck—his literary oblivion is complete. A professor of Greek and Latin at Columbia University, he was engaged, aside from his classical studies, in liberalizing and broadening American critical methods and in making contemporary European letters known to American scholars—which is to say that he was doing a job in the academic sphere equivalent to Huneker's in the journalistic. It need hardly be added that he was not the radical his enemies accused him of being. Though he wrote of contemporaries and foreigners with few lingering traces of the genteel heritage, when such national holy ones as Emerson and Longfellow were under consideration he reverted to type and was just a professor of the year 1900. But he did shock the pedants into looking around at what was actually going on in the world and he did introduce into official criticism a pinch of moral tolerance. And what of it? A few historians will remember him gratefully and nobody will read him. He was a stimulating but minor figure even in those days and nothing he wrote was inspiring for more than a moment only. His audience was continually outstripping him, and that was his tragedy. His timidity and caution made him an inadequate spokesman for the one class who could have given him a permanent symbolic significance. It was Huneker who succeeded.

For it is obvious that men of letters are sometimes elected to historical importance without reference to the intrinsic worth of their compositions. It is likely that when Samuel Johnson's works are no longer read, he will be talked and written about and will represent something concrete and meaningful. He was a type, a perfect and complete expression of an age. So, too, was James Huneker. In both the man and the writer—in his cosmopolitanism, his sensuality, his indifference to the Puritan virtues, his contempt for the Victorian

aesthetic, and his grim, inflexible individualism—the recent bourgeoisie of the cities might find a delightful reflection of their profoundest impulses. Remaining always several steps ahead of the community that bred him, he was seldom in advance of, or superior to, its aspirations or even its latent reflexes. It was this class that came to dominate American life immediately after the World War. Those were the years of its plenty. It set the whole tone of the decade in the arts and professions, in social behavior, manners, and politics. And James Huneker's mind, his soul if you will, was the dream of that class incarnate, and indeed it was his friends, his disciples and pupils, who ruled the roost throughout the twenties. He was a shadow while his followers were canonized, yet it was he who did the spade-work and bequeathed the style and the point of view which after his death became so popular. We are not concerned, however, with who succeeded and who failed in gathering the cash and the glory. Our concern is the fact that his style and point of view did ultimately become popular among those younger middle-class ladies and gentlemen in New York and Chicago and elsewhere who played with the arts—a fact which classifies him unmistakably. He was a man, said Van Wyck Brooks, of the tribe.





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- MAXWELL BODENHEIM is the author of a number of novels, including *Slow Vision*.
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- ALAN CALMER has written on American labor literature.
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- JAMES T. FARRELL'S recently published *Judgment Day* is the final volume in a trilogy dealing with Studs Lonigan. Farrell is now writing a new tetralogy of Chicago life. He is also the author of two volumes of stories, *Calico Shoes* and *Guillotine Party*.
- KENNETH FEARING'S new *Poems* have just been published by Dynamo Press. *Angel Arms* was his first book.
- BEN FIELD has written a number of stories and sketches of revolutionary farmers and farmhands, including *In the Grass*, *The Rabbit*, *Sheep Dip*, *Light*, *The New Housekeeper*, *The Hunt*.
- FOLKSONGS: Ella May Wiggin was a martyr of Gastonia. Aunt Molly Jackson wrote songs for the Harlan, Kentucky, coal miners. *A Southern Cotton Mill Rhyme* is an old ballad discovered by Grace Lumpkin. *Do Lak Alabamy Boys* and *Death House Blues* are from Lawrence Gellert's collection of *Negro Songs of Protest*.

- ROBERT FORSYTHE is the dean of proletarian humorists.
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- MERIDEL LE SUEUR is a Midwestern story writer.
- H. H. LEWIS is a Missouri farmer, author of a number of pamphlets of verse.
- GRACE LUMPKIN is writing another novel of Southern workers.
- NORMAN MACLEOD wrote *Horizons of Death*, a volume of poems.
- A. B. MAGIL'S poetry and criticism appeared in the monthly *New Masses*. He is the author of a pamphlet on Father Coughlin.

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- CLIFFORD ODETS' plays, *Waiting for Lefty*, *Till the Day I Die*, and *Awake and Sing*, are not only current Broadway hits but are being performed throughout the country by worker and professional dramatic groups.
- KENNETH PATCHEN'S *Joe Hill Listens to the Praying* aroused a great deal of comment when it appeared in the *New Masses*.
- PAUL PETERS is one of the pioneer revolutionary playwrights in this country.
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- WILLIAM PILLIN is a Chicago poet.
- HARRY ALAN POTAMKIN was one of the first American proletarian writers. He died in 1933.
- PHILIP RAHV is an editor of *Partisan Review*.
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- BERNARD SMITH is writing a history of American literary criticism.
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PHILIP STEVENSON wrote several novels and short plays, including *God's in His Heaven*, published by the Theatre Union.

GENEVIEVE TAGGARD'S latest book of verse is entitled, *Not Mine to Finish*.

JIM WATERS is a worker-poet.

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JOHN WEXLEY'S *The Last Mile* and *They Shall Not Die* were produced on Broadway.

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