

consternation, and search for his whereabouts takes his pursuers into all sorts of improbable European purlieus, ranging from the brothels of Ostria, the lunatic areas of Westland (where The Leader has a loud speaker instead of a face), through the gardens of Paradise Park, "where most wasters and cranks wind up sooner or later" and a romantically erudite poet misquotes the classics, and the crass vulgarity of the Nineveh Hotel until the time comes for the disguise to be superseded by manifesto:

Since I've been away from you, I've come to understand you better. I don't hate you any more. I see how you fit into the whole scheme. You are significant, but not in the way I used to imagine. You are units in an immense army: most of you will die without ever knowing what your leaders are really fighting for or even that you are fighting at all. Well, I am going to be a unit in the army of the other side. . . .

and to a proclamation of the Vicar's blacklist, the General's curse and official unrecognition from the big-shot press, Francis, the missing heir, Alan, who has been searching for him and several newly-found companions come down from the stage and go out through the audience, while "the gestures and cries on the stage become more incoherent, bestial and fantastic, until at last all are drowned in deafening military chords."

As with Eliot, Auden and Isherwood put the finest poetic and prophetic writing into the choruses, which are by turns ominous or flippant, casual or imperative. The epilogue, ending on the line "To each his need: from each his power" is particularly fine; too long to quote in full, it cannot be divorced from what has gone before nor abbreviated by partial quotation without damaging its integral feeling. Perhaps an idea of the choral quality can be suggested by fragmentary selection from the verses which end Scene Four of Act III:

So, under the local images your blood has con-
jured
We show you man caught in the trap of his
terror, destroying himself. . . .
Do not speak of a change of heart, meaning five
hundred a year, and a room of one's own
As if that were all that is necessary. In these
islands alone there are some forty-seven mil-
lion hearts, each with four chambers. . . .
Visit from house to house, from country to coun-
try: consider the populations
Beneath the communions and the coiffures: dis-
cover your image.
Man divided always and restless always: afraid
and unable to forgive. . . .
Beware of yourself:
Have you not heard your own heart whisper 'I
am the nicest person in this room'?

Asking to be introduced to someone real: someone
unlike all those people over there? . . .
You have wonderful hospitals and a few good
schools:

Repent.
The precision of your instruments and the skill
of your designers is unparalleled:
Unite.
Your knowledge and your power are capable of
infinite extension:
Act.

Not the least interesting aspect of Auden's career has been his ability to work with others. This is a sign of sound artistic health and Eliot's general commentary on the point is worth repeating: "The second-rate artist, of course, cannot afford to surrender himself to any common action; for his chief task is the assertion of all the trifling differences which are his distinction: only the man who has so much to give that he can forget himself in his work can afford to collaborate, to exchange, to contribute."

Between them, Eliot and Auden have managed to hit off just about what is the matter with E. E. Cummings, whose sickly heart, however brave he was about it, has only too often told him he was the nicest person in the room. There is something

pathetic about a man whose disgust with authority forbids him acceptance of any system, whether of politics, punctuation or ideas. Even when Cummings' conceited ingenuity is most exasperating in asserting his pretensions to organized composition, we pity him for the constant embarrassment he must suffer in asking to be introduced to someone real. His own talent is real enough, but it has served only to fool him about himself. The poor fellow. He thinks that in writing *Tom*, a ballet based on *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, he has "fearlessly and completely challenged a partial and cowardly epoch." Actually, what he has done is wasted his time over a book of stage directions, no mean art, as Shakespeare and Shaw have proven, but—they also wrote the plays. Then what abuse of the adverbial parts of speech! It is time his best friend, or some one, should tell Cummings how he offends. For a man who knows much about writing to plop down into this swamp of squirmspurty pseudo-boyish squishiness illustrates—alas!—how a compassionate and generous talent can get itself mired, lacking analysis, in a search for respectable occupation, a principle of allegiance.

ROLFE HUMPHRIES.

The Chinese Revolution

CHINA'S MILLIONS, by Anna Louise Strong. Introduction by John Cournos. The Knight Publishing Co. \$2.50.

WORKERS in Changsha, in April, 1927, when they learned that Chiang Kai-shek had made a deal with the Shanghai bankers and had suppressed the Shanghai labor unions, said to Anna Louise Strong, "The revolution is a moving train. At every station some get on and others get off. Chiang Kai-shek got off the train of the revolution."

There can be added to this shrewd comment what the succeeding years have shown, that events let no historical figure rest. When he got off the train of the revolution Chiang Kai-shek did not stand still, but began going backwards. Today, eight years after the triumphs had won him the trust and support of the Chinese masses, eight years after the unification of China seemed to have been achieved and the imperialist powers were giving way before the unity of the Chinese people, Chiang Kai-shek sees his power disintegrating. He sees the revolution re-arisen and gathering in might against him. The

Shanghai bankers cannot fight for him; the masses hate him; and the Japanese who have used him against his people now ignore him while they go about adding the northern provinces of China as a new puppet state to looted Manchuria.

The story of the disintegration of the Chinese Nationalist Party since the 1927 betrayal is told in the three chapters with which Anna Louise Strong brings up to date her vivid book on the Chinese National Revolution. These three chapters add much to the value of a book that has well deserved its high reputation. They show with startling incisiveness the consequences of a betrayal of the masses. They show political forces in action more clearly than any like period in recent history. First of all the revolution went on. It was not stopped. It could not be stopped. No fascist reaction was more unscrupulous than the Kuomintang reaction. But the revolution flowed under and around the reaction and gathered greater strength. The Soviet districts in China expand irresistibly. Secondly, political power needs a mass base. Bankers and landlords do not provide it. The Kuomintang grows weaker every day, facing the patient but unforgiving masses who wait their day and know it is coming as the Soviets advance. Thirdly, no imperialist power has ever stepped in to help without staying to help itself. Chiang Kai-shek, when he first accepted Japanese assistance against his own people, prepared for the seizure of Manchuria and for the new puppet state now being put together in Nor China.

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Prerequisites of Growth

AT MADAME BONNARD'S, by Joseph Vogel. Alfred A. Knopf. \$2.

IN reviewing Grace Lumpkin's fine new book, Erskine Caldwell has noted a tendency of contemporary Left novelists, an unfortunate and irritating tendency, already less in evidence than it was last year but one that has marred even some of the best of their work.

References are made on several occasions to the clean overalls and shirts of some of the workers, inferences are to be drawn from the remarkably good English of some of them and lessons are given in their chaste moral habits. On the other hand, some individuals among the opposition are depicted as having bad-smelling feet, foul speech and perverted morals. There is truth behind all of these instances, but they are overdrawn, in contrast, to the point of absurdity.

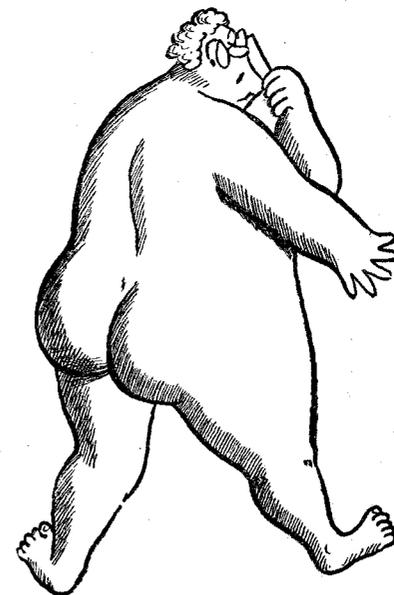
Joseph Vogel is one of the few whose hands are completely clean of this dealing from the bottom because he has a fundamental integrity and a fundamental love for the materials of a novel. He suffers with his people and he would no sooner hurt them in what he conceives to be their artistic completeness than he or you would think of wilfully overturing a baby carriage. When he has an idea about why one of these people acts in a certain way he describes it in sentences that steer clear of adornments outside his range and when he is puzzled or stumped he hazards suggestions, naive perhaps at times, but not with the fashionable, sophisticated primitivism of the Dumbbell School, rather in the truer groping method, if not manner, of the early Sherwood Anderson.

Much as *Jews Without Money* was essentially the work of a poet, *Georgia Nigger* of a reporter, *The Disinherited* of a manual worker, so *At Madame Bonnard's* is a novel by one who has done his best work as a writer of short stories. Its chapters progress in the single-line narrative of most short stories and they are sufficiently complete to stand up by themselves and many of them could be extracted without damage to its structure as a novel. As a result, the situations have little continuity of development and the incidents and people themselves lose the tension necessary to sustain not only our interest in them as individuals but their character as such. Different aspects of Hyman Lavin are shown in the light of different events but these aspects are so unrelated, so lacking in the similar earmarks that stamp the most varied actions of a person, that he doesn't hang together nearly well enough. This is not a plea for the plotty and ostensibly watertight but actually false and adventitious tension created by Hammett or Cain or, at times and on another plane, by Guy de Maupassant. It is a caution against the use of Dos Passos devices, appropriate to the Dos Passos canvas, but harassing on a smaller scale and

this, not due to any lack of intrinsic skill in the body of Vogel's writing.

In common with most of his co-workers in the school he has chosen, Vogel seems to have more success in dealing with the minor characters of his book; definitely the approach of the short-story writer, accustomed to illuminating relatively few aspects of a person, a legitimate and inevitable approach to the short story but something of a tour de force, to be used sparingly in a novel. Mrs. Steiner, the servant at Madame Bonnard's boarding house, used to be a lady in the old country and she is bitter about her lot and she says so every time she crops up in the book and that is all you know about Mrs. Steiner.

You take Francoise, another servant and, in the scheme of Proust's novel, a minor character. You know what she looked like at a dozen periods of her life, what she thought of her successive employers and what they thought of her and what she thought of the people who came to visit her employers and what she thought about the shopkeepers she traded with and of the hats worn by the hero's mistress and what she thought about death, illness, immortality, war, restaurant cooking, etymology, literary work, several other servants; people, ideas and objects the mere list of which would stretch the length of a Vogel chapter. Of course, Joseph Vogel is Joseph Vogel, not Marcel Proust, Klementi Voroshilov or the late Marie Dressler. He is trying to write a book about a group of people and Proust and a lot of other writers have done this in certain ways which ought to be helpful in deciding him on the particulars of his own way. No one growing up in the educational



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