

Best of Kind Since 'Out Of the Night'

THE ACCUSED. By Alexander Weissberg, New York, Simon & Schuster, \$4.

By CARL VICTOR LITTLE

This is, as Arthur Koestler says in a lengthy introduction, "a great big spouting whale of a book," and not even Mr. Koestler could put the Jonah on it for us through his sponsorship—Mr. Koestler, the archetype of the be-fuddled intellectual of our era who has trod both sides of the ideological street but who is currently, like Henry Wallace, on our side.

This is Alexander Weissberg's story of his imprisonment in Russia in the Great Purge of 1937 during which eight million people were arrested, many of them executed, some of them imprisoned and most of them sent to forced labor camps. Mr. Weissberg, after almost three years of imprisonment, was exchanged as a prisoner and turned over to the Gestapo after Hitler and Stalin signed their pact.

Weissberg is an Austrian physician who joined the Communist party in 1927. In 1934 he accepted an invitation of the Supreme Economic Council of the U.S.S.R. to work at the Physical Technical Institute in Kharkov and during his tenure there founded the "Journal of Physics."

The importance of this volume is the light it throws on the Great Purge and also the information it gives concerning the technique used by the Russian secret police (G.P.U.) to obtain the fantastic confessions that were dramatized during the public trials.

This is undoubtedly the most exciting, readable and revealing book of its kind since the late Jan Valtin's "Out of the Night." Although it runs more than 500 pages, and although some of it is necessarily repetitious since it concerns the continuous grilling of Weissberg by the G. P. U., it is likely that you'll read it all avily.

When Weissberg was arrested he was accused of having plotted with Nicholas Bukharin, former (and now late) member of the Politburo, to kill Stalin and blow up various industrial plants. For months, Weissberg held out, refusing to confess to what he protested was a lie. He was not beaten, but as the questioning reached its intensive stage, he was quizzed by relays of agents continuously for three days and nights after which he collapsed.

Later he was placed in a cell with Rozhansky who, although posing as a prisoner, was an agent of the GPU. Rozhansky urged him to confess, claiming that a confession was the duty he owed the party, and holding out the belief that the punishment would be light.

So, confess Weissberg did. But

the next day he repudiated it. Weissberg proved such a worthy opponent of the GPU during the questionings that an agent on one occasion shouted, "Why do you torment us?" (Imagine a prisoner tormenting the GPU because he would not confess.)

Despite the long digressions of the author on the personal histories of the characters he introduces, THE ACCUSED reads like a novel of psychological suspense, and it will give you a thrill that Weissberg (I hope he's still on our side, but I don't trust a certain type of intellectual) was the winner.

Tarkington
Is Taken to
Task—Gently

Van Wyck Brooks is gently critical of Booth Tarkington in THE CONFIDENT YEARS: 1885-1915, published last Friday by Dutton (\$6).

The following excerpt from his comments on Tarkington appeared in a pre-publication brochure sent out by the Dutton firm:

"He adjusted his characters, whatever they were, to the point of view that the best thing is to get on and make money, for, although the tables might quite well have been turned the other way, the businessmen always have a laugh on the poets and the high-brows... The trouble with Tarkington was not that he loved the well-to-do Hoosiers he wrote about, but that he so readily accepted their Philistine standards. He was not sufficiently detached from his world to criticize its values—

which is merely a way of saying that he never grew up, that he remained the college boy who failed to establish his independence in his prosperous Hoosier lawyer father's house. So Tarkington, the prince of popular novelists, was never taken seriously—in critical circles he sat below the salt—in spite of a brilliant satirical gift that rivaled Sinclair Lewis's and a feeling like Scott Fitzgerald's for the glamour of youth."



RARITY—"Portrait of Richard Mather," early 17th Century woodcut, has been lent by the Massachusetts Historical Society to the current exhibition, "The First Two Centuries of American Prints and Decorative Arts," at Herron Art Museum. The closing date has been changed from today to next Sunday, Jan. 13.

Basso Writes Of Fur Trade

Hamilton Basso, long a student

of the American frontier, has signed a contract with McGraw-Hill for a book on an exciting and hitherto almost unknown chapter in American history," according to the publisher.

Covering the peak years of the fur trade in the United States, 1822-1834, the book will be based "in considerable part on a huge accumulation of original papers, including journals, diaries and letters, most of which have never before been made use of or even seen by scholars."

Trappers, guides and mountain men appearing in the narrative will include such characters as John Colter, Jim Bridger, Hugh Glass, Kit Carson and many others. McGraw-Hill expects to bring the book out next year.

Science Stories Collected

If you are a member of the rapidly growing group devoted to science fiction, you will want to own NEW TALES OF SPACE AND TIME (Holt, \$3.50). This is a large collection of new stories, each written expressly for this anthology.

Late, Great Sculptor Tells Nearly All

BETWEEN SITTINGS: AN INFORMAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY. By Jo Davidson. Illustrated by the author. New York, Dial, \$5.

The late Jo Davidson, who died in Tours, France, Jan. 2, gained recognition as a sculptor before World War I.

He was considered a "venerable institution" as long ago as the early '20s, when he was pointed out to sightseers along the boulevards of Paris much in the manner that the Louvre is pointed out. And now comes his autobiography, finished when he was 68, which tells all.

Well, perhaps Mr. Davidson doesn't tell all, but he does tell enough, in this rollicking account of an abundant, merry and productive life, during which he has consorted and cavorted with virtually all the VIPs of the modern era, to afford the jaded book reader a hilarious time.

Big names are new, even in this century dedicated to that phenomenon, the common man, and celebrity after celebrity pass in review in this volume in which Mr. Davidson gives you the conditions under which he "caught" the great, and the near great for "immortal stone or bronze. This is an "undress" picture of Jo Davidson's subjects, a gallery of celebrities with their hair down.

Aside from his prodigious talent, it is likely that the success in his field is due to the fact that Mr. Davidson loved people, virtually all people with whom he came in contact. Although somewhat left of the center politically and philosophically all his life, you can tell he had a great affection for the elder Rockefeller whom he once did; for Lord Northcliffe; and for assorted millionaires and those who have been black reactionaries in the thinking of Mr. Davidson.

To demonstrate what a big-hearted lover of mankind in general Jo Davidson was, I cite the fact he even liked Frank Sinatra, calling him "a phenomenon, a crooner with a social conscience." Frankie is at least a phenomenon and in my opinion a whole list of other things.

Mr. Davidson was in Paris in 1922 (as usual) when he was urged to return to the United States to do a bust of the late E. W. Scripps. A letter from Mr. Davidson's lifelong friend, Lincoln Steffens, closed the deal. Mr. Steffens wrote: "You must do a great thing with Scripps. He is a great man and an individual. There is no other like him. Energy, vision, courage, wisdom—he thinks his own thought absolutely. He sees straight."

Mr. Davidson returned to Long Island where the Scripps yacht was tied up. The sculptor said that the first words of E. W. Scripps were, "Where did you get all those whiskers?"

As Mr. Davidson worked, Mr. Scripps never stopped talking. "He objected to the making of the bust," writes Mr. Davidson. "He objected to me. He wanted to know why I lived in France. Why didn't I live in America? Wasn't it good enough for you?"

Just a few of the closeups you get here are those of Bob LaFollette the elder, E. W. Marland, Clemenceau, Foch, Dawes, Pershing, Shaw, Col. House, Woodrow Wilson, Chaplin, Errol Pyle, Frank Harris, Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney and Einstein who, Davidson observes, wasn't wearing socks when he met him in his Princeton office.

New Remarque's

SPARK OF LIFE, Erich Maria Remarque's first novel since the publication of ARCH OF TRIUMPH more than five years ago, will be published Jan. 28 by Appleton-Century-Crofts.

Set in a Nazi concentration camp, Mr. Remarque's new novel has as theme the triumph of the human spirit over even the most depraved tyranny," according to the publisher.

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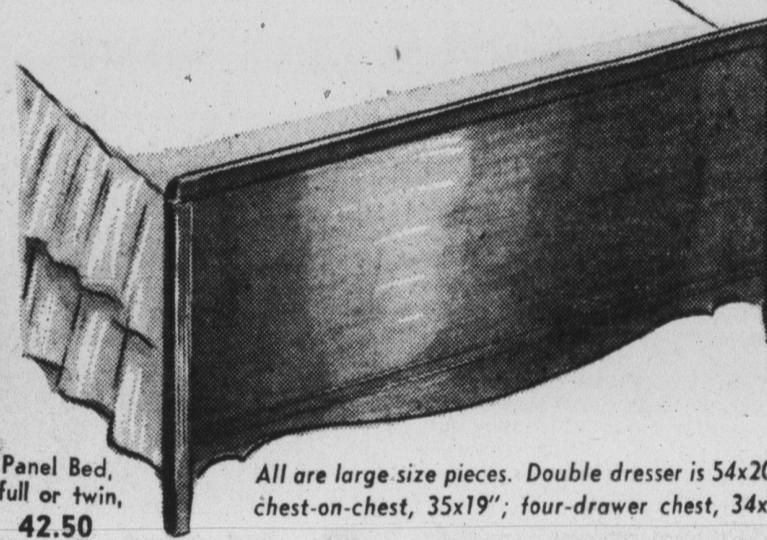
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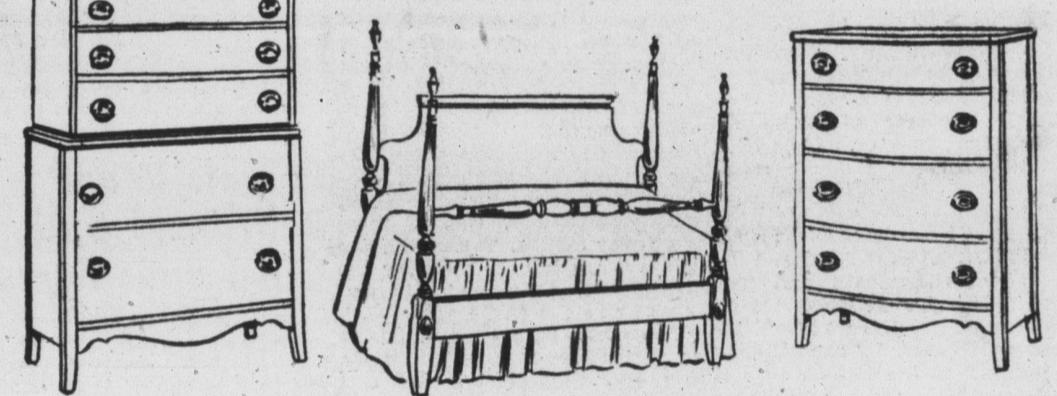


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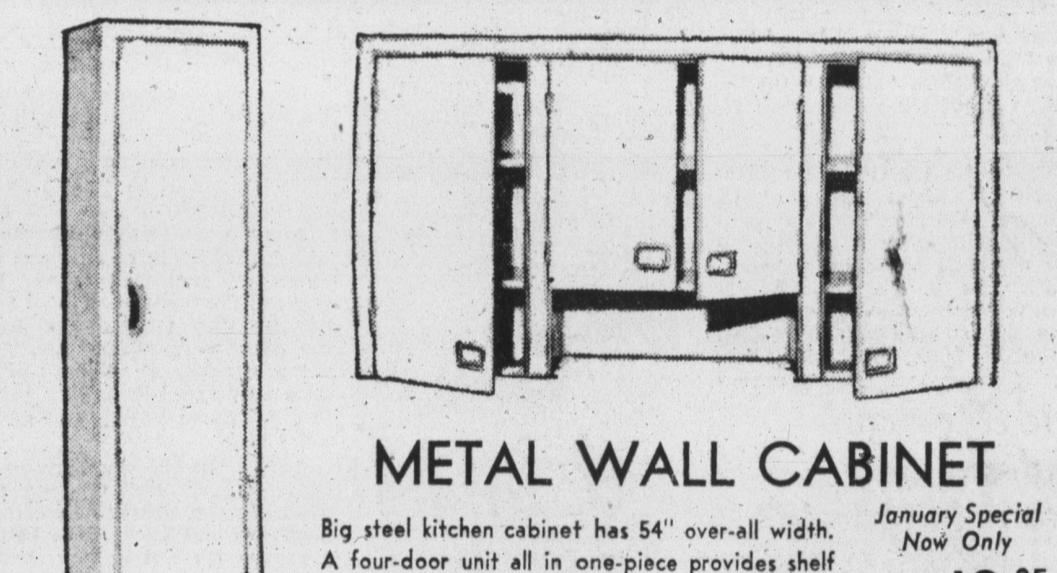


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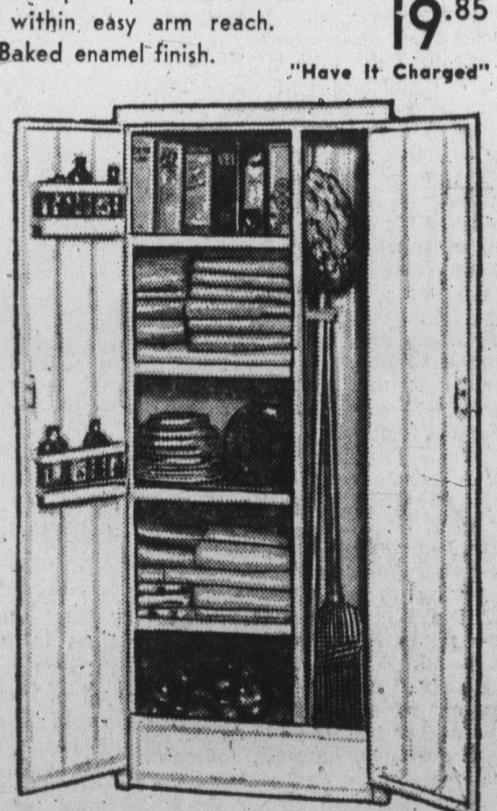
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