The Book Find News

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UPTON SINCLAIR

A WORLD TO WIN

The Book Find Club Selection for September
A WORLD TO WIN

by Upton Sinclair

THIS seventh volume of Upton Sinclair’s epic narrative of our time—the World’s End series—carries Lanny Budd from meetings with Laval and Petain in Vichy in 1940 to an interview with Stalin in Moscow in March of 1942. As with each book in the series, A World To Win can be enjoyed independently for its own separate story, or as part of the sweeping account of our troubled era.

The World’s End series has won generous recognition from the outstanding writers of today in every country. George Bernard Shaw candidly admits “When people ask me what has happened in my long lifetime, I do not refer them to the newspaper files and to the authorities, but to Upton Sinclair’s novels.” In a personal letter to Upton Sinclair, Thomas Mann writes, “I read your exciting book and want to express my sincere congratulations on this part of your masterful work, which is such a brilliant critique of our time.”

A World To Win has been as enthusiastically received as the preceding six volumes. In fact many critics have regarded it as “perhaps the most interesting of all the Lanny Budd series.” According to the Los Angeles Times “. . . Lanny’s story compels attention and holds interest in this as in no other volume of this enormous novel . . . through more than 600 pages the narrative never sags with any burden of dullness.” Newsweek says of Upton Sinclair that he “sticks hard and fast to essential facts, and his flair for presenting them dramatically is a happy one. . . As a historical novelist of our times, he has few competitors.”

“The canvas is sweeping and the pace generally brisk . . . a penetrating and frequently exciting study of the forces underlying the tremendous crises of our era” is the Chicago Sun Book Week’s opinion of Book Find Club’s September Selection.

On the next page you will read a complete review of A World To Win, by Lewis Browne, an admirer of Upton Sinclair’s who has long maintained that Sinclair makes “history more vivid and absorbing than a mere historian could ever do.”

NOTE: This book was published by Viking Press, at $3.00. It is available to members of Book Find Club, at only $1.35.
LEWIS BROWNE reviews the September Selection

The least inadequate thing one can say about Upton Sinclair is that he is a phenomenon. What other writer, after plying his craft for more than forty years, and producing more than sixty books, would be capable of turning out a novel as fresh and absorbing, as shrewd and well informed, as wide in scope and clear in purpose, as is A World To Win? This man is obviously one of the literary titans, a giant whose vigor is as inexhaustible as his talent.

This has long been realized abroad. There, indeed, no one seems to doubt that Sinclair is a supremely great writer, one of a kind with Romain Rolland, H. G. Wells, Maxim Gorki, even Tolstoi. I know of no other living American author who enjoys such world prestige, for none has been as avidly translated, and none has been so influential. Wherever I have browsed, invariably I have found well-thumbed copies of his books. Wherever I have talked with students and “intellectuals”, invariably I have heard his name praised. Many years before we here at home finally accorded this author our Pulitzer award, there was actually a crusade in Europe to get him the Nobel Prize!

But now America seems to be waking up to his greatness. After decades

of intermittent obscurity and notoriety, of a sudden he has begun to enjoy general acclaim. All of his most recent novels have been best-sellers!

It is not hard to see why. Our reading public has done a lot of growing lately, and ideas which it once considered outrageous, or preposterous, or —worse still—dull and fatuous, these have become almost dismayingly sensible and grave. Sinclair’s belated popularity, I feel sure, is due to a change in us, not in him. He has simply lived long enough for us to catch up with him.

A World To Win is one of a series of novels in which he has been tracing the history of our generation through the adventures of one man. It is the seventh of that series, and covers those most critical of all recent years, 1940 and 1942, when the fate of civilization hung more narrowly in the balance than perhaps ever before in fifteen hundred years.

The hero, Lanny Budd, ostensibly a roving art-dealer but actually one of President Roosevelt’s confidential agents, manages to go everywhere from Vichy to Yenan and Kuibyshev, meets everyone from Louella Parsons to Mao Tse Tung and Stalin, and gets tipped off to every secret from Hess’ delusions to Einstein’s equations. He is a sort of one-man O.S.S. who sees all, hears all, and now tells all about what
went on between the time France fell and Russia started to strike back.

It makes an enthralling tale. And a true one, too. Not literally true, of course, for Sinclair is a novelist, not a reporter. Wherever possible, he sticks to the known facts of history; but whenever necessary—because such facts are lacking—he blandly invents. He puts one in mind of those early map-makers who, not knowing the entire geography of a land, simply filled in the blank areas with vivid imaginings. That, however, does not invalidate his narrative. On the contrary, his license with factuality somehow makes for greater actuality, and what might otherwise have been as dull as water in a ditch becomes as lively as alcohol in the brain cells.

Bernard Shaw has said that when people ask him what has happened during his long lifetime, he refers to neither to the newspaper files nor to the historians, but to Upton Sinclair's novels. How wise! For those novels—and especially this latest one—do tell immeasurably more than can be gathered from the conventional sources. They tell more because they are so full of life and color, so full of passion and understanding. Sinclair does not seek merely to inform; his aim is to enlighten. He is a man with a mission, and that mission is to make us see, not just look at, what has been happening.

To some critics that is all wrong. They complain that Sinclair has "sold his art for a pot of message." To me that seems as glib as it is silly, for who knows what art is, or who has decided that it may not convey a message? The complaint is irrelevant, too, since Sinclair shows no sign of caring to be an artist. He is fundamentally a teacher, an apostle, a prophet. Once such a man would have spoken in parables, or in hortatory verse, or perhaps in proverbs. Today the most effective medium appears to be the novel, so that is the one Sinclair employs.

And magnificently. If you doubt it, read A World To Win.

* * *

Albert Einstein says of the Lanny Budd series:

"I am convinced that you are doing very important and valuable work in giving to the American public a vivid insight into the psychological and economical background of the tragedy evolving in our generation. Only a real artist can accomplish this."
SOME of my friends have told me that the Lanny Budd series of novels has surprised them; and I answer that it cannot have surprised anyone as much as it has surprised me. Originally I planned one novel, to be called World's End, and to tell the adventures of an American family living in France during the first World War and afterwards. That story behaved as, if you are a lover of gardens, you have seen a rose behave; it began as a little bud—no pun intended—and it grew, and petals expanded and then more petals; this went on and on until it appeared more like Jack's beanstalk than any rose in any garden. Characters took their destinies into their own hands; characters who walked into some casual scene suddenly changed the whole course of the story.

I can discern the play of two factors in this development. First, I have been a fascinated and tireless observer of the economic, political, and social events of my lifetime. I have traveled a good deal, I have met people rich and poor, high and low, in half a dozen countries, and visitors from many more; I have read day and night every sort of record of what was going on in my world. So my mind is a storehouse of facts and incidents, faces, voices, local color—like a painter's palette ready for him to dip his brush into it. And, second, there is, behind all the activities of my mind, all my interest in these things, an intense and persistent moral pressure that does not let me rest. The world seems to me a place of dreadful blundering and waste, of needless cruelty and suffering, and I have been possessed, even from my childhood, by the dream, the longing, to prevent it.

Many ask how long the story will continue, and I answer that I cannot tell. Volume I, World's End, used up six years, and Volume II, Between Two Worlds, used ten, from 1919 to 1929; but of late the events have become more tightly packed, and the last two volumes have used only a year and a half each. At that rate two more volumes should bring Lanny close to this hour—but who can guess what will happen during the two years it will take to write those volumes? Who can guess what Lanny Budd will be doing in the service of UN, and in the harnessing of the atomic bomb?

The success of the seven books has been a continuing source of pleasure to an author who has had far more failure than success throughout his life.

What the success of these books means to me is just one thing: that millions of people all over the world are getting information as to how we and they were drawn into World War II, and what will have to be done if we and they are to escape being drawn into World War III.
IN 1921, when I was a sophomore at the University of California in Berkeley, a middle-aged gentleman in steel-rimmed spectacles appeared one day just outside of Sather Gate. He had set up some kind of improvised box-table and was selling paper-bound books for fifty cents. Upon inspection of his wares I learned he was selling books by an author called Upton Sinclair. This was the first time I had heard the name. It was also the first time I had heard such titles as *Jimmy Higgins*, *The Brass Check*, *The Jungle*. Since I was working my way through college, half a dollar was a large sum of money but I laid it on the box-table for a copy of *The Jungle*. The bespectacled salesman asked if I did not want a copy of *The Brass Check*. I told him I was sorry, but I didn't have another fifty cents. He pressed a copy of *The Brass Check* into my hand. Years later I came to suspect that the book salesman was also the author.

That night I stayed up until one o'clock to finish *The Jungle*. It was the strongest novel I had ever read, and when I had completed it I knew that my adult education had begun. I haunted the stacks of the University library reading *The Money Changers*, *The Profits of Religion*, *King Coal*. When the succeeding books of Upton Sinclair came out I read them just as quickly as I could lay my hands on them. When I finally graduated from the University I had learned a few things that had not been included in their curricula—and probably one or two which they would not have been so anxious for me to have known. Certainly Upton Sinclair's books were as important in my process of education as anything taught to me by all the professors at the University put together.

In the language of Hollywood, we now DISSOLVE OUT and DISSOLVE IN again some fifteen years later. I was writing *Sailor On Horseback*, a biography about Jack London, who had been an old friend and co-worker of Upton Sinclair. I asked Mr. Sinclair if I might come to see him, and he readily consented. I shall never forget my evening in the Sinclair home in Pasadena, nor do I ever expect to meet again in this wide world so dynamic a human brain: for in the course of three short hours Upton Sinclair conceived two whole novels, which he outlined to me structurally! Something in our conversation stimulated him to dictate to me, whole and complete, one of the most delightfully sardonic short stories I have ever heard; and just for good measure he outlined a book on economics which he suggested we write in collaboration.
I do not always agree with Upton Sinclair, and there are mystical places in his heart and mind where I cannot and will not follow him. However, I am genuinely convinced that he is one of the wisest and best-informed men in the world today. There is mighty little of importance that he does not know about history, either past or contemporary. I have watched him prophesy world conduct over a period of years, and when he is wrong it is only in unimportant detail. He has the great gift of penetration; he stabs through pretense, sham, hypocrisy, double-talk and double-dealing like a steel spoke through butter; but even more important than his knowledge and the keenness of his international analyses, is the profound goodness of his heart. Injustice burns and tortures him no less today, after having written a round half-hundred books, than it did in the days before I was born. He loves mankind, and never ceases to wage his one-man crusade against oppression, brutality and war.

About two years ago I lectured in Gloversville, New York, when the temperature was thirty degrees below zero. The audience listened to me with their hats and greatcoats on and their mufflers tied around their necks. When the lecture was over I thought they would all run at once for the warmth of their homes, but instead a group gathered around and we fell into an argument which warmed our blood a good deal more than a hot stove could have. The subject? Upton Sinclair and the Lanny Budd series. One woman asked me, “Are the Lanny Budd books accurate?” I replied that that was largely a matter of interpretation, that the historical events portrayed were completely accurate but that some of the interpretations might have been Mr. Sinclair’s and that she might arrive at different conclusions, based upon her experience and background. The woman answered, “No, no, I agree with Mr. Sinclair completely—I just wanted to make sure that his historic material was faithfully recorded. For me, they are the most deeply moving portraits of modern life to be found in any literature.”

I concur heartily in this judgment. I think World’s End a great novel, and I was delighted with Presidential Agent. The latest book in the series, A World To Win, stands right up with the finest volumes in the series. I wish I were terribly rich, I wish I had an inexhaustible quantity of paper: for I would supply a full set of the Lanny Budd novels to every boy and girl graduating from high school. I think they would then have a better chance of entering the adult world with an understanding grasp of what life holds in store for them.

Irving Stone, one of America’s leading biographers, has written Lust for Life, Sailor on Horseback and Immortal Wife.
On July 26 Bernard Shaw achieved one of his laudable ambitions for mankind. In *Back To Methuselah*, which he wrote as a mere stripling of sixty-five, he concluded that human beings would simply have to live longer if they were to acquire any sense. Being an inveterate optimist, he saw no real impediment to extending the life-span by several centuries; and being a practical man, he must have resolved to set an example. It is true of course that a mere ninety years falls considerably short of his Methuselean ideal. But since our notion of longevity is more moderate, we celebrate his ninetieth birthday as another Shavian feat, and perhaps he will grant us his indulgence. It is certain, however, that the tongue that has served him as his spear would make short shrift of us if we were so inept as to reckon his years by simple arithmetic. Life without moral passion, he noted long ago, is nothing; life without usefulness even less than nothing. If his faith in the perfectibility of man has been immense, if evolution has been almost mystically assured in his credo, he has been relentless in insisting upon the imperativeness of personal will and exertion. For our latter day St. George, faith and work have been inseparable, and it is by his works that he wishes to be known.

One of the most inspired inventions of the Middle Ages was the identification of sainthood and knight errantry in the same person. The original St. George and his contemporary counterpart are both products of this fusion, except that Shaw is no invention. Hagiology, moreover, has contained no comparable figure. He has combined personal austerities with zeal for the fullness of earthly life; one of the first dragons he hunted down, while we were yet unborn or still in our swaddling clothes, was Victorian morality. He has been a great humanitarian and no one in our time has been so tenderminded, whether the subject of his protest was slums and sweatshops, war and the capitalist system, or vivisection and "the slaughter in the butcher's yard." Yet he has been the arch-enemy of sentimentality, and has even entertained the feasibility of liquidating useless members of society. He has disdained materialism but has been a shrewd bargainer in the marketplaces. He has been a fiery opponent of competitiveness (he even invented a system of lawn tennis in which the players were penalized for winning!) but few men of our time have been so aggressive or so impatient with weakness.

Everyone who has tried to affix a label to Shaw has been confounded at one time or other. "Karl Marx made a man of me," he declared in his later years, and much of his thinking has been undoubtedly Marxist. Yet he has
rejected much in Marx, including the theory of the class-conflict. He has been a self-proclaimed Fabian socialist and yet has evinced the greatest scepticism of parliamentary politics, pointing out in *The Apple Cart* that no matter which party wins the elections it was always capital, "Breakages, Ltd.", that ran the country. He has even avowed himself a Communist. He has been a champion of the masses and of the ideals of democracy, and yet he has also worshipped at the shrine of the Nietzschean superman.

What shall we make of this man or phenomenon? It is a question that puzzled Max Beerbohm even before Shaw turned us into whirling dervishes whenever we tried to follow his gyrations. The irrepressible Max drew a cartoon in 1914 entitled *Life-Force, Woman-Set-Free, Superman, etc.* in which Shaw was shown bringing a package of clothes to Georg Brandes. "What'll you take for the lot?" asks Brandes. "Immortality" is the answer. "Come," says that alert critic, "I've handled these goods before! Coat, Mr. Schopenhauer's; waistcoat, Mr. Ibsen's; Mr. Nietzsche's trousers—"

"Ah" replies Shaw, "but look at the patches." Yet it is certain that the cartoonist missed the full import of his point by not taking Shaw's reply seriously. The "patches" have made all the difference between a mere borrower and a great man of letters, and it is a matter of considerable importance that it was Shaw who wore the clothes. That which would have looked like tatters on another wearer was plate armor on the man who came to London as the self-styled upstart son of a downstart Irish father and proceeded to map out the prolonged campaign that has filled his years.

The dragon he has tracked down and slain countless times has assumed too many shapes for any one man to destroy it with finality. Shaw's very ideals—Fabianism, democracy, feminine emancipation, the cult of the superman, and so on—have had a curious way of turning into dragons. Yet he has always ridden on. He reached the peak of despair in the early thirties: In *On The Rocks* he was ready to acknowledge the failure of the masses who had been the supreme article of faith with liberals and radicals ("Yes; they always break the wrong windows, poor fellows"), and when he came to write *Too True To Be Good* in 1932 all Europe was the subject of his funeral oration. Employing the voice of the clergymen character Aubrey, he announced that The Western World was "damned beyond salvation." Yet he knew he would have to go beyond negations, as he always did, and as he has continued to do: "Is No enough? For a boy, yes; for a man, never . . . . I must preach and preach and preach no matter how late the hour and how short the day . . . ." to which he added, "The author, though himself a professional talkmaker, does not believe that the world can be saved by talk alone." The truth of the matter is that it is easy to know what to make of Shaw. He has always sought to make right reason and good will prevail in the maze of the modern

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A SELECTION of the world's greatest writings on the human quest for justice and freedom, covering a period of five thousand years, and drawn from some three hundred writers in twenty-five languages. Jack London wrote of it:

“To see gathered here together this great body of human fineness and nobleness is to realize what glorious humans have already existed, do exist, and will continue increasingly to exist until all the world beautiful be made over in their image. We know how gods are made. Comes now the time to make a world.”

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ANNA AND THE KING OF SIAM by Margaret Landon—The sights and smells and customs of the far-off Kingdom of Siam come vividly alive in this true story of the little English governess of firm convictions and fearless action who changed the destiny of an Oriental Empire. A delightful biography against a rich and varied background. ($1.49)

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Saint George and the Dragon

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world. Only his divagations need explaining, and this is not difficult, considering the nature of the world through which he has pursued his knight-errantry.

Let us consider the itinerary: Shaw was intellectually cradled in the nineteenth century when individualism and self-realization were progressive ideals, when Ibsen's emancipated woman was a passion for intellectuals, and when Nietzsche's spirited Superman formed a welcome contrast to the philistines of the bourse and the sweatshop. Discovering the contradiction that an individualistic society aborts real individuality, he turned socialist, under the miscellaneous influences of Henry George, Karl Marx, and the Webbs. He joined the ranks of the parliamentary semi-socialists only to find that evolutionary socialism moved in devious ways and brought dubious results. He pinned new hope on revolutionary socialism with the triumph of Bolshevism only to find that the masses of Europe were unready to embrace it and were succumbing to the demagoguery of a rightist counter-revolution, and this led him to look hopefully toward the iron-fisted pseudo-saviors who might knock some sense into people. Had he not earlier glorified their prototype in Caesar and Cleopatra with a Caesar whose clear mind triumphed over the political mess-makers? Bumbling had always been the cardinal sin in his doxology. Then, of course, came the disillusionment with the Mussolini and the Hitlers who quickly proved themselves madmen rather than leaders, and so G.B.S. came back to the earlier belief in revolutionary socialism from which the recent Labor Party victory has not deflected him.

Charging the protean demon of the twentieth century was an inhumanly difficult experience, and he had his lance broken many times. The exertion was also enervating, and so it is not surprising that he who started out with a simple eighteenth century belief in the nostrum of reason should have wavered a little on the way and even leaned on the crutch of a Bergsonian elan vital that would ensure man's salvation in spite of man's feebleness. Nevertheless, what would have discredited smaller men cannot discredit Shaw; certainly not the creative Shaw who has nearly always had a way of holding disparate particles in a luminous solution of comedy and exhortation. Nor can it discredit him as a man of his times and explorer that he could not cut a straight path through the twentieth century jungle. The tall bearded gentleman of the Olympian brow and voice is disqualified only from playing God. It is the one limitation to which he will have to submit, we fear; much as it may irk him to be deprived of a role he would have enjoyed adding to his diversified repertory.

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Sailor's View

Your books provide excellent and exciting reading material and not only I but a good number of our crew look forward to receiving them. Especially now that we are in alien lands and waters, the subject material in these books, much of which is so recent and concerns both world-wide and national events, bring us a constant reminder of the true state of affairs back home and that the big peace is yet to be achieved.

Morton Katz, U.S.N.

Praise for Aragon

Aragon: Poet of the French Resistance has given me more pleasure than anything I have read in a long while. Delicious sensitive poetry — moving subtle prose. And, underlying it all, a feeling of the dignity of man — of a great universal brotherhood. A magnificent beautiful book. For which I thank you.

Mary Agnes Morel

Lovely Mistake

I asked that you not send me Wasteland and also sent a check to cover four future books, but apparently my letter arrived late and Wasteland came to me. It was a lovely mistake. I'm keeping it, have read it, and consider it the finest novel I've read in years. It has so much of humanity in it. An excellent Selection.

Jean Anderson

Fan Mail

I enjoyed reading Focus and thought it of sufficient importance to review it before the members of my congregation in Logan, West Virginia. Your choices since my membership have been very good — books with power of expression, depth of analysis and, above all, a constructive message to readers and people everywhere. More power to you.

Sidney Anselrad

Open Questions

Under separate cover I am returning Wasteland. In my opinion the character of your selections is matched by the character of your club — both are very poor. The Bulwark, for example, is the veriest trash.

Samuel Marx

I enjoyed The Bulwark a great deal — in fact I believe I liked it even better than Sister Carrie.

Henry Joseph Siegle

The Memorial to Dreiser edition of the News was wonderful, and a reading of the book is sufficient answer to all of his critics.

Barbara Higdon

Why did you pick The Age of Jackson? It's a source book, practically. Let writers consult it if they wish. But your members are readers, not writers. Did you think you'd impress us; give us a bargain? Don't. Why have you not given us Earth Could Be Fair? Really, if you don't pick Earth Could Be Fair, then I'm just about quitting.

Frederic C. Favre

In all of my books I underline striking, important sentences, phrases, etc. In The Age of Jackson I find this practice to have become ridiculous inasmuch as so far I've had no underline practically every sentence.

Congratulations on your magnificent Selection. However, it's only another great modern literary work in your long list of high standards.

Ralph Shapey

Pint-sized Book Find News?

The past two selections — Dreiser's and Schlesinger's — are enough to make anyone dizzy with delight. I do think that the Book Find News could be cut to 8 pages, containing only a review of the book and a biography of the author. The present issue goes too far.

Jon Moon
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