

THE BOOK RECORD

Conducted by ANTAR

FORD TURNED JUGGERNAUT

Money Changes Well-meaning
"Crank" into Pitiless Racketeer
of Industry.

Special Review by O.E.W.

LAST week I read two books, both novels, dealing with a problem that has begun to hurt American civilisation (if we are to believe the newspapers) only within the last generation—the problem of relationship between capital and labour.

The first is a modest book, Goetze Jeter's "The Strikers," published by Methuen. The second is much more ambitious—Upton Sinclair's "The Flivver King," published by T. Werner Laurie.

Both are as worth reading as any recent novel.

SINCLAIR'S pen has lost nothing of its corroding bitterness since he wrote "The Jungle." I am inclined to think his libellous and probably justified attack on Billionaire Ford is as great a book as his expose of the Chicago Stockyard horrors.

But the world—and the American world in particular—can no longer reel before exposures. It is far too well used to them. "The Flivver King" will not, alas, set the Hudson on fire, much less the Thames; but if it ever falls into the hands of Ford, it should make him wriggle more unhappily than anything since the memorable day he had to admit before the Superior Court of Michigan that he was not quite certain of the difference between Arnold Bennett and Benedict Arnold!

Fortunately for pigmy Sinclair, a thousand-million-dollar fortune does not to stop to squash a writing worm, however menacingly it has turned. . . .

"The Flivver King" employs a very simple and unartistic device to tell its story. Coincidentally it discloses the rise and fall of Ford with the rise and fall of the family of one of his spindle-nut-screwers sub-foremen.

The reader follows, sympathetically, the career of the little "crank" who perfected a horseless carriage in a side-street in Detroit, side by side with the career of the apologetic little buck-toothed workman who went to him for a job in the first motor works. One reads with hope how mass production made the workman content, how it raised his wages and shortened his working hours, gave him a home of his own and eventually even his own "flivver."

With that and promise of more good things, one learns tolerantly of Ford earning his first paltry five million, of his silly "Peace Ship" in 1915, of his well-meaning and often defrauded social department—which was estab-

lished to see profits were shared only by those among his workmen who lived nice, clean, Christian lives!

THEN, when everything in the American industrial garden is as lovely as can be, with a growing sense of terror we see the money machine giving poor, well-meaning Henry his first licking. We see him pass on the buck to the workmen whom he had tried so nicely to help. We see the ruthless system of speeding up, the dry rot of production eat into the foundations of Ford's concept of social security.

At last the machine conquers the man.

Obsessed with keeping his hundred millions safe, Ford weathers the depression, sailing triumphantly across seas studded with drowning, worn-out workers. He dare not float one dollar bill for the oldest and hungriest of them to clutch and be saved.

The end?

Since the depression did not abolish motor cars, Ford and most of his workers survive. "Things" get back to "normal"—except that for all time the faith of the working people in God Ford is shattered. They hate him worse than any other man in all the world.

So the son of the spindle-nut-screw-er foreman turns labour organiser and, one night, while the silver-haired and benevolent master of a billion dollars is enjoying ceremonial dinner, his gangster hirelings are busy kicking that young man in the groins and loosening up his kidneys to make quite sure the evil of organised labour won't be perpetuated in another generation.

"**T**HE Flivver King" is Upton Sinclair cussing and damning in his finest style. Everyone knows it is a pretty rotten old world, but Sinclair can show you its rottenness as painfully as any writer I know.

IN contemplation of Henry Ford's helplessness under the thumb of the Money God I had almost forgotten that other book, "The Strikers." As literature it is streets ahead of "The Flivver King," but as a social document it is out of coo-ee.

It tells the intimate, human story of a little shoe-manufacturing town in the Middle West—and of what happens to its people when a labour boss makes trouble.

The terribly depressing thing about those two books, "leftist" and "rightist," is that they are both tragically true.



ORGANISED LABOUR.

Two new novels attack the problems of mass-production industry.

THE STORY OF HER LAST FLIGHT

ALTHOUGH she makes no fuss about them, the stories told by Amelia Earhart in her "Last Flight" are by no means uncommunicative or bald. It was her intention to write a book when she completed her last project, and it was to be called "World Flight." As a memorial substitute, "Last Flight" takes its place.

Through the material left behind, Mr. George Putnam, Amelia Earhart's husband, has been able to arrange, almost in his wife's words, the full story of her flying life. There is very little about her Atlantic flight; and her Pacific flight she recalls almost as coolly. Pertinently, she remarks: "The time to worry is three months before a flight. Decide then whether the goal is worth the risks involved. If it is, stop worrying. To worry is to add another hazard." She told her husband, "It just seems that I must try this (last) flight. I've weighed it all carefully. With it behind me life will be fuller and richer. I can be content. Afterward it will be fun to grow old."

"Last Flight," then, is the record of the life of a very level-headed, brave and charming woman pioneer in long-distance aviation.

