

The Speeches and Writings of Mother Jones

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Jack London on the Road: The Tramp Diary and Other Hobo Writings, edited by Richard W. Etulain. 1979. Reprint. Logan: Utah State University Press, 1987. xi, 209 pp. Illustrations, notes. \$12.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY CARLOS A. SCHWANTES, UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO

Jack London was fascinated by the life of the transient, and time and again he returned to the subject in his writings. He was, in fact, the first major American writer to deal with hoboes. During a tramp half-way across the continent with a contingent of Coxey's Army in 1894, he gained his most important firsthand insights into life on the road; yet, as Richard Etulain observes, this facet of the author's life went largely unnoticed by biographers and critics, despite London's repeated claims that the experience was a turning point in his life.

Etulain has done an outstanding job of assembling all that London wrote about transient life, except for *The Road* (1907), a book already republished. The heart of *Jack London on the Road* is probably his diary account of a month-long odyssey across Iowa in the spring of 1894. Whether London actually became a formal member of Kelley's contingent of Coxeyites is not clear, but he accompanied it as far as Keokuk, where tiring of the "army's" discipline and hardship he set out on his own. London ultimately landed in the Erie County (NY) Penitentiary, where he served a thirty-day term for vagrancy.

Tramping as a way of life was for many years an important aspect of the natural-resource-based economy of the American West. The alternating rhythms of work and unemployment in timber, mining, agriculture, and construction fostered the creation of a veritable army of itinerant workers. London sought to capture the essence of their life on the road, to provide a kind of "how-to" guide to their subculture and its argot. Etulain's introductory remarks, which take the form of an extended essay on London and bibliographical notes on hobo literature, represent an excellent starting point for any reader interested in itinerant workers.

The Speeches and Writings of Mother Jones, edited by Edward M. Steel. Pittsburgh Series in Labor History. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988. xvii, 331 pp. Biographical notes, index. \$32.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY ALLAN KENT POWELL, UTAH STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Readers of the *Annals of Iowa* may recall my review of *The Correspondence of Mother Jones* published in the Summer/Fall 1986 issue. *The Speeches and Writings of Mother Jones* is a companion volume to that

comprehensive collection of 364 letters written by and to Mother Jones. The transcripts of thirty-one speeches given by Mother Jones during a twenty-one-year period between January 1901 and February 1922 constitute most of the book. Also included are seventeen articles published primarily in *The Appeal to Reason*, *The Cincinnati Post*, *The St. Louis Labor*, and the *International Socialist Review* between 1901 and 1915.

Professor Steel and the University of Pittsburgh Press have made a monumental contribution to American history in collecting and publishing these important documents of the American labor movement. As Americans ask who were the real heroes of the twentieth century, Mother Mary Jones must be counted in the front ranks. She spoke for the American worker in a truly American form. She described the pitiful conditions of miners and workers, factory and brewery girls. She railed against pompous politicians including the "monkey chaser," Theodore Roosevelt. She dared the press to print the truth from the workers' point of view. She ridiculed the capitalists whose luxury was bought at a heavy price in suffering by the working class. She chastized those she sought to lead for not doing enough, but she looked to the future with optimism and faith. Her broadest goal was for "the children to have good schooling . . . [the] women to know nothing but what is good . . . to leave to this nation a noble manhood and greater womanhood" (108-9). She assured workers that "the labor movement was not originated by man, [but] was a commandment from God Almighty. He commanded the prophets . . . to go down and redeem the Israelites that were in bondage, and he organized the men into a union and went to work" (91).

The speeches and writings of Mother Jones portray the struggle for a more humane America. Each selection is prefaced by a short introduction. A welcome feature of this volume are the short biographical notes on individuals cited in the speeches and writings. Both volumes will stand for many years as a standard reference for those who seek to understand the course of American labor during the first three decades of this century and its most colorful and inspiring spokesperson.

A Ruth Suckow Omnibus, by Ruth Suckow. Introduction by Clarence A. Andrews. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1988. xvi, 310 pp. \$9.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY SARA McALPIN, BVM, CLARKE COLLEGE

This new collection of ten short stories and one novella by Ruth Suckow reprints the work of an author much admired in the 1920s

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