

years later while one librarian nudges another and says, "It is she."

And this individual—this heroine of a life so full of dramatic contrast—is Anzia Yeziarska.

By the flicker of a match I first saw Miss Yeziarska as she bade me step inside her tiny room while she lit the gas.

"I was resting", she began, wrapping a big grey blanket around her and hunching herself in bed. "I go to bed early—yes. You see, I'm up writing at five in the morning. All day I write and it is so hard—so very hard for me to write real life down on paper!"

She spied "Hungry Hearts", her first volume of short stories, under my arm.

"You like them—my stories? It was very nice of Mr. O'Brien to dedicate his book to me but you know—" The dull eyes suddenly brightened. "What is it they say in America? 'One swallow does not make a summer'? Happy? Yes—I am happy when I feel someone has heard me. But success or failure should not really count. 'Work as if for results but leave the results with God'—that little verse is my creed."

She turned to the window as if her thoughts pierced the straggly lace curtain and the cluttered fire escapes around and stared into the patch of twilight blue sky peeping above all.

"And that I call my 'crucifix curtain'." She pointed to the bit of lace at the narrow window. "It is so ugly—at first it bruised my very soul to look at it; just like when I would try to write some days and nothing would come. I would get so angry with myself. But now, now I have faith and when you can follow faith like a star it really doesn't matter whether it is ebb or flow with you."

A HUNGRY HEART

By Edythe H. Browne

A PALE face emerges from the flying wheels and belts of a sweatshop; that same face, flushed and smiling, bends over the pen that writes "The Fat of the Land", adjudged the best short story in one of O'Brien's Year Books. A drooping figure begs for work as scullery maid at the underground entrance of the Waldorf Astoria; the same figure, two years later, sways to the rhythm of the Waldorf orchestra, the guest of honor at a Thanksgiving party. A shriveled bit of person in plaid shawl stares hungrily at the shelves of books in the Public Library; the same person browses among these books a few

There has been much of ebb in Anzia Yeziarska's life from the time she emigrated from Poland to America when she was nine years old. To write was her ambition. Yet the rent had to be paid and hungry mouths had to be fed, so the sordid business of making a living—if twelve hours a day for seven days at \$1.50 can be so called—smothered the divine fire. But leaping sparks smoldering under years of sweatshop drudgery burned through the grime of tenement hall rooms until the spiritual hunger of the emigrant flashed from Yeziarska's realistic pen into short stories of New York's Ghetto. "Hungry Hearts" was followed by "Salome of the Tenements", a tense novel of East Side life but judged by critics a little below the standard. Miss Yeziarska had set for herself in "Hungry Hearts", in its leaning to types rather than to distinct characters. And now comes her second collection of stories, "Children of Loneliness".

"I guess you are surprised when I say I don't read much. Books—they seem so artificial to me. I must have real life. Would you believe it that for six months I walked and talked and cried with my heroine, Hanneh Hayeeh?"

It was this character portrait in "The Fat of the Land" that gripped the attention of a short story instructor at Columbia and struck a path to "The Century", "The Metropolitan", and O'Brien's Year Book. Since its inception Miss Yeziarska has created other characters as vitally interesting for numerous periodicals.

"You ask me for something about myself." Her head bent low under a crown of auburn hair. She spoke slowly.

"You have read my story, 'My Own People'? Well—I'm the Sophie Sa-

pinsky—that is my whole life." Then the monotone changed to a lively earnestness. "You know, like Sophie, I have often envied those who could write so beautifully about nothing when I had so much to say, yet could not say it. Like Sophie too, I prefer to live here, alone. I guess it's a hobby with me, I so love solitude." As she dipped her pen to autograph my book she smiled, a wan little smile that only added to the hungry, dreamy look in her eyes, a fleeting shadow of the sweatshop life of drudgery.

No one ever told Anzia Yeziarska she could write. The factory girls sneered. Her landlady merely humored her. But she believed in those emigrant characters and plots germinating within her, believed they had a message. We have that message now; but it is the author's uncooling faith more than anything else that makes it heard.

"Always I feel", continued Miss Yeziarska, clenching her hands as if in embrace of that very faith which is her dearest possession, "that the more you are pushed down by the world, the more you must rise above it. The pushing only serves to bring you up again. You got to push yourself up, by yourself. In my darkest hour I have always hoped."

In a corner of Miss Yeziarska's room stands a rickety little table. Only a short while ago, perhaps, it held the hat and coat tossed aside by a weary, downtrodden Yeziarska upon her return from the factory. But now—now that same little table creaks under the weight of magazines, manuscripts, and important business letters from editors who crave to hear of that very exhaustion, that very heart sickness, of which the little table might speak so eloquently. But Anzia Yeziarska alone in her hall

room in the shadow of Washington Square shrinks from publicity.

"No — no!" she drew back when I broached the word *write up*. "I feel I have done nothing yet — I have only just 'arrived', as they say."

It is because Anzia Yeziarska has "just arrived" with her bundle of short stories tucked under her arm that she is doubly interesting. Today she is the recognized mouthpiece of New York's Jewish East Side which hails her as "Ghetto Queen" for her sincere and sympathetic chronicling of emigrant joy and sorrow. With ear to the sidewalks of Essex Street Miss Yeziarska has been too engrossed recording tenement life to hear the booming and hurraing of Success outside her hall room door. Not even the screening of "Hungry Hearts", for which she received a neat sum, could win her from the lonely existence that she craves. She has never taken notes and does not go abroad for material. Each story is an echo of her own life. Day by day the crowd is thickening to listen to that echo.

"My own people will not be stilled in me till all America stops to listen", ends a prophetic last line of one of her stories.

America *does* halt. America *does* harken.