

Another Artist on the Blacklist

One of the most important cultural events of the last month was the publication for the first time in America of Franz Kafka's prophetic parable of justice, "The Trial," in a translation from the original German. Horace Gregory, the critic, considered it "an event of first importance."

But Mr. Kafka did not arrive in a luxury liner's first class cabin to collect his mounting royalties, nor was he given by his publisher, Alfred A. Knopf, the dubious pleasure of being lionized at the New York lunch-grubbing literati's cocktail parties. For Mr. Kafka died in a Vienna suburb in 1924, as the result of years of privation.

Of what sharpness of wit, of what heights of nobility his untimely death at forty-one deprived world literature we shall never know. There are portions of "The Castle" and "The Trial"—two of his three novels—"which the world would have been much poorer to have lost forever," Mr. Gregory declares.

What poverty concedes to us in world literature is still a glorious thing, but it is scant and tawdry,

measured against the artistry which might have found expression if want amidst wealth did not curse the world. The list of artists in painting, music, literature and the other aesthetic disciplines who managed to achieve a little in spite of the fetters poverty wove around them is a long one; to it Kafka's name must be added.

Longer still, though, are the unwritten lists of men and women who might have added to the beauty of life had want not frustrated the artistic urge that burned within them and, in a world in which even the satisfactions of the mind become the monopoly of the privileged, blew it up into a soul-consuming fire.

Some day, when involuntary poverty is abolished, the last name will be added to this "blacklist" of artists. Then, when abundance for the few and privation for the many amidst potential plenty for all gives way to actual abundance for all, the world with its wealth will nourish the artistic urge, in retribution to the blacklisted whose souls its seared. He who cherishes beauty will hasten that day.

—W. L.