

BOURKE-WHITE

With Erskine Caldwell, she burrowed into the deep South, brought back a biting social indictment called *You Have Seen Their Faces*.

She went through the Boll Weevil belt, the old South and the new. She made straightforward studies of Negroes and whites, sharecroppers, tobacco-rovers. She graphed the shadow of marginal subsistence.

It is not practicable, in these pages, to go with Miss Bourke-White to the ends of the earth. The incidents included are designed only to hint at the scope of her work, her attitudes and methods.

Unlike any photographer that came before her, she has the world at her feet, a plane at her door, and all science behind her.

She has capitalized to the *n*th degree on all the resources of modern business and industry. Yet she would never concede that the thread of life is spun on a ticker.

"There is a limit," she asserts, "to the progress that the photographer as an artist can make in *purely* commercial work. . . .

"The technical problems are so difficult, so varied, so stimulating, and for a long time so challenging that his work will leap ahead if he successfully meets the problems put to him. But a point comes where his work will increase in merit from the advertiser's point of view only if he himself begins to adopt that point of view.

"A desire to do honest work, a social view of the world, will lead him into unexpected pitfalls. To go on competently in the line along which this work leads him he must abandon his own artistic and social conceptions."



Curiously, Miss Bourke-White in her own work has successfully mixed oil and water. Her income is reported in large round figures. She works for magazines which carry all Wall Street on their neatly curried backs. Yet she has done some of the strongest pieces of honest documentation in modern photography.

In her development, Miss Bourke-White has mastered the machine and turned a critical eye on the machine's masters.

She has altered politically, moved a step apart from the art-for-art's-sakers who died on the barricades outside the Royal Academy. She has steadily matured not only as a photographer but also as an individual.