

THE CHECK LIST

CRITICISM

ON SECOND THOUGHT, by James Gray. \$3.00. *Minnesota*. Mr. Gray, the new book editor of the Chicago *Daily News*, was formerly literary editor of the St. Paul *Pioneer Press* and *Dispatch* for about two decades. Here are reprinted those of his reviews that still look good to him — and running throughout are also many of his present-day views on the same authors and topics. The pieces are all effectively written and thought out, filled with shrewd insights, and sound, independent opinions. Mr. Gray is obviously a man of high standards, and he is not readily swayed by the ballyhoo issuing from the book publishers' publicity offices. He sees clearly that Sinclair Lewis' satire is of the obvious, heavy-handed sort, "not a precision instrument." He points to the "faked and phony" character of most of Bromfield's tales, which he labels in large part as "trivial, trite, and insincere." He disposes quickly of the literary pretensions of Clare Boothe Luce, and he dares to say publicly what many have long suspected, to wit, that Willa Cather "has never really mastered the craft of the novel." It is truly astonishing that Mr. Gray's critical talents have received such little notice in the East. He is easily one of the very best newspaper or magazine book reviewers in the country. It would be very difficult to mention a reviewer in the East who excels him.

THE PSYCHIATRIC NOVELS OF OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES; abridgment, introduction, and psychiatric annotations by Clarence P. Obendorf. \$3.00. *Columbia*. Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote three novels that dealt with psychiatric problems — *Elsie Venner* (1858-1859), *The Guardian Angel* (1867) and *A Mortal Antipathy* (1885). They are here abridged by Dr. Obendorf, who is clinical professor of psychiatry at Columbia. He also supplies an introduction and detailed notes throughout the text. He

argues that "In certain essentials Holmes' theory and philosophy of approach to psychological problems is prophetic of psychoanalysis and anticipated Freud's formulations and the psychoanalytical psychiatry which grew out of it." The book is hardly one for the general reader, for the novels make difficult reading, at least in their abridged form; but it will be of much interest to literary critics and historians. The first edition of this book was published in 1943. This second edition is revised and enlarged.

HISTORY

IT'S AN OLD NEW ENGLAND CUSTOM, by Edwin Valentine Mitchell. \$2.75. *Vanguard*. Mr. Mitchell has written another popular historical book — and it is excellent. Among the old New England customs he discusses are eating pie for breakfast, talking about the weather, beholding phantom ships, adopting peculiar place names, thirsting after strange gods, beating the drum, reaching a ripe old age, excelling in epitaphs, and harking back to the past. He deals with each one of them with immense learning, but the general reader would never suspect it, so well and unpretentiously does he write.

THE EVOLUTION OF MODERN LATIN AMERICA, by R. A. Humphreys. \$3.00. *Oxford*. Any writer who attempts to pack the history of a continent into 150 pages is inevitably going to oversimplify. Nevertheless, Mr. Humphreys' volume has a lot to recommend it. His object has been to sketch in only enough Latin-American history to enable the beginner in the field to grasp the outlines and to understand present-day conflicts. He makes a valuable distinction between the corrupt dictatorships below the Rio Grande and the totalitarian states which have arisen elsewhere; and he hammers away steadily at the social difficulties which doctrinaire democrats are apt to overlook.

LOWER PIEDMONT COUNTRY, by H. C. Nixon. \$3.00. *Duell, Sloan & Pearce*. Mr. Nixon, who is editorial director of the Vanderbilt University Press, was undoubtedly as good a man as could be found to do this latest volume in the American Folkways series; it is likely that his effort is not entirely satisfactory because of the limitations imposed by the nature of the series. Seventy thousand words simply are not sufficient to do a well-rounded job. The best that can be hoped for is to transmit a mood or feeling for the country which will encourage the reader to make effective use of the bibliography; and here Nixon is on the whole successful. The Lower Piedmont Country, which includes eastern Tennessee and parts of northern Georgia and Alabama, has a great deal of color and tradition, and its past is marked with drama, change, and progress. This book is a fair guide to its study.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

THE SHORE DIMLY SEEN, by Ellis Gibbs Arnall. \$3.00. *Lippincott*. Mr. Arnall's term of office as governor of Georgia has been one of the more encouraging events in recent Southern history. His book is the political testament of a man who has been effectively liberal in an illiberal area. Mr. Arnall believes less in the overall programmatic approach to politics than in steady, even if slow, progress in the betterment of social and political inequalities. He emphasizes works over faith, action over rhetoric. Especially to the point is his analysis of the South's economic bondage to the North, a condition frequently overlooked by many liberal critics of the South's social backwardness.

OIL ACROSS THE WORLD, *The American Saga of Pipelines*, by Charles Morrow Wilson. \$3.50. *Longmans, Green*. Mr. Wilson is concerned here mainly with the technical, rather than the political, side of the controversies now raging over American interests in oil overseas. The book contains probably everything one needs to know about the problems involved in laying pipelines, refining crude oil and locating reserves. Although it is written in popular style and makes an occasional attempt to incorporate some "human interest" material, the book is concerned too much

with purely technical matters to be of much interest to the general reader.

BETRAYAL IN THE PHILIPPINES, by Hernando Abaya. \$3.00. *Wyn*. The author of this angry book is a Filipino journalist who has apparently spent a long time digging up material with which to document heavily and with plausibility his assertion that the Philippines today have neither political freedom nor economic independence. The general thesis of the book is that American commercial interests interceded to persuade our government to suppress all democratic movements in the Philippines and impose as president a "fascist-minded collaborator" whom we could control. Unfortunately the book is not provided with an index.

LIFE LINE TO A PROMISED LAND, by Ira Hirschmann. \$2.75. *Vanguard*. As an official on the War Refugee Board, Mr. Hirschmann was stationed in Turkey during the war and given wide powers to do whatever he could to rescue refugees from the murderous persecutions of the Axis powers. He was instrumental in saving the lives of many men, women and children, and here he tells how he did it. His tale makes absorbing reading; at times, the facts he reveals about the moral callousness of governments (including that of highly civilized Great Britain) seem almost beyond belief, but his documentation leaves no room for doubt. Mr. Hirschmann is especially sharp with Great Britain. He insists that the Arabs and Jews in Palestine would get along well if the British did not foster bad feeling among them, and if they had not built up the Arab League, "a device for world propaganda and furthering British imperialist aims. It is no secret that the Arab leaders are financed by the British." In a postscript he says, "For the sake of world peace, we must insist that the question of the independence of Palestine be settled in the Security Council of the United Nations, where it belongs, and nowhere else."

WHERE ARE WE HEADING?, by Sumner Welles. \$3.00. *Harper*. It is unfortunate that our former Under Secretary of State chooses to write in frigid governmentalese, and employ the tone of an irritated schoolmaster. For what he has to