

guys than when he was stuck with the stuffed shirts and phony big shots of the metropolitan drawing rooms. Personal ridicule, he thought, could not touch him; if he had anything, it could stand on its own merit.

Lewis and Smith have supported their account of his adventures with copious documentation and illustration of the various gaudy, vulgar and transient performances that were going on at the time. The bourgeois taste of our day looks back on these with a patronizing smile of amusement, so obviously coarse and crude do such antics seem. The dreadful thing about them, and this is what our sophisticated citizen cannot recognize, is their essential persistence; the fundamental likes of this society have not been changed, they have only disguised themselves in the slick and nasty niceness of glossy paper and silver screen, in the glib and unctuous voices of the air. What is required for their treatment is more than men of good will like Oscar Wilde, and more than belief in their susceptibility of conversion to nobler use: what is needed is their liquidation and that takes what John Reed referred to in a euphemistic moment, as "the profound social change."

JOHN YOST.

## Debutante Revolution

IT WON'T BE FLOWERS, by Judith Kelly. Harper & Bros. \$2.

MISS KELLY has given us a sensitive picture of the intellectual plight of those upper-class young women whose well-dressed existences have become barren before the intruding barbarities of poverty and war. Charming Bridget Smith has a beautiful home and loves her handsome husband, but with all this she is restless and feels insecure because, being intelligent and perceptive, she is disturbed by ragged men on the park benches and war headlines in the morning paper. She is afraid of impending violence because of what they may do to her husband and her home: war "for what? For her clothes, her cared-for loveliness, this silver room? Dan die for these meaningless nothings, this false safety and dollar beauty?" But her unrest is mere confusion until she meets Mark Enters, who, the author would have us believe, provided her with a Marxist sword with which to cut through the intellectual underbrush.

Mark Enters is described on the jacket as a "brilliant, impatient young Communist," and the author speaks approvingly of his "crackling, concise talk" and "swift, incisive mind and intuition"; but for one who presumably has a revolutionary function in life our hero seems to this reviewer one of the most repulsive parlor Bolsheviks of all fiction. He sits in Bridget's beautiful silver living-room and, making sure everyone is listening, delivers his opinions of medical school in what the author calls a "brilliant, decisive, hard-bitten performance," to wit: "Nine-tenths of the staff were fools with phonographs for brains and whipped cream

for guts. . . . Go through a private ward and then through a public; see how you like the contrast." Then, like a little boy trying to startle his elders, he looks at Bridget "to see what dent his words might have made on her composure."

To show his emancipation from this bourgeois world, our "revolutionary" exhibitionist is careful to be rude to its bourgeois inhabitants (this the author thinks rather endearing) and sneer at their non-revolutionary remarks. His attentions were concentrated upon Bridget, specifically, upon getting her into bed with him. When he fails in this, he

refuses to answer her question, "What shall I do?" It is not apparent why the "indestructible selflessness" that Bridget begins painfully to achieve on the last page should, as far as Mark has been concerned, follow in its translation into action the line of Marx any more than the line of Coughlin.

One feels that Mark has been crudely manufactured for symbolic purposes; he is unreal and unconvincing. But the Bridgets in this world, Miss Kelly has seen and known and understood, and about them she has something significant to say.

SEBASTIAN STONE.

## Brief Review

*LINCOLN AND THE COMMUNISTS*, by Earl Browder. (Workers Library Publishers, Inc. 2 cents.) I won't advise professional Republicans to read this pamphlet. They might begin to feel uneasy about using Lincoln's name from their political pulpit. Why, the man was a Red! First, he refused to be dominated by the Supreme Court on the question of Negro slavery. That's a good start for any Red. When the reaction took arms, he stood his ground. Civil war followed. Lincoln emerged victorious. Today's upheaval finds the party founded by Lincoln in the enemy camp of reaction. Meanwhile, the tory Democrats of yesterday haven't changed their tory spots. With the Supreme Court invalidating the N.R.A. and A.A.A., proclaiming social legislation unconstitutional, Roosevelt is silent. Worse, he smiles. Earl Browder's parallel between the two historic moments is complete. "The times again call for a Lincoln, for a new party, for a new program." The immediate answer to reaction is a Farmer-Labor Party. This pamphlet should be read widely during this election year.

*THE HANDBOOK OF THE SOVIET UNION*, compiled by American-Russian Chamber of Commerce. The John Day Company. \$3. An invaluable reference book well arranged and clearly written. The sections include: an analysis of the Soviet government and its judicial procedure, a description of its foreign relations with particular reference to trade treaties, the economic geography of the Soviet Union, a history of its economic development since

the Revolution, the working out of the Second Five-Year Plan, the organization of Soviet industry, of Agriculture, of Transportation and Communications, Municipal Construction, Foreign Trade, American-Soviet Trade Relations, International Trade, Finance, Labor Conditions and Social Welfare, Educational and Cultural Development, Regulations for Foreigners, Tourist Travel in the Soviet Union. The volume concludes with a series of valuable statistical surveys, maps and charts.

*SIGN OF THE HEMLOCK*, by Walter Ludwig. Pioneer Youth of America, 219 West 29th St., New York, N. Y. 10c. Good reading for youngsters twelve years or older. It is a story of the Shays rebellion with the family of Daniel Shays as the principal characters. Sound historically and fascinating as a story.

*The Best Poems of 1935. Selected by Thomas Moul.* Harcourt, Brace & Co. \$2. The success of Thomas Moul's annual is, as he says, evidence that an interest in poetry survives. Unfortunately, it is too much of the "led" sort. Poetry readers still seem to be afraid of their own taste, hesitate to buy new volumes of the poets while they buy anthologies. Moul's taste is good enough for ordinary purposes; but in these years it does not serve. Ignoring proletarian poetry except for one poem by C. Day Lewis, he inevitably invalidates his title, since he thereby leaves out many of the best poems of the year.

J. S.

# A NOTE ON LITERARY CRITICISM !

By

## JAMES T. FARRELL

Author of

## "STUDS LONIGAN"

A concrete analysis of the subject, wherein Mr. Farrell proceeds to "name names" in a volume that already has provoked acute controversy.

\$2.50 • AT ALL BOOKSTORES

THE VANGUARD PRESS, 424 Madison Avenue, New York

# Music

## Recent Recordings

THE NEW Toscanini records of Wagnerian excerpts have the authentic ring of a concert performance. Victor has been wise in acceding to the maestro's most minute instructions, for the discs have a fidelity to tone, balance and dynamics that the radio broadcasts were never able to approach. The full Philharmonic was used, instead of the sixty-odd men usually employed in symphonic recordings, and the engineers were forbidden to tinker with the controls or alter in any way the leader's own dynamic scheme. Carnegie Hall has proved itself almost as ideal a recording studio as it is a concert auditorium, since these records possess a clarity and definition that Stokowski has never surpassed in all his experiments.

Included in this volume are the preludes to acts one and three of *Lohengrin*, Toscanini's own concert arrangement of the Dawn and Siegfried's Rhine Journey from *Götterdämmerung*, and the *Siegfried Idyll*. It is doubtful whether Wagner ever received more exalted performances; all that is cheap and pretentious in the music is forgotten in the light of the conductor's supreme taste and his ability to extract from the Philharmonic playing that is not of this world. No one else could have secured such string tone as one hears in the *Götterdämmerung* extracts, or such brass attack as in the prelude to act three of *Lohengrin*. It is only in the woodwinds that any faults can be found.

Mechanically, only two flaws could be found in the whole album (M-308): a delay of forty seconds in starting on the second side, and an inexcusable clarinet fluff by Bellison on the second side of the *Götterdämmerung*.

With the approach of summer the companies are once again indulging in their annoying formula of specializing in the lighter classics. Instead of Bach, Columbia gives us Elgar 'cello concertos, abridged versions of *Louise* and a mediocely sung volume of Robert Franz' *lieder*, while Victor comes through with the first Mendelssohn *Quartet in E Flat Major*, a beautiful work played by the Budapest String Quartet, and a Dvorak symphony by the Czech Philharmonic.

Buried away in the little known lists of Perfect-Melotone are examples of the finest Negro ensemble singing of spirituals I have yet heard on records. The artists are Mitchell's Christian Singers, four workers

from the southeastern extremity of South Carolina without formal musical training of any kind, whose rhythmic freedom and perfect ensemble sense are a refreshing contrast to the stilted and studied singing of the more "dicty" groups from the Southern universities and churches. They sing without accompaniment or written arrangement, but they have a unity of feeling which one can only find in the greatest of improvising musicians. Whatever the sociological implications of spirituals may be they are undeniably authentic folk material when they are sung in the original. Mitchell's group not only brings out all the warmth and depth of the songs; they establish themselves as interpreters almost without equal in the music world.

The particular record which occasions this ecstatic outburst is the coupling of *Who Was John* and *What More Can Jesus Do* (Perfect-Melotone 60758). Inasmuch as they are in the "race" catalog they must be specially ordered from dealers (any store carrying Brunswick, Columbia, or Vocalion records can supply them). The recording itself is perfection, with admirable balance and blending of the voices, and there are many more sides, some of spirituals unknown even to collectors, still to be released by the company.

Although it has been buffeted around by grasping commercial managers and libelled by flagrant imitators, swing music continues to be released on the phonograph. Benny Goodman, whose music last year was anathema to the Broadway music world, has found himself to be among the most popular and successful orchestra leaders in the country, and in his wake follows the magnificent Negro orchestra of Fletcher Henderson, which was always the finest and least inhibited in the country. The excellence of Henderson's arrangements for Goodman were bound to rebound to the credit of his own band, and now one can at last hear the phenomenon of a colored and a white band sounding almost the same—which is intended to be a great compliment for Goodman.

Goodman has made many excellent Victor records during the past six weeks, the most exciting of which are *Stardust*, *I Know That You Know*, and the soon-to-be-released *St. Louis Blues*, all of them Henderson arrangements. But he may best be heard in his new ensemble records with Teddy Wilson at the piano and Gene Krupa on drums: *China's Boy*, *Nobody's Sweetheart*, *Lady Be Good* and *More Than You Know*, which are alto-

gether without parallel in the jazz world today.

Teddy Wilson, using half of Fletcher Henderson's band, has just recorded four excellent sides for Brunswick, two of which, *Mary Had a Little Lamb* and *Too Good to be True*, are now on the market. The records were made late at night, a time when Negro musicians feel more like playing than in the abnormal early morning hours when most records are made. There is a freedom here which can only come from eight musicians playing from the sheer enjoyment of it.

There have been several other good dance releases of which we might mention Bunny Berigan's *I Can't Get Started* (Vocalion), Fletcher Henderson's *Stealin' Apples*, *Christopher Columbus*, *Blue Lou* (Vocalion) and his *Moonrise on the Lowlands* and *I'll Always Be in Love with You* (Victor); Mary Lou Williams' piano solo of *Overhand* (Decca) and Alphonse Trent's old Gennett record of *I Found a New Baby*, now repressed on Champion.

HENRY JOHNSON.

## Current Theater

*Battle Hymn* (Experimental Theater). Michael Gold's and Michael Blankfort's play about John Brown, dramatized in three earnest acts and immediately related to the America of 1936 by prologs and an epilog in an "expressionist" mode. Not the drama of grand poetry and passion which the John Brown theme invites, but a picture of the heroic battler against slavery as observed from the outside—a pageant of struggle more than a drama of conflict. Written with warmth and color.

*Bury the Dead* (Barrymore Theater). Irwin Shaw's remarkable anti-war play sensitively staged and acted; written with poetry and passion. Required attendance.

1936 (Biltmore Theater). The third edition of the W.P.A.'s Living Newspaper project (the first, *Ethiopia*, was censored). Less interesting as entertainment and thinking than *Triple-A Plowed Under* because it lacks a binding idea. But as a review of what happened last year, it presents some significant events with startling effectiveness—particularly the Angelo Herndon case, and the rise and fall of Huey Long.

*Dance of Death* (Adelphi Theater). W. H. Auden's poetic travesty on the bourgeoisie. The most artistically ambitious of the W.P.A. undertakings, and a brilliant idea, but the script falls far short of its possibilities. The producer has done a heroic job; the music of Clair Leonard is a rare delight.

*Class of '29* (Manhattan Theater). A play about college graduates of the class of 1929 who find themselves surplus material in the profit-system world—a theme which has been crying for a playwright. Orrie Lashin and Milo Hastings have approached it with earnestness and understanding, but with less than the required dramatic skill and resourcefulness. The dialog is often wooden, the characters for the most part lack impact though a few passages register sharply. Chiefly significant for its theme, *Class of '29* might well be visited by the seniors in the metropolitan colleges—and the juniors, sophomores and freshmen as well.

*The Drift* (The Community Players). This new play by Claire and Paul Sifton, produced May 28, 29, 30 at 550 West 110th Street, deserves serious consideration by one of the social theaters. The struggles of miners in the Mesabe iron range of northern Minnesota are dramatized in two acts packed with material. The revisions derived through professional rehearsal and production could make *Drift* one of the best plays of its kind.

S. B.

### BLOOMFIELD'S

118 EAST 14th ST. OPP. IRVING PL.  
Tompkins Square 6065

Victor and Columbia: Symphonic and Chamber Music  
Recordings at Bargain Prices—Also Radios & Phonographs.  
Excellent Mail Order Service—Come in and Browse Around.  
Just received TOSCANINI with the Philharmonic Sym. Orch.  
of N. Y. recording Lohengrin, preludes to Act I and III.  
Götterdämmerung—Dawn, Siegfried's Rhine Journey and  
Siegfried Idyl. Catalogue mailed upon request.

"Quite apart from propaganda, it is a  
thrilling play."—William Lyon Phelps.

### BURY the DEAD

The Drama That Started the World by IRWIN SHAW  
BARRYMORE THEATRE, 47th St. W. of B'way  
Evenings at 8:50. Matinees at 2:40  
Prices: Evens. 50c to \$2.00. Mats. Wed. & Sat. 50c to \$1.50