

ist philosophy in all its aspects" (p. 268). It is such eclecticism as this (at a time when the French Communist Party is insisting upon dialectical materialism as a necessary principle upon which to build one united party by merging the Communist and Socialist Parties) that leads the author to his greatest defect, lack of faith in the ability of the masses to become conscious of their need and to organize for effective action. To him it is "problematic" whether "a majority of the people under present conditions can become intelligent about the ends and means involved in a program for social reconstruction" (p. 226). Such an attitude denies the possibility of a revolutionary struggle, and makes the putsch the only alternative.

In view of these defects, his last chapter, in which he defines a program of action, seems to have little connection with what went before. Mr. Slesinger favors organizing the unorganized, the united front (but he does not mention the people's front), "a radical labor party," and the development of a revolutionary ideology and organization (but he does not mention the Communist Party). It is significant, however, that he does not here specifically show what the liberal educator can begin to do to learn in practice, perhaps, what he is not yet fully willing to admit in theory: to join the American Federation of Teachers, to take greater interest not merely in adult education but in workers' education, to join farmer-labor parties that are growing up and tending towards a national farmer-labor party, in short, to become active in the struggle and thereby learn that it is in fact a class struggle.

Marxian criticism of the liberal educator is necessary; but it should be soundly grounded, and practical. Mr. Slesinger's, it seems to me, is neither.

MORRIS SCHAPPES.

### Ariel in Idaho

APRIL, by Vardis Fisher. Doubleday, Doran, & Co. and Caxton Printers, Ltd. \$2.

APRIL, subtitled *A Fable of Love*, seems a strange title for the new novel by Vardis Fisher, who recorded in his Vridar Hunter tetralogy the dark, volcanic, and titanic passions of a tortured soul. Despite its title, its rural setting, and its plot, *April* is far from being a placid pastoral idyll. It has humor, true enough, but the wry, twisted humor seen on the puckered mouth of a man who has eaten an astringent green persimmon. Mr. Fisher has said that it is impossible to conceive of any other kind of humor than ironic humor, and his grins are invariably strongly tinged with the sardonic.

Somebody has described Samuel Johnson as "an Ariel encased in the coarse hulls of a Caliban," and this might also apply to Mr. Fisher's heroine, June Beeg. She is short, dumpy, and plain, but her head is full of poetic fancy and whimsy. She feels the urge to love and be loved by a male, but the country bumpkins she knows will have nothing to do with her. They are attracted more by a pretty face and a trim shape than by a beautiful soul hidden within a lumpish body. There has

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been a procession of farmhands on her father's farm, but June has never had much luck with them. There comes an anæmic stripling who fondly believes himself to be a poet, and he bewails the sorry state of affairs when a college man and a creator of literature to boot has to trudge along in the dust behind a plow. June is attracted to him, and sets out deliberately, in her faunish way, to win him. There is a scene of impressive dramatic power in which the callow youth repulses her advances, and June with simple dignity and pathos lays bare her heart.

June's mother, fat, indolent, and silly, is eternally engrossed in the synthetic romance found between the covers of cheap novels, and is disappointed because her wild, shaggy husband does not conform to her ideas of a true lover, engendered by the sissified heroes of fiction. June's father is a character in the authentic Fisher tradition of men whose footsteps shake the earth with thunder, men with heaving, hair-matted chests, men who howl with agony-shaken voices at a lightning-riven sky, though he is pretty well subdued and hopeless when the book begins, and is given to long periods of disappearance to get away from it all, only a sad shadow of the ring-tailed squealer of former days.

Through it all, faithful Sol Incham, an elderly bachelor, has been coming to see June every Sunday, often bearing a bouquet of woodland posies. He is plainly the only one who has any conception of June's other, inner self, a sprite keenly responsive to the beauties of life and nature. Even his understanding is an incomplete and somewhat distorted one.

It is always difficult and unwise to approach Mr. Fisher's characters with a come-day-god-day-God-send-Sunday yardstick, and one may even make out a plausible case for the thesis that no such people ever trod the earth, this being particularly true of the more intellectual ones. *April* is in spots a fable in very truth, but the fantasy is of high flight and epic dimension. The most credible and appealing character of the tetralogy was Nelo, Vridar's half-Indian sweetheart and wife, and in *April* it is upon the more inarticulate characters that Mr. Fisher bestows the attributes of earthiness and reality that made of Nelo such a saving contrast to Vridar's theatricality and inner turmoil.

Mr. Fisher's ability to recreate in all its turbulent hues and savage splendor the ante-lope country he knows so well is here used to magnificent advantage. This reviewer has never before encountered so striking a portrayal of a fire in the woods, and this episode ranks with the very finest descriptive prose of our day or any other day.

There is something annoyingly Gene Stratton Porter-ish about the happy ending in which June suddenly becomes cognizant and appreciative of Sol's heart of gold and flies to his shack and bosom, the sprite becoming a domesticated hewer of wood and fetcher of water in the twinkling of an eye, as it were. But Vardis Fisher has been so admirably revitalized by return contact with the earth that first

nurtured his creative muse, he has so successfully cast off the sickly introspection and pure argumentation that marred the final volume of his tetralogy, he relates a tale with such persuasive grace, that one feels inclined to blink at trifles and offer thanks for a job well done.

JACK CONROY.

### Brief Reviews

*METTERNICH*, by H. Du Coudray. Illustrated. Yale University Press. \$4.00.

For nearly forty years up to the revolutionary year, 1848, Metternich, continually Foreign Minister or Chancellor of Austria, dominated European affairs. His effort, pursued with great skill, was to keep the heritage of the French Revolution from being fulfilled in Europe. Miss Coudray calls this a mission of peace; but it prevented no wars and only intensified conflict and insecurity. The rule of the bourgeoisie, whether under a republic or a constitutional monarchy, was inevitable in France, as was, also, the unification and independent national existence of Germany and Italy, which Metternich attempted to hold back in the interests of Hapsburg absolutism. Metternich is very much a hero to Miss Coudray, who sees him loyally with his own eyes; her very clever and epigrammatic book, charged with a brilliance scarcely equalled since Lytton Strachey, is, therefore, very limited in its value, especially in its stupidly snobbish indifference to those economic realities which give the key to the profound failure of Metternich's successful-seeming career.

*THE BALKAN STATES 1. ECONOMIC*, Oxford University Press. \$2.00.

*DRUMS IN THE BALKAN NIGHT*, by John J. B. McCulloch. Illustrated. G. P. Putnam's Sons. \$3.00.

The first of these volumes was prepared for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, organized in England in 1920, on the proviso that no "opinions" were to be expressed in its studies. There is certainly the strictest avoidance of "opinions" in this volume, which consists of statistical charts and explanatory text. The book is very valuable for reference, however. It requires no very elaborate study of the material to see the economic misery, sharpened by foreign control of all valuable resources, which has made the politics of this region a record of violence.

The second volume is a step above the ordinary tourist account. Mr. McCulloch is far from profound; he is, in fact, overanxious to appear to be a good fellow; but he is intelligent, observant, and a lively writer; and not inattentive to the currents of imperialist influence in the Balkans. His book is worth looking into.

★

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*Report, Brussels Peace Congress*. Secretariat, International Peace Campaign.

*The Croquet Player*, by H. G. Wells. Viking. \$1.25.

*Some of My Best Friends Are Jews*, by Robert Gessner. Farrar & Rinehart. \$3.

*Are You a Stockholder?*, by Alden Winthrop. Covici, Friede. \$2.50.

*On This Island*, by W. H. Auden. Random House. \$1.50.

*Unemployment Relief in Periods of Depression*, by Leah H. Feder. Russell Sage Foundation. \$2.50.

*America Today*, a book of 100 prints exhibited by the American Artists' Congress. Equinox. \$5.

*Idaho: A Guide in Word and Picture*, prepared by the Federal Writers' Projects of the Works Progress Administration. Caxton. \$3.

*This Is Your Day*, by Edward Newhouse. Lee Furman. \$2.50.