

support was given, since a tacit "deal" existed between Olson and Hoidale.

Those who desire a more complete understanding of the section embracing the Dakotas, Minnesota, and parts of Wisconsin, Iowa, and Nebraska, as well as literary admirers of Rolvaag, would do well to get hold of this book.

DALE KRAMER.

Expose of Racism

Herbert J. Seligman's "Race Against Man" a timely refutation.

OF ALL the dehumanizing ingredients that compose the mosaic of fascism, none is so vicious as its racist policy. And, as is persuasively demonstrated in this timely book (*Race Against Man*, by Herbert J. Seligman; G. P. Putnam's Sons, \$2.75), there is none so barren of foundation in science, ethics, or otherwise. *Race Against Man* is a popularized synthesis of all the accumulated scholarship on the subject of race. The author checks the current doctrines of the totalitarian racists against the established body of scientific knowledge in anthropology, biology, psychology, and related fields. In a presentation remarkably incisive for the tremendous research that has gone into this rather small volume, he lays bare the claims for a genetically pure Aryan or Nordic "race," endowed by hereditary destiny with superior physical and spiritual attributes.

Science has well established that ethnic groups can be properly classified as races only on the basis of distinctive physical characteristics. Because of innumerable overlappings and variations between every race, none has remained pure—and perhaps least of all the Germans and Italians. Furthermore, there is no scientific warrant for the argument that physical descriptions can imply fatal limitations in spiritual and cultural potentialities. On the contrary, the world's culture is seen as the product of the accumulated contributions of all peoples and no one race may rightfully claim preeminence in the authorship. Finally, the classic Nazi warnings of racial degeneration through miscegenation are thoroughly discredited. Far from being a disadvantage, ethnic mixture is a means of solving many human problems.

The shallow and self-seeking motivations which underly prevailing attitudes on race are trenchantly exposed in the challenging chapters on the Negroes, the Oriental minorities in the United States, and the Jews. In the instance of the first two, the author shows that the so-called colored problem "is in reality the white problem, and that problem lies in the conquest of fear, greed, and sanctified brutality having for their aim and objective economic exploitation." Anti-Semitism is placed in proper relation to its historical roots and is correctly appraised as an instrument to advance economic and political reaction. The author sees its contemporary development under the aegis of the Nazis as a threat

which transcends the fate of the Jewish people and imperils all the basic values of civilization.

The book suffers from one unfortunate weakness. This is the author's omission of any reference to the attitude on race (and its collateral implications) on the part of the Soviet Union. The latter is today an ideal crucible for ethnic admixture, almost two hundred diverse racial elements fusing harmoniously into the unified composite which is the country of socialism. The demonstrated strength of the USSR in every phase of economic, political, and social activity is the best evidence in rebuttal of the Nazi racist position; the Soviet Union alone is using race, not "against" man, but to serve his ends and those of society.

Apart from this serious shortcoming, *Race Against Man* is an excellent discussion of a complex subject that is susceptible of much confusion today. Written in a spirited style and yet with much sensitivity, it is in every respect a valuable addition to the recent literature exposing the spuriousness of Nazi-fascism.

JOSEPH HASTINGS.

Brief Review

Collection of articles on American Folksongs.

THE fifteen articles by Robert Winslow Gordon which were written for the *New York Times* Sunday magazine some eleven years ago and now published in a single volume (*Folksongs of America*) by the National Service Bureau of the WPA are studded with examples of every type of American folksong: North Carolina mountain songs, Negro spirituals, Negro work songs, shouts and chants, lumberjack songs, cowboy songs, songs of the pioneers, etc.

The volume contains ample evidence to support Mr. Gordon's claim that America has a body of folksong "perhaps greater in extent than that possessed by any other nation, and certainly unsurpassed in interest and variety of types." The publication of this volume (which sells for 25 cents) and, I hope, subsequent volumes which will include tunes as well as verses, should soon dispose of the paradoxical situation in which songs that owe their very existence to the mass of the people have remained for so long the property and pleasure of a handful of specialists and collectors. WPA can score up another contribution to American culture.

DAVID SILVER.



Charles Martin

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Poetry on the Air

"Words Without Music," over the Columbia network, offers dramatic performance of poetry and verse plays. A fresh, exciting presentation.

ONE Sunday afternoon last December, the Columbia Broadcasting System took a flyer on the average American's potentialities as a poetry lover. Through sixty of its stations the network sent out a program called "Words Without Music." People in Passamaquoddy, in Winston-Salem, or in Saginaw, who tuned in by chance on that program, heard a group of actors perform the poetry of Vachel Lindsay, William Rose Benet, and Carl Sandburg. A new type of program, offering a different treatment of poetry, it has won a considerable audience for an art against which the American mind has been heavily prejudiced.

Part of this public hostility to poetry is the belief that it is an abnormal, effeminate, highbrow, meaningless art. There is the misconception of the poet as a dreamer and idler, unfit to meet the realities of the world of work and war. There is the common caricature of the long-haired starveling inditing verses in his Paris or Greenwich Village garret. There are the countless schoolrooms where an epic is memorized in tedious chunks and its every phrase is stupidly and laboriously analyzed to the last syllable. There are the poetry societies where a handful of exclusive people reverently whisper homage to long-dead romantics. There are those prolific scribblers who read simperingly on the air their syrupy verses. And there are those erudite conjuring tricks, the product of poets retired into their private dream world.

But against all these factors in our common life making for indifference or opposition, there are strong and active signs of a hope for poetry. From the founding of Harriet Monroe's *Poetry* in 1912, to today, some fifty thousand poets have achieved publication and certainly many times more have never gotten into print. Americans in great numbers are seeking to express their experiences in verse. Another indication of their natural feeling for rhythm and rhyme is the popularity of limerick contests, of Gilbert and Sullivan, and of jazz songs. And among the workers of America, on ranches, in lumber camps, in mining towns, in steel mills, in cotton fields, in hundreds of our industries, work songs and ballads of their own making have been shaped and sung and recited until they have become an integral part of emotional life.

That poetry is an art which everyone can and does practice in one form or another is indisputable. It is a human activity reflecting and influencing human activities. Taken in this elementary sense, Americans do not shy away from poetry. For they think of their own songs and ballads not as poetry consciously made but as a natural product of

forces within their lives and work that need expression. It is when a highly serious label is attached that they tend to reject it, even though it may be something good, something having beauty and meaning for them. It is a publishing miracle when the thin little books of verse priced at \$1.75 or the fatter ones at \$3 sell enough to cover their cost. And it is usually rare to find a magazine editor printing verse anywhere but in a cranny of his page or between the ads in the back.

Recognizing the need for poetry and the prejudice against it, Norman Corwin, himself a young poet, planned for the radio a program of poetry that would offset the prejudice and help meet the need. Mr. Corwin does not claim to be the first to see the possibilities of verse in radio. In his introduction to *The Fall of the City*, a radio verse play written at the end of 1936, Archibald MacLeish wrote:

The argument for radio as a stage for verse is neither long nor sensational . . . radio is a mechanism which carries to an audience sounds and nothing but sounds. . . . There is only the

spoken word—an implement which poets have always claimed to use with a special authority. There is only the word-excited imagination—a theater in which poets have always claimed peculiar rights to play. . . . With the eye closed or staring at nothing, verse has every power over the ear. The ear accepts, accepts and believes, accepts and creates. The ear is the poet's perfect audience, his only true audience. And it is radio and only radio which can give him public access to this perfect friend. . . .

MacLeish was persuading American poets to experiment with verse plays for radio, but Corwin in his "Words Without Music" has not limited himself to plays written in verse form. He has experimented with non-dramatic verse, applying to it a technique of orchestration and augmentation that gives it dramatic impact. In his production of Sandburg's *The People, Yes*, for example, different voices were used, in order to achieve the quality of restlessness, change, motion, that is in the original.

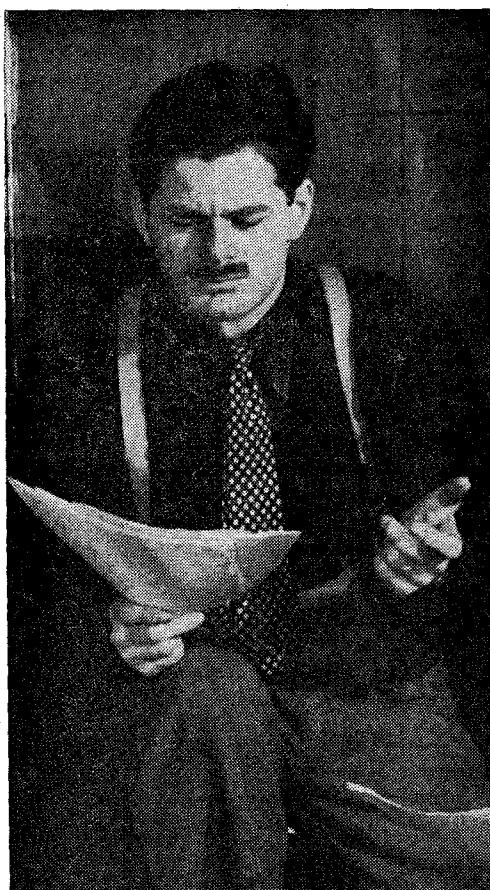
Sound effects (as in all Corwin's verse adaptations) were written in both as background and as active elements—e.g., the machine effect behind Sandburg's brief poem:

The machine yes the machine
never wastes anybody's time
never watches the foreman
never talks back. . . .

The effect operates in strict counterpoint and deliberate rhythm to reenforce the impression of noise and monotony. One notes the use of a thunderdrum at several points to heighten the low ominous tone of certain speeches.

Following that principle of adaptation, Mr. Corwin has been producing on "Words Without Music" the work of a wide variety of poets. One program was given to the Negro writers James Weldon Johnson, Sterling Brown, and Irwin Russell. Another to the Englishmen Thomas Hood, W. S. Gilbert, Jonathan Swift, Shakespeare, Matthew Arnold, and Edward Lear. Two American ballads by Longfellow and Amanda Benjamin Hall made up one program. Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* took up an entire program on March 5. At other times Mr. Corwin has broadcast his adaptations of Robert Frost, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Thackeray, Alfred Noyes, David Morton, Browning, Keats, Poe, and Amy Lowell.

Two interesting experiments with his own verse have been produced by Mr. Corwin. On December 25 his very amusing *Plot to Overthrow Christmas* was broadcast, and on February 19 his *They Fly Through the Air with the Greatest of Ease*. The latter was based upon Vittorio Mussolini's book cele-



NORMAN CORWIN, the director of "Words Without Music," often acts in and writes for the programs, which go on the air over CBS at 2:30 (EST) Sunday afternoons.