

Musician of Norway

EDVARD GRIEG. By David Monrad-Johansen. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1938. \$4.

Reviewed by GILBERT CHASE

TO some, the fact that Edvard Grieg was a Norwegian composer may seem insignificant beside the fact that he was a great composer. But to Grieg himself the fact that he was a Norwegian was of paramount importance. Had he not been a composer, he still would have striven with all his energy, in some other field, for the cultural independence of his country. He was a man who placed national aspirations above self-expression and personal glory. And because he was a musician he strove all his life to give Norway's soul a voice in music.

We know that he succeeded. But the full story of the cultural movement in which Grieg played so vital a part, and of the struggles and difficulties which he had to face, is now told for the first time with completeness and authority in this excellent biography, written by one who is himself a Norwegian and a composer. To read this book is not only to gain a rich insight into the life and art of a cou-

rageous and lovable personality, but also to understand the conditions under which Grieg worked, the ideals towards which he aspired, and the national spirit which is reflected in his music.

This is one of those rare musical biographies which should appeal equally to the layman and the musician. The author's admirable style, the sympathy and understanding which he brings to his subject, and his frequent quotations from the charming and vivacious letters of Grieg, combine to make the book as readable as it is enlightening. While avoiding technical detail, the author traces the evolution of Grieg's music with intimate knowledge and critical acumen.

The translation has been ably done by Madge Robertson, but some letters and quotations in German and French have been left in the original, which is hard on those who do not read these languages. The illustrations are numerous and attractive. A list of Grieg's compositions might have added to the reference value of the book. But it unquestionably stands as the authoritative biography of Grieg, and one of the best musical biographies of recent years.

Gilbert Chase was associate editor of the recently published "International Cyclopedia of Music and Musicians."

North of the Nazis

RATS IN THE LARDER: The Story of Nazi Influence in Denmark. By Joachim Joesten. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1939. \$2.50.

Reviewed by DAVID H. POPPER

TO the average American Scandina-
navia is Europe's "quiet corner"—
a backwater area amid Europe's
swirling diplomatic currents and a region
where many of the problems of demo-
cratic government seem to have been
successfully solved. It is high time that
an iconoclast arose to shatter this some-
what idyllic conception. Speaking for
Denmark alone, and writing in a breezy
style which conceals telling thrusts at
that country's political leaders, Mr. Joe-
sten acquaints us with some rather alarm-
ing realities. In his opinion Danish
democracy has been seriously undermined
by calculated Nazi penetration. Danish
National Socialist factions are encouraged
from across the border. Germans living in
Denmark are regimented and set to es-
pionage. The North Schleswig border dis-
pute is held as a perennial threat over
Danish heads. Germans systematically
buy up land all along the disputed bound-
ary. Germany's bilateral, controlled trade
agreement with the Danes ruthlessly
mulets the little nation. German air and
naval forces violate the territorial in-
tegrity of the country at will. The anti-
Nazi press is intimidated. Everything pos-
sible is done to sustain the predominant
Danish attitude that it is fruitless to try
to resist German incursions.

In the face of such activities, which
some powers (and, most of all, Nazi Ger-
many) would regard as the epitome of
provocation if turned against them, the
Danish statesmen maintain a hush-hush
policy of conciliation and vaguely hope
that the miracle by which they were per-
mitted to remain neutral in 1914 will be
repeated. As in pre-war days, Denmark
continues to prepare fortifications against
naval attack by Britain, while leaving
the German border undefended. Mean-
while, Denmark openly rebuffs attempts
by the other Scandinavian nations to win
its support for concerted efforts to achieve
military security.

Swayed by his antipathy to fascism and
a sincere concern for democracy, Mr.
Joesten attempts to rally the Danes to a
defense of their rights and their national
integrity. He believes that a close alliance
of rearmcd Scandinavian nations would
act as a deterrent to German aggression
in that quarter, particularly if Britain
were to resolve to defend Danish neu-
trality against German infringement. Yet
there is much to be said in extenuation
of the present Danish policy, disastrous as
its ultimate effects may be. The League
of Nations has gone; and the spirit of
martial resistance was not precisely in
evidence anywhere when Czechoslovakia,
another small state, was subjected to Ger-
man pressure. Under the circumstances
the Danes cannot be too severely blamed
for believing that a dash of the headstrong
valor of the Vikings would be fruitless at
the moment. Until those powers equipped
to resist the Nazi dictatorship decide to
do so, small nations must put their trust
in compliant neutrality and negotiation.

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
THE STONEWARE MONKEY R. Austin Freeman (Dodd, Mead: \$2.)	Murder and jewel theft in rural England have deadly aftermath in artistic London circles, as erudite Dr. Thorndyke discovers.	Masterly handling by G.O.M. of mystery writers of not entirely opaque problem made specially enjoyable by sly jabs at modern art.	Perfection
DEATH TEARS A COMIC STRIP Theodora Dubois (Houghton Mifflin: \$2.)	Unloved Staten Island stepfather dies from "morphine withdrawal." Shot kills brother. "Surgeon-Sleuth" McNeill—aided by wife—operates successfully.	"Maddeningly complicated" case involves batch of ebullient and likable characters, slick tricks with dope, and surprise solution.	A-1
THE URGENT HANGMAN Peter Cheyney (Coward-McCann: \$2.)	Slim Callaghan, London private detective, pins murder of rich father on proper member of unwholesome clan.	Resourceful sleuth with heart of gold, nerves of iron, and tongue of brass does his stuff to slang obligato.	Mild thriller
THE CASE OF THE GREEN FELT HAT Christopher Bush (Holt: \$2.)	Ludovic Travers, on rural honeymoon, uses knowledge of golf to solve murder of crooked and much hated English "share pusher."	Ludo suffers less than other fictional sleuths turned Benedick. Features of tale include likable characters and tantalizing finish.	Enter-taining
DOOR NAILS NEVER DIE Anthony Wynne (Lippincott: \$2.)	Rich English farmer and country parson slain in inexplicable fashion. Dr. Hailey runs counter to cops and clears doomed suspect.	Dignified doctor's nocturnal wanderings by land and sea add zest of adventure to much involved yarn with solution bordering fantastic.	Agree-able
THE CLUE OF THE ARTIFICIAL EYE J. S. Fletcher (Hillman-Curl: \$2.)	Nine short stories of murder and theft with Paul Campenhaye, criminologist, as hero.	All tales pretty badly "dated," with only occasional flashes of deceased master.	Grave-yard hay
SENTENCE DEFERRED August Derleth (Scribners: \$2.)	Banker's bones found in burned house after business failure. Judge Peck deftly straightens out murder mystery.	Small town background and characters especially well done. Neat legal tie-up tightens plot.	Better grade

Biography of a Mind

GEORGE SANTAYANA. By George W. Howgate. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 1938. \$3.50.

Reviewed by MILTON K. MUNITZ

THERE are probably few who would disagree with Mr. Howgate's prophecy that "we shall have had in George Santayana one of the remarkable men of this generation." Mr. Howgate presents us with a studied and laboriously accurate summary of Santayana's writings and life; he narrates the biography of a mind in which the poet, moral philosopher, essayist, critic, and metaphysician have variously played their roles, not however independently of one another, but rather as manifold expressions of and approaches to an underlying central interest in the relation of man and his spirit to the universe. To one who has traversed both Santayana's own writings and the comparatively small body of critical literature about him, Mr. Howgate's book will afford little beyond what he already knows or has learned from those experiences. For those on the other hand who for one reason or another have not read extensively in Santayana, this book provides in convenient form an organized account of Santayana's extended adventures in criticism, poetic expression, and constructive philosophy. The book will have served a useful purpose if, by means of its well-advised technique of generous quotations and by its restrained enthusiasm and sympathy for its subject, it induces its readers to turn to Santayana's own writings for the genuine intellectual and esthetic enjoyment which they have to offer. For Santayana like Schopenhauer is his own best expositor.

Furthermore, the reader will then realize more than he might perhaps from Mr. Howgate's account, that Santayana is primarily a philosopher and not merely a great literary artist. For in approaching Santayana from a literary rather than a technically philosophic point of view, as Mr. Howgate does, one misses, it seems to the present reviewer, that which endows the means of expression with its genuine value, its felicitous and lucid conveyance of a body of principles that arrest the mind in their own right.

When critically examined, these principles will be found to crystallize around a serious attempt to unite in morals and metaphysics a thoroughgoing recognition of the material forces in life and nature with an equally thoroughgoing appreciation of spiritual values as these have been celebrated in the great idealistic traditions. Santayana's intellectual itinerary in the course of some forty-odd years has included Athens, Rome, and even Calcutta, and it is as a studied attempt to combine the insights of Greek ethics and Indian or Catholic spirituality that the ultimate fruits of this unique journey must be judged. And although Mr. Howgate, in relative neglect of considering the difficulties in the way of ultimately uniting these divergent materials, seems to accept Santayana's own judgment of their compatibility, other readers might be led

to question such a synthesis. For the latter it will be possible to understand and evaluate the implications of a theory of the spiritual life such as Santayana develops in his later writings in its relation to current political and moral problems. For in so far as such a life entails a disinclination from moral concerns as irrational or conventional necessities, it exhibits a form of escapism that in no way conforms to the moral idealism of the life of reason. Such a reader will also appreciate the manner in which the construction of the "Realms of Being" reflects the selective emphases of a moral philosophy different in temper from that originally sketched with such admirable comprehensiveness in "The Life of Reason." He will differentiate in his own mind the separate strands of philosophic influence, those stemming from Aristotelian naturalism, Platonic dualism, and Lockean agnosticism, that have in one way or another entered into Santayana's thought, and arrive at an estimation of these as

expressions of variously different persuasions of thought and conduct.

Yet whatever be one's own preferences or allegiances in these matters, it is an undeniable truth about Santayana that his writings are provocative precisely for the reason that they are many-sided. They combine profundity of thought and artistry of expression; they unite Olympian detachment and interest in universal principles with pointedly shrewd analyses of current affairs or historical matters of fact. One can turn, therefore, to Santayana's poetry; to his critical analyses of literary figures like Goethe, Shelley, or Dante; to his discerning comments on the habits of mind and conduct in England, America, or Germany; to his extensive moral examination of the natural conditions and possible ideal developments of institutions such as art, science, religion, and society; or finally to his more technical discussions concerning the nature of knowledge and the generic traits of reality, and in each case either be rewarded with insights that pierce to the truth of the matter, or be challenged by the masterful defense of a position that calls for critically circumspect thoughts.

*"I like moving on and on,
which is lucky, because . . .*

I Married a Vagabond

BY RACHEL LATTA (MRS. HARRY A.) FRANCK

Here is both a travel book of wide appeal and a human document of extraordinary interest. Married to a man who is ever starting for some far-off land, Mrs. Franck has thoroughly enjoyed accompanying her husband and making a home for the family in all parts of the world. Wherever possible they have shunned the beaten track and, as a result, have become familiar with strange customs and ways of life the ordinary traveler never sees. Mrs. Franck's enthusiasm for travel is infectious and her vivid prose carries us along on a glorious series of irresistible adventures, the spirit of which is delightfully caught in the charming illustrations by Charles Child. No one who has thrilled to Mr. Franck's "Vagabond Journeys" or who likes travel will want to miss this volume.



\$2.50

PLAIN ENGLISH

BY WILLIAM FREEMAN

This forthright book tells you in plain English what plain English is. It answers all the questions you have wondered about, concerning grammar, linguistics, style, background of words, their use in everyday language as well as in poetry and prose. Edited by Blanche Colton Williams.

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