

mass of original material and will long, if not always, remain the last word on his subjects. The same may be said of most of the volumes which he has procured and edited, but what shall we say of scale? John Hay was a secretary to Abraham Lincoln, poet, novelist, and historian, secretary to the Legation at Madrid, Assistant Secretary of State, Ambassador to the Court of St. James, Secretary of State, and had not merely a national but an international reputation and influence. If his life can appear in the series in 476 pages why should 758 be allotted to a man like Chandler?

This is not to say that there is not much interesting material in the volume for the student of American politics, such as the pages devoted, for example, to the first Grant campaign for the Presidency. Professor Richardson has done a final job. His scholarship, his thoroughness, and the access he has had to original documentary material, would seem to leave nothing for any biographer in the future to glean. For the specialist interested in the local political machinery and methods of the time it will prove valuable and permanent, but in this day, so distraught with mondial events and characters, it is scarcely a volume to attract the ordinary reader.

**SRL**

readers were largely instrumental in the success of *God's Stepchildren* by Sarah Gertrude Millin. Her new novel, *THE DARK GODS*, a story of Nazi propaganda among South African tribes, will be published by Harper on Feb. 20th. Your bookseller will take your order for a first-edition copy now. \$2.50

## Primer on Nature

*AN ESSAY ON NATURE.* By Frederick J. E. Woodbridge. New York: Columbia University Press. 1940. 351 pp., with index. \$3.

Reviewed by ALAN DEVOE

"IT is foolish," Professor Woodbridge has written, "to suppose that there is any science which says the last word about Nature. There may, however, be one that says the first words. It may be called philosophy." In this latest book he has undertaken to utter first words about the identity of Nature and the nature of Nature, and meditatively to consider basic problems of the natural and the more-than-natural. There has resulted, as readers already acquainted with his penetrating clarity and smooth serenity of style will not be surprised to learn, a book of beauty and wisdom and much suggestiveness.

Nature, for Professor Woodbridge, as for the Santayana of "Scepticism and Animal Faith," is "public experience . . . the stars, the seasons, the swarm of animals, the spectacle of birth and death, the facts before every man's eyes . . .," and in establishing what he takes to be the realness of these facts he attacks powerfully and with ingenuity the wilder and more paralyzing kinds of extreme scepticism. Nature exists; Nature lies exposed to all; if the visible world is made problematic, intellectual clarity has vanished and a reign of confusion begun. From these sturdily established premises, and treading windingly a path whereon, as he says, "it is not easy to avoid offending the sen-

sitive and encouraging the superstitious," he proceeds to the development of the theme that Nature is still man's home, still the vineyard where knowledge is gathered, and he comes ultimately to utter the conclusion that Nature sets the pattern for a moral order, and that in the pursuit of happiness if not of knowledge (a carefully explored distinction) acknowledgment of the supernatural may be regarded as a natural necessity.

Professor Woodbridge has two great gifts uncommon in philosophers. He writes a prose which, always lucid and effortlessly expert, rises frequently to moving poetry; and he knows how, when necessary, to speak a single homely epigrammatic sentence which will illuminate a concept, for the ordinary reader, more brilliantly than pages of explanation might. There is much intricate thinking in this book of his, and the subtle expositions of theories of time and light and space and optics are often hard to follow. But always there are the relieving and illuminating homely phrases such as when it is observed (about space) that "one can walk upstairs and downstairs in one's house but not in infinity"; or (about pragmatism) that "Truth is not 'that which works,' but something in Nature that is worked with"; or (about the supernatural) that "all ceremony is faith in the ideal, faith in the ever-superior, ending in faith in the superior-to-Nature." Professor Woodbridge's style has beauty and strength and sometimes humor, and always a fine absence of philosophic wind.

"An Essay on Nature" is an answer—shrewd, humane, and of great dignity—to the dualism which "contends that . . . the familiar scenes we explore are but data whereby we ascertain the character and structure of a universe which somehow lies independently." It is a brave and grave testament of naturalism. And it is an utterance, not least, out of a great piety, the piety of a man who feels himself so deeply a child of Nature that in this book he revives the old and nowadays-infrequent device of capitalizing and personifying her, the quiet piety of a philosopher who can emerge from the labyrinthine corridors of thought to say:

To regard Nature as the symbol of God's glory is not at all strange or unnatural. It is very human. It is, perhaps, the thing we are ultimately led to do when, thoroughly sophisticated, disillusioned, and disenchanted, we take ourselves seriously in hand and ask what is our business here. Then we stand confronted by the Ancient of Days.

This is a serene and thoughtful speaking of first words about the subject Nature.

## By DALTON TRUMBO

Author of "JOHNNY GOT HIS GUN"

The author of the Most Original Book of 1939 now writes the Most Original Book of 1941. A wise and witty tale of modern American politics, in which the amazed Mr. Andrew Long suddenly finds himself in the Shale City jail, and has to call for help from that old friend of the family, General Andrew Jackson!

Recommended by the Book-of-the-Month Club  
352 pages. \$2.50 at all bookstores.

# The Remarkable ANDREW

Philadelphia • J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY • New York

# Words and Music...

*SPRING SYMPHONY.* By Eleanor Painter. New York: Harper and Brothers. 1941. 362 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by ABBOTT C. DEE

NO love affair of the nineteenth century, not even that of Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning, is more poignantly human, more warmly romantic, than that of Clara Wieck and Robert Schumann. It began when she was a child of eight, a musical prodigy carefully guarded and rigorously enslaved by a tyrannical father. Schumann came to the house to take lessons. Papa Wieck had discovered in him a talent, and soon he was living under the master's roof. To the child Clara he immediately became something more than one of her father's pupils. He was a gracious and charming knight-errant from a larger world. He told her lovely, fantastic stories. He taught her a more delicate, more shadowy, more impassioned music which her father disapproved. Such, for years, was their relationship. To him she was just a child, very attractive and greatly gifted. But in her was bred a worship that was never to grow cold. Then, after many successful tours, she returned to Leipzig a young woman, and Schumann saw in her the dream of his feverish imagination.

Such a love Papa Wieck could not permit. To him Schumann represented all that was bad in modern music—the wildness, the extravagance, the lawlessness of heresy. He could not allow his Clara to be perverted by contact with madness. Besides, she was an extremely profitable asset. She had become a pianist of world-wide renown. Her tours were a succession of ovations. He fought with every weapon, honest and dishonest, to keep her. His methods were not only contemptible but inept as well. At last Wieck's refusal to permit their wedding had to be overruled in a court of law, and there began one of the most harmonious and productive of romantic marriages.

The story of their tribulations has been told many times. It can never be better presented than it is in the actual letters that passed between the lovers in their many separations. Out of these Miss Painter has drawn the most vivid parts of her narrative. She has, in fact, built her novel around them. She has blocked in a generous background; she has built her characters solidly and honestly, and when her invented dialogue grows too stilted and lifeless, she has turned to the letters themselves which bring Clara and Robert at once and effectively alive.

*THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH.* By Hendrik Willem van Loon. With an Album of Records Played by Grace Castagnetta. New York: Simon & Schuster. 1940. 68 pp., with four phonograph records. \$5.

Reviewed by PAUL HENRY LANG

WHEN first beholding Dr. van Loon's handsome Bach biography this reviewer thought that he was to read one of those delightful children's books. But after settling down to read the book in earnest it became apparent that the doctoral prefix stressed by the publishers stands there purposely, for this is supposed to be one of those "for the first time" books which will do justice to the master.

The book no more does justice to the great musician than do the appended phonograph records to his mu-

sic. Surely it is evident that handful of piano pieces cannot give even the vaguest idea of the art of the creator of gigantic choral compositions, stupendous organ works, brilliant concertos, searching chamber music, and mystic polyphonic *summae*.

Hendrik Willem van Loon's "biography," a scanty book in large print, with generous margins, and with many full-page and half-page illustrations, is a most sketchy affair. An encyclopaedic entry inflated by wisecracks, anachronistic asides, and incongruous "crotchety divigations" (for the etymology of this word consult Messrs. Simon & Schuster), said divigations often being in rather bad taste. The author's ability to cram a goodly number of amateurish boners in such a short book is no less amazing than his obvious unfamiliarity with musical literature in general and Bachiana in particular. It might be wise for Dr. van Loon to concentrate on his own field, whatever that may be.

JUST PUBLISHED:

The gifted young author of  
AMERICAN SONG offers a salty  
novel of his own Iowa



ALWAYS  
THE  
LAND

By PAUL ENGLE

A RANDOM



320 pages, \$2.50

HOUSE BOOK

THIS is an unorthodox story of farm folks versus horse folks—an amusing group of characters presented in all their nobility and generosity as well as their quirks and cussedness.

Essentially, it is a modern love story, but there are deep and vital overtones that give the book a special significance in these days of struggle between the *free old* and the *organized new*. A robust story peppered with explosive, racy dialogue.