

stration was offered or is likely to be offered that the Japanese doubled the weight of their depth charges as a result of information received from the American press. They could tell well enough that they weren't sinking our boats by the absence of debris and oil on the surface.

Also if the argument is valid that it is impossible to write any submarine book without giving essential information to the enemy, why did the Navy ask that these books be written in the first place? Why not kill them in copy? Why pass them through once, letting the writers invest a considerable amount of time and the publishers a good deal of money before deciding they were too dangerous to print? The total strategic situation was far more favorable in the middle of 1943, when the books were sent to the burning ghats, than toward the end of 1942, when the Navy wanted them to come out. The method by which the thing was done constitutes a plain admission of stupidity on the Navy's part, a failure to estimate the conditions correctly.

So far most of the criticism of the episode that has been heard or written has been concentrated around this question of procedure. This is a mistake; the fault lies not in procedure but in fundamental policy. The Navy men are looking at the picture from the wrong end. Like all military men, they would be delighted to keep everything they do in war as close a secret as possible—"tell them nothing till the war is over and then tell them who won," as one of them put it.

Within the narrow compass of the staff view this is perfectly correct. It is virtually impossible to print anything whatever in war without sacrificing some lives. German lives were sacrificed because the Nazis allowed newspapers to print obituary notices. (They were used in prisoner questioning and in identification of units at the front.) British lives were sacrificed because Admiral Bacon of the Dover patrol wrote in his memoirs in 1920 that it was possible to use submarines on the surface at night. French lives were sacrificed because DeGaulle wrote "The Army of the Future" and the Nazis took up his ideas. American lives will certainly be lost in any next war as a result of the Ingham book, a detailed and fascinating volume about the guerrilla movement in the Philippines, what it amounted to, how it was set up and supplied by officers coming in via submarine.

The only way to avoid giving an enemy or a potential enemy information of which he may make use is to silence the press altogether on anything with the remotest relation to military topics. This was the ideal so-

lution approximated in Japan, from whose printed material we learned nothing, because Japanese papers contained nothing but the fantastic nonsense put out by a government that "sank" a new American Navy once a month.

There are several devils to pay when people find they have been tricked and lied to like this. In fact a few of them were around our Navy Department with pitchforks after the concealment of the disaster of Savo Island. That is, the method of universal concealment simply will not work in a democracy. But this is not the essential question. The whole thing is a matter of degrees—of finding the point at which the people of a democracy have the information necessary to insure their understanding of and enthusiastic support in a war consonant

with the least possible sacrifice of lives.

Who is fitted to make this decision? Perhaps publicists, men in daily contact with the people and their temper. Perhaps fighting men at the front, in daily contact with the enemy and with the feelings of their own subordinates, the men whose lives will be forfeit if mistakes are made. But the story of the lost submarine books shows that under our system the decision rested with neither of these groups. It was arrogated to themselves by officers behind desks in Washington, whose most vital concern in this field was the preservation of their air of being high priests of a secret mystery, while they forgot that revelations which may be of some value to the enemy are often of far more importance to the people on one's own side.

Good-Hearted Soil

PAY DIRT. *Farming & Gardening with Composts.* By J. I. Rodale, with an introduction by Sir Albert Howard. New York: The Devin-Adair Company. 1945. 240 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by RUSSELL LORD

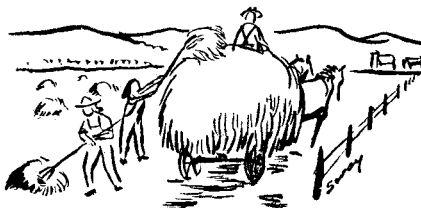
THE British have a saying seldom heard in this country. They say that a soil is "in good heart." The living heart of a soil, as they see it, is organic matter, humus. Sir Albert Howard is progenitor of a school of thought in Britain which has held with increasing vehemence for the past five years that such good-heartedness is the all-in-all of soil fertility; that mineral "artificial"—commercial fertilizers, we call them—are not only useless but dangerous to soil and to human health.

Groups have arisen here as in Europe and New Zealand to propagate such doctrine. Some of these groups sell a secret powder or potion to hasten the humidification of organic waste materials. Still others are given to incantations and rites. Well, if one must worship mysteries and wonders, compost can qualify; for out of the fermenting, dead, decaying heap comes life; out of corruption, incorruption. And there can be no doubt that the organic renewal of life in soil has been the grossly neglected part of our farming and gardening in America.

That is why I, for one, have always felt it a shame that initial preachments on composting in this country should have involved so much of cultish mon-

keyshines and mumbo-jumbo. Sir Albert's school of thought has, happily, always stood clear of that. But Sir Albert and his most ardent followers have become of late rather too sharply uncompromising in their claims and attitudes, and too shrill. Organics Only is their watchword; artificials are "devil's dust." The generality of advanced American experience, not given to doctrinaire fiat, would hold more simply, as Louis Bromfield does in "Pleasant Valley," that under modern conditions of stress and cropping, hard-worked soils need both organic and inorganic renewal.

Sir Albert is Contributing Editor of *Organic Farming*, a magazine that Fred Rodale, the present author, edits at Emmaus, Pennsylvania. Rodale left the city and bought a farm when he read Howard's book five years ago. His farm experiences, plus a lack, perhaps, of the mental rigidity which comes with maturity, have led him to present a more malleable and gently reasonable version of the organic panacea that Howard first laid down in "The Agricultural Testament," 1940. "Pay Dirt" is a good book. It will arouse contention, without closing the way completely to the unregenerate who still like a shot of acid phosphate or even—horrid words—ammonium sulfate, in their compost. Himself a beginner at farming, Mr. Rodale gives explicit and valuable directions for making and applying compost. He encourages people who know nothing about farming and gardening by laying down a tenable and useful precept: Work with Nature, and you may be rewarded. Unnatural, high-powered methods complicate gardening and farming unduly. You can't cheat Nature; and you can't fight her, and win.



Country Doctor

THE MUSIC IS GONE. By LeGarde S. Doughty. New York: Duell, Sloan Pearce, 1945. 214 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by GRACE FRANK

DR. WILL GRAY considered himself merely a country doctor, the last of the tribe in fact, but he would have refused to exchange his lot for that of any city specialist, proud of his "hell-bent anchorage to the hills of God's wrath" because it was there that he could minister to underprivileged humanity and practice medicine as an art, not a business. The meaning of such a man to the poor, ignorant folk of a single county in Georgia forms the theme of Mr. Doughty's first novel.

After a dramatic opening chapter, in which the physician's wife meets a sudden and tragic death, little seems to happen. Yet in the course of the story Dr. Gray forces recalcitrant poli-



ticians to drain a marsh that is endangering the health of the community, helps an ambitious boy by precept, example, and financial backing to pursue his medical studies, and saves a young girl from an imperilling heritage by fostering her love of music. The doctor's life meshes with that of his patients, and somehow we, too, become participants when he "births" a baby or sews up the wounds of men slashed in a brawl, when he muses on the passionless strength of a typical "brood woman," or on the progeny of illustrious old Southern families in whom a taste for imported wine has degenerated into a lust for native liquor.

The quiet tale is well written and skilfully developed; details of the practice of medicine in a small community, some of them quite professional, furnish a springboard for the doctor's reflections on human fallibility. If at times these reflections seem more mellow than ripe and a little too consonant with the doctor's liking for Liszt's *Liebesträume*, at others they reveal the kind of sophisticated insight that derives from an encompassing experience.

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