

**Personal History.** *William Vaughn Moody, a poet of great achievement and even greater promise, died when he was only forty-one. Three years later began the American poetic renaissance of 1912-1916, to which Moody might have contributed verse of distinction and a mature guidance. For Moody, with his graceful carriage, wavy hair, Vandyke beard, and musical voice, was not only the picture of a poet but was, too, a careful scholar, an inspiring teacher, and a man of deep feeling. His early poems achieved nobility and lyric power. Best known, perhaps, is "An Ode in Time of Hesitation," written in indignation at the imperialism of the Spanish-American War. Although no writer of free verse, Moody's zest and critical spirit marked him as a forerunner of the new poets. A year before his death Moody married a woman altogether as distinguished as himself. With full poetic justice, Harriet Tilden Moody, whose story is lovingly told in "A House in Chicago," reviewed below, became the friend and mentor of those poets—Vachel Lindsay, Robinson, the Colums, Robert Frost—whose company her husband had not lived to join.*

## F.D.R.'s Choice

**HARRY TRUMAN: A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY:** By William P. Helm. New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce. 1947. 241 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by JOHN D. WEAVER

WHEN he first came to Washington, a few weeks after his successful Senatorial race of 1934, Harry Truman looked up William P. Helm, the Washington correspondent of the *Kansas City Journal-Post*, which had supported the Pendergast-picked candidate largely because the powerful opposition paper, the *Kansas City Star*, had fought him. Helm was drawn to the modest, friendly junior Senator, who admitted he was "green as grass and ignorant as a fool about practically everything worth knowing." A Republican with a profound distaste for the Roosevelt reforms, Helm became the "Black Republican friend" of Senator Truman who was voting for all the New Deal measures of which Helm disapproved.

Now with Truman in the White House, his "Black Republican friend" has written a book about him. It is a very friendly book, filled with anecdotes to show Truman as "a good fellow," a man who enjoyed the fun and fellowship of the Senate, got a kick out of beating Vice President Garner at poker, and could drink five powerful cocktails without showing any ill effects. The other well-documented Truman virtues are generously attested to, his modesty, integrity, political loyalty, capacity for hard work.

As a campaign puff designed to prove that all the American virtues have come to full flowering in the inevitable Democratic candidate of 1948, Helm's book could be passed over as a routine work with the mortality of its genre, a book which would

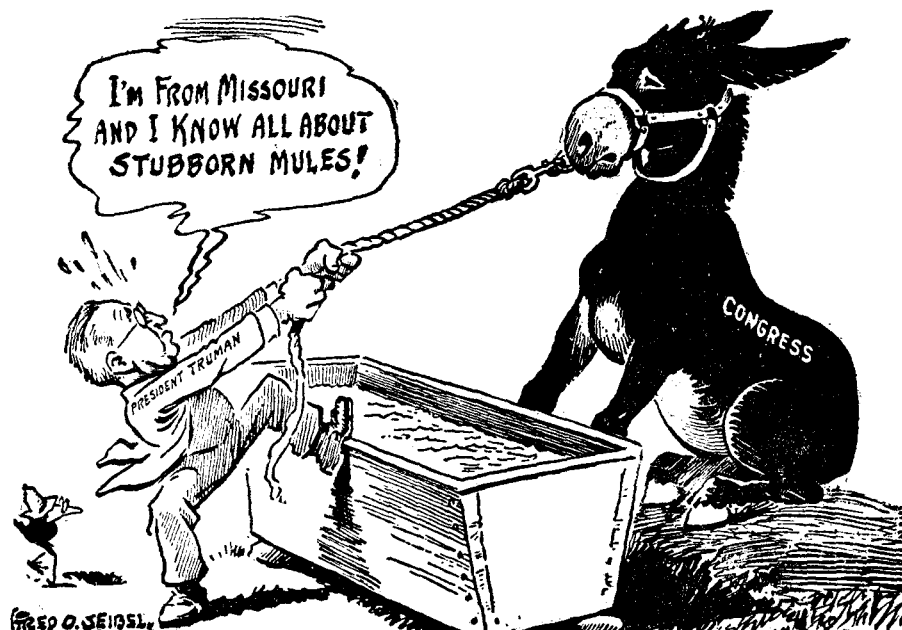
soon be at one on second-hand store shelves with a similar work on Alf Landon, but Helm has chosen to label his book a "political biography" and that raises questions quite beyond Truman's gregarious capacities with the bottle and seven-card stud.

A political biography would normally be expected to deal with the maturing of a political philosophy, but there is nothing in Helm's work to suggest that Truman has ever acted on any problem save by impulse. His instincts, according to Helm, are good, but the author goes no further than that. Helm's obvious deficiencies as a biographer are passed on to his subject, so that in attempting to perform a friendly service for Truman, the author has succeeded only in making the President appear as superficial and small as this slight, superficial work. By ignoring the larger issues of Truman's time Helm

gives the impression that, as far as Truman is concerned, such problems do not exist. There is no mention of foreign policy, inflation, housing, budgets, taxes; and two contemporary phenomena about which a Truman biographer might conceivably concern himself are not even touched upon: the United Nations and the atom bomb. Yet it was Harry Truman whom Roosevelt picked to carry out his program for world cooperation in the event of his death, and it was Harry Truman who had to make the horrendous decision on the bombing of Hiroshima.

Helm's thesis, if such an ill-constructed book could be said to have a thesis, is that, as a Senator, Truman consistently supported Roosevelt in his ruinous policies because of his instinctive sympathy for the underdog, and now as President he has the trying task of liquidating the program because, with administrative responsibility, he has come to see how unworkable were the Roosevelt visions of change. Helm writes as though Truman had run against Roosevelt in 1944 and won.

As a writer Helm is a man of the most modest gifts. His style has a city desk slovenliness without the small corrective graces of a good copy reader. The cliché comes naturally to him, and when he essays a metaphor to make his writing "fancy," it is a clumsy and unfortunate effort. He has nothing to add to the Truman record (outside of a few naïve conclusions and a somewhat remarkable explanation of why Truman booted Wallace out of his Cabinet), and his retelling of the familiar material from the files lacks both interest and distinction.



—Seibel in The Richmond Times-Dispatch.

"Mule from Missouri, too?"

## 2790 Groveland

A HOUSE IN CHICAGO. By Olivia Howard Dunbar. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1947. 287 pp. \$3.50.

Reviewed by PAMELA TAYLOR

**T**WENTY-SEVEN ninety Groveland Avenue was a Chicago address well known, during the years from 1913 to 1928, to the innumerable literary figures who came to the three-story, red brick house as guests and returned again and again as friends. Harriet Tilden Moody, who raised hospitality and friendship to a creative art in this informal but delightfully comfortable home of hers, and whose full and varied life is told with great charm and appreciation in "A House in Chicago," was an extraordinary woman.

Born in Ohio in 1857, and brought up in Chicago in great luxury, Harriet Tilden's early life was secure. Beauty, popularity which would have been dazzling to a less well-balanced nature, and real intellectual ability made her years at boarding school, at Cornell, and as a Chicago debutante a record of easy successes. But an unhappy marriage, decided on at the cost of estrangement from her parents and terminated by divorce, brought the girl her first bitter taste of failure.

Upon her father's death the family found itself without income; unwilling that her mother should be deprived of any of the comforts which she required, the undaunted and resourceful young woman qualified for and began a successful career as an instructor in English literature in one of the Chicago high schools. At the same time she founded, using her own kitchen and such after-school hours as she could spare, a catering business which was to expand into an establishment which for years supplied Chicago's tables with really memorable delicacies and was eventually to include two highly successful restaurants and a London branch.

In 1899 she met the brilliant young poet William Vaughn Moody, who had come out from Harvard to teach English literature at the University of Chicago. Their marriage in 1908, begun in such happiness, was tragically ended in 1910 by the poet's untimely death.

Three years later Mrs. Moody, at the request of Harriet Monroe, received as a guest Rabindranath Tagore, then almost unknown in this country, and a lasting friendship began. Soon E. A. Robinson, Vachel

Lindsay, Ridgely Torrence, Padraic and Mary Colum, John Masefield, and Robert Frost were added to her group of devoted friends. Crippled for life by a severe fall which had injured her leg, she was obliged to give up teaching, but the ever-expanding catering business provided an income which she spent unstintingly on others, in unlimited hospitality in Chicago and at the remote Massachusetts farm which had been bought before Moody's death as a retreat and working place, in quiet benefactions and gifts. But more important, she gave, until her death, endless energy, effort, and time to furthering the development of the many poets who were included in her very wide circle of friends. While undoubtedly a tacit memorial to the beloved husband whom she had lost, this "Concern" (in the Quaker sense) was also a creative expression of her own personality.

The many letters quoted throw innumerable intimate and illuminating lights on some of the very distinguished writers of Mrs. Moody's day.

## Rustic Retreat

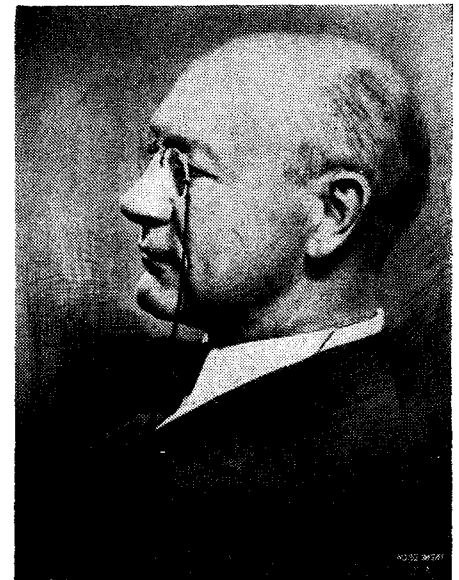
AN EXPLORER COMES HOME. By Roy Chapman Andrews. New York: Doubleday & Co. 1947. 288 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by  
CATHERINE MEREDITH BROWN

**A**FTER many eventful years of exploration, of journeys into the dark corners of the earth, the distinguished Dr. Roy Chapman Andrews has looked homeward, embraced the hearth, and settled for serenity. Easing into dangerously loose-fitting slippers, he exudes the stringent satisfaction of the recently retired. His narrative, coated with contentment, points to only one possible pattern for living. Fortunately Mrs. Andrews shares this rustic enthusiasm. She, too, is willing to accept the world's envy.

After four years of directing the American Museum of Natural History, Dr. Andrews, in 1937, felt "like an animal in the zoo"; he was eager for fresh fields and possessed pastures. Colebrook, Connecticut, proved the answer. The farm was discovered, adored, and bought all in one day. The way was pointed. "An Explorer Comes Home" is quite simply an avowed affidavit in praise of the pastoral.

Originally intended only for week ends, "Pondwood" soon proved compelling enough so that year-round



—American Museum of Natural History.

Dr. Roy Chapman Andrews's "particular country living seems to breed . . . almost an isolationism in the face of history."

living, with regular visits to New York, became the order of the Andrews. Congenial neighbors, skiing, fishing, hunting for woodcock and duck, shooting, fill the time left free from writing, canning, and gardening. When aided by an eager colored couple, the mechanics of life present no problem.

Nor is there at any time even a threat of loneliness. Animal life supplies constant distraction. Lord Jitters, the Persian cat, Queen, the dog, and Poke-Poke, the kitten, make for good company. Dr. Andrews has the rather whimsical gift of being able to converse with his pets, and is apt to dissertate on jealousy, loyalty, love, and varying degrees of aptitude in this four-footed kingdom.

Now and again the explorer remembers, and we are catapulted from the lurking Thornton Burgess influence to the thrill of the Gobi Desert, to far-off India, to the lure of strange beasts and insects. These are welcome interludes; the spirit deserves a jolt; recollection must disturb the routine as the event of the outside world does not.

This particular country living seems to breed an armor against anxiety, a detachment, almost an isolationism in the face of history. Dr. Andrews's son piloted a plane, flew many missions, and returned in peace to "Pondwood." The cord, therefore, is there though one is seldom conscious of it.

Fundamentally, this is one man's meat, but it could be seasoned with a dash of humor, a touch of awareness, and less apathy.