

truth of the Goethean maxim ever bear more harshly. But it would be quite wrong to think of Beethoven as a frustrated spirit, a defeated man. He arose above defeat and dismay to a serenity that, in the Ninth Symphony, became godlike, and that, in the last four quartettes, went even beyond. The emotional content of those last quartettes must always be a bit mystifying to lesser men: it transcends all ordinary experience. But even lesser men cannot escape the feeling that there is here, in Mr. Sullivan's words, "a spiritual synthesis which the race has not achieved, but which, we may suppose, it is on its way to achieving." Thus the prophetic Beethoven. He is Man of the next phase.

Mr. Sullivan deals with a difficult subject. He is constantly appealing to standards and criteria which are not those of every day. But its difficulties yield to his extraordinary clarity of thought and his profound and intimate knowledge of Beethoven. I think he has gone further toward explaining a stupendous and unparalleled phenomenon than any other man who has ever tried to deal with it.

### *Andrew Jackson*

ANDREW JACKSON: *An Epic in Homespun*, by Gerald W. Johnson. \$3.50. 8 x 6; 303 pp. New York: Minton, Balch & Company.

MR. JOHNSON here attempts no full-length biography of Jackson, with the usual armamentarium of documents; he contents himself with a character sketch. But his knowledge of the Jackson epic is so obviously wide and sound and his delight in the man is so complete and so contagious that the result is a work that plainly gets nearer to the truth than any Jackson biography ever published, with the sole exception of William Graham Sumner's, now forty-six years old. Old Hickory, indeed, has suffered vastly from the literati, whether of the friendly gang or the hostile. He has been worshipped as a god and reviled as a devil. No man ever entered the White House under the burden of a more inconvenient past. And no President was

ever denounced with greater ferocity. Mr. Johnson adopts a more judicious course, but he is by no means pallidly judicial. One sees at once that he enjoys Jackson immensely, and is profoundly touched by him—and that feeling, half delight and half sympathy, he conveys very skillfully to the reader. His book, indeed, is a model of artful writing.

Of all American heroes, Jackson had the stormiest career, and was the most tragic man. The pawky humor of Lincoln was not in him, though they came out of the same uproarious wilds: he saw life as a serious and even sombre business, and his dominant emotion was indignation. The list of men and things he hated would fill many pages. Perhaps the English *raj* belongs at the head of it, but certainly the name of John C. Calhoun must have second place. Jackson died regretting that he had not hanged Calhoun—a regret that history, in the long run, will probably share. But there is no sign that he ever regretted hanging those he did hang—or gouging and maiming those he gouged and maimed, or damning those he merely damned. One must go back to Berserk himself, wallowing in gore, to find a heartier and more implacable foe. Or, for that matter, a more steadfast friend. When he believed in a man (or a woman) his confidence leaped past the last forlorn outposts of credulity. When he hated, he hated all over.

Destiny thrust him into Valhalla while he still lived: he became one of the tribal gods of the Americanos, and especially of the low-down faction thereof. But even destiny could not give him happiness. His life was a long dirge of sorrows and sufferings, some of them extraordinarily grotesque, but others reaching to a dignity almost Greek. Of all the love stories embalmed in American history, his was plainly the most fantastic. The lady committed bigamy to marry him, and as age crept upon her she became fat, querulous and religious. But for years he tracked down and tried to butcher all who ventured to view her realistically, and to the

end of his days he loved her with a devotion that no Tristan ever matched. Long after she was dead the old man would sit with her portrait, and turn the leaves of her Bible. He believed that the foul and abominable assaults of his enemies, in the campaign of 1828, had killed her—that he had won the Presidency at the cost of her life. So he passed into his last years a lonely and embittered man, mourning his Rachel. "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher." "Surely," says Mr. Johnson, "the Preacher never has a finer illustration of his text."

### *American Folk-Song*

THE AMERICAN SONGBAG, by Carl Sandburg.  
\$7.50. 10¼ x 7½; 495 pp. New York: Harcourt,  
Brace & Company.

THE title of this book is aptly chosen. Sandburg has emptied into its pages the lyrical loot of his wanderings about the United States, with his guitar under his arm. There are songs in endless variety, 280 of them in all, set down precisely as he heard them—often, alas, somewhat defectively, but always with a grand gusto for the simple sentimentalities of the folk. What other American has studied the folk more assiduously, or to better profit? His poems have the authentic flavor of the soil in them—they are as unmistakably American as the folk-melodies of Friedrich Schiller are unmistakably German—, and from the same mine he has dredged the rich materials of his "Rootabaga Stories" and his "Abraham Lincoln." In compiling this "Songbag" he had the aid of a huge array of collaborators, ranging from contrapuntists and professors of sociology to cowboys, Lake sailors, city loafers, and roistering students in the far-flung "colleges" of the wheat country. But mainly the thing is his own. His running commentary on the songs is charming indeed. The volume would lose three-fourths of its peculiar interest if there were no Sandburg in it.

Now and then, to be sure, he nods: it would be astonishing, in so vast a col-

lection, if he did not. Let him make note, in his next edition, that "Josie," on page 84, is simply a mauled version of "Ain't Dat a Shame!"; a famous vaudeville song of thirty years ago, now forgotten, and that the "Boll Weevil Song," on page 8, borrows from the same source. "Po' Boy," on page 30, is another decayed vaudevillian of the palmy days, and "Common Bill," on page 62, is a German folk-song, badly reported. The I. W. W. song, "E'lelujah, I'm a Bum!"; on page 184, was never written by a wobbly; it is an ancient Salvation Army hymn, with the tune unchanged. By the same token, "The Hearse Song" on page 444, credited to the A. E. F., is the time-tattered "Funeral March of a Marionette."

Some of the most familiar songs, it seems to me, are set down inaccurately. In "Turkey in the Straw," for example, the first two measures of the refrain should be repeated, not in series but successively. "Dese Bones Gwine to Rise Again," on page 470, is a sad hash, both as to words and as to music. Can it be that Sandburg has never heard the one authentic, original, chemically pure first stanza:

Some people say dat a nigger won't steal,  
Dese bones shill rise agin!  
But I caught one in my corn-fiel',  
Dese bones shill rise agin!

Also, what enemy of the æsthetic de-  
cencies gave him "It's the Syme the Whole  
World Over" in ¾ time? Certainly even  
the tots in the kindergartens must know  
by now that the tune is in common time—  
and that it is far more plaintive and lovely  
than the burlesque of it that Sandburg  
prints. Again, I must protest against the  
slaughter of "Lydia Pinkham" on page  
210, and of "Hoosen Johnny," on page  
164. Finally, I give notice that I did *not*  
write the accompaniment to "The Drunk-  
ard's Doom," on page 104, as a note  
politely says. But the whole book would  
be worth having if it contained only the  
priceless "I Got a Gal at the Head of the  
Holler," on page 320. Here, indeed, is  
American folk-song at its glorious best!