

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!

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