BOOK REVIEWS AND BOOK NOTICES


The rather scant biographical literature of the Keystone State has been enriched by two volumes written about men who in their day attracted more attention than almost any others of their fellows. Jeremiah Sullivan Black and Thaddeus Stevens were names to conjure by and whenever they appeared, there was bound to be excited attention. In some few respects they were alike, but in so many ways different that one is especially struck by the contrast. Black was a Democrat of the strictest sect, a fluent writer and speaker, a great controversialist championing unpopular causes, a lawyer and jurist. Stevens on the other hand was first anti-Mason, then Whig, finally Republican, his writing was of the briefest and his speech bore none of Black's florid oratory, he was by profession a lawyer, but more especially was he a legislator and manipulator. One was a great moralist while the other had the reputation of flouting the conventions.

Black came first to the fore and served as Chief Justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court and Attorney-General in Buchanan's cabinet while Stevens was still comparatively obscure. The sectional controversy which intensified to the point of civil war brought each into the limelight. Black shared with Buchanan the strain of the nerve-wracking last months of the latter's administration while he and his chief sought the best means of preserving the Union. Though both felt that they lacked power under the Constitution to take effective means to prevent secession, Black was less fearful than Buchanan. Neither could find the formula, however, and they left office together, thoroughly discredited. Then it was Stevens' turn.

From 1861 to 1868 he became more and more powerful in Congress until he served during reconstruction as a species of dictator. Effective prosecution of the war and the freedom of the slaves were his first objectives and then providing equality for the emancipated negroes became a mania. To secure this latter end he strove with such bitterness as to destroy what little spirit the south had left at the close of the war. He stopped at nothing and nearly accomplished the destruction of the executive branch of government. Black quarreled with Stevens and all his works, and took his place as defender of the abandoned Constitution. His brilliant tongue and dramatic fervor made him one of the few notable post-war champions of the time honored rights of the states.

Both of these biographies are the products of extended research. Black left a voluminous correspondence which is a gold mine to scholars and his biographer has thoroughly explored it. Stevens was less generous but Mr. Woodley has made extensive collecting efforts and has gathered together a
wealth of local material and reminiscences. He has also had the advantage of the previous biographical work of McCall, Callender, Woodburn and Woodward. Mr. Brigance earnestly strives to remain objective and on the whole succeeds. Mr. Woodley endeavors to make Stevens more respectable and less venomous. He does raise some doubts, but the record is too plain to be much altered and psychoanalysis rises to confound his efforts. Would-be biographers may be encouraged by these volumes; there are many more subjects in Pennsylvania history which would lend themselves to similar efforts.

Roy F. Nichols.


This work is to be welcomed as one of those useful studies which, while presenting the historical background of a little known event taking place in the American revolutionary era, preserves that charm of style so necessary to enjoyable reading. The author presents to the historical world the story of Thomas Mason, adventurer, who played no small part in the initial success of colonial arms at the outbreak of hostilities. Beginning his story with the boyhood of Thomas Mason in Poole, England, Dr. Pleasants traces his footsteps through a maze of adventures until we find him master of his own ship sailing from the port of Philadelphia to all parts of the world.

An energetic character, whose whole heart and soul was chained to the cause of the colonies, Mason could not stand idly by and watch their futile efforts caused by lack of arms and ammunition. Importuned by General Gage and General Washington, he undertook a voyage to France to procure a shipment of the desired commodities. Forming a partnership with Robert Morris and another Philadelphia merchant named Jacob Winey, he set sail August 1775 upon the venture. After considerable difficulty, owing to the fact that the French authorities were unwilling to antagonize England by openly aiding the colonies, he succeeded in obtaining, not one, but two shiploads of the precious munitions. Returning home, he successfully evaded the British squadron stationed off the Delaware Capes, and in due time the cargo was distributed among Washington's men.

Again, Robert Morris, wishing to feel the pulse of the people of Bermuda, sought out Mason who readily agreed to undertake a voyage for that purpose. After a successful trip in which he supplied the starving islanders with food, he was prevailed upon to attempt another. This time fate overtook him in the form of several months' imprisonment, being kept alive until his release only by the kind offices of some friends. He then returned to this country, spending the remainder of his life in Philadelphia where he had formerly made his home.

The author has drawn most of his information from a journal kept by the doughty mariner, and has supplemented this with numerous other documents and a vivid imagination. Although the work is devoid of the usual documentation, a bibliography is appended with photostatic copies of excerpts from the journal and personal letters. While the author has sacrificed com-
plete accuracy by drawing upon his imagination, he has told a straightforward tale, which under no circumstances can be disregarded by the professional historian who would understand this eventful period.

VICTOR L. JOHNSON.


"Of the old days, and the old ways, and the world as it used to be." As pleasantly as this, Mr. Gillingham begins his monograph on marine insurance in Philadelphia and the seaboard colonies. He speaks of foreign privateers in the Delaware River, and of Philadelphia privateers on the Spanish Main. He tells of "six gentlemen of fortune" who engaged in underwriting in 1758. He quotes rates on "hulls, goods, spirits, Mexican dollars, slaves, and the taking of besieged cities" and goes on to discuss the insurance of lotteries by some of Philadelphia's leading citizens.

Probably the most valuable part of the book is the lists of brokers and underwriters, and the biographical account the author gives of these men. The work is well indexed and beautifully made. It is careful, scholarly, and charming.

EDWARD L. MCKENNA.


A carefully compiled bibliography on any phase of the history of Pennsylvania is always welcome, since relatively little has been done in this important field. Mr. Aurand has performed a valuable service in compiling and annotating this excellent bibliography of the works of Dr. William Henry Egle. Not only are the many books, pamphlets, and periodical articles of this well known Pennsylvania historian noted, but the works that he edited and compiled are also included. Thus the articles which appeared in Notes and Queries and in the Historical Register are given. Likewise, the contents of the second and third series of the Pennsylvania Archives are classified. The bibliographer has in his private collection a number of Dr. Egle's "scrap books." Important items from these have been selected and listed. Mr. Aurand is to be commended for his labors in compiling and publishing the limited edition of this bibliography, which will be of much value, especially to state and local historians, and to genealogists.

ARTHUR C. BINING.
The Man With the Hoe (D'r Mon Mit D'r Hock) and Other Poems. By Edwin Markham. Translated into the Pennsylvania-German Dialect by A. Monroe Aurand, Jr. (Harrisburg: The Aurand Press, 1934. Pp. 25. Paper covers. $1.00).

This collection of poems by the famous American poet, Edwin Markham, includes "The Man With the Hoe," "Lincoln, the Man of the People," and a number of shorter ones. The original poem in each case is given together with its translation into the Pennsylvania-German dialect. A re-translation from the Pennsylvania-German into the English used in the average community where the dialect is spoken, is made of the first poem in the collection.


The articles included in this essay on the life of William A. Thomas, a prominent ironmaster of Centre county, first appeared in the Bellefonte newspapers. In a very interesting manner, the author tells the story of the son of a hero of the Revolution, who became an owner of the largest iron manufacturing company in central Pennsylvania in the period before and during the Civil War. The many activities of this early industrial leader are clearly presented. The work is based largely on manuscript material in the possession of the author.