BOOK REVIEWS


In this latest biography of the German baron who turned the ragged Continental Army into a disciplined military force, a new General von Steuben is laid before our eyes. Here is still the able soldier, keen tactician, and charming friend and companion. But much of his past and certain of his characteristics are altered. The man of ancient, noble lineage who sacrificed a fortune in Germany to come to the aid of the struggling colonies has disappeared. In his place emerges an impeccious and improvident soldier of fortune who reluctantly undertook the American adventure as a last resort.

Most of the erroneous ideas we have had about Steuben’s career were given currency by the biography of the Baron written by Friedrich Kapp nearly 80 years ago and his misstatements have been kept alive by later writers. But it is unfair to judge Kapp too harshly. As the Baron’s present biographer, a retired American brigadier general, points out, Steuben himself was the source of nearly all of this false biography. Writing with the imaginative zeal of a Munchausen, the Baron “misled his American friends about his life in Germany and his German friends about his life in America” in his letters and his memoirs. He was, his biographer found with some chagrin, “a systematic, circumstantial and deliberate liar” about his personal affairs although his military papers are “models of veracity.”

Having discovered this, however, General Palmer resisted the temptation to abandon his work, eschewed the role of debunker, and undertook a sympathetic revaluation of Steuben’s life and character. This is fortunate because it has resulted not only in a fascinating tale of the Baron’s career based on the actual facts, but in uncovering a possible motive for his multitudinous prevarications.

When Steuben first visited Benjamin Franklin and Silas Deane, the American commissioners in Paris, they had a difficult problem on their hands. They knew that the Continental Army was sorely handicapped by a lack of discipline, organization, and administrative experience; they were soon convinced by St. Germain, the French Minister of War, that Steuben was the man to fill this need. He had been literally reared in the magnificently disciplined Prussian Army; he had been one of the aides-de-camp of Frederick the Great, then the acknowledged master of the art of war. Unfortunately the flood of foreign officers to America and the recent appointments of Lafayette and DeKalb as major generals had aroused bitter resentment in the Continental Army. Franklin and Deane had definite instructions to make no further promises of rank or pay to officers anxious to join the American cause. Furthermore Steuben, despite his other qualifications, held only the rank of captain; he had been out of army life 14 years, and he had no funds. Without a better introduction than the facts provided, there was scant chance that Congress could be persuaded to enlist his abilities to America’s advantage.
When Steuben eventually sailed he bore letters from Franklin and Deane introducing him as "Lieut. Gen. in the King of Prussia's Service, whom he attended in all his campaigns, being his Aid de Camp, quartermaster Genl. etc." Upon his arrival in America the Baron posed as a nobleman of wealth who asked "neither riches nor titles" in return for the honor of serving as a volunteer. General Palmer suggests that this was the beginning of the prevarications, that it was approved if not actually sponsored by Franklin and Deane, and that the Baron's further falsehoods were concocted to further the conspiracy. Wherever the truth lies, the stratagem worked and the way was smoothed for Steuben to undertake his task of reorganizing the American forces along approved military lines.

As a matter of fact, the truthful account of Steuben's early career is hardly less colorful than the fictions he manufactured. Son of a Prussian officer, he was at the siege of Prague as a boy of 14 and an officer himself three years later. He served with the famous "free battalion" of Gen. Johann von Mayr during part of the Seven Years War and later was among the first to send Frederick the Great the momentous tidings of the Czarina Elizabeth's death. Not long after he became one of Frederick's aides-de-camp, only to be suddenly dropped from the army at the end of the war, possibly because of the enmity of another royal aide. There followed fourteen moderately comfortable years during which he was chief minister or chamberlain at the court of Hohenzollern-Hechingen. It was at the end of this period, when the always precarious Hohenzollern finances had fallen to a new low ebb, that he began the desperate search for a new job that finally led him to the American commissioners in Paris. His experiences after he joined the dispirited American Army at Valley Forge on February 23, 1778 are well known. He appraised the situation shrewdly, met each obstacle with patience and common sense, and, in an amazingly short time, spread the new gospel of military discipline through the American ranks. Less well known are the events that followed: the painful period that Steuben spent in Virginia as commander of the pitiabley weak Continental forces in that state, the time he spent as Washington's lobbyist before Congress, his unremitting efforts as inspector general to keep the army in a condition to fight. These General Palmer covers in admirable detail, as well as the New Jersey campaign of 1778 in which Steuben took an active part. The tale of Steuben's life after the war is the story of his attempts to obtain from the American Congress the compensation for his services which he felt he had justly earned, of his improvidence, of his wild schemes for wringing riches from the new world, of his unsuccessful attempts to develop the tract of land in the Mohawk Valley given him by the state of New York, and finally of his death in a lonely log cabin in that near-wilderness.

This is the man who, in General Palmer's estimation, was one of two individuals whose military services were indispensable to the achievement of American independence. "It is not conceivable," he writes, "that any other American soldier could have borne Washington's burden of supreme responsibility. Nor is it conceivable that any other man could have given the technical assistance, essential to military success, that Steuben gave his chief. Washington was the indispensable commander. Steuben was his indispensable staff officer."
General Palmer shows a tendency, particularly in the early sections of his book, to interlard his pages rather heavily with conjecture. This is natural enough, perhaps, since gaps between the known facts must be bridged and since the Baron's own reminiscences are so unreliable a guide. But, by and large, this new life of Steuben is an admirable blend of painstaking research and vivid narrative. It deserves to be read, both on its merits as a story, and as the first accurate, full-length biography of one of the major figures of the American Revolution.

Wilmington, Delaware

CHARLES L. REESE, JR.


From 1758 until a few days before her death Elizabeth Drinker, the wife of a wealthy and prominent Quaker, Henry Drinker, a member of the firm of James and Drinker in the shipping and importing business, kept an almost daily diary. Her diary was a strictly private affair, not written with a view to publication, yet this is the second time that portions of it have appeared in print. In 1889 Henry Drinker Biddle published a volume of extracts, which is frequently quoted. They dwelt largely with the affairs of the Drinker family, and with the social life of the day in Philadelphia. The book has long been out of print and is quite rare. The present volume is edited by Elizabeth's great great grandson, a prominent authority on public health, and it comprises much invaluable information on the hygiene of domestic and public life in Philadelphia during the latter half of the eighteenth century, and on the prominent medical men who made the city at the time the chief medical center of America, aspects which were naturally not particularly stressed in the previous publication.

Elizabeth Drinker had nine children and twenty-five grandchildren and as the diary is full of the illnesses and mishaps which naturally befell so large a family, and of the means employed to combat them, we get a close view of the domestic medicine of the day. Chapters I and II, entitled "A Colonial Family" and "Just Living," show us how Mrs. Drinker met these mishaps, but they illustrate also most vividly the unhygienic conditions which prevailed among our ancestors. Until a pumping station was erected in 1803 to supply water from the Schuylkill, the inhabitants of Philadelphia depended for their water supply on wells dug in the yards of their houses, and side by side with the wells were dug the cesspools, appropriately termed "necessaries." It was many years later that sufficient water was supplied to furnish adequate sewage. Elizabeth's diary contains many allusions to the emptying of these pools and the annoyance which they caused. She records the fact that her husband acquired a bathtub in 1803; before that they had used a shower bath put up in their back yard. An ever recurring problem was the delousing of newly acquired indentured servants. The children, like those of today, got foreign bodies in their air passages—Eliza a nutshell up her nose, and a grandchild swallowed a safety-pin. The
methods adopted for their removal were somewhat crude but successful. The chapter on "Childbearing in 1790" makes one wonder how our ancestors left descendants. There is a delightful glimpse of Dr. William Shippen, Jr., the foremost obstetrician of the time rattling his forceps in his pockets, when in attendance on Elizabeth's daughter. One of her sons developed tuberculosis when twenty-one years old, in spite of which he lived to the age of fifty-four. The management of his chronic invalidism by Dr. John Bard, of New York, as well as various Philadelphia physicians, is an interesting comment on the practice of the day. Smallpox, malaria, typhoid fever and dysentery, all claimed numerous victims in Philadelphia and Dr. Drinker devotes a chapter to them. On various occasions Philadelphia was afflicted by terrible epidemics of yellow fever, of which we have been left awful accounts by Benjamin Rush and Mathew Carey, besides the description by Charles Brockden Brown in *Arthur Mervyn* of the yellow fever of 1793. Mrs. Drinker's diary contains much of interest about the epidemics through which she lived. Chapter VII is a first-class account of the medical profession in Philadelphia in 1800. In the course of time the Drinkers utilized the services of most of the prominent physicians of the period, Benjamin Rush, Adam Kuhn, Nicholas Way, William Shippen, Jr., and we gain much insight into their personality and methods of practice from Elizabeth's diary. The last chapter is a relation of the days of the Revolution when the Drinkers suffered much because of their rigid adherence to the principles of the Friends. Henry Drinker was one of those "exiled" to Virginia because of his pacifist principles. However, all ended well with Elizabeth and her diary concludes in a contented spirit. The running commentary and notes of Dr. Drinker make this book a most important contribution to the early history of medicine in this country. He used the material here published as the basis of a series of lectures before the Lowell Institute. It was a happy thought to expand them and render such valuable material available to those interested in the history of American medicine. The book contains a number of excellent illustrations.

*Philadelphia*

Francis R. Packard

*Our Rude Forefathers. American Political Verse: 1783-1788.* By Louie M. Miner. (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: The Torch Press, 1937. vii, 274 p. $3.00.)

The story of the chaotic but important years from the Peace of 1783 to the adoption of the Constitution has been told from a variety of angles. A refreshingly new exposition of the old material is to be found in Dr. Louie Miner's *Our Rude Forefathers*, a detailed study of the political verse produced in that tempestuous half decade. The years before and during the Revolution had provided excellent training for a goodly number of Whig and Tory penmen whose verses exerted considerable influence through the columns of the newspapers, so that by the time the United States had achieved independence the Poet's Corner of every news sheet had come to be regarded as the legitimate stamping ground of the political Pegasus. Here it was during the formative years of the nation that anonymous, pseudonymous, and some few open-visored riders cantered in praise of their youthful country, galloped manfully to splinter a lance with those
who would hinder the progress of the republic, or pricked their nags to a thick lather when Anarch threatened to destroy the fruits of the Revolution. In short, scarcely an issue of national or state importance appeared that did not call forth sympathetic or vitriolic comments in rhyme.

Until the present study little or no effort has been made to examine this body of verse, save for the purpose of collecting the work of such poets as Freneau, Brackenridge, Francis Hopkinson, David Humphreys, and John Trumbull. Dr. Miner's original intention was to edit the widely scattered political verse of the period, a project which was found to be impracticable because of the amount of material that turned up. She has therefore limited herself to that dealing with national or state problems, using it "as a point of departure in writing up the political scenes in which it figured. Although some of the poems were self-explanatory, many of them required patient investigation of the surrounding prose, recourse to diaries, codes of law, minutes of convention, and pamphlets, before their significance was clear." (p. vii) A rapid but admirable exposition of the historical background of the period is followed by a survey of the development of satirical verse in America. As might be expected, *Hudibras* was a universal model, with Pope, Dryden, Churchill, and *The Rolliad* as secondary favorites; but the author points out that by post-Revolutionary times our satirical verse had taken on "a hard-hitting quality of phrase, a directness and point of attack, a tang of idiom, which are distinctly American. . . . That the verse rarely rises to the level of poetry is not strange. Even in the eighteenth century it was only the occasional politician who happened to be a poet." (p. vii)

For purposes of organization the verse is grouped according to content under eight chapter headings and is arranged in approximately chronological order. The initial chapter, Foreign Affairs, is concerned chiefly with our unsatisfactory early efforts to deal with European powers, particularly in the matter of trade relations. A second section is devoted to the problem of the exiled and remaining Tories while two further chapters contain abundant evidence of the popular indignation directed against the undemocratic principles of the Society of the Cincinnati and against the increasing mob of unscrupulous lawyers who were battenning on the economic and social unrest throughout the country. The fifth chapter treats a group of verses reflecting the confusion caused by the absence of a stable national currency and the insistence on the part of certain of the state legislatures to issue paper money, the value of which fluctuated rapidly. The Reign of Anarch, the sixth chapter, is concerned with the effects of the economic depression in New England where rioting that broke out in some quarters found both vigorous support and opposition in verse. Material for the seventh chapter is drawn from the events revolving around the Constitutional Convention which met in Philadelphia in 1787 to design a "fabric of freedom" that would safeguard the rights of all classes and insure democratic principles of government. Political verse writers exhibited mixed though hopeful feelings, while the heated debates in the state legislatures before the adoption of the Constitution produced a terrific conflict of opinions among the poets from the various sections of the country. In the final chapter, under the title of The Willing Song, is summarized the general feeling among all factions when, the
struggle over the Constitution concluded, poets joined in an expression of willingness to promote the welfare of a united nation.

The foregoing summary of Our Rude Forefathers is in no way an adequate description of the work as a whole. Although Dr. Miner has intended it primarily as a study of political verse, it is at the same time a masterly presentation of the factors that for five years held the loosely bound states in the grip of political and economic upheaval. The student of literature will find here a number of new names on the roll of American verse writers and some of the familiar figures will be seen in new activities. For the historian there is valuable evidence of manner in which literature may aid in the understanding of a troubled period. The general reader will find that the discussions of political and social problems a century and a half ago have a strangely familiar ring today.

One may indeed be thankful for the patience with which Dr. Miner has opened up a hitherto largely neglected field of American literature. Some regret might be expressed that this mass of verse, much of it extremely significant, still awaits collection; or that excerpts and summaries have been used in place of complete texts. However, abundant and adequate footnotes will direct the student to originals should he desire them. Inasmuch as Our Rude Forefathers is likely to remain for some time an authoritative reference work, it seems proper to point out here that some valuable material, particularly in the footnotes, is not cited in the index.

Brooklyn College

CHESTER T. HALLENBECK


The complexities of modern universities—the diversity of courses, the problems of the teaching staff and the students, and the intricacies of administration—are faithfully reflected in the complexities of the book under present consideration, which fairly defy consistent reviewing. Not that this is to its discredit. Indeed, it may be said at the outset that no volume in the Tercentennial History series has a higher degree of true merit or is written with more inherent charm.

Wisely refraining from any attempt to narrate the history of each of the many departments that constitute Harvard University, Professor Morison has competently assumed the role of editor, leaving the detailed accounts of the development of the several branches of study to eminent scholars in their respective fields. Thus George Herbert Palmer and Ralph Barton Perry have treated philosophy; history was taken by Ephraim Emerton in collaboration with the editor; mathematics by Julian Lowell Coolidge; botany by Benjamin Lincoln Robinson, and so on.

The limitations of a review preclude any exhaustive analysis of the contents of this book. Certain generalizations may be made and certain examples cited. Each chapter usually discusses the history of a given department, its personnel, organization, and the nature of the courses offered from the opening years of
President Eliot's administration to 1929. Each chapter reveals the workmanship, the peculiar fiat of a distinctive personality. Thus the differing attitudes of the scientist and the man of letters, the narrator of historical fact and the expositor of physical laws are felicitously shown; while a high standard of exact scholarship based upon painstaking research is maintained throughout.

Perhaps the most interesting reading, as also the most significant contribution to knowledge, lies in the series of thumb-nail biographies of the professors. Many of these men have achieved an international reputation, others are less known, but all have lived with faith in their work and a downright belief in that academic freedom which for three centuries has been the cornerstone of Harvard's policy. Thus the distinguished company passes in review: William James the philosopher and the polished George Santayana; Francis James Child and Barrett Wendell, authors both; Henry Adams and Justin Winsor, men of unrivalled eminence in American history; Edward C. Pickering the astronomer and John Trowbridge the physicist—to say nothing of many more.

Such is the work under review. One cannot but feel that in its pages the Harvard University of Eliot's and Lowell's administrations comes to life, and the past is connected with the living institution of today. Thorough annotation and a good index complete a work that must ever be recognized as a distinct contribution to constructive research and the best traditions of American scholarship.

ALBAN W. HOOPES


On May 17, 1937, the Baltimore Sun celebrated its centenary. To mark the event, four distinguished members of its staff have collaborated in writing its history. Their joint effort has resulted in a volume that should prove interesting to anyone studying the American press.

When the Sun was founded in 1837, American journalism was just emerging from a period of which it had little cause to be proud. Most existing papers were personal organs, making no effort to gather or print the news impartially. The price was usually five or six cents, more than the ordinary man could afford to pay. The first successful newspaper to break away from the old tradition was the New York Sun, established in 1833. The Sun tried to get all the news, and it sold for only one cent, a price within the reach of all. Its amazing success was soon followed by the founding of the New York Herald and the Philadelphia Public Ledger.

The Public Ledger marked the first independent venture of a new publishing company, Swain, Abell and Simmons. In Philadelphia, Swain, the editor of the Public Ledger, was the important member of the firm. Abell desired a paper of which he could be the editor; and to this end he persuaded his partners to assist in starting a paper in Baltimore. Arunah S. Abell directed the Baltimore Sun for fifty years—fifty eventful years. This half-century saw Baltimore becoming more and more prosperous, until the Civil War destroyed the source of
its prosperity and, for a while, threatened to destroy even the city itself. At the end of the war, and for years afterwards, Baltimore was a beaten city. It was only with the passing of the war generation that the city regained its courage.

The steps in the development of Baltimore were all reflected in the Sun. For the first twenty-five years of its existence, it was one of the leaders of the American press. It introduced many innovations in procedure, and scored many beats in the news field, but during the Civil War the paper had to be overly cautious, and the editors were forced into a conservative position. Except for a few political battles, the Sun remained stolid and uninspired until C. H. Grasty obtained control from Abell's heirs in 1910.

Grasty, a splendid newspaperman, but a poor financier, remained in control of the Sun for only four years. During this time, however, he revived the spirit of the old Sun, and established an evening paper with the same name. When he retired, the Sun was once again steering a straight course forward.

Since 1914 the Sun has resumed its place as one of the outstanding American newspapers. It has been a leader in all the political and social developments of the last few years, but still retains its old independence and beliefs. This point was very evident in the last presidential election when the Sun, although it had supported Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932, announced that it could not support him for re-election, in the face of the returns from a straw vote conducted by the paper showing that Mr. Roosevelt would overwhelmingly carry Maryland.

Although Mr. Mencken and his associates are careful of the accuracy of their facts about the Sun and Baltimore, they do not show the same care when they go afield. Philadelphians particularly will question some of the statements in reference to their city, such as that Dirck Keyser was in Germantown in 1635, and that the increase in Philadelphia's population during the 1850's was due solely to the growth of manufacturing. However, the greatest imperfection in an exceptional book lies in the close association of the Sun and the authors. They seem to write with a sense of awe; they are Sun worshippers and devoted, as they should be, to a great newspaper. But the result is not always objective history. Nevertheless, the book is skilfully written and has been well planned. The authors have included numerous short biographical sketches of the men who have been employed by the Sun in the past century, which are most interesting for they show the tremendous influence of the Sun as a training school for the country's journalists. The excellent index and the well chosen illustrations also add considerably to the respected position The Sunpapers of Baltimore will occupy in the fast growing library of the history of great American newspapers.

The Historical Society of Pennsylvania

J. Harcourt Givens

The Romantic Decatur. By Charles Lee Lewis, United States Naval Academy. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1937. 296 p. $3.00.)

With the possible exception of John Paul Jones, no officer of the United States Navy has been the subject of so much printed matter as Stephen Decatur, junior. James Barron's bullet had scarcely done its work before the first formal
biography appeared in print. The presses are still working, but not one has yet given us all the facts concerning Decatur's private life or his career as a naval officer.

Professor Lewis' book unfortunately follows the pattern of the others—like a skimming stone he touches only the crests of the highest waves and, at times, just the spray. Whole periods are passed hurriedly, particularly the formative years of Decatur's training under Commodore John Barry during the French War of 1798-1801 and the years of his early rise to fame during the service under Commodores Dale and Morris in the Mediterranean. In the brief résumé of these periods a number of errors have crept into the text. The Philadelphia mercantile firm of Gurney and Smith, with which Decatur served as a clerk, were never shipbuilders; they had no contract to build the frigate United States, but were employed only as "Navy Agents"—suppliers of materials. The frigate United States was not, as Professor Lewis writes, launched on July 10, 1797, but on May 10, 1797.

Jumping from the close of the French War in 1801, Professor Lewis describes Decatur's most famous exploit: the burning of the frigate Philadelphia in Tripoli Harbor in 1804. This feat brought a captaincy to Decatur. Devoting almost two full chapters of his book to this one episode, Professor Lewis repeats all the old traditions with their errors. Decatur is made always to appear as the commander of the expedition, whereas Lieutenant Charles Stewart was his superior. The hardships of the voyage from the American base at Syracuse to Tripoli, the decayed provisions, the filth, and vermin on the ex-Tripolitan ketch are retold in detail, but Professor Lewis is apparently unaware that his hero had only a small share in them since he spent much of his time in the comfort of Lieutenant Stewart's cabin on the Syren. The crew of the ketch Intrepid, according to the tradition here reiterated (Decatur himself originated it) performed a prodigious slaughter of Moors once the Americans gained the Philadelphia's decks. But there is very good contemporary evidence from the Tripolitan side and also from a disinterested and well informed person in Tripoli that there were but seven men on the Philadelphia when Decatur boarded with his crew of seventy. Perhaps the darkness played tricks with the deck furniture, turning it into men as Decatur swung over the rail. Be that as it may, had some of the primary sources been consulted an entirely different shading would have been given to the episode.

However, there is no gainsaying the gallantry of the act, for Tripoli was a difficult harbor to enter under the best of circumstances at night—and Decatur also had to face the hundred and more heavy guns topping the city walls. That the exploit merited the promotion of Decatur over the heads of many other capable officers is debatable, and it is a high tribute to Commodore Preble's ability to handle men and hold their loyalty that the morale of the service was not ruined. Professor Lewis emphasizes the fact that "thus [Decatur] became the youngest Captain ever commissioned in the United States Navy, being then only a little more than twenty-five years old." That may be true if "United States Navy" is restricted to mean the service after its re-creation in 1794. If the term is used in its full scope, one might cite among others: Nicholas Biddle, born 1750, com-
missioned captain 1775; Joshua Barney, born 1759, commander of the *Hyder Ally* at twenty-two when she took the *General Monk*.

Upon reaching the War of 1812 Professor Lewis is on surer ground. Using the plentiful sources of the period he is able to tell the story down to the very wording of the toasts drunk to his hero after the capture of H.M.S. *Macedonian*. Decatur’s loss of the frigate *President* brought not one whit of criticism from his contemporaries, and, despite the opinions of Roosevelt and Mahan to the contrary, Professor Lewis justifies shrewdly and plausibly the surrender of the frigate to the “mob” of British vessels which surrounded his vessel.

Following the second war with England, Decatur was dispatched with a squadron to subdue the warlike moves of the Dey of Algiers. That potentate, fearing the destruction of his fleet, quickly signed a treaty of peace dictated by Decatur, foregoing the annual tribute from the United States, freeing Christian captives, etc. This treaty, Professor Lewis implies, ended our troubles with the Algerines. Captain O. H. Perry found it otherwise when he arrived at Algiers with the ratified copy of the treaty. Almost at once, Perry thought it necessary to write home, “The Algerines are extremely restive under the treaty made with Decatur, considering it disgraceful to the Faithful to humble themselves before Christian Dogs.” Consequently within a few weeks the treaty was disavowed. And had not Lord Exmouth destroyed the Dey’s fleet and the city’s fortifications, our navy would have discovered that negotiations were required.

The final chapters are devoted to Decatur’s activities as one of the three Naval Commissioners and to the correspondence and events which preceded the duel with James Barron. Of the latter, Professor Lewis has presented what seems to be the fairest and most even tempered account of the unfortunate affair.

An appendix collects the “Songs and Poems” written about Decatur and his exploits. A bibliography gives a very complete list of books and a very incomplete list of periodical and manuscript sources. Had the author made a thorough search for the latter, such as Decatur’s report on the *Chesapeake-Leopard* affair in the Society’s Collections; Mrs. Decatur’s letters now in Chicago; the Dale Papers in Professor Lewis’ own institution; the Cathcart Papers (N.Y.P.L.); Eaton Mss. (Huntington Library); the log of the *Syren*, *ad inf.*—had he been acquainted with these, he could have presented a more fully-founded and correct study of the career of the man with whom Luck walked constantly in life and seems to have deserted in death.

*Philadelphia*  
**Marion V. Brewington**

*Adam Smith as Student and Professor.* By **William Robert Scott.** (Glasgow: Jackson, Son & Company Ltd., 1937. xxvi, 445 p. Illustrations, facsimiles, appendices. 30s.)

This book constitutes perhaps the most important contribution to the biography of Adam Smith since the publication of John Rae’s *Life* over forty years ago. It is written by one of the most distinguished living historians of English and Scottish economic history. Professor Scott is perhaps best known to Ameri-
can scholars for his important contributions to the history of English and Scottish colonizing companies in the new world, but he has long been a devoted student of eighteenth century Scottish economic thought. His life of Francis Hutcheson, published over thirty years ago, is fundamental to an understanding of Adam Smith's intellectual background. And not more than two years ago his short article on Adam Smith at Downing Street, 1766-67 (The Economic History Review, VI, 1) contributed new and significant material on the subject.

The book under review does not pretend to be a complete biography of Smith. It deals in fact only with his early life and stops twelve years short of the publication of The Wealth of Nations. For the most part it simply prints documents heretofore unpublished relative to Smith's earlier academic career. A good deal of this material refers to internal disputes in the University of Glasgow at the time when Smith was professor there, but the best of it are eighty-three unpublished letters to and from Smith ranging over the whole course of his life (including one reference to Benjamin Franklin, p. 255) and the full text of the unpublished early draft of part of The Wealth of Nations, the finding of which Professor Scott recorded in The Economic Journal about two years ago (September 1935).

The appendices contain interesting notes on some Scottish branches of the Smith family, and a number of excellent facsimiles of Smith's handwriting at different stages of his career.

On the whole Professor Scott's researches have yielded disappointingly little new biographical material of significance about Smith, and almost nothing new at all about the development of his economic thinking. Like a good Britisher, Professor Scott seems disposed to discount French influences and to emphasize Scottish ones, but he really does not address himself directly to this problem at all. One gets the impression that the book as printed is merely a fragment of the book which was contemplated, but we must be grateful for small mercies and hope that Professor Scott will yet give us a full length portrait of his distinguished predecessor at the University of Glasgow.

University of Pennsylvania

CONYERS READ

Dr. Bodo Otto and the Medical Background of the American Revolution. (By James E. Gibson. (Charles C. Thomas: Springfield, Illinois and Baltimore, Maryland: 1937. ix, 345 p. $3.50.)

The best known physicians of the Revolutionary period have naturally been those who were associated with the first medical schools, or who held the chief positions in the medical department of the Continental armies. Mr. Gibson has done well to recall here the story of another type of doctor—the well-trained, plodding practitioner, whose courage and conscientiousness made up for what he may have lacked in brilliance and originality. Such men are in a sense the mainstay of any profession, and it is regrettable that they are not better known in both past and present.

The difficulty in presenting them, however, is obvious. They rarely write or assume prominent positions, and in consequence leave few records behind
them. This is clearly illustrated in the present biography; for although the author has sifted the sources most carefully, much of his subject's career remains shadowy and ill defined. Bodo Otto was born in Hanover in 1709, received the usual training as a surgeon in several German cities, and practiced this profession in his native country until 1755. In that year, for reasons unknown, he migrated with his second wife and several children to Philadelphia. A successful practice among his German brethren in that town and in Reading, occupied his time until the outbreak of the Revolution. Then, at the age of 67, he volunteered for service with the patriot forces, and served with apparent distinction as "Senior Surgeon" for the duration of the War. In 1782, he attempted to resume practice, first in Philadelphia and then in Baltimore; but soon returned to his original work in Reading. Here he died in 1787. This outline of his life is well documented; but for long periods it remains little more than that—a bare statement of essentials, with few of the details which might lend realism to either the man or his career.

Perhaps because of the lack of biographical data, Mr. Gibson has inserted in the narrative a mass of background material relating to the general history of Germany and of the American Revolution. In consequence, the style is decidedly discursive; and for long intervals Dr. Otto himself practically disappears from the narrative. The latter part of the book is largely devoted to the professional controversies of the army medical service. This theme is of considerable interest, however; first, because Mr. Gibson here provides further information on the great difficulties experienced in organizing that service; second, since he here prints for the first time a number of important letters from medical leaders; and, finally, because in retelling the long Morgan-Shippen controversy, his findings are entirely favorable to the latter. The contrast of this with other interpretations will be apparent, if the present work is compared with the equally careful account in Nathan Goodman's Benjamin Rush.

The reviewer regrets that in giving so much detail to those controversies, the author did not follow further their implications concerning the medical service actually available to Continental soldiers. But enough is noted to make clear once more, that the chief danger to these men—as to troops in most wars—was not the enemy without but disease within their lines. Red coats were more romantic than yellow fever, and orthodox historians will doubtless continue to describe the one and ignore the other for this reason. But it is to Mr. Gibson's credit that he at least has an eye for the realities of the story.

Duke University

RICHARD H. SHRYOCK


The only justification for reviewing a popular book a year or more after its appearance is a conviction that it contains some of the elements of a classic. In these terms further comment on the most widely and favorably reviewed non-fiction work of the past year is more than warranted. The Flowering of New England should not, and probably will not, pass into the limbo.

The enduring quality of this study of the literary and cultural history of
New England in the nineteenth century depends upon its success in bringing
to life rather than in merely analysing a phase of our intellectual development;
upon its significance as the culmination of the thought of perhaps the foremost
of our living literary critics; and upon its own readability and literary excel-

ence.

Mr. Brooks has attained that view of his subject which is rare among lit-

erary historians: the realization that the whole is greater than any of its parts.

Although his method is roughly chronological and he devotes separate chapters
to individual writers, he never loses sight for a moment of the fact that his
subject is the New England mind of the nineteenth century, and that that
mind is a complete organism with a life cycle of its own. It is hard enough to
write a biography of a man or woman; it requires genius to write a biography
of a people. Gibbon succeeded in doing so; Carlyle to a lesser degree. The

Flowering of New England is of the genus of The Decline and Fall and The

French Revolution. Starting with the portraits of Gilbert Stuart and con-
cluding with Emerson's spiritual grasp of the meaning of his times, Mr. Brooks
has produced a single work of art, not a chronicle. The book is a whole of
which every part—the histories of Prescott, Brook Farm, Thoreau at Walden,
Longfellow at Cambridge—reveal their meanings only with reference to a
central and all-pervading significance.

The thematic structure of The Flowering of New England originates in and
returns to Emerson, for it was the Concord sage who taught Mr. Brooks what
life is all about. His early blasts against Puritanism were, like those of H. L.
Mencken, mere evidences of that hopeless but provocative revolt against Puritan
values which started with Roger Williams, and shaped the lives of Edwards,
Channing, Hawthorne, and Emerson himself. Each revolutionist has in the
end only reasserted the faith of his fathers that human life is best understood in
terms of moral values: his revolt has been successful to the extent that he has
justified his right to rediscover moral values for himself instead of accepting
the findings and formulations of the fathers. Mr. Brooks' intellectual history
seems to have followed somewhat the same pattern. It has been concerned with
the problem of the artist in a materialistic civilization. Given an America of
apparently infinite natural resources; a laissez faire economy, a deterministic
and materialistic metaphysics, and a pragmatic morality could have been foretold
from the start. The function of literature in such an intellectual atmosphere
is obviously that of recording phenomena, not of evaluating principles. Realism
was predicted in the work of Cooper and Irving, in spite of the valiant efforts
of Poe to correct the tendency and to formulate an esthetic. With the opening of
the West, the problem again became acute, even more so than in the early phases
of our intellectual history. Mark Twain attempted to face the problem and was
defeated; Henry James recognized the problem and ran away from it. What
did Emerson do about it? Did he recognize it? Did he accept it? Did he run
away from it? Apparently he found a way.

The Ordeal of Mark Twain and The Pilgrimage of Henry James are among
the most profound and challenging of our critical studies of our own literature.
Both are perversely wrong in their conclusions, both issue challenges which sub-
sequent critics cannot ignore. Whatever conclusions he may reach about the meaning of the work of these two men, each critic must now start with the problem as Mr. Brooks states it. How can the literary artist in America remain faithful to the material he knows from experience and extract from that material a central esthetic significance? He states the case himself in his Sketches in Criticism: "Before the emergence of our critical movement, the clear sense of the great values of life had long been submerged in America. . . . Our thought has been centrifugal instead of centripetal; it has gone out to the frame, it has never fixed itself upon the picture." Mr. Brooks fixed his thought finally upon a picture which turned out to be a portrait of Emerson.

The story behind the writing of his life of Emerson would be interesting if we could know it in detail. Obviously it is the record of a spiritual struggle. The book appeared in two forms, and was imperfect at the end. First came Emerson and Others, with six chapters on episodes in the life of the essayist: then an interval of some years; and finally, the completed narrative. The lives of Mark Twain and of Henry James had been studies in defeat, and much of that of Emerson was written in a tone of almost patronizing pity. But in his final sentence the biographer granted to his subject "the universe in which to live." There is in these words something of the effect of the sun finally breaking through storm clouds on the evening of a threatening day. Had Mr. Brooks solved his problem for himself?

The Flowering of New England provides evidence for an affirmative answer to that question. The individual artist has become reconciled to his environment because he has found a way to retain his integrity and at the same time allow the environment to be the hero of the story. This is the only possible answer to materialistic determinism and the challenge of nineteenth century science. Emerson—and Mr. Brooks—are supreme because they have subordinated their egotism to the life forces which work upon them, and have found, to their surprise, that those forces are friendly. In these terms, the artist may once again function.

It were superfluous to repeat again the comments upon the literary values of the resulting book. Mr. Brooks is very free with his sources, retaining them in his memory and weaving them into a pattern rather than piecing them together by a deliberate historical process. The result is subject to the criticisms of misrepresentation and error of detail. But these weaknesses are more than compensated by centrality of understanding and living quality in the narrative. In such work only is the literary historian both artist and critic. Only a genius should attempt it; but Mr. Brooks has succeeded at last.

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Why Was Lincoln Murdered? By OTTO EISENSCHIML. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1937. x, 503 p. $3.50.)

Some ten years ago Mr. Eisenschiml, a chemist with historical interests, began to wonder why General Grant broke his engagement to appear with President Lincoln at Ford's Theatre on the night of the assassination. The result of his
investigation led him on and on till he became so astounded by what he found that he wrote this book, which, as he is the first to admit, proves nothing.

He emphasizes the unreliability of the President's body-guard, the failure of Stanton to broadcast J. Wilkes Booth's name as the murderer until several hours had elapsed, and quotes with great force the story told many years later that Stanton refused Lincoln's request that Major Eckert accompany him to the theatre. Furthermore the chase of Booth was badly managed. Why? Also why was Booth shot instead of captured? Why were the assassination prisoners treated in such peculiar fashion? Why was John Surratt allowed at large so long? Was it not a plot of Stanton and the Radicals to get rid of the merciful Lincoln? Was it not a plot of the same Radicals who had prolonged the war and were determined to punish the South and ruin its political power?

The author has been diligent in research and has uncovered many strange things. Much of this evidence, however, can be understood by those who are aware of the terrible carelessness which has marked official Washington from the beginning and was particularly prevalent in the ante-bellum and Civil War days. Also it is understandable by those who know something of the wear and tear of nerves and personal jealousies which were a part of the Civil War. Stanton, too, was a man of many complexes and erratic behavior. His conduct was unpredictable and often bizarre. Mrs. Lincoln and Mrs. Grant were on bad terms which is probably the simple explanation of the author's original question. In other words all this evidence points to confusion, carelessness, personal feud but not to criminal conspiracy except that which involved Booth and his original band. Nothing in this book in any tangible way implicates anyone else. If Stanton and the Radicals were involved the evidence is yet to be found. In the meantime Mr. Eisenschiml has done history a service by asking a number of interesting questions, many of which are still unanswered.

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