letter to Weld of June 2, 1835, from John W. Nevin, professor of oriental and Biblical literature in the Western Theological Seminary from 1829 to 1836. Professor Nevin proclaimed his devotion to immediate emancipation but declined to address an antislavery meeting, which he had previously agreed to do. "It is apprehended," he said, "that very serious injury would result to the Seminary with which I am connected, if I should thus stand forth on this occasion as the advocate of a cause so generally held in dislike." He had evidently been "warned that it would not be tolerated." Professor Nevin explained his position further: "The proper authority may, if it be thought proper, command silence; and so long as I retain my place in the Seminary, I must hold it my duty to comply with the rule. This corporation, like every other, has a right to prescribe the terms of its own internal economy. But if I am to be placed under such a rule, I claim the right on the other hand of quitting the connection by which it reaches me." Theodore Weld returned to Pittsburgh in January, 1836, and until spring he spoke for the cause throughout western Pennsylvania. There are references in letters and footnotes to J. B. Vashon, "a well-to-do Negro of Pittsburgh [who] was an active abolitionist and a leader among the Negroes of Pennsylvania," and to his son, George B. Vashon, a distinguished leader of his race, who was the first negro graduate of Oberlin College (about 1841), and who became a well-known lawyer and "president of Avery College in Pittsburgh." Henry B. Stanton wrote to Weld in 1835 concerning appointments to the faculty of Oberlin College and inquired if Job Foster Halsey, then pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Allegheny, would do for one of the departments.

This collection of letters, discovered in a trunk in a farmhouse attic in Massachusetts, is an important contribution to the history of a period of enthusiastic reforming.

*University of Pittsburgh*  

William J. Martin


The life of an unusual personality of the past century is sketched in the admirable introduction to this volume, and her stimulating opinions and experiences during seven animated years in the nation's history are revealed in her editorial letters written between 1858 and 1865. Most of the material of
western Pennsylvania interest is in the introduction; for Mrs. Swisshelm removed from the Pittsburgh district in 1857, and it was not until the end of the period covered by these letters that she returned to make her home there.

Jane Grey Cannon was born in Pittsburgh in 1815, the daughter of Scotch-Irish parents. In 1836 she became the wife of James Swisshelm, but her married life proved uncongenial, and in 1839 a serious rift occurred when she left her husband in Louisville, Kentucky, to return to Pittsburgh to nurse her ailing mother. After her mother's death in 1840 she taught at the Butler Seminary at Butler for about two years "at a salary of twenty-five dollars a month," and began her writing career with articles in Butler and Pittsburgh newspapers denouncing capital punishment and slavery and defending women's rights. Interesting information on local as well as on national affairs is revealed in the descriptions of her subsequent activities in Pittsburgh and of the establishment of her own newspaper, the Saturday Visitor, in 1847. The slavery issue, and in particular the menace of "slavery catching" in the Pittsburgh region, occupied her chief attention. Financial, marital, and editorial worries finally combined to break her health, and in 1857 she gave up her connection with the paper and resolved to make her home near that of her sister in Minnesota. The story of her subsequent struggle to establish in St. Cloud a newspaper in which she could voice her opinions unmolested, of her lecture tours, and of her activities in St. Cloud and, from 1863 to 1865, in Washington, where she had received a position in the war department, is full of interest. In 1865, after establishing a claim to the Swisshelm estate at Swissvale, she returned to settle down there for the remainder of her life.

It is the period of her career from the latter part of 1858, after her establishment in St. Cloud, to her final return to western Pennsylvania that is reflected in her letters to the St. Cloud Democrat reprinted in this volume. While she was on lecture tours in Minnesota and in various eastern cities and during her sojourn in Washington she was wont to entertain the readers of the Democrat with accounts of her movements, the receptions given her speeches, and her traveling experiences. The letters contain the gist of her convictions in regard to salient political and moral issues of the day and her impressions of people and places with which she was familiar. Throughout are scattered references to western Pennsylvania, interjected chiefly for purposes of comparison with Minnesota, but only two visits to the Pittsburgh region are recorded: that of July and August, 1860, "on business matters," and that of January, 1863, when she was detained several days at Hawkins' Hill with her friend Colonel Hawkins and his family "waiting for my ticket on the Penn.
Central R. R., as it was sent by mistake to Chicago.” In her letter of August 3, 1860, she asserted that “Pittsburg is greatly improved. There are street Railroads on Penn St. and Pennsylvania Avenue, on Smithfield from Fifth to Birmingham, and on St. Clair St. running to Manchester. The old Allegheny Bridge has been replaced by a fine suspension bridge, with rails for the horse cars crossing it; and there has been a great number of valuable blocks of buildings put up in different parts of the city.” Pennsylvania crops and roads, even Pennsylvania people, suffered by comparison with those of Minnesota, and on August 13, 1860, she wrote: “It rains every day and every night and as I have been so long accustomed to Minnesota air and sunshine, this spell of Pennsylvania weather does not agree with me.”

The letters are printed in chronological order but are divided into seven chapters, the titles of which indicate the general interest of the letters composing them. Excellent footnotes keep the reader abreast of the movements of the author when they are not made clear in the text and explain vague references to individuals or events mentioned. The volume has been carefully prepared and edited and presents an interesting subject in an engaging yet scholarly manner.

Pittsburgh

Elisabeth M. Sellers


“Here is a story, previously unwritten,” says Professor Brigance in the preface, “of a dynamic and colorful public character who wrought more influence on American history than many Presidents.” A cabinet member in an unpopular administration, a devotee of a party discredited for many years after the Civil War, one of the most scathing critics and vituperative denouncers of the dominant Republican group—it is little wonder that Jeremiah S. Black has been somewhat neglected by the historian, but he was not an obscure figure in the day in which he lived. The political and legal career of Black as a district judge in western Pennsylvania, as chief justice of the supreme court of the Keystone state, as attorney general and secretary of state under President Buchanan are accurately traced in this book. His activities as a constitutional lawyer and his influence as a private citizen after the Civil War are vividly described. Professor Brigance has told his story well. His style