Following such works as the *Memoirs of the War in the Southern Department of the United States* by General Henry Lee himself, so ably furnished with biographical introduction, maps and notes by his illustrious son, General Robert E. Lee, both of whom were gifted with brilliantly eloquent expression and literary style, any writer on the same subject finds himself hard-pressed to match his predecessors. A good bibliography has been listed; and, if the author had used it even superficially, he would have avoided most of the pitfalls of historical inaccuracies that beset the road of the biographer. A good, interesting, accurate biography of this great patriot may yet be written, and enough unused manuscript material exists to bring a new understanding of the deep well of warm emotions that motivated one of Washington's favorite young officers.

Pittsburgh

Edward G. Williams


These two little paperback books of the Great American Thinkers Series prove that American idealism in the era of the Revolution really was a creative manifestation of the powers of human personality. Both John Woolman (1720-1772) and Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) were apostles of brotherhood, persuasive and pervasive. They themselves were special, not ordinary men. Active and effective faith motivated their labors. They differed, yet they were of a similar constructive pattern of service to the principle of universal fellowship. Each had his “singularities,” but their purposes were identically humane in effect.

A like observation may be made concerning both authors. Dr. Edwin H. Cady of the University of Indiana, in his study of “the Quaker Saint,” accepts the subject as his model of literary art, while Dr. Ralph L. Ketcham of Syracuse University, discussing “Poor Richard,” deliberately chooses the unpretending simplicity of his *Almanac* and *Autobiography* as a suitable style of composition.

That is part of the genius of both men. They possessed skill in communication, possibly because of their innate earnestness. Woolman, doubtless, is the more difficult for modern readers to com-
prehend but perhaps the more definitely universal in his goal. He visualized unity in acceptance of the teachings of the Founder of Christianity. There was no compromise in his “experience” of Christ.

Franklin meanwhile was a practical rationalist, only indirectly a mystic. He is remembered even now as a scientist, guided by “organized common sense.” Nevertheless he was a dreamer, an optimist. His vision included not only the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States but also “the Pennsylvania fire- place,” the harmonica, bifocal lenses and the lightning rod.

Both men come alive in these two little volumes. The book about Woolman opens with the unforgettable confession of a young boy’s massacre of a nestful of robins and their devoted mother. Dr. Cady, referring to his principal writing, says:

Woolman’s credentials to historical importance and present relevance are impeccable. They rise from his service to the cause of human freedom and dignity, from the limpid beauty of the Journal, which is his work of art and testament, and from the vital appeal of his personal saintliness presented through the Journal . . . It was he who turned the Religious Society of Friends against slavery.

A natural question is: To what extent or degree were Franklin and Woolman authentic contemporaries? We know that “Poor Richard” was fourteen when the Quaker Saint was born and still was alive for eighteen years after his fellow-thinker died, but it is not clear that Franklin and Woolman ever met or even corresponded.

Dr. Cady, however, gives it as his opinion that:

It is almost impossible to believe that Woolman and Franklin did not know each other and completely impossible to suppose that Franklin was not an imposing figure on the horizon of “the world” with which Woolman was engaged . . . But to Woolman, Franklin must have been the very image, both personally and as projected in his writings, of the man of the world. Franklin not only seemed but was an entirely different kind of American. The ego-strong son of an immigrant shopkeeper, Franklin was never entangled in the hopes, however poignant, of a Heavenly City in the wilderness.

A fundamental difference between “Poor Richard” and the Quaker Saint lay in the fact that Franklin was what now is described as a professional commentator on current events while Woolman preferred to be preoccupied with matters of spiritual consequence particularly. Ethical problems were important to him largely because they interfered with heavenly peace.

But these two books should be read together. “Poor Richard” and the Saintly Quaker had much more in common than might be supposed. Dr. Ketcham quotes these lines from Franklin, yet they well might have been written quite as effectively by Woolman:
It is that particular wise and good God, who is the Author and Owner of our System, that I propose for the Object of my Praise and Adoration, and that next to the Praise due to his Wisdom, I believe he is pleased and delights in the Happiness of those he has created; and since without Virtue Man can have no Happiness in this World, I firmly believe he delights to see me Virtuous because he is pleas'd when he sees me Happy. And since he has created many Things which seem purely design'd for the Delight of Man, I believe he is not offended when he sees his Children solace themselves in any manner of pleasant Exercises and innocent Delights, and I think no Pleasure innocent that is to Man hurtful.

Both men, in any case, probably would have been appreciated by Thomas Jefferson and his associates on July 4, 1776, when they used the most important moment of the Declaration to pledge devotion to happiness as the prime purpose of life and liberty.

The Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania

( Editor's Note: One of the bibliographic treasures of The Historical Society is a copy of The Works of John Woolman which once belonged to Daniel P. Bowers. It was printed in Philadelphia by Joseph Crukshank in 1774.)


More and more I come to see history as cumulative processive experience and not, say, the continual filling in of some otherwise vague and progressing line reaching out of the past toward my own sitting here, America, 1968 — the specific world through which I move. We tend to time memorable things so that they actually can be placed as past; but I don't at all think that that's necessarily the most useful (or most real) mode of apprehension. When one begins to feel that heaven is real, and is not anything if not with him as he presently is — and that hell is as real and as equally as present — one protests the linear that can only place the known portions side by side, and wants to reject anything which does not move to keep those known portions not only available, but alive.

Hugh Henry Brackenridge becomes immediately contemporary with such words as: "Why is it that I am proud and value myself among my species? It is because I think I possess in some degree the distinguishing characteristic of a man, a taste for both the fine arts; a taste and characteristic too little valued in America, where a system