BOOK REVIEWS


Here is one of those rare books about which other books well but not easily may be written. Even the veriest amateur surely will be stirred by many of the attractive problems it raises. The author is an established historian of antiques. His own enthusiasm is contagious. Thus, a reader wishes to know specifically what copper is and what brass is. Are they both metals, made by Nature? If not, how do they differ and what happens when they are brought together? And what is zinc and how does it have a new significance since Paracelsus in the sixteenth century?

Mr. Kauffman obviously is himself intrigued. He is a man of now and cares about the work modern men do or at least should try to do. His latest book has multiple heroes. One of them is Paul Revere No. 2 (1735-1818), Longfellow's midnight rider of "the 18th of April in [17]75 . . . for the countryfolk to be up and to arm" along the road to Lexington. We learn that he then was forty and famous far beyond New England as a master-metal worker and engraver. But of course he was by no means alone. His friends at the start of the Revolution included John Hancock, Samuel Adams and Joseph Warren. He was indubitably a leader among the people who by their constructive deeds proved the social, cultural, esthetic and scientific power behind the Declaration of Independence. It was no accident that Revere's work was carried on through two sequent centuries by descendants of his sixteen children.

Many of the metal fabricators are represented on bells cast in the Revolutionary era — a circumstance natural enough, yet somewhat surprising in such a hazardous age. Mr. Kauffman quotes The Pennsylvania Packet of Philadelphia in May 1754 as recording: "Last week was raised and fixed in the State House steeple the new bell cast here by Pass and Stow, weighing 2080 pounds with the motto, 'Proclaim Liberty through all the land to all the inhabitants thereof,'" after Leviticus XX.10, but insists with ample reason that "the most famous bell founder" was the silversmith Revere, who by 1792 made 400 bells altogether, "ranging in weight from 50 to 2885 pounds."

Numerous other productions of skilled copper and brass artisans similarly are commented upon engagingly by Mr. Kauffman. His own finished literary product therefore is a story in the best anecdotal sense of the word. Narrative values grace the references to brass andirons, balances, cannons, clocks, door knockers and locks, gun parts, sundials, candlesticks, buttons, skillets, molds for casting and scientific instruments; likewise for copper basins, coal hods, coffee pots and tea kettles, measures, pumps, ladles and skimmers, stencils, weathervanes, churners, piping, drip pans, frying pans, stew pans, warming pans, coins and sheathing for ships, not to overlook an infinite variety of novelties.

Probably the most intriguing paragraph in the entire volume reads in part as follows:

The Ontonagon Boulder from what is now Michigan shows that pure copper was occasionally found on the earth's surface. The first white man to visit the Ontonagon Boulder was Alexander Henry, an English trader at Mackinac, about 1766. In 1819, General Lewis Cass made the first explorations of the Lake Superior region for the U. S. Government and visited the Ontonagon River in order to see the boulder. Henry R. Schoolcraft, a member of the Cass expedition, describes it in his book, Narrative Journal of Travels through the Northwestern Regions of the United States, published in 1821. Attempts to move the boulder at that time were unsuccessful. In 1841, Julius Eldred, a hardware merchant of Detroit, purchased the boulder from the Chippewa Indians for $150. With great difficulty, Eldred moved it to Sault Sainte Marie. It was, however, claimed by the U. S. War Department, which moved it to Washington, D. C., in 1843. In 1860, it was deposited in the Smithsonian Institution, where it is now exhibited. The boulder weighs about three tons and contains about $2,000 worth of copper.

Such "believe-it-or-not" citations have the effect of rendering American Copper and Brass a veritable dictionary of metallurgy or, anyway, the American history thereof. The only regrettable omission noticed by the present reviewer is that of the name of the maker of the beautiful brass andirons in the lobby of the home of The Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, cast as it is believed for Joseph McClurg, well-known air blast steel furnace owner in the neighborhood
of Fifth avenue and Smithfield street, Pittsburgh, in 1815. The andirons are stamped "McClur Pgh," but it is not known for certain that they were cast by the steel processor.

The precious quality of Mr. Kauffman’s book is not in doubt, however. It supplements popular knowledge of collectors’ items as such but it also stimulates creative activity in the arts and crafts of modern as well as future times.

*Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania*

*Lafayette, the Guest of the Nation.* By **JANE BACON MACINTYRE.**


*Lafayette, the Guest of the Nation* is at once a fascinating coverage of his 1824-25 visit taken from newspaper accounts, journals, letters, and is an invaluable picture of the United States at this period. It furnishes a panoramic view of the young country, since Lafayette in thirteen months covered the twenty-four existing states by coach, canal boat, and by pioneer steamers that risked his life in their races on the Mississippi, Ohio, and Potomac. During his stay, he met nine of the first ten Presidents of the United States, visited Mount Vernon and Monticello, the unfinished Erie Canal, Niagara Falls, battlefields, forts, Navy yards, colleges, log cabins, mansions, Indian reservations, and the White House, keeping his health and sanity despite constant travelling and pressures.

The receptions in towns large and small followed a pattern: a bedecked triumphal arch, a banquet, odes and speeches, military escorts, school children singing, a Masonic banquet, a reception by the Society of the Cincinnati, church services, and a Lafayette Ball to become the lifetime treasure of the women; theater parties, torchlight processions, music, cannon fire. It was impossible, of course, to keep to schedule. But towns waited all night, their windows ablaze with candles. Although tired, Lafayette always had the perfect response. He never failed to recognize a face, recall a name or the circumstances under which he had last met the speaker.

Forty years had passed since his last visit at twenty-seven, "enchanting the eye with his silvery powdered hair and brocades, fascinating everyone with his delightful manners, with the charm and magne-