

BOOK REVIEWS

Henry Winter Davis: Antebellum and Civil War Congressman from Maryland. By GERALD S. HENIG. (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1973. Pp. 332. Notes, bibliography, index. \$7.50.)

Any reviewer would be impressed with this book simply by looking at the cover, seeing the dedication, and reading the acknowledgments. He would learn that the doctoral dissertation on which it is based was directed by Hans L. Trefousse (to whom the book is dedicated) and that the later manuscript was read by Arthur Schlesinger, Ari Hoogenboom, LeWanda Cox, Irving Katz, Harold Hyman, Herman Belz, John Niven, and James Rawley. Several of these leading historians use words like "scholarly and lively," "significant contribution," "excellent account," and "splendid piece of scholarship." Certainly any young historian would be fortunate to receive such encomiums for his first book.

The fact of the matter is that this is a sound, thorough study. It is based on wide research and is written in a lucid, though hardly scintillating, style. It reflects the revisionist trend in "radical Republican" historiography and fulfills the author's desire to show that there were good points to Henry Winter Davis in addition to the bad ones usually emphasized.

A thorough biography of this key mid-nineteenth-century figure has long been needed. Consider some of the roles Davis played during this period: a leading late-1850s and Civil War member of the House of Representatives from the crucial border state of Maryland; chairman of the House Foreign Relations Committee; chairman of the Select Committee on Rebellious States; and author of the Wade-Davis Bill and Manifesto. He was also a member of the Know-Nothing party and a former slaveholder who became an abolitionist, a "radical," and a leading anti-Lincolnite. Professor Henig, in *Henry Winter Davis*, argues persuasively that Davis was important for his work in keeping Maryland loyal, ridding that state of slavery, and being a central figure in the onset of Reconstruction. Henig concludes Davis has never received sufficient credit for these accomplishments.

Professor Henig, a member of the history department of California State University in Hayward, details Davis's life well and concludes that the key to understanding Davis's career was his hatred for the Democratic party. Politics, to Davis, was not "simply a struggle between rival organizations; for him it was a war between good and evil."

One wishes that Professor Henig was a devotee of psycho-history. Here, by his own description, is a historical figure well suited for this approach. Henig uses words like "certain inner hysteria," "obsessed," "highly sensitive," "intolerant of criticism," "self-righteousness," "driven by hatred," and "vain and impulsive." But, he does not go beyond these words; Davis's inner being is not explored. So too, Henig does not utilize roll-call analysis to shed light on Davis's migration from Know-Nothingism to Republicanism.

In summary, this is an important book and one that deserves a wide reading. Professor Henig has added to our knowledge of the congressional side of the Civil War and early Reconstruction.

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The Last Americans: The Indian in American Culture. By WILLIAM BRANDON. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1974. Pp. 553. Acknowledgments, introduction, a portfolio of American Indian poetry, notes, bibliography, index. \$12.95.)

Recent historical research has produced many changes in attitudes toward the American Indian and his culture. *The Last Americans* is an example of this tendency. Originally published as *The American Heritage Book of Indians* (New York, 1961), the new title and the subsequent revisions reflect the changes in scholarly perspective about the Native American in the last ten years. Primarily, the book deals with the effect of native culture and ideas on the history of America and the interaction of these factors with European values.

Since *The Last Americans* synthesizes many new ideas, it should be considered a popular history of Indian people. Perhaps it was revised to capitalize on the current renewed interest in the Native American. At any rate, it is eminently readable and a good introductory book for the novice Indian historian.

Mr. Brandon attacks most of the clichés about the American Indian. For instance, the author states that often the Indian concepts of freedom and communal sharing were glossed over by white explorers through their emphasis on kinship and analogies to feudalism. But really the Indian world was devoted to *living*, while the Europeans were dedicated to *getting*. Other generalizations seem tenuous, how-