

tory of American thought is that of the first American democrat and nonconformist. It is well documented and shows evidence of patient research. But it is a work of unbalanced eulogy, building up a mass of evidence in favour of Williams and taking no notice of the charges that have been levelled against his name by various students of his period.

The Rhode Island pioneer is drawn for us as a transcendental mystic who was the first promulgator of the modern doctrine of freedom of worship and the builder of a civil state, the principles of which have since spread over the entire American union. He is hailed as the forerunner of Jefferson and Madison and as spiritually akin to Bacon, Hobbes, Descartes, and the French Encyclopedists. But there is no direct reference to the classical criticisms against his life and labours.

Twichell the historian, for instance, says that everywhere Williams lingered there sprang up strife in an acute form. Schneider in *The Puritan Mind* asserts that Williams did not so much establish religious liberty on Rhode Island as create religious anarchy so that Rhode Island became a refuge for all sorts of religious misfits. John Fiske sums him up as hopelessly controversial. His biographers, from Gammell to Emily Easton, have generally found something to explain in his contentious life. This present book apparently finds nothing. Dr. Ernst, saying nothing of his hero's hostility towards the Catholics, omits to mention the fact that there was a law in Rhode Island debarring them from the franchise, which law remained on the statute books from 1664 to 1783. In his estimate of the political experiment at Providence he makes no reference to the anterior policy of the Calverts in Maryland. He overlooks the statement John Fiske has made in regard to the beginnings

of American democracy. Fiske said that Connecticut had the first written constitution known to history as creating a government and that our system of government today is in lineal descent more nearly related to that of Connecticut than that of any of the other thirteen colonies.

The thesis which Dr. Ernst sets forth is easily credible to those who know nothing about Roger Williams and his times. But the scientific student of the period would have welcomed a less partisan biography. It is a pity that the author, in elaborating his theme, should have failed to take account of the relevant objections.

CHAS. F. RONAYNE

CHARLOTTE BRONTË by E. F. Benson
(LONGMANS. \$4.00)

THREE-QUARTERS of a century has gone by since Mrs. Gaskell brought a hurricane about her ears by the publication of her *Life of Charlotte Brontë*. Since then we have had innumerable biographies of the Brontës, but we are as far as ever from getting an impartial one. Something in the air of Hawthorne Parsonage seems to go to the heads of chroniclers, and they emerge from their researches in states of violent partisanship.

Although Mr. Benson has made Charlotte the titular heroine of his book he inclines to the Emily-cum-Branwell cult. Poor Charlotte emerges as an acidulous, spinsterish little figure-of-fun, driving her talented sisters and brother with her own furious ambition. Often Mr. Benson seems aware that he is not presenting a woman who could by any sweep of the imagination have been a genius, and at such moments he halts his interpretation to recall to us, flatly, that he is writing of the author of *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*. But the moment passes; we have again the resentful, driving, managing creature before

us, and the task of re-creating her as the mystery she was is all to be done over again.

This is not to say that *Charlotte Brontë* is not an excellent book. It is one that should be on the shelf of every Brontë-lover. In retrieving Mrs. Gaskell's error of presenting Charlotte as a saint without stain, Mr. Benson occasionally leans too far in the other direction, and presents her as something just short of an hysteric. But he has had the inspiration to tell about her straightforwardly as a woman who was capable of falling deeply, wildly, and indiscreetly in love (though indeed how the indisputable evidence of her love for M. Héger can still be ignored is inexplicable). In building up the character of a woman capable of deep emotion, Mr.

Benson quotes extensively from Charlotte's letters to her school companion, Ellen Nussey. These quotations are wild enough, in all conscience, and yet perhaps a protest is again in order: in the middle of the last century a Gothic madness was abroad in the land, and many a good soul poured out the frenzied self-accusation that was customary, that was in fact downright modish, who hadn't a sin to bless herself with.

Mr. Benson has a theory, to me, I confess, more ingenious than convincing, that Branwell Brontë had much to do with *Wuthering Heights*. It is well stated, worth considering, and recommended to all who like insoluble problems.

FREDERIC SHEPARD

FOUR NEW NOVELISTS, AND JULIAN GREEN

THERE is no rough and ready classification into which Janet Lewis's book, *THE INVASION* (Harcourt, Brace. \$2.50) can be crowded, but, since the publishers have very wisely decided to issue it as a first novel, it falls, by my good fortune, into this department for review. Happy as I am at the chance that allows me to review it, I cannot help regretting that the reader who passes by fiction-notices, but whose attention would be caught at once if *The Invasion* were listed as American history, or Ojibway folk-lore, or even as "regional literature", may overlook for some time a delightful and important book. There is no danger that he will miss it entirely.

The gathering and breaking of the wave of the white race over the Great Lakes country, told by following the history of one real family, the Johnstons of St. Mary's, over little more than a hundred years, is the heart of Miss Lewis's story. John Johnston, a young Irishman of good birth, forced to make his own career, chose to do it in the New World, as a trader. "In the middle of August of . . . 1791, a *canot du nord*, or *canot du maître*, a birch canoe of the largest size . . . left Michilimackinac and came by slow stages up the St. Mary's River, past the Sault, past Les Grands Sables, past the Pictured Rocks, and so on along the south shore of Lake Superior." The French had already come, thinly, and receded before the English, but not until they had turned the Indians from their own way of life toward the white man's way of barter and credit. When young Johnston arrived the English were

already pushing in, more and more strongly; before his death, less than forty years later, the American wave had rushed over the land.

Johnston, chivalrous and honest, married the Woman of the Glade, daughter of the Ojibway chieftain, Waub-ojeeg, the White Fisher; and he was fully aware of the honour that had been shown him. From a timid child, frightened by the white man and his stove and his bed, the Woman of the Glade turns insensibly into Neengay, "My Mother", surrounded by her handsome, sturdy children; and Neengay turns into the mediator between her husband's race and her own, until the day comes when her son, speaking for her whose father had never failed to counsel them wisely, must tell the Indians that their day is finished: "He explained that the Americans were numberless, that they would keep coming forever, that it would be impossible to kill them all. He said: 'This is the hour in which to choose. This is the hour in which to make them friends or enemies', and ended his oration with this sentence: 'The firing of one gun will bring ruin to your tribe and to the Chippewa nation, so that not a dog will be left to howl in your villages'". A tragedy has seldom been told more quietly than here.

Johnston died; Neengay dies; her children marry, the gently but hardily reared grandchildren of the old Ojibway chief mingle their blood with that of the conquering race, leaving here and there the inheritance of ivory skin, aquiline nose, dark eyes; and the children who had each two names, an Eng-