

Klem, Norman Macleod, Robert McAlmon, Fred R. Miller, Ira V. Morris, Freda Snowden, Lottie Sterne, Sydney Salt, Arthur Calder-Marshall, Paul Engle, Evelyn Scott, and Jas. T. Farrell.

Dainty refreshments were served at a late hour and one and all voted it a scrumptious time.

GEORGE MILBURN.

Massachusetts Agitator

SAM ADAMS, PIONEER IN PROPAGANDA, by John C. Miller. Little, Brown. \$4.

THE New England radical movement, which culminated in the American Revolution, had its origins in class struggles within the colonies. The converting of this debtor-creditor strife into a struggle against the British Empire was to a large extent the work of Sam Adams. And a great work it was!

The years before the Stamp Act and the beginning of active anti-British sentiment in the colonies were not featureless, as many of us imagine. They were very lively years, particularly in New England, where the debtor and voteless elements, with a crude inflationary program, waged a sharp political battle against the merchant-banker oligarchy of Boston. The populist program was eventually killed, but not until the sound-money group had appealed in considerable panic to the British Parliament. Defeated, the Massachusetts popular front fell apart and continued disunited and inert until after the Seven Years War. The victory of Britain over France in that conflict gave rise to certain conditions which made possible the secession of the colonies from the empire, a secession already latent in the independent industrial development of New England and the fettering of the colonial economy generally by British mercantilism. On the one hand the danger of French imperialism had been eliminated from the Continent, leaving the colonies free to deal with England alone. And on the other, England, through the well-known taxation policies of Grenville, Townshend, etc., began to crack down on the colonies.

Thus a new alignment of forces was made possible in America, and Adams, leader for years of the popular party in Massachusetts, master of machine politics, organizer of an extra-legal, semi-military body of Boston workers, busied himself to create the needed alliances. By means of Committees of Correspondence and other agitational measures, the popular elements were once more united, this time with recruits from the old Tory front: business men who had felt the pinch of England's taxes. In this fashion the diehard Tories were isolated and the anti-imperialist front was strengthened by the inclusion of a moderate group, few in numbers, strong in wealth and prestige. Demanding nothing to begin with except imperial reform, this group was eventually forced by the growing intransigence of England to adopt the complete radical program of war and independence.

For this strategic victory of the radicals,

Sam Adams was largely responsible. He was "the man of the Revolution." After 1776, however, his influence waned quickly. Not apt enough in military affairs to be useful during the war, he was not constructive enough, either, to play any great part in the period of consolidation. He approved the suppression of the Shaysites, although their rebellion was an expression of genuine grievances on the part of those same rural elements which Adams had wooed so strenuously for the revolution. He was no "leveler," as Mr. Miller rightly says; but on the other hand he was no Federalist either, had little liking for the Constitution. Only when the Republicans came to power was he satisfied. On that great occasion he wrote to Jefferson: "The Storm is over and we are in Port."

Mr. Miller's well-written, shapely, interesting biography of Adams is somewhat irritating for its ungracious treatment of its hero. No open charges are made; formulations of any kind are rare; "scientific detachment" is the absolute rule; yet it is plain enough that to Mr. Miller, Adams was a clever politician, a "professional agitator" who made good, and little more. Like many another economic determinist of the mechanical school, Mr. Miller is a little disillusioned with history, particularly with revolutions and the men who are alleged to "make" them. For according to this view revolutions are the work of "aggressive" or "determined" minorities, who play upon the isolated economic grievances of the people, hypnotize them with propaganda, and hustle them toward revolution with clever strategy. To show the distortions which such a minority-plus-propaganda theory of history results in, let us cite that charge of exaggerating the issues, which Mr. Miller in his back-handed way brings against Sam Adams. True: his writings were shrill with cries of tyranny which, judged by the immediate and conscious intentions of the English, were sometimes far-fetched. But was Adams attacking the individual Lords of Parliament or was he attacking that antiquated monstrosity, the British mercantile system, which those individuals represented in spite of themselves? And was that system able to maintain itself against the expanding productive forces of the colonies without finally resorting to tyranny—real tyranny in the shape of redcoats and repressive laws? Less of an opportunist than most of those who led the bourgeois revolutions, Adams appears to have foreseen this ultimate development and acted accordingly.

F. W. DUPEE.

Old Wine in New Bottles

HISTORY OF THE GREAT AMERICAN FORTUNES, by Gustavus Myers. Modern Library Giants. \$1.10.

THIS is an interesting and somewhat curious revision of a modern classic. The original 1909 edition of this work, like many or most classics, was greeted with fear and disdain by the publishers and critics of the time. For them Myers told altogether

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too baldly and completely the story of how the Goulds, Astors, Vanderbilts, Morgans, and others arrived at a position of enormous wealth and power under capitalism. As Myers neatly puts it, "Although in editorial after editorial the New York *World* had, in the most unmeasured language, denounced the criminal looting done by certain individuals and corporations, its reviewers objected to my summing up of the facts as 'declamatory.'"

In this work Myers did more than a mere "muckraking" job. (This was the famous period of the "muckrakers" when the best of them, like Lincoln Steffens, were struggling toward a clarity which arrived only later.) He made plain that there was a system underlying the symptoms he exposed, and that it was a system of exploitation. Much of his concrete material dealt with the conditions of the workers in the industries controlled by the financial buccaneers, and with the kinds of suppressive measures taken against the workers who organized to better their conditions. Finally, the concluding paragraph of the original edition was a call for socialism. This was no theoretical monument of the stature of *Das Kapital*. But it was more than a recitation of assorted skulduggeries in American high finance.

Since 1909 there have been changes in the world and in Gustavus Myers. The latter's development ran by no means parallel to that of Lincoln Steffens. Myers appeared to put behind him his exposures of capitalist fortunes, of the Supreme Court, and of Taimmany Hall. A leaf was turned. National destiny became his theme. In 1925 appeared *The History of American Idealism*, dedicated to Otto H. Kahn. Here Mr. Myers asserts "It has been this constant exploring into evils that has given superficial observers the impression that America is a hotbed of crookedness and corruption. . . . Where in all history is to be found the precedent of a people idealistic and to such a preponderant degree that the nominal leaders simply expressed what the people themselves felt and thought?" This was written in the Harding-Coolidge era. Looking back to 1898, Myers saw the Spanish-American war as a great crusade of liberation. Of imperialism and Hearst, there is not a word.

The same theme was continued in *America Strikes Back*, published in 1935. This was so highly regarded by the Chemical Foundation, Inc., as to be put on its list for free distribution to college professors along with the nationalist writings of Samuel Crowther and George N. Peek. The publisher's advertisements represented Gustavus Myers as a St. George, famed for the slaying of the American muckraker.

The announcement that Myers was to revise and bring up to date his 1909 edition of *History of the Great American Fortunes* to be published as a Modern Library Giant of 1936 led to some speculation. Would Myers complete his retreat by scuttling his own classic? Or was he staging a comeback by

a sudden reversion to his original interests?

A careful comparison of the two editions yields the following: the main body of the text remains almost unchanged. Death notices are added for some of the magnates who have passed from the scene since the first edition. A few pages on the current J. P. Morgan are added. Here there is a brief mention of the senatorial revelations concerning the Morgan firm as a key factor in America's entry into the World War. More space is allotted to the counter-statement issued by the firm itself. A slender chapter is inserted at the end of the volume allotting one or two paragraphs each to the Mellons, du Ponts, Woolworths, etc. These are in much the same vein as the original work.

The socialist conclusion of the original edition is dropped altogether. Here there is no conclusion. The original preface is retained, but a new one is added, suggesting that the problem is not as serious as when Myers first wrote. "Wealth, once regarded as a vested and sacred right, has ceased to be so considered. . . . Recent years have seen introduced what is the equivalent of a limitation on income from wealth."

Gustavus Myers has not scuttled his own classic. He has, I believe, somewhat bowdlerized it. The changes are relatively few, but they are for the worse. It may well be said that the house of Modern Library has performed a service to the American people in making this book available for a wider distribution than it has had heretofore. It would have performed a greater service by republishing the original unchanged or by persuading Mr. Myers to do a better revision. The latter probably would have required quite an effort.

ADDISON T. CUTLER.

Brief Review

THE TRUTH ABOUT COLUMBUS, by Charles Duff. Introduction by Philip Guedalla. Illustrated. Random House. \$3.

The intimation in the title that important revelations about Columbus are made in the book is misleading. There are certain changes of emphasis; one upon existing knowledge in the fifteenth century of land to the west; another upon the character of Columbus; a third upon Jewish backing, financial and intellectual, of the expedition. The account, as a whole, is unusually well paced and readable.



Recently Recommended Books

The Theory and Practice of Socialism, by John Strachey. Random House. \$3.

Art and Society: A Marxist Analysis, by George Plekhanov, with an introduction by Granville Hicks. Critics' Group. Cloth \$1, paper 35c.

The Future of Liberty, by George Soule. Macmillan. \$2.

The Best of Art Young, with an introduction by Heywood Broun. Vanguard. \$3.

History of the Haymarket Affair, by Henry David Farrar & Rinehart. \$4.

Man's Worldly Goods, by Leo Huberman. Harper. \$2.50.

Fighting Angel, by Pearl S. Buck. Reynal & Hitchcock. \$2.50.

The War Goes On, by Sholem Asch. Putnam. \$3.