



REVIEW and COMMENT

SUMMER READING

The Father of Democracy

THE YOUNG JEFFERSON, by Claude G. Bowers. Houghton Mifflin. \$3.75.

THE third in point of publication, though the first in strict biographical order, this volume apparently completes what is surely the best work in its specific field and one of the great works in American biographical literature. I am not equipped to pass upon the fine points of Mr. Bowers' use and interpretation of his documentary material. As biographer he tends to the other extreme of the debunking school, and it is obvious that to give full effect to his portrait he has done some arbitrary arrangement of background and lighting. But equally obvious is the fact that the likeness is from life.

In his preface to *The Young Jefferson* Mr. Bowers writes: "It is during this period of his life that it is possible to present the Jefferson of flesh and blood, the human being, for he is more intimately revealed during these younger years before he was so completely absorbed in political controversies. To most Americans, including historians, he has been a symbol, a flag, a steel engraving, a philosopher in an ivory tower, or, more often, a cunning politician spinning his web of intrigue in dark corners. I have tried here to rescue a very human being from the wilderness of myth and fable."

For a literary analyst with the three volumes of this Jefferson biography before him, this suggests an interesting study in the literary means to make a biographical subject lifelike. Mr. Bowers gives us, here, the Jefferson practicing on the violin and exchanging adolescent enthusiasms over the poems of Ossian; he gives us his hero as lover, husband, father, lavish host, intellectual companion. But these incarnations are done mainly in set descriptions. They lack the movement of opposition which makes the Jefferson of the previous volumes, *Jefferson and Hamilton* and *Jefferson in Power*, so stirring.

Of the three volumes in the series *The Young Jefferson* is the most conventionally biographical and the most conventionally literary. It is of great value for its accumulation of material;

and it is necessary for a rounded evaluation of Jefferson, particularly in its data on the political struggles in Virginia, the training ground for Jefferson's role on the national stage. But the book falls short of its predecessors not only in lifelike realization of its subject but as reconstruction of history.

The unusual distinction and power of *Jefferson and Hamilton* and *Jefferson in Power* was that they were centered on critical political struggles. Not only Jefferson but his antagonist was in full view. And the opposition was full scale. The drama and excitement of conflict gave the characters a living glow. Moreover, the antagonists were such well realized personifications of social forces that, in effect, the works were also vigorous dramatizations of the class struggles of the first generation of the American Republic.

The Young Jefferson, however, dutifully proceeding chronologically and uncentered, as the other volumes were, on critical political struggles, has much less of portraiture in action. Mr. Bowers makes as much as, apparently, he can, of the antagonisms Jefferson met and overcame in these earlier years—his struggle with the Tidewater aristocracy that maintained a class rule over early Virginia, with the Episcopal parsonages that sought to secure their vested interests in alliance with the Tidewater landlords, with the opponents of his draft of the Declaration of Independence and with the opponents, active and passive, of the American revolution, etc. Mr. Bowers is also careful to explain the importance and significance of these earlier struggles. These antagonists however lack the proportions and the force of the others. Mr. Bowers feels that they ought to be dramatic and makes adjectival assertions to that effect, but the drama fails to materialize. He accumulates data but it has, too often, no more effect than a string of synonymous adjectives. One feels a limitation of sheer literary skill, and of psychological insights. The latter may be due, here, to Mr. Bowers' conception of Jefferson as a flawless figure, which leads to an excessive gloss of surface, like that which often mars statuary.

But if *The Young Jefferson* is a de-

cline, it is a decline from Mr. Bowers' own eminence. From any other hand it would rank as a work of great distinction. Though in a more limited form, he still presents Jefferson mainly in terms of political struggles. And it remains his great contribution here to see these struggles as keys both to Jefferson's life and to America's history.

Another virtue of Bowers' great biography, in its wholeness, is that it helps to make clear the continuity of the struggle for democracy. Democracy must be maintained, as well as won, by struggle; and the struggle, though the same in essence, constantly changes in form.

In common with the English political philosophers who were his inspiration Jefferson, for example, saw one of the democratic goals in a balance of public powers, executive, legislative and judicial, each limiting the other's possible restraints upon the individual. This applied to the acquisition of property. With opportunities opened to him by the democratic revolution, and with physical space enough on the virgin continent to afford every individual toehold and swinging room, the right to property, then primarily a matter of worked land and earned tradesman's profits, was a democratic right.

The world has changed vastly since then. Space has shrunk and the relations of the individual to society have become more complex. Property has lost its character of individual accumulation, and has been transformed in other significant ways. Thus the terms of the continuing struggle are very different today. But for that struggle, today, Jefferson's adroit and determined fight and his victories can serve us as a guide and inspiration. Giving them so clear a presentation, Mr. Bowers has served the people well.

ISIDOR SCHNEIDER.

The People of Africa

WHAT DO THE PEOPLE OF AFRICA WANT? by Mrs. Paul Robeson. Council on African Affairs. 10c.

THE war has made us realize to some extent the strategic importance of Africa for resources, but to too many it

still has little definite history and still less a definite future. There is darkness in the popular knowledge of Africa rather than in Africa itself. We are thankful therefore to Mrs. Paul Robeson and the Council on African Affairs for a very readable and informative introduction to the problem of the African people. In twenty-three illustrated pages we are given a glimpse of Africa's past and present contributions to world progress, the treatment of the Africans by their European rulers, and the strivings and accomplishments of the people in their struggle for political and economic democracy.

Africa is one of the least developed of the earth's regions, yet it has tremendous possibilities for development. Only one percent of water power resources potentially greater than that of Europe, North America and South America combined, have as yet been developed, as compared with about twenty-five percent for North America. But more than in any other part of the world such riches belong to foreign exploiters and the native is a stranger in his own land. In South Africa the natives must have a pass to leave the native reserves and work in the cities and towns. They must pay taxes, but they may not vote.

But there are stirrings. There were African representatives to the London Labor Conference. There are political, youth, women's, business, farmers and professional organizations. African soldiers have shed their blood not only in Africa but in Europe and Asia. Can there be any doubt as to what the people of Africa want? HAROLD KIRSHNER.

From the Foxholes

THE BRICK FOXHOLE, by Richard Brooks. Harpers. \$2.50.

SERGEANT NELSON OF THE GUARDS, by Gerald Kersh. Winston. \$2.50.

STRONGER THAN FEAR, by Richard Tregaskis. Random House. \$2.

IDENTITY UNKNOWN, by Robert Newman. Ziff Davis. \$1.

WHISTLE WHILE YOU WAIT, by Fred Howard. Duell, Sloan & Pearce. \$2.50.

OUR American heritage of advertising agency art has taken a cruel revenge. These books about the war are a tribute to the power of the cliché, including the many progressive clichés that have been sprinkled like parsley over these ill-prepared texts.

The most exciting narrative of the five books under review is *The Brick Foxhole*, by a marine. It is based upon the life of boredom led by the barrack soldier. The trick movie finish irritates



Acting Consul General for the USSR Mikhailov (right) as he thanks Paul Manship for the gift of a record of the work of 165 American artists presented in the interest of strengthening cultural ties between the USA and the Soviet Union. The exhibit consisted of more than 1,000 photographic and color reproductions of the works of Thomas A. Benton, Peter Blume, Alexander Brook, David Burluk, Adolph Dehn, Philip Evergood, William Gropper, Minna Harkavy, Joseph Hirsch, Malvina Hoffman, Leon Kroll, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Julian E. Levy, Manship, Carl Milles, Waldo Pierce, Henry Varum Poor, Boardman Richardson, Norman Rockwell, John Sloan, Max Weber and others, and was collected under the auspices of the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship.

the reader into remembering the bad writing. On one page: "without the bat of an eye" is followed by "when the chips were down." Those phrases might be excused as an attempt at realism, but not "adverbial back-patting." The final citation for bad writing must go to this bit of ersatz Hemingway: "The dog tags tinkled against her. Then there was silence. Jeff took the world in his hand and threw a curve ball at the moon." Richard Wright says in the blurb for this thing that the writing is "muscular." Mr. Brooks still has to learn how to use his muscles.

The rest of the books could be easily dismissed, except that John Lehmann stated during a silly controversy in *Horizon* that Gerald Kersh is one of the writers who have made English wartime writing just as good as the French. This collection of anecdotes strung loosely about the neck of an Army "character" provides enough rope with which to hang Mr. Lehmann. It is bad Kipling, a British version of *Private Hargrove*, and worse, *Beau Geste*.

The Tregaskis book should not rob anyone of two dollars. An issue of the *Infantry Journal* at thirty-five cents will give you five times as much knowledge of small-unit tactics or of the behavior of American officers in combat.

Identity Unknown was made into a Republic picture. The book deserved it.

Whistle While You Wait, a collection of letters from Fred Howard to his wife, will interest you if you've never received any mail from overseas. Otherwise, you will not be interested in people who make love while the shades are up.

BILL AALTO.

After the War

THE FEAR MAKERS, by Darwin L. Teilheit. Appleton-Century. \$2.75.

THIS is a hard hitting novel written in a clipped, masculine style. Its hero, Captain Eaton, returns, wounded, from the Normandy beachhead to find his poll-taking organization, of whose honesty he had been proud, taken over by a racketeering group. As soon as