

Conciliator in the Age of Hate

HORATIO SEYMOUR OF NEW YORK.
By Stewart Mitchell. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1938. \$5.

Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS

A T long last justice can be done to Horatio Seymour; and Mr. Mitchell has done it amply and ably. In Civil War days Seymour was stigmatized as a copperhead, a hater of the Union cause, a man who with all the prestige of the New York governorship lent moral aid and encouragement to rebels. For decades afterward most people recalled him as the executive who, just after Gettysburg, had supposedly addressed the draft rioters of New York City as "my friends." He was ranked with Vallandigham—abler, more cautious, but equally dangerous. This view was the product of wartime excitement, of the Union League school of patriotism, and of the ultra-radical oratory, journalism, and history of G.A.R. days. The fact is that Seymour, a man of great integrity and patriotism, was as loyal to the Union as any Abolitionist or any Ben Wade-Zach Chandler type of ranter against the South—and a great deal more astute and clear-sighted. Lincoln was perfectly correct when he wrote Seymour in 1863: "As to maintaining the nation's life and integrity, I assume and believe that there cannot be a difference of purpose between you and me." As governor, Seymour supported the war effort consistently and vigorously. He never called the draft rioters "friends" and he did his utmost to suppress disorders. But as he believed in conciliation before the war began, so he believed later in compromise on all points save restoration of the Union. For that view, as for his resistance to various wartime infringements, no well-informed student will condemn him.

The Civil War, with its immediate antecedents and consequences, rightly receives more than half the space in Mr. Mitchell's 600-page volume. Seymour, a steadfast lover of common sense, compromise, and concord, was in the thick of political events from the time he supported Douglas for the Presidency in 1860 till he himself was defeated for that office in 1868. As governor he trod a difficult path, and on the whole trod it well. Some errors of judgment he committed, but on the great war issues he occupied a position quite as defensible as that of his radical assailants. So he did after the war. His stand on reconstruction, debt, currency, and national expenditures was sound, and it was no great piece of luck for the republic that Grant instead of Seymour became President in 1869.

Apart from the Civil War and its issues, Seymour holds a conspicuous place in the great line of New York Democratic leaders which runs down from Van Bu-

ren, Silas Wright, and W. L. Marcy to Tilden and Cleveland. That line stood for a set of principles which became the core of Democratic tradition down to 1896—for sound money, low tariffs, economical expenditure, the conservation of State rights and activities against Federal encroachments, and efficient administration. Seymour appears in these interesting pages as a man of commonplace abilities, with nothing like Silas Wright's rugged Roman force, Tilden's incisive intellect, or Cleveland's belligerent courage. He seems never to have said or written a memorable sentence in his life; he was

totally uninspiring. Yet his shrewd common sense, his moderation, and his kindly tact in managing men, raised him to leadership; and he used power with purity and sagacity.

Mr. Mitchell has said the most for him that can be said; yet the book is honest, avoids special pleading, and never glosses over Seymour's weaknesses (for example, his nepotism while governor) or his mistakes and ineptitudes. The research is exhaustive, and it is safe to say that the volume is that rare work, a truly definitive biography. It is very well written; and though Seymour is not in himself worth six hundred pages, Mr. Mitchell's skill in presenting the historical background goes far toward justifying the length of his book.

The Way of the Aggressor

JAPAN IN CHINA. By T. A. Bisson. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1938. \$3.

Reviewed by ALBERT PARRY

MR. BISSON'S name is favorably known through the reports on the Far Eastern situation he has written for the Foreign Policy Association. His acquaintance with the scene is personal; his approach is scholarly. In the present volume he gives us the quintessence of his findings on the subject: no strikingly new thesis, to be sure, but a valuable book nevertheless—a sober, detailed account of the events and underlying factors leading, since the early 1930s, to the latest stage of the tragedy in China.

It is a tragedy to China, but not of China. From Mr. Bisson's well-documented analysis and long-range view we learn that, despite the heavy toll of defeat and destruction so far borne by China, it is the Japanese who are destined to be the final-day victims of Tokyo's aggression. The author shows that economically China is more self-sufficient than her attacker. Socially and politically the united front of her classes and parties has stood the test of Nippon's fire and intrigue. The guerrilla method of the Eighth Route (formerly Communist) Army has proved successful. Mr. Bisson warns sensibly that fruits of this method should not be exaggerated. Although assailed and harassed by the elusive fight-

ers, Japan's military position in the Chinese plains may remain tenable, and new areas may be overrun by her mechanized legions. But this guerrilla warfare "will continue to require a costly army of occupation for many years to come."

By way of economic journals and reluctant admissions of the Japanese themselves, the author takes us behind the Tokyo scenes to show how ill this unexpected cost of her

path through China can be afforded by Japan. A thoughtful and conclusive chapter on Manchoukuo demonstrates that after six years the militarists of the Rising Sun failed to bring quiet and profit either to themselves or to that land. As goes Manchoukuo, so goes the intramural China. The stubborn resistance of the Manchurians to the Japanese yoke is bound to be multiplied tenfold in the rest of China. It will do more than free the Flowery



General Chu Teh, Commander of the Eighth (Communist) Army.

Land—it will, according to Mr. Bisson, "gain freedom for the Japanese people, who are today equally at the mercy of their militarist masters."

A prophecy of a revolution in Japan is thus implied. Considering the tough fiber of her ruling clique, it is safe to surmise that the militarists will not give up their power without a struggle. Today's adventure in China will lead to tomorrow's civil war in Japan. If so, the bloody drama of the Far East is only beginning.

Albert Parry has written on Far Eastern questions for Asia, Pacific Affairs, and other publications.

Old-Fashioned Fashion

FROM HOOPSKIRTS TO NUDITY. By Carrie A. Hall. Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers. 1938. \$5.

Reviewed by ELIZABETH HAWES

ANYTHING I say about this book is exceedingly biased and probably unfair. Carrie A. Hall and myself are fundamentally of different generations. Our most basic ideas are, if not diametrically opposed, at least divergent.

This serves to point up a most interesting fact about Fashion. Mrs. Hall prints a picture of "the fiend of fashion from an ancient manuscript in the British Museum" which, with bat wings and fiendish head, exemplifies all the horrors of that "Dame." She devotes her first chapter to Style versus Fashion. "Fashion is the only tyrant against whom modern civilization has not carried on a crusade. . . ." "Fashions as they are decreed are often without justification. . . ." A couple of causes of fashion are: "love of change; and the influence of trade in the transient reign of objects of luxury." Who could disagree?

Fifty years spent in designing and making more than twenty thousand dresses have led Carrie Hall to these conclusions, as a much shorter time has put many of the rest of us in the same position. Perhaps the difference between fifty years in the trade and ten is what makes Mrs. Hall ready gracefully to give up her crusading spirit and allow that fashions will probably be just as "freaky" in the future as they have been in the past, unless the changing social conditions and the wholesome effect of the enlarged sphere of usefulness to which women have attained should so dominate the world of dress that it becomes the smart thing to dress sensibly.

Is it out of the question that even "the smart thing" will vanish? More important, does fashion now only influence "the transient reign of objects of luxury"? We have fashion in towels, cars, lamps, and every dress from \$3.75 up.

Mrs. Hall seems to feel that Fashion only concerns itself with "ladies," and the major part of her book, where she vouchsafes any criticism, blandly emphasizes the fact that there are a lot of things a real lady must never wear. "A gentlewoman never attracts attention to her feet or legs." Ye gods! Obviously we have no more gentlewomen, and why occupy one's mind with that problem? An improvement in the fashion of this decade is the "Gown for little women" which Mrs. Hall bases on the popularity of the motion-picture of that name. (Katharine Hepburn is about five feet seven.)

"From Hoopskirts to Nudity" should have its place on the library shelf in the Modes and Manners of a Past Gen-

eration section, and mainly for the pictures which tell the story. The text also tells the story, and best where it is inadvertently clinging to the past century in manners and ideas. "The first purpose of clothing was to provide comfort," says Carrie Hall.

My grandmother might have told me that. A lot of people may still think that. But anthropologists have given us cer-

tain historical facts which we can take or leave. Nowadays most of us prefer to take them. The first aim of clothing was to beautify the human form for the purpose of satisfying a very human desire: to be attractive to the other sex.

Different centuries may try to achieve this end in different ways, but don't let's, even kindly, calmly, and generously, like Mrs. Hall, try to mix our centuries.

Elizabeth Hawes, a leading American dress designer, is the author of "Fashion Is Spinach," recently reviewed in these columns.

SWEDES IN AMERICA

Edited by ADOLPH B. BENSON and NABOTH HEDIN

Published in connection with the Swedish American Tercentenary 1938 celebration of the founding of the New Sweden colony, each of the chapters of this important volume has been written by a specialist in a particular field. The result is the first complete history in one volume of the Swedes in this country and of their contribution to American life. Illustrated. \$3.00

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