

out consideration for the "race, nationality, or the political or religious views of the writers," to keep on their shelves books which represent all sides of controversial questions, and to throw open their assembly rooms to "all groups in the community regardless of their beliefs or affiliations."

The fourth general session brought the convention to a close with an address by President-elect Ralph Munn and the presentation of new officers.

Christopher Stull is on the staff of the San Francisco Chronicle.

Mystic Bluestocking

THE LADY OF THE HOLY ALLIANCE. By Ernest John Knapp. New York: Columbia University Press. 1939. 262 pp., with index. \$5.

Reviewed by GARRETT MATTINGLY

JULIE DE KRUDENER is chiefly remembered as the white-haired mystic who was supposed to exercise a profound spiritual influence upon Czar Alexander I, just as that dreamy young man was adumbrating the Holy Alliance. Before she was linked with that preposterous document, Julie had traveled a long way, mostly in a more mundane guise, as a less holy inspiration. Daughter of a noble Baltic family, married, at eighteen, to a neighbor, the Baron von Krüdener, she accompanied him on diplomatic missions to Venice and Copenhagen before she left him to follow the life of an emancipated bluestocking, rivaling (at least in her own estimation) Madame de Staël and Madame Récamier, just failing to captivate famous lovers, or captivating lovers who just failed to become famous, and winning, as the result of assiduous intrigue, brief celebrity as the authoress of a sentimental novel, "Valerie." The malicious hinted that her religious conversion had waited on the fading of her charms, but there seems to be no doubt that Julie abandoned herself to German chiliastic mysticism with the same fervor and romantic sensibility with which she had swum with other currents of her age, and with as much sincerity.

This biography recounts authoritatively Julie's restless life, keeping an even balance between sympathy and justice, but wisely relies for its chief interest on the analysis of those various intellectual climates to which she successively succumbed. The chapters on the provincial culture of Riga in the later eighteenth century and on the religious fanatics and charlatans of southern Germany in the Napoleonic period seem particularly fresh and illuminating. Most people can comprehend the temper of a past age better from one intelligently selected and presented concrete instance than from volumes of generalization. They will welcome this story of a woman whose life swayed so freely in the rising tides of European romanticism.

Ingenious Mr. Peale

THE ARTIST OF THE REVOLUTION: THE EARLY LIFE OF CHARLES WILLSON PEALE. By Charles Coleman Sellers. Hebron, Conn.: Feather & Good. 1939. \$7.50.

Reviewed by OLIVER LARKIN

IN a period when many Americans still believed that "the Plow-Man that raiseth Grain is more serviceable to Mankind, than the Painter who draws only to please the Eye," Charles Willson Peale dared to prophesy that the arts "will here find patronage, and an Asylum, when oppression and tyranny shall perhaps banish them from the seats where they now flourish." In an age still theocratic, Peale hissed a Philadelphia Minister for including King George in the Litany, called Tom Paine his friend, and read Montesquieu and the love poems of Ovid. Although the limner of Peale's day was, in the phrase of Trumbull, "necessarily dependent upon the protection of the rich and great," this Furious Whig championed a republic based on the direct expression of the popular will, lost the friendship and the patronage of conservative merchant-profiters, and after the battle dryly conceded that he had "rather more attended to make my Country than myself Independent." While Copley, safe in England, kept aloof from the Revolution, Peale captained ragged Continentals under Washington, "equipped," as his biographer remarks, "for painting in miniature and fighting in the large," and executed, between skirmishes, portraits of Washington and his associates which were to be, in Peale's ambition, a National Gallery of Revolutionary America.

When, in 1780, the artist "laid politics aside and persued the Brush," he had more than justified Benjamin West's reference to "that ingenious young Mr. Peale." He had been a saddler, a coach-maker, a silversmith. He had repaired watches and clocks, made plaster casts, manufactured false teeth, produced mezzotints, designed and built transparencies to celebrate the triumphs of the Revolution. Peale clothed his soldiers' feet with shoes of his own making, built for himself a xylophone and a "barel Organ," mastered the craft of taxidermy, invented a machine for giving rectal injections, and opened the first museum of natural history in America.

Mr. Sellers has published the first biography of this homespun Leonardo. He takes Peale to his forty-ninth year and leaves the remaining thirty-seven for treatment in a second volume. By means of Peale's unpublished autobiography and the supplementary self-revelation to be found in the artist's diaries, his letter books, and other family papers, clarity and conviction emerge from what might have been,

in less sympathetic hands, a sprawling and contradictory assemblage of facts. Mr. Sellers has indeed so intimately identified himself with the "mild, benevolent, and good man" of whom he writes, that one can believe Charles Willson Peale, reborn, is repeating his life's story in terms which the reader of today can understand, and presenting evidence by means of which a far less grudging estimate of the painter can now be formed than is to be found in the pages of that Yankee Vasari, William Dunlap.

When American art, and its relation to the political, social, and artistic development of America secure the scholarly attention they have so long deserved but so seldom received, "The Artist of the Revolution" will be required reading.

Oliver Larkin is on the faculty of art at Smith College.

AMERICAN FOLK PLAYS

Edited by FREDERICK H. KOCH

Foreword by
ARCHIBALD HENDERSON

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Mayor Maverick on the Constitution

IN BLOOD AND INK. By Maury Maverick. New York: Modern Age Books. 1939. 282 pp., with index. Paper, 75 cents. (Starling Press: cloth, \$2.50)

Reviewed by DUNCAN AIKMAN

MAYOR MAVERICK of San Antonio, whom practically everybody remembers as the most titillatingly sententious Congressman since Randolph of Roanoke, here propounds a thesis. It is: The Constitution of the United States is much more alive than the document you find at the tail end of the school histories.

A lot of blood went into its making besides the ink that was used to write it and interpret it and circumscribe its effectiveness. Hundreds of ideas feed it with vitamins, some of them dating back to the old Anglo-Saxon tribes, some so new in their implications of where American democracy is going that they can hardly yet be described as hatched. Some of them, like the Declaration of Independence slogan, "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" have never been attached to the Constitution in the formal literary sense. Others, like the concept of a functioning economic democracy, have not, in a strictly coherent way, even been written down.

But, along with the things that make sense in the Magna Carta, the Declaration, the Articles of Confederation, the Northwest Territory Ordinance of 1787, and the more forward-looking Supreme Court decisions, all sound democratic ideas of American origin or usage belong to what Mayor Maverick calls "the living Constitution." For a practical politician, he is almost mystical about it. Now and then he talks of the Constitution as "the Law of the Land" a good deal as if it had sprung magically out of the earth, like a volcano or a grasshopper.

Apart from these poetics, the mayor keeps his eye on realities. What he wants is to have us put "the living Constitution" to work and quit paying ritual adorations to the one that the lawyers and most of the Supreme Court majorities have been trying to guarantee since the start of the Republic as being one hundred per cent ink.

This, Mr. Maverick insists, is easier than we think. We can halt the supreme justices in their wicked work of ham-stringing democratic progress and economic justice any time it pleases us: by legally restricting their range of jurisdiction, for instance, or by packing the court, or merely by threatening to do these shocking things.

Suppose, he intimates, the Dred Scott decision had been warded off by scaring Chief Justice Taney as Mr. Roosevelt scared the "nine old men" in 1937? Or Chief Justice Waite in his recognition of corporations as "persons" under the "due process of law" clause of the fourteenth amendment?

"The people were always in a position to get control of the government," he says in one place, "if they had known what to do and had taken the trouble to do it." According to the Maverick thesis, they still are. With a little rational political effort, they can produce a life in which all Americans can "talk, pray, think as we please—and eat regular."

Along with much picturesque autobiographical material, a good deal of this ground was covered in "A Maverick American" two years ago. The present book is livelier than most review lessons, but it would go better with a little more Maverick sauce.

The Native Theater

AMERICAN FOLK PLAYS. Edited by Frederick H. Koch. New York: D. Appleton-Century Co. 1939. 592 pp. \$4.

Reviewed by STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT

THIS book marks twenty years of the Playmakers' Theater at Chapel Hill and twenty years, as well, of Professor Koch's indefatigable efforts in the cause of American folk-drama. It is easy to say to any literary aspirant, "Write about the things you know about;" it is a good deal harder to show him how to go about it. But Professor Koch has been singularly successful—the proof of it is in this book. Here are twenty-one one-act plays, ranging from Canada to Mexico, and all across the length and breadth of the United States. Few if any of them are by names well-known to the Broadway stage, but all of them are distinguished by one thing—sincerity of intent. Each playmaker has honestly tried to get to grips with some one aspect of American life. It may be Davy Crockett or a farm woman of the North Dakota prairies—it may be a cowboy comedy or an Oklahoma tragedy—the same desire to work with native materials and make something of them is obvious in them all. It is an interesting and, in many respects, a remarkable achievement.

The plays themselves are workable and workmanlike. A few of them, "Funeral Flowers for the Bride," "The Red Velvet Coat," "Git up and Bar the Door," are better than that. But all of them should interest and stimulate little-theater groups throughout the country. They show what can be done—and if they also, in one sense, show its limits, that is only to be expected. For the truism, unfortunately, holds that great plays are written by great dramatists—and you can be as honest as the daylight and yet not write greatly. These are good plays and honest plays, but it is hard to feel that any one of the contributors to the present volume is a potential Paul Green or Eugene O'Neill or Thomas Wolfe. However, I don't know the au-

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The Criminal Record

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Title and Author	Crime, Place, Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
MURDER ON EVERY FLOOR Ann Demarest (Hillman-Curl: \$2.)	Brother and sister slain in sinister N. Y. apartment house. Handsome young lawyer assists city cops to solution.	Begins all right and continues very nicely, with plentiful thrills and satisfactorily tangled plot—but ending folds up dismally.	Disappointing
MURDER GOES TO THE WORLD'S FAIR Timothy Brace (Dutton: \$2.)	Nazi and Russian stabbed at "Peace Dinners" in World's Fair. Anthony Adams and exposition police unravel widely ramified plot.	When Adams comes down off his stilts the yarn is good. Exotic snake-dancer gizes zip to performance.	Average