



Fight between peasants and soldiers. From the painting by Wouwermans.

## History Anticipating Itself

*THE THIRTY YEARS WAR.* By C. V. Wedgwood. New Haven: The Yale University Press. 1939. \$4.50.

Reviewed by GARRETT MATTINGLY

THREE hundred and twenty years ago the movement of German armies into Bohemia, where the Czechs were reasserting their often suppressed but always renescent national independence, began a long, hideous European war. At first the powers felt that the Bohemian trouble could be localized. The Czechs had counted on English and French support but both states held aloof; the king of France had no sympathy for Protestants or for the desire of peoples to govern themselves, the king of England fancied himself as a peacemaker. But Europe was full of unrest, aggression begets aggression, and soon those states which did not take to arms through greed, or the desire to uphold some sacred cause, were driven to them through fear, or in simple self-defense.

For thirty years thereafter there reeled back and forth across Germany armies speaking every tongue of Europe, locked in a confused, interminable struggle. They fought to advance national aims, personal ambitions, warring ideologies. Towards the last they fought because they did not know how to stop fighting, like automata in a ghastly nightmare. Scholars are still arguing over the cost of that war, whether it reduced the population of Germany by two-thirds, or only by less than half, whether it, alone, was responsible for the cultural decline and political and social backwardness of Central Europe thereafter, or whether other causes had been at work, whether Germany might have found national unity and normal development had the war been avoided, or whether disintegration had already gone

too far. In a sense we are still paying, and shall continue to pay the costs of the Thirty Years War. For, not only did it contribute fatally to the barbarization of Germany, but, like all European wars thereafter, it did not end with peace, but with a truce of exhaustion and a rearrangement of frontiers which held the seeds of future wars.

It is strange that, until now, there has been no good, compact history of the Thirty Years War available in English. There is, now. One is tempted to say that Miss Wedgwood's book not only supersedes anything else of its kind in English, but is probably the best short history of the Thirty Years War in any language. It is based upon an astonishing command of the printed sources, which have been so thoroughly reworked that it is in the best sense of the word an original contribution to history. It manages to be critical, judicial, well balanced, without sacrificing for a moment force, interest, excitement; an impressive demonstration that history can still be written soundly for the general reading public. Its narrative pages recapture the action and suspense of battles and intrigues, its sketches of personalities are vivid and incisive, yet the movement of the whole story is never lost in inviting byways. Her power to convey clearly and justly the broad outlines of confusing situations and to preserve the reader's sense of proportion in the midst of details marks Miss Wedgwood as a historian in the great tradition. The format of the book is worthy of its content. There are maps and many well reproduced illustrations, an intelligent supplementary bibliography of the most recent literature, and a good index. This is a book which specialists cannot afford to neglect and which the general reader will be glad to own.

## Maritime New York

*THE RISE OF NEW YORK PORT, 1815-1860.* By Robert Greenhalgh Albion. With the collaboration of Jessie Barnes Pope. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1939. \$3.75.

Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS

THIS handsomely-illustrated volume shows how interesting and illuminating the best kind of economic history can be made. At bottom it is a masterly piece of analysis; a study of just how commercial, financial, and social forces combined to raise New York in a single generation to undisputed primacy among American ports. But it is as picturesque and readable a narrative as Morison's "Maritime History of Massachusetts." Beginning with the year in which New Yorkers enthusiastically welcomed peace with England by a great dinner and celebration, and in which Europe gained a return to normal pursuits at Waterloo, and ending with Lincoln's election on the eve of the Civil War, the book covers a long list of striking developments. Packet lines to Europe were established, and lines of steamers followed; the Erie Canal was opened, stimulating Western trade with the Atlantic; the Sound became a great waterway; Southern commerce was developed by the "cotton triangle"; by brig and schooner Cuba and the other Caribbean islands poured their sugar, molasses, and tobacco into the city; other lines brought Plata hides and Rio sugar from South America; with the Irish famine and the failure of the German revolution a great immigrant traffic sprang up; and after the discovery of gold New York was linked to California by some of the fastest clippers in existence. It is a story wide in scope and rich in color. Dr. Albion has made the most of its economic significance, but he has not neglected any of its literary opportunities.

The main thesis of his crowded and panoramic book is that the origins of New York's supremacy as a port go back a little earlier than has usually been supposed, and that the causes are decidedly more complex. It will not do merely to say that the Erie Canal accomplished it. DeWitt Clinton did not finish his big ditch until 1825; and Dr. Albion boldly states that it was the preceding decade, 1815-25, which determined that New York would outstrip all other seaports. The city's primacy has always lain in importing rather than exporting. When the Napoleonic Wars closed, British manufacturers hastened to dump their wares in America via New York; and while this wholesale marketing at low prices was ruinous to many American manufacturers, it yielded New York shippers rich gains. As important as any other element was the creation of the "cotton triangle," giving New York command of a large share of the South's commercial activ-

ity. In the fifties the Southerners, trying belatedly to create a direct trade from their own ports, declared that the New Yorkers and their associates were taking forty cents out of every dollar that Europe paid for the staple.

Dr. Albion does not confine himself to wharves and decks. In two absorbing chapters, "Merchant Princes" and "Within the Counting House," he describes the leaders whose brains and enterprise made New York's supremacy possible, and analyzes some of their methods of making a profit. Most of the names are familiar to those who have studied any maritime history—Griswold, Howland, Goodhue, Preserved Fish, Anson G. Phelps, the Grinnells, the Lows, and the Tappans. They were the solid men of the city, and they created a society based on character and flavored by culture which is well described in those two classics, Philip Hone's "Diary" and Dayton's "Last Knickerbocker Days of New York." Dr. Albion does the fine qualities of these great shippers and merchants full justice. An equally interesting chapter, "The East River Yards," tells how the New York ships were designed, built, and equipped in such great yards as that of Henry Eckford, of Isaac Webb (who trained Donald McKay of clipper ship fame), Christian Bergh, and the Brown brothers. So famous did the best yards become that both European and Latin-American nations turned to them before the Civil War for the construction of frigates.

This is an unusually well-planned and carefully wrought volume, packed with the fruits of research, touching a wide variety of topics, and yet without a dull page. Some of its chapters (that, for example, on New York and the demand for ship-subsidies, and that on the immigration business) merely open up large topics which are worth books in themselves; but taken in relation to its aim, the book shows no lack of thoroughness. The publishers have illustrated it with a wealth of attractive maritime prints and un-hackneyed portraits.

## Expert in Sea Strategy

*MAHAN: The Life and Work of Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, U.S.N. By Captain W. D. Puleston, U.S.N. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939. \$4.*

Reviewed by R. ERNEST DUPUY,  
MAJOR, F.A.

**I**N the midst of international turmoil the great gray ships of the Fleet have scurried back to "normal operating areas" off the Pacific coast. A fleet in being—an undivided naval fighting force, epitome of sea power—stands guardian of high seas areas vital to defense of the United States. Due acknowledgment, this, to the judgment and farsightedness of a modest, reserved, American Naval officer dead almost a quarter-century.

Alfred Thayer Mahan, the man who made the world conscious of sea power, the man most responsible—with the assistance of Theodore Roosevelt—for the present higher strategic education of our naval officers, is being widely quoted today by a generation which never knew him in the flesh. It is fitting that another Navy man has chosen this moment to bring out an interesting biography of the officer to whom the United States Navy owes so much.

The art of war, whether on land, on water or in the air, is ruled by certain basic principles. This Mahan realized as result of intense study and omnivorous reading, and this he preached through his lifetime. Captain Puleston has brought to life, with sympathetic treatment, the man behind those voluminous tomes, "The In-

fluence of Sea Power upon History" and "The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire," best known products of Mahan's prolific pen. We see him through the author's eyes as a sensitive, reserved thinker, combining with the iron severity of the quarter-deck and the salty gumption of the deep-water navigator an unusual capacity for analytic research. A sensitivity of honor, inherited perhaps from the rigid precepts of Thayer, through his father, was to cause him both heartburns and tranquility — the former from Annapolis Days when he insisted on reporting classmates for infractions of regulations, the latter in his closing years as he gazed back on a career without reproach.

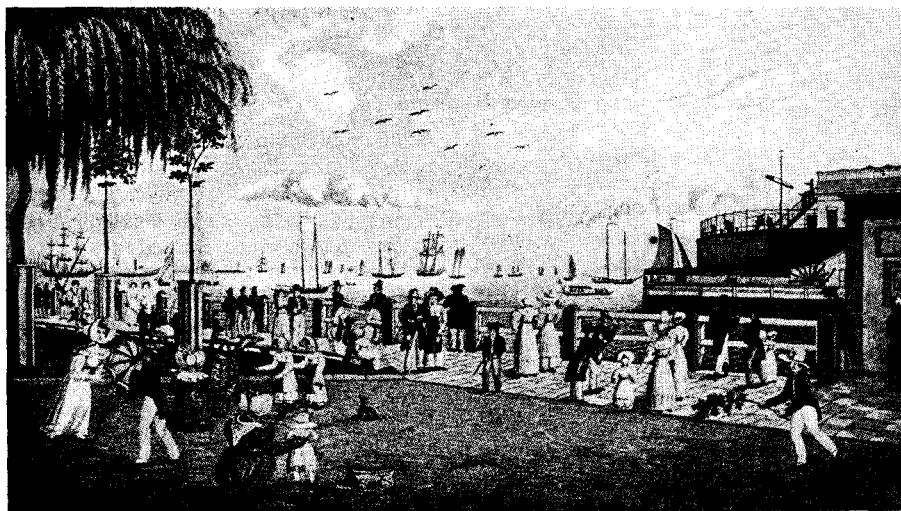
One reads with interest that in 1861 Passed Midshipman Mahan presented to the Assistant Secretary of the Navy a confidential plan to decoy Confederate sea raiders: "... A sailing ship . . . might be equipped with a heavy pivot gun and a light house built over it . . . which could not excite suspicion. . . ." A contemptuous silence rewarded the youngster's efforts. But fifty-four years later the British Navy used similar mystery ships—"Q boats," to decoy German submarines!

As his War College lectures and subsequent literary efforts gained him kudos here and abroad, with such disciples as Theodore Roosevelt, the Kaiser, and the hierarchy of French and British naval command, Mahan in his own service suffered to some degree the usual fate of prophets at home. Part of this Captain Puleston attributes to petty jealousy, part to shortsightedness of superiors who could not see the advantages of a Naval War College. Captain Mahan's cruise to Europe in command of the U.S.S. *Chicago*, 1893-95, with Rear Admiral Henry Erben, one of his critics, flying his flag on board in charge of this "one-ship squadron," was perhaps the most aggravating incident of this petty persecution. Erben, with nothing to do but criticize the ship's commander, kept things hot. On the other hand, wherever the *Chicago* went dignitaries outdid themselves to honor his literary second in command. A happy ship the *Chicago* must have been on that cruise!

It's a good yarn, well spun, of a man whose stature increases as the years go by. Good reading by itself, it is in addition a splendid complement to Harold and Margaret Sprout's recent "Rise of American Naval Power."



Mahan in 1894



New York harbor from the Battery (about 1850)