

of our population which we have come to consider as distinctly American. The catalogue reflects their conservatism, their unwillingness to pay out hard-earned money for that which does not serve some useful purpose, their quickness to resent their being taken advantage of, and their ready appreciation of help when given.

It is this kind of people the catalogue reaches, and their ways of living and thinking are indelibly imprinted on its engaging pages—pored over in several million homes by moist-fingered children, gingham-aproned housewives, and elderly people whose eyes are not as good as they used to be, and for whom we respectfully recommend the "Old Folks Bible, printed in large clear type at \$1.98."

Black Thunder

DRUMS AT DUSK. By Arna Bontemps.
New York: The Macmillan Company.
1939. \$2.50.

Reviewed by C. D. ABBOTT

THE Negro insurrection in colonial Santo Domingo was a significant accompaniment to the French Revolution. The Creole planters had succumbed to a luxury that was peculiarly effete. Regarding their paradise as too far distant from the horrors of Paris to be seriously affected, they basked in their self-importance, while the slaves, who vastly outnumbered them, grew intoxicated upon liberty, equality, and fraternity. Suddenly the storm broke, and its violence made even the atrocities of the Terror seem mild.

Mr. Bontemps is an American Negro who has seen in that Haitian cataclysm a story that is vitally pertinent to the history of his race, and he has developed it into a novel which is a signal contribution to Negro literature. He is not without an understanding sympathy for the more far-sighted of the island aristocrats, whose characters he develops almost with tenderness, but among the planters they were an impotent minority lost in the crowd of selfish, grasping men whose tyranny knew no limits. These he pursues with relentless and very effective irony. It is, however, with the blacks themselves that he is most dramatically successful. He has been able to present them as a vast, undifferentiated mass, a seething horde of misused animals who at last can bear no more and who rise more like a flood than an army. And then out of the mass comes the exceptional figure, the Toussaint, the hero who can, perhaps, direct the whirlwind. It is a gripping story from start to finish because its matter is vital and important. Even its many faults, of which a spasmodically fumbling style and a stern insistence upon visceral shudders are the worst, cannot obscure its passionate honesty.

The Caliban of Reconstruction

THADDEUS STEVENS, THE SINISTER PATRIOT. By Alphonse B. Miller. New York: Harper & Bros. 1939. \$4.

Reviewed by GEORGE FORT MILTON

ONE strange thing about war is that the great leaders of the battlefield eventually become imbued with the zeal for peace; while the politicians in the legislative halls miles from the front become more and more consumed with the corrosive hates.

Certainly such was the case in Washington during the Civil War and Reconstruction. The gentleness with which Grant received Lee's surrender, the commiserative spirit with which Sherman met Joe Johnston, were conspicuous by their absence from the leadership of the Congress that had the opportunity to



"Old Thad Stevens—a lusty hater, a champion of invective; a man with naught but contempt for his foes" . . .

make peace a blessing but instead made it a curse.

At the head of the Congressional battalion of death was Old Thad Stevens—a lusty hater, a champion of invective, a man with naught but bitterness and contempt for his foes. It is of this man, the Caliban of Reconstruction, that Alphonse B. Miller has written his book. To the adjective of his sub-title—the sinister patriot—none could make objection, although many may doubt the noun.

And yet one thing must be said about Thad Stevens. For all his clubfoot and his twisted heart, and his mind full of malice and his tongue full of venom, he was the greatest parliamentary leader the United States has ever known.

Once I was talking with Senator Borah about the great parliamentary leaders of remembered history: William Pitt, Charles James Fox, Gladstone, Disraeli, Parnell, the French Revolutionary triad of Robespierre, Danton, and Marat. Among Americans, Fisher Ames was

mentioned, John Randolph of Roanoke, Daniel Webster, and Henry Clay. But we were agreed that, so far as the ability of a legislative leader to coerce an unwilling group of men into obedience to his will was involved, Thad Stevens was probably the greatest of them all.

The author recognizes this fact and makes the most of it. This reviewer is in disagreement with many of his attitudes toward Reconstruction. He almost adopts Stevens's tone toward Andrew Johnson, whose chief sin as President was that he believed in making peace something other than a curse for the prostrate South. But be this as it may, the book is well written, its style has movement, pungency, and occasionally delightful satire. Furthermore, Mr. Miller does not insist upon making Old Thad anything other than what he was. He paints him as of the earth more than earthy. And he stands out as an extraordinary man.

Thad Stevens's career was strangely disproportioned. Born in 1792, he was in his late fifties before he came upon the national stage. He first sat in the House which passed the Compromise of 1850; he last sat in the House which prosecuted the impeachment of the President of the United States. Until the war broke out, his House service was active, bitter, not particularly controlling. By the time of Antietam, however, Stevens was forging his way to the control of the House.

So it was that he worked with Henry Winter Davis in opposition to Lincoln's Reconstruction policies. And when Johnson, the Plebeian patriot from Tennessee, took Lincoln's place, and soon began to want to follow Lincoln's policies of restoration, Old Thad was immediately at war. No sooner had Congress opened in December, 1865, than Stevens spiked the Johnsonian gun. And from then until impeachment's failure there was hardly a legislative day in which this grim old warrior did not denounce "the traitor in the White House." In fact, I think he died not from disease, although he was sore afflicted. I think he died from a broken heart because impeachment failed.

My own sympathies are with the group of Moderates who, if they had won, could have saved the South and the nation many years of needless sectional bitterness. And yet I prefer Thad Stevens to the egregiously God-like Sumner, or the leering Ben Butler, buffoon as well as "Beast," or the sanctimonious John Sherman, or any other of the weirdly motted Radical tribe. For there was no cant about Old Thad—he did not pretend, he did not pose, he did not lie. Loving seldom, lusty often, he made no bones about it. Gambling with a passion, he proclaimed it. Property—except in slaves—was his god, and he boasted of it. For all his sins, he knew how to command his fellows. And he had a number one mind.

George Fort Milton, editor of the *Chatanooga News*, is the author of "The Age of Hate."

Romantic Record of Empire

THE MANILA GALLEON. By William Lytle Schurz. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1939. \$6.

Reviewed by GARRETT MATTINGLY

FOR two hundred and fifty years from 1565 to 1815 there came annually into the deep landlocked harbor of Acapulco, two hundred miles by winding mountain roads from Mexico City, one or more high-sided Spanish galleons from across the lonely Pacific. They came laden with the goods of the Orient, especially the silks of China, and returned freighted with those pesos of Mexican silver which rapidly became the standard currency of the farther East. The whole trading community of Manila lived by the profits of this annual voyage, and the Spanish dominions in the Philippines were bound to the great empire of Spain solely by this one slender thread. No other regular navigation, surely, was ever so full of perils, yet no other line of ships known to history lasted so long. The story of the Manila galleons must be among the strangest and most romantic of the records of empire.

In this book it is competently told. A historical introduction provides enough general history of the Philippines to keep the reader straight, and then follow topical chapters, each on a chronological framework and with surprisingly little repetition, describing the trade in the Orient with China and Japan, India and the Spice Isles, the dangerous navigation itself and the ships and men that made it, the competitors who menaced it, and the destination of the wares. The list of these last reads like a manifest of Sinbad's show, and their carriage entailed fighting and hairbreadth adventure enough to supply a whole school of historical novelists; but though rich in these,

this book does not neglect soberer details. How the trade was regulated, how the ships were built and manned, most of the questions we would ask are answered as fully and precisely as the materials permit. Besides utilizing an immense amount of printed matter, Mr. Schurz has dug into the *Archivo de Indias* at Seville for fresh and welcome information, and written a book not only for the general reader but for the student of economic history also.

That being so, it is a pity that the student gets so little help towards using it. This book deserves to reach the general reader for whom it is designed—I hope it reaches him in thousands—but is he really so skittish as to be hopelessly repelled by a few footnotes? Eight pages are filled with a list of documents examined; such lists, without some indication of what new material the documents offer, are of no use to anybody except as evidence of the author's industry. The bibliography heaps together more than three hundred publications, some of them in scores of volumes, without distinguishing those which have provided a quaint phrase or served to verify a single fact, from those which have yielded the substance of a dozen pages; without discriminating between the indispensable and the relatively worthless, or offering a word of criticism as to which books should be consulted for which topics. In other words the only way to check Mr. Schurz's interpretations or his fresh contributions is to do his work all over again. This book is the result of considerable scholarship; it's too bad that a prejudice about the limitations of the popular reader should have denied it its proofs. It's about time that American authors and publishers combined to persuade the general reader to take the necessary scholarly apparatus without gagging. He may not be so squeamish as they think.



Dr. S. Josephine Baker

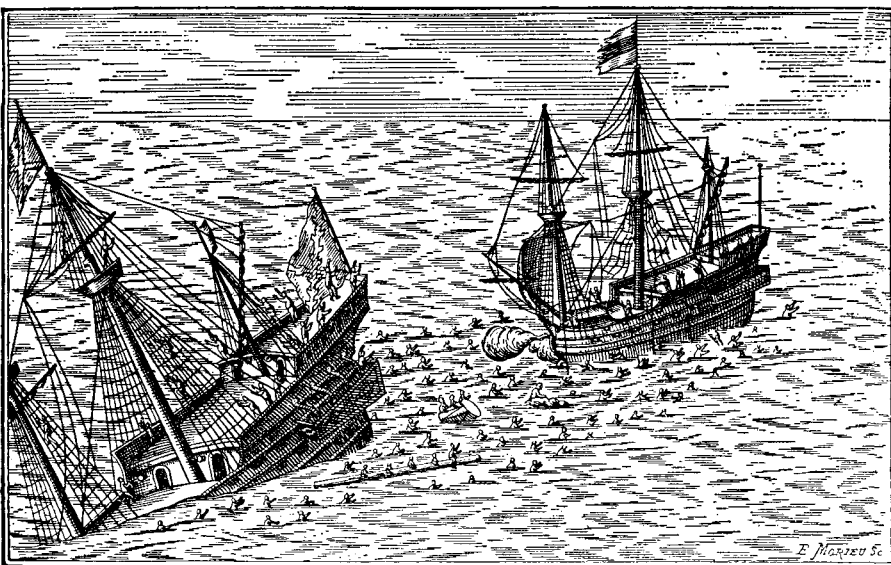
Campaigner for Child Health

FIGHTING FOR LIFE. By S. Josephine Baker, M.D. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1939. \$2.75.

Reviewed by MABEL S. ULRICH, M.D.

DR. JOSEPHINE BAKER, as everyone knows—or should—was the first person to inject the health of children into practical politics. Under her directorship the Bureau of Child Hygiene—the first in the world—was established in New York City in 1909. For thirty years through changing administrations, she concentrated all her energies on organizing and extending New York's child-saving campaign, impartially loyal to Tammany or "reform" mayors and commissioners, asking only that they aid and abet her work. She retired only when every state in the Union had a child bureau of its own, modeled after her set-up, and when the appalling number of infant deaths had been reduced two-thirds. Her autobiography is largely the story of those thirty years. It is the bracing tale of how one woman, armed chiefly with common-sense and courage, conducted and won a fight against great odds, and emerged without a trace of rancor or intolerance, and with her sense of humor intact.

Dr. Baker went into medicine with none of the "fancy" and sentimental ideas so rampant among career women in the 90's. Born into a happy, well-to-do family in Poughkeepsie, she had seventeen gay, carefree years before she was suddenly confronted with the necessity of earning a living. Her description of those girlhood years will awaken many a nostalgic pang in readers of her "age group." After her graduation from the now extinct Woman's Medical College, under teachers who will always be revered by women physicians, she interned in Boston, and then hung out her shingle in New York. Her first year brought her exactly \$185. Economic determinism was responsible for starting her on her career. She passed the Civil Service examinations, and became a



Engagement between a Spanish Galleon and a Dutch ship.