

Americana. *A man who sets out to write a serious book on American history is undertaking a formidable task. If he is to succeed, he must bring to his work, besides literary skill, patience and fortitude sufficient to carry him through years of examining and analyzing the sources. A book like those reviewed below may have been started long before the Munich Pact, yet not reach publication until the world is debating the likelihood of a Russo-American war. If the writer has chosen for his subject some fundamental aspect of our heritage and has done his research and writing well, his work will have pertinency whenever it is completed. One of this week's books is the beginning of Dumas Malone's biography of Thomas Jefferson, which may well become the definitive life of the apostle of our democracy.*

"Disciple of Enlightenment"

JEFFERSON THE VIRGINIAN. By Dumas Malone. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1948. 484 pp. \$6.

Reviewed by
THOMAS J. WERTENBAKER

NOW that the long expected first volume of Professor Malone's "Jefferson and His Time" has appeared the public will not be disappointed. "Jefferson the Virginian" is interesting, scholarly, moderate in its judgments, the product of long delving into both secondary and primary sources, sound in its interpretations.

The task of organization, always difficult for the biographer, has been skilfully handled. Assuming that the reader is acquainted with the outline of American history, the author touches upon the march of events no more than is necessary to explain the part Jefferson played in them. The treatment is topical, for Jefferson's ancestry, his youth, his education, his career as a lawyer, his marriage, etc., are taken up in succession. But these topics are themselves in chronological order.

Some biographers encounter a difficult problem in the paucity and incompleteness of source material. But the student of Thomas Jefferson is embarrassed with riches—letters, reports, pamphlets, county records, state records, national records, newspapers, account books. Not only does it take years to go through Jefferson's own writings and what others wrote about him, but to separate the essential from the unessential, to portray in strong colors the major characteristics of the man. To emphasize the part he played in major events, while discarding minor matters, requires a practised hand. The author has attained success in large part by avoiding the mistake, only too common with biographers, of following the day-by-

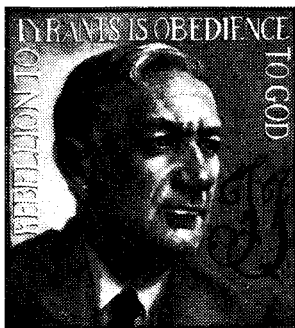
day doings of the man about whom they are writing, and so obscuring main events in a mass of detail.

The style, though not polished, is dignified and yet light enough to attract the average reader. It has none of the flippancy which has marred some American biographies and which, instead of humanizing the great men about whom they were written, has only too often produced mere caricatures. Professor Malone's writing has, also, the cardinal virtue of clarity. It is this which explains in part why the

interest is sustained throughout, why the reader when he takes up the volume is reluctant to lay it down until he has reached the last page.

Dr. Malone's work is marked by saneness and moderation. At no time does he resort to exaggeration to give the impression that he has discovered hitherto unknown facts or evolved new interpretations; at no time does he distort the truth to make it fit some preconceived theory. But under his pen Jefferson comes alive. We see the outer man, large, awkward, sandy-haired, shy; we are shown the workings of his mind with its intense curiosity, its longing for new ideas; we wonder at the capacity of the youth, as well as the man, for unremitting, methodical work: we join with him in his social enjoyments, seeing not the frontier bumpkin whom some writers have depicted, but the polished gentleman; we look on as he listens to words of wisdom from his beloved teachers, William Small and George Wythe, and from his friend Francis Fauquier, the erudite and accomplished lieutenant-governor of Virginia.

Perhaps Professor Malone could not have given us so fascinating a picture of Jefferson the youth and explained so convincingly the influence of environment in shaping his character, had not he, himself, been so intimately acquainted with the Piedmont region. Surely he must have



THE AUTHOR: Dumas Malone promised himself twenty years ago—while teaching history at the University of Virginia—that some day he would chronicle Jefferson. The impetus was partly the aftermath of his doctorate on a Colonial contemporary, Thomas Cooper, but overwhelmingly his sentimentality about Virginia—while claiming everything Southern as home from his Mississippi birthplace to the Potomac. His forebears were pre-Revolutionary Americans, dominantly Scotch and English, notwithstanding French-Huguenot and Irish strains which identify him. Until 1943, when the Rockefeller Foun-

dation and University of Virginia gave him the go-ahead, six months' concentration on his goal was all he could spare from the latter's faculty, Yale, the Dictionary of American Biography, and Harvard University Press. With the last two he spent seven years apiece, respectively as editor and director, acquiring administrative distinction and a distaste for pedantry, topic of some spirited scoldings. "I don't see why professors can't be interesting and scholarly. An editor's job is to comb an author's hair, tie his tie, and brush his clothes." Despite having godfathered two Pulitzer Prize winners and the satisfaction of seeing musical works encouraged at Harvard, it got to be "too much business.... Office routine is intolerable." Now, at last, with only one class at Columbia's Graduate School of Political Science, he can indulge to his heart's delight in Jefferson. It takes at least two years per volume, with three more to go. There are interim excursions to the Library of Congress, and speeches ("I love to make speeches!")—on history, literature, and the South, which "has gotten better, although all its problems call for greater patience.... The mind of man does not move fast." Dr. Malone has gray hair, a ruddy complexion, bantering blue-green eyes. His manner is direct and comfortable. "My greatest escapes," he says, "are music—a recent thing with me—and historical research. Just think of the opportunity of getting really acquainted with Benjamin Franklin!"

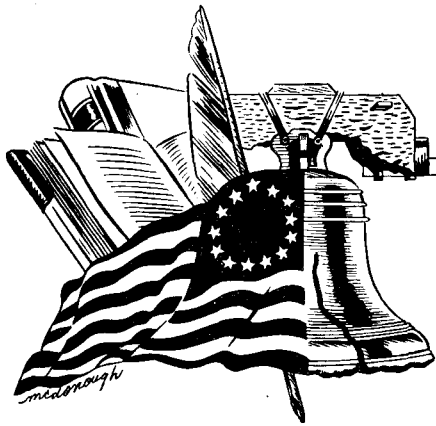
—R. G.

stood on Jefferson's "little mountain" when he wrote: "His eye, like his mind, sought an extended view. From this spot he could see to the eastward an expanse of forested country, rolling like the sea; and to the westward he could look across the treetops to a mountain wall of lavender and blue."

The author has profited, also, by the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg, for had not the Wren Building, the Raleigh Tavern, the Court House Green, the Palace, Bruton Parish Church reappeared in all their former beauty and charm, it would have been impossible to picture so vividly Jefferson's activities as a student at William and Mary, or as a burgess, or as war governor of Virginia.

In recounting Jefferson's part in the events leading to the Revolution, Professor Malone believes that he, like the other patriots, was concerned almost exclusively over the threat to American liberty. The Virginians had for decades governed themselves through their representatives in the House of Burgesses; they were determined not to submit when the British Government tried to undermine their assembly by taxing them without its consent. Unlike some historians, who try to interpret the Revolution in such a way as to make it accord with the theory of economic determinism, Professor Malone takes Jefferson at his word when he says "our attachment to no nation upon earth should supplant our attachment to liberty," and when he urges the people "to preserve that liberty which he [our Creator] committed to us in sacred deposit."

The author very properly emphasizes that it was at an early age that Jefferson made his declaration of intellectual independence. There is no way of knowing just when this apostle of freedom first swore hostility against every form of tyranny over



the mind of man. But when a very young man he arrived at his abiding conviction that human intelligence can unlock, not only the treasure houses of the past, but also the secrets of the universe. Jefferson was not irreligious, and in his later years he found in the teachings of Jesus "the purest system of morals ever before preached to man." But against the dominance of the clergy over men's minds or bodies, he waged unceasing war. "Disciple of Enlightenment," Professor Malone calls him.

All who are interested in American history will look forward to the appearance of the remaining volumes of "Jefferson and His Time." If "Jefferson the Democrat," "Jefferson the President," and "Jefferson the Sage" maintain the high level of merit set in "Jefferson the Virginian," the completed work will no doubt take its place among the standard American biographies.

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A Spectacular Revolt

PONTIAC AND THE INDIAN UPRISING. By Howard H. Peckham. Princeton: The Princeton University Press. 1947. 346 pp. \$4.50.

Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS

IF not the greatest of Indian chieftains, the fiery Ottawa leader Pontiac at any rate organized the greatest of the red men's revolts against the whites. The seizure of full continental authority in North America by the British in 1763 seemed to place the savage tribes, hitherto courted by the warring French and English, at the mercy of the conqueror. General Amherst did not know enough about the Indians to treat them magnanimously; the British authorities did not — perhaps could not — keep in peace all the promises they had made in war. With four tribes at his back, Pontiac rose in a spasmodic attempt to regain the lost independence of action and obtain better terms for his people. He captured three of the Western forts, besieged two more, and harried the border country. Then, as the British gathered superior forces, the sieges of Detroit and Fort Pitt were raised, and Pontiac was compelled to yield. But he surrendered with honor, and became a valued ally of the crown.

This story, as told long ago in Parkman's immortal prose, has never ceased to fascinate students of border history and the Indian. But if Parkman brought to it an unmatched pen, he lacked a complete knowledge of Pontiac's rising, and at one vital point went wholly astray. Mr. Peckham has used many manuscripts which were unavailable to his predecessor. He is thus able to give a more complete biography of Pontiac; to add much vivid new detail to the record of his bloody revolt and the means by which Gladwin, Bouquet, and other royal officers suppressed it; and dispel Parkman's mistaken idea that Pontiac headed a carefully-organized conspiracy embracing the whole West. Instead, Pontiac's attack was restricted, and the other tribes rose spontaneously. Mr. Peckham also sheds much fresh light on the trading conditions in the West, on Indian weapons and strategy, and on the psychology of the savages. His second chapter, describing the daily life of the Ottawa villages, is worthy of Parkman himself. Altogether, he has produced a book which, while pleasantly modest in style, is a permanently useful addition to the historical literature of the Indian, the Old Northwest, and the last years of British rule south of the Great Lakes.

Above the Dream

By Mae Winkler Goodman

UPON the pale periphery of sleep,
Against the narrow boundary of the night
The mind sinks into darkness, yet will keep
A slender grasp on the receding light.
Suspended there above the dream and waking,
Between two continents, it half discerns
Beyond the rim of sleep, the dawn's thin breaking;
A backward shore to which not one returns.

No closer can we move to life and death,
Midway between the coming and the going,
Struggling above the foam, yet half beneath,
Swept in the current of the tide's long flowing.
Here, and but briefly, we may trace the arc
Of time, from dark to light, to utter dark!