

Americana. *How many of you heard Russell Conwell deliver his famous Chautauqua lecture, "Acres of Diamonds"? "Money is power," thundered Dr. Conwell, "money has power. This is a wonderfully great life, and you ought to spend your time getting money, because of the power there is in money. Now, when a man could have been rich just as well, and he is now weak because he is poor, he has done some great wrong; he has been untruthful to himself; he has been unkind to his fellow men. . . ." Dr. Conwell spoke the values of the victorious, expanding, booming North in the money-grabbing days after the Civil War. The defeated South, left to struggle to its feet again in agrarian isolation, is only now coming into its own.*

Chautauqua—American Phenomenon

WE CALLED IT CULTURE. By Victoria Case and Robert Ormond Case. New York: Doubleday & Co. 1948. 272 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by HERBERT ASBURY

IN THE gaudy debunking days of the 1920's and the early 1930's, one of the favorite targets of the bright young men who wrote for Mr. Mencken's *American Mercury* and its imitators was Chautauqua. They derided it as the apogee of banality, the playground of yokels, and a sort of intellectual soothing syrup especially prepared for the Bible Belt. Their strictures were true enough as far as they went, for some aspects of Chautauqua, especially in its latter years, were certainly banal enough for anybody. But they presented only one side of a many-sided movement. Here in this fine book is the whole picture of Chautauqua, a thorough, well-written, and competently-organized account of an American phenomenon which is without parallel elsewhere in the world. It could be read with profit and enjoyment by every American who is interested in the cultural development of his country, and some twenty million of our citizens could read it with nostalgic affection. There are at least that many who will remember the great days when, from a Chautauqua platform, they heard their first good music, saw their first production of a great play, and listened in awe while prominent men and women lecturers brought to the small towns, for the first time, a general knowledge of the vast outside world.

The truth is that Chautauqua was a cultural force of considerable importance. As the Cases put it,

Chautauqua was rooted in a thirst for knowledge. At first it was religious knowledge, but the horizon soon broadened to encompass

all the arts. It was a tradition that remained unshaken to the end. Even in her shoddy later days, when she descended to the noisy level of the vaudeville circuit, Chautauqua never completely laid aside her trappings of respectability or failed in her virtuous duty to "uplift" and "inspire." . . . Before Chautauqua there was scarcely such a thing as adult education, but before the movement collapsed extension courses, summer schools, and correspondence study had spread throughout the country, all more or less based upon the patterns originated when Chautauqua was founded in upstate New York in 1874.

All this uplift, knowledge, and inspiration were poured out to millions of Americans every summer—in 1924, the peak year, an estimated thirty-five million people heard Chautauqua in 12,000 towns—by men and women who were either important then or have since become so. Many got their start on the Chautauqua platform. Carl Akeley and Vilhjalmar Stefansson, noted explorers, were circuit regulars; and so were Drew Pearson, whose father managed the Swarthmore circuits; Robert M. La Follette, Senator George Norris, Senator Alben Barkley, Al Smith, Eugene V. Debs, William Howard Taft, Herbert Hoover, Vice-President Thomas R. Marshall, Champ Clark, Edna Ferber, Stephen Leacock, Walter Lippmann, James Whitcomb Riley, Irvin S. Cobb, Winston Churchill, Prince William of Sweden, and Ida M. Tarbell.

And, of course, those remarkable standbys William Jennings Bryan, the Silver-Tongued Orator; and Dr. Russell H. Conwell, whose "Acres of Diamonds" was the most famous of all inspirational lectures. Bryan never changed his tune, and had few assets save his Voice, but for more than twenty-five years he was the best drawing-card the lecture platform has

ever known; he was "good for forty acres of parked Fords anywhere, at any time of the day or night." Dr. Conwell delivered "Acres of Diamonds," which is printed in the Case book as an appendix, 6,000 times at fees ranging from \$150 to \$500. The proceeds of his platform appearances should have made him a multimillionaire but he disapproved of inherited riches and great accumulations of wealth, and he practised what he preached. With a part of his huge income he put hundreds of poor boys through college; with the remainder he founded Temple University and Samaritan Hospital in Philadelphia.

Chautauqua meant music and the drama, too, in thousands of small towns and villages where the theatre had always been considered a device of the devil; and where the only music heard was that provided by the village band, the parlor organs, the fiddlers at the country dances, and an occasional gramophone record. The anti-drama barriers were broken down gradually, and Chautauqua was finally able to present full-fledged performances of plays and light operas. There were no anti-music barriers to demolish; the people were starved for music. And mostly they wanted good music; famous singers, bands, and orchestras traveled the circuits every year. Selections most frequently requested by Chautauqua audiences in 1921 for instance, included compositions by Beethoven, Rubenstein, Dvorak, Wagner, Handel, and Mendelssohn. It is true that some of this music is now considered old hat, but just compare it with the jangling discords that fill the air today.

This book should prove of great value to students of the American scene. It is surprising that it hasn't been written before. But it is fortunate that the task of writing it fell into the Cases' capable hands.

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 724)

MACKAYE:
LINCOLN CENTENARY ODE*

God give us

.....
such as breathe
Still of the trail, the redwood,
and the ranch,
.....

And cities where the stars can
still look in
And leave their benediction;
common men
Kindled by Nature's awe to
contemplation
And by her goads to courage.

*Delivered Feb. 1909 at The Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences, Academy of Music, Brooklyn.

Cultural Entity

THE SOUTH OLD AND NEW: A History, 1820-1947. By Francis Butler Simkins. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1948. 527 pp. \$6.

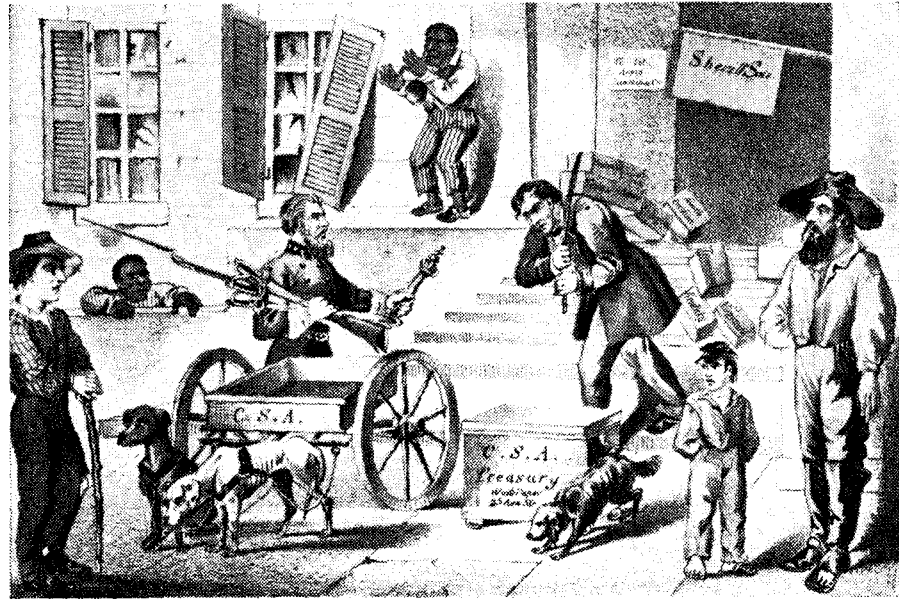
Reviewed by NANCY H. MACLENNAN

THE PURPOSE of this book is to trace the political and social traits that make the thirteen Southern states of this nation "a cultural province conscious of its identity." To do this, the author focuses on the years 1820 through 1947, analyzing the Southland in terms of race, politics, religion, education, art, war and peace, economics, and code. His Southern picture is panoramic, ranging from Communism to the TVA. He has summoned a host of witnesses to attest this picture, witnesses who are identified in footnotes and bibliography, who all but tell Dr. Simkins's history for him. Several well-selected illustrations and maps contribute to the work.

Dr. Simkins, who has written or co-authored four other important books on the South, has achieved in this latest one an effect more dynamic than the avowed academic purpose. To depict the South as a self-conscious cultural entity, if not as a living kind of regional being, perhaps, was a relatively easy assignment for Dr. Simkins. An associate professor of history at the Virginia State Teachers College, Dr. Simkins was born in South Carolina and is descended from an early Southern family. The impact of his newest book lies not in the excellence of his regional portrait but in the political interest that he arouses.

Pervading Dr. Simkins's book is his conception of the Southerner as a unique and self-contained American type, indeed the only "complete soul" our variegated, multi-national society has created. In such characteristics as the Southerner's belief in white supremacy he has not changed in the last 127 years, Dr. Simkins writes. With statistics and significant detail, he brings to life the nineteenth-century plantation, the slave system, the Civil War, the Reconstruction, the modern Negro, and the South's economic growing-pains; its loyalty to states' rights, its peculiar chivalry, its aristocracy, its piety, and its prejudice. Within the framework of this legend emerges a realistic procession of famous individual Southerners: Robert E. Lee, Jefferson Davis, Booker T. Washington, Huey Long, John Nance Garner, James F. Byrnes, and many, many others.

Objectivity is Dr. Simkins's key stylistic talent. Although he is a



—The Bettmann Archive.

General Moving Day in Richmond, Va. [May 1, 1865]: "If they had been wise enough to give the best-educated Negroes the vote, if . . . if . . . if . . ."

Southerner, and one who lost a grandfather in the Civil War, the author avoids sentimentality in his moving summary of General Lee's surrender to General Grant at Appomattox. In his chapter on Southern literature, Dr. Simkins X-rays the success of Margaret Mitchell's "Gone with the Wind," and finds, coincidentally, that here, too, "objectivity does not surrender to sentimentality." Generally, the author seems fair—with one notable exception. Those who regard the memory of President Lincoln as something more or less sacred may be profoundly shocked by Dr. Simkins's suggestion that the Great Emancipator was really a "double-talking" war-monger.

Dr. Simkins should have placed more emphasis than he has done on the actual and potential contribution of the South to American welfare, nationally and as to world peace. And he allows himself to be victimized by his own talent for objectivity, which finally recoils on him leaving him without a message or a moral with which to end his book. As an expert on the South, his failure to offer his own answer, or any partial solution, to the Negro problem today is most disappointing, especially since the book wears such a mien of authenticity and authority.

The South is where, at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, the greatest weapon of modern war was forged—the atom bomb. The same South contains America's greatest scientific laboratory for peace. By solving the Negro problem in its own land, the United States Government will be able to speak with real authority in the great human rights cases before the UN.

Controversial Period

THE SOUTH DURING RECONSTRUCTION, 1865-1877. By E. Merton Coulter. Vol. VIII of *A History of the South*. Edited by Wendell Holmes Stephenson and E. Merton Coulter. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press. 1947. 426 pp. \$5.

Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS

THE SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS of the South, which far exceeds that of any other section, finds many expressions—in the fiction of Erskine Caldwell and Eudora Welty, in the defiant interpretations like "I'll Take My Stand" and "The Advancing South," in the books of warning like Gerald Johnson's "The Wasted Land," in Rupert B. Vance's studies in human geography and the economic writings of Broadus Mitchell, in such able sociological works as Arthur F. Raper's "Preface to Peasantry," and in the broad philosophical surveys of Howard W. Odum. No other region, not even New England, has so much reason for self-consciousness. None has had such a separate history, nor such a tragic history. None has had such a persistent and little-changing culture; the South is still mainly agrarian, still mainly Anglo-Saxon, still largely Jeffersonian. No other section has such numerous and terrible problems peculiar to itself. It is right that the South should produce an immense literature upon its special traits, experiences, and perplexities; and we may be grateful that it is a literature full of thrust, color, and

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