

had somehow learned to conduct their war with fair efficiency.

The account of the Mexican campaigns here given is excellent, though what is now our American Southwest is somewhat slighted. The study of national politics is good too, even if little attention is paid to the mounting Freesoil Movement and the angry resentments which gave birth to Van Buren's candidacy in 1848 and the election of a Whig President following the resplendent success of a Democratic President in enlarging the national domain by one-third. Livelier and more compressed than Justin H. Smith or George Lockhart Rives, this volume will replace both for the general reader. Its subtitle is not strictly accurate; the conflict was not a rehearsal for the Civil War so much as a prelude to it. Mr. Bill might have said more of its importance in bringing into the foreground of national life the almost irrepressible conflict between those who were determined to expand slavery, and those who were still more determined to hem it in. But he has produced a capital short history of a neglected part of our national story.

Nearly Everybody

THE ROOSEVELT ERA. Edited by Milton Crane. New York: Boni & Gaer. 1947. 626 pp. \$4.75.

Reviewed by T. V. SMITH

THIS is an anthology with a purpose: "to assemble a coherent and connected group of materials for a social history of the age." The age is that of Franklin Roosevelt. The President, says the editor, "is the hero, rather than the subject, of this book."

Well, nearly everybody's in it. The contributors range in latitude from Walter Lippmann to James Farrell, in longitude from Thurman Arnold to James Thurber. They run all the gamuts of all the emotions from Henry Wallace's broadcast "to the little businessmen of the nation" to Reinhold Niebuhr, who writes "An End to Illusions."

What do all these prove, these and five dozen more of the great and near-great and the not-so-near-great? Whatever one wants proved. That is the good of a generously selected anthology. As Jonathan Daniels says in a diverting foreword:

The pieces . . . put together here, Milton Crane, the editor collected in the exciting understanding that he was letting the period speak for itself in self-pity and self-analysis, in anger and fear, and in comedy as well as courage.

Let the matter go at that.

Liquid Mason-Dixon Line



—From the book jacket.

THE TENNESSEE. The New River: Civil War to TVA. By Donald Davidson. Illustrated by Theresa Sherrier Davidson. New York: Rinehart & Co. 1948. 377 pp. \$3.50.

Reviewed by WILLSON WHITMAN

IN THE "Rivers of America Series" the Tennessee deserves two volumes, one for the old river and a second for the new one that TVA made. But old or new, this liquid Mason-Dixon line is a cantankerous river, bending and twisting to isolate little islands of local prejudice.

In starting his second volume with the Civil War, Mr. Davidson shows a Southern approach to TVA as a continuation of the Yankee power-grab of '61. But for a Southern writer he mercifully compresses the Civil War story, using only a hundred pages to tell a heedless generation how it was that Grant won by building an inland navy on the Tennessee, which was important even though its puny warships could be captured by the cavalry of General Nathan Bedford Forrest.

Recounting the real injustices of reconstruction, the author sees the South as wholly innocent victim, thus missing a chance to explain such manifestations as the Scopes and Scottsboro trials in terms of exhaustion and poverty. Instead, Yankee lawyers Darrow and Leibowitz are still the enemy, and he quotes Burke on the indictment of a people, not against Southern unfairness to the Negro but against Yankee criticism of the South.

Coming to TVA, Mr. Davidson betrays his distaste for the whole program but does, as a conscientious historian, give TVA credit for considerable accomplishment, thus in effect keeping a foot on each bank of the river. This is a representative Southern attitude; as he puts it:

TVA could, and it would and it did, make a new river, and not only a new river but a new river system. The supporters of TVA had reason to exult in that. The transformation was marvelous. Still, it was not ex-

actly the transformation that Tennessee and Alabama might have thought up.

With every admission that TVA did a good job goes a hint that it might have been better, or anyhow credit should go to somebody else—say Senator McKellar or the army engineers. Of the many lawsuits, Mr. Davidson admits that TVA won but he quotes wistfully from corporation counsel. Reporting Congressional hearings of '38, he is accurate in detail—this writer was there too—but his sympathies are with the Republicans who hoped so desperately to find something rotten in the New Deal.

Yet it would be unfair to "The Tennessee" to classify it with other books by Vanderbilt professors which have openly attacked public power. Mr. Davidson avoids the power issue; as an agrarian he seems also to say surprisingly little about farming, although he deplores the flooding of fat bottom lands and doubts the necessity for TVA emphasis on the erosion that was eating away the hills. Complaint that here and there hill farmers still plow corn rows implies both that TVA persuasions to the contrary are sound and that they are not tyrannically compulsive.

It would also be unfair to overlook the vast amount of information that Mr. Davidson has gathered and presents, even when it is against his side. He knows and loves the river. Writing without regional curlicues, with the precision of a professor anywhere, he tells you about the past and present of Shoals mussels and notes that Pickwick Landing was named by a reader of Dickens.

That "The Tennessee" ends with a steamer trip instead of a discussion of the river as a provider of atomic power is to be expected. North or South, many people, like the author, prefer travel to change.

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 722)

HENRY ADAMS:
TO CHARLES W. ELIOT*

I propose that Mr. H. C. Lodge should have a course in U. S. History coterminous with mine. His views being Federalist and conservative have as good a right to expression in the College as mine which tend to democracy and radicalism. [The clash of opinions can hardly fail to stimulate inquiry among the students.]

*Boston, March 2, 1877. H.C.L. had been a student in H. A.'s classes in 1870 and had been one of three to receive the Ph.D., in Political Science, the first offered by Harvard. C.W.E. had been President of Harvard one year.

To Tell the Truth

IRVING BABOW

IT WASN'T announced as a "truth serum." And nobody anticipated the strange effect it would have on the people of the United States.

Originally, it had been developed as a serum for protection against influenza. The research workers made no pretentious claims for it, and indicated cautiously that further experimentation was necessary.

But after a while, all doubts concerning the effectiveness of the serum vanished. So remarkable were its powers against influenza that it was only natural that a law should be passed requiring immediate universal inoculation of the entire population and of all persons entering our country.

Public health officers reported a speedy decline in the incidence of influenza, but there came from all parts of the country indications that the serum injections produced a strange non-toxic effect on the brain. Inhibitory speech controls, stated the medical reports, were broken down so that the individual had to speak truthfully concerning what was "on his mind."

The anti-influenza serum, it turned out, also had properties which, for want of a better term, caused it to be called a "truth serum."

Within a week after the mass inoculations, truth began to pop in little and big explosions from New York to San Francisco.

As Winchell put it—"If Diogenes could return with his lamp for another look-see for an honest gee, he'd find everybody and his uncle—even the Broadway agents and double-talk artists—breaking their necks to tell the truth, pure, simple, and unadulterated."

In the Middle West, Hiram Twohy, a Congressional candidate, speaking at a campaign rally, told his audience:

Anybody with an ounce of brains could see I ain't fit to be elected Congressman and would vote for my opponent, Jim Bradley. Being a good grain salesman and the best horse-shoe pitcher and guitar player this side of the Rockies is no reason to send me to Washington. Now take Jim—there's a man . . .

This refreshing candor was matched by all other aspirants for public office. And accordingly the *Congressional Record* began appearing with many blank pages. A great change was also soon noted in the news-

papers of the country. For instance, the advertising section of the *Chicago Clarion* had this typical store ad:

CLEARANCE SALE of our Shoddy Blankets, unfit for human use. Specially over-priced for this sale, \$10.95, but not worth half the price. Guaranteed to shrink and fall apart after the first washing. Why throw away your money?

The society pages also underwent some modifications. For example, Dolly Francisco, society editor of the *San Francisco Post*, wrote this story on the wedding of Dagmar Duprez to J. Morton Trimble III:

This was probably the most insufferable social event of a very dull season. The bride blushing gave her age as forty-two, but the old battle-axe could have been an eye-witness to the San Francisco Fire. At long last, little Dagmar's folks have got her married off to Morty, the chinless wonder. He couldn't hold down a job as grocery clerk, and will be manager of father-in-law's wholesale grocery firm. At the wedding, where the Duprez mausoleum was too cold and the champagne too warm, the bride looked simply ghastly in her satin gown. The groom wore a harassed expression befitting a condemned man.

The book publishers' blurbs appearing in book sections of newspapers and magazines in their new form could be illustrated by an item like this:

"Eternal Wench" is Elizabeth Kenton's first novel, and all who like literature sincerely hope it's her last. If Lizzie could write one-tenth as well as she rolls her eyes, she'd be a cinch for the Pulitzer and Nobel prizes. If you wonder why a conservative house like ours publishes racy bilge like E. W., just take a look at Kenton's photo and ask yourself what a natural she is for exploitation and cheesecake merchandising. With the promotion campaign we're giving this book, even the Sears Roebuck catalogue would be a best seller.

Broadcasting, too, showed some



new departures. On the program "Hit Tunes of the Week," the orchestra leader Sammy Brine introduced his new song "Moon Madness" with this comment:

Anybody who thinks this is original doesn't know an arpeggio from a glissando. All I did was take a few chords from Tchaikovsky's "None But the Lonely Heart," Brahms' "Lullaby," a Bach fugue, and a dash of Stravinsky's "Sacre du Printemps." What came out is the hodge-podge you'll hear now.

Don Jentzen, the genial announcer on the Johnny Spleen Show, said in giving the commercial:

For the last twelve weeks, I've been paid to make an ass of myself reading the commercials written by the president of the outfit sponsoring this clambake. I've imitated a telegraph, a broken phonograph record, a locomotive, and a laughing hyena. Even a moron wouldn't stand for the hog-wash I've been dishing out, to say nothing of buying the product. I wouldn't touch it myself with a ten-foot pole.

The radio commentators and news analysts presented some innovations in their broadcasts. Typical was the pontifical Dawney Cloose, Jr., who had always spoken with the voice of authority and who now commented:

Today there's more disturbing news on the Trieste crisis. Another day, another crisis. Strictly entre nous, I didn't know where the darn place was until I looked it up in the atlas. And if I hadn't consulted my trusty little encyclopedia before the broadcast, I wouldn't be gabbing now for thirteen minutes on why Trieste is fraught with significance. Instead of wasting your time listening to this yapping, why don't you run down to the nearest bar for a nice cool glass of beer and chew the fat with some people who probably know more about it than I do?

And on the editorial page of 469 newspapers, the syndicated columnist Underwood Pelten observed: "For years now, I've been bamboozling the public by confusing bile with brains, and being agin everything as a cover-up for not knowing very much about anything."

PERHAPS the most unpredicted transformation came from Hollywood. The Hollywood Yes-Men's Protective Association, the Screen's Publicists Guild, the Motion Picture Producers' Association, and sundry other cinema groups announced plaintively that reports of the serum rendered them almost speechless.

Henry Hawkins, producer of "Lawless," prepared entirely new copy for his billboards and newspaper advertising along this line:

"Lawless" reaches a new nadir in motion-picture production. Our