

Americana. In the circles which concern themselves with exploring and perpetuating our national heritage, it is fashionable to lament that the first century and a half of our history on this continent—"the colonial period"—has fallen into sad neglect. Yet, thanks to such scholarly enterprises as the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, Virginia, during the past fifteen years there has been a great renaissance of interest in that epoch. Three books reviewed below are, directly or indirectly, outgrowths of the movement: a new edition of Dr. Alexander Hamilton's 1744 travel diary, "Gentlemen's Progress"; Frederick B. Tolles's report on the Quaker merchants of Philadelphia, "Meeting House and Counting House"; and an edition of the autobiography of the celebrated physician, Benjamin Rush. . . . Margaret Thorp's "Female Persuasion" profiles six nineteenth-century feminist leaders.

Little Amazons

FEMALE PERSUASION: *Six Strong-Minded Women.* By Margaret Farrand Thorp. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1949. 253 pp. \$3.75.

Reviewed by ADRIENNE KOCH

LONG before the term "career woman" had settled into our language habits, a few outstanding nineteenth-century women of extraordinary moral fiber had to work to win full membership for their sex in the race of human beings. Not that "strong-minded women" (a not-too-happy phrase) were lacking in the days of the colonial settlers or the time of the new American Republic—far from it. It would be hard to outdo the conviction of an Anne Hutchinson in her head-on clash with Massachusetts theocracy; or to surpass the intellectual reach of an Abigail Adams, who was nevertheless disposed to peer into the great world from the confines of "the woman's sphere." But the "freedom and equality" proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence found a bevy of female spokesmen only in the past century.

Margaret Farrand Thorp, in "Female Persuasion," offers six interesting biographical essays on the courageous but more conservative behavior of the human female of the "bloomer" or near-bloomer set. The six chosen for sympathetic presentation are not, by any means, the greatest American women of the period, nor the strongest of the "strong-minded." Five are Northerners—Catherine Beecher, Jane Swisshelm, Amelia Bloomer (who drank of the cup of ridicule to provide women comfortable dress in the shape of Turkish pantaloons), "Grace Greenwood" (Sara Lippincott), and Maria

Child—and there is one Southern accent, provided by Louisa McCord. The author's choice seems to have been conditioned by the wish to explore the lesser-known reformers and writers. Women like Margaret Fuller have, it is true, been lavishly exploited by literary historians in the past; and suffragettes like Susan Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton have been, perhaps deservedly, consigned to a static "fame" as symbols of a movement, or to persistent caricature. And while the six women who are the subject of this book are not in all instances winning or even compelling, their lives do enrich the social history of America; while together they demonstrate a genuinely American spirit of moral earnestness, active labor for what is considered "right," and heroic exertions in wartime emergency or in critical junctures when their principles were threatened by defeat. As

one of the six declared: "I never work on the winning side"—by choice, she meant. Had the ladies contributed only this sentiment alone to the America later castigated for worshipping the "bitch goddess Success," their labors would not have been in vain.

The literary persuasions of these energetic ladies, as the quotations in this volume bear out, are deservedly forgotten. Romantic fiction, journalism with a "message," theological controversy, home-making literature, abolitionist polemics are rarely conducive to literary or intellectual excellence. But the messages (for they were several) have clearly lived to conquer America: comfortable dress for the ladies (without hooting boys to snowball the wearers); moral and intellectual education available for "females"; vocational opportunity dependent only upon ability (the latter accepted in principle, although practice is still discriminatory in favor of the male animal); the abolition of slavery; the suffrage. So thoroughly have these causes prevailed that some of them already have an antique sound.

Several incidental features of the thematic material offered are fresh. For one thing, these intrepid ladies were all, at some point, romantically engaged and almost all married. Almost all married badly; but bad or good, the husbands themselves deserve credit for enormous courage and patience.

A misconception that it is time to clear up concerns the popular image of the Amazon: the large, tall, aggressive, managerial woman. Mrs. Thorp's "strong-minded women" are almost all *little* women—the most fiery of all, Jane Swisshelm, being a shade under five feet! To this let everyone attach the significance he may choose.



—From *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, courtesy Culver Service.

A "Bloomer" (in Leap Year)—"Say! oh, say, dearest, will you be mine!"

The Colonies in 1744

GENTLEMAN'S PROGRESS: *The Itinerarium of Dr. Alexander Hamilton, 1744. Edited, with an introduction by Carl Bridenbaugh. Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 1948. 267 pp. \$4.*

Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS

IN THE midst of King George's War, and in the year before the capture of Louisbourg, a Scottish physician residing in Maryland embarked on a 1,600-mile journey for his health. Riding from Annapolis to Philadelphia and New York, making a voyage by sloop to Albany and back, and traversing Long Island and lower New England on horseback, he finally found himself lodged for a ten days' sojourn at a boarding-house on Beacon Hill in Boston. Thence he returned more directly to his starting point. He was benefited by getting away from the summer heat of Annapolis, and especially enjoyed the bracing air of Newport. He found entertainment in the variety of constitutions, complexions, and governments in the various colonies. The northern provinces he found better settled and better governed than Maryland, while the people had a higher standard of living. "As to politeness and humanity," he writes, "they are much alike except in the great towns, where the inhabitants are more civilized, especially at Boston."

This travel journal, while not as humorous and lively as the earlier and shorter book by Madame Knight, is decidedly more informative, and its rescue from complete obscurity by the Williamsburg Institute is a happy achievement. The only previous printing was in a very small, privately-issued edition distributed by the collector William K. Bixby to his friends. Important libraries have lacked a copy. Yet no one who wishes to know how the people of the Middle Colonies and New England lived, dressed, ate, talked, jested, chicaned, and generally behaved or misbehaved can find a better source. For the historical novelist it will be a mine of precise and amusing information.

The note of the "Itinerarium" is human interest. Dr. Hamilton, an urbane, sociable, keen-minded young man, educated at the University of Edinburgh, delighted in observing people. Every tavern-keeper, farmer, Quaker merchant, boatswain, parson, and housewife is given a graphic descriptive touch, and many speeches are reported verbatim. A dialogue

overheard at Kingstown, N. J., among two Irishmen, a Scotsman, and a Jew, touching the authority of the Old Testament, is as good as a page from Smollett. The three-page picture of the company, talk, and pursuits met at a tavern in New York is equally good. Newport the diarist found as remarkable for pretty women as Albany was for ugly ones. Albany, however, was redeemed by the painter Feke, occupying the handsomest mansion Hamilton had seen in America, and by a Philosophical Society where the conversation dwelt on highly unphilosophical topics. Reaching Boston, the doctor gives equal space to a diversion called "hauling the fox" and the library of Harvard College, and records with pleasure that after calling at the



Physical Club, he fell into chat with Mr. Robert Lightfoot and other gentlemen. "Our discourse began upon philosophy and concluded in a smutty strain."

While the staple of the book is personal description and reporting of conversations, Dr. Hamilton does not fail to make general observations of value. He points out the wide gulf between urban and country manners, some of the rustics being very boorish indeed. He was struck, like all travelers of that and later periods, by the bold, impudent independence shown by the Yankees, who had no such respect for class lines as Virginians or Marylanders. He observed the steady growth of trade; in Boston the better people were delightfully hospitable to all strangers save rival merchants—"for of them they are jealous." The fact that fortunes were being made in the Northeast by privateering upon the French does not escape him. His pages show how briskly people were now circulating from colony to colony; how many social, political, and quasi-scientific clubs and assemblies existed

in the large towns to help disseminate ideas; and how steadily two distinct attitudes toward the crown were taking form, one loyal, the other critical. Most of his journey he enjoyed. But one colony was too much for him. "Farewell, Connecticut," he exclaimed as he passed Rye Bridge. "I have had a surfeit of your ragged money, rough roads, and enthusiastic people." And in New York he frankly admitted that, drinking till he was "pretty well flushed," he found the local "toapers" too much for even a Scot.

Americana Notes

MEETING HOUSE AND COUNTING HOUSE, by Frederick B. Tolles. University of North Carolina Press. \$5. John Woolman refused when sore athirst to drink from a silver cup; other strict Quakers frowned on the ostentation of oil portraits and had their silhouettes cut instead; and even when James Logan built a Georgian house as handsome as the Byrds'. "Westover" he gave it plain doors instead of the fan-lights and scrollwork of the Virginia mansion. The best Friends always felt divided between an austere pursuit of the Inner Light and a businesslike exploitation of the virtues of Thrift and Enterprise. Most of them made an efficient compromise. They learned how to combine plainness with property. Frederick B. Tolles describes their success in making sure of good things in both this world and the next in "Meeting House and Counting House." A sly vein of humor runs through the book—and yet it is entirely respectful. After all, a sect which practises economy, sobriety, industry, honesty, dependability, and enterprise, which devotes itself largely to trade, whose members constantly aid each other, and which channels its intellectual curiosity into science, can hardly fail of success. Mr. Tolles's chapter on eighteenth-century Quaker grandees shows what a delightful body the Pennsylvania aristocracy was. Their wealth by 1774 quite overwhelmed the puritanical John Adams, and laid the foundations of modern Philadelphia.

EARLY DAYS OF OIL, by Paul H. Giddens. Princeton University Press. \$6. It is just ninety years since "Colonel" Drake lent the oil industry its dramatic start at Titusville. That industry has changed the face of America, and deserves all the historical attention the country will give it. Its early years in northwestern Pennsylvania were gaudily picturesque. That hilly, forested region filled with an excited population of adventurers, merchants, mechanics, and investors; slopes blossomed in every direction