

story. She came to San Francisco in 1928.

Memories are more living things than the files of old newspapers. The love and laughter that was our childhood's San Francisco never got into the headlines. There were gardens around sunshiny bay-windowed houses, then, and in the houses quiet folk who loved books and music, and children gathered around the evening lamps. Our city knew the dreamy music of foghorns, 300 mornings a year, knew cable cars straining gallantly up the steep hills, knew fruit-baskets swaying on coolie-blue shoulders, and knew the golden sandlots out by the Presidio for a playground.

Through Foreign Eyes

THIS WAS AMERICA. By Oscar Handlin. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 602 pp. \$6.

UPON THIS CONTINENT. By Abel Plenn. New York: Creative Age Press. 235 pp. \$3.50.

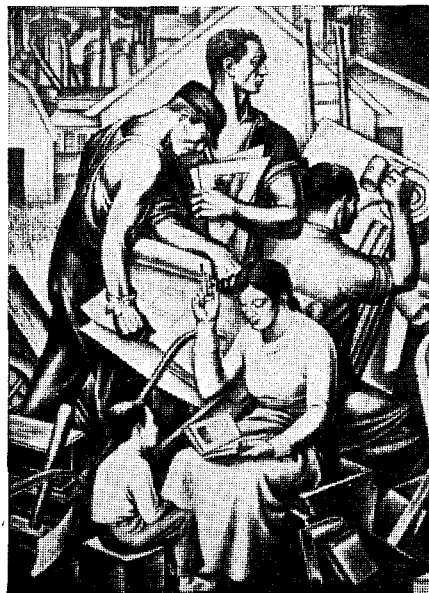
By ALLAN NEVINS

THE paper money is a means of cheating foreigners. The stage-coaches are hell. The Negro slaves are brutally treated. The women spend their days shopping. Everybody brags. "There are gardens, but the charm of the place is spoiled by a scowling sky, a hostile climate, and humid lands, to say nothing of the somber solitude, of the bad manners and gross customs, of the religious fanaticism, of the unbearable democracy of the great mass of white inhabitants, of the comic pride of the wealthy classes, of the lack of good tone and good taste, and the urbanity of an advanced society." Is this Mrs. Trollope? Not at all; it is the Gascon aristocrat De Montlezun, writing of America in 1818.

America is the most moral of countries. The ideal of the American man is "purity in intention, decision in will, energy in action, simplicity and gentleness in manner." In American homes the women generally have all the power they wish. New England glories in the impulse toward universal popular education, and American schools for women are much superior to those of Europe. A stream of spiritual life is forcing its way through all impediments. America has a creative power of organization; the people "associate as easily as they breathe." The spirit of true democracy shows itself in the multiplicity

We watched the lazy Pacific seas creaming eternally over seal rocks, we drank in the sights and smells and tastes of mysterious wooden-balconied, grease-and-smoke-blackened Chinatown. We saw the battered freighters come and go, for the Clyde, for Benares, for Nome. And even while we said to ourselves exaltingly, "This is our city," we knew that the heart of incomparable San Francisco was escaping us still.

Kathleen Norris is the author of more than seventy-five popular novels, including "Certain People of Importance," which deals with a prosperous San Franciscan family through several generations.



—From "Art in Federal Buildings."

"Uphold the Right."

of professional bodies, workingmen's guilds, clubs, libraries, and assembly rooms. Everywhere the descendants of the Puritans establish churches, legislatures, a free press, and asylums for the unfortunate. "Wherever the Anglo-American advances, the same cultivation arises." Is this the reformer James Silk Buckingham? Not at all; it is Fredrika Bremer extolling our "free, self-governing communities" in 1853.

Like the British traveler, the Continental sojourner (to whom, in forty different incarnations from a Dutchman in 1780 to Ernst Toller in 1930, Dr. Handlin devotes his fat volume) could see much that he came prepared to find. If a Bourbon, he could find ground for hostile criticism everywhere; if a democrat, he could hail progress on every side. Judging from the selections here given, the Con-

tinental writers were on the whole less expert than Cobbett, Maryatt, and Mrs. Martineau, Dickens, Matthew Arnold, and H. G. Wells. The language alone was a barrier, while differences of culture struck the Continental as greater. Some of these two-score visitors tell very strange stories. Karl T. Griesinger just before the Civil War found America full of breach-of-promise cases, and warned German immigrants that Irish girls were specially dangerous—"they know the law, and are anxious to be married, particularly to Germans." One Frenchman, Michaux, declared that planters made their slaves drag the plow because they were cheaper than horses. Another, Bourget, gave a picture of football as "a heap of twenty-two bodies tumbling on top of one another, like an inextricable knot of serpents with human heads," with doctors leaping in to "sponge the blood which streams from the forehead, the eyes, the nose, the mouth."

But in the main, the Continental reporters paint just about the same picture of America as their British rivals. They are not so lively or incisive, but they are struck by the same salient characteristics. What do they discover? They write of the ennobling sense of independence and equality which animates Americans. They dwell on the simplicity of manners, the general wholesomeness of life. They are impressed by the abounding energy of the people, their go-ahead enterprise, and their skill in subduing the wilderness. "The heart of a Frenchman palpitates," writes Jean Pierre Brissot, to find the splendid Harvard Library standing "where 150 years ago arose the smoke of the savage calumet." They note the Puritanical cast of morals, carried among the women to prudishness. They remark the tremendous zeal of Americans in establishing newspapers, opening public schools, and attending lyceums, though the higher peaks of culture are lacking. The later travelers are struck by the standardization of dress, food, and furniture, and by the tremendous vogue of baseball and other sports. Every other observer comments on the mobility of Americans and their passion for changing their residences.

Here, too, are the same defects and

LITERARY I.Q. ANSWERS

1. Samuel Butler. 2. William Ellery Channing. 3. Richard Henry Dana. 4. Sir Kenelm Digby and Kenelm Henry Digby. 5. Alexandre Dumas. 6. Alexander Hamilton. 7. Robert Herrick. 8. Oliver Wendell Holmes. 9. Josiah Quincy. 10. Sir Walter Raleigh.

vices that British travelers note, recorded with a shade less accuracy. The business sharpness of Yankees, verging on knavery, is mentioned alike by the Italian Grassi in 1819 and the Russian Tverskoy in 1895. Moreau in the East and Von Hubner in the Far West deal in similar terms with the American tendency toward violence and homicide. The emotionalism of religious revivals, the insecurity of marriage and the family, and the widespread taste for land speculation and stock gambling are described by a dozen writers. Giuseppe Giacosa, the Italian dramatist, dwells on our weakness for the colossal and our habit of putting the dollar mark on everything. He met a millionaire who showed him around his art gallery, murmuring, "Corot, \$10,000; Millet, \$15,000," and so on. The tyranny of public opinion is frequently exposed.

And of course the visitors list all our minor faults: the oldtime tobacco-spitting, the passion for ice water and meat dishes, the rowdy manners of toothpick-chewing, feet-on-table men, the use of cheap, inartistic goods and jerrybuilt houses, and the tastes for the sensational in oratory, newspapers, and movies.

Altogether, the book might be dismissed as entertaining but repetitive were it not for one novel and impressive element. Beginning with Miss Bremer and Ole Raeder, a series of Continental travelers took pains to visit communities of their countrymen and to describe their lot in America. The two writers mentioned found that the Scandinavians had done well. But other observers struck a savage note. Giacosa furnishes a harrowing description of Italian poverty in the New York slums. The Hungarian Count Vay de Vaga und Luskod, while not unappreciative of America's better side, gives a still more horrifying picture of the miserable toil of Slav and Hungarian workers in the Pittsburgh steel mills. Henri Hauser is caustic in his account of the "disordered tempo" of American life as seen by the immigrant, and Ernst Toller expatiates upon the misery which makes a high rate of crime understandable. In these selections Professor Handlin's book, which represents not only a happy idea but a great deal of hard work, makes a valuable contribution to the readily-available material on American life. It was well worth doing, and it has been done well.

Not so much can be said for Mr. Plenn's volume. It is a slender sheaf of selections from memoirs, travels, letters, and the like, reflecting different sides of American life from Ver-

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Ideas & Studies.

Last week we were observing in this space that a Rip Van Winkle who had fallen asleep in the mid-Thirties when Nazi Germany was threatening the survival of all the things cherished by democrats would be puzzled if he awakened in the late Forties to find the menace being played by Soviet Russia. To understand how day-to-day developments fit into the long-term trends of Western civilization, Rip or any other bewildered citizen might well read a book like J. J. Saunders's "The Age of Revolution" (see page 21) or Stringfellow Barr's forthcoming "Pilgrimage of Western Man." Such books would also furnish a valuable background for the provocative discussion of freedom and Socialism offered by the British Labor Party leader Harold Laski in "Liberty in the Modern State," reviewed below.

Current Ills and One Remedy

LIBERTY IN THE MODERN STATE.
By Harold J. Laski. New York: The Viking Press. 175 pp. \$2.75.

By MARK DEWOLFE HOWE

THE re-publication of Professor Laski's brilliant essay on "Liberty in the Modern State" finds ample justification in two related considerations. One is in the immediate importance of such an eloquent reminder that at the core of the Socialist faith lies a passionate conviction that free minds must be the first objective of a decent society. The other is found, not in the message of the original essay itself, but in Professor Laski's introduction to the new edition. There he considers the question whether there is substantial basis for hope that the liberty of which he wrote in 1930 can be secured in the postwar world.

In giving an explicit answer to that question Professor Laski not only gives a vivid interpretation of the issues which confront the contemporary world but he adds perspective to certain aspects of his theory of liberty.

Although it was evident in 1930 that Professor Laski believed that freedom would be fruitful only in a society which provided equal economic security for all, his commitment to Socialism was less explicit in the essay itself than it has become in the present introduction. Now his assertion is unqualified that "private ownership of the means of production is no longer compatible with democratic institutions." He is persuaded, accordingly, that the promise of liberty which a capitalist society can offer its people must be illusory and that under present conditions neither freedom nor peace can be secured while capitalism continues. It will not be enough, however, for the nations of the world to reconstitute their economic systems. The survival and freshening of liberty requires, in addition, the abandonment of the fiction of national sovereignty which the nineteenth century sanctified as a principle.

In other recent writings Professor Laski has outlined the same prognosis and prescribed the same remedies. The new suggestiveness in the present volume is found in the relationship which the prediction and the remedy bear to his theory of liberty. Persuasive as the introduction is, many readers are likely to feel that the prescribed Socialist remedy needs a more explicit reconciliation with Professor Laski's principles of liberty than he has attempted to provide. Fundamental to his theory of liberty is the insistence that a nation's law (and therefore, I take it, a nation's



—Harris & Ewing.

Harold J. Laski: "Private ownership of the means of production is no longer compatible with democratic institutions."