

Centaur in the Civil War

GIANT IN GRAY. By Manly Wade Wellman. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 387 pp. \$5.

By STANLEY F. HORN

"GIANT" is a large-sized word, but it is not inappropriately used in describing General Wade Hampton, of South Carolina. Hampton was a big man figuratively and literally, physically and spiritually. As a dashing cavalry commander in the armies of the Confederate States of America he was a veritable centaur, a big man on a big charger, glorying in the clash of personal combat. The war over, he gracefully accepted defeat and financial ruin and lived on to serve his state with distinction in private life and as Governor and United States Senator.

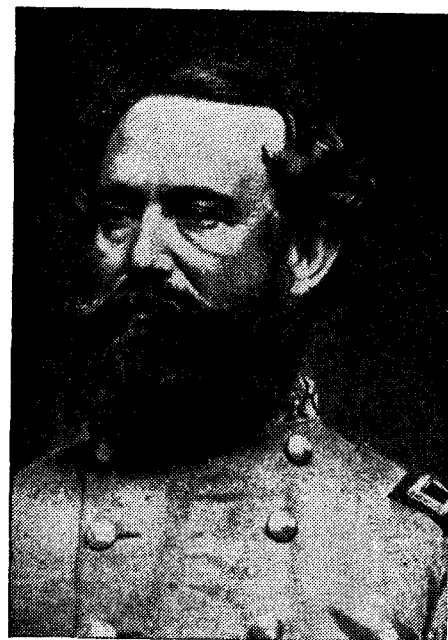
It was once a common saying that the War Between the States was "a rich man's war and a poor man's fight," but the fallacy of this cynical aphorism was well demonstrated by the example of Hampton—among many others. He was a rich man, an extensive land-holder, and the owner of 3,000 slaves, when the war started in 1861. He was an anti-secessionist and was opposed to war. But when war came he did not hesitate to offer himself and his financial resources

in the defense of his native South Carolina.

Within twenty days after the fall of Fort Sumter Wade Hampton, in an advertisement in the *Charleston Courier*, was calling for volunteers, a thousand of them, to organize a "Legion" of all arms—six companies of infantry, four troops of cavalry, and a battery of artillery. Within less than a week more men had volunteered than could be used, and late in June "Hampton's Legion" left South Carolina for the fields of Virginia, where it was to win fame for itself and its commander. After a brief stop-over in Richmond, the Legion moved on to Manassas, arriving just in time to be thrust hastily into the battle then and there raging. Early in the action Hampton's horse was shot from under him, and he continued to lead his men on foot, wielding a fallen infantryman's rifle. The battle over, he was praised by Beauregard for his "soldierly ability," and won the compliments of President Davis.

Other battles followed, and Hampton and his Legion were in the thick of them, always found where the fighting was the hottest. Eventually he was transferred to the cavalry service, and when colorful "Jeb" Stuart was killed in 1864 it was the strapping big South Carolinian who was selected by Robert E. Lee to command the cavalry of the Army of Northern Virginia. That he made a good job of it is a matter of history, some military critics even venturing the opinion that the unostentatious, calculating Hampton was really a more effective cavalry leader than the more spectacular Stuart. In truth, Hampton—like his companion-in-arms, Nathan Bedford Forrest—seemed to possess a natural genius for cavalry fighting, without benefit of West Point or any other formal military training. Bravely and skillfully he fought on to the end and then, his parole in his pocket, went back to the blackened ruins of his once palatial home in South Carolina, there to face the tragic problems of the Reconstruction.

Hampton [writes Mr. Wellman], who had marched to war as the richest gentleman of the South, came back as one of the poorest. He moved into an overseer's house that had escaped the burning at Sand Hills. . . . He had no source of income; he mourned the loss of kinsmen and friends. Three thousand Negroes who had once called him master were now lost among the throngs of freedmen who ques-



General Wade Hampton—"a big man on a big charger."

tioned, begged, and sometimes rioted. His Confederate money and his lieutenant-general's commission were alike valueless bits of paper. Home from the wars he had brought memories of defeated toil and struggle, a gray uniform he was forbidden to wear, and the scars of five wounds. That was all.

Essentially Hampton's plight was not far different from that of thousands of other returned Confederate soldiers; but Hampton, like Robert E. Lee, showed his greatness by rising above the crippling handicaps of adversity. Ever counseling conciliation and moderation and justice to all, regardless of party or color, but vigorously opposing oppression, he helped to lead the people of South Carolina through the nightmare of the postwar years until home rule was restored and the name of Wade Hampton became legendary in the history of the state.

"Giant in Gray" is Mr. Wellman's first venture into the field of historical biography, although he is an established writer of fiction. In this life of Wade Hampton he combines the two essentials of a successful historical work: he knows how to write and he knows what he is writing about. The result is an excellent biography of a truly great man, a man too long neglected by writers. The book deserves, and will doubtless attain, a place high in the list of the standard books of biography of Southern soldiers and statesmen.

Stanley F. Horn, editor of The Southern Lumberman, wrote "The Army of Tennessee" and edited the recent "The Robert E. Lee Reader."

FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT: No. 336

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 336 will be found in the next issue.

O ZWHHVS QFSRIZWHM

VSZDG CBS CB HVFCIUUV

ZWTS JSFM GACCHVZM.

—SZWNOPSHV UOGYSZZ.

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 335

Those who dream by day are cognizant of many things which escape those who dream only by night.

—E. A. Poe.

Humor. Since one of the happiest ways of bidding a friend a Merry Christmas is to give him something that will make him laugh, many solid citizens use books of humor as Christmas gifts. For this reason, each year a number of enterprising publishers gather together a pound or two of risible material, whether in pictorial or textual form, bind it between boards, and put it into the nation's book stores in time to succor harried gift givers. Devotees of pictorial humor will find much to delight them in Peter Arno's "Sizzling Platter" and Whitney Darrow, Jr.'s "Please Pass the Hostess." Of this season's written humor two of the better collections are reviewed below: "Chips off the Old Benchley," last pieces by the late Robert Benchley, and "Listen to the Mocking Bird," by the still very much alive S. J. Perelman.

A Couple of Funny Fellows

CHIPS OFF THE OLD BENCHLEY.

By Robert Benchley. New York: Harper & Bros. 273 pp. \$3.

LISTEN TO THE MOCKING BIRD.

By S. J. Perelman. New York: Simon & Schuster. 153 pp. \$2.95.

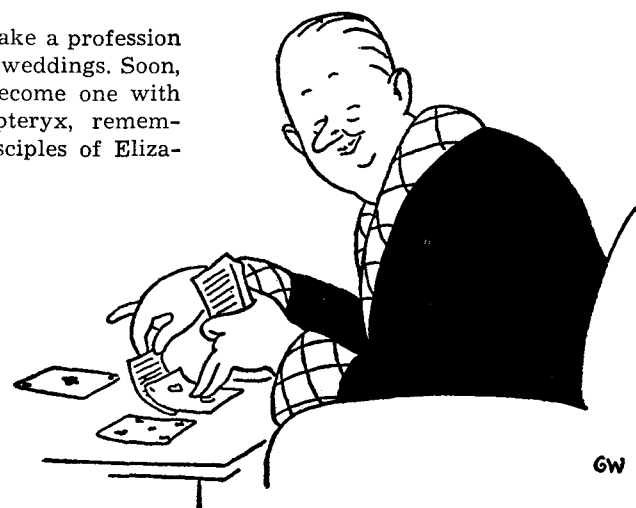
By LEE ROGOW

THERE seems to be a slather of public and private money available for the endowment of various worthy projects—rural electrification, development of rocket fuels, novels promoting the Christian ideal, even obscurantist poetry. I wonder if a smidgeon of that loot could be siphoned off to encourage a valuable but declining literary form—the short comic essay. The masters of this ill-paid craft are becoming as rare as

the gentlemen who make a profession of tying ascot ties for weddings. Soon, I fear, the art will become one with the dodo and the apteryx, remembered only by the disciples of Elizabeth S. Kingsley.

Unlike its dead-pan cousin, the serious essay, the short comic piece has lost none of its audience. The production of potential customers reached new heights during the war and the maternity hospitals report only a mild slackening off since. But for some reason I have not been able to determine the shortage of new apprentices in the field of "casuals" is something fierce.

I say something's got to be done. Benchley has been gone for four years now. Will Cuppy, Wallace Irwin, and Russell Maloney are gone. Death has long since also taken away Stephen Leacock. Perelman's fast balls have lost much of their zip and he's relying on control alone. Donald Ogden Stewart is in Hollywood, Dorothy Parker is occupied with other matters. James Thurber and Wolcott Gibbs and Frank Sullivan are with



—Illustrations from the book.

us all too seldom. We decidedly need some new funny fellows in print.

The fact is that the material in "Chips Off the Old Benchley" is hardly up to the gentleman's best work. There is only an occasional gleam or turn of phrase to indicate that the man was one of the two or three funniest fellows in the English language.

Chalk this up as run-of-the-mine Benchley and—but wait a second. This is a fatiguing craft. (The only man I know who manages to be funny day after day is Nick Kenny, radio columnist of the New York *Daily Mirror*.) And besides Benchley was clearly one of the princes of the earth, and he could write things like:

"People are constantly writing in to this department and asking, 'What kind of dog shall I give my boy?'"

"Or, sometimes, 'What kind of boy shall I give my dog?'"

And, "A dog teaches a boy fidelity, perseverance, and to turn around

