

Shays' Rebellion, an uprising, rooted in economic discontent, which had an incalculable impact on the political thinking of the time. (N.B.: See Fiske's "Critical Period.")

One cannot read this full-scale review of the period without coming away with a fresh appreciation of the solid achievements of the Congress of the Confederation, notably in laying down a basic policy for the national domain. Jensen argues that a "dynamic minority" of nationalists succeeded in establishing a central government with coercive authority even though a majority of the people believed that government should rule by persuasion. Viewing centralization and compulsion with obvious distrust, Jensen attacks recent advocates of world government for their appeals to the history of the critical period. But regardless of the mixed motives of the nationalists of that day, these men of '87 who thought continentally possessed a largeness of vision and a willingness to transcend petty local loyalties so sorely needed today if we are to curb the self-destructive consequences of rampant nationalism and imperialism.

We welcome Mr. Jensen's brilliant refutation of the classic picture of the years preceding 1787 as marking a period of stagnation, ineptitude, and corruption. He has given us a needed revision of much earlier studies based on less intensive scholarship. But recognition of the constructive accomplishments of the old Congress and the states of the Confederation should not lead us to undervaluing the psychological lift which the Federal Constitution gave to the new nation. Nor should we deny to current advocates of stronger international controls the benefits of that historic "lesson" offered by thirteen states voluntarily curtailing their sovereignty on being confronted with what many well-informed men then believed to be a "crisis."

## Still I Care

By Fern Maddox

PERHAPS a road  
Went somewhere;  
Perhaps a song  
Came drifting through the air;  
Perhaps a moon  
Melted into frozen dawn;  
Perhaps a sun  
Scorched all it beat upon;  
  
I have crossed a thousand roads  
And known, too casually, a thousand  
souls. . . .  
Yet . . . still I care  
For him, whom I left standing there.

OCTOBER 28, 1950

# Ohio's Old Porkopolis

THE SERENE CINCINNATIANS. By Alvin F. Harlow. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 442 pp. \$4.50.

By JAMES A. MAXWELL

AN EMOTIONALLY unstable Taft-hater could easily develop a serious persecution complex in Cincinnati. In the course of a day's movement about the town he could encounter the family name on a bridge, a school, a museum, a street, an auditorium, a playground, and a University Hall—to give but an incomplete list of the tangible monuments to Taft influence in the city.

But even more unnerving to our neurotic would be the fact that Cincinnati today is a municipal counterpart of Senator Robert A. Taft. Both are placid, middle-aged, wealthy, conservative Republican, suspicious of innovations, passively resistant to change, and almost totally without pretensions. Both are constantly bathed in an unwavering light of middle-class respectability.

This present, or Taft-like, period of Cincinnati's history is undoubtedly what Alvin F. Harlow had in mind when he chose his title, "The Serene Cincinnatians," for the sixth of Dutton's Society in America series. However, since most of Mr. Harlow's work deals with the city from its post-Revolutionary War birth until about 1900, the adjective "serene" is badly misleading.

Cincinnati's youth—totally unlike the Senator's, I'm certain—was wild, violent, and politically corrupt. The author has done an extensive research job of the period when the city was popularly known as Porkopolis, the nation's greatest butcher of hogs, when streams flowing by packing houses literally ran red with animal blood. He tells of the street battles between the Know-Nothings and the German immigrants and the riots between the Abolitionists and Southern sympathizers. Keelboatmen fought drunken brawls in the streets and Lafcadio Hearn, as a reporter for the *Enquirer*, recounted the murders and debauchery of the "Bucktown" area. During these adolescent days Cincinnati turned out more beer and whiskey than any other city in the country, and submitted to a political regime as venal as any the nation has produced.

Most of this makes for lively reading but, unfortunately, Mr. Harlow seems to be a researcher who finds it difficult to discard anything he has uncovered, and his work is cluttered with names and anecdotes of little importance to the main story. He also



Alvin F. Harlow—the "serene" is misleading.

fails to trace with any real understanding Cincinnati's transition from unbridled youth to middle-aged rectitude. There is none of the sharp analysis of nineteenth-century cause and twentieth-century effect, which Cleveland Amory did so brilliantly in "The Proper Bostonians," the first of the Society in America series.

"The Serene Cincinnatians" is a good factual history of the city for about the first century and a quarter of its existence and it will certainly not be without interest to the natives of the city, who can view it as a kind of family snapshot album. The non-resident, I fear, will learn little about the actual character of the town. In its own way, Cincinnati's personality is as marked as New York's or San Francisco's or New Orleans's and it offers far more possibilities for social comment than here explored.

There is some indication that Mr. Harlow may have written his book too quickly after gathering his material. His prose style is frequently awkward and badly littered with clichés. He finds things "dull as ditch water" or "scarce as hen's teeth"; people "leave no stone unturned" and look upon city landmarks as "their pride and joy." A pressing deadline—if this was the villain—can have strange effects upon many writers.

Several years ago the WPA Writers Program published "The Cincinnati Guide" as part of its national series. "The Serene Cincinnatians" is little more than that book considerably expanded. What is needed is a penetrating evaluation of greater scope, possibly something in line with what Mr. Harlow's title suggests.

James A. Maxwell has contributed many sketches about his native city of Cincinnati to The New Yorker.

## Until Appomattox

SOCIETY AND THOUGHT IN EARLY AMERICA. By Harvey Wish. New York: Longmans, Green & Co. 612 pp. \$6.

By WAYNE ANDREWS

TEACHING American history, never the easiest job in the world, is no easier now than in the days when you and I boned up on the Payne-Aldrich tariff for our high-school finals. More and more teachers, and we may be thankful for this, are coming to realize that American history, if it is to have any significance for the students, ought to deal a lot less with politics and a lot more with the theme of American civilization as a whole. This means that fewer teachers are memorizing the Payne-Aldrich schedules the night before that particular lecture; instead they are valiantly delving into topics as unfamiliar as the progress of eighteenth-century medicine in Philadelphia in order to say just the right word on Benjamin Rush. So "social history," the phrase the professionals use to describe the study of American civilization in its broader aspects, is keeping a good many college professors from enjoying the sound sleep at night to which they feel entitled.

Social history, of course, is nothing new. Henry Adams, who has always been recognized in academic circles as one of the greatest of American historians, provided a brilliant analysis of American civilization in the opening years of the nineteenth century in the first few chapters of his volumes on the Jefferson and Madison administrations, and any social historian who hopes to make his mark must realize to his chagrin that his efforts will be compared with those of Adams. This isn't a cheerful prospect for the academicians now pounding their typewriters; it's a little as if every new play on Broadway had to be compared with the wittiest of Bernard Shaw.

Professor Harvey Wish of Western Reserve is the latest faculty member to publish a contribution to American social history and, although his literary style can scarcely match that of Adams, it must be admitted that he has written an agreeable chronicle of our strivings from Jamestown to Appomattox. If anyone thinks all history textbooks must be dull, he will be pleasantly surprised by Professor Wish's narrative, which summarizes in simple language such ponderous questions as the religious controversies of the seventeenth century, the economic development of the colonies in the eighteenth century, and the

early history of slavery on our continent.

Professor Wish is so deft in emphasizing the importance of our racial and religious backgrounds that one can only regret he was not always able to eliminate trivial facts from his all-inclusive survey. When he reports that "the mammy acting as a wet nurse for white children was a familiar plantation figure," one is almost too eager to cry "amen," and when he dutifully quotes us the statistics



on the speed of the rotary presses of 1847, one wonders just why information of interest only to printers was given such importance.

Unfortunately, too, Professor Wish is not always profound. "Herman Melville often puzzled the critics, and his 'Moby Dick' bored too many readers" may not seem an adequate characterization of Melville to those of his students majoring in English.

Perhaps Professor Wish did not fully realize that if a social historian is to treat subjects of which he has no first-hand knowledge, he must be doubly careful of the accuracy of his facts. "Society and Thought in Early America" is filled with a number of errors, which are bound to embarrass the author sooner or later. For example, though the legend was exploded many years ago that Peter Harrison was Van Brugh's associate in the design of Blenheim Castle, Professor Wish gives Harrison the sole credit for Blenheim. And though the definitive bibliography of Parson Weems's life of Washington mentions eighty-four editions, Professor Wish apparently has heard of only twenty. Even more unlucky is Professor Wish's reference to Ann Radcliffe. As all lovers of the Gothic novel will recall, Mrs. Radcliffe was the author not of "The Mysteries of the Forest" but of "The Mysteries of Udolpho" and "The Romance of the Forest."

Wayne Andrews is the author of "The Vanderbilt Legend" and "The Battle for Chicago."

## B&M R.R.

HIGH GREEN AND THE BARK PEELERS. By R. M. Neal. New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce. 275 pp. \$3.50.

By LUCIUS BEEBE

MANY years ago in the now remote youth of the reviewer in Wakefield, Massachusetts, the trains of the seemingly lordly Boston & Maine Railroad were a big thing. There were three separate and distinct depots serving separate precincts of the town and the reviewer drove his father to one of them each morning in a horse rig suitable to the season and weather and retrieved him each evening. Sometimes he lingered around town in the morning consuming sodas at Bonney & Dutton's drug-store or shopping for boyhood treasures at Beesley's five and ten, waiting for the Portland Express to go through. The Express was a thing of untellable splendor as it, roaring smokily around the curve at Crystal Pond, tore into the brief tangent between Curley Brothers' grain elevator and the Harvard Knitting Mill, and disappeared, a diminishing vision of observation-platform brasswork in the distance toward Reading, Andover, and heaven only knew what other far places: Portland presumably. Over this very stretch of rails, back in 1846, the locomotive engine *Antelope* had, for the first time in the history of the world, achieved a speed of a mile a minute.

Last spring, chancing to be in Wakefield, the reviewer saw the Pine Tree Limited flash through town. Gone was the splendid Pacific-type locomotive with its gleaming siderods and rolling brass bell on the head end. Gone were the beautiful dark-green Pullmans and diner of his memory, gone the brass-railed observation platform. The train had been streamlined—i.e., conceived in a preposterous design of presumably airflow lines—and was powered with a Diesel engine, an unsightly sort of main-line automobile sheathed in a cartridge of tin-foil.

The reviewer was depressed and glad that he now lives in Nevada, where most trains are still, as God intended, powered by steam and the great cab-first Mallets of the Southern Pacific breasting the high passes of the Sierra still clutch at the imagination as few machines in the modern world have power to do.

Mr. Neal's story is not concerned with the history of the Boston & Maine, its antecedent companies, and their peculiar and intimate integration to the Yankee economy of the