



—New York Public Library Picture Collection.

"Salisbury Mill," by Paul Busch.

adverse balances of payments over the last generation and a great relative reduction in factory wages.

New England's greatest problem is, in the reviewer's view, its location in the northeast corner of the vast American market, ever moving further away. This explains New England's failure to hold more than 1 per cent of the nation's automobile jobs, though in terms of technical position the region was on a strategic position to capture this industry; and it explains its failure to attract the heavy chemical industries. The authors of the report discuss fully the transportation problems of New England and especially the unfair rate structures.

In dealing with financial resources, taxes, Federal expenditures, and the regional balance of payments, the authors bring together much useful information. They help explode one myth, namely, that heavy state and local taxes are in fact a serious deterrent to maintaining industry in New England. (I am not referring to the misapprehensions concerning relative tax loads, which may be a deterrent.) They also see the relevance of the net drain of funds out of this region by the Federal Government, part of the proceeds being used to bolster the competitive position of the South and West. They express concern lest this region be unable to pay for its imported food and raw materials should the competitive position continue to deteriorate and the Treasury continue to withdraw cash from the region.

Unfortunately, the authors of this

report straddle the issue of Federal aid for this region. Perhaps they should not be criticized too harshly on this point; for it is frequently the practice in subsidized research representing all sorts of interests to be overly cautious on controversial issues. For example, the possible contribution of hydro-electric power is considerably underestimated or belittled by presenting estimates which can scarcely be termed objective. Is there a case for some Federal intervention in the Connecticut Valley, for example? No answer is given. The issue is scarcely touched. Yet one-third of the book is devoted to natural resources which account for 4 to 5 per cent of the income of the region. And there is strange silence on the important issue of Federal help in developing our resources.

Finally, I wish that more space had been given to an analysis of the major problems and less to compilation of interesting, and even if important, facts. For example, an all-out discussion of the issues raised by competition of low-income regions with an old established high-income region would have been very helpful. But nevertheless this is a valuable study, one of the best in regional economics, and all who contributed are to be congratulated. On the whole, I have no dissent with its conclusions about New England's general prosperity since 1940 and the probability of continued health if the major issues are faced frankly and if disease is treated promptly, but not on the basis of an ideology that fits 1850 rather than 1950.

Economic Incentives

"Man, Motives, and Money: Psychological Frontiers of Economics," by Albert Lauterbach (Cornell University Press, 366 pp. \$5), applies, in a thorough and wide-ranging way, the lessons of psychology to business problems. Andrew S. Roscoe, our reviewer, is president of the South Brooklyn Savings and Loan Association and lecturer in economics at the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn.

By Andrew S. Roscoe

TODAY, with the vigorous, wholesome alliance of economics with sociology and psychology, we have a completely new understanding and a much more rational comprehension of the place of economics, not only in our own nation but in our general philosophy. Too long was the science of economics studied in a vacuum.

Such writers as Albert Lauterbach must now be recognized as a force in any intelligent study of economics, not only in the classroom but also in the bank, the stock exchange, the factory, even in the home. His new book, "Man, Motives, and Money," is virtually an encyclopedia of the new psychological approach of economics, and it is obviously the result of painstaking research. The businessman who reads it will be rewarded by the analyses of the motivation of business activity, and, while he may not agree with some of the hypotheses advanced with respect to the future of business, he can gain sufficient information about his own business policies to improve them.

The types of problems discussed in this work are indicated by such challenging topics as (a) the impact of non-economic factors upon economic decision-making; (b) the influences of economic instability upon individuals and groups, preventing them from acting "economically," and the effect of economic reforms upon personal security; (c) the presupposition of the emergence of a different kind of human being, especially in Western democratic countries, by economic reform of any desirable type.

Mr. Lauterbach describes the modern concept of business as including activities and units of a widely varying character, all of which meet on the market in different positions and with different driving forces. He indicates the historical changes which have affected the components of American business all the way from the small

(Continued on page 19)



—From "King of Comedy."

Scene in Sennett's "Salome vs. Shenandoah"—"...we played it by ear as we went along."

Era of the Great Comedians

"King of Comedy," by Mack Sennett, as told to Cameron Shipp (Doubleday, 284 pp. \$4.50), is the life story of the great film producer in the days when movies were funny.

By Arthur Knight

MACK SENNETT opens his engagingly frank and unassuming autobiography, "King of Comedy," with the disturbing reflection that movies today aren't as funny as they were when Keystone was grinding them out at the rate of two or more a week. It's true—and it's to Sennett's credit that nowhere in this rambling, anecdotal, and frequently funny book does he suggest that the decline of humor on our screens is the direct consequence of his own retirement from the field. He made his contributions to film comedy; they were considerable, and he is justifiably proud of them. He makes no further claims.

He does raise the question, however. And perhaps some part of the

answer is to be found in his descriptions of the free-wheeling, boldly improvisational techniques for comedic creation that prevailed in the Mack Sennett studios. "This place isn't a studio," one writer wailed at the time, "it's a madhouse." If Sennett heard that a chimney was being toppled, a lake being drained, a parade forming he immediately dispatched a cameraman and whatever actors might be around, got the scene in the can, then built a story around it.

Unfortunately—at least, for comedy—Hollywood has changed considerably since that time. Costs of production have shot up to astronomical figures, studio staff and overhead impose their crushing weight on every script. In the interests of economy films are planned on paper and budgeted step by step. The moments of divine inspiration that permitted a Chaplin to assemble his immortal costume on a rainy afternoon, or Mabel Normand to heave the first custard pie full into Ben Turpin's gloriously cock-eyed pan—these have all but been eliminated in the pressing need

to push through a production efficiently and on schedule.

Perhaps Sennett's methods could have prevailed only when the movie industry was young, enthusiastic, and wildly disorganized. But it's a sobering thought to realize that this half-educated Canadian boiler-maker and burlesque comedian, using just these methods, was able to discover and develop such consequential clowns as Harry Langdon, Chester Conklin, Buster Keaton, Raymond Griffith, Gloria Swanson, W. C. Fields, and, of course, Charlie Chaplin. Even Harold Lloyd worked for Sennett at one time. Sennett fired him: he wasn't funny enough. That era has vanished—and with it, apparently, the great comedians.

"KING OF COMEDY," however, is not concerned solely with antics on the Sennett lot. There is also a love story, the tangled love of Sennett and Mabel Normand that began at Biograph and ended with her tragic death two decades later. Both had gotten too big and too busy for marriage; and the only bitterness that turns up in these pages is Sennett's self-reproach for that oversight. His descriptions of this sparkling, elusive, wide-eyed hoyden are the finest in print.

Mention of Mabel Normand, of course, leads inevitably to the mysterious, still unsolved murder of William Desmond Taylor, a scandal that rocked not only Hollywood but the entire nation back in 1922. Sennett, with an unreleased Normand picture in his vaults, had a double interest in the case, yet he reports it with a vividness and adherence to the facts that would do credit to Joe Friday.

Sound and the arrival of the double-feature write the final chapters to this book. Sound changed shooting techniques, while the double-feature virtually eliminated the two-reel comedy from movie programs. The failure of Paramount-Publix in 1935 took his studio with it. Still, Sennett's chief regret, it would seem, was less the personal loss of millions of dollars than the end of opportunity to go on making the kind of comedies that had brought him fame. He is curiously diffident about his films, often snorting with heavy irony at those well-intended critics who found them artistic, or "based on the fundamentals of human nature." "We played it by ear as we went along," he says.

But his ear was good, his instincts were sound, and Sennett established the high-water mark for one type of American film creativity. "King of Comedy" is an entertaining and reasonably accurate account of how it was done.