

the Federal debt. There is merit in this narrative method, for the confusion of a spate of events and incidents strikes the reader much as it must have struck a first Congressman who had to deal with each episode. The writing problem is very difficult. Mr. Schachner has to deal with Hamilton's program and its issues, Jefferson's diplomacy, the Indians at war in the West, British and French and Spanish policies, the Mississippi navigation, the Canadian border forts, Washington's effect upon people, the unfortunate personal story of Hamilton, with the Bank, the national capital, the China trade, the tobacco duties, shipping and tariffs and new mercantile fortunes, with all the social and political boilings that produced the first political parties.

And most of the great issues—the Jay treaty, Citizen Genêt, neutrality, the speculation mania, the XYZ affair, the Alien and Sedition Acts, the election of 1800—are well known from many tellings. Indeed, Mr. Schachner's greatest difficulty has been to show, in the midst of all this fast movement, what the general historical climax of his story really is. All the events that swept the Americans along tended in one direction—the downfall of the Federalists, defeated by a new phenomenon as important in its own sphere as the Constitution itself, namely, a nationally-organized political party. And while Schachner vividly presents the details of this climax, somehow the big point is obscured. The important sense I should be left with at the end of this book is not the bitter sadness of John Adams at his repudiation, but the knowledge that a system of national planning had been rejected, and one coherent view of what America was and should be repudiated. Nowhere in all the conflicts among Ames, Pickering, Hamilton, and Adams does it emerge that there was a genuine Federalist philosophy which attempted to answer the problems America raised and quiet the discontents the Democrat-Republicans fed upon.

This is a defect. It is a weakness in the plot of this volume, for in the history of a major conflict I should be convinced that both sides have a case and a cause, and feel either cheer or dismay at the outcome. The Federalists were engaging personalities, and as Professor Coker once remarked, they had the grace not to pretend they were Jeffersonians. But they should be taken seriously as political philosophers, too, even though they went down to defeat. It is, after all, in their image we have developed America, though we persist in employing the vocabulary of the Jeffersonians.

Hero of the Democracy

"The Head and Heart of Thomas Jefferson," by John Dos Passos (Doubleday. 442 pp. \$5), is a novelist's impressionistic essay about the social world in which our third President matured. Our reviewer, Adrienne Koch, is the author of "Jefferson and Madison: The Great Collaboration," and is at work on a book to be called "Philosophy for a Time of Crisis."

By Adrienne Koch

JOHN Dos Passos's study of "The Head and Heart of Thomas Jefferson" is a very special work and makes emphatic the growing affection which America's greatest philosopher-statesman is coming to claim not only from his countrymen but from democrats the world over. The lanky, red-haired, soft-spoken Virginian whose philosophical mind, large heart, and stern conscience each brought something permanent to the American tradition has moved out of the realm of history books merely, into the illuminated art world of theatre, radio, poetry, and poetic fiction.

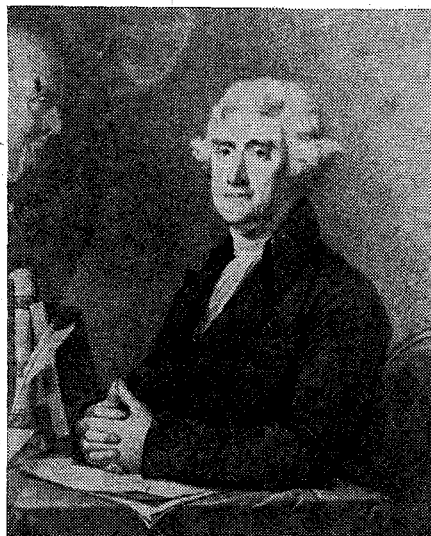
Mr. Dos Passos might possibly have written a novel about Thomas Jefferson. He chose, however, to write an impressionistic essay about Jefferson's social world, and while there is no noteworthy analysis of Jefferson's mind in this study, there are many summary insights and charac-

terizations about Jefferson, his friends, co-workers, and teachers.

The particular vein of inquiry and contemplation that seems to attract Mr. Dos Passos is presumably the going world of a man named Jefferson. Very well. What was it like? Who peopled it? What were they saying, wearing, eating? What kinds of hotels did they put up in? What might the weather have been when Jefferson first viewed the English, the French, or the Italian countryside? And, finally, what did this man say he believed and what—roughly—did he do to make himself an imperishable symbol of Heart and Head for America? These are all indubitably interesting queries. Their answers, insofar as they are given here, are liable to come in the form of natural enough supposition (where facts do not suffice) or artfully flavored descriptions based upon Jefferson's telling phrases. Scenes flash by with something of the old "camera eye" quality. Jefferson saw this, heard that, caught the song of the nightingale, detected the greedy glints in the veiled eyes of European diplomats, lived, breathed, discussed late into the night with preceptors and colleagues and disciples and friends. One does not feel that here is the living Jefferson, but that here are some of the surrounding men and moments of an existence that mysteriously achieves integrity and character. The explicative nexus, however, the persuasive inner core of the man, remains remote—not here, but beyond the door. Jefferson *was* here, we are told, because we can see some of his marks. He learned natural philosophy, for example, from his William and Mary tutor, Dr. William Small (and here Dos Passos inevitably stops to cull all he can about that impressive young professor). In short, there is an observable effort to give us the human and social interstices in the Jefferson story; but the net effect is mechanical, only occasionally arresting, and often vitiated by its poverty of intellectual meaning.

ANOTHER way of stating the degree of disappointment this book inspires is to consider a few of the important occasions where the novelist's sensitivity fails to match his complex subject. First with regard to an episode

(Continued on page 40)



—Culver.

Jefferson—"... what did [he] say?"

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Whose Is the Guilt?

IN America as well as Great Britain the untimely death of Dylan Thomas, perhaps the greatest lyric poet of his time, has shocked innumerable people who had never read his musical verses or listened in enchantment to the magic quality of his voice. And yet they were moved by an unknown name in a column on the obituary page of a newspaper, as if something rare and vital had vanished from the world. To many who had reason to know his value there came a sense of guilt. Why, they asked their conscience, had this Welshman died so young, as man's years count today, in a time when playwrights and philosophers live to a ripe old age?

Was it the poet's fault, or was the society in which he lived to blame? "Poetry is an occupational disease," said one man. "Did not Keats's life end at twenty-six, Shelley's at thirty, and Byron's at thirty-six?" That sense of hidden guilt or even of shame cannot be so easily removed, for Keats died in Rome of an illness which today would have been cured, Shelley was drowned at sea, and Byron died of malaria in Greece. In the next generation both Browning and Tennyson died of an incurable disease, old age.

Dylan Thomas came from a hardy race of long-lived people who through the centuries have learned how to make peace with rural poverty. He was a schoolteacher when he began to compose his rhythmical stanzas that enchant the ear and perhaps too often bemuse the senses. His total published output is astonishingly small to have gained so great a reputation. He rewrote and polished his poems assiduously and certainly threw away more of his work than ever reached the printer. To the

younger generation of British youths in college he became a legendary figure, the very voice and accent of a musical race, singing of nature and love and the strife of men, of man's hope and his despair.

He was a family man who loved his wife and children and his small house overlooking the ancient hills, as anyone must know who has read his tender and beautiful recital of a Christmas Eve at home. Once that was enough for the vast majority of mankind. And he had more than that! A poet may have a paunch and a bald head; Dylan Thomas was the poet incarnate. He was a genius, and he was given the voice and the looks to match his kingship. He believed in himself as a poet, and in poetry as necessary to life as the air we breathe. What more could man want from life, the ordinary man might ask as he goes about his worldly affairs?

IT IS said that he was "wild and generous, flamboyant, unpredictable, religious, ribald, and thirsty." Perhaps it was his exuberance, his thirst for life a Welsh cottage could not quench, which led him to London and New York, to pubs and bars and alien platforms from which he recited his poetry, and, of course, to radio and television and the theatre. But it is even more likely that there are few men of genius brought up in the country, living on meager fare, who can today resist the temptations that are offered them. Money, of course, is the root of all evil, or it used to be considered so. Was it pounds and dollars he sought, a knowledge of the outer world, or the flattery of foreign audiences? Time and his increasing fame would have brought him an income he could not

have imagined in his youth; he knew all a poet needs to know of human nature; he must have despised flattery and the shallow critical essays, naming him a symbolist, a surrealist, or an existentialist. Perhaps, today, only a few men of genius can escape the nets cast to trap them with gold and applause for bait. Now we are permitted to know that he drank too much, a common failing among too many gifted writers. But this one man should have escaped, for the world is poorer for his loss. Alas, this was not the way Dylan Thomas should have ended his life. Our society is guilty of his death; not the poet.

—H. S.

Frederick Lewis Allen

IN THE DEATH on February 13 of Frederick Lewis Allen the publishing world lost one of its most loved and respected editors and American letters a distinguished popular historian. A New Englander by birth, the son of a minister who had been an assistant of Phillips Brooks at the famous Trinity Church in Boston, Mr. Allen displayed throughout his career a profound and vivid concern with the morals, the mores, and the politics of his country. As an editor he had the all-essential quality of being able to gauge before the event the cause or subject that was to become of interest to the public with the result that he made *Harper's Magazine* not only the repository of good literature but a forum for discussion of ideas and affairs. A man of lively, if quiet, humor, of quick understanding, and of unaffected friendliness, he endeared to himself a long list of contributors. When he stepped out of the editorship of *Harper's* some months ago the affection and admiration in which he was held were given expression at a dinner in his honor at which Mr. Allen, himself on occasions the most delightful of masters of ceremony, responded in a speech setting forth his editorial aims and creed. To the general public he was known principally for his books, and especially for the trio "Only Yesterday," "Since Yesterday," and "The Big Change," in which he reviewed with exceeding deftness the recent annals of the country. Mr. Allen compressed into these volumes a vast mass of facts, but he gave them life by the vivacity of his style and meaning by weaving them into a coherent pattern of national attitudes and behavior. And though he never flinched in his portrayals from the less admirable aspects of recent American history he remained to the end an optimist. The general public as well as his friends will miss him sorely.

—A. L.