

that life itself can suddenly become symbolic. . . . But classical symbolism . . . is rarely to be found in Hemingway's work." Or this, on Hemingway as alleged arch-priest of you-know-what. "Altogether too much fuss has been made over the Lost Generation. Hemingway is always represented as tolling their knell to the accompaniment of *Götterdämmerung* drinking. Emphasis is always laid on lack of this, that, or the other. History has proved the thesis wrong. The Lost Generation (or one-hundred-thousandth part of it) was having a well-earned party. . . . But what about the emergence of Hemingway as a serious writer of the first class? Of Ford producing his Tietjens trilogy, Dos Passos his 'U.S.A.' novels, Cummings his poetry?" Or even the over-gloomy disquisition in Chapter 8 on a text provided by Hemingway himself: "We, as citizens, are governed by fear and guided by frustration, using a noncorrected compass." Such instances of critical acumen should not be forgotten despite the fact that, when Mr. Atkins hits one of his hollow caverns, he is likely to be found at the deep end.

"Most modern American criticism," writes Mr. Atkins, "gives the impression . . . of having been written by Olympians in bow ties." Not bad. But the witticism comes in a book which often reads like something talked into a tape-recorder while the author searched through a dark cave for the missing link. "God forgive me," he cries at one point, "I am trying to do homage to a great writer." The homage is undermined with obtuse judgments, as when Hemingway is characterized as a "very up-to-date Hardy," or when Mr. Atkins records his suspicion that Robert Jordan in "For Whom the Bell Tolls" is "only a development of Richard Gordon, the writer in 'To Have and Have Not.'" What are we to make of the opinion that "The Torrents of Spring" may turn out to be Hemingway's most important book "when there is an educated public"? He believes with Edwin Muir and others that the pattern of Hemingway's "development" has been from Natural Man to Political Man and then back again to Natural Man, that howling oversimplification whose ghost ought to have been laid long ago. He quotes with approval Mr. Muir's opinion that the Natural Man, "driven and goaded and denied natural satisfaction," can find no recourse but to retire into himself "to lick his wounds or seek forgetfulness in drink or sex." This, surely, is speleological nonsense. The best antidote for it is the reading of such non-Olympian, fore-in-hand, modern American criticism as Mr. Fenton's.



M. T. upon his amphibian calavera.

## World of Huck's Dad

### "The Adventures of Mark Twain."

by Jerry Allen (Little, Brown, 341 pp. \$4.50), is partly a narrative biography of Samuel L. Clemens that draws upon his autobiographical writings as well as other sources, partly a study of his social criticism. Our reviewer, Edward Wagenknecht, is the author of "Mark Twain, The Man and His Work."

By Edward Wagenknecht

JUST where Jerry Allen's "The Adventures of Mark Twain" is to stand upon the lengthening shelf of Twainia is somewhat doubtful, for though it is absorbingly interesting throughout, it is not all of a piece. She begins with the idea of producing a purely narrative work, based not only upon all that has been recorded by Mark Twain's biographers from Albert Bigelow Paine to Dixon Wecter, but also by what she believes to be the autobiographical material which Mark himself set down in his own books, both fiction and non-fiction. This method is justified to the extent that Mark Twain was one of the most autobiographical of writers, and one who created by dramatizing his own personality; but Miss Allen's use of it creates problems. The white-washing scene in "Tom Sawyer," for example, here presented as part of Mark's biography, was certainly not recorded by him with literal truthfulness; furthermore, it is a heavy handicap for any biographer to be

compelled to place her own paraphrase alongside what a great creative writer has already recorded in his own way.

There is a good deal of paraphrase in Miss Allen's pages, not only from Mark Twain but also from other writers. I must make it clear that I am not criticizing her for this: she could not have written her kind of book without it, and though there are places where I think she is wrong—the best critical opinion seems to be that Isaiah Sellers did not use the pen-name "Mark Twain" before Samuel L. Clemens, and that the killing of the soldier in "The Private History of a Campaign That Failed" is not fact but embellishment—I regard her method as a legitimate one and consider her to have used it conscientiously. If her book is mosaic work, it is mosaic work that is alive.

Then, at the beginning of her fourth division, she drops her chronological and narrative method altogether and jumps over nine years (which she takes up again, in rather zig-zag fashion, in her fifth and last book), and loops back to "A Connecticut Yankee," which she erroneously says Mark Twain considered his greatest book, and then to "Huckleberry Finn," both of which she studies largely for their sociological interest. The rest of Book IV is devoted to a study of Mark Twain's social criticism during his last years, from which many long extracts are given.

Miss Allen has not used the Mark Twain Papers at Berkeley, but she has used some unpublished material in the Berg Collection at the New York Public Library, and she has had the benefit of criticism and advice from Clara Clemens Samossoud. I suspect that she has quoted from both these sources, though her study is quite innocent of all documentation. In her preface she says that the "happenings" in her book "are sedulous as to fact, verified truth. Like the works of the author of 'Innocents Abroad,' it is laced around the edges with some verified embroidery." I confess I do not know what this means, but the most reasonable guess would be that, in trying to make her book read like a novel, the author has occasionally availed herself of novelistic license.

There is some rather unnecessary background material (heavily dependent upon Frederick Lewis Allen and Lloyd Morris), in the latter part of this book. The general reader will find this one of the most readable of all books about Mark Twain. The specialist will value it for its gusto and sympathy and for the odds and ends of information contained in it which are not elsewhere readily available.

# The Elusive General Washington

**"George Washington's America,"** by John Tebbel (E. P. Dutton. 478 pp. \$5), describes what the most-traveled American of his day saw on his journeys. In reviewing it, Carl Bridenbaugh, professor of history at the University of California at Berkeley, considers the strengths and weaknesses of the shelf of writing about our first President.

By Carl Bridenbaugh

AMERICAN history is particularly rich in good biographies. It is ironical, however, that definitive lives of the leading founders of the Republic are either still to be written or yet incomplete—such is the case with Jefferson, Hamilton, and especially George Washington. What today's average citizen wants is a readable and authoritative one-volume life of the man who, by common consent, is regarded as the greatest American.

The writing of a biography of George Washington poses certain difficult problems. Immediately after his death, Washington ceased to be a real personage and, shrouded in myths, became a figure so sacred that anyone attempting to evaluate his life and actions critically faced almost certain disapproval. As a soldier and a statesman he had a much longer public life than most men—forty-five years—and it was a crowded and eventful life. By no standard a literary man, he yet wrote a tremendous number of very good letters and received many more; the materials for his biography are not merely ample, they are formidable. Although he was a bear for paper work, Washington was primarily a man of action rather than contemplation, and his writings seldom afford even a glimpse of his inner being. Consequently he has always proved a baffling figure.

But we have yet to be told this by any biographer. Washington's life exhibits no critical problems like those of Jefferson and Hamilton. The problem is to grasp the essential man; it is one of synthesis and characterization. Here is where the late Douglas Southall Freeman's massive and useful study ending in 1783 fails him who would compress Washington into a single volume. The portion of his career

on which we sorely need a sound estimate is that from 1783 to his death, particularly his role as President of the infant United States, his concepts of government, his place as a party leader. For these years all we now have is a glimpse of the dignified classical silhouette of the Father of His Country.

What then can one read about George Washington? Of the one-volume lives, Paul Leicester Ford's "The True George Washington" (1896) is in many respects still the most satisfying; Shelby Little's "George Washington" and John C. Fitzpatrick's "George Washington Himself" were published for the Bicentennial of 1932. No writer, however, is likely to surpass the insights and literary charm of the forty pages of S. E. Morison's "The Young Man Washington" now happily reprinted in "By Land and By Sea" (1953). But here the list ends.

Most historical scholars have elected to write on one aspect of this busy life: on the soldier, the farmer, Washington and the West, the traveler. This latter feature concerns John Tebbel, in his new volume "George Washington's America." Many eighteenth-century Americans traveled this country far and wide, but the great Virginian outdid them all. Mr. Tebbel seeks to tell "the story of Washington's travels over the face of America, how he looked to the nation, and how the nation appeared to him. . . . Inevitably, of course, a biographical portrait emerges. . . ." This work is frankly aimed at a popular audience, not at schoolmen. Yet it is uncertain how much popular appeal the book will have because of the very nature of the author's conception. It does not appear to me to come off, being neither a good life of Washington nor a picture of his America from which the average reader can take away any connected impressions. Each episode chronicled is in itself entertaining, but a series of anecdotes requires a thread to join them in order to prevent confusion in the mind of the reader. There is nothing here to sustain interest. The book is reasonably accurate, the style is clear; but Mr. Tebbel is impaled on his literary device. His volume has no focus, no real point. The very large popular audience for a good one-volume work on George Washington is still to be satisfied.



—From "The Autobiography of George Washington"  
President Washington's watermark.

## Salutes to New Nature

**"New Green World,"** by Josephine Herbst (Hastings House. 272 pp. \$4), the first volume in the American Procession Series, is a biography of John Bartram, eighteenth-century naturalist. Below it is reviewed by Alan Devoe, author of "Our Animal Neighbors" and other volumes on nature.

By Alan Devoe

MOST of us who can read, or even peer with some attention at television, know at least a little about John James Audubon. That lyricist of the early American wilderness was a romantic figure, and has been romanticized. Fewer may know anything of Peter Kalm, the Swedish explorer-botanist who traveled the Hudson, the Blue Mountains, the Great Lakes and Niagara areas before 1750. Alexander Wilson, ornithologist? Recognition falters. Over the name of John Bartram, or that of his son William, it is likely to fail altogether.

The early naturalists of America, John Bartram especially, have been waiting for an appropriate rescue. This has come now, in "New Green World," at the somewhat unexpected hands of the novelist Josephine Herbst. As a card-carrying member of the Book Reviewers' Union, I am duly aware of the perils of enthusiasm and mindful of Rule 3, Section 8, which says: "Always hedge your superlatives and never go out on a limb." However, hang all this. Under the spell of "New Green World," coming simultaneously with the spell of the new green world now blossoming all around, let it be said at once and simply: This is an outstandingly fine book, a brilliant contribution to na-