

What? How? Who?

"Harvard Guide to American History," by Oscar Handlin, Arthur Meier Schlesinger, Samuel Eliot Morison, Frederick Merk, Arthur Meier Schlesinger, Jr., and Paul Herman Buck. (Harvard University Press. 689 pp. \$10), is a reference work for all students and writers in the field of American history. It is here reviewed by Samuel Flagg Bemis, co-author with the late Grace Gardner Giffin of the standard "Guide to the Diplomatic History of the United States, 1775-1921."

By Samuel Flagg Bemis

IN 1912 three distinguished professors of history at Harvard (two of them later Pulitzer Prize winners) published the famous Hart, Channing, and Turner "Guide to the Study and Reading of American History," which served a generation of teachers and students of history throughout the nation. Most of us were brought up on it in our formative years. Now it has become obsolete because of the pullulating mass of historical literature that has piled up in American libraries since then. Nobody can read it all. The only way to bring it under control is by historical organization and cooperation. Today six famous professors at the same university, five of them

already possessed of Pulitzer awards, have presented us with a new "Harvard Guide to American History" perfecting and bringing up to date the older, now out-dated publication.

Basically the work is a bibliography. About three-fifths of its pages are devoted to lists of books on American history from 1492-1952, topically and chronologically presented, chapter by chapter, and properly classified therein into categories of general works, special works, and bibliographical aids. Another two-fifths present a description and bibliography of "Materials and Tools" for the study and writing of American history. The smallest section is not the least instructive, the first two chapters which concern the nature of history and practical problems of research and writing. Here the student finds himself under safe and competent guidance insofar as cold print can furnish it. There is much more than cold print—there is get-up and go and inspiration to work.

THE reviewer may be blamed if he cannot discover any serious flaws in this most valuable and important guide which is bound to serve the study and writing of American history for decades to come. Perhaps it is not fair to note the lack of critical commentary for or discrimination among the titles listed in the bibliographical chapters; however useful, such apparatus might have expanded the labor, dimensions, and cost of the book beyond practical limits. But a listing of titles in chronological order of publication rather than in no accountable order, under each topic and in each category, would help to suggest at a glance the historiographical evolution of the subject.

There are those who would not accept the editors' division of historical sources into "two general categories: primary sources, or first-hand testimony; and secondary sources, or descriptions of an event based on primary sources." It is not so simple as that. Rather, an historical source is the trace of an event or an idea more or less close to the event or idea. The editors admit that the line between their two categories is often indistinct.

The index inevitably is a vital part of such a volume. The magnificent 140-page index seems to leave little to be desired.

Every serious student who can possibly afford it must have a copy of this new indispensable "Guide." Maybe it will pay back the high cost of purchase because it suggests where to look for financial grants and aids, that academic manna which falls so fruitfully from the heavenly foundations on the blessed and unblessed.



Bats and Balls

"Sports in American Life," by Frederick W. Cozens and Florence S. Stumpf (University of Chicago Press. 366 pp. \$5), is a study of games and recreation in the United States since 1900. Below it is reviewed by John R. Tunis, author of many sport stories and books about tennis.

By John R. Tunis

AT the outset, I must confess that I am staggered by the effort, labor, and research that went into the composition of Frederick W. Cozens's and Florence S. Stumpf's "Sports in American Life." There can't be any book, magazine, report, article, document, or monograph written on athletics in the past fifty years that the authors have not consulted and digested. As an example of the work involved, they quote among others, Dr. A. A. Brill, Dr. Karl Menninger, Frederick L. Allen, Mrs. Mary R. Beard, John Gunther, D. W. Brogan, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Ortega y Gasset, Margaret Mead, Lewis Mumford, Stanley Woodward, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Wayne Morse, Joyce Cary, and Geoffrey Gorer. There are excerpts from publications ranging from *Collier's* and *The Saturday Evening Post* to the *Industrial Sports Journal* and the *Annals of the American Academy of Political Science*.

For anyone interested in this side of our society—and who isn't?—there are things to be learned on every page. For instance, did you know there is a bowling alley in the White House? That golf equipment makes up 45 per cent of A. G. Spalding's business? That the Civilian Conservation Corps laid the foundation for skiing in the United States? That Biddy Basketball for boys between nine and twelve is growing, and that Iddy-Biddy Basketball for kids between five and eight has been organized? That "advertising artists dealt a death blow to the frail feminine figure clothed in diaphanous robes and veils and popularized in her stead the vivacious, rosy-cheeked athletic girl"?

This is interesting. Trouble is, it
(Continued on page 41)

FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT NO. 585

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 585 will be found in the next issue.

ZLJ IOY KLBI XPJI GY
SL ALI ZNJBI BYY, PAS

IOYA SYZNAY, GY SYZNAY

ZNJBI PAS IOYA BYY.

—GPVIYJ VNXXKPAA.

Answer to No. 584

You grow up the day you have your first real laugh—at yourself.—Ethel Barrymore.

Escape to the North

"Swamp Angel," by Ethel Wilson (Harper. 215 pp. \$3), is the story of a young woman who finds balm to soothe a broken marriage among the woods and streams of the Canadian north woods.

By Pamela Taylor

WHEN Maggie Vardoe left her second husband forever, a flight meticulously and long planned, down to its last detail, and with great good fortune carried out exactly as she had intended, it was a break for freedom, away from a situation which was no longer tolerable, even for a single day. Fleeing Vancouver, to which she proposed never to return, she headed for the Canadian north woods, where she had been happy as a child. It was not only freedom from an unbearable marital mistake she sought, it was freedom to make herself whole, to knit up the threads of her inner self, left frayed and ragged by the assaults of personal tragedy and unforgivable error. Her simple aim was self-preservation, an independent survival. But Maggie was not intended by Nature as a lone wolf. Young and attractive, she personified competence and compassion. People with problems turned to her as inevitably as she sought river and forest for comfort. As Maggie rebuilt her life, other peo-

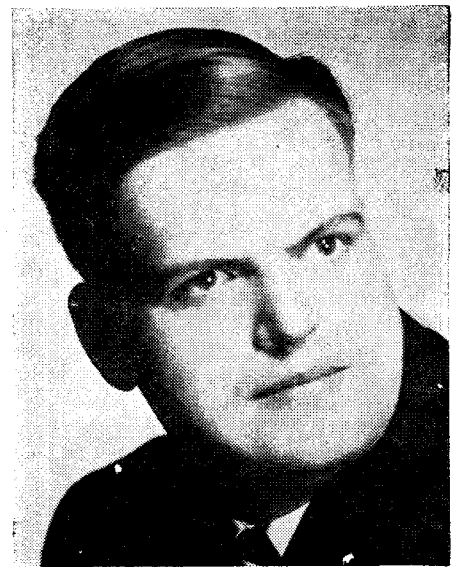
ple's lives became involved with hers.

The intricate pattern of mingled emotions, demands, and resentments forms the fabric of Ethel Wilson's "Swamp Angel." For one person at least the threads of love and hate were so twisted together that it was impossible to distinguish them. To another Maggie gave independence, the power to stand alone and walk as a man.

In many ways this deceptively casual story of the rebirth of a bruised and desperate adult is tantalizingly fragmentary. The characters appear, catch our imagination, and disappear with the maddening inconsequence of real life. A Chinese family is introduced, described with sympathy, abandoned. A secondary plot promises to be interesting but we no sooner begin to feel at home with the two lovers involved than they too disappear from view.

THE style in which "Swamp Angel" is written is a curiously varied one, illuminated by occasional flashes of most engaging originality. The author communicates her own knowledge and love of the deep woods and their waters, and of the pleasures of fishing, most persuasively, and she is most persuasive when describing their healing influence on the battered human spirit. Maggie is the first literary heroine I have encountered who is an expert at the delicate art of tying beautiful fishing flies.

The character who walks away with the book, however, is Mrs. Severance, of whose triumphs as part of a circus juggling act only the "Swamp Angel," an elegant little revolver, remains. It is probably the infrequent but always to be hoped-for appearance of unique and vivid creations like Mrs. Severance, and, for instance, Aunt Palm in "The Left Hand Is the Dreamer" and Grandma in "February Hill," that keeps those of us who are inveterate readers of fiction faithful to our addiction. When all too often novel after novel appears to have been written about the same set of stock figures, an unforgettable, outrageous, and pungent individual whom we can think back to with warmth and amusement compensates for all manner of technical weaknesses. "Swamp Angel," whatever its weakness, is an unusual and delightful book.



—Victor Berling.

Gilbert Rees—"extraordinary charm."

Kansas's Hard Life

"Respectable Women," by Gilbert Rees (Random House. 342 pp. \$3.50), is the story of a courageous woman who made a home for her brood in a raw Kansas town after the Civil War, as seen through the eyes of one of her daughters.

By Sara Henderson Hay

AT FIRST glance, Gilbert Rees's "Respectable Women" appears to be another candidate for that already groaning shelf of books about eccentric relatives and helter-skelter growings-up in out-of-the-way places and situations. It is a folksy reminiscence in the Mark Twain tradition, a mixture of ingenuousness and exaggeration, of naivete and salty wit, a homespun chronicle shot through with flashes of startling color and beauty. What gives it a difference is the subtle shift of emphasis from the story told to the storyteller; from a re-creation, however authentic and picturesque, of a colorful era to the poetic and sensitive creation of a character—the ostensible narrator, Clara Barnes. It can be safely assumed, I think, that Mr. Rees is not, at this writing, an old lady of 110 or thereabouts, reminiscing about life in Kansas around the 1870s. That he has made Clara, through the medium of her own speech and thought, as real as flesh and blood is a considerable feat of imaginative projection.

Clara was a little girl when the family came to Pike, Kansas, to the raw young Midwest in the latter part



—Howard Severson.

Ethel Wilson—"warmth, amusement."