

## Americana

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to do with tracing the influences by which over a period of some half dozen years the manner of life lived in the area underwent slow but inevitable changes until in the end what had been as wide-open and uninhibited an existence as the country had ever known was transformed into one not markedly different from that of the rest of the nation. There were of course a number of factors responsible for that change, the chief of which—as the author makes clear—was the arrival in ever-increasing numbers of women from the States, coming out to join their menfolk who had gone on ahead.

To the student of human behavior the story of that transformation from a predominantly male population to one in which the sexes were fairly evenly divided makes interesting and perhaps significant reading. For the changeover was not accomplished without a certain amount of strain and friction. Men who for a year or two had been completely free agents in not a few instances found it difficult to abandon the allure of the barroom, the gaming table, and the compliant ladies of pleasure for the simple joys of domesticity. Virtue was triumphant in the end but it was a long and sometimes painful process, and Mrs. Margo's narrative brings that seldom emphasized phase of the gold rush into sharp focus.

## Notes

**LINCOLN'S AIDE:** "Close up your affairs and go to Washington and wait for me. A. Lincoln." This note, written in December 1860, to a newspaper editor in his stripling twenties was the spark for the fascinating memoirs of William O. Stoddard, which now appear as "*Lincoln's Third Secretary*" (Exposition Press, \$3.50). The memoirs, covering the four years that Stoddard served on the White House staff (with his own latchkey to the Executive Mansion), were written in his old age for his family. They have been edited by his son, William O. Stoddard, Jr. While the editing is lacking in scholarship and while the foreword, by the Rev. Dr. Edgar DeWitt Jones, drips with unction, Stoddard's own unaffected narrative of his Lincoln days comes through virtually unscathed.

Stoddard met Lincoln in Illinois, wrote an editorial that had some influence in getting Lincoln nominated, campaigned vigorously in 1860, and

came to Washington as a clerk to sign land patents for the President. Actually he served principally as a correspondence and appointments secretary to Lincoln; on occasion he undertook inspection trips to the war theatres, dealt tactfully with Mrs. Lincoln when Nicolay and Hay could not, and, in general, served the President with shrewdness and understanding.

Stoddard writes simply and well about his experiences. He tells what he saw, what others said. He does not pretend to have been a big wheel, nor even an intimate of Lincoln. It is this absence of vainglory that gives these memoirs their readability. Stoddard, quite unconsciously, has written a first-class piece of reportage.

—ALDEN WHITMAN.

**YANKEE INVENTIVENESS:** A good share of the old Yankee genius was tinkering. The New Englander of two hundred and more years ago did it himself and took pride in the contraptions that resulted. "I could make anything a body wanted—anything in the world, it didn't make any difference," Mark Twain's Connecticut Yankee boasted "and if there wasn't any quick new-fangled way to make a thing I could invent one." This Yankee inventiveness has interested many historians, and now the list includes Edmund Fuller, whose "*Tinkers and Genius*" (Hastings House, \$4.50) is the most recent in the American Procession Series under the general editorship of Henry G. Alsberg.

Old New England was stony, mountainous, and wooded; it was sparsely populated. Its inhabitants had to improvise to overcome nature's handicaps, or to make virtues out of them. The geographical factor thus accounts in great measure for New Englanders' adaptations of the water wheel and the forge, and for their subsequent skill in mechanical matters.

The persons who wielded the skill and gave life to it—from David Bushnell and his submarine to Chauncey Jerome and his brass clocks through Charles Goodyear and his rubber process—were almost without exception interesting and crotchety in their own right. Mr. Fuller tells their stories well, with copious quotations from contemporary documents.

In concentrating on inventors as people Mr. Fuller has not neglected the technical aspects of their labors; but, happily for most laymen, he explains the inventions simply. The result is a lively and well-integrated chunk of our social and mechanical history, and a very respectable addition to the American Procession Series.

—A. W.

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