

in a real democratic situation. It represents the one-track support of some single transcendent value as the task of statesmanship, whereas almost invariably the real task has been the skilful reconciliation of conflicting values. It is ironical that Lincoln, the supreme reconciler of conflicting values, should be stereotyped as the supreme protagonist of a single one.

Mr. Donald's book is a powerful and effective antidote for this stereotyped view. But, as he would be the first to agree, the American imagination clings tenaciously to its myths of the Frontier Hero, the Man of Sorrows, and the predestined Emancipator. Diligent research and palpable truth face heavy odds when they encroach upon the will to believe. Even the ablest professor of Lincolology, when he performs the public service of challenging this will, must be prepared to incur the verdict pronounced by Mr. Mencken.

**GOLD PENINSULA:** For a quick summary of the history of America's Gold Pen-

insula Prof. Rembert W. Patrick's "Florida Under Five Flags" (University of Florida Press, \$3) is hard to beat. The book, which is a revised edition of the one issued in 1945, the centenary of Florida's admission to the Union, is a lavish, slick-paper production; it is crammed with illustrations and has five pretty good maps. Florida's five flags are, of course, those of Spain, France, Great Britain, the Confederacy, and the United States. The Confederate flag, until recently at least, appears to be the one of which Floridians are most proud, and this is reflected in both Professor Patrick's text and in the illustrations. He is, however, at pains to point out the lop-sidedness of the ante-bellum social and economic structure, and he does pay passing tribute to the state's Reconstruction Constitution. The prejudices of a bygone age die slowly, and in the case of Florida dramatic changes since World War II have hastened the process. Chief among these changes are population growth, urbanization, the millions in income

from commercial crops and big strides in industry. Professor Patrick deals extensively with this emergence of a "new" Florida, and is not unmindful of the problems it creates. Summary, not speculation, however, is the theme of this book, and it must be said that Professor Patrick has bound up a lot of history into a very tidy and readable package. —ALDEN WHITMAN.

**G. W. IN THE WEST:** Contemporary accounts of historical incidents garished with knowledgeable editing are delights both to the casual reader and the professional historian. Such a delight has been served up by Hugh Cleland in "George Washington in the Ohio Valley" (University of Pittsburgh Press, \$5). Mr. Cleland has bound together the basic documents pertaining to the seven phases of Washington's career that touched on the Western Country. Five of the trips dealt with military matters and two were on Washington's and others' land interests. What impresses the modern  
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**AMERICA WITHOUT BRAG:** With its more than 300 pictures and 50,000 words, Emerson M. Brooks's "The Growth of a Nation" (Dutton, \$5.95) is a capable and comprehensive once-over-lightly survey of America from the dinosaur to the Geiger counter. It differs principally from most of its predecessors in a heavily-populated field by accenting social history and social progress—labor and education, for instance,—each get much more space than the Civil War. The jacket declares that this is not a "brag book," and the description is accurate; Mr. Brooks points with pride, but he does not beat a drum. This is an ideal book to send to a friend abroad, and your next-door neighbor will be a better citizen for looking it over. So will you. The illustrations are well chosen and show a pleasant variety of method: photographs (including several excellent period shots), old prints, maps, cartoons, advertisements, title-pages.

One criticism can be leveled at "The Growth of a Nation" which applies to many picture-text books: Why cannot every photograph and print be fully described, located, and, if possible, dated, not necessarily in the descriptive text, but in a back-of-the-book summary? Mr. Brooks's failure to render this service is even exemplified in his text; his next-to-the-last picture is a photograph of the home in which the Eisenhower boys grew up, which is, one learns, "west of the Missouri River." Takes in quite a bit of territory. —JOHN T. WINTERICH.



—National Archives.

The Landing of Columbus.



—Latter Day Saints Church Photo.

Mormon Temple, Salt Lake City.



—Henry Ford Museum, Dearborn, Mich.

Henry Ford in His First Automobile, 1896.

# Ways to Understand Literary Greatness



**"Critical Approaches to Literature,"** by David Daiches (Prentice-Hall, 404 pp. \$6.50), is a well-known critic's examination of the chief contributions to literary theory in the classical and English languages. Joseph Wood Krutch, author of *"The Modern Temper,"* reviews it below.

By Joseph Wood Krutch

SOME of us are old enough to remember when the "New Criticism" meant Croce's literature-as-expression and when "the adventure of the soul among the masterpieces" was a respectable phrase. Since then a generation has grown up taking it for granted that "serious criticism" was invented by Pound and Eliot, and some members of it are going to be shocked to discover that David Daiches (whom they have already recognized as a "serious critic") has surveyed the whole field in a book called *"Critical Approaches to Literature"* and has come up with the conclusion that there is much to be said on both sides. Or, as he puts it: "There is no single 'right' method of handling literary problems, no single approach to works of literary art that will yield all the significant truths about them." Even to impressionism he grants a useful function and he is guilty also of a heresy which may seem even blacker to an age which regards criticism as the Queen of the Arts and Sciences and sometimes seems to assume that the function of poetry is to provide material for the critic. "Art is greater than its interpreters . . .," he writes. "While the scrutinizing of literary theories is a valuable philosophical activity . . . the active appreciation of literature is not always dependent on such theorizing.

*"Critical Approaches to Literature"* is a long solid book into which a great deal of labor and thought has obviously gone. While disclaiming completeness of any kind, it undertakes a careful examination of what the author regards as the fundamental contributions to literary theory in the classical and English languages, from Plato to Longinus and from Sidney to the youngest of the present generation. Students of literary esthetics and the history of ideas may

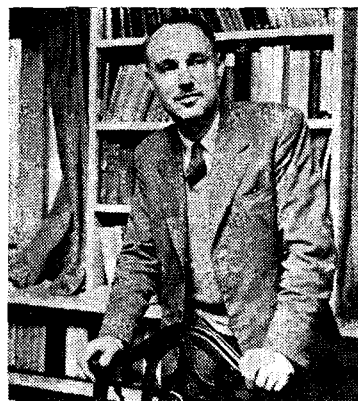
well find the most valuable (as it is the longest) portion of the study that in which the author traces through excerpts from key thinkers the modifications and enrichments of content in their attempts to deal with such recurring problems as the meaning of "imitation," the social, moral, and psychological function of literature, and the special kind of "truth" it sets forth. Mr. Daiches's statements of the problems and, especially, his analysis of the elusive differences between successive critics who often changed and deepened the concepts which they seemed to be borrowing from their predecessors, seems to me remarkably fresh and penetrating despite the fact that he is dealing with persons and ideas which have been dealt with so that they have become smoothly conventionalized. For all this, it may still be true that the most important aspect of his book and the one most likely to have a definite influence is that which involves his repudiation of that tendency to claim that they have discovered the one and only true way, into which some of the New Critics have tended to fall.

HE DOES not deny or even discount the genuineness of their contribution. Perhaps they only have, in our time, said new and true things about literature. Mr. Daiches discusses appreciatively their contributions and their timeliness at a moment when more traditional methods seem to have lost temporarily their ability to add anything to what they had already achieved. But he also points out very clearly and shrewdly the limitations of the method—especially the fact that

since it works best with certain kinds of literature, notably metaphysical poetry and symbolic prose fiction, it tends to conclude that therefore only the kind of poetry and the kind of fiction it can illuminate has a right to be called true fiction or true poetry. What is perhaps even more important, he protests against the blindness of those who refuse to admit that other methods can produce certain valuable results which their methods cannot. At one point in his favorable discussion of the achievements of the New Critics he remarks that a critic "who wishes to explain 'The Waste-land' to readers brought up on Palgrave's 'Golden Treasury'" will have to use the New Critic's methods. He might have added that nowadays the problem is more likely to be how to explain "The Golden Treasury" to readers brought up on "The Waste-land" and that for this task other methods are necessary.

In his autobiography Yeats announces that the intellectual life begins for us when we say "Thou fool!"—though he fails to add that according to the Bible this must mean that an intellectual life puts us in danger of hell-fire. His dictum was accepted by many New Critics as a working principle and it may even be that for a time it was an effective one. When Eliot wanted to protest that the romantic stress on the personality of the poet and on the abandonment to emotion had been somewhat overdone he would not have got as much attention by saying just that as he did get by pontificating: "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality." His maddening dogmatism was effective just because it was maddening and he often ended by persuading those whom he provoked into arguing with him.

But the New Critics are no longer voices crying in the wilderness. They purvey the current orthodoxy and they no longer need to overstate their case or to claim to have said the last word. The time has come when their method and their aspect of the truth should be put in perspective and given its place in the continuing but endless attempt to understand literary greatness. Mr. Daiches's book implies a plea for just that.



—Erich Hartmann.

David Daiches—"fresh and penetrating."