

"I'm certainly relieved to know you're herbivorous."

knowledge of our native wild flowers, being without it seems impossible to conceive. And yet nowadays many do not know it. Here in one volume is a superb pictorial presentation of some 400 wild flowers, of which 364 are in color that is extraordinary for fidelity and showing the salient features. Index cross reference sends the inquirer to the descriptive data: popular name, botanical name, family, roots, stalks, leaves, flowers, fruits, variants, heights, something of soil and habitat, range, season of bloom. Moreover, the introductory section succinctly presents the botanical structure of plants, and there is sufficient data as well on changes taking place and the essentials of conservation to provide a warning to those who would strip our wilderness heritage.

These are the days of specialists, and this is as true in gardening as elsewhere. The herb gardener has a special treat in store in Elizabeth S. Hayes's *"Spices and Herbs Around the World"* (Doubleday, \$5.95) though it is not strictly speaking a garden book. Here are legends, historical data, and information on the cultivation and uses of herbs dating back to "Gerard's Herball" (1597-1633). Besides a fragrant miscellany of unusual recipes, wit and fancy, the book also contains a Herb Growing Chart. Not so new is a more comprehensive garden-cum-cookbook in this field: Dorothy Childs Hogner's infectious charming *"A Fresh Herb Platter"* (Doubleday, \$3.95), which discusses vegetables and herbs, garden salads, and the possibilities of herbs in pots, window boxes, and terrace gardens. Other areas of specialization are covered in Roy Genders's *"Miniature Roses"* (\$3.95), *"Gladioli and the Miniatures"* (\$4.95), H. Clifford Crook's

*"Campanulas and Bellflowers in Cultivation"* (\$2.50), Paul Fischer's *"Variegated Foliage Plants"* (\$3.50), A. T. Johnson's *"Hardy Heaths"* (\$2.50)—all published by St. Martin's Press. They are practical in approach and factual regarding selection of species, cultivation, propagation, and directions when and where to plant them. A final recommendation in a special field is Bernice Brilmayer's *"All About Vines and Hanging Plants"* (Doubleday, \$5.95). Everything one needs to know about vines and the increasingly popular hanging plants is here—how to use them, what to use and where, propagation, pests and culture, habits of growth, handling, pruning—including much information I have sought in vain elsewhere. A useful group of lists and sources makes this a practical addition to the garden shelf.

There's a warm spot in my heart for those books that don't quite qualify as garden books, though they are the very soul of gardeners. An example is Buckner Hollingsworth's *"Her Garden Was Her Delight"* (Macmillan, \$4, to be published May 21). John Bartram, an internationally known American botanist before the Revolution, wrote the title words about Martha Logan, an early Charleston florist, and here, in this wholly unexpected sort of book, are brief stories about notable women gardeners, botanists, agriculturists, artists, from the days of the Massachusetts Bay Colony almost to the present. It makes a composite picture, drawn from fragmentary evidence, sometimes too hesitant, sometimes verging on the sentimental, but providing piquancy and unusual fare.

And now for those tempting books one buys to give to a very special friend and then duplicates because one cannot

part with the first. Edwin A. Menninger, who belongs to a family famous in medicine but is himself a naturalist, plant explorer, and journalist, with a special hobby of tropical horticulture, shares a lifelong passion in his fascinating *"Flowering Trees of the World"* (Hearstside, \$18.95). And to those of us who have yearned for just such a book on returning from the tropics, here is a dream fulfilled. Mr. Menninger describes 1,000 species in 500 genres; he tells his reader what he needs to know and recounts a great deal of personal and botanical history. For practical use, he also discusses the adaptability and the use, culture and limitations of some of these trees for other climates. It is a valuable book in an almost untouched area. Another book both practical and lavish is the long-awaited *"Rhododendrons of the World,"* by David G. Leach (Scribners, \$25). The author is a widely known hybridizer; the illustrator, Edmond Amateis, is equally equipped for his contribution: diagrams, sketches, maps, charts in color, and sixteen pages of halftones. For amateurs there is all the information they could ask on suitable varieties, where to get them, how to use them; for professionals 148 species are described, and chapters are given to propagation, nutrition, production, and landscaping. And, finally, Georgina Masson, whose *"Italian Villas and Palaces"* delighted us several years ago, has produced its companion in *"Italian Gardens"* (Abrams, \$17.50), illustrated sumptuously with 213 beautiful photographs. Its fascinating text progresses historically and regionally, evidencing scholarship and a sense of the unity of architecture and landscaping. It is a fitting book with which to end our garden tour.

#### FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT NO. 977

*A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 977 will be found in the next issue.*

QDK XQ XHLNGKCBRGK, RFL  
LDBL XQ DKC NHGA MBFGL.  
LBGKACBHT.

*Answer to Literary Crypt No. 976*

*Your ignorance cramps my conversation.*

—ANTHONY HOPE.

## Before the Clash with Aaron Burr

**"Alexander Hamilton: The National Adventure, 1788-1804," by Broadus Mitchell** (Macmillan. 555 pp. \$12.50), the concluding volume of a major biography, presents the first Secretary of the Treasury in a more sympathetic light than he has customarily been accorded. Trevor Colbourn teaches colonial history at Indiana University.

By TREVOR COLBOURN

FIVE years ago Broadus Mitchell published the first volume of his Hamilton biography. Ironically, 1957 was also the year selected by the Congress of the United States to celebrate the Bicentennial of our first Secretary of the Treasury. The Congress, as Professor Mitchell demonstrated, was two years late. Now, with his biography completed, we can attempt an evaluation of his subject and his treatment.

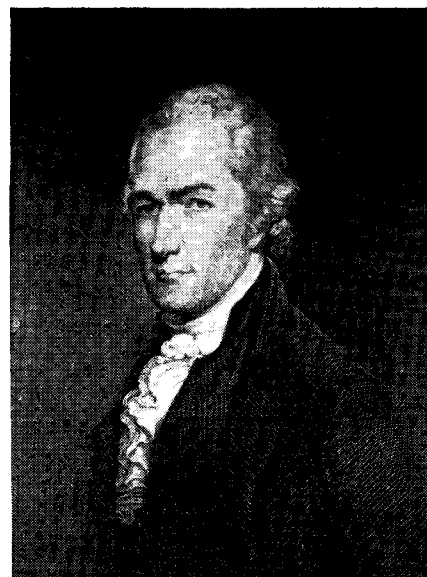
Mitchell certainly has little serious competition. The few Hamilton biographies predating his are either too brief to be adequate or too partisan to be accurate. Alexander Hamilton has not enjoyed a very good historical press. Too often he has been known for the modern political company he keeps: when right-wing politicoes look for a patron saint of greater antiquity and less radicalism than Lincoln, Hamilton usually gets their votes. His contempt for democracy (not so unusual in the eighteenth century) has added to his notoriety. While he may not have said, "Your people, sir, your people is a great beast," he had no respect for "the majesty of the multitude." There is, as one recent writer observed, no way around "the unflinching bluntness of Hamilton's conservatism."

What, after all, can be said for Hamilton? He was born in 1755. His mother was not married to his father for the simple reason that she was already married to another. (One imaginative soul suggested George Washington sired Hamilton, which would have made for an interesting West Indian version of "George Washington slept here.") Hamilton participated in the American Revolution and served as aide de camp to General Washington until he found the role inconvenient. He disapproved

of the democratic tendencies of the Constitution of 1787, but reconciled himself to fighting for its ratification. Without Hamilton's efforts New York would not have entered the new Union, and his contribution to the Federalist Papers is not to be disregarded. The final sixteen years of his short life form the subject of Mitchell's newest volume. This covers Hamilton's important if controversial work at the Treasury, his various contributions to partisan diplomacy and politics, the Maria Reynolds affair, and developments leading to the final fatal clash with Aaron Burr.

The ingredients that have made Alexander Hamilton so unappetizing a biographical dish are readily apparent. As Gouverneur Morris recorded, Hamilton was "indiscreet, vain, opinionated . . . opposed to republican and attached to monarchical government." Just as Morris had difficulty composing the funeral oration in 1804, so has Mitchell had to struggle with Hamilton's many "human flaws." The result is a lengthy, detailed biography that reads often like an extended apology for its subject.

This is not to deny Mitchell's study its many virtues. The treatment of Hamilton's background is probably the best yet. The account of his financial program is particularly helpful, and Mitchell does well in explaining his hero's collectivist notions. Hamilton owed much to mercantilism and had little use for the *laissez-faire* views of later admirers. But this hardly qualifies Hamilton for the "liberal" tag Mitchell tries to hang on him. The author makes an interesting case for Hamilton's using the wealthy ("for noble purpose") rather than being used by them. And he stresses the pressures under which the Secretary labored at the Treasury: even the gallant Henry Lee tried to take advantage of Hamilton's friendship to secure tips for speculation. Perhaps, admitted Lee, such inquiries may be improper, but "I do not think them so." Hamilton gently demurred, and reminded Lee of Caesar's wife: "The most innocent things may be misinterpreted." Hamilton may have entertained dangerous friends, but he had a powerful regard for his personal integrity. Mitchell's study suggests that where his honor was concerned Hamilton was too thin-skinned for a public man; the marvel is not that Burr shot Alexander Hamilton in 1804 but that



Hamilton—"collectivist notions."

someone else failed to oblige earlier.

If it is possible to argue for Hamilton's "sharp vision of an infant nation's need for national strength, both economic and military," it is more difficult to explain away Hamilton's ill-judged excursions into personal politics. His patriotism does not excuse his usurpation of the functions of the Department of State. Mitchell admits Hamilton *may* have been indiscreet in his conversations with British Minister Hammond, but he then tries to justify Hamilton's behavior with the remark that "the health of the Treasury depended more on foreign affairs than successful conduct of foreign relations hinged on Treasury operations." This is a little like suggesting that Douglas Dillon should today be telling Dean Rusk what to say to the Russians.

Mitchell's handling of the Reynolds affair is in a similar vein. Hamilton's liaison with Mrs. Reynolds is spun out over some twenty sympathetic pages, the upshot of which is that "passion set aside intelligence and judgment," but that Hamilton's "voluntary" public confession five years later was "so explicit as to disarm censure." In fact, Mitchell marvels at Hamilton's fertile contrivance in carrying on this amorous intrigue at the same time he met his public responsibilities. "The episode," concludes Mitchell, "is strange on several counts," but one count omitted is Hamilton's profession of proud innocence because Mrs. Reynolds's black-mailing procurer of a husband was denied the Treasury job he demanded. Hamilton and his newest biographer really seem to believe that this was "a conspiracy of vice against virtue."

Mitchell has every obligation to explain Hamilton's side of controversial issues, and no one has done it so well. But a biographer has a greater obliga-