

The AMEN CORNER



One of the pleasantest features of life at Oxford in the now receding days when the Oxonian was an undergraduate was the existence of a repertory company at the Oxford Playhouse. Last winter one of its younger members came to Broadway. "Here is a Hamlet," wrote one critic (Mr. Gilbert Gabriel), "all told as fine and fresh and stirring as the oldest of us can remember, as the youngest of us can expect to see in years to come."

Miss Rosamond Gilder, of the *Theatre Arts Monthly*, thought the same, and she also thought what a pity it is that not only the effect but the details of great performances have never been caught and preserved. The result is a book such as has never been done before, *John Gielgud's Hamlet: A Record of Performance*, by Rosamond Gilder, with Notes on Production, Costume and Traditional Business by John Gielgud.¹ With John Gielgud's notes, Miss Gilder presents a minute description of what he did on the stage in actual performance, and how he did it. On the pages opposite is the complete cut version of *Hamlet* used by Gielgud. Illustrations show the actor in costume, some of the sets designed for the New York production by Jo Mielziner, and diagrams of the stage.

"The ultimate fascination of the theatre," writes Miss Gilder in her Foreword, "lies in the fact that it is made up in equal parts of poetry and greasepaint, of inspiration and box-office receipts, of dust and divinity. . . ."

"Some of the flavour of that kingdom is brought to these pages, by Mr. Gielgud's notes and comments, written between performances, on trains, in the dressing room, jotted down when *Hamlet* should have been resting but John Gielgud, electrified by a new idea, would give him no peace. These reflections on the past, self-criticisms, advice to directors; these indications of a wide reading, of an eager and retentive mind, of a keen judgment and a sensitive intelligence, add an invaluable sense of back-stage living to this record of an outstanding performance."

The Oxford University Press² has just published also a translation of Dr. Levin L. Schücking's *The Meaning of Hamlet*.³ We enjoyed being able to say "I told you so," when we read the review of this book in the *Theatre Arts Monthly*. The news of this book, says the reviewer, "hardly incites a public thrill." But "a few pages and the reader has a surprise that should make him ever wary of foregone conclusions. Dr. Schücking speaks and thinks, first of all, with the grace and lucidity one associates with Lemaître and Anatole France. . . . It will be some time before another volume on *Hamlet* appears which is so certain to please both the æthete in search of the writing and the Elizabethan specialist on the lookout for a fresh and sane critical approach."

THE OXONIAN.

(¹) \$3.00. (²) 114 Fifth Avenues. (³) \$2.25.

The Empire State

HISTORY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK. Edited by Alexander C. Flick. New York: Columbia University Press. 1937. 10 vols. \$50 the set.

Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS

THESE ten handsome blue volumes, nearly 4,000 pages in all, brought out under the expert editorship of the State Historian of New York and the scholarly auspices of the State Historical Association, are indispensable to all libraries of American history which pretend to reasonable completeness, and to all special students of New York affairs. The work is as able and complete as any planned on these particular lines could be. The plan, it must be said, falls short of being ideal. Nearly twenty years ago Illinois created a centennial commission which, choosing Clarence W. Alvord as editor, executed much the best State history yet written. This was done by appropriating generous funds, hiring a corps of research workers, assembling a veritable library of material at the State University, and inducing seven capable men to spend years in writing six thorough, carefully unified volumes. Circumstances made it impossible to duplicate that effort in New York. Dr. Flick, Dr. Dixon Ryan Fox, and the other planners, beginning in the very heart of the depression, took the next best course; they designed a composite history which should enlist nearly a hundred writers, each contributing one or more chapters. This meant some raggedness, some gaps, some repetition; but Dr. Flick's skill has kept the inevitable asymmetry and unevenness near a minimum. While the volumes of the Illinois history can be read through with unflagging interest, these must rather be used as a work of reference; but they make a good reference work.

At its best it is extremely good. To the first volume Arthur C. Parker contributes three chapters on prehistoric man, the general culture of the Indians, and the special culture of the Iroquois, which are as authoritative as anything ever written on pre-Columbian history. In the third volume Evarts B. Greene draws a delightful picture of New York City in the late days of British rule, when Cherokee chiefs were taken to see "Richard III" at the John Street Theatre, beer and grog were served to the populace on the King's birthday in 1766, and the young ladies spent boisterous evenings at Ranelagh and Vauxhall Gardens. A brilliant chapter in the fourth volume by Hoffman Nickerson on the principal New York campaigns of the Revolution offers a notable appraisal of Washington's generalship and of the reasons for Burgoyne's defeat. He thinks that "Gentleman Johnny" might have done better

with a smaller army. The campaigns of Clinton and Sullivan against the Tories and Indians in western New York take on richer significance as treated by Dr. Flick, though Walter Butler loses much of his picturesque reputation for barbarity. Dr. A. J. Wall explains with much new information the failure of the various British offers of an olive branch, while Dr. Flick elucidates the far more remarkable failure of the loyalists—rich, cultured, numerous, and highly-placed—to give any really effective aid to the empire for which they lost everything.

A striking chapter by John Pell in the fifth volume also throws new light on the secession of the Vermonters from New York. In a period when land speculation was the great American financial sport, two royal governors, Wentworth and Colden, issued two sets of grants to two sets of speculators. The Yorkers got the law on their side, the Yankees got possession; and New York surveyors were, as Ethan Allen put it, "chastised with the twigs of the wilderness." A veritable little republic sprang up, whose burghers took equal joy in repulsing the British and in defeating a small New York army at Wallamoosac. Mr. Pell does justice to the valors, the greeds, and the humors of the contest. In this same volume Julius Pratt treats with shrewd brevity the War of 1812. Many New Yorkers were sorry to see it begun—even on the western frontier the New England element was reluctant—and more still were sorry when the State's generals and militia covered themselves with disgrace. But the war cost New York less than two millions, manufacturing flourished, upstate farmers sold their produce at high prices (often to the enemy), and the whole State felt happier after it than before. In both the fifth and sixth volumes Harry J. Carman presents essays on the rise of the factory system which are replete with new facts. Here we learn how the Havemeyers and Colgates came from England at the end of the 18th century to set up in sugar-refining and soap-making; how Ezekiel Case commenced glovemaking in Gloversville in 1803; how Chickering went into piano-making; how Troy's horseshoes came to mark the high-ways of the globe; and how East River shipbuilders gave the Czar his proudest ship and France her first steam ram. Noble E. Whitford tells better than any earlier writer how the Erie Canal made New York great. Two complementary chapters by Edward Hungerford on the prosperous history of the New York Central and the sorry tale of the Erie have equal expertness.

These are but some of the more striking of the hundred chapters. Others of sterling merit might be named. As we should expect, the latter part of the his-

tory is not so good as the first. The narrative grows too massive and complex to be treated in a series of detached essays; too much of New York's history merges with the oft-told elements of national history; space becomes too limited for the record of ten million people. The first six volumes, bringing the story roughly to 1850, are sufficiently full and fairly well unified. But the remaining four are not enough for the past eighty years. Readers of the seventh volume find the pace accelerating to seven-league strides. Dr. P. G. Archamphugh and Milledge L. Bonham deal with New York's part in the slavery struggle 1850-60, and her role in the Civil War—both excellently; but thirty pages each are not enough, especially for Dr. Bonham. The immense importance of the war as a turning point in New York history, especially industrial and financial, cannot properly be brought out. Later on, political and constitutional history from 1860 to the present day must be covered in four chapters—140 pages for the long eventful period from Fernando Wood to Governor Lehman. And the three last volumes, while full of good things, are decidedly a jumble. They contain a series of essays on specialized topics—on banking, public utilities, humane institutions, medicine, women's affairs, newspapers, labor, sports and recreation (a particularly good chapter by John A. Krout), the port of New York, and so on. However good (and a few of them tend to be mere fact-catalogues) these essays have little organic relation to one another; they read too much like sections in an encyclopedia.

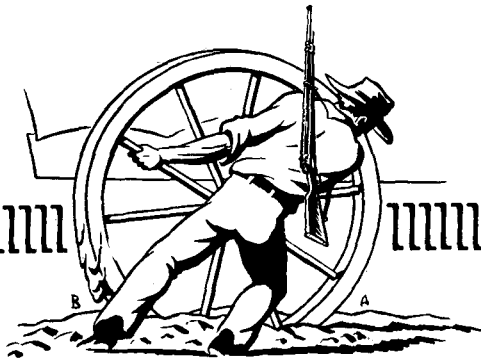
Much of this was inevitable under the plan adopted—and it was the only possible plan. And after all defects are allowed for, the handsomely printed set represents an achievement of enduring value, for which Dr. Flick deserves the thanks of the State. Hitherto the student has needed a library if he would learn much about New York's past; now he can find most of the facts (at least down to 1875) within these ten covers.

Allan Nevins, professor of American history at Columbia University, has twice won the Pulitzer Prize for biography with his lives of Cleveland and Hamilton Fish.

**SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S
DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 188)**

**THOMAS WYATT—
"WHAT SHOULD I SAY?"**

What should I say,
Since faith is dead,
And truth away
From you is fled?
Should I be led
With doubleness?
Nay, nay, mistress.
I promised you,
And you promised me,
To be as true
As I would be;
But since I see
Your double heart,
Farewell my part!



A Book-of-the-Month Club selection.

The Turning Wheels

By **STUART CLOETE**

"A REMARKABLE first novel . . . the fruit of vast knowledge and experience. It is tough-fibred, brutal, and melodramatic, but as luxuriant as the jungle and at times as terrible and beautiful. Everything South African is caught in its capacious net: veld, desert, and jungle; savages, animals wild and tame, and animal-like vegetation; mysticism and magic, horror and humor, danger and daring. The outstanding quality is gusto, and yet the complex story is most artfully handled. The passions of Sannie van Reenen and her four lovers are central and all the rest of the novel is fed by them: — the Wife of Bath philosophy of the immensely comic Tante Anna; the mixture of wisdom and charlatany of Rinkels, the amusing Kaffir witch-doctor; the fidelity of Jackalaas and his pet lion; the tragedy of the girl Sara: each is projected in the round and each has its own complete story . . . Sex, love, reproduction, and death are the theme, but zest of living is the spirit. It is a grand yarn."
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The Background of the Solid South

*DIXIE AFTER THE WAR. By Myrta
Lockett Avary. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1937. \$3.*

Reviewed by **GEORGE FORT MILTON**

THE eagerness with which our reading public buys nearly everything that is written about what we might properly term America's war and its aftermath explains the republication of Mrs. Avary's volume. At the time of its initial publication, it was an interesting and significant book, and much of its material was distinctly useful in giving the post-Reconstruction generation a better understanding of those stormy days of un cushioned change.

The best of the book is its personal narrative. At the end of the War Myrta Lockett was a little girl on "Lombardy Grove," a large plantation in Southern Virginia, at the crossing of thoroughfares which linked North Carolina and the Old Dominion. Thus her home was a focus for the heartsick, footsore soldiers making their way back to ruined farms and homes, and thereafter for judges, lawyers, and politicians traveling from courthouse to courthouse. So this little girl was for years at a post-war listening post; to her ears came the complaints, the grievances, the typical sagas of disaster of the prostrate South. Later she became journalist, editor, and author, and at the turn of the century began to mobilize her childhood memories and put on paper her personal recollections of the pathos and privations of those direful days in the desolated South. These personal records she supplemented by a tour of several Southern States collecting data on the Freedmen's Bureau, Negro schools, the old Ku Klux Klan, Black and Tan conventions, Reconstruction elections, and other phenomena in the twelve years between Lincoln and Rutherford B. Hayes.

When I first read the book about fifteen years ago, I found it quite a thrilling record of Reconstruction's evils. But I finished this present rereading with a feeling that did not altogether maintain my early enthusiasm. The main trouble is that Mrs. Avary has given only a partial view of the Reconstruction South. She chiefly reflects the experiences and attitudes of the ex-"slaveocracy"—the former owners of many slaves. In view of her background, it would have been next to impossible for her to do otherwise, and she must be acquitted promptly of any conscious purpose to limit or distort. The South's long-continued bitterness is popularly ascribed to its failure on the battlefield. Yet the evidence indicates that an overwhelming majority of the men who fought and lost returned home willing to accept the result and to go forward as loyal citizens of a reconstituted United States. Reconstruction, not Civil War, caused the chasm which for decades tempered reunion with bitterness and regret. In their efforts to reorganize overnight the whole structure of Southern society, the Reconstructionists showed a naive and sophomoric sociology, a lack of understanding of the processes

of successful adjustment, which was bound to cause their enterprise to fail.

Mrs. Avary gives us a graphic contemporary picture of these years of Southern travail and national disgrace. When one reads it, and others like it, one can readily understand the bitterness of the "unreconstructed Rebel" and the psychic background of the Solid South.

George Fort Milton, editor of The Chattanooga News, is the author of "Eve of Conflict," a book on Stephen A. Douglas.

Authors of the Week

Stuart Cloete

In addition to the information about Mr. Cloete given by the reviewer, a few particulars may be added. He was born in Paris forty years ago, and educated in England. In South Africa after the war, he managed a large cattle ranch on the Transvaal, and later ran a dairy farm near Johannesburg. To familiarize himself with writing he worked for five years at serials for London periodicals before he started his novel "The Turning Wheels." He hopes to write a series of novels about the Boers, bringing their history down to date.

Thomas H. Benton

Thomas Hart Benton is a Missourian born in Neosha in 1889. He left the Western Military Academy at Alton, Illinois, to work as a cartoonist in Joplin, Missouri. His career as a professional painter began in 1912. He has directed the Department of Painting in the Kansas City Art Institute since 1935. His most important murals have been done for the New School for Social Research, the Whitney Museum, and the Indiana Building at the Chicago World's Fair.

Meade Minnigerode

This writer, who has made many an excursion into history and biography, is a celebrated son of Eli, having graduated from Yale in 1910. He was born in England, and his earlier schooling was at Harrow. He comes however of an old Southern American family. During the war he was representative in France of the U. S. Shipping Board and also, as First Lieutenant, with the American Red Cross, with the A. E. F., and in service with the French Army. He received the French Commemorative Medal and French Victory Medal. He married in 1932 and lives today in Essex, Conn.

Albert Halper

Having worked seven nights a week for fourteen months on a post-office night-shift, Albert Halper resigned the moment they notified him of his promotion to a regular clerkship at increased wages. That was because he had taken the job only to "find himself" in relationship to life in general. Born in Chicago, August 3, 1904, he had drifted from job to job, some of which were: factory hand, office worker, salesman, jewelry clerk, and (which qualified him to write "The Chute") order picker in a mail-order house; just as his experience as shipping-clerk in an electrotpe foundry enabled him to write "The Foundry."