

eccentric sexton of New York's Grace Church, Isaac Hull Brown, who knew how to keep a highly social congregation in its place.

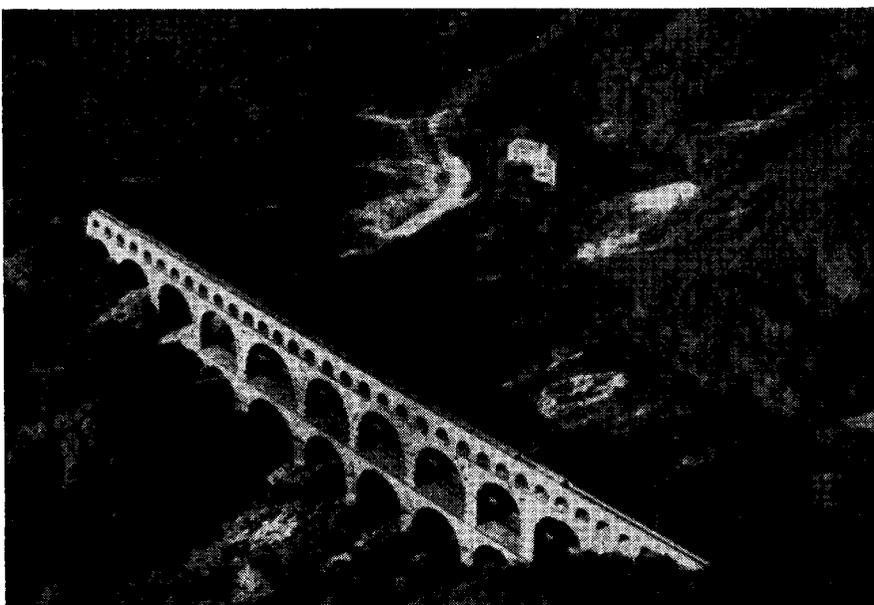
Here and there are some items that may be new even to veteran Carmer readers. From the Hamilton College *Alumni Review* comes a memoir of his Hamilton classmate (Class of 1914) John V. A. Weaver, a pioneering poet in the American vernacular who died too young, and, from the same periodical, a portrait of Melancthon Woolsey Stryker, the fiercely individualistic president of that proudly individualistic little college in the Carmer-Weaver days.

INEVITABLY, those veteran readers will regret certain omissions. If one may be so impertinent as to suggest to a writer that he should have selected one thing rather than another from among his own works, I would have included "The Last Time I Saw Lon Whiteman," from *Dark Trees*, a stirring account of one of the great confidence men in American history, a Hamilton man (Class of 1881) who has had no peer, I venture to say, among the alumni of any other institution; and "The Cardiff Giant," from *Lonesome Drum*. If it was a question of space, either could have sat in for an untypical Carmer piece, a profile of Fiorello La Guardia that doesn't tell the reader more about the Little Flower than he was likely to have known before.

There is, of course, no reason why those who are now being introduced to Carl Carmer cannot go back and browse for themselves in *Dark Trees* and *Lonesome Drum*, both of which have been reissued in paperback by his present publisher, and *The Hudson*, perhaps the best of the Rivers of America series, and his early volumes of verse, *French Town* and *Deep South*, where they will find that his poetic gift, represented in these pages by such delicate lyrics as "Song for Orleans County" and "Boy Reading," has done much to give the body of his work its tone.

In any case, there is more than enough in this Carmer self-selection to hold its readers, old and new, as one must be held by the kind of narrative artist the Upstate boy became following a childhood rich in family love and lore. Do I hear somebody saying that, considering New York State's stunning variety, its long history, exciting topography, bustling cities, and lonely countrysides, a writer exploring it really should not have had too many problems? That all he had to do was choose his fields of interest and go to work? The fact remains that no one has done it as Mr. Carmer has, that on his home grounds, all the way from Manhattan to the North Country looking over into Canada, there has been no one like him.

—JOHN K. HUTCHENS.



—From the book.

Roman aqueduct in Gaul—an "obsession with war and with order."

The Caesars' Last Stand

The Mask of Jove: A History of Graeco-Roman Civilization from the Death of Alexander to the Death of Constantine, by Stringfellow Barr (Lippincott. 598 pp. \$15), analyzes and interprets the Roman Empire through close examination of the lives of seven key figures. Orville Prescott was for many years book critic of the *New York Times*.

By ORVILLE PRESCOTT

SOMETIMES it seems as if there were as many ways of writing history as there are of writing tribal lays. In every generation new histories are written of old subjects, incorporating the findings of recent scholarship and reflecting the emotional and political climate of the moment. And individual historians delight in different points of emphasis and in different personal interpretations. It is fitting as well as inevitable that contemporary historians should write with one eye on their major topic and one on the tempests and torments of our own time.

Stringfellow Barr, who has been president of St. John's College and professor of humanities at Rutgers University, writes of the ancient Mediterranean world with awesome learning and constant preoccupation with the moral failures and political follies that destroyed

the last, best hope of the Greeks and Romans. Five years ago his majestic history of Greece, *The Will of Zeus*, was published. Its sequel, *The Mask of Jove*, is a history of Rome which is also a history of Greek culture as it influenced Rome and as it was transformed by Romans.

This long, solid, stately, and continuously interesting work is an impressive achievement. Never intended as a basic history, it ignores much with which educated readers should in theory be familiar, and would best be approached as a supplement to and a commentary on simpler, more directly chronological accounts. Mr. Barr does maintain a continuous narrative, but only on his own terms. He has selected seven key individuals for extended discussion and has described the events of their times through their lives and the ideas for which they stood. These seven men are Cicero, Augustus, Jesus, Paul, Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius, Diocletian, and Constantine.

Each of these figures is the subject of a brilliant essay in which Mr. Barr roams at length across the concurrent state of civilization in the ancient world, interpreting and analyzing political, military, moral, economic, literary, and artistic affairs. In the process he quotes copiously from the famous Latin and Greek writers of the time, and from many obscure authors known only to scholars. Mr. Barr's reflections are always inter-

esting and often provocative. His quotations are frequently fascinating.

But such a method of writing history means that many celebrated personages are granted short shrift. Julius Caesar himself is mentioned only briefly, and many others are merely referred to in passing. One century is covered in a few pages, but with concise brilliance: "Between the death of Marcus Aurelius in 180 and the accession of Diocletian in 285 . . . thirty-two emperors reigned. Of these thirty-two emperors, only two certainly died a natural death."

Commenting on the chaos and slaughter of the third century, Mr. Barr says: "Back of the monotonous violence . . . lay the fact that Rome's habit of conquest, which enabled her to take over first peninsular Italy and finally the many peoples and great wealth that Augustus controlled, had become a sort of reflex action. Rome had gobbled up many countries; and once the habit of violence and the respect for force and the love of pillage had been thwarted by the sea or the desert or by the uninviting poverty of Barbaria, the Roman Empire started gobbling up itself."

Mr. Barr always keeps in mind the Romans' obsession with war and with order. Their obsession with war had won them an empire and wealth. Their concern for order had been the source of the great system of Roman law, which, Mr. Barr thinks, has been vastly overpraised. Roman law was rooted in injustice. The wealthy and the poor received different punishments for the same crimes. Far more than under any subsequent legal system, the law was conceived of as a bulwark for property. And it permitted and even approved of many monstrous cruelties.

The privileged top layer of society became corrupt and depraved several centuries before the fall of Roman power. How much this decadence hastened Rome's decline the author does not attempt to estimate. He is content to discuss the many contributing factors, among them the loss of faith in the state religion and in the legal system, the economic and population decline, plagues.

The Mask of Iove is a magisterial work that requires prolonged attention and rewards it.

State lines, as recent election returns from the South have indicated, will not vanish very easily.) Could we have two supreme coordinate powers in one? Could representative government stretch across a continent? And, returning to the most troublesome of questions, how could sovereign states be combined with an effective federal government?

In the murky heat, ranged before green-covered tables in the State House at Philadelphia, they deliberated. Most of them were upper middle class, although many were land-poor. They feared the leveling influence of mass democracy, rowdiness, and violence. Yet their concern was not for themselves alone. Throughout, their thought, fervently voiced, was for the freedom and happiness of the people at large, people who must feel themselves a part of the new government. Throughout, their concern was for the posterity who would judge whether their work had been good.

Mrs. Bowen calls them forth: Dr. Franklin, wise, mellow, and moderate; Washington, in whose silence lay his strength; Madison, with his foresight and formidable learning; Hamilton, "nostrils and mouth sensitive as in a blooded horse," who foresaw the vast, urban America we know today. We see and hear the ironic Gouverneur Morris, the pernicky Elbridge Gerry, the slovenly, ranting Luther Martin, and the bespectacled James Wilson, "unsung hero of the Federal Convention," his mind "one blaze of light." For it was Wilson who overcame the fears of a single vigorous executive. It was Wilson who saw no reason why men should enjoy any less freedom under a national government, who warned, when fearful men wondered if the wild states to the West should be admitted on terms of equality, that the majority must govern in all cases. Both he and Roger Sherman sensed that the West might one day be the population center, that their children and grandchildren might well be Westerners. Sherman, silent and shrewd, honest yet convincing, is another of Mrs. Bowen's heroes. For it was he who saved the convention with his idea that the vote be counted two ways, by states and by individuals.

The question of representation was the rock upon which the Convention nearly shattered. Franklin besought divine aid, Washington's face assumed the look it wore at Valley Forge. The question was: should representation be proportional? The small states insisted, as they do today, that with proportional representation a few large states would control the nation. Whether or not the so-called Great Compromise, making the states forever equal in the Senate, was right, it is certain that the Convention would have broken up without it. Like-

A Government for the People

Miracle at Philadelphia: The Story of the Constitutional Convention, May to September 1787, by Catherine Drinker Bowen (*Atlantic-Little, Brown*, 346 pp. \$7.50), tells of the problems, many of them still with us, that wracked the writers of the U.S. Constitution. Margaret L. Coit of the Fairleigh Dickinson University faculty is co-author of "The Growing Years," a book on the post-Colonial period in America.

By MARGARET L. COIT

IN HER lucid, enlightening *Miracle at Philadelphia* Catherine Drinker Bowen does not attempt to break new ground or to enter into academic controversy. Her purpose is to transmute intellectual dialogue into drama, to call up the voices, the sounds, the look and the feel of times past, and to tell an old story zestfully, as if it had never been told before. It is an account of conciliation rather than conflict, of "the grace and glory of compromise, sitting on Washington's shoulder like the dove." And it is told without bias, except for the one shared by Washington and Mrs. Bowen, that what happened at Philadelphia was truly a miracle.

The miracle was threefold. The personalities were at variance, their problems were immense, their interests clashed. Already the twangy, spare-spoken New Englanders were "damned Yankee" to Southerners, while to Northerners gun-carrying Kentuckians might have come from another planet. The interests of North and South, declared South Carolina's Pierce Butler, were virtually those of separate nations. To many their state was their country. Town-meeting villages in New England wanted no governor but "the Goviner of the Univarse." The so-called "league of friendship," the Articles of Confederation, was tarined to the breaking point. Taxes went uncollected and debts were unpaid. The situation, as Washington and Madison saw it, was too serious for despair. Both Washington and young Hamilton realized that America had achieved continental dimension and must begoverned accordingly; the question was how.

Mrs. Bowen makes it clear that many of the problems that wracked the Constitution-makers yesterday are still with us today. How federal was our government? How sovereign the states? Should, or could, state lines have been abolished? (Here the Constitution-makers ran up against the difference between what should have been and what could be.