

onix section), some coils of line, an ice ax, a guide, a girl, and fluctuations in the weather—and he has all the materials necessary for a novel of constant excitement. Climbing, to this author, as in last year's translation of his novel "First on the Rope," is a legitimate and important experience in itself. The task of reaching the top has no symbolic implications, like those which have interested James Ramsey Ullman and the team of Auden-Isherwood; here, mountaineering itself is a perfectly complete subject and theme. Glaciers, avalanches, seracs, couloirs, and southwinds have all the importance to Frison-Roche that money, prestige, and mental endowments have in our society at sea level.

In the technical details of each ascent Frison-Roche achieves a mastery all his own. He brings to his climbs, like the magnificent one of Mont Blanc, a flawless accuracy. Each scene he describes exists, and exists precisely as he describes it. Unfortunately, however, the author draws upon too slender a fund of drama. The basic conflict is between the guide Zian and his city-bred wife Brigitte, whose early enthusiasm for the mountains is replaced by the anxieties natural to an ever-more-married woman.

—CHARLES SPIELBERGER.

SWING SHIFT. By Margaret Graham. Citadel Press. \$3. This is a disheartening and dreary first novel about the growing pains of American railroad unions in the past fifty years. Edmond McCaffrey, son of a Scotch coal miner, takes up with the railroads before his first shave, and he is still at it as a stout union organizer when the book closes, too many pages later. In between, Mac — as he is called throughout the story — gets started as a dispatcher, working his way through the then rough railroad systems of North Dakota and Montana. By 1922 strong interest in the advancing union movements and pure wanderlust take him to Russia with a large group of Americans to help the Soviet Union get on its industrial feet. After he has taught the commissars a thing or two about dispatching trains he returns to America, goes to Tampa, Florida, and helps the cigar workers to unionize.

Miss Graham's story might have made exciting reading, but she does not know how to write fiction. Her narrative line balks again and again at the insuperable load of facts and figures it is asked to carry. Such incidentals as dialogue and plain descriptive prose are handled in good sixth-grader style. Mac, a kind of composite of the world's workers, never comes to life, neither do any of his comrades, and so neither does the book.

—WHITNEY BALLIETT.

The American Past. *Until the publication half a dozen years ago of Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.'s "The Age of Jackson," the average American's ignorance of what had happened in his native land during the expansive years between the Presidency of Thomas Jefferson and the outbreak of the Civil War was exceeded only by his indifference. The publication of Schlesinger's volume, which has helped change all that, came as part of a movement by historians to reinterpret this so-called "middle period" of our national history. Two political figures who cast long shadows across that era at last have thorough, objective, and scholarly biographies: Charles M. Wiltse's "John C. Calhoun" (page 16) and Holman Hamilton's "Zachary Taylor" (page 17) are both final links in extended studies. The heirs of Jefferson in the young nation are portrayed with knowledge, wit, and considerable literary charm in George Dangerfield's "The Era of Good Feelings," reviewed below.*

Between Jefferson & Jackson

THE ERA OF GOOD FEELINGS. By George Dangerfield. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 525 pp. \$6.

By J. H. POWELL

THE "Era of Good Feelings" always sounded dull in school books; and unfortunately something called "The Middle Period" came soon afterwards. Both were a cinch to skip. Where do historians find such epithets? George Dangerfield, being British, was spared the American school-bred distaste for the years between Jefferson and Jackson, these years "of confusion and vigor, of aspiration, uncertainty, division, and ill will," when feelings ran high but invariably were not good; and he has found the hardihood to write of them.

He writes with gusto, sense, and authority. His agreeable, eloquent

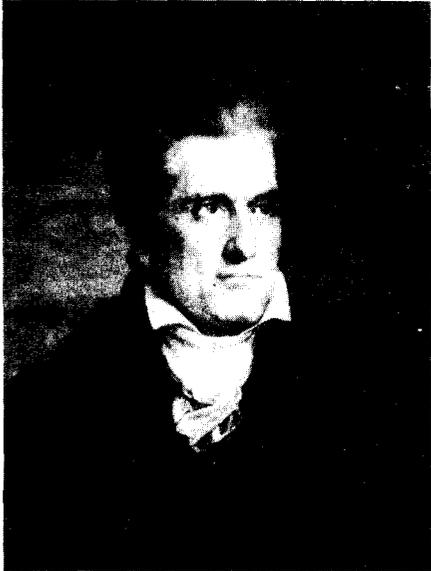
book is full of people, conflicts, ideas, and color. It is a learned book, and witty and skilful; on every page it is thoughtful, clever, and original. If the total impression is somewhat less original, the fault lies with the material, not the writer. Its effect will be excellent, for so many of us have forgotten that there were other Jeffersonians than Jefferson; that Jefferson himself observed the strong reaction against his "niggardly theories of government," as John Quincy Adams called them; that there was in the 1820's a bold scheme of national planning which Jackson, indifferent, overthrew.

President Monroe, that useful, imposing personage dedicated to other men's ideas since he had few of his own, cannot be the central figure of this or any book. He was the façade behind which Quincy Adams and Henry Clay developed their energetic programs. From the treaty conferences at Ghent in 1814 until his retirement in 1829, Quincy Adams somehow was the principal American, at home as well as abroad. Rarely was an intellect less furnished with effective personal qualities than his. Mr. Dangerfield is superb in personal analysis. Marshall, Calhoun, Jackson, Gallatin, Randolph, a whole generation of leaders are brilliantly, shrewdly presented. So also is John Taylor of Caroline, "first of a long line of American statesmen who flourished only in opposition," who regarded government itself as evil, yet deplored his own prejudice. He could produce no



George Dangerfield—"writes with gusto."

J. H. Powell is the author of a biography of Richard Rush, American diplomat of the Era of Good Feelings.



—By Rembrandt Peale.
John C. Calhoun—"frustrated life."

philosophical system of politics; he could produce only "the landscape of a dream."

Between the poles of Taylor's democracy and Adams's republicanism, Jeffersonians veered, till the sharp depression of 1819 put an end to exuberant nationalism, fostered the snarling sectionalism of a country now become a continent, and engendered a national program. The Missouri Compromise and the Monroe Doctrine were parts of the national plan; so was Clay's "American System," and the tariff policy. But the expressive capitalism of Eastern business, the resentful agrarianism of the West in depression and recovery, the dissolving Jeffersonian Party organization ("an old, creaking, and privileged political machine which could no longer do the work that was required of it"), separated the people from their government. In Adams's Presidency, 1825-29, the Administration's comprehensive plan of fostering equally "the plough, the looms, and the ship," had little quick relevance to the demands and grievances of the people. "It was by listening to and learning from these demands and grievances that Andrew Jackson, who came to the Presidency in 1829 with no program and almost no ideas, became one of the great popular leaders in American history."

Through the years since independence, the recurring struggle has gone on, between those who would have a free, and those a prosperous America. The conflict of Adams and Jackson is a phase of a present conflict. Adams believed that Jackson's victory meant "the ruin of our cause"; but history has more often been on Adams's side, the side of those who sense that in a good society freedom alone is not enough.

Advocate of Sectionalism

JOHN C. CALHOUN: *Sectionalist, 1840-1850*. By Charles M. Wiltse. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co. 592 pp. \$6.

By ROY NICHOLS

CALHOUN had the mind of a statesman without the instincts of a politician. Because of this latter incapacity he was frustrated in his great ambition. The nation would never accept him as leader.

The tragedy of this frustration is the theme of this third and last volume in Mr. Wiltse's extended biography of the South Carolinian. In these volumes Calhoun's life has been made to fit into a neat pattern of interpretation. In the first, he was the ardent young nationalist who worked to make the young Republic strong and powerful. In the second, he saw that the means used to advance national power were conflicting and he bent his efforts to fighting the corrupting power by such violent concepts as state nullification of Federal laws, a form of civil disobedience.

In this third volume, the violent swinging of the pendulum of Calhoun's enthusiasm comes to equilibrium in a philosophical solution of the problem in which he advocates the creation of a sectional power which shall be accorded the right to check the national. This is the story of the last ten years of his life lived during that feverish decade, 1840-1850.

In these last years Calhoun returned to the Democratic Party and likewise returned to his nationalism though few historians have given him credit for it. Much of this time of final tragedy he spent in the Senate but it was broken by three episodes. He sought the 1844 nomination for the Presidency, he retired to his study to write the prescription for the saving of the Constitution and the Republic, and he served as Secretary of State.

As a Senator his utterances were listened to with the same awe which was accorded Webster and Clay, but he could hardly command the united support of the South, let alone the nation. His two themes were free trade and defense of Southern rights. Only if the growing power of the free labor states could be brought to acknowledge the just interests of the South could the nation be saved. He spent his last strength in an effort to convert the nation to his view in the bitter struggle over the admission of California in 1850 and died in its midst without knowing the full extent of his failure.

As Presidential candidate he lacked any of the political genius needed to attract nationwide support or conciliate or deal with factions and rival leaders. He placed his confidence in inept friends, he failed to mobilize an adequate press, and he himself proved too fastidious to associate with those who controlled votes. He felt the office should seek him, and as is usual it did not.

So he withdrew from the contest and sought refuge in the wide reaches of his mind. He wrote two books which he hoped would command public attention and arrest the dangerous trends. He saw the nation threatened with civil war, and he worked out a highly ingenious and intelligent theoretical arrest. He would make the Federal system of state and nation over by inserting a third power. The Federal Government should be reorganized so that the South might veto any acts of the national Government. Only such policies as could receive the assent of both sections, North and South, could be put in operation.

As Secretary of State Calhoun had his one success in this final period of his career. He was called in to guide the annexation of Texas and had the satisfaction of carrying this difficult operation through its final stages.

Mr. Wiltse has ranged far in his analysis of this great career. He has seen the growth of the young Republic as part of a great development of Western civilization dominated by the rise of industrialism and democracy. He has shown effectively the dilemma of Calhoun, who was really trying to arrest these great forces in the interest of the static Southern agricultural slave labor society.

One lays down this very expert and complete work with the feeling that Mr. Wiltse is most successful as an historian but perhaps less so as a biographer. The effective analysis gives us vividly the plight of the nation and the world forces at work in the crisis. However, somehow Calhoun as a man is elusive. The extent of his personal tragedy is lost sight of in the absorbing story of the times. Had Mr. Wiltse freed himself from the shackles placed upon his imagination by Calhoun's inability to express his emotions, he might have conveyed more effectively to his readers the great tragedy of this frustrated life.

Roy Nichols, professor of history at the University of Pennsylvania, won a Pulitzer Prize for his book "The Disruption of American Democracy."