The Southern Country Editor. By Thomas D. Clark. (Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill, 1948, pp. 365. Facsimiles, bibliography, and index. $3.50.)

In his earlier *Rampaging Frontier* and *Pills, Petticoats and Plows*, able historian Thomas D. Clark proved that the way of life of a people can be pictured in minute detail by retelling the tales they told and the pranks they played, or, in the latter book, by describing the things they bought at the country store, why they bought them and how—if ever—they paid for them. In his present work he demonstrates that infinitely more can be learned of their life by scanning the newspapers they read.

A Mississippian by birth, Dr. Clark is head of the Department of History at the University of Kentucky. He knows the South, from its backcountry farms to its great universities, as he knows its people high and low, and he is rapidly gaining recognition as the leading historian of the region.

Dr. Clark's scholarship is sound and his research infinitely painstaking; better still, for the purpose of interpreting his subject, he has a keen sense of humor and the patience with the vagaries of his fellow man which social historians too often lack.

In *The Southern Country Editor* he has made a fast moving, readable, and thought-provoking survey of the editorial content of hundreds of Southern newspapers which shows what editors preferred to write and their patrons to read during the years since 1865. The study is based exclusively upon country weeklies—entirely proper since the South was and is mainly a land of rural and small town readers.

The evidence he presents goes a long way toward discovering the reasons for what has been good and what has been ill in the Southland. Members of the morbid current school of Southern novelists might save themselves some of the anguish of their endless soul-searching by skimming through his chapters "The Southern Mind in Thralldom," "Children of Freedom," "The Day Goes by Like a Shadow on the Heart," "In the Wake of Time," and "Between the Plow Handles of Experience."

Dr. Clark claims importance for the country weekly because of the very fact of its provincialism. Its editor made

little or no effort to publish other than local news up to World War I—this held true even in presidential election years because, under the one-party system, the presidential vote was assured and only the gubernatorial contest and the even more interesting ones for county representative, sheriff, judge, and prosecuting attorney provoked local interest. Thus, concentrating upon acceptable news in a locality interested mainly in local affairs, the editor either published what the people wished to read or he failed: if a paper continued publication, its readers opinions were, perforce, reflected in its columns and an analysis of newspaper content demonstrates trends of thought in various districts through the passing years.

Although Dr. Clark makes no unscholarly effort to prove the point, his book conveys an impression which is at least new to this reader. It is that the most deep-seated ill to which the South is heir developed after reconstruction; that it was an ill of the spirit rather than of the flesh which first became acute when the seceded states found themselves back in full standing in the Union but bewildered and hurt in hitherto high pride; that recovery became hopeful only with the appearance of elusive symptoms when the North and South joined in waging the minor Spanish-American War and that actual recuperation did not begin until 1917 brought the broadening influence of universal military service to its young men.

The evidence seems to point to this late-developed psychological manifestation, even more than to the facts of the dire war-produced poverty of 1865 and the evil doings of carpetbaggers, as the agent which induced sullen reaction to all change, all progress; which held back efforts to improve education, agriculture, and local government and tended to substitute such morbid interests as that in crimes of violence, in hangings, and in the fire-and-brimstone elements of Holy Writ.

The chronology of the material quoted indicates that the agrarian South began to feel sorriest for itself not after Appomattox but after Grant's administration; that it lived most precariously not under carpetbagger rule but when, between 1885 and 1905, its own law-enforcement system was at lowest efficiency.

Present newspaper content, judged by the same stand-

ards as that of the past, indicates a current improvement as healthful and a future as hopeful in proportion as it was dismal fifty years ago: the country paper, bolstered by a power press and a linotype machine, continues as a more efficient prophet of further improvement.

That part of the work devoted to the mechanics of editing, printing, and financing a country weekly is as applicable to North, East, and West as to the South—tramp printers, type lice, "patent insides," slow-paying subscribers, belligerent subjects of news items and persons with a passion for publicity were evils common to all localities. There is also a general chapter of enlightening information upon the power which the patent medicine industry wielded in the newspaper field before the Pure Food and Drugs Act broke its grip; that chapter, by typical Clark touch, is titled "Go Tell Aunt Lydia!"

The Southern Country Editor is an important document; one which should set off special study upon a good many phases of Southern social and economic problems through what has been the rather lightly-regarded medium of the county weekly newspaper files.

Crawfordsville, Indiana Richard E. Banta

The Agrarian Revolt in Western Canada, A Survey Showing American Parallels. By Paul F. Sharp. (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1948, pp. ix, 204. Bibliography and index. $3.00.)

The scope of this volume is indicated in its subtitle *A Survey showing American Parallels.* Mr. Sharp claims that the story of the North American West has not been told as a whole, and quotes Professor A. L. Burt to show that it "has often been approached with a national bias which ignores the parallel development of regions divided by a political boundary." This study successfully attempts to trace the parallel agrarian movements in the American and Canadian Wests and to indicate the close connection between them. It fills a long felt want.

When the so-called "passing of the frontier" took place in the United States in the last decade of the nineteenth century, the stream of settlement turned north to Canada.