

Mr. Brigrance's assumption will seem to slight the cultural significance of the humorist who has moved so many for so long to laugh at their own limitations and absurdities.

Mr. Fatout is primarily concerned with the reconstruction of the lecture circuit in the last half of the nineteenth century and with the role which Twain played in it, from his first financial success in 1866 with his Sandwich Islands performance to 1900 when he finally "made no more lecture tours" or accepted "pay for talking."

Under shrewd promoters like James Redpath, the once sophisticated lyceum became an immense network (not unlike present-day mass media) with eastern, western, and northern circuits. The business attracted an odd assortment of stars: Henry Ward Beecher, Robert Ingersoll, Anna Dickinson, Wendell Phillips, Josh Billings, and Petroleum V. Nasby. This paradoxical troupe included moral uplifters, free thought crusaders, rabid reformers, and crude entertainers. Twain called all of them, including himself, "bandits" on a "public highway."

With commendable thoroughness Mr. Fatout records the newspaper reactions to Twain's performances, which varied from occasional blasts at his sacrilegious allusions, distortions of fact, and indecent sorties to frequently favorable but seldom ecstatic reviews. Mr. Fatout states that there is no clear evidence to support the contention that Twain was "ranked with the select group of the most-highly paid" (p. 150).

The author discounts the notion that Twain submitted to the ordeal of public performances solely for the quick cash. He could never resist for long the pleasure he got from wrestling with a live audience. Even in moods of fatigue and discouragement and while swearing he was going to retire, he was busy revising lectures and analyzing audience reactions so that his next performance might be a triumph.

After the early eighties Mark Twain was one of the most popular after-dinner speakers in America, but his reputation as a lecturer and public reader awaited the flood of recognition springing from his world tour in 1895-1896. Although the fulfillment of his intention was shattered by the death of Susy, his "hundred readings in fifty-three cities of five countries" clinched Mark Twain's reputation "as the dean of American speakers" and "the elder statesman of the platform" (p. 272).

The only flaw in Mr. Fatout's book is that it ends but fails to conclude. Instead of a thematic evaluation or an interpretation of the significance of the lecture circuit experience as it affected Mark Twain's expression, the author slides to a stop on a biographical tangent. In spite of this structural weakness, the work is substantially conceived and actively written. Those interested in one of the world's most famous speakers will find *Mark Twain on the Lecture Circuit* well worth reading.

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American Folklore. By Richard M. Dorson. *The Chicago History of American Civilization.* Edited by Daniel J. Boorstin. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959. Pp. ix, 328. Chronology, bibliographical notes, table, index. \$4.50.)

At first glance, the title of this volume appears to be merely descriptive, but after reading the Foreword it takes on a special and

complex meaning. The author, professor of history and folklore at Indiana University, commences his essay with a definition of folklore. It is, he writes, "the oral traditions channeled across the centuries through human mouths" (p. 2). He points out that folklore may refer to types of barns, quilts, tales, songs, customs, rituals, and a variety of other phenomena. "The common element" he sees in this variety is "tradition." He then states an assumption upon which the entire book rests: "Since the arc of tradition in a given culture may vary considerably from country to country, it is only right that the study of folklore should follow the contours of a particular civilization" (p. 2). This, in brief, is Dorson's theory of American folklore, which he first presented before an audience of scholars in 1957. His book thus becomes an extensive exposition of this idea.

American folklore, the author writes, began to take form with the first colonist landings. Beliefs of the Old World were grafted onto the environment of the New World. Colonial folklore centered on themes of the land, savages, and the providence of God. With the coming of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, Providence passed from general attention. The new turn that folklore took was native—from "the odd grain of American character." Regional types, the down-Easter, the crafty Yankee, the homespun southerner, and the expansive westerner, all developed. Using subliterate sources, such as the *Spirit of the Times*, the author examines in particular the development of folk humor, which, he asserts, decreased as sectional strife grew. "But," he concludes, "the backwoods oral yarn found one final supreme mode of expression during the Civil War holocaust, in the person of its central actor, Abraham Lincoln" (p. 69).

Mr. Dorson interrupts his chronological presentation at this point and shifts to some other aspects of American folklore. He interprets the regional folk culture of the Pennsylvania Germans, the Ozark hill folk, Spanish New Mexicans, Utah Mormons, and Maine Coast Yankees, all of whose traditions stand in contrast to American urban industrial society. In an examination of immigrant folklore, he poses the question, "What happens to the inherited traditions of European and Asiatic folk after they settle in the United States and learn a new language and new ways" (pp. 135-136). Drawing mainly upon his own collection of lore from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, the author concludes that tradition among immigrants lasts longer than is commonly supposed. He also explores Negro folklore, which he perhaps surprisingly treats separately from that of other immigrants, and concludes that its African origins should be minimized. Folk heroes also receive consideration. Using the term "fakelore" that he coined in 1949 in connection with deliberately manufactured folk heroes like Paul Bunyan, the author develops in contrast legendary heroes like Davy Crockett and Jesse James. Returning to his chronology the author ends his essay with a brief chapter on modern folklore, in which he concludes, after an examination of the folklore of city folk, college students, and G.I.'s, that mass culture is not traditionless. "The idea that folklore is dying out is itself a kind of folklore" (p. 278).

Some readers will be disappointed because of gaps in the illustrative material from the wide spectrum of folklore that the author draws upon;

and others will find weaknesses in his case. Among the former is the almost complete exclusion of folk dance, art, and crafts. Among the latter, three examples will suffice. It appears that the author raises some issues that ought to be pursued further. One of these is the problem of maintenance of tradition by immigrants. He probably dismisses too quickly the general implications of the studies of Marvin K. Opler, who reaches a conclusion in his study of the Japanese and Nisei that varies from Dorson's own. More collecting and interpreting in this area is needed before a firmly held conclusion should be reached. Weaknesses also appear in the chapter on folk heroes. Dorson correctly designates Paul Bunyan hero-tales as "fakelore." Are, however, many of the Davy Crockett tales, which were in part the products of Whig politicians and propagandists, less "manufactured" than those about Bunyan? In short, the useful term, "fakelore," should be applied consistently. Also, why should the author exclude the leading figures in our national experience about whom tradition has woven many tales, namely George Washington, Andrew Jackson, and Abraham Lincoln, from his gallery of folk heroes? To qualify, must a folk hero be of local significance and then become legendary through oral word and sub-literary media? Must the hero be only "folksy"? Why not consistently follow the definition of "tradition" as folklore if it is valid? These weaknesses, however, are minor in view of Dorson's thesis.

Professor Dorson demonstrates beyond much doubt his theory that American folklore, or at least many of its aspects, follows the "contours" of American civilization. This is his great achievement, for which we are grateful. Further, he uses his extensive collecting and interpreting in the field of folklore skillfully and easily, making this book both a good introduction to American folklore for the beginner and a stimulating interpretation for the scholar.

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Seed, Soil and Science: The Story of Eugene D. Funk. By Helen M. Cavanagh. (Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1959. Pp. xii, 544. Illustrations, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. \$7.50.)

This book is largely the story of one member of a pioneer family of German descent which settled on the untamed prairie near Bloomington, Illinois, in 1823, accumulated large land holdings, established a well-known seed company, and has for years exerted energetic leadership in scientific agriculture and in local, state, and national affairs. Its central figure, Eugene D. Funk, Sr. (1867-1944), grew up during a period of rising land values and rapid advancement in agriculture.

In the auspicious first year of the present century, the Funk Brothers Seed Company was founded. Its first concern was the production of better seed corn to fill a need generally felt at that time. Much attention was given later, however, to other crop plants, such as alfalfa and soy beans, and to the general improvement of agricultural practices.

By the time that the groundwork was laid for the production of hybrid corn, the Funk Company had established a reputation for producing good seed corn by the older methods of selection. Eugene Funk had also reached the age at which he might have been content to rest