The book seemed to this reviewer a little shallow in some areas and too detailed in others. However, the author has done a tremendous amount of research and made a critical analysis of that research. His approach to the problem of this period is somewhat unusual and refreshing. The book is well written, very easy to read, and it is objective throughout.

Alabama State College

Joseph M. Brittain


In this thin little volume seven southern scholars—four historians, a librarian, a literary critic, and a publisher—attempt, as so many others have done, to get at the central theme or main idea of the South. Their efforts are little if any more satisfying than those of their predecessors. Six of the authors attempt to explain the South from some one major point of departure but they all come back to the same oft-repeated explanation: slavery in the Old and race relations in the New South.

Frank E. Vandiver emphasizes violence as a distinctive characteristic of the South, and traces it through the code duello, slavery, war, politics, and even religion. He characterizes the southern approach to all these problems as an offensive-defense mechanism. But he comes in the end to slavery and its modern counterpart, racism, as the core of southern identity. T. Harry Williams rides a political horse but he begins with slavery and ends with the race issue. He finds in one southern politico— Huey Long—a man who approached the problem with realism and succeeded in bringing good roads, education, public health, and social services to the people of his state. Walter Prescott Webb's essay adds little to what he had already contributed to an understanding of the contemporary South. He paints a rosy picture of the advantages of the South—land, water, minerals—and bright prospects for the future. But he finds that obsession with race is a major deterrent in the fulfillment of the promise. Richard B. Harwell finds the Civil War an anchor which southern writers have been unable to shake off. He points with pride, however, to the efforts of numerous recent writers—historians, novelists, journalists, sociologists, and spokesmen of a New South of racial equality—who are moving into the main stream of Americanism. He calls on all Southerners to forget the Civil War and become Americans as well as Southerners. Lewis D. Rubin, Jr., also sees slavery and the Civil War as the great divide which the South had largely crossed by 1870 except in race relations. Industrial development and educational advance enabled southern literary figures to gain world-wide recognition. But Rubin finds race the key issue. Failure of whites to treat the Negro as an equal has forced southern writers to compromise with their integrity. Hugh B. Patterson sees hope for southern progress in industry, education, housing, and
Book Reviews

health. But race and segregation slow down progress, and leadership is required to break down the barrier. All these writers have unity in that they recognize slavery, race, and economic backwardness as major characteristics of the South.

George B. Tindall takes a different and new approach to the problem of understanding the South. He does not attempt to analyze the South himself but rather suggests an analysis of the various myths that have been developed to explain the South. He analyzes briefly such topics as the myth of the aristocratic planter society based upon slavery, the South of the poor white trash, the Agrarian South, the New South Creed, and suggests at least a dozen others. His thesis is that by a study of the origin, development, and acceptance of these myths the historian can better understand what the South has been and still is. It remains to be seen whether his thesis is correct or not, but at least it is a new and original approach to southern history.

University of North Carolina

Fletcher M. Green


André Maurois has long been in the forefront of contemporary French interpreters of the United States. A frequent visitor to these shores, he has had a lifelong interest in American history and institutions and has written several books interpreting America for the European public. In the present work Maurois has written a warm and sympathetic history of the United States from 1912 to 1960. Designed for the average European reader rather than the scholar, this work provides a clear narrative of American history, with many apt quotations, and several sharply etched vignettes of American leaders. The author's own personal recollections and his conversations with prominent Americans add color and immediacy to the narrative of events.

The author modestly claims to have made no contribution to scholarship, and the factual narrative is based on standard secondary works. But many Americans will be interested in the image of their country as reflected by the mind of this civilized Frenchman. For the convenience of such readers the bulk of the interpretative comments are contained in three insightful chapters surveying the state of America in 1912, 1939, and 1960. The United States is, in Maurois' view, above all an idealistic nation. Three sets of ideas have shaped American history: "moral puritanism," enlightenment liberalism, and faith in progress. American history represents the interaction between these ideas and the hard facts of twentieth-century life. Idealism, in Plato's sense, accounts for both the strength and weakness of American foreign policy. Maurois finds that Americans have concentrated on essences such as liberty and democracy to the occasional neglect of concrete realities. In domestic policy American ideals were challenged by the power of big business, leading to social injustice. Despite the rigidities