(*vide* Carl Van Doren and the Book of the Brunch Club type of literary impresario). The reason for the general inability of the scholar to merge the demands of scholarship with the demands of journalism derived from an inability to distinguish between the claims of contemporary vitality and the claims of intellectual discipline. But Wilson, who had had the advantage of his training under Gauss, knew that a man could have vitality without a disciplined approach to writing, and vice versa. Accordingly, Wilson was in a position to appreciate the effervescence, the amusements and the animation of the passing show without confusing them with such qualities as greatness, or sanity, or impassioned conviction, or distinction. In a word, he could let his senses respond and still keep his head.

Another distinguishing feature of Wilson's criticism is that he never cheats on presentation. His usual method is to start off with a flat exposition of his theme and a flat summary of an author's line of thought. The beginnings of a Wilson critical essay are deliberately sober. In consequence, he seldom misleads a reader about the nature or history of the author under discussion. Wilson's ability to bring a high narrative skill to his statement of the development of an author's ideas makes him an extremely safe guide, even in the cases where the critic's own final interpretation must seem faulty. Wilson's mid-thirties judgments on the universality of Marxist theory stand cruelly exposed in 1952, yet his expositions of what the Marxists were saying and doing remain absolutely first-rate. He has the same gift of lucid presentation that he finds in Mencken.

Wilson has called himself a Socialist, but it becomes obvious, as one reads his "Marxism at the End of the Thirties," that his socialism has simmered down to a nostalgic word-fetishism combined with a defiant humanism that makes no connection whatsoever with the brassy and intolerant creeds of Lenin, Stalin or even Aneurin Bevan. It turns out that Wilson doubts the dogma of the Dialectic, doubts the ability of the State to run industry in a humane way, and doubts the pretensions to holy writ status of all the various Marxist creeds. Whether this leaves him a conscious believer in voluntary social cooperation is never quite clear, but it is a safe bet that his incorrigible individualism must throw him ultimately on the side of those who think society must solve its problems without demanding anything more from government than military and police protection and equal justice under Constitutional law. He is still anti-bourgeois, but he will ultimately find himself fighting to save the bourgeois if only to save himself and his own standards.

In any event Wilson has lost his interest in economics. What seems to hold him at the moment is the color and impact of the exceptional individual. His fifty-page epilogue to "The Shores of Light" on Edna St. Vincent Millay, written in 1952, is a beautiful piece of mingled biography, autobiography and poetic appreciation of our most remarkable twentieth-century poet. It is of a piece with the prologue on Christian Gauss. One would like to see Edmund Wilson do more of this sort of thing—he must have known at least a score of great individuals who are worthy of such attention.

Old New Yorker

The Diary of George Templeton Strong, 1835-1875, edited by Allan Nevins and Milton Halsey. 4 vols. New York: Macmillan. $35.00

The New Yorker that was George Templeton Strong, distinguished lawyer, Columbia trustee and vestryman of Trinity Church, would not recognize the metropolis of Manhattan in our day. The great families—the Schermerhorns, the Schuylers, the Fishes and the Stuyvesants—have been eclipsed in power and affluence; and society itself, in the sense that Strong understood it, has been superseded by the well-heeled rabble of "café society."

Strong was a man of property, but even more so a man of firm principles; and that he grasped the importance of history and the continuity of historical tradition is evident in the more than four million words he set down in this diary. The sources of insight into the lives of citizens of New York in the mid-nineteenth century are not extensive. Hence this diary is a legacy of genuine worth. It is doubly valuable in that it is free of posturizing, pretensions to moral grandeur, and special treatment for kinsmen and close associates.

The diary was begun when Strong, age fifteen, was a sophomore at Columbia College. He made his last entry on June 25, 1875, in which he observed "I have been improving the wrong way, like bad fish in warm weather." The diarist died July 21.

How much was recorded in the forty-year period which Americans look upon, nowadays, as an idyll but which the diarist regarded as an epoch filled with severe trials! The Great Fire of 1835, the coming of Irishdom to Manhattan, cholera epidemics, the sinking of the liner Arctic off Newfoundland, the draft riots, the "Forty Thieves" in City Hall—these are commented upon in Strong's diary.

The population of New York more than tripled in the period the diary covers. One New York, one mode of life, one society, died. A new city, a new class of rich, a new breed of poor, came into being. It was a victory of what he termed the "unwashed democracy" and the shoddy millionaire of the type he described as ". . . a great fat foreclosing spider."

In Strong's youth the City of New York was an old town of handsome residences and noble public buildings. It was a place not unmindful of traditions and civilized customs. And though Strong jotted down an occasional complaint against the number of whores and blacklegs on Broadway, it was nevertheless possible to walk abroad in the evening. Police protection was real and effective, and one could enjoy a stroll in the night air without fear of a mugging.

One of the most refreshing qualities in the diary is Strong's fine sense of humor. A man of large talents, positive intelligence, cultivation, and sound classical education (he was a collector of books and, what is rare among collectors, a reader), he nevertheless had none of the modern intellectual's extraordinary capacity for taking oneself too seriously. He appraised his own actions with an appreciation for the comical. For instance, the building of a bathroom in the rear of his Greenwich Street home in 1844 provided the occasion for a piece of verse indicative of the man's temper in his lighter moments. "In Greenwich Street did G. T. S./A Stately backbuilding decree./ Where clear the Croton Water ran/Through pipes impervious to man—/Up to the third stor*ie*/So *x* square feet of useless ground/ With fair brick walls were girdled round."

The truly serious side of George Templeton Strong is best revealed in his commentary on the maritime and industrial disasters of the era. Despite his conservatism and allegiance to the economic order of his time and place, the diarist was no apologist for evils inherent in the system. His entry for January 11, 1860, records a fearful tragedy at Lawrence, Mass. A wretched, unsafe factory building collapsed under the weight of machinery installed in it, and some two hundred girls and young women died. He observed:

> Of course, nobody will be hanged. Somebody has murdered about two hundred people, many of them with hideous torture, in order to save money, but society has no avenging gibbet for the respectable millionaire and homicide. . . . What Southern capitalist trifles with the lives of his operatives as do our philanthropes of the North?

He was a conservative, no mistaking that. He wrote of Andrew Jackson that "he's done the country more harm than any man that ever lived in it, unless it may have been Tom Jefferson." But he was never interested in mere money-getting, and his character was not of that false and meretricious quality common in "the Gilded Age." He was a creature of an older New York. Standards were, to Strong, more real and significant than stock speculation. Proud of family and genuine intellectual achievements (he was a scholar engaged, incidentally, in the law), he had nothing of the snob in his emotional make-up. He could say in 1850 that

> . . . Better that a sansculotte mob should invade the Fifth Avenue, better that Wm. B. Astor's estate be subjected to a "benevolence" of fifty per cent, better that vested rights and the sanctity of property be trodden down into the mire of democracy and Fourierism, than that we should all become snobs together. . . .

Though from the first years of his manhood engaged in service to the municipality and to worthy institutions (he was a member of what he called Columbia's "Board of Incurables" and labored for St. Luke's Hospital), Strong's principal achievement was his work on the Sanitary Commission during the Civil War. This organization created order out of the tragic chaos of the medical and sanitary services. The saving of countless lives and the rectifying of frightful conditions in the Union armies are, most properly, credited to the Sanitary Commission.

This diary, with its wealth of curious detail, its coining of words (such as Secessia for the south), and acuteness of observation, reminds one that oftentimes the ablest writers in a country are not the avowed literary artists, the professional writers. For Strong is a stylist of force and marked individuality. The incisive quality of Strong's writing is evident in this entry concerning the operations of the fabulously crooked Mayor Fernando Wood:

> Chief among the civic notabilia is the Mayor's foray among the unhappy fallen women who perambulate Broadway, the noctivagous strumpetocracy. . . . What the Mayor seeks to abolish is not the terrible evil of prostitution (for the great notorious "ladies" boarding houses of Leonard and Mercer Streets are left in peace), but simply the scandal and offence of the *peripatetic* whorearchy.

Strong has willed us a faithful portrait of New York and New Yorkers. Though an exceptionally modest man, Strong's achievements, his labors on behalf of worthwhile causes, his profound sense of duty and responsibility, blaze through the pages of the diary. The four volumes are a mighty testament to the nineteenth-century American of good birth, to his refinement, his scholarship, and consciousness of civic duty.

The diary is a great public document in that it brings alive the temper and customs of the greatest city in the world. The publication of it is a public service, and the publisher deserves a salute from students of our history. ANTHONY HARRIGAN

The Colonial Style

American Furniture, by Joseph Downs. New York: Macmillan. $17.50

Joseph Downs, author of "American Furniture," is curator of the Henry F. du Pont Museum at Winterthur. The photographs of Queen Anne and Chippendale pieces are from the Winterthur Museum of 135 manorial rooms which accommodates twenty guests a day by appointment.

What is impressive about our museum-embalmed household culture is the superb craftsmanship that went into a chair, a mixing table, a kettle or a