

fall by Alfred Knopf. He was awaiting page proof at the time of his death.

Professor Merk did not like academic publicity or the obvious pursuit of professional honors. Small of stature, thin and frail-looking, he seemed to be shy and retiring. Over the years he declined to speak in public, claiming that his voice was weak and that it became husky and indistinguishable after a short time. But the honors came anyway. He was a member of the Massachusetts Historical Society, a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, president of the Agricultural History Society (1948) and of the Mississippi Valley Historical Society (1959). He was made an honorary life member of the Western History Association in 1969. He was elected to AAS in April 1946. In 1958 Harvard conferred an honorary degree on him and in 1971 Wisconsin awarded him an L.H.D. Fred may have seemed frail and shy, but he confided to a friend shortly before his death that he was 'tough.' The evidence is all on the side of his own self-evaluation.

Professor Merk is survived by his wife, Lois Bannister Merk, a daughter, Katherine (Mrs. Robert S. Freeman), a son, Frederick Bannister Merk, and four grandchildren.

Howard R. Lamar

#### MILTON HALSEY THOMAS

Historian, collector, editor, genealogist, archivist, bibliographer, indexer, and diarist, Milton Halsey Thomas was a gentleman scholar and friend of scholars, warmly regarded for his learning, loyalty, and generosity. Self-effacing to a fault (the 'Milton' always made him uneasy), he sought to combine excellence of matter with excellence of manner. The blend was unique. Previewing proofsheets of Halsey's great edition of *The Diary of Samuel Sewall* (1973), Clifford K. Shipton, a friend of four decades, wrote on June 27, 1966:

'Because I know the work involved, I am amazed at the depth of your scholarship; I cannot see that you have missed a point, although I have been tramping these fields for forty years. I am particularly pleased that in your footnotes you unbend to what Cotton Mather called "quaint conceits." It is a pleasure to find my old friend Halsey smiling at the reader from the small type.' Shipton was to Harvard what Thomas was to Columbia and Princeton, and Halsey can only have been delighted at such praise. Though he spared no effort to verify a name or a date, he aimed to keep his footnotes—as he kept himself—jaunty and personable.

Born to Elijah Milton and Elea (Manny) Thomas at Troy, New York, on February 3, 1903, Halsey early became an authority on the Thomas family, a genealogy that included at least one *Mayflower* passenger and Gen. John Thomas of Revolutionary fame. Of modest means, he matriculated at Columbia in 1926 after a bookish youth and a few semesters at Tufts, earning his undergraduate degree while serving as librarian of Butler Library of Philosophy (1926–28) and beginning his long tenure as curator of Columbiana (1929–59). While an undergraduate in the School of Special Studies, he collaborated with Prof. Herbert W. Schneider on *A Bibliography of John Dewey* (1929, revised and reissued in 1962 as *John Dewey: A Centennial Bibliography*) and, on one memorable occasion, rescued the corpus of Dewey's poems from the wastebasket to which the philosopher had consigned them. Obtaining a B.S. in 1930, he received a B.S. in library studies in 1931 and an A.M. in 1942. The last he valued especially as a nonprofessional degree bearing honorific associations.

During his thirty years at Columbiana, Halsey became a leading authority on the history of the university and on the history of American—especially Knickerbocker—culture. In spacious quarters on the lower level of Seth Low Library, he collected, preserved, and presided over the archives of the university. Here also, on tap for doctor's orals as an unofficial

member of the history department, he assisted a long procession of brilliant graduate students like George A. Billias and Milton M. Klein, becoming meanwhile their lifelong friend. Even an inexperienced sophomore like the present writer could and did bumble into Columbiana forty years ago fascinated by the mystique of Nicholas Murray Butler, his gorgeous Oxford robe on Halsey's wall, his *sanctum sanctorum* just upstairs, and his house recently targeted by undergraduate brickbats. Halsey gave his visitor a still unforgettable, though unintended, lesson by courteously ushering him to a solid wall of carefully mounted Butler scrapbooks some of whose yellowed clippings revealed how the young 'Nicholas Miraculous' achieved notoriety by hurling verbal brickbats at city dignitaries, 'motheaten mastodons' and the like. Halsey was intensely aware of the drama of his post near the power center of a great university, but he was seemingly content to observe unobserved, enacting the role of faithful librarian, respecting users as much as his collections, all the while turning out a stream of in-house publications: compiling *A Bibliography of the Faculty of Political Science, Columbia University* (1931) and *A Bibliography of Nicholas Murray Butler* (1934), serving as managing editor of the *University Quarterly* (1930-35), and editing *Columbia University Officers and Alumni, 1754-1857* (1936) and Clement Clarke Moore's *Early History of Columbia College* (1940).

Shortly after the outbreak of World War II, Halsey took up residence at the Nassau Club in Princeton, New Jersey, though he remained at Columbiana for another twenty years. The move to Princeton was a crucial decision. For an inveterate bachelor, it brought a far more satisfying social life in a smaller, more intimate community; and for a vigorous mind that must have felt somewhat oppressed by the sheer size of Columbia, it provided a creative release. The Nassau Club was a lively center for Princeton intellectuals, old and young, and Halsey fitted easily into the group. Among the more im-

portant fruits of his new freedom was the four-volume *Diary of George Templeton Strong* (1952), a monumental work which Halsey incubated and edited in collaboration with Allan Nevins. Reviewers hailed it as one of the great American diaries, a unique literary and historical account of mid-nineteenth-century New York society. Plans for a much needed edition of *The Diary of Samuel Sewall* for modern readers were already advancing, and much of the editorial work was done during the 1950s. Reviewing these two volumes for *The New England Quarterly* in 1973, Lyman H. Butterfield called them 'an ideal and surely definitive edition' of Sewall's 'matchless record of his age.'

Meanwhile, Halsey's presence in Princeton had placed him under the discerning eyes of Julian Boyd and William Dix. When Princeton appointed its first archivist in 1959, he was the inevitable choice. Utilizing experience gained at Columbia, he at once began consolidating and arranging the records of Princeton University, accomplishing in his ten years as archivist there what he had already accomplished at Columbia. Increased income and leisure during these years encouraged foreign travel and participation in such intellectual and scholarly associations as the American Antiquarian Society, the Massachusetts Historical Society, the Grolier Club, the New England Historic Genealogical Society, and the Bibliographical Society of America. Elected to the Antiquarian Society on October 19, 1960, he attended all but three of the ensuing meetings before his final illness and generously supported all its activities.

Retirement for Halsey was unthinkable. From his relinquishment of his post as archivist in 1969 to his death on July 7, 1977, after a long illness, he divided his time among his scholarly pursuits, his hobbies, European travel (including long periods of residence in Paris and London), and a new appointment as consulting editor to *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, an opportunity altogether compatible with his polit-

ical and personal convictions. His final assignment, which he accepted in the spirit of a challenge, was the indexing of the first twenty-two volumes of the *Wilson Papers*; and, according to the *New York Times*, 'Modern historical editors consider these indexes unrivalled for their accuracy, organization and comprehensiveness.' Future generations, it may be, will know Halsey for the private journals he himself kept in the New England tradition so vital in his consciousness. If so, readers will find him, like George Templeton Strong, a 'cultivated, sincere, intelligent, high-minded, and delightful' gentleman. They will also find him master of an astonishing power of style and observation.

James Franklin Beard

#### ARTHUR BERNON TOURTELLOT

Generous friend, scholar, optimist, elegant bon vivant and raconteur, coadjutor in good works, businessman, writer and journalist; all these terms and others describe Arthur Tourtellot and suggest why his death on October 18, 1977, is so cruel a loss to so many colleagues.

Arthur Bernon Tourtellot was born in Providence, Rhode Island, to Walter Roy Tourtellot and his wife, Ethel Maude Harris, on July 23, 1913. He grew to young manhood in various New England rectories and entered Harvard College with the class of 1935. Following a checkered career there (later to be capped by service on the visiting committee to the Harvard College Library), Tourtellot went to work at the *Boston Evening Transcript*, all the while writing—the personal activity to which he gave first priority throughout his life. In 1938 he published a life of Fanny Burney, entitled *Be Loved No More* and the next year, under the pseudonym of Arthur Vernon, *The History and Romance of the Horse*. Those pre-war years of authorship culminated in the 1941 publication of *The Charles*, a fine volume in the Farrar & Rinehart

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