



like people that had taken leave of the world." Yet even during the bleakest of times, Pepys's optimism remained intact. He felt blessed, having risen from lowly origins (his father was a tailor) to a high administrative post in the British admiralty. A genius at organization, he was by no means a drudge. He loved city life, theater-going, conversations, political intrigue, fashion, the minutiae of everyday affairs. Whatever he observed or did (including the philandering that nearly destroyed his marriage), whatever he thought about a sermon or a play (he judged Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* "insipid"), he dutifully recorded in his calfskin day-books, employing the Shelton method of shorthand. Eye problems brought the diaries to a premature close. (Pepys pressed on to the then venerable age of 70, dying in 1703.) Even so, the entire diary runs to 11 volumes in a University of California edition. Latham, a Cambridge scholar and coeditor (with William Matthews) of the complete edition, has brought the best of Pepys into the more manageable confines of this handsome single volume.

**DICTIONARY OF  
AMERICAN REGIONAL  
ENGLISH**

**Vol. I: Introduction  
and A-C**

Frederick G. Cassidy,  
chief editor  
Harvard, 1985  
903 pp. \$60

The DARE project was launched in 1965, not a year too soon. With each day's passing, radio and television make American English more homogeneous. Fortunately, this dictionary will preserve some of the local variations that once enlivened our national speech. In the introduction to their first volume, the editors describe their aims, scope, and methods. To read the text of the 1,847-item questionnaire used by the DARE fieldworkers, for instance, is to gain respect not only for the editors' thoroughness but also for the respondents' patience (sample question: "Any sign or trace: 'He left here last week and nobody's seen --- of him since.'"). The fruits of the editorial labor are informative and entertaining. Here one finds the idiom of "back people" and "city jakes," insults, epithets (an "ace boon coon" is a close friend in New York City black lingo), and names for the myriad tools and furnishings of day-to-day life. Even the most "conceity" (Pennsylvania patois for hard-to-please) will have trouble finding this rich word-hoard "boresome."