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ate too much, worked too little, and died too young. The remedy, as he saw it, was to breed mules.

Seeking no ordinary mules, but "a race of extraordinary goodness," Washington, says Powell, set himself a considerable challenge. The greatest obstacle was the fact that mules, being the hybrid offspring of a male jackass and a female horse, are sterile. Washington's efforts to unite mares and asses, by turns comic and moving, remained untold for more than a century and a half after his death.

Jackasses of the size and quality Washington's vision demanded were not easily found. The best were Spanish and under export restrictions. For a time the general despaired until he received a royal gift from Spain's Charles III of two blooded jacks, one of which survived the Atlantic crossing to reach Mount Vernon in 1785. Lafayette soon sent over another, from Malta.

Breeding proved an uncertain business, but Washington persevered; so did the jacks. When he returned to Mount Vernon after his two-term presidency, drought had taken a heavy toll on his farms—but the jacks had thrived. Their offspring were numerous and healthy. Though Washington's last days were full of disappointment, they were not without some satisfaction. "He left a nation behind him," Powell observes, "and he left it stocked with mules."

Northern Myths About Dixie

"The Northern Origins of Southern Mythology" by Patrick Gerster and Nicholas Cords, in *Journal of Southern History* (Nov. 1977), Tulane University, New Orleans, La. 70118.

Feudalism, the agrarian utopia, the bigoted society—more than any other region in the United States the South has been the subject of literary mythmaking. Curiously, the most familiar myths were created by Northerners: In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Harriet Beecher Stowe, a New Englander, molded the stereotype of "the faithful darkey." The home of composer Stephen Foster, contrary to popular belief, was not Kentucky but Pittsburgh. And "Dixie," the anthem of the Confederacy, was written by an Ohioan, David Decatur Emmett.

Gerster and Cords, historians at Minnesota's Lakewood Community College, review the work of several major historians who have tried to analyze the Northern attraction to Southern ways of life. Some scholars have argued that the creeping Northern egalitarianism of the mid-19th century sufficiently threatened Yankee property owners to provoke a "hankering after aristocracy" which eulogized Southern stability. Others have ascribed the North's envy of Southern aristocracy to "the airs of grace and decorum, secretly yearned for but never realized."

After Reconstruction, Northern writers like Melville, James, and Henry Adams contrasted the political and commercial excesses of the "Gilded Age" with the agrarian values of the ante-bellum South. These values seemed neither as hypocritical nor as unsavory as those of New York's corrupt "Boss" Tweed or the robber-baron financier Jay Gould.

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Perhaps, the authors conclude, historians should focus less on the South and more on what William Faulkner called the North's "volitionless, almost helpless capacity and eagerness to believe anything about the South."

Witchcraft: Off on a Technicality

"Les procès de sorcellerie au Parlement de Paris (1565-1640)" [Sorcery trials in the Parlement of Paris (1565-1640)] by Alfred Soman, in *Annales—Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* (vol. 32, no. 4, 1977), Librairie Armand Colin, 103 Boulevard Saint-Michel, 75240 Paris, France.

Witchcraft trials were common in France during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. During the 17th century, however, the highest court in the land, the Parlement of Paris, began to reduce the sentences meted out to men and women convicted of sorcery.

According to most modern scholars, the Parlement's harsh attitude began to change only in 1624 when, after long association with Sorbonne theologians and Parisian freethinkers, the judges decreed that henceforth all sentences by lower courts entailing torture or execution be automatically subject to appeal. Some Western historians have argued that this more lenient judicial attitude reflected a "mental revolution" brought on by the dawn of scientific rationalism.

Not so, says Soman, a historian at the Centre National de Recherche Scientifique in Paris, who has examined newly available archives relating to 750 trials held between 1565 and 1640. In fact, he writes, the Parlement had treated sorcery with surprising clemency since the mid-1500s. Growing sophistication in jurisprudence, together with social changes—a lull in France's Catholic-Huguenot religious warfare, for example—affected the Parlement's treatment of sorcery more deeply than did changing intellectual theories. Finally, the men of the Parlement, "long before doubting the reality of sorcery itself," were concerned with the strict application of accepted legal methods—such as rules of evidence—in sorcery cases.

Suicide and the Schools

"Behind the Discipline Problem: Youth Suicide as a Measure of Alienation" by Edward A. Wynne, in *Phi Delta Kappan* (Jan. 1978), P.O. Box 789, Bloomington, Ind. 47401.

Many Americans now believe that lack of "discipline" is the public schools' biggest problem. Wynne, a professor of education at the University of Illinois, contends that the disorderliness of American adolescents masks a much deeper and more subtle malaise. For two decades, bellwether indices of social disorganization—youth drug and alcohol abuse, homicides, teen-age pregnancy—have been steadily