

The Saturday Review

of LITERATURE

EDITED BY HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

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Tories and Patriots

THE United States knows little of its own past, and what it does know is largely wrong. Races that live in one community generation after generation have a fund of tradition that corrects formal history; they are themselves history projected into the present. But in America one moves into a new tradition with each removal to another section, or acquires a ready-made national history on arrival. History for most Americans is like the sacred formulas of savage tribes which have to be memorized by adopted members. It is reduced to a patter, and the more widely such standardized history is taught the deeper conventional ideas of the past with little relation to reality are imprinted upon the American mind.

Fortunately early America has at last become fashionable. American antiques bring high prices, American chronicles come upon the screen and the stage. Lincoln has succeeded in drama, Jackson has twice failed but will yet be dramatized. The Civil War will soon have its literary day. And more important still for right understanding, an array of early records of American life are being printed and reprinted. It is easier than before to learn what the infant America was really like.

Two figures of the common imagination will be overhauled in the process, the supposedly hundred percent American of the days before Ellis Island, and the hated Tory of the Revolution. St. John de Crèvecoeur's "Letters from an American Farmer" first published in 1782, now supplemented by his recently discovered "Sketches of Eighteenth Century America"* are as instructive in this respect as they are interesting. Crèvecoeur was an energetic and cultivated Norman who travelled in the French service through French America, changed his allegiance when the French empire fell in 1759, married, and settled down in the frontier district of what is now Orange County, New York. There he farmed, and amidst the incredible labors of a pioneer saw with a travelled eye and described the novelty of his experience. He was one of the earliest, and remains one of the best, of our nature writers.

And what was this American neighborhood as the French American knew it? Dutch, slow but industrious. Jonathan Edwards speaks of the frontier Dutch as spiritually degraded almost to the level of Indians, but Crèvecoeur praises their caution and steadiness. Irish, who were the poor whites of the district; Germans, good and desirable neighbors; Yankees from Connecticut, real Americans these of many generations, keen, but officious, sanctimonious, tricky, admired for their shrewdness, but disliked as the New Englanders very generally were when they left home, as they were constantly doing; Scotch Irish, energetic trouble makers; Indians, whose way of life was so fascinating that if white youth went with them they could seldom be brought back. And these were the ancestors of those who say without discrimination that the country is ruined because we let in the foreigner! "The strength of the climate," says the author, has the same effect on dogs and men. "In the course of a few generations they become American dogs as well as we American men."

Crèvecoeur's rough but authentic idyll was shattered by the Revolution. What happened to moderate men, doubtful of the wisdom of rebellion, "Landscapes" in the new volume tell. And there is an equivalent story in Jonathan

Dusk: N. Y. C.

By S. FOSTER DAMON

THE round and hot sun lingers, softly lighting
A solitary cloud with violet.
On the rich sky an aeroplane is writing
In smoke the name of a cheap cigarette.

The skyscrapers, as placid as young sibyls,
Smile on the traffic's pandemonium.
A hand, gigantic and invisible, scribbles
In flame the name of a new chewing gum.

O mob, you have formed the world to your desire!
You are your own God: the old gods are dead.
These are your pillar of cloud, your pillar of fire;
These are your substitutes for wine and bread.

This Week



"The Wind." Reviewed by *Vernon Loggins*.

"We Must March." Reviewed by *Agnes C. Laut*.

Two Books on Byron. Reviewed by *Samuel C. Chew*.

"The Making of the English New Testament" Reviewed by *Kirsopp Lake*.

The Bowling Green. By *Christopher Morley*.

Next Week, or Later

Children's Book Week Number

Prep Schools for Rotarians. By *O. J. Lewis*.

Reviews by *Anne Parrish, Hugh Lofting, Cornelia Otis Skinner, Marion Ponsonby*, and others.

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Boucher's "Reminiscences of an American Loyalist"*** just published. The American Revolution was social and domestic as well as political and national. The have-nots spoiled the haves. British sympathizers, like the McFingal of John Trumbull's admirable (though forgotten) satire, escaped early to the ports, having converted their wealth, but temperate men, like Crèvecoeur, who wanted, hoping for peace, suffered most. No matter what they had done or been in the community, their lands were confiscated, and they were hunted like wolves through the forests. Crèvecoeur, who was more than half Quaker, thought of removing his whole family to the Indian wilderness, but feared the after effects upon his children. In the end he had to fly, his house was burned, his wife died, his children were lost, and not until he returned as French consul after the war did he find them in Boston.

Indeed it is a fair question whether the really
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An Epic Work

By A. L. GARDINER

Editor, London *Daily News*

IF IT is in the power of books to influence human affairs, I do not think it can be doubted that Lord Grey's apologia* will have a high place among the events of history. It deals with the vastest drama in the secular annals of mankind, and it deals with it with a noble simplicity that gives it something of the emotion of cosmic tragedy. The impression is the stronger because it is so clearly unsought and even unthought of. Lord Grey writes as he speaks. In my experience—and I have been familiar with the oratory of the House of Commons since the days of Gladstone—there has been no speaker of distinction in our time whose method was so plain and unadorned, or who sustained his argument with such unanswerable force as Lord Grey. He has the gift of what one may call naked oratory beyond contemporary precedent. The secret of his power is indicated in his reference to his momentous speech in the House of Commons on August 3rd, 1914. No one who heard that speech will ever forget it. The last hope had gone. Europe was plunging into the abyss of war—war on a scale such as the world had never seen. He rose in a House shaken with the agony of the moment, torn with the bitterest dissensions, the bulk of his own supporters gloomily distrustful of the policy that was sweeping the nation into the general vortex. He sat down—and I speak as one who had been publicly critical of his diplomacy—with the House silent, sorrowful, but convinced. It was that speech and it was his personality that carried the nation into the war at once and with practical unanimity. "When I stood up in the House of Commons," he says, referring to this occasion, "I do not recall feeling nervous. At such a moment there could be neither hope of personal success nor fear of personal failure. In a great crisis a man who has to act or speak, stands bare and stripped of choice. He has to do what it is in him to do; just this is what he will do and must do and he can do no other."

And he writes as he speaks, with the same simplicity, honesty, directness. You may doubt his wisdom, but you cannot doubt the high and chivalrous quality of character that shines through his utterance. You cannot doubt the nobility of his aims nor the large, humane disinterestedness with which he pursues them. His candor disarms criticism. If he thinks he was wrong here or there he says he was wrong. If he has changed his view of a given situation in the light of fuller knowledge, he admits it. He regrets that the military conversations with France in 1906 were not disclosed to the full Cabinet, though with characteristic restraint he does not recall the fact that the neglect was mainly due to the domestic tragedy which at that moment shattered his private life. He admits that his view, that in the twelve day crisis that preceded the war, Austria was only the instrument of Germany, has been qualified. He thinks now that Austria's part was more independent than he had supposed. He disclaims any title to present the whole vast complex of things in its true proportions and relations. He sees the drama from one angle only, is careful to define his own limitations, and is conspicuously fair to the opposing views. Thus, referring to the

*TWENTY-FIVE YEARS: 1892-1916. By VISCOUNT GREY OF FALLODON. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co. 1925. 2 vols. \$10.

struggle with the Cabinet on the eve of the war, he says: "It must be admitted that if there were not an anti-war group in the Cabinet there ought to have been. . . If this feeling had not been represented in the Cabinet the Government would have been out of touch with the country, an unsafe position in any circumstances, a most dangerous one in a crisis."

He does not pretend that the Entente did not involve irritations to Germany and he confesses to the discomfort in his mind, "of finding us somehow engaged in blocking Germany's projects in other parts of the world. We were bound to oppose her plans when they were inimical and dangerous to British interests, but was it necessary to assume that everything everywhere that Germany wanted was dangerous to us?" He rejoiced in the opportunity of satisfying the German aspirations in Asia Minor by the Bagdad railway agreement, and he ingenuously admits that in 1906 he was anxious to concede a coaling station to Germany in West Africa, until he discovered that in the previous year his predecessor at the Foreign Office, Lord Lansdowne, had encouraged France to resist pressure from Germany for the concession of a coaling station in Morocco. In short, the attitude throughout is that of a dispassionate observer of events, recording his own motives, his own thoughts, and his own share in the action with studied moderation and detachment.

The result gives the reader the impression of sitting beside a patient tossing in a fever. The patient is Europe, and the fever lasts a generation before it culminates in the catastrophe. Sometimes the fever subsides, sometimes the patient is quiescent, sometimes the danger point seems even to have passed, as in 1913, but always the high temperature returns, the peril reappears, and the agony is renewed. Was the disease too deep-seated to be beyond cure? Was the peril avoidable by the wisdom of men, or was the catastrophe inherent in the conditions?

Let us look at the progress of the fever as Grey saw it, and as he records it. Whatever view may be taken of his own part in the story there can be no doubt that from the beginning to the end he was actuated by the single motive of preserving the peace of Europe. That can be said more confidently of him than of any other principal in the vast sweep of events. His story begins in 1892, when, the foremost figure among the younger politicians of the time, he became under-secretary to Lord Rosebery at the Foreign Office. The loom of fate had already begun to weave its pattern. The Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria, and Italy had called into being the counter alliance of France and Russia. England stood aloof. It was the period of "splendid isolation" with its complementary aspiration for the Concert of Europe. In so far as England had sympathies, they were German sympathies inspired in part by an unbroken historical amity, in part by the sentiment of the Victorian court. They were expressed by successive Prime Ministers of unusual authority and of both parties—Gladstone, Salisbury, Rosebery. Throughout the 'nineties those sympathies prevailed. If there was fear, it was fear of France and Russia, and all the preparations for naval security were made on the Franco-Russian calculation. Twice we were on the brink of war with France, over the Bangkok incident in 1893, and the Fashoda incident in 1898. The pinpricks of France and the menace of the incalculable despotism of Russia were tending to strengthen the German sympathies of the country and pave the way, if "splendid isolation" had to be sacrificed, to an understanding with that country. This tendency, implicit in the policy of Salisbury and Rosebery alike, took form in 1899 when Chamberlain made his memorable speech suggesting an Anglo-Saxon-Teutonic understanding, which should cover not merely England and Germany, but, if she were disposed, America also.

That gesture, made under the impression that it would be welcomed, evoked no response from Germany. It evoked no response because throughout the 'nineties, while the hostility of France was open and flagrant, there was no compensating spirit of friendship from Germany. Bismarck had fallen, the young Kaiser was in the saddle, and the Bismarckian tradition of Continental dominance had given place to the dream of world power. That dream had changed the

orientation of Germany. "Our future is on the sea," said the Kaiser at Stettin in 1898, and there began that development of the sea power of Germany in which collision with the sea power of Britain was implicit. The significance of this change of attitude was not realized in England in the 'nineties in spite of such unfriendly incidents as the Kaiser's telegram to Kruger, and at the very time that Chamberlain was making his overture to Germany, Bülow, the Chancellor, was writing a private memorandum in which he said:

On the whole it is certain that opinion in England is far less anti-German than opinion in Germany is anti-English; therefore those Englishmen like Chisolm and Saunders (the *Times* correspondent who was subsequently banished from Berlin) are the most dangerous to us since they know from their own observations the depth and bitterness of German antipathy against England.

The practical rejection of the Chamberlain overture did not sensibly increase suspicion in England and even as late as 1902 the disposition of the Government to work with Germany was illustrated, and most unfortunately illustrated, by its association in the Venezulean episode. It can hardly be doubted that the Kaiser's purpose in that affair was to challenge the Monroe doctrine and to involve England in the challenge. The peril was fortunately realized before events had gone too far, and when the cloud passed and it was seen how near the country had been brought to a grave rupture with the United States, public opinion was deeply aroused. From this incident sprang the widespread suspicion of Germany and the definite impulse to sacrifice the doctrine of "splendid isolation". That doctrine was valid while it was believed that the feelings of Germany were friendly, but that belief seemed no longer tenable in view of the spirit of German relations and the now unconcealed challenge to the naval supremacy of England.

This change of mentality was the opportunity for Delcassé, whose mind had dominated French foreign policy for ten years and who was the true author and begetter of the Entente. Grey, then out of office, welcomed the Anglo-French understanding. He had no personal enthusiasm for France and no hostility to Germany, but he was alarmed by the drift of events and was seized with the conviction that England must have cordial relations with somebody. When he came into office as Foreign Secretary in 1906 he had two motives, the first was to stop the drift of Europe to war, the other was to secure the position of his own country in the event of failure. "I re-entered office," he says, "with the fixed resolve not to lose the one friendship we had made, not to slip back again into the friction of 1892-5. With Germany I wanted to be as friendly as I could be, without sacrificing friendships already made."

The history of the next eight years was the history of the failure of the one motive and the success of the other. Perhaps they were irreconcilable. Perhaps "splendid isolation" still represented the true function of England in Continental affairs—we shall never know. But the pauseless challenge of Germany at sea was the rock on which Grey's major motive split. Gesture after gesture was made to Germany without response. We stopped building capital ships: Germany went on building more. We offered a ten years' naval holiday: Tirpitz produced a new and more formidable naval programme. We sent Haldane to negotiate privately with the Kaiser: he returned with the confession of failure. Meanwhile Germany was testing the reality of the Entente. The first Moroccan crisis in 1905, the Bosnia-Herzegovina crisis in 1908, the second Moroccan crisis in 1911—in turn aimed at trying the ice. With each incident the universal tension increased. Then with the Balkan war in 1912 and the success of the London Conference there came a momentary lift of the cloud. It was Grey's hour of triumph. He seemed to have restored the Concert of Europe. The Kaiser paid him a handsome tribute, and for a few brief months the sky of Europe was clearer than it had been for seven years. Then, almost out of the blue, came the catastrophe. Grey acquits the Kaiser of a desire for war. He wanted another "shining armor" victory of diplomacy, but he had lost prestige with the military autocrats by the

compromise of 1911 and was swept into the current.

Grey fairly emphasizes the refusal by Germany to accept a conference as the crucial test of responsibility for the war. Only a little more than a year before the London Conference of Ambassadors had saved Europe. All the members of that conference were still in London. Their intervention would have checked the mad torrent of events, changed the atmosphere, perhaps averted the disaster. But Germany said "No," and in saying "No," proclaimed war.

By far the most important revelation of Grey's book deals, not with the origins of the war, but with President Wilson's peace overture in February, 1916, and Grey's attitude towards it. If Grey in history is burdened with a share of the responsibility of the tragedy, it will not be because of his motives, but because of his methods. His motives were high and noble: his methods were rigid and official. He had static force, not dynamic force. His loyalty was excessive: his quality of initiative deficient. All this is illustrated in the Wilson episode. Colonel House told Grey in February, 1916, that the President, on hearing from France and England that the moment was opportune, would propose a conference to put an end to the war. Should the allies accept this proposal and should Germany refuse it, the United States would probably enter into war against Germany. As to the conditions of peace Colonel House, speaking for Wilson, expressed an opinion decidedly favorable to the restoration of Belgium, the transference of Alsace-Lorraine to France, and the acquisition of an outlet to the sea by Russia, with certain compensations to Germany outside Europe. This overture was disregarded. Beyond being forwarded by the French ambassador to M. Briand, it might as well have been dropped in the wastepaper basket. Apparently no mention of the subject directly was made to Briand and no pressure was applied to give it effect. This was not because Grey did not realize its gravity. It was because he feared to give France the impression that we were weakening by mentioning the word, "peace." He left the initiative, if initiative there was to be, to Briand. He did not ask him to consider it: he waited for Briand to act. Briand was as much afraid of talking of peace as Grey and remained silent. It was not until nine months later, on the eve of the fall of the Asquith Coalition, that Grey communicated the House memorandum to the Cabinet with the cautious suggestion that in certain circumstances—that is the weakening of one of the Allies—the Wilson overture should be considered.

I do not think that the final judgment will acquit Grey in this great matter. It is true, of course, that in February, 1916, such a peace proposal as Wilson contemplated would not have been accepted by Germany, but the consideration of that proposal was the plain, obvious duty of the Allies, and the fact that it was not considered will remain a grave blot on the statesmanship of Grey. The incident did not reflect any lack of appreciation on Grey's part of the importance of America. There is no more striking feature of his story than that dealing with his relations with the U. S. A. prior to its intervention in the war. In those relations his wisdom, patience, and goodwill were unflinching and his friendship with Page, Roosevelt, and House was a priceless service. That feeling was abundantly reciprocated and among the memorable things of the book is a letter from Roosevelt to Grey written at the most critical stage of the controversy over the right of search at sea, in which Roosevelt quotes from a letter from John Bright to Sumner during the Civil War: "At all hazards," said Bright, "you must not let this matter grow to a war with England; even if you are right and we are wrong." "With the reversal of names," added Roosevelt, "the advice I am giving is the same as John Bright gave and my reasons are the same."

Grey speaks in one place of how "after the outbreak of the war I sometimes lay awake asking myself again and again whether the war could have been prevented by anything that I could have done in the preceding years." That question does not admit of an absolute answer, but