

George's odious treatment of King George V which may be read about in Sir Harold Nicolson's biography, though he does explain satisfactorily why Lloyd George did not include Asquith in the delegation to the Peace Conference as the King suggested. Mr. Owen is at his very best when relating the events leading to Asquith's resignation, in which it may be said that Lloyd George acted honourably if only for the good reason that so many people were intriguing for him against Asquith that it would have been sheer folly for him to have done otherwise. But surely Mr. Owen ought

to have strengthened the strong case for his hero by remembering Balfour's remarkable judgement on Lloyd George's appointment to the Premiership. It is to be found in Balfour's biography by Mrs. Dugdale. "As you may imagine," he said to a member of his family, "I have no prejudices in favour of Lloyd George. I have opposed every political principle he holds—but I think he is the only man who can at this moment break down that wall of military red tape, and see that the brains of the country are made use of." Like others, Balfour underestimated the thickness of "that wall."

Christopher Sykes

SAINTS AND STATESMEN

IMPERIALISM is not always antithetical to liberty. Where there is a law higher than the law of the local ruler, the subject has somewhere to appeal if his local ruler turns tyrannous, and this can be a real safeguard. British Guiana, for example, is not as free as it might be, but it is very much freer than it would be if there had been no outside power to check the totalitarian PPP. Professor Perry Miller's book* shows that the same lesson may be learned from the early history of Massachusetts, where on more than one occasion the settlers had to look to London for the protection of their freedom and their lives.

The local rulers of 17th century Massachusetts were not wicked tyrants. They were virtuous tyrants, and servants of a Utopian ideal. That is what made them so terrible. Worldly tyrants are sometimes reformed, and the very incompetence of corrupt administration affords a measure of respite to the subject. Religious tyrants are impervious to moral pressure, and their governments are usually efficient.

The government of Massachusetts was in many ways exemplary. The rulers thought of themselves not merely as the elect of God, but as "visible saints." In truth they were men of great faith, strong will, and what used to be known as "clean lives." Unfortunately they were destitute alike of humility and compassion; indeed they would have thought it *wrong* to be humble and compassionate. Like totalitarian rulers of every time and place, they were hardest on their deviationists, on those who shared their broad desire to create a New Jerusalem in Massachusetts, but who had different ideas about the way it should be done.

Massachusetts received its charter in 1629. Already by the 1640's independent-thinking men were being silenced, jailed, or banished. The local rulers would have liked to have taken sterner measures; Mr. Miller says "the only restraint was a fear lest, if they went too far, Cromwell might intervene." The confusion in England towards the end of the 1650's gave the visible saints their chance. Baptists, Quakers, Lutherans were executed, following the most preposterous trials. It was spring of 1661 before "an order arrived from Charles II forbidding Massachusetts Bay to kill his

* *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province.* By PERRY MILLER. Geoffrey Cumberlege for Harvard University Press. 52s.

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subjects." The rulers were reduced to a "sudden obedience," but (I quote again from Mr. Miller) "upon the first hint of royal indifference" they began "a new series of whippings, some of them almost to death."

IT WAS the establishment of religious toleration as a cardinal principle of the reign of William and Mary in England which brought at first the pretence, and by degrees the reality of liberty to Massachusetts too; but an equally important contribution of the imperial power to the cause of American liberty was its protection of those New England colonies adjacent to Massachusetts, notably Connecticut and Rhode Island in which (no less than in Pennsylvania) the great tradition of American democracy took its first firm roots.

Much, too much, has been said about the nineteen witches who were executed in Salem Village. Mr. Miller deals with the episode in one brisk chapter, and this is quite enough. Witch trials were too universal a feature of 17th century Christendom for any very special importance to attach to those of Massachusetts. What is really conspicuous is the record of the Massachusetts Calvinists in their judicial murder of such people as William Robinson, Marmaduke Stevenson, William Leddra, and Mary Dyer, all Protestant Christians, all Americans of the finest kind, and all deviationists. Admittedly there were crackpots among those Christians who were persecuted. Lydia Wardwell and Deborah Wilson, who bore witness to their faith by walking naked through the streets, were no doubt neurotic. But what about such Calvinist leaders as Increase and Cotton Mather? To read about Cotton Mather's ecstatic sermons to people on the brink of the gallows is to be forcibly reminded of the Marquis de Sade, the necrophile as well as the "sadist" (for several others among the visible saints were flagellants).

THE question, to which Mr. Miller's book provides the most detailed answer of any that has yet appeared, is how did it all come about?

The Puritan settlers arrived in Massachusetts with a unified intellectual system and a distinct political ideal. They had learned that ideal from Calvin, but it was at least as old as Plato's *Republic*. They believed, as Plato did, that men

and women, though depraved, could yet live in an ideal society provided that they were governed by a hard-living intellectual minority and that there were sufficiently elaborate arrangements for the education and discipline of everybody, including the rulers themselves. The Massachusetts colonists were well equipped to realise this vision. They all accepted the necessity of self-denial and obedience. Their "social contract" was a conscious covenant with God. Their leaders were educated men, whose leadership was the reward of intellectual ability and not of wealth. Not only did they succeed in building a society without extremes of poverty and wealth, they resisted the natural tendency of the richer to accumulate power. The rule of visible saints in Massachusetts was about as near as any state has come to the rule of philosopher-guardians. Nowhere else in the world, except perhaps in Calvinist Scotland, was education and learning so much valued for its own sake. And life, for those who submitted to the rule of the visible saints, was not bad. But being Americans, and Americans of British origin, the settlers included some who would not submit, and these, of course, were the ones who suffered.

The rulers of Massachusetts were as apprehensive as Plato of the danger of their society "degenerating into democracy"; and considerations of expediency reinforced the call of duty to eliminate subversive elements. In fact there was no clear distinction for them between religious and political exigencies. Since their commands were (they thought) God's commands, resistance was blasphemous; and God, as the Old Testament (which they knew so much better than the New Testament) said, was a God of wrath.

Alas, however, the saints did not guard successfully against another danger Plato visualised, and that was one besetting the ruling class itself: the danger of intellectual decay. John Cotton, the first of three chief stewards of Massachusetts theocracy, began extremely well. He was a scholar and a gentleman of the best Protestant type. But his firmness of mind soon relapsed into a cankerous intolerance, and his heart, like Calvin's, went rotten with vanity. His successors, Increase and Cotton Mather, were inferior men to begin with; and they not only became more intolerant than John Cotton had ever been, they began also to slacken in those respects where the Puritan needs to

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Mr. Miller is not hostile towards these men. A Harvard professor himself, he abandons the old Harvard tradition of white-washing the visible saints without following Vernon Louis Parrington in denigrating them unmercifully. He seeks to show them in the round, and his method is to pile evidence on evidence. His book is longer than it need have been, but no one could possibly accuse him of prejudiced selectiveness; he is not selective at all. He is often critical, but his criticisms are tempered by the thought, which lies behind his whole

book, that everything, good and bad, which happened in the 17th century was a necessary condition of what New England afterwards became.

Mr. Miller is probably right. If it had not been for the Utopian ordeal of Massachusetts, Americans might not have been so firmly convinced as they afterwards became that free government, however bad, is always better than totalitarian government, however good; and it was thanks to the solicitude of imperialists in London that the lesson of Massachusetts, painful as it was, was not more painful still.

Maurice Cranston

THE PERILS OF SANG-FROID

NATIONAL character is at once mythical and real, for our image of national character is a more or less effective guide to some parts of conduct. Consider the laborious scowlings and despair of perfectly amiable and contented Frenchmen, or the energetic womanising postures of adequately chaste and monogamous Americans. Imperturbability, an outward mask of unfeelingness, is our characteristic defensive posture. But many novelists tend to turn what is for most people no more than an occasional tactic of behaviour into an ideal of life, a useful mannerism into an admired style. The consequences—inarticulateness, indifference, resignation, withered emotions—are as unsatisfactory for fiction as they are impoverishing for life.

Here are five novels concerned with the private emotions of members of the English upper-middle class. Admittedly one of them is set in the spiritual and physical neighbourhood of the War Office and vast issues of treason and loyalty loom in the middle distance, but these issues are secondary to a triangle of strictly personal relationships. They are well written; they are not romances, not mere raw material for daydreams, nor message-

bearing fables; they presume a fairly high degree of sensitivity and discernment in the reader; they are, that is to say, serious and genuine confrontations of the human condition; but they are rather dull. If a novel is worth reading at all it is worth reading twice. None of these books survives this rigorous test. For all their decent merits they fail to achieve the level of their authors' intentions, they are cultural commodities and not works of art. It is not exactly that paucity of experience, on account of which English life is often held to be an insufficient begetter of fiction, that is to blame. It is rather a kind of spiritual defeatism in the characters, an incapacity or unwillingness to respond to experience, that divests these stories of importance, of any real claim on our interest.

JOHN MORTIMER'S *The Narrowing Stream** is perhaps the most obvious case of this deficiency. Mr. Mortimer is a very competent and usually very amusing writer, but in this book his mood is doggedly elegiac. Julia is an attractive woman in her middle thirties, once

* *The Narrowing Stream*. By JOHN MORTIMER. Collins. 10s. 6d.