

Creative Experience

Creative Experience, by M. P. Follett. Longmans, Green and Company. \$3.00.

THE biological concept of struggle is no longer for us purely biological. It has become part and parcel of our social thinking. Political scientists, for example, have ceased talking of the state as "perfected rationality" or as an "absolute and fixed end in itself." They now talk, quite nonchalantly, of the state as the arena in which conflicting interests fight out their battles. Social warfare, in short, is regarded as of the essence of political life, the "right" of the actual state being the embodiment of the most powerful might. In economic life the same thought of a persistent and apparently ineradicable conflict prevails—the conflict between capital and labor, producer and middleman, merchant and merchant, worker and worker. In jurisprudence, of course, the thought is hardly new: the courts are the arena of regularized conflict, the whole technique of justice being devised to bring about a settlement which will satisfy at least one party to the fight. Finally, it is increasingly recognized that in the world at large, conflict rages between race and race, nation and nation; while in religion, fundamentalists fight modernists; pietists, secularists.

Philosophers have, in times gone by, made various attempts to describe the quintessential nature of the universe. For Plato, the world in its reality, was an eternal harmony. For Kant, it was a divine moral order. For Hegel, it was an eternally coherent and self-evolving consciousness. For Schopenhauer, it was a will, forever striving to fulfill itself but forever frustrated. And so on. It might be said that the modern philosopher is almost compelled to the position which Heraclitus long ago took, that at the very heart of the universe is conflict. "War is the father of all things." The process of reality is an everlasting fight.

This goes hard with those of us who are working for peace between nations, peace between capital and labor, peace between the races. If the universe itself is conflict, then we might as well throw up the whole nasty business and let the universe simmer in its bellicose stew. As a matter of fact, there have always been two parties to this issue: those who have believed fervently in peace as an actual removal of conflict; and those who, convinced that conflict could never be eliminated, rationalized it into a gloriously beneficent force. "War makes for the manly and adventurous qualities," wrote Theodore Roosevelt.

Doubtless both parties have been wrong and both have been right. The old controversy over the question whether competition was good or bad never was solved by taking one side or the other. There was always a come-back from the other side. For much as we hate strife, the absence of striving against something is easily seen to be a kind of death-in-life. On the other hand, much as we exalt the vigor of struggle, certain kinds of struggle are seen to be nothing more than a kind of hell-in-life.

Obviously the whole idea of conflict needs re-examining. Conflict is energizing; but what kind of conflict? Peace and harmony are the desire of our souls; but what kind of peace and harmony? In this book, Miss Follett has, it would seem, found the solvent idea. Conflict is

of the very essence of the creative life. But not all conflict; only conflict in which the spirit and technique are actually creative. And what does that mean? It means this, that it is possible to regard a conflict-situation not simply as an opportunity for the victory of one side or the other, but for the victory of both sides. All the conflicts that we deplore are conflicts in which the sole idea is to suppress the other side. War is that kind of a conflict. So is much of the prevailing conflict between capital and labor, race and race. In such conflicts all the techniques employed are devised solely to the end of winning a complete and smashing victory over the opponent. But suppose one enters a conflict-situation with the thought that that situation presents an opportunity for real inventive thought, the kind of thought which may devise a method of settlement which will yield basic satisfactions to both parties? Entered into with that spirit, conflict becomes the most valuable stimulus for our creative energies. Take, for example, the outstanding conflict between young and old. The traditional technique of age has been to lord it over the young. The traditional technique of rebellious youth has been to break away from the old ones. Already, however, in the better regions of education, a new spirit and a new technique are developing. Age is devising a *modus operandi* which elicits and sustains the fine independencies of youth. Youth is learning how to illuminate its impulses through the non-coercive guidance of age. As a result, both win. The conflict remains, for youth can never quite get the point of view of age, nor age the point of view of youth; but the conflict is a constant process of inventing new ways in which youth and age operate together.

An example of the inventive opportunity presented by conflict is found in the problem of industrial accident. As the conflict was drawn for many generations, the issue was a sharp antagonism between employer and employee. The employee wished compensation for accident; the employer wished to escape the burden of compensation. Each case at issue was bitterly fought out in the courts, the employee doing his best to prove that the accident was due to no negligence on his part; the employer doing his level best to prove the opposite. If the employee won, most of the damages went to his lawyer. If the employer won, another unfortunate was cast upon the social dust heap. It was war à outrance, with tragedy on the program, whichever side won. Accident insurance was the inventive idea which so solved the issue that both sides won. For by the new device the heavy burden of individual responsibility was removed from the shoulders of the employer; while the still heavier burden of individual risk was lifted from the shoulders of the employee.

It is this central idea, that conflict presents an opportunity for creative thought, creative energizing, which makes Miss Follett's book one of the most timely volumes which have appeared within these sorely tried years. Conflict, we now see, is not something to be accepted as indiscriminately good or bad. Conflict is a stimulating opportunity. We may altogether miss the opportunity it presents and go on our stupid way slashing each other with tongues or pogroms or strikes or lockouts or Big Berthas. Or, taking up the challenge of conflict, we may find it the veritable stimulus to a progressive civilizing of our world.

Most Utopias are sentimental evasions. They depict a bliss which never can be. Most of the "hard realisms" are truculent pessimisms. They depict a ruthlessness of nature and man which is largely of their own limited

imagining. Both break on the hard rock of conflict. It is a masterly achievement to have taken this hard rock of conflict and used it as a foundation stone for the up-rearing of our civilization.

Miss Follett's book, however, is far more than a presentation of this central thesis. It is an acute analysis of our prevailing political misconceptions. It is likewise a most illuminating integration of the more noteworthy conclusions of modern psychology, particularly as they have bearing upon the problems of politics, economics and law. Her chapters on Circular Response, Integrative Behavior and The Gestalt Concept are a challenge to the closet psychologist. Her chapters on law throw a flood of light upon what is happening and what can happen in the processes of law and justice.

The book will be read with appreciation by practical men of business and politics who are also thinkers; and by those thinkers whose intellectual absorption has not locked them utterly away from the despised world of the practical.

H. A. OVERSTREET.

George III and Pitt

George III and the American Revolution. The Beginnings, by Frank A. Mumby. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. \$5.00.

THE fifteen year period between the accession of George III and the first battle of the Revolution on Lexington Green is a field of perennial interest to historians. Mr. Mumby has not, like Lecky, Trevelyan, and Edgerton in England, or Professors Howard and Van Tyne, on this side, presented a consecutive narrative of the causes of the American Revolution. Instead, he has followed the plan of his four volumes on the Tudor period, letting the contemporaries tell the story in their correspondence. More than two hundred letters have been selected from readily accessible sources, such as the publications of the Historical Manuscripts Commission, the correspondence of British and American statesmen, biographies and memoirs, and these letters have been skilfully arranged, with just enough integrating historical comment, to illustrate the policy of the ruling classes in Great Britain and its effect upon public sentiment both in England and in the American colonies during the first fifteen years of George III's reign. It would have been easy for the author, with such a wealth of material to choose from, to make his source book a special plea either for or against the colonial cause; but Mr. Mumby has been scrupulously fair in his selection. Letters of King George, Lord North, the Dukes of Bedford and Grafton, the Earls of Bute and Sandwich, George Grenville and Thomas Hutchinson on the one side are balanced by the protests of Burke, Chatham, Camden, Conway, Junius, Wilkes, Franklin, and Washington on the other, while the caustic irony of that prince of observers and reporters, Horace Walpole, forms a running commentary on the strife of the factions at Westminster.

The point that comes out most clearly in these letters, noted with surprise and sadness in the correspondence of men like Newcastle and Burke, and fully emphasized by Mr. Mumby in his connecting text, is the strange unwillingness of William Pitt to use his unrivalled talents and his enormous influence to unite the Whigs in a con-

sistent opposition to the Bute-Grenville-Bedford policy of coercion of the American colonies. Pitt appears here in an exasperatingly inconsistent rôle. The soundness of his views and the sincerity of his sympathy with the American cause, when he let loose his flood of compelling oratory in Parliament, were patent to all; but his almost sickening servility in the royal presence, his reluctance to sink personal animosities and adversions in the cause of the public welfare, his proud preference to play a lone hand, and his distrust of the efficacy of united party action, deprived the Whigs of the one leader who could have rallied them to present a solid front against the "King's friends". The golden opportunity was presented in early September, 1763. The Bute ministry had come to an end. The new premier, George Grenville, had not yet proposed his fatal stamp act. The King sent for Pitt and received him "very graciously" in an audience of three hours' duration, desiring him to "tell him his opinion of things and persons at large with the utmost freedom." He was ready to bestow the seals upon the Great Commoner, and by the advice of the Earl of Bute at that. But Pitt would not accept office with his brother-in-law Temple at the head of the Treasury, though Temple had been the only member of the cabinet to support Pitt in the Spanish crisis of the autumn of 1761.

The golden opportunity was lost. Instead of Pitt's supplanting Grenville, John Russell, the Duke of Bedford, joined the government as President of the Council. "Thus began the Grenville-Bedford administration" says Mumby, "the crowning blunder of which was the breach between the mother country and the American colonies, which, widened by mutual misunderstandings and the obstinacy of the King, was destined to become irreparable." Twice in 1765 Pitt was urged to take office, on one occasion by no less a person than the King's uncle, the Duke of Cumberland, who visited him at his country house in Kent. A place was waiting for him at any time in the short-lived ministry of the Marquess of Rockingham. But he steadily refused. When at last he consented, on the fall of Rockingham in 1766, to form a ministry on absolutely his own terms, his health was so broken by the tortures of his hereditary gout that he was mentally incapacitated to direct the government. His transfer to the House of Lords as the Earl of Chatham and Viscount Pitt sadly impaired his influence with the people, who had idolized the Great Commoner. The story of the two years nominal ministry of the Earl of Chatham is too well known. It was then that the mischief was done. In Burke's vivid language, "deprived of his guiding influence, they (the ministers) were whirled about, the sport of every gust, easily driven into any port; and as those who joined with them in manning the vessel were the most directly opposed to his opinions, measures and character, and by far the most artful and powerful of the set, they easily prevailed so as to seize upon the vacant, unoccupied and derelict minds of his friends; and instantly they turned the vessel wholly out of the course of his policy." The marplot Charles Townsend seized the abandoned helm and drove the ship of state on the rocks.

As we look back through the generations of our national growth, it is hardly conceivable that it could have been the destiny of America to be anything but a great and free independent nation. But to the men of those fateful years immediately preceding the American Revolution—even to the foremost patriots in America, like Washington, Franklin, and John Adams, whose fervent protestations