

*The Trent Affair, including a Review of English and American Relations at the Beginning of the Civil War.* By THOMAS L. HARRIS, A.M. Indianapolis and Kansas City, The Bowen-Merrill Company, 1896. — 288 pp.

In prefacing his account of the *Trent* affair with a review of Anglo-American relations at the beginning of the Civil War in the United States, the author's purpose may be assumed to have been to place the principal topic in a proper historical perspective. It is therefore somewhat disappointing to find in his narrative various statements into which he seems to have been betrayed by a feeling of resentment. For example, he declares that, "with rare exceptions, the press, the people and the government [of Great Britain] were heart and soul with the South in its efforts for the dismemberment of the American commonwealth." This is a very sweeping assertion. It may be quite true that Lord Palmerston's course in the case of the *Trent* is open to grave censure, and it may be equally true that other acts of the British government during the Civil War afforded just cause of complaint; but in attempting to indict a whole people and its government, it is proper to exercise circumspection. The author's feelings have not always permitted him to do so.

He devotes a chapter to "The Question of Confederate Independence," and concludes it with the declaration that nothing but the thought that it was "inexpedient," and "perhaps not quite safe," "prevented an early recognition [of the independence] of the Confederacy by England." His proofs of this are (1) that British sympathy was with the Confederacy; (2) that Earl Russell said in April, 1861, that the matter was "not ripe for decision one way or the other"; and (3) that "efforts" were made in England "to have the independence of the Confederacy immediately recognized." It is obvious that of these proofs the last is the only one that promises anything tangible. But the only "effort" mentioned is the action of Mr. Gregory, a member of Parliament, who, early in 1861, gave notice in the Commons of a motion looking to the recognition of Confederate independence, and published a letter in the *London Times* in support of it. In reality Mr. Gregory's motion was, as we are told, "finally postponed indefinitely." But we are assured that this was done "because the Commons thought it inexpedient to act upon it at that time." Perhaps so; perhaps not. Since we are reduced, however, to mere assumption, it might be fair to admit that the action of the Commons may have been to some extent influenced

by the circumstance that the independence of the Confederacy was not actually established.

In treating of the Queen's proclamation of neutrality of May 13, 1861, by which the Confederate states were recognized as a belligerent, the author declares that, if the views he has expressed of the case be correct, "there can be no defense whatever for the action of the British government"; and that it "must," in the opinion of "every unprejudiced mind," "ever be classed with the long catalogue of unjust acts and international wrongs for which England has been noted in her relations with weaker nations or with stronger countries in distress." It therefore becomes material to inquire what are the author's "views of the case." Briefly stated, he holds that the recognition of Confederate belligerency, if it had been extended after August 1, 1861, would have been "entirely in accordance with the principles of strict fairness and neutrality." His reason for this statement is, that the war was in the beginning "only a personal war, an effort on the part of the Federal government to suppress rebellion on the part of individuals;" and that a state of war, in the international sense, "did not exist until after President Lincoln's proclamation to that effect, issued August 16, 1861, in pursuance of the act of Congress of July 13, 1861." The Supreme Court of the United States has held precisely the reverse. In the *Prize Cases* (2 Black, 635), involving two vessels that were seized in May, 1861, that tribunal declared that the "proclamation of blockade [issued in April, 1861] is itself official and conclusive evidence that a state of war existed," and that in "organizing" the rebellion the insurgents "acted as states." There is thus ample room for a different view of the law from that expressed by the author, whatever may be thought of the lack of consideration for the United States government shown in the particular manner in which the Queen's proclamation was issued.

As to the case of the *Trent* itself, Mr. Harris maintains that the seizure of Mason and Slidell by Captain Wilkes was wrong in point of law; and he thinks that Mr. Seward should have placed the release of the captives on a broader ground than that of the omission of the captor to bring the vessel into port. His argument on this point is clear and forcible, and well worthy of consideration.

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*The Province of Quebec and the Early American Revolution.* A Study in English-American Colonial History. By VICTOR COFFIN, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of European History in the University of Wisconsin. Bulletin of the University of Wisconsin, Economics, Political Science and History Series, Vol. I, No. 3, Madison, Wis., 1896. — xvii, 288 pp.

The specific subject of this monograph is the Quebec Act of 1774, its origin and its immediate and ultimate results. This is a topic which till now has scarcely received adequate attention. Opinions concerning it which were based on hearsay, or adopted after insufficient investigation, have passed for history. It does not lie directly in the path of the historian of the American Revolution, and hence has been slurred over. The romantic period of Canadian history, to which Parkman and most of the Catholic historians exclusively devoted themselves, had passed before the Quebec Act became law. It was a statute, too, which had manifold bearings and which, to be understood, demands study from several points of view. Only within recent years have the materials for such an investigation been placed within the easy reach of American students, and that breadth of view attained which makes it possible to use such materials properly. Professor Coffin has studied the sources with great thoroughness, and has made strong and independent use of the material which they afford. As a specimen of historical reasoning, of the proper marshalling of evidence, this work merits high praise.

The argument of the author is briefly as follows: During the interval between the establishment of English government in Canada under the proclamation of October, 1763 and the passage of the Quebec Act, the governors took the French *noblesse* under their protection; and, believing that the peasantry was largely under the influence of this class, they insisted that the granting of favors to it and the maintenance, so far as possible, of the system of French law intact, was the safe course of policy to be pursued. Of this they convinced the home government, at the same time prejudicing it against the English-speaking element of the population, which, though small, had protested against the performance of jury service by Catholics, and against the collection of the old French customs duties without distinct appropriation by an assembly, and which had, moreover, insisted upon the establishment of a legislature. The officials of the home government, though meaning to be just and humane, were not qualified to deal with the situation intelligently, and accordingly they acted upon