

CARL SCHURZ¹

THE *Reminiscences* of Carl Schurz have now been followed by six volumes of his letters, papers and speeches. Of these volumes, the first covers the period treated in the *Reminiscences*, volume ii and pages 1 to 310 of volume iii. The remaining five volumes contain the materials used by Mr. Bancroft and Mr. Dunning in the *Sketch of Carl Schurz's Political Career, 1869-1906*, which concludes volume iii of the *Reminiscences*, pages 311 to 455. The principles of his editing which Mr. Bancroft explains in the introduction are satisfying to the scholar, and appear to have been lived up to. Each volume contains an admirable calendar of its contents; and the few notes given are precisely those needed. The index, however, is of the most general character, and is incomplete, while the make-up of the volumes, while eminently pleasing and dignified, seems hardly heavy enough to withstand such usage as they may well receive from university undergraduates.

The speeches and political papers constitute about three-fifths of the whole contents. With the exception of one review of conditions in the South (IV, 368-400) written in 1885, twenty years after his first report of conditions there which furnished the groundwork of the argument in favor of the Republican program of 1866, and a fragment on McKinley (VI, 266-275), these have all been previously printed. No excuse need be given for their presentation in collected form. They make a really unique contribution to American history. From 1860 to 1904, either by speech or public letter, Carl Schurz expounded his views on every presidential election. Of one of these expositions he wrote Charles Francis Adams, January 1, 1899: "This speech is to serve the same purpose, namely to be a sort *vade mecum* for speakers or writers on our side of the question who will find in it answers, or at least suggestions for answers, to every argument brought forward on the other side." It is true that others sometimes guessed better than Schurz what the public were thinking; but for historical background, in spite of the fact that the early days of the republic were always invested for him with a somewhat too golden glow, for intellectual grasp

¹ Speeches, Correspondence and Political Papers of Carl Schurz. Selected and edited by Frederick Bancroft. Six volumes. New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1913. xviii, 522; vii, 534; xiv, 508; xix, 528; xii, 531; xi, 496 pp.

of the situation, for mastery of the essential issues, and for knowledge and unvarnished utterance of facts, he had no rival in his generation. His discussions were always high-toned, dealing with substance and not with personalities. James G. Blaine was the only man whose motives he attacked. Of Grant, whom he as earnestly opposed, he wrote (July 27, 1872): "He does not sit in his closet a designing usurper, gloomily pondering how he may subvert the free institution of the Republic. Neither does he ponder how he may preserve them. He does not ponder at all. He simply wants to carry a point" (II, 423). Schurz's speeches always became campaign documents. They were not only used by those who believed as he did, but received forced attention from those who did not; they are almost of themselves alone a political history of the period.

In addition to these periodic political pronunciamientos, the volumes contain speeches and series of speeches on a large variety of topics and occasions. Some of them were of great political significance; nearly all of them are of importance to the historian as being the clearest and frankest summaries of the situation to be found in the discussions of the day. Most important are those on reconstruction, between 1868 and 1876, on finance, during the seventies and nineties, on civil service reform from 1870 until Schurz's death, on Indian policy from 1875 to 1885, and on imperialism from 1899. Germane to the last subject was one of Schurz's best speeches on the annexation of San Domingo, delivered in the Senate, January 11, 1871. He discussed also "The Need of a Rational Forest Policy" in 1889, "International Arbitration" in 1896, and other subjects of national import, and made many historical addresses.

These pieces have a value wholly impersonal; they carry their merit on their face today; they would have been of weight at the time even if anonymous. To estimate their actual influence, however, it is necessary to know what Schurz's personality added to them. The correspondence serves in large measure to give their setting, while making a distinct contribution of its own. It includes letters to Schurz as well as from him, and is remarkable for the eminence and character of those taking part in it, but still more for the candor, without acerbity, of his own letters.

In their introduction, the memorial committee rightly group Schurz with Hamilton and Gallatin, as the three "greatest of the foreign-born statesmen of the country." It is a striking fact that in all three cases, an unusual precocity in attaining public distinction was followed by a sudden and final loss of popular influence at the age of about fifty.

On March 25, 1855, at the age of twenty-six and after less than three years' residence in this country, Schurz wrote that he intended to enter our public life: "Although I do not regard the public affairs of this country with the same devotion as those of our old home." This is the last note of regret. Once in the fight, he became absolutely American. He was already full of confidence. On March 25, 1854, he wrote his wife from Washington:

I feel that I might be able to do something worth while in this sphere, if once I had become actively and officially a part of it. . . . I do not think I am overestimating my value when I say that I would be second to very few here, not now, but in a few years.

Great and conspicuous as was Schurz's ability, it was not that alone which accounted for his rapid political rise. This was due still more to the position as leader of the German element which he soon acquired, partly because of his early leadership of the revolutionary movement in Germany, and partly because of his unusually rapid adjustment to American life. Entering local politics in Wisconsin, interest in the nativist movement soon drew him to Boston where he made friends among the reformer group who proved to be his most congenial associates. The campaign of 1860 found him established as the main reliance of the Republicans for winning to their side the Democratic-inclined German population. Schurz wrote Lincoln, May 22, 1860: "I was elected a member of the National Central Committee, and, as a matter of course, the 'foreign department,' if it may be so called, fell to my special charge." From this time until 1889 (except for 1880) and again in 1900 and 1904, his letters afford the best source for the study of the educational side of national campaigning as yet available to the historian. In 1860 with his fine intelligence fired by a great cause and fresh with the exuberance of youth he rose to the greatest height of oratory. He wrote his wife, July 25, that Lincoln after hearing him said: "You are an awful fellow! I understand your power now." His speech at St. Louis, August 1, was his greatest, and the best of the campaign. In this campaign and that for the Union immediately following, he did more to influence the course of American history than at any other time.

On November 10, 1860, he wrote to J. F. Potter that while he did not want an office unless the administration wished to give him one, he hoped that they would offer him nothing rather than a poor one. "First, I should like to be in a place where I can do something. . . . Secondly, as I am generally looked upon as the representative of the

German element, I consider it due to those I do represent that I should not take an inferior place." Fully conscious of his position, he soon began a series of letters to the presidents and presidential candidates, which continued until his death, and which are remarkable for their directness, the general sanity of their advice, and their absence of a sense of humor. To every president from Lincoln to Roosevelt, except Arthur and Harrison, he tendered suggestions. These letters elicited many interesting replies. A discussion with Lincoln as to the cause of the Republican defeats in November, 1862 (I, 211-222), is suggestive. Still more so is one with Hayes in 1876 (III, 284-290) as to whether the "plain people" feared that a Democratic victory would bring Rebellion into power, or desired a change. Hayes urged a "hopeful tone." Perhaps the most interesting is one from Hayes, February 4, 1877, expressing his "anxiety to do something to promote the pacification of the South." The letters of Garfield, Cleveland and Roosevelt, while they exhibit a wish to conciliate Schurz, are more perfunctory; he had passed his zenith.

When in 1869 Schurz became senator from Missouri, he found behind him a new force added to the German element. The various men working for reform in the tariff, finance and civil service saw combined with his oratory and his special German backing a practical political sense which made him possible for leadership where Sumner was not. During and after the break with Grant, Schurz is in correspondence with all the reform leaders, Godkin, Bowles, Charles Francis Adams, Jr., Horace White, young Henry Cabot Lodge and many others. In their letters is the inner history of the movement. The climax of Schurz's political career is his speech on "The Aims of the Liberal Republican Movement," delivered on taking the chair as permanent president of their convention at Cincinnati, May 2, 1871 (II, 354-360), whither he brought his Germans and his reformers together for united action. No dramatist could have produced a more tragic contrast than does the simple chronology which places next in order Schurz's letter of May 6 to Horace Greeley expressing his chagrin and perturbation of spirit at the latter's nomination (II, 361-367)—the first letter of a correspondence of singular individuality.

On June 16, 1875, Charles Francis Adams, Jr., wrote Schurz of the nomination of Allen in Ohio: "The weapon with which to kill him is the German vote—it is the only effective weapon at hand, and you are its holder." Although Allen was "killed," it was already evident to more practical politicians that Adams's statement, as well as that of the memorial committee in the introduction to the volumes, that "he, above

all others, personified that extraordinary stream of German immigration which enriched the United States in the years immediately following the Revolution of 1848," was but partially true. The very fact that he devoted himself to politics differentiated him from his generally unpolitical countrymen. His co-workers and associates were not Germans. He may be said to have personified the forty-eighters, the politically-moved immigrants; but they formed only a small minority of the voters of that nationality. Schurz no longer stood before the country as the representative of the whole.

He still maintained his leadership of the reformer group, powerful not so much because of its numbers as of its political mobility. Schurz believed that they had a still further element of strength. Godkin wrote him, June 28, 1872, (II, 386-387) of that "moral position which, when combined with such oratorical gifts as you have, gives a man an unshakable hold on the people and *forces* him on any party which wishes to succeed." That Schurz and many of the men with whom he was working did deserve and to some extent had such a "moral hold," is undeniable; but "moral hold" in this country has never been more than a break on the descent to Avernus unless accompanied by a representative spirit. It is this that our foreign-born have failed to grasp. Schurz, disappointed in the convention of 1872, wanted a meeting of "notables," men of standing "in the political and social world" (II, 377-378, to Godkin, May 20, 1873; III, 155-156, July 16, 1875, to W. M. Grosvenor). The meeting was held, and Schurz, while shrinking from appearing as president-maker, used its moral influence to secure the nomination of Charles Francis Adams or of Bristow by the Republicans in 1876.

Disappointed once more, Schurz nevertheless accepted Hayes heartily, and entered into confidential relations with him. In the disputed election he suggested reference to the Supreme Court (III, 339-348). A hasty comparison of the correspondence at this point with Rhodes's "Review of President Hayes' Administration," in his *Historical Essays* will show how much it will contribute to the future historian. Entering Hayes's cabinet in the Department of the Interior, he wrote that it was not a very interesting department to him as he had "never given much attention to the Indians, patents, pensions and public lands" (III, 399, February 19, 1877, to Murat Halstead). He got up those typically American subjects, but not in such a way as to compel attention. His letters and papers on Indian policy are interesting, but in his subsequent, and in many respects admirable, *Life of Henry Clay*, he does not mention public lands. His generalization

that "a Senator belonging to the administration party is naturally not inclined to oppose the President" (III, 366-376, January 25, 1877, to Hayes) proved too optimistic. In 1884, after the nomination of Blaine, Schurz at once wrote to Bayard (IV, 205-208, June 28, 1884), and put himself in touch with the Democratic party, endeavoring to secure the nomination of Bayard or Cleveland. Bayard was anxious to have him in Cleveland's cabinet (IV, 291, November 17, 1884), but Schurz would not consider it (IV, 291-293, November 21), and Cleveland did not suggest it (IV, 358, March 2, 1885, to L. Q. C. Lamar).

In spite of Schurz's letters and support, Cleveland apparently did not heed him as much as previous presidents had done. To a mutual friend who asked Cleveland to regard Schurz as substantially a supporter, in spite of the fact that Schurz as representative of the Civil Service Reform Association had attacked some of the President's actions, Mr. Cleveland said: "Yes, but when am I to find three or four hours to answer his letter" (IV, 473). Nevertheless Schurz remained in correspondence with Bayard, and played a part in the Samoan Affair (V, 1-10, January 30, February 3, 1889).

As a supporter of sound money in 1896 Schurz was thrown in touch once more with the Republicans. On November 12, 1896, he wrote Mark Hanna that he did not want a cabinet position, that a cabinet should be homogeneous (V, 328-329). His correspondence with President McKinley on the civil service is interesting (V, 340-342, 296-398, 429-431), though its results were unsatisfactory to him; that on the war and imperialism (V, 457-458, 465-466, 472-477, 515-520) includes no response. In a fragment of an essay on McKinley (VI, 270-271) he speaks of a promise, as he understood it, made him by McKinley shortly after the latter's inauguration, that there should be "no jingo nonsense under my administration," and particularly no scheming for the annexation of Hawaii.

Though the note of friendship and family affection is often struck, the letters, as they appear, have no interest for the historian of culture, since the editor has omitted those which are primarily "personal, journalistic and military," and has made excision of occasional paragraphs in the letters printed. The ways and means of Schurz's life and his literary tastes are almost totally without illustration. Even his first impressions of America appear only in a few cases in the first part of the first volumes. The contribution is strictly political.

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REVIEWS.

The New Freedom: A Call for the Emancipation of the Generous Energies of a People. By WOODROW WILSON. New York, Doubleday, Page and Company, 1913.—viii, 294 pp.

A celebrated English statesman, when asked once upon a time what his religious faith was, sagely replied that wise men never defined their religion. This same statesman kept his friends and foes in such a state of uncertainty as to his political faith that the most nearly accurate characterization which could be devised for him was that of "Tory-Democrat." The long line of distinguished Americans who have held the office of president of the United States have been almost as cryptic in their politics. Previous to the publication of Mr. Wilson's *New Freedom*, there had been only one systematic treatise on politics and economics by a president. John Adams published, some years before his election to the presidency, his justly famous *Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States*. This indiscretion plagued him from the day of publication until the morning of March 4, 1801, when he retired to private life. Other presidents after Adams had written copiously and many of them had written books, but none had attempted to formulate his creed in political economy until Mr. Wilson.

Although this volume is composed of speeches made during the campaign and, therefore, bears the marks of addresses delivered to popular audiences, it is a fairly symmetrical work, and it unfolds a reasonably complete system of public economy. It was a thoughtless wit who brought against it the charge of "lucid ambiguity." There are, it is true, some ingeniously turned phrases that gleam with the same brightness from every angle, but running through it there is a system. And it is of high significance that Mr. Wilson saw fit to give it to the world. It is of still greater significance that we at last have a president who has dared to let his mind play freely around the central problem of American democracy: the distribution of wealth and opportunity.

But the results of his meditations are not new. Doubtless Mr. Wilson is well enough aware of the fact, for though his volume bears the title of the "new" freedom, he speaks everywhere of the "restoration" of politics to their full spiritual vigor and of the national life to its "pristine" strength. It is true he does not attempt to fix the date of our "pristine