

## Garfield and His Time

THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF JAMES ABRAM GARFIELD. By THEODORE CLARK SMITH. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1925. \$12.

Reviewed by RALPH VOLNEY HARRIS, Jr.  
Boston University

THE mere mention of a new biography of Garfield is enough to arouse immediate interest, because of the peculiarly immoral tone of politics during much of his public career. If ever there was a period redolent of scandal, it was the decade and a half after the Civil War. The "gold corner," the "salary grab," the "whiskey ring," the *Crédit Mobilier*, the Hayes-Tilden election, and the "Star Route" frauds, eloquent tales of rottenness, still serve as stock illustrations of how seamy-sided American politics may become. As for the individual leaders of that day, altogether too many were fit subjects for barroom jokes or for grand jury investigations. "Jim" Fisk, "Ben" Butler, Oakes Ames, Don Cameron, Roscoe Conkling, and even James G. Blaine all contributed to produce what the late Professor Dunning so aptly called "the nadir of national disgrace."

Any opportunity for analyzing once more these products of the Reconstruction era would be valuable in itself; but in these volumes Professor Smith offers far more. The scandals are here, to be sure, but they are used almost as a foil for displaying the solid worth of a leader who could remain untarnished while reputations all around were being smirched or ruined. Garfield was creating a record that may well stir enthusiastic admiration. If this picture differs from those in the pages of Rhodes, Dunning, and Oberholtzer, there is enough evidence presented for its verification. Professor Smith has had free, unhampered access to hitherto unpublished Garfield papers, and these he has used in masterly fashion.



Garfield's early life, as a poor farmer's son and canal boat hand, is dealt with sensibly, without the shameless sentimentalism of campaign biographies. The struggle for an education, culminating in the years at Williams under Mark Hopkins, are so described as to bring out Garfield's persistence and initiative. In this part of the work Professor Smith makes it possible for the reader to follow intimately the various stages in Garfield's intellectual growth, from the school boy through the steps of theological controversialist, Campbellite teacher and preacher, chief of staff under Rosecrans, serious student of public finance in Congress, and President of the United States.

Throughout the book Professor Smith emphasizes again and again Garfield's qualities as a man. From an abundance of material the reader is impressed with Garfield's eminent sanity, down-right common sense, admirable reasonableness, and thoroughgoing honesty. "Anyone," Smith writes, "who reads the hundreds upon hundreds of letters written by him to wife, family, colleagues, friends, acquaintances, gains an impression of a fine and simple integrity in the man." His shortcomings, which seem curiously few in the light of all this evidence, were due to errors of judgment, never to trickery or dishonesty. For a record that can stand such detailed analysis as Professor Smith offers in these volumes, no apologies are required.

In the exposition of Garfield's public career the author goes fully into almost every episode concerning which there has been either controversy or charge of unbecoming conduct. The story of the collapse of General Rosecrans during the fighting at Chickamauga brings out Garfield's loyalty as well as his ability; the evidence presented demolishes the charges against Garfield which Dana so assiduously circulated in the *Sun*. With similar thoroughness Professor Smith dissects the tissue of charges regarding the De Golyer pavement, "salary grab," and *Crédit Mobilier* accusations. Here again, by means of an abundance of detailed evidence, much of which is published for the first time, the author succeeds in completely exonerating Garfield. In this minute examination of Garfield's acts the author remains happily even tempered. In fact he seems to have adopted Garfield's own method of meeting charges, by a plain

statement of facts, and by an appeal to reason and common sense.

On the constructive side of Garfield's work in Congress the book is especially illuminating. Here Garfield appears, if not as a great statesman, at least as an invaluable public servant, with attributes of true ability. As Chairman of the House Committee on Appropriations he tried to inject an element of logic and reason into matters left frequently to mere chance, or corrupt bargaining. Garfield even went so far as to make a careful study of the English budget system, and to urge Congress to consider some of its advantages. Compared with the ordinary run of "pork" hunting Congressmen, Garfield stood on high ground.

After his election, Garfield began, in his usual methodical manner, to organize his administration. This work brought him into conflict with his erstwhile opponent in the Republican convention, Conkling, the leader of the New York "Stalwarts." In the struggle that followed over the principle of "Senatorial Courtesy," the new President appears as a man of strong convictions and unusual political skill. The story of his victory over the arrogant Senator from New York is a fascinating account of a definite policy clearly thought out and vigorously executed.

These two volumes will serve to elevate Garfield to a deservedly high rank among the ablest public officials of this country. Judged by the standards of any time, no matter how high, Garfield's record would be a striking one for the sensible ideals, unselfish motives, and sheer ability which consistently gave distinction to his work. But when judged by the standards of his own time, and when compared with the "political vermin" which infested the Grant administration, Garfield appears almost as a phenomenon.

## An American Saga

BUFFALO DAYS. By COLONEL HOMER W. WHEELER. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co. 1925. \$4.

Reviewed by John G. Neihardt.  
Author of "The Song of the Indian Wars."

HEROISM of the grander sort is the offspring of character and apparent fortuity, either of which without the other is barren of such deeds as men most delight to remember. No doubt this goes far toward explaining the ancient and universal need of fiction. Men, keenly conscious of their unrealized potentialities, merely resort to the expedient of remembering those things which, owing to the notorious carelessness of chance, have failed to happen. Even the perennial fish story, by this theory, is seen to be a valiant and humanly justifiable attempt to correct the sad delinquencies of Destiny.

However, in the life of an occasional man chance seems to be most active and obliging, with the result that fact becomes stranger and more thrilling than most fiction; for chance, being unhuman, is under no compulsion to seem plausible. Splendid things just happen, regardless of rules; and even those authoritative people, the critics, dare not object for once. Such a fortunate man is Homer W. Wheeler, to whom we are indebted for the stirring saga of his life, told honestly and therefore admirably told.

It was in Western Kansas during the spring of 1875 that Homer Wheeler, then post-trader at Fort Wallace, was launched upon a long and notable military career in a manner that broke all rules. News came to the fort that a band of Indians had been making trouble for the cattlemen down on Punished Woman's Creek and was bound north. When forty men of the Sixth Cavalry set forth in pursuit of the hostiles, Wheeler, being familiar with the country, volunteered to serve as guide. The hostile band was overtaken on the north fork of Sappa Creek, a affluent of the upper Republican, and what followed was a perfect little pocket classic of a battle. The Indians, conscious of their superior numbers and loath to lose their pony herd, held their ground, and there was close stubborn fighting. In Colonel Wheeler's frankly unliterary and thrilling account of the battle one must read carefully between the lines in order to appreciate the post-trader's full contribution to the victory that was won, for the Colonel makes no great matter of his heroism. We believe him when he tells us of his astonishment some weeks later upon receiving from

the War Department a long envelope addressed to "Second Lieutenant Homer W. Wheeler." Though his military experience had been limited strictly to the Sappa Creek fight, he thus suddenly found himself in the company of West Pointers. It is the sort of thing that may happen in the world of Horatio W. Alger, but hardly anywhere else!

During the seven years previous to this event, Wheeler had served an arduous apprenticeship as a plainsman, hunting buffalo, and raising cattle in spite of thieves, wild Indians, and the unfriendly elements—all of which he sets forth with the simple but effective art of a campfire confidence. But this merely builds the colorful background of the man's personality for the brave march of the tale through those memorable years when the last great struggle for the buffalo pastures was taking place between the land-mad white men and the tribes of the plains. Wheeler's story is largely that of the Fifth Cavalry, as Colonel of which regiment he retired in 1911 after thirty-six years of service. With it he fought under Mackenzie in the desperate winter battle with Dull Knife's Cheyennes on the upper Powder, again distinguishing himself in an affair remarkable for heroism on both sides. With his regiment he visited the Custer field when the signs of that tragic event were still fresh, and helped to rebury the dead. In this connection he is able to give some important facts not generally known and a clearer light is thrown on Custer's conduct. He served in the campaign of 1877 against the Nez Percés when Chief Joseph was fighting his way toward Canada and freedom—a retreat that has been compared with that of the ten thousand Greeks and is certainly one of the most impressive episodes in our history. Men, whose names have in them something of song for those Americans who know and sincerely love their country's traditions, were this man's friends—Sheridan, Merritt, Crook, Mackenzie, Forsyth! Bill Hickok was his friend, and Cody.

"Buffalo Days," one of the last contemporary accounts of our heroic age, is in direct line of descent from "Captain Bonneville" and "Astoria." The descent is not a matter of merely literary values, but of the blood of the truly Homeric breed that will soon be gone with the bison.



## DIARY OF A SEMI-PRECIOUS NOVELIST

Monday

ROSE at dawn—at ten fifteen—  
Then took a plunge. (Refreshed the bean)  
And wrote a page on my new novel.  
If this time I don't make 'em grovel,  
I'll eat the whole darn manuscript.  
I liked my last, but something slept.

Ate lunch at *Henri's* with a fan,  
An aging flapper, tense and wan,  
With literary dreams engrossed.  
My fingers, did she know, are crossed,  
For as Dean Howells used to say  
"Don't criticize unless they pay."  
(Only the surgeon who is feed.  
Is privileged to make them bleed.)  
So home, and read a book of Trollope's  
And later ate a dish of scallops....

Tuesday

Worked rather well, was interviewed  
By a reporter, slightly stewed,  
Who spoke at length of his delight  
In "Weeds,"—a book I didn't write.  
Later into the radio  
Told what an author ought to know,  
And hoped I might impress the sticks  
Dined heartily at half past six  
At Horn and Hardart's new café,  
And called the net result a day.—  
Although in some strange way it seemed  
I still must edit what I dreamed,  
And give the product style and finish—  
No wonder that I'm growing thinnish...

Wednesday

Woke with the birds (an English sparrow)  
Found I was frozen to the marrow,



The bedclothes having walked a mile..  
My toast was burnt; my coffee vile.  
Tried hard to hit upon a title..  
"The Spark,"—"The Dreamer,"—something vital;  
"He Got The Job,"—a modern twist..  
Finished the chapter where they kissed..

A grave young radical to tea  
Demanding love and verse be free.  
"But make an honest girl of art,"  
I said, and hurt his little feelings..  
"Follow the dictates of your heart,"  
Ate several apples, and their peelings.

#### Thursday

By early post (the devil take her)  
A woman calls upon her maker  
To witness I'm a stogey hermit.  
(I would be if I had a permit)..  
My aunt is going to the Lido.  
The iceman writes and signs it "Guido,"  
And says "send cash, and not a check."  
A clipping bureau sends a peck  
Of notices o'er which I loiter..  
My photograph has grown a goitre..  
Permission to reprint...a list..  
Is craved by an anthologist..  
(Should write and tell him he's a beat,  
But still anthologists must eat!)  
Oh! for a letter with a kick in..  
Went breakfastless, but lunched on chicken...

#### Friday

The weather great, and for a cookie  
Had been persuaded to play hookey,  
But no one seemed to read my mind,  
So stuck at the demition grind,  
Till complications of my hero's  
Reduced me to a row of zeros.  
Is that friend right who says you'd sell  
Three times the books done half as well?

Then for my sins went out to dinner  
(I must indeed have been a sinner)  
For ever as the evening wore on,  
Was I the victim of a moron..  
"Why are your heroines neurotic?"  
"Have publishers become despotic?"  
"Don't movies make a lot of money?"  
And at the time, it wasn't funny!..

#### Saturday

Awoke with something of a snuffle.  
Decided that my book was piffle,  
And things like me were better scrapped..  
A bit more cheerful when I napped,  
But still abandoned literature.  
Think I'll go in for something pure  
Like politics, or cloaks and suits.  
The little wop that shines my boots  
Has found the secret of delight..  
Maybe, it's just...he doesn't write.

Dined at the Ritz, on fatted calf,  
Observing how the other half  
Conducts itself when placed between you.  
Wrote scraps of verse upon the menu  
About a beggar and his wishes.

#### Sunday

Rained cats and dogs and little fishes.  
Wrote all day long on soup and bread..  
Then staggered happily to bed...

ETHEL M. KELLEY

In a lively article, published only a short time ago in the *Student Leader*, a pamphlet issued by the Labor Club of Glasgow University, George Bernard Shaw remarked that the use of a rectorial election was to make "a periodical gesture of insult to academic education." The article was written in support of the candidacy of Sidney Webb, former president of the Board of Trade, for the lord rectorship of Glasgow University, a post for which Austen Chamberlain, Foreign Secretary, and G. K. Chesterton have also been nominated.

G. B. S. said Mr. Chamberlain would make an ideal rector and was certain to win hands down "unless he unexpectedly betrays cultural interests and knowledge of other things than the party game before polling day."

## The BOWLING GREEN

SEVERAL friendly correspondents have supplied information on the matter of the Pine Tree Blight, which we suggested as a literary analogy. K. C. of Hartford, Conn., writes:—

The currant bush is an "intermediate host," if you know what that is. I didn't at your age. The pine tree blight (made in Germany) cannot be carried from pine to pine but must be communicated to the currant, which passes it on to the next pine victim.

President Moody of Middlebury College, Vermont, says:—

I noticed your reference to the pine tree. Instantly I thought that that partially correct reference could have been expanded if you had accepted our invitation to come to Bread Loaf for the English Summer Session, and there, in the midst of our thirty-one thousand acres of forest you could not have failed to absorb a certain amount of silviculture and known that interesting story of the parasite upon the white pine (curiously enough it does not attack anything but the white pine) which is known as the White Pine Blister Rust. This parasite, or fungus, starts upon the white pine and then needs for the second stage of its development shelter or refuge upon either wild or domestic gooseberry or currant. Here it makes further progress, upon which it returns in a third stage to the white pine where it is fatal.

In regard to Neglected Books, Harry Patterson writes charmingly from Grand Island, Nebraska:—

I note occasional contributions from Arthur Colton in the *Saturday Review*. If you have any influence with that charming writer I wish you would persuade him, by fair means or foul, to publish a volume of essays. His novel "The Debatable Land," and at least one of his stories, "The Spiral Etone" in "Tioba and Other Tales," I still maintain are at the very topmost notch of American literature. And the tragedy of it is they are both long out of print while scores of volumes of less literary merit are starred as landmarks by the intelligentsia.

Another—and perhaps equally irrelevant—parable occurs to me. I am not a radio devotee, but I gather that there are certain parts of the world, certain seasons of the year, and certain times of the day, when the ether is specially full of Static; and that when that is so it is peculiarly difficult to get clear tone.

Exactly the same problem appears in literature. In the past few years, the literary ether has been jammed with a very curious and lively kind of Static, which has enormous possibilities for great expression when the proper adjustments can be made. But it also results in this, that if the installation—viz. the imagination of the writer—has not been justly tuned in to the exact undulation, the recital consists mostly of screams, howls, and yelps. As is most profitable in parables, the reader must apply instances and draw conclusions to suit his own taste.

Some of the literary experiments of our time have been tremendously thrilling, others have been tiresome and vain. I like to regard them as *hors d'œuvres*, antipastic appetizers for some possible magnificent feasting that caterers of the next decade may spread. Perhaps the great pieces of resistance, when they come, will not be so very different from what we have been nourished by in the past. But in any event it is well to enjoy *hors d'œuvres* for what they are, nor sate the appetite with them merely because the waiter is tardy. Nor is it fair to complain if they sometimes have a fishy flavor; for *hors d'œuvres* consist largely of small chippings of pungent fish.

By a refinement of coincidence, I happened to be in Philadelphia just when the last walls of Leary's blessed old bookshop were being delapidated. Surely no decently-constituted being would gaze without some honest melancholy upon the vanishing of the place where, in his teens, he first suspected the excitements of book-hunting. Tom Daly and I hung about the wrecked doorway, in a pious hope that some forgotten volume might be found in the rubbish. We remained, troveless, until bricks began falling on us. By the faces of Leary's staff, at their temporary home on Arch Street, we could see that the loss of the old building had been a heavy blow upon those inward sensibilities that men rarely mention, but cannot forbid their friends to suspect. And so we lay it as a charge upon the architect of the new Leary's, whoever he may be, to do a really fine and appropriate job in rebuilding on the old site. Not since the original Old Corner Bookstore disappeared in Boston has there been a problem of bookshop-architecture of such sentimental interest to The

Trade. The new Leary's should be planned to remind us, in some way, of the old one; and if Philadelphia is in any degree aware of its treasures, the matter will have just consideration. We count on Leary's rising again (as Ben Franklin said in his own epitaph) in a new edition and a more glorious binding.

It was interesting to note, by the way, that the management of the Ben Franklin Hotel in Philly has set up a searchlight to play a nightly beam upon the statue of Ben which sits on the Chestnut Street pavement. This little stunt would have enormously pleased that humorous electrician. The only other incident of a few hours' rambling in Philadelphia that seems important to recount was finding a man selling broadside ballads (five for 10 cents) in front of the famous old Trocadero burlesque theatre. This was so Chaucerian an episode—as the Troc itself used to be Chaucerian in some of its flavors—that I give you the titles of the ballads. They were "The Face on the Barroom Floor," "The Girl With the Blue Velvet Band," "The Shooting of Dangerous Dan McGrew," "The Kid's Last Fight," "The Hell-Bound Train."

I was a little disheartened by a phrase in a letter from the Dean of a college greatly admired for its old traditions in *literae humaniores*. Introducing a young man said to be interested in literature, the Dean wrote "he is anxious to consult you in regard to the best way of proceeding to market his product." I am sure that the Dean, writing in haste, used the phrase innocently enough; and yet it hath an ominous sound.

The chief adventures of a few days in Atlantic City were (1) observing that the Atlantic City Truth Center is in the Riddle Building, and (2) buying a copy of "Selections from Landor" (the Golden Treasury Series) at Walter Landor's bookshop, where the young clerk believed the book was written by the owner of the store. Going thereafter to Northampton, Mass., Titania and I made the usual visit to the book-counters at Liggett's in the Grand Central Station, for train-reading. A collection of Jonathan Edwards's sermons for 25 cents seemed to me a good venture; and I learned for the first time what was the origin of Dr. Edwards's row with his congregation. It appears that he objected fiercely to the young people of Northampton being allowed to read all sorts of frolicsome and profane books. When his congregation outvoted him on this matter, he left prophesying the curses of hell on the town. His notion of hell was free access to miscellaneous literature; and it has been strictly fulfilled, for in Northampton you will now find one of the most charming and generously supplied bookstores in the world, where the delightful maidens of Smith College browse unrebuked upon volumes of all sorts; and the tall calf-bound set of Jonathan Edwards's works tarries upstairs in the attic, probably unsalable. I should like to know what were the books that so agitated Dr. Edwards; the 69 gallons of rum consumed by the workmen who built his church did not worry him at all. As for the Hampshire Book Shop, a store that lists in its catalogue of Christmas specialties such desirables as "Paradoxes and Problems," by John Donne, and Thomas Fuller's "Worthies," and Geoffrey Scott's "The Portrait of Zelide" may be seen to be no common mart.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

A literary find of the first importance has been made public by William A. Speck, Curator of the Speck Collection of Goetheana in the Yale library, in his announcement that he has discovered the author of the "Letters of Charlotte," the celebrated imitation of Goethe's "Sorrows of Werther," which has remained anonymous for 150 years. The author's name, W. James, is signed to a letter secured by Mr. Speck from an English bookseller, addressed to Cadell, the famous 18th century publisher, who later brought out the "Letters of Charlotte." In it the writer proposes that Cadell publish the book, and indicates haste, as he wishes to return to his home in Hertfordshire.

For the era before the modern bestseller, the "Sorrows of Werther," printed in 1774, had an unprecedented sale. Not till "Uncle Tom's Cabin" and Byron's "Childe Harold" did it have a rival in this regard. Its reception in England was tremendous, leading to the publication of many pirated editions, and scores of imitations. The most noteworthy of the latter was the "Letters of Charlotte."