

Points of View

Paul Jones

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:
SIR:

In the list of consulted authorities supplied by Mr. Phillips Russell in his book entitled, "Paul Jones, Man of Action," I have found the mention of my own biography of our naval hero. Following immediately after is the name of Colonel A. C. Buell's book, "Paul Jones Founder of the American Navy," to which is added "assailed by Mrs. de Koven for alleged inventions." You will permit me to deal with the implication contained in the word "alleged." Buell's book was published in the year 1900. Mr. Charles Scribner, who had published Buell's book, had authorized me to prepare another book about Paul Jones, embodying certain unpublished letters, which existed in the Congressional Library in Washington. During my preparation for the writing of this book I sought for the authorities quoted by Buell as containing the new material which had not been published in the previous biographies of Jones and which had been used by him in his biography. Aside from the well known histories and the biographies antecedent to his I found these new authorities to be non-discoverable. On a visit to the Washington library I was informed by Mr. Worthington Ford (then head of the manuscript department of the library) that Colonel Buell had never visited the library and had never examined the large collection of Jones's documents there preserved. After months of examination of these documents I came to the conclusion that Buell had fabricated all the so-called new material which did not exist in the previous biographies. In the year 1906 I published, in the columns of *The New York Times* an extensive article in which I exposed Buell's fabrications. This exposé has never been refuted or questioned. Mr. Phillips Russell in his book has however quoted a number of these inventions. It is not possible, in the limits of this communication for me to deal with the great number of fabrications and false documents which Buell published. I will therefore discuss only four.

The first invention concerns the national banner. Buell stated that on account of the two resolutions passed by Congress on the 14th of June, 1777, when the Stars and Stripes were adopted as the national banner and Jones was appointed to the *Ranger*, that Jones declared: "That the flag and I are twins, born in the same hour from the same womb of destiny." To support this glorious declaration, Buell made the further statement that Jones assembled a bevy of Portsmouth girls to fabricate the first Stars and Stripes flag and that this was flown for the first time in history from the mast of the *Ranger* on July 4th, 1777. The facts are as follows: Paul Jones did not receive his first appointment to the navy on June 14th, 1777,

but was made first lieutenant on the flagship of our infant fleet on December 7th, 1775. Having been superseded in rank after this appointment he wrote many letters of protest, preserved among his manuscripts in Washington, which antedate his appointment to the *Ranger* in the year 1777. The declaration about his being born to the American service on the same day that the flag was adopted was therefore an invention of the clearest and most easily proved variety.

As to the fabrication of the flag by the Portsmouth maidens this was also an audacious invention. Investigation started by Commander Joseph Foster in Portsmouth in the year 1910 disclosed that none of these maidens had ever existed in the flesh. George Canby, grandnephew of Betsy Ross, who did fabricate the first Stars and Stripes under Washington's direction, had written to Buell asking him for his authorities in regard to his story of the Portsmouth flag. This letter was sent by Canby to Commander Foster who published it in a Portsmouth newspaper. The letter is as follows: The William Cramp and Sons Ship and Engine Building Company
Office Beach and Ball Streets
Philadelphia, Oct. 4, 1901

My Dear Mr. Canby:

I have received your letter of the first instant. I have been intending to call upon you ever since you did me the honor to visit me at my house but have not as yet found time.

The only copy that I have of the article printed in the *Times* concerning the Stafford flag is in my scrap book. But I have the date of the paper and will write to the *Times* office and if possible obtain another copy.

With regard to the papers of Elijah Hall, I have gone over all my original notes, that is all that I have saved of them, and I cannot find anything to indicate exactly where his (these?) could now be found. In fact all that I ever saw of them was in his journal and two letters written by him, all in manuscript. This was fifteen years ago, in 1886. They were then in the possession of a descendant of his, an elderly maiden lady named Sherburne, who, as well as I can remember, resided in Dover, N. H.

As to the making of the flag for the *Ranger*, Hall only referred to it in a single sentence. The detailed story was told to me by Miss Sherburne orally, as a family tradition. My impression is that Miss Sherburne was a granddaughter of Dorothy Hall, Elijah's (niece) who is mentioned in the foot-note.

The fact is that when compiling the matter for my history I never had any idea of being a defendant in the premises or being called to prove anything by proffer of original documents. Indeed, I was not at that time sure that I would ever publish it. As a result I was careless about preserving the documentary evidence.

For this reason about all I can do is to say, those who take sufficient interest in my statements to read them must accept them as authority as far as I am concerned without going behind the returns.

I am well aware that in such a work as that in which you are engaged, documentary proof, even to photograph copies of original papers, is desirable, if not essential. In this particular

case I do not see how I can help you in that direction, a situation which, let me assure you, I regret exceedingly.

Very truly yours,
AUGUSTUS C. BUELL.

According to the generally accepted historical record, the Stars and Stripes flag was first flown at Fort Stanwix on August the 6th, 1777.

The second invention of Buell which I will discuss deals with the mysterious Madame T., the unidentified inamorata of Paul Jones, referred to by him in his letters to Thomas Jefferson. Among the manuscripts of Paul Jones in the Congressional Library there are autograph drafts addressed to Madame T. The first of these is dated July 24th of the year 1780. There are two others also to a Madame T. dated September 4th and October 24th, 1787, enclosed in letters to Jefferson of the same dates. There is also another letter to Jefferson in which this Madame T. was referred to, of September 9th, 1788. Several of Jones's biographers have not unnaturally assumed that these letters were addressed to one and the same person. They have also assumed that her name was "Thelison" or "Tellison", but an investigation of the grounds of both these assumptions reveal that they are untenable. The first letter to Madame T., of July, 1780, contains an account of Jones's loss of the ship *Alliance*, and indicates a relationship of distant, but courteous friendship. The first mention of the full name "Tellison" is found in Disraeli's "Life of Paul Jones" published by Murray in the year 1825, as the lady to whom the letter of July 24th, 1780, was addressed.

Paul Jones knew a Madame Thilarie and her sister Madame de Bonneuil, as is proved by his letters to the latter and also by a statement by Madame Vigée Le Brun in her written portrait of Paul Jones, published in her memoirs. The name Thilarie with its nearly identical first syllable to that of Tellison or Thelison, as it also appears, might have been thus written by Disraeli. But Robert Sands who published in 1830 the papers which were brought to America by Jones's niece, Janet Taylor, states on the best authority that "Tellison" was not the name of the second Madame T. of whom Jones wrote to Jefferson. The above mentioned autograph drafts of letters in the Jones collection supply the only information in regard to these two Madame T's, with the exception of a brief letter of Janet Taylor to Jared Sparkes stating that Madame T. resided with her sister who was a widow. This letter is in the Harvard Library.

The author of this article paid a research agent for three years to seek for the identity of this second Madame T. in all the libraries and archives of Paris. This search was without success. We know by Robert Sands's statement that she was not called Thelison or Tellison. We know also by Jones's letter to Jefferson of the year 1788 that she did not acknowledge the money sent to her by Jones during his absence in Russia. In the attempt to supply a Lady Hamilton to the history of our naval hero, Buell invented many romantic incidents. According to Jones's letters to Jefferson and those which he enclosed in these to the lady herself he did sustain an intimate relation with this second Madame T. He stated to Jefferson that she was an illegitimate daughter of Louis XV. by a lady of quality. He also stated that she had a protectress who had some position of importance at the court. No investigation has discovered the full name of this Madame T., of her mother, or of her protectress. Mr. Buell has stated that an unpublished entry in the diary of Gouverneur Morris related that she was present at Jones's side during his last illness in Paris. Mr. Russell has quoted this statement. The following letter from Gouverneur Morris's granddaughter, Mrs. Maudsley, states that there was no such entry.

32, Montpelier Square
London, S. W.

October 27, 1906

Dear Mrs. de Koven:

I have been able to fulfil my promise to you to search through my grandfather's original papers for this entry of July 15th, 1772, concerning Paul Jones, which Mr. Buell quotes as originating with my grandfather. There is no such entry in his original diary nor is there any mention of Paul Jones at this time other than that published in the "Diary and Letters," dated July 18th, where Mr. Morris was sent for to make Paul Jones's will on the day before he died.

It is of course possible that Mr. Buell may have found some such mention of Paul Jones in some letter of my grandfather's written at that time, but there is no such entry in the original diary.

I hope you are making satisfactory progress with your work and I am sorry I cannot throw any light on Madame de Telison. I cannot remember her name appearing amongst the many names of people my grandfather knew and wrote of.

Yours sincerely,
ANNIE CARY MAUSLEY.

Mr. Russell states also on Buell's authority that the mother of the lady whom he falsely called Aimée Adele de Telison was called Madame de Bonneval. There was a Madame de Bonneval who assumed his title by order of Louis XV. after she had come under his protection. Her real name was Mlle. de Tiercelin. She did have a child by Louis XV., but that child was a son, called Benoist Louis Le Duc, who went into the church and became the Abbé of the church of St. Martin in Paris. Mlle. de Tiercelin was never married and died in Paris on July 15th, 1779. Buell's invention of the so called "Aimée de Telison's" parentage was thus as completely unfounded as were the rest of his fabrications. The author of this article procured a copy of the entire dossier of Mlle. de Tiercelin, which is to be found in the Archives Nationales Artistiques et Littéraires, Bibliothèque Nationale, where the above facts are set forth.

A letter from Buell to Colonel Henry Watterson in answer to his enquiries for further information about "Aimée Adele de Telison" furnishes information in regard to his methods of building up a story. This letter was furnished by a member of Buell's family.

To Henry Watterson. December 3, 1900
My dear Henry:

I received your letter of the 28th ultimo on my return from Washington today.

With regard to Aimée Adele de Telison—not "Thelison"—I can only say that, in the text of my book, I exhausted all that I could glean in twenty years of research: and, even at that I drew to some extent on an historical novel called "Le Déluge," published in France in 1833, which so far as I know was never translated into English and is now exceedingly rare.

Apart from the fragmentary remnants of her correspondence with Jones preserved in the Sherburne Collection, the Janet Taylor Collection, and the French Collection; together with the letters of Miss Edes-Herbert and a few cursory references in "Historical Anecdotes of the Reign of Louis XVI," I could find nothing authentic about her in contemporaneous papers, and the substance of all that is embraced in my book. I based my theory of her employment by Josephine on a footnote in the letters of Miss Edes-Herbert as printed in Edinburgh in 1809.

Most truly yours,
(signed) A. C. BUELL.

The book called "The Historical Anecdotes of the Reign of Louis XVI," cannot be discovered and there is no edition of the letter of Miss Edes-Herbert published in Edinburgh in 1809. Quotations only from this lady's letters are to be found in the "Biography of Paul Jones," published by an anonymous writer in Edinburgh in 1833.

The third example of Buell's inventions relates to the false document assigned by him to Paul Jones on the founding of the Navy. Buell states that on the 4th of September, 1775, a Committee was appointed in Congress to discuss the foundation of a Navy. Buell again states that on the 14th of September Paul Jones presented this document to the Committee. Any school boy could have informed Colonel Buell that it was John Adams who assembled the first Committee to discuss the founding of the Navy on October the 3rd, 1775, and that an enlarged Committee met again on October 13th to continue these deliberations. The document supplied by Buell is a barefaced fabrication as was also the personnel of Buell's imaginary Committee of September 4th, 1775. The eighth paragraph of this false document contains a garbled quotation from an authentic letter of Paul Jones to Hewes of April 14th, 1776. The existence of this passage presents internal evidence of the falsity of the document as the dates of the Committees of Congress present external evidence of its fabrication. Mr. Phillips Russell has stated that a quotation from this document is now in use at Annapolis. The following letter from Commander Nulton should definitely and permanently dispose of this statement:

United States Naval Academy
Annapolis, Maryland

Dear Constien: 6 February 1928.

Replying to yours of the 3 January with reference to the so-called Paul Jones letter; The use of the excerpt taken from Buell's "Paul Jones" was discontinued some time previous to the World War.

The following quotation was used between 1910 or 1911 until 1917 directly in connection with the English course:

"None other than a gentleman, as well as a seaman both in theory and practice, is qualified to support the character of a com-

(Continued on page 812)

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Conducted by EDWARD DAVISON

Competition No. 28. A prize of fifteen dollars is offered for the best short poem in Analyzed Rhyme. For the benefit of those who missed the discussion of Analyzed Rhyme in our last issue a brief explanation is printed below.* (Entries should reach *The Saturday Review* office, 25 West 45th Street, not later than the morning of April 30.)

Competition No. 29. Mr. Mencken's April *Americana* reports that Mr. Billy Sunday has announced an intention to have himself skinned after death, the skin to furnish a drum for use in street Revival Parades throughout the United States. A prize of fifteen dollars is offered for the poem most nearly resembling what Mr. Vachel Lindsay might write on hearing such a drum beaten in Springfield, Illinois. (Entries, which may be fragmentary, but must not exceed forty lines of verse, should reach *The Saturday Review* office not later than the morning of May 7.)

Competitors are advised to read carefully the rules printed below.

THE TWENTY-FIFTH COMPETITION

A prize of fifteen dollars was offered for the best description, in the manner of Mr. Thornton Wilder, of Mr. Sinclair Lewis's thoughts and feelings on coming back to settle in Gopher Prairie after having won fame in the world.

THE PRIZE DESCRIPTION

HE had been in Gopher Prairie for a week. It was Rotary Day at the new hotel, and dazedly he reflected that he was there as the guest of Dr. Kennicott. It did not surprise him, nor even shock him. The great shock of his decision to return overshadowed all lesser concussions. But he did not intend to respond to the loud platitudes and meaningless compliments that he knew would be heaped upon him. He hated that.

The two columns on the front page of the *Weekly Dauntless*, under the heading, "The Return of the Native," had been almost intolerably painful to him. It outraged him that he should be the subject of so much rhetoric. He had hoped that the paper would damn him roundly, and that he might then find a handful of appreciative souls that might turn out to be friends. But he knew it was too much to hope for. The *Dauntless* had hailed him as the man who, with Percy Bresnahan, "had put Gopher Prairie on the map." Lewis floated into a cold, calm fury that did not leave him for days.

Changes in the physical city were to have been expected, but no one could have anticipated the changes that had come to pass in Gopher Prairie since Lewis last saw it. For three consecutive years it had won the "Better Cities" contest, and the very pavements rang with the slogan. Lewis had no quarrel with civic improvement. But the clanging monotony of the cry bored him horribly. When he accepted Dr. Kennicott's invitation he was in that state, and having arrived at the luncheon he knew that he was about to be bored still worse. Rapidly he studied the faces at the long table, but saw everywhere smug prosperity and the Spirit of Boast. Desperately he recalled his reasons for his return, and clung to them as to an anchor. If he must be a spiritual hermit, he could not endure it. Then he found himself listening to an excellent speaker. "Beyond physical convenience and civic improvement there were intellectual continents undiscovered." The applause was tremendous. Lewis was thinking, "I wonder if my grandchildren's grandchildren will glimpse one of the shores?"

DAVID HEATHESTONE.

If David Heathstone had not already proved his mettle by taking the prize from nearly two hundred rival competitors a few weeks ago I might have found it more difficult to explain that he wins this time for the sole reason that his fragment was the least unsuccessful of a not very successful batch. Mr. Thornton Wilder would not, I think, have permitted a shock to overshadow a concussion, and to me there seems something wrong with the simile of the anchor. Moreover, the fragment has no subtlety and its prose is only negatively reminiscent of Mr. Wilder's. But even more serious objections are to be urged

against the entries by Parker Tyler and Gertrude Jennings which, more than any others, approached Mr. Heathstone's standard. Formerly, in such circumstances, I withheld the award. The post office regulations, however, seem to forbid this, and therefore the prize will always in future be awarded. One can only regret a law that reduces a contest of skill to the level of a lottery.

Mary Heath Ballantyne and Arjeh were the best of several who chose the wrong approach by making Mr. Wilder describe Mr. Lewis's thoughts in the first person, thus:

Now I shall become acquainted with the central passions of the Main Street that I have reviled. Fame is mine, but I am terrified at the illusions of the brain-fever that my leisure engenders. Henceforth I am constrained to paint my characters in tableau, unmoving. In repose each is curious and exasperating. "I think," Babbitt said to me lately, "I could confess a little about myself if you would let me be quiet long enough."

This, by Mrs. Ballantyne, is pitched in a completely false key to harmonize with Mr. Wilder. But the last sentence, taken on its own merits, is of pregnant excellence. Theodore Schilling might have challenged the prizewinner if he had written at greater length, but Arjeh, who can usually be depended on for a good parody, slipped into mere burlesque this time. Parker Tyler alone seems to have envisaged a possible satiric parallel in Shakespeare's return to Stratford. He made very little of it, however.

RULES

(Competitors failing to comply with rules will be disqualified.) 1. Envelopes should be addressed to "The Competitions Editor, *The Saturday Review of Literature*, 25 West 45th Street, New York City." The number of the competition (e.g., "Competition 1") must be written on the top left-hand corner. 2. ALL MSS. must be legible—typewritten if possible—and should bear the name or pseudonym of the author. Competitors may offer more than one entry. MSS. cannot be returned. 3. *The Saturday Review* reserves the right to print the whole or part of any entry.

*The following specimen of Analyzed Rhyme by Frank Kendon, its inventor, is reprinted from last week:

Oh that content, content might softly so
Steal over me and cheat this longing for
fame,
That I might love the trees about my
home,
Or well enough sing to throw the songs
away.

The principle of Analyzed Rhyme can be briefly re-stated as follows: "Mr. Kendon takes two such words as "soon" and "hide," but separates the vowel from the consonantal sounds before looking for his rhymes. The "oo" of soon is united with the "d" of hide; and the "i" of hide with the "n" of soon. This simple analysis produces the rhyming sounds oon, ide, ine, ood as a basis for new sets of words. Thus an absolute sound relationship can be established between words that have hitherto seemed alien to each other, e. g., soon hide, divine, brood." (See the issue of *The Saturday Review* dated April 14.)