





## American Letters

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sohn alone, among the moderns, run to one hundred ten inches! This is scarcely "true value . . . exhibited in its totality," especially when one recalls that the seventeenth century includes Increase Mather, the intellectual giant of the Puritans, and that the eighteenth includes Benjamin Franklin, Jonathan Edwards, Thomas Jefferson, and Alexander Hamilton, who, taken all together, receive less space than does Mr. Lewisohn himself.

Mr. Lewisohn may reply that these men do not represent "creative expression," and that the principle of severity will exclude them. Waiving the question whether they ought not therefore to be excluded entirely, one turns to consider the principle of severity, and one discovers that almost everybody before Whitman is cruelly reduced in space, and that two-thirds of the anthology is devoted to writers since 1870. Now I heartily agree with Mr. Lewisohn in admiring the flowering of American literature in the last sixty years, but Mr. Lewisohn writes as if he were sole and singular in making the discovery of its worth. "The pedagogical anthologists" who have preceded him, he says, "included only the 'Maud Mullers,' and the poem of signal excellence not at all, for the absurd reason that the latter is apt to have been written some time in the present century." I read this statement with amazement; then, making a list of twenty-five authors who immediately succeed Whitman in Mr. Lewisohn's anthology, I turned to the first four "pedagogical anthologists" on my shelves. Most of these do not include novelists except sparingly, and all of them have had to grapple with copyright difficulties, but one has selections from eleven of Mr. Lewisohn's authors, one from fourteen, one from fifteen, and one from sixteen! Again, Mr. Lewisohn says that "the large representation" he has given Emily Dickinson "seems

The point is not to find fault with Mr. Lewisohn's selections; the point lies in the absurdity of the bland assumptions underlying Mr. Lewisohn's theory of the "pedagogical anthologists." Mr. Lewisohn is an amateur in American literary history—a gifted amateur, but still an amateur; and it is scarcely to be expected that he has suddenly discovered some golden clue to the inner meaning of American literary history which has been concealed from those who have spent their lives at trying to understand and evaluate it. His book is mainly interesting as an exhibition of his temperamental preferences. He prefers to read Emerson as a collection of random apothegms instead of in representative wholes; he prefers to reprint Mencken's paragraphs on "The Hopes of a National Literature" and to ignore Channing's essay on the same subject (now a hundred years old), though Channing's essay is much more philosophical. There is no good pretending that a book of this character exhibits either "totality" or "severity" of point of view or of criticism in any consistent sense of the words.

The best answer to the vagaries of Mr. Lewisohn is the thorough, orderly, and discriminating survey of American literature represented by the five "pedagogical anthologists" listed above. Here one really has the opportunity to understand the origin and progress of the "dominant strains in American thought, and art and aspiration." Here, if he wants it, the reader can really make an orderly survey of American thought and art and inspiration from the voyages of the discoverers with their wild and unconscious poetry to the novels of William Faulkner and Glenway Wescott. The reader of Mr. Lewisohn's volume, on the other hand, is likely to rise from it strengthened in his favorite prejudice that the only authors worth considering are "modern authors," and that "creative expression" improves in proportion as it approaches New York City and the year 1933.

## An Ideal War Minister

WAR MEMOIRS OF DAVID LLOYD  
GEORGE: Volume II. Boston: Little,  
Brown & Co. 1933. \$4.

Reviewed by HAROLD NICOLSON

**M**R. LLOYD GEORGE is regarded by many of his compatriots as a volatile and inconsequent man. Few estimates could be further from the truth. In his methods, Mr. Lloyd George may at moments pursue a zigzag course; in his purpose his course is throughout obstinately rectilinear. He is guided by certain overpowering principles and prejudices. He has in the first place an obsessive hatred of all privilege. He has in the second place a romantic passion for the under dog. The former prejudice leads him, not merely to dislike, not merely to suspect, but even to combat, the opinion of all experts or pundits. The latter affection has induced him to slide off on tangents, to rush into emotional states of mind regarding issues which, in themselves, are not centrally important.

During the war—and he was the greatest war minister that England has produced since Pitt—these prejudices and passions tempted him into many strange ways. His distrust of the professional sol-

And the passing of the years has not changed that. And his passing has not altered the fact that his name is honored by the people of the world because of his leadership in the darkest days of the world's history. He is more honored than any other man of his time. Yet the fact remains that during those dark years of 1916, 1917, and 1918 Lloyd George saved western civilization and the British Empire. No incidental criticism can mar the splendor of his achievement.

Both the faults and the virtues of his genius are well illustrated in the second volume of his war memoirs. It is a book, in the first place, immensely vitalizing and refreshing. Mr. Lloyd George, although he would be the last to claim any literary accomplishment, manages to convey in his pages some of that bustling compulsion, some of that mobile zeal, which was the inspiration of tired generals and dispirited politicians during the darkest years of the war. These pages throb with animation: it is only when Lloyd George quotes other people that they seem to flag. When he speaks in his own person the whole thing is breathless, dramatic, illuminated, flood-lit.

In the second place, we are given a picture of human will in action. Mr. Lloyd George is throughout his memoirs modest, considerate, and fair. At moments he will lunge at people like M'Kenna, Keynes, Simon, or Sir William Robertson. But it is not an ill-humored lunge. He never attributes to himself qualities of prevision or determination which he is unable to prove. His memoirs are among the least conceited autobiographies that I have ever read. And yet in the end one is left with admiration for his initiative, his will-power, his moral courage, and his almost frantic energy. No man or woman can read these pages without a flush of admiration to the heart.

Thirdly, Lloyd George defines, and personifies, the qualities of an ideal war minister. Courage, composure, judgment, vision, imagination, initiative, assiduity,—these qualities were possessed by other statesmen as well as David Lloyd George. What he alone possessed is what he calls (but does not claim for himself) “a flair for conducting a great fight.” How abun-



**THE MUSE OF HISTORY: "MUST YOU, DAVID, WHEN I'M SO TIRED?"**  
*A cartoon by Ernest H. Shepard, from Punch*

George writes fairly and impartially about the American attitude in 1915 and 1916 and quotes some interesting and characteristic letters from Roosevelt. This will not interest them overmuch since Lloyd George, when discreet, is somewhat dull. Nor will they be able to iden-

interest as will be the story of a man who, without family advantage or inherited privilege, emerged to dominate the feudal machinery of Great Britain and succeeded, by personal force and magnetism, in leading the country from the depths of inertia to the maximum energy which she has exercised since the seventeenth century. And above all this volume will delight American readers as a portrait of a fierce, resourceful, and immensely individual human being, triumphing against overwhelming odds. Americans are perhaps too apt to interpret our shy reticence as evidence of a decline in national confidence. These memoirs may help to show them that, although tired, we have immense forces of resilience. No country can be really decadent if it can produce in moments of crisis a Lloyd George.

## A Novel of Europe Today

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influence and determine his own microscopic destiny.

At the very beginning of the book we discover that the real story is that of the times, of half a century of technical development and triumphant capitalism, of the constitution of a new form of physical and spiritual slavery. Karl's personal growth and development are merely reflected against this powerful drama of truly magnificent proportions, while he himself hardly grasps the correlation and dependency of significant economic developments. The value of this book lies in its forceful establishment of the fact that individualism today has been replaced by a subversive entanglement of world-wide economic trends and individual fates.

This remarkable first novel is the kind to which a reviewer feels unable to do full justice. He may describe it elaborately and quote profusely and still in the end say it is a book to be read and not read about. It is a most interesting novel, but even more it is an economic survey of the world intensely gripping and exciting.

## Herbert Gorman's Historical Novel

**JONATHAN BISHOP.** By Herbert Gorman. New York: Farrar & Rinehart. 1933. \$2.50.

Reviewed by GEORGE DANGERFIELD

THIS is a novel without a hero. Mr. Gorman's intentions are sufficiently indicated by his title. He intended to have a hero. But it is the sad lot of historical novelists that they have to fit their characters to their period: it is only on very fortunate occasions that the process is reversed. Mr. Gorman's period is the France of 1870-1871, a period so rich in drama that it appears (most excusably) to have absorbed the better part of his attention. The scene was ready; history had provided most of the players; but no one seemed cast for the useful part of hero.

So he concocted a young American called Jonathan Bishop, whose adventures would serve as a clue through the bloody labyrinth of Sedan, the Siege, and the Commune. Characters born of second thoughts in this way are not infrequently stillborn; and Jonathan—excellent guide though he is—does trail behind him a strongish smell of lamp.

He arrives in Paris fresh from Harvard, just in time to see the waning glories of Napoleon III's court, and to have his innocence despoiled by one of those Napoleonic *cocodettes*, or female political spies. War is declared with Prussia; Napoleon III and his armies leave for Berlin; but to the love-sick Jonathan everything is a little illusory, a little fantastic. And then the lady proves faithless, the illusion is destroyed, and nothing is left to our hero but his enviable faculty of being in at the death. He arrives in Sedan just before that tragic little city capitulates; he carries back a message from the Emperor to the Empress Eugénie; he accompanies Eugénie on her flight to England; he

hopelessly aspersed among a million scenes of rage and misery. The best one can say of him is that he is a convenient eye-witness who is always on the spot. In the end he is captured on the outskirts of Belleville and "pressed" into the service of the Commune and of that Chester-tonian revolutionary, Gaultier de Saint-Just. Wearing a uniform which he has learned to hate, he comes to a somewhat disembodied end in the shambles of Père-Lachaise; and the tear that one drops upon his corpse is at best a perfunctory one. Poor fellow, he was less a character than a convenience.

But oddly enough, Mr. Gorman's book is a memorable piece of writing. The se-



cret of that, I think, lies hidden in one of Jonathan's comments: "... The Commune had spat in the face of history ... history was a giant that would devour the Commune." Our hero at last reveals himself—he is Tradition; our villain is unmasked—he is Revolution Those who