

A Reporter's View of the Civil War



"My Diary North and South," by William Howard Russell (Harper, 268 pp. \$4), is a new edition, edited by Fletcher Pratt, of the classic report by a London Times correspondent on the state of the disunited nation at the outbreak of the Civil War. Allan Nevins, who reviews it below, is the author of *"The Emergence of Lincoln"* and other books.

By Allan Nevins

"HOW well that book stands time!" wrote Charles Francis Adams, Jr., of William Howard Russell's "Diary" in the summer of 1863. Young Adams, a hard-bitten lieutenant-colonel under Grant, had spent off-hours in the Virginia woods rereading the volume, and was impressed anew by its graphic veracity. A great deal of the report, added Adams, "makes me weep and blush as one reads." Now, issued in a new edition more than ninety years after the book first enlightened and angered Americans, it clearly stands the test of time.

It is very much a journalist's book, blunt, vivid, factual, with plenty of breezy conversation and portrait-painting, as superficial as it is entertaining. Russell, backed by the tremendous prestige of the London Times, had opportunity to go everywhere as North and South plunged into war, and to meet Presidents, generals, and Senators on equal terms. He saw New York society before the first shots; spent weeks in Washington as tottery old Winfield Scott tried to whip the incoming regiments into an army; was feted in South Carolina while secessionist fires still burned incandescent; viewed Montgomery before the Confederate Cabinet removed to Richmond; and, with Secretary of State Seward as his mentor, Irwin McDowell a congenial friend, and Congressmen as eager informants, in Washington again sized up the chances of the conflict. He was perceptive enough to see Lincoln's superiority over the polished Jefferson Davis, but not wise enough to realize that the North would ultimately triumph.

Never, from one point of view, has America appeared to worse disadvantage. Few of its rotten spots were missed by Russell. He heard Fifth Avenue gentlemen mouth treason over their wine; watched soldiers drill half-naked because shoddy con-

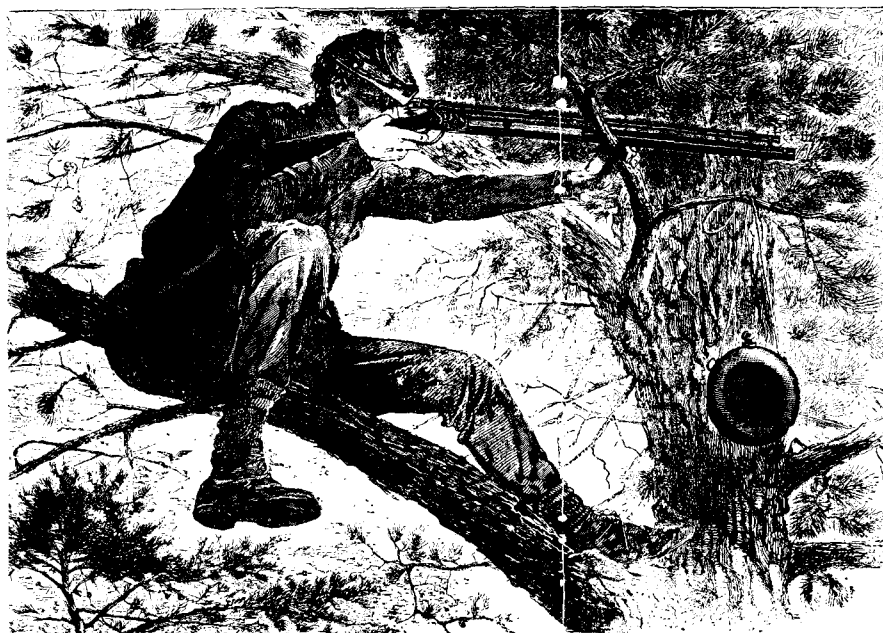
tractors had supplied uniforms made of ground rags and glue; hurried through camps that stank intolerably because nobody made the troops dig proper latrines; and heard editors and politicians demand "On to Richmond" of an unorganized army of green recruits under greener officers. He saw his friend General McDowell running errands about Washington because he had no staff to attend to them. He viewed harum-scarum military preparations with the natural disdain of the best military editor and most experienced war correspondent of Europe. In the end he saw the rout of Bull Run, and by a matter-of-fact description of it made every patriotic American writhe.

A man of more vision and generosity would have seen another side of the conflict, as Dicey and Goldwin Smith did later perceive it. The fervent rally of the North to arms in April 1861, though far from impressive in its surface froth of parades, oratory, and editorializing, represented a deep purposefulness of steellike strength. Tens of thousands of young men burned to give their lives to the Union, as below the Potomac they burned to sacrifice themselves in creating a new nation. A host of Northern businessmen were ready to spend all they had to save the country. After Bull Run the moral fervor grew stronger than ever. This was what Count Gasparin rightly called the uprising of a great

people; in part an uprising against the deep-seated wrong of slavery, in part a determination to keep the shining example of democracy alive for the benefit of all the nations. That nobler side of the United States in 1861 Russell largely ignored.

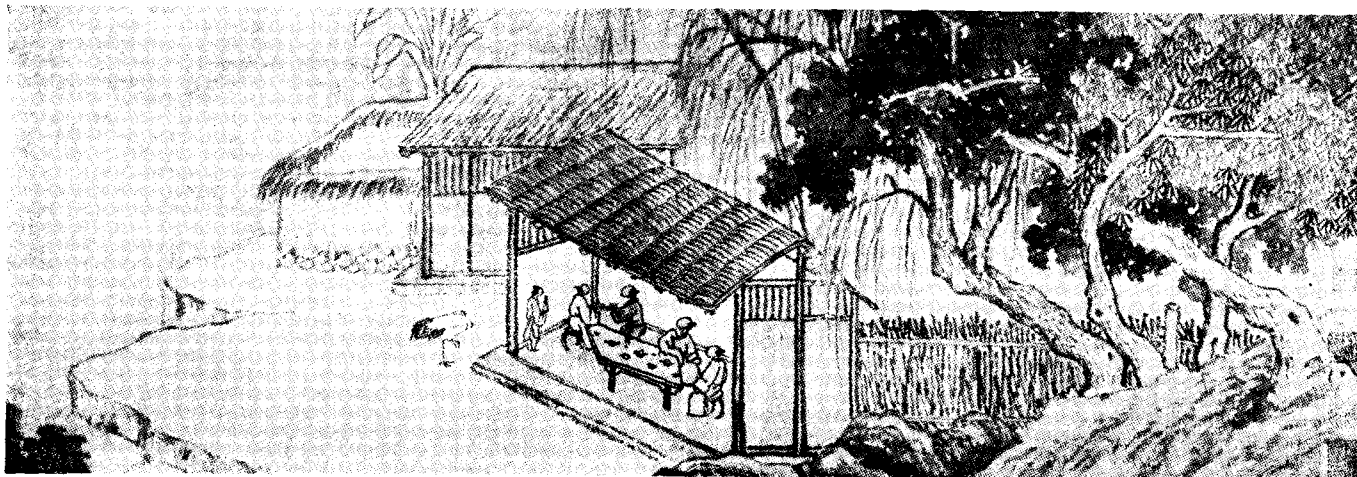
IN THIS he was not without excuse. For one reason his principal adviser, Seward, was at this time a believer in a patched-up peace, lukewarm and hesitant, while such metropolitan associates as August Belmont and S. L. M. Barlow were frank appeasers. For another reason, his British prejudices misled him; he was no believer in democracy, and its uncouth, sordid, blundering surface aspects confirmed his suspicions. And, finally, Russell was treated badly by the American people. At first his hosts were too obsequious. Later, when he had told the stinging truth about Bull Run—not at all overdrawn, and frank in its account of his own forced share in the general break to the shelter of Washington forts—he was mercilessly and scurrilously abused. Northern doors were slammed in his face. A sentry came near murdering him. He was given no opportunity to stay on and relate how the North rapidly gathered a great army, how it steadily organized its strength, and how Lincoln gave broadening purpose to the war. That was our loss more than his. He might

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—From "Adventures of America: 1857-1900."

"Sharpshooter on Picket Duty," by Winslow Homer.



—From the book (courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts, Boston).

"Poet Gazing at the Moon," by Shen Chou, the best fifteenth-century representative of the Southern School of landscape painting.

Pre-Han, Ming, Ch'ing, etc.

"Chinese Art," by Leigh Ashton and Basil Gray (Beechurst Press, 366 pp. 144 illus. \$9), is the first American edition of a now standard British survey of several thousand years of Chinese activity in painting, sculpture, metalwork, ceramics, etc. Here it is reviewed by Benjamin Rowland of the Fogg Museum, Harvard, author of *"The Art and Architecture of India"* and other books.

By Benjamin Rowland

EVERY general work or introduction to a vast field like Chinese art must present a tempting array of unguarded targets for the reviewer's rapier. For the critic who is a specialist in some aspect of the subject the ruthless demolition of such books is all too easy. He can press the attack by pointing to errors both of commission and omission; he can decry the work as too chatty, too lyrical, or too factual; or perhaps he can take offense at inaccuracies in his special field.

None of these blunted weapons in the reviewer's armory of clichés avails in an appraisal of Sir Leigh Ashton's and Basil Gray's *"Chinese Art."* Perhaps the invulnerability of this particular primer lies in the fact that, unlike other introductions, it is both general and specific in its survey of more than three thousand years of Chinese art. The treatment of the material throughout is not only sensitive in interpretation but scholarly as well. Each period in this development is prefaced by short sections dealing

with the history of the time and the general characteristics of the various forms of expression: paintings, sculpture, metalwork, ceramics, textiles, etc. These usually very apt and laconic characterizations are supplemented by series of illustrations arranged according to medium and accompanied by more specific descriptions of the objects reproduced. This is not a new book: it has gone through at least four printings in England before the present American edition, which differs only in the inclusion of a colored frontispiece.

Of the 144 reproductions covering all the arts seventy, or nearly one-half, are devoted to illustrating ceramics. This notation is not intended as a damaging criticism. The selection is symptomatic of our time, when the study and collection of Chinese porcelain are enjoying a passionate renaissance in England and the United States. In fact, this seeming overemphasis could perhaps be pointed out as one of the virtues of a book dedicated to the beginner, especially the beginner in collecting, who can still acquire handsome examples of pottery of every period, whereas specimens of Chinese painting, sculpture, and metalwork may be beyond his purse and connoisseurship. Actually, the paragraphs describing the characteristics of Chinese ceramic wares are the best in the book, and the illustrations for these sections are well chosen and superbly reproduced. Another neglected minor art—Chinese textiles—is accorded a deservedly fuller treatment than is usually found in such general works.

Save for a few views to provide

background, the writers have avoided illustrations of monuments *in situ*. With the exception of objects in the museums in Leningrad and Peking, the works illustrated are all in collections accessible to European and American students; so that in this way the book provides a beginner's guide to the most notable collections of Chinese art that he can actually see for himself.

SCULPTURE is given an adequate representation, always with splendid examples, but, perhaps wisely, in view of the dedication of the book to the *amateur d'art*, the authors have avoided the more recondite aspects of style and iconography.

The sections on painting are particularly useful for American readers, since so many of the examples chosen are exhibited in our great public collections. It is only in the selection of certain illustrations that a serious criticism of the writers' judgment can be made. The stiffly archaic landscape detail of Plate 50 has nothing to do with the T'ang master, Wang Wei. Why in Plate 59 choose a late copy of a T'ang artist, Yen Li-pên, when an original exists in the same collection? Plate 62, an interesting Yüan or Ming painting attributed to Hui Tsung, is completely untypical of the Emperor's style as we know it in universally accepted works by his brush. In the same way in the section on sculpture it seems a mistake to reproduce as typical of the T'ang style a figure which even the authors themselves are not entirely certain in attributing to this period.

These complaints, which might seem to bracket the reviewer with critics who enjoy demolishing introductions on general principles, are intended only as suggestions for improvements in the subsequent editions this work deserves to enjoy.