

American Beginnings

ORIGINS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION. By John C. Miller. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. An Atlantic Monthly Press Book. 1943. 505 pp. \$3.50.

Reviewed by WILLIAM S. LYNCH

THERE was a time when a volume with the title "Origins of the American Revolution" would have been regarded as of interest only to the scholars and students of history. Yet here is a thoroughly scholarly piece of work, precisely documented, and still lively and spirited enough for a best-seller list. It comes at a time when there is a great resurgence of pride in and curiosity about American history.

It is as a professional historian and research worker that Professor John C. Miller of Bryn Mawr makes his contribution to the American's understanding of himself. Chronologically, Miller in this book keeps to the years 1763-1776, from the Peace of Paris at the end of the Seven Years' War to the adoption of the Declaration of Independence by the Second Continental Congress. In these years there occurred some of the events most familiar to American schoolboys—the Proclamation of 1763, the Sugar Act, the Stamp Act, the Townshend Acts, the Boston Tea Party, the Burning of the Gaspee, Lexington, and Concord. The story has been told often but it never grows stale. For his version, Professor Miller has gone straight back to the sources and he has presented his findings with freshness and vigor.

He sees the American Revolution for what it was—not merely an economic struggle, not just a political conflict, but the military expression of complicated factors involving outworn mercantilism, the clash between Parliament and King, the human desire of ordinary people for a cup of tea on their own terms. He sees it, too, as something not yet finished; he ends his book by quoting Harrison Gray Otis, who wrote to a friend many years after the Revolution: "You and I did not imagine, when the first war with Britain was over, that the Revolution was just begun." The democratic tide could not be stemmed and the Revolutionary movement could not be kept "within the narrow channel of resistance to Great Britain."

Professor Miller's Americans are neither demigods nor tavern roisters exclusively, and his British are neither deliberate tyrants nor benevolent cousins overseas. Caught in the currents of expanding empire and the English tradition of liberty they are these

things and more besides.

In discussing the ideology of the Americans during those years, Professor Miller makes clear the debt of American political thought to John Locke, whose "Two Treatises of Government," 1690, had made its author the philosophic apologist for the "glorious revolution of 1688." Little did he dream that he was to become the apologist for another revolution in another hemisphere. "Patriots quoted him with as much reverence as Communists quote Marx today. Indeed, it is not too much to say that during the era of the American Revolution, the 'party line' was John Locke." To be sure, the American mind twisted Locke to its purpose. Locke's doctrine of the supremacy of the legislature meant that the British Parliament should be raised higher than the Crown. The colonists used the theory to disprove Parliament's right to tax them without their consent. Jefferson repeats Locke's own phrases in the Declaration of Independence. To the British, however, the Americans were still living in the seventeenth century, and they in their eighteenth-century enlightenment looked on Locke as a museum piece. The Americans were better Englishmen than the English themselves insofar as they were holding to the traditional English concepts of liberty.

One of the fascinating aspects of this period in history is its cast of characters, the men and women who need little of the artificial coloring that the historical novelists have been giving them. In this book we get good glimpses of them as they must really have been. We see young Patrick Henry, after six weeks' study, given a license to practice law by the judges at Williamsburg. There is the story of the struggle between the Delanceys and the Livingstons for political control of New York state. There is Alexander McDougall, one of the most radical of the Sons of Liberty, imprisoned for anti-British agitation, receiving delegates of patriots in his cell, striking the pose of an American John Wilkes. "Hardly a day passed but some patriotic ladies managed to get up a procession to visit the



—From the book

An old woodcut of Independence Hall

handsome prisoner."

We see with Mr. Miller the lack of unity among the colonies, a lack which the British overrated and in so doing brought together the Boston "levelers," the Southern aristocrats, the Whig merchants.

Later, other foes of America were to be misled by the sectionalism and differences other than geographic which seemed at times to pull the American people apart. But at every critical moment Americans have found in their hatred of tyranny and love of liberty a common bond. The reader of this book will draw from its account of the Tom Paines, the Jeffersons, the pre-Revolutionary American citizens, inspiration for today's fight against the fact of tyranny, a fact which the American could not endure for himself in the past and will not tolerate now for any country or group of people anywhere.

Books for British War Relief

The British War Relief Society of the U. S. A. has launched a campaign to collect 500,000 books for the men of the fighting forces in North Africa, the Near East, and the Middle East. Mrs. Bernard Baruch, Jr., who heads the Book Committee of The British War Relief Society, reports that 30,000 books have already been contributed as the result of a limited campaign in the Greater New York area. The need for books is so great that her committee is now extending the drive to all parts of the country. In addition to the books shipped to the Mediterranean area, the committee plans also to furnish books for men of the British naval and merchant ships.

Books should be addressed to the Book Committee, British War Relief Society of the U. S. A., 84 Hudson Street, New York City.

Genesis of a Double Tragedy

THE TWO MARSHALS, BAZAINE—PÉTAIN. By Philip Guedalla. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock. 1943. 346 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by GEORGE D. CROTHERS

IT was a misapprehension of the past generation that France had laid autocracy to rest and had become devoted to liberty and equality. Perhaps we should have been prepared for the tragedy of Vichy, and we should not have been surprised at Frenchmen taking seriously the Fascist mouthings about discipline and authority, *Travail, Famille, Patrie*. It is small consolation now to be reminded by Philip Guedalla's "Two Marshals" that Frenchmen are not all virtuous republicans, and that twice within the memory of living man (albeit an old one) they placed their destiny in the hands of such dispirited and anti-Republican soldiers as Achille Bazaine and Philippe Pétain.

Mr. Guedalla makes ingenious use of the parallel between his two generals. They were each born in the same year as Napoleonic princes; they both fought in wars precipitated by the Germans; they were both pessimists; they both believed in the superiority of the defensive in war; they both defended fortified positions not far apart. But Bazaine was defeated at Metz, whereas Pétain was successful at Verdun. Bazaine surrendered a French army and was court-martialed. Pétain later surrendered France and became its self-exalted *Fuehrer*. All this is told with a verve and a brilliance that make the generals seem the more stodgy by comparison.

Mr. Guedalla might have written a trilogy and included a sketch of MacMahon, another anti-Republican Marshal who surrendered another French army at Sedan. For Bazaine was disgraced and imprisoned (justly or unjustly—one isn't quite sure), whereas MacMahon, *illustre vaincu*, was chosen monarchist head of the Third Republic. However, Bazaine and Pétain suffice to describe by implication the Frenchman's respect for authority in a crisis, his penchant for either worshipping or damning the military, and the depths of French morale in 1870 and 1940.

As biography, the book is less satisfying. Hidden behind Mr. Guedalla's glittering style and an amazing collection of vivid trivia, there are omissions to trouble the serious reader. It is nice to know that Bazaine's young bride took a piano with her to Gallipoli (whither she accompanied her spouse in the Crimean War) and played Mozart for the dying son of Marshal



—From the book

Ney. It would have been nice also to learn more about Bazaine during the crucial years from 1867 to 1870. The story of his rise from the ranks and his service in Africa, Spain, Crimea, Italy, and Mexico, and his portrait as a somewhat taciturn but moderately resourceful commander do not prepare the reader for his sudden despair

Where Devils Dared to Tread

THE SPY IN AMERICA. By George S. Bryan. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co. 1943. 234 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by STRUTHERS BURT

THE word spy has a hissing sound and is usually hissed. It is one of the most insulting names you can call a man or woman; one of the most shameful terms of obloquy, and yet actually the word means nothing more than to observe carefully; to watch; to discover while you yourself are unobserved; to look and find out.

Its origin is the old High German word *spehon*, the most innocent application of which is spy-glass. All intelligent and alert men and women are spying continually, automatically or consciously; on themselves, on others, on life. Hunters and explorers, frontiersmen, are consistent spies. That's the way they get through a new country without losing their lives. The habit of spying, held within honorable bounds, is one of the most useful the human race has developed. And without it the human race would have been speedily obliterated by stronger but less intelligent enemies. One reason why summer in a large city is so interesting and informative is that windows are open and you can watch other creatures of your species go about their business, unsuspecting, naturally, lonely self by self, unaware

in 1870. And the explanation that his excessive caution outside Metz was the result of five years of marriage to a seventeen-year old bride is hardly satisfying.

The portrait of Pétain is more consistent. He was a tactician whose military forte was defense and whose political views, when articulate, were anti-Republican. He was friendly with anti-Dreyfusards, he made disparaging remarks about politicians, he was a pessimist in the First World War, spurred to successful action by stronger spirits, and only prevented from disastrous retreat in 1918 by his subordination to the more daring Foch. Consequently, when 1940 comes, his surrender is no surprise.

In all this tragedy the French people play the chorus, supporting one hero today and another tomorrow; fighting for principles here, yielding in despair there; loyal to leaders in success, distrustful in adversity; individualists always. In numerous smug comparisons with the British, the French come off second best, especially Marshals. But the story is dedicated *A toutes les gloires de la France*.

that they are being observed. This is wonderfully instructive, even more so than the zoölogical gardens invented by Hagenback where, in habitats congenial to them, animals are confined by barriers so natural they fail to recognize them as such.

In war the spy has always been indispensable although nowadays many of his functions have been taken over by the air force. None the less the spy, whom we have preferred to call an "agent" for the past forty years or so, will never go out of fashion. Living with the enemy, walking among them, listening, watching, ingratiating himself even to the point of often being part of their innermost councils, he knows things no airman can ever find out. Mr. Bryan quotes Frontinus the Roman on this subject and also Col. McDougall, one time superintendent of Great Britain's Royal Military College at Sandhurst, who said, "Without accurate intelligence of an enemy's movements, the greatest military talent is useless." The book also emphasizes, and proves by numerous illustrations, the result of research, the fact, which will be surprising to many Americans, that Washington was one of the greatest spy-masters of history. This upright, honorable gentleman believed firmly in the necessity for espionage and resorted to all manner of adroit tricks to promote it. And he