

NOTES FROM THE LIBRARY

LAFAYETTE'S LETTERS TO WASHINGTON

A RECENT valuable addition to the Library is *The Letters of Lafayette to Washington, 1777-1799*, presented by Mrs. Helen Fahnestock Hubbard of New York. Edited by Dr. Louis Gottschalk, of the University of Chicago, eminent authority on the French Revolution and on the life of Lafayette, the volume was privately printed by Mrs. Hubbard in a limited edition. Although the majority of the letters have been published elsewhere, there are many that are here made available to scholars for the first time.

Lafayette was undoubtedly the most popular foreigner who has ever spent any considerable time in America. Born into one of the oldest and wealthiest families of the *ancien régime*, he inherited the title of marquis at the age of thirteen. His aristocratic lineage did not prevent him from developing a warm sympathy for the cause of liberty, and while still only nineteen he resolved to take a leading part in the American Revolution. His motives for doing so are not hard to discover. He was a romantic and idealistic youth who had been influenced by the democratic teachings of Rousseau and Raynal. He was anxious to avenge the defeat of France in the Seven Years' War and the death of his father at the hands of British soldiers in the Battle of Minden. He admitted also that he had an

insatiable craving for glory, describing himself as "an ardent lover of laurels." Jefferson said of him that he had "a canine appetite for popularity and fame."

Lafayette's letters to his commander-in-chief reveal some of the trials the young marquis endured and some of the sacrifices he made for the American cause. Though demanding the rank of major-general, he insisted upon serving without pay, and even borrowed money on his own account to buy clothing and food for his troops. Soon after his arrival in America he was placed in command of the fantastic expedition of 1778 for the conquest of Canada in the dead of winter. The troubles he experienced in connection with this enterprise, which eventually had to be abandoned as a result of political bungling, left him so disillusioned that he was on the point of returning to France. News of the signing of the Franco-American alliance, however, caused him to change his mind, and he fought with the Continental armies through the remainder of the war. He won his greatest glory in the events leading up to the capture of Yorktown, but again in the face of disappointment and hardship. Charged with the defense of Virginia, he was compelled to march his troops over vast distances, to combat discouragement and desertion, and to grind his teeth in despair over reinforcements that never came.

His soldiers lacked food and "cloathing of any sort"; they had no shoes; they did not even have salt. The loyalty of some of the citizens of the surrounding territory was by no means unquestionable. Even Mr. Lund Washington, manager of Mount Vernon and third cousin of its owner, "went on board the ennemy's vessels and consented to give them provisions."

The most significant of the letters in the Hubbard volume are undoubtedly those which contain Lafayette's political ideas. He was a true liberal in every respect. At times he wrote like a Jeffersonian democrat. He criticized the American Constitution because, in its original form, it contained no Bill of Rights and for the reason that it set no limit on the number of terms a President might serve. Nevertheless, he was far from being a radical. He hoped that the Federal Union would have "solidity and energy," and he always stood on the side of orderly progress. He confessed that Shays' Rebellion caused him a "great deal of concern and uneasiness." It is noteworthy that this was the sort of disturbance which Jefferson thought should be repeated from time to time in order that "the tree of liberty" might be "refreshed with the blood of patriots and tyrants."

With the end of the American Revolution, Lafayette returned to France. He threw himself immediately into reform movements in his native land. Long before the great upheaval

of 1789 he was working zealously to free the French Protestants from legal disabilities and to promote the abolition of slavery. His plan for the latter object, which he called his "hobby horse," was to encourage wealthy men to buy plantations in the colonies and to liberate the Negroes on them and give them the status of tenants. To set the example, he purchased a large plantation in the colony of Cayenne. In 1787 he took his seat in the Assembly of Notables and, alone among the members of that body, signed the demand for the convocation of the Estates-General.

Lafayette took a leading part in the early stages of the French Revolution. As a member of the National Assembly he advocated religious toleration, trial by jury, freedom of the press, the emancipation of slaves, the abolition of titles of nobility, and the suppression of privileged orders. In a letter to Washington he took credit for having ordered the destruction of the Bastille and sent along the principal key of the ancient fortress. As the Revolution approached its climax, he wrote again to his "dear General" criticizing the appointment of Gouverneur Morris as Minister to Paris. He condemned him as an "aristocrat" and a "counter-revolutionary" and therefore unfit to be the ambassador of one "representative democracy" to another. Despite his extreme liberalism, Lafayette detested violence. When he attempted in August, 1792, to protect the king and queen from the fury of

the radicals, he was condemned as a traitor. Soon afterward he was captured by the Austrians and spent the next seven years in prison or in exile in various European countries. During most of that time he wrote few letters to his beloved friend. He returned to France in the fall of 1799 and learned a short time later of Washington's death.

EDWARD MCN. BURNS

RUTGERS PRESS BOOKS

The Last Poems of Philip Freneau, edited by Lewis Leary. Rutgers University Press.

DR. LEARY, who has already done much important work on Freneau, has made another contribution by collecting and editing fifty poems which appeared fugitively during the last sixteen years of the poet's long life. Assembled from various newspapers, especially the *Trenton True American* and the *New Brunswick Fredonian*, they are here published in a handsome volume, of which the Rutgers University Press may well be proud.

It must be admitted—and Professor Leary admits it in his Introduction—that these pieces add little or nothing to their author's stature as a poet. In fact some of them are not much above the level of typical small town newspaper verse. Evidently Freneau's literary powers reached their peak between about 1770 and 1790—roughly the third and fourth decades of his life—and thereafter a

commonplaceness of utterance that always threatened him became his prevailing mode of expression.

Clearly in these last poems the time was past when Freneau could write anything comparable to "The Power of Fancy," "The Beauties of Santa Cruz," "The House of Night," "The British Prison Ship," "To the Memory of the Brave Americans," or "The Wild Honey Suckle." Yet for any student of the New Jersey poet these poems have a considerable interest and value. They indicate that in his latter years he had swung away almost completely from the romantic school, of which he had been a promising forerunner in his earlier days, and had sheltered himself again in the neo-classical fold, in which he had been brought up by his youthful reading. Instead of the imaginative or sensuous stanzas he once wrote, we find here mainly occasional, moralizing, political, or satirical pieces written largely in a pedestrian metre.

But the poems further show that he retained to the end some of the convictions of his more vigorous years. George III is still "the terror of mankind." Sturdy republican as of yore, Freneau expresses in "Lines to a Lady" his indignation that

*A custom has come up, of late,
Of making presents to the GREAT.*

And in a footnote to this poem he remarks: "It seems to augur ill to *Republicanism*, to observe so many of our citizens courting familiarity with,

and rendering themselves obsequious to Royalists and crowned heads." In "Bonaparte" he deplores the fact that France did not remain republican and that

Now Europe hugs her chains.

In "To a New-England Poet" Washington Irving comes in for censure because he has gone to Britain's court where he has kissed a monarch's hand, and whence he will return with inevitable wealth and fame. This poem further satirizes America's cultural subservience to England's approval in the lines:

Dear Bard, I pray you, take the hint,
In England what you write and print,
Republished here in shop, or stall,
Will perfectly enchant us all.

On the other hand "A Transient View of Monticello" proves that Freneau had lost none of his earlier veneration for the great democrat of Virginia—"patriot, sage, philosopher."

Echoes of the younger Freneau are further heard in "The Arrival at Indian Sam's . . . Wigwam," in which the simple redskin is shown to possess a native courtesy and generosity which the high society whites decidedly lack; while "A Midnight Storm in the Gulph Stream" offers a vigorous description of a tempest that compares favorably with other ocean scenes depicted by this first American poet of the sea. And here and there are brief passages charged with something of

that invective which he wielded so trenchantly in his prime. I confess to a liking for these concluding lines of "On a Widow Lady (Very Rich and Very Penurious.)":

What has been said, no doubt, is true,
Yet money cannot *all things* do—
It cannot make the globe turn round,
It cannot make false doctrine sound,
It cannot make a fool a wit,
It cannot make a clown polite:—
Dame nature's debt it cannot pay,
Nor cold *December* change to *May*;
It cannot make a miser rich,
It cannot give a monkey speech:
What can it yet not farther do?
IT CANNOT MAKE ME FOND OF YOU.

A tendency toward the collecting and publishing of early manuscript and fugitive poems is developing in the field of American literary scholarship. To this movement, which will one day make possible a completer view of the whole range of our poetry than we have yet had, Dr. Leary's well-edited volume is a substantial addition.

O.S.C.

Letters of Thomas Hood From the Dilke Papers in the British Museum. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Leslie A. Marchand. *Rutgers University Studies in English: Number Four.*

UNTIL the present time only two works on Thomas Hood, *The Memorials of Thomas Hood*, "collected,

arranged, and edited by his daughter, with a preface and notes by his son" (1860) and Walter Jerrold's *Thomas Hood: His Life and Times* (1907), have contained any of the presumably large number of letters the nineteenth-century poet and humorist wrote to his many friends. Professor Marchand does not attempt to fill this enormous gap left by scholars: rather his volume contains only those unpublished papers by Hood preserved in the Dilke Collection in the British Museum. These consist largely of six important long and several shorter letters addressed to his friend Charles Wentworth Dilke, editor of the *Athenæum* from 1830 to 1846, and to his wife, Mrs. Dilke. Professor Marchand has also included some unpublished fragments of letters, poems, and prose sketches.

The Dilkes were among Hood's warmest friends, and the letters to them show a frankness and sincerity which make them important to any biographer of Hood. They reveal not only his intimate family relations told "with a free outpouring of spirit" but also his habits of writing and something of his difficulties with his publishers. As usual in his best letters, they are written in a style which mixes the serious with the comic.

Professor Marchand's "Introduction" concerning Hood's relationship with the Dilkes and other friends mentioned in the letters is both concise and learned, and each item is carefully annotated. The Rutgers

University Press, in spite of war-time regulations, has produced a very attractive volume.

T. C. D. EAVES

GIFTS TO THE LIBRARY

AMONG the gifts which have been received this year by the Library, few will equal in sentimental value the books presented by Justice Charles W. Parker. These books of great interest in the history of New Jersey law are not only valuable in themselves, but were at various times in the possession of Cortlandt Parker, 1836, and in the case of the so-called *Leaming and Spicer*, New Jersey, 1758, in the possession of James Parker upon whose land Queen's College now stands. These books have served one of the most distinguished legal families of New Jersey for nearly 200 years, and now come to rest appropriately enough we think in the Rutgers University Library.

A gift of about 3000 volumes has been received during the year through the generosity of W. L. L. Peltz of Albany, New York, the son of John D. Peltz of the Class of 1873. This library belonged originally to William Law Learned, well-known lawyer of upper New York State. The collection itself is of a general character. It is especially strong in Napoleonic and early 19th century French material, and includes among other things a magnificent set of William Hobbes, which has now become very scarce.

Few donors are likely to be more understanding and sympathetic than Mr. Peltz, who knows that many of the books of this library will remain in their boxes until Rutgers has a new and larger building in which to house them.

With the end of the war, there has been some decrease in gifts of material relating to the actual carrying on of the war. A very small percentage of this collection is being exhibited during the month of June in the Voorhees Library. A most interesting series of

papers used by our propagandists in the Philippines, and a collection of material used by the Japanese in that same area, came to us through the combined efforts of Major Alfred G. Hall, Class of 1938, and Sgt. George Ritter, Class of 1941.

With the return of I. Robert Kriendler, 1936, after four years in the Marine Corps, there has started again a steady stream of signed works of contemporary American authors which go to augment the Kriendler Collection.