Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

TCLC 80

Volume 80

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

Excerpts from Criticism of the Works of Novelists, Poets, Playwrights, Short Story Writers, and Other Creative Writers Who Lived between 1900 and 1960, from the First Published Critical Appraisals to Current Evaluations

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Preface

Since its inception more than fifteen years ago, *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* has been purchased and used by nearly 10,000 school, public, and college or university libraries. *TCLC* has covered more than 500 authors, representing 58 nationalities, and over 25,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical response to twentieth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as *TCLC*. In the words of one reviewer, "there is nothing comparable available." *TCLC* "is a gold mine of information—dates, pseudonyms, biographical information, and criticism from books and periodicals—which many libraries would have difficulty assembling on their own."

Scope of the Series

TCLC is designed to serve as an introduction to authors who died between 1900 and 1960 and to the most significant interpretations of these author's works. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of this period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. In organizing and excerpting the vast amount of critical material written on these authors, *TCLC* helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in *TCLC* presents a comprehensive survey of an author's career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Every fourth volume of *TCLC* is devoted to literary topics. These topic entries widen the focus of the series from individual authors to such broader subjects as literary movements, prominent themes in twentieth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers.

TCLC is designed as a companion series to Gale's *Contemporary Literary Criticism,* which reprints commentary on authors now living or who have died since 1960. Because of the different periods under consideration, there is no duplication of material between *CLC* and *TCLC.* For additional information about *CLC* and Gale's other criticism titles, users should consult the Guide to Gale Literary Criticism Series preceding the title page in this volume.

Coverage

Each volume of *TCLC* is carefully compiled to present:

- criticism of authors, or literary topics, representing a variety of genres and nationalities
- both major and lesser-known writers and literary works of the period
- 6-12 authors or 3-6 topics per volume
- individual entries that survey critical response to each author's work or each topic in literary history, including early criticism to reflect initial reactions; later criticism to represent any rise or decline in reputation; and current retrospective analyses.

Organization of This Book

An author entry consists of the following elements: author heading, biographical and critical introduction, list of principal works, excerpts of criticism (each preceded by an annotation and a bibliographic citation), and a bibliography of further reading.

- The **Author Heading** consists of the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. If an author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym will be listed in the author heading and the real name given in parentheses on the first line of the biographical and critical introduction. Also located at

the beginning of the introduction to the author entry are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose languages use nonroman alphabets.

- The **Biographical and Critical Introduction** outlines the author's life and career, as well as the critical issues surrounding his or her work. References to past volumes of *TCLC* are provided at the beginning of the introduction. Additional sources of information in other biographical and critical reference series published by Gale, including *Short Story Criticism, Children's Literature Review, Contemporary Authors, Dictionary of Literary Biography,* and *Something about the Author,* are listed in a box at the end of the entry.

- Some *TCLC* entries include **Portraits** of the author. Entries also may contain reproductions of materials pertinent to an author's career, including manuscript pages, title pages, dust jackets, letters, and drawings, as well as photographs of important people, places, and events in an author's life.

- The **List of Principal Works** is chronological by date of first book publication and identifies the genre of each work. In the case of foreign authors with both foreign-language publications and English translations, the title and date of the first English-language edition are given in brackets. Unless otherwise indicated, dramas are dated by first performance, not first publication.

- Critical excerpts are prefaced by **Annotations** providing the reader with information about both the critic and the criticism that follows. Included are the critic's reputation, individual approach to literary criticism, and particular expertise in an author's works. Also noted are the relative importance of a work of criticism, the scope of the excerpt, and the growth of critical controversy or changes in critical trends regarding an author. In some cases, these annotations cross-reference excerpts by critics who discuss each other's commentary.

- A complete **Bibliographic Citation** designed to facilitate location of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism.

- Criticism is arranged chronologically in each author entry to provide a perspective on changes in critical evaluation over the years. All titles of works by the author featured in the entry are printed in boldface type to enable the user to easily locate discussion of particular works. Also for purposes of easier identification, the critic's name and the publication date of the essay are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the journal in which it appeared. Some of the excerpts in *TCLC* also contain translated material. Unless otherwise noted, translations in brackets are by the editors; translations in parentheses or continuous with the text are by the critic. Publication information (such as footnotes or page and line references to specific editions of works) have been deleted at the editor's discretion to provide smoother reading of the text.

- An annotated list of **Further Reading** appearing at the end of each author entry suggests secondary sources on the author. In some cases it includes essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights.

Cumulative Indexes

- Each volume of *TCLC* contains a cumulative **Author Index** listing all authors who have appeared in Gale's Literary Criticism Series, along with cross references to such biographical series as *Contemporary Authors* and *Dictionary of Literary Biography.* For readers' convenience, a complete list of Gale titles included appears on the first page of the author index. Useful for locating authors within the various series, this index is particularly valuable for those authors who are identified by a certain period but who, because of their death dates, are placed in another, or for those authors whose careers span two periods. For example, F. Scott Fitzgerald is found in *TCLC,* yet a writer often associated with him, Ernest Hemingway, is found in *CLC.*

- Each *TCLC* volume includes a cumulative **Nationality Index** which lists all authors who have appeared in *TCLC* volumes, arranged alphabetically under their respective nationalities, as well as Topics volume entries devoted to particular national literatures.

- Each new volume in Gale's Literary Criticism Series includes a cumulative **Topic Index,** which lists all literary topics treated in *NCLC, TCLC, LC 1400-1800,* and the *CLC* yearbook.

- Each new volume of *TCLC,* with the exception of the Topics volumes, includes a **Title Index** listing the titles of all literary works discussed in the volume. In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Gale has also produced a **Special Paperbound Edition** of the *TCLC* title index. This annual cumulation lists all titles discussed in the series since its inception and is issued with the first volume of *TCLC* published each year. Additional copies of the index are available on request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the following year's cumulation. Titles discussed in the Topics volume entries are not included *TCLC* cumulative index.

Citing Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume in Gale's literary Criticism Series may use the following general forms to footnote reprinted criticism. The first example pertains to materials drawn from periodicals, the second to material reprinted from books.

[1]William H. Slavick, "Going to School to DuBose Heyward," *The Harlem Renaissance Reexamined,* (AMS Press, 1987); excerpted and reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism,* Vol. 59, ed. Jennifer Gariepy (Detroit: Gale Research, 1995), pp. 94-105.

[2]George Orwell, "Reflections on Gandhi," *Partisan Review,* 6 (Winter 1949), pp. 85-92; excerpted and reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism,* Vol. 59, ed. Jennifer Gariepy (Detroit: Gale Research, 1995), pp. 40-3.

Suggestions Are Welcome

In response to suggestions, several features have been added to *TCLC* since the series began, including annotations to excerpted criticism, a cumulative index to authors in all Gale literary criticism series, entries devoted to criticism on a single work by a major author, more extensive illustrations, and a title index listing all literary works discussed in the series since its inception.

Readers who wish to suggest authors or topics to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to write the editors.

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Brooks Adams

1848-1927

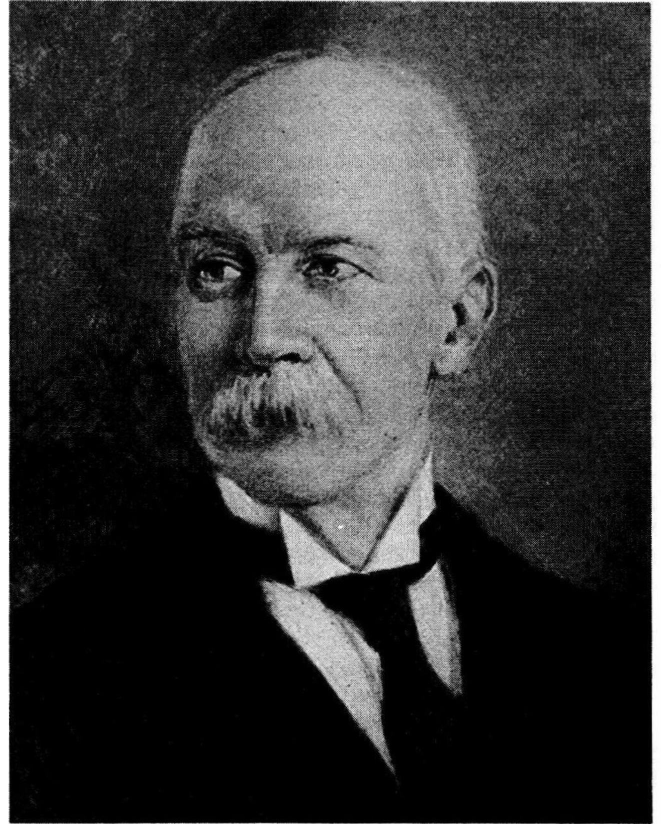
(Full name Henry Brooks Adams) American historian.

INTRODUCTION

A noted historian of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, Adams is primarily remembered for his exploration of the rise and fall of world civilizations based upon their relation to the major paths of economic exchange. Adams's body of work—characterized by his deep pessimism and anti-Semitism—represents his attempt to establish a cyclical view of history based in part upon the natural laws of thermodynamics, which he believed governed social and economic development and decline. Early in his career, Adams generated controversy for his attacks on New England's religious forefathers, whom he believed to be the antithesis of democratic leaders. In his later writings, Adams exhibited an increasing bitterness, reflecting his belief that the energy of the United States had been spent, and that the nation had succumbed to materialism and greed. During his life, Adams was also an outspoken advocate for converting the United States' economy from the gold standard to bimetallism—the use of both silver and gold as standards.

Biographical Information

The youngest of six children of Charles Francis Adams and Abigail Brooks Adams, Adams belonged to a dynasty of prominent American political thinkers. His great-grandfather John Adams and his grandfather John Quincy Adams were presidents of the United States. His father was the 1848 Free Soil candidate for U.S. vice president; he ran on the same ticket as Martin Van Buren. Charles Adams was also named minister to Great Britain during the U.S. Civil War by President Abraham Lincoln. Adams's older brother was Henry Adams, whose literary legacy includes his autobiography *The Education of Henry Adams,* the novel *Democracy,* and a nine-volume *History of the Administrations of Jefferson and Madison.* Two other brothers, Charles and John Quincy, also enjoyed modest fame. Adams attended English schools and graduated from Harvard in 1870. He completed one year of study at Harvard Law School, and passed the bar examinations without obtaining a law degree. His family's wealth enabled Brooks Adams to pursue his writing career unencumbered by financial concerns. Adams practiced law for a brief period before leaving for Europe with his father. During his adult life, Adams traveled extensively throughout Europe, the Middle East and India. From 1904 to 1911 he lectured at the Boston University School of Law.



Major Works

Adams published several articles and reviews before his first history, *The Emancipation of Massachusetts* (1887). In it, Adams attacked the hagiographic depictions of the Protestant forefathers of New England. He argued that previous depictions of early New England founders were untrue and that, instead of fostering democratic virtues, the founders engendered a climate of religious intolerance. The book was perceived as controversial in its time, and much was made of the unbalanced nature of Adams's presentation. Adams's defended his work to Henry Cabot Lodge: "It is really not a history of Mass. but a metaphysical and philosophical inquiry as to the actions of the human mind in the progress of civilization; illustrated by the history of a small community isolated and allowed to work itself free. This is not an attempt to break down the Puritans or to abuse the clergy, but to follow out the action of the human mind as we do of the human body. I believe they and we are subject to the same laws." While declaring his premise sound for the original, Adams added a 168-page preface to his 1919 revision,

which many critics believe refutes the theories of his original manuscript.

In his next major work, *The Law of Civilization and Decay: An Essay on History* (1895), Adams examined the control of economic power and its effect on history, politics, culture, and religion. Adams posited that the cyclical nature of centralization and stagnation was governed by physical laws. Civilization, wrote Adams, followed a set pattern of stages: energy-gathering, which incorporated imagination, war and conquest; centralization and the accumulation of wealth; and usurpation of energy by capitalists. Once economic power is centralized in a civilization, greed becomes predominant, leading to stagnation in all elements of society. Adams supported his thesis using ancient Rome, Medieval Europe, and Imperial Britain as examples. When economic power became centralized in any of these areas, stagnation set in and this power moved elsewhere. While finding Adams's methodology unsystematic, critics received *The Law of Civilization and Decay* positively. The perception that Adams was disenfranchised from American capitalism and was predicting the eventual demise of the U.S. economy was reinforced by his subsequent efforts. *America's Economic Superiority* (1900), *The New Empire* (1902), and *The Theory of Social Revolutions* (1913) continued his theories into economic history. He also wrote the preface to brother Henry Adams's *The Degradation of the Democratic Dogma* (1920).

PRINCIPAL WORKS

The Emancipation of Massachusetts (history) 1887
The Law of Civilization and Decay: An Essay on History (history) 1895
America's Economic Superiority (history) 1900
The New Empire (history) 1902
The Theory of Social Revolutions (history) 1913

CRITICISM

The Yale Review (review date 1896)

SOURCE: A review of *The Law of Civilization and Decay,* in *The Yale Review,* 1896, pp. 451-53.

[*In the following excerpt, the reviewer finds Adams's* The Law of Civilization and Decay *a flawed yet valuable work in determining historical patterns.*]

Reference was made in a notice of Kidd's *Social Evolution* in the third volume of this Review, to the probability that we should have many attempts in the next few years to construct a philosophy of history on the basis of our existing knowledge. The present attempt is by the historian of the ***Emancipation of Massachusetts.*** Any one who thinks it possible for the present age to produce a final philosophy of history, would derive much instruction by reading this book and Mr. Kidd's together.

The term "science" of history rather than "philosophy" must be applied to the attempt, if we speak strictly. It opens—to give the order of the author's thought rather than of his statement—with three fundamental assumptions. First, actions of every kind are manifestations of material energy, and are controlled by its laws. Second, human history, as one of the "outlets through which solar energy is dissipated," is governed by fixed laws. Third, among human actions, thoughts or "intellectual phenomena," are those which determine the course of history. Starting with these propositions assumed, the science of history is developed in this way. The first controlling intellectual conception is fear. This leads to religious, military, and artistic types of civilization, and, in richly endowed races, to an accumulation of energy in the form of capital. As this accumulation takes place, the race passes into the second stage, and greed succeeds fear as the determining idea. This leads to economic organization in which capital tends to become supreme, to the decay of the earlier types of civilization, to the waste of energy through competition, and, as this can no longer be reproduced under a capitalistic organization, to the disintegration of society, from which there can be no return except through an infusion of fresh barbarian blood, that is, through a renewal of the earlier types of civilization.

The author's treatment of Roman history may serve as an example. The Romans, when they first appear in history, are of a martial type just passing into an economic. As they had no adaptation either to commerce or to manufactures, but only to agriculture, greed with them took the form of usury. This produced a society divided into two classes, creditor and debtor. As society consolidated and centralized itself, the power of the former increased and the pressure upon the latter became heavier, until at last the reproduction of energy ceased, that is, less was produced than was dissipated. Then society, which reached its greatest centralization under the Caesars, disintegrated, the barbarian took possession of the world, and the middle ages began. In these a return took place to an imaginative and military type of civilization, similar to that from which the Romans had earlier emerged.

The doctrine is a thoroughgoing and ideally complete pessimism. We stand in our own age, upon the verge of another disintegration of society like that which befell Rome, from which the world can hope to emerge upon a new round of the same sort only by the infusion of barbarian blood from some source. But it does not appear from anything in the book that this fate can make the slightest difference to those whom it overtakes, or to the human race as a whole. The only movement for mankind is this ceaseless round, every stage of which is deplorably bad, and is constantly changing into another just as bad.

The fatal defect of the book is that it follows but a single thread through the course of history. It must be recognized, however, as a valuable contribution to the science of history. Especially noteworthy are the author's keenness of insight and freshness of interpretation. His power of combination is less evident, but the future worker in this field will have to reckon with Mr. Adams's reading of the economic movements of history.

In closing one cannot forbear to quote two passages, of which many might be selected throughout the book, to show its character as a "tract for the times." These are from the chapter on Rome:

> "It appears to be a natural law that when social development has reached a certain stage, and capital has accumulated sufficiently, the class which has had the capacity to absorb it shall try to enhance the value of their property by legislation. This is done most easily by reducing the quantity of the currency, which is a legal tender for the payment of debts. A currency obviously gains in power as it shrinks in volume, and the usurers of Constantinople intuitively condensed to the utmost that of the empire. After the insolvency under Elagabalus, payments were exacted by gold in weight, and as it grew scarcer its value rose when measured in commodities."

> "When wealth became force, the female might be as strong as the male; therefore she was emancipated. Through easy divorce she came to stand on an equality with the man in the marriage contract. She controlled her own property, because she could defend it; and as she had power, she exercised political privileges. . . . When force reached the stage where it expressed itself exclusively through money, the governing class ceased to be chosen because they were valiant or eloquent, artistic, learned, or devout, and were selected solely because they had the faculty of acquiring and keeping wealth."

Journal of Political Economy (review date 1902)

SOURCE: A review of *The New Empire*, in *Journal of Political Economy*, 1902, pp. 314-17.

[*In the following excerpt, the reviewer unfavorably assesses Adams's* The New Empire.]

Pursuing a line of argument already worked out in his ***Law of Civilization and Decay,*** Mr. Adams offers an explanation, a theory it may be called, of the rise and decline of successive "empires" from the dawn of history to the present. The objective point of the argument is to account for the present, or imminent, supremacy of America as an imperial power. This supremacy has, in Mr. Adams's mind, all the certainty of an accomplished fact. While it takes the form of a political supremacy, its substantial ground is the commercial leadership of the new imperial organization; the reason for commercial leadership being, in its turn, the possession of superior material resources, particularly mineral resources, together with the convergence of trade routes upon the territory in which the seat of empire lies.

Mr. Adams's explanation of the growth of imperial power, in all ages, is altogether a geographical one. From the beginning trade routes have determined where accumulations of wealth would occur, and they have thereby determined where the greater masses of population would congregate and so where the seat of political power would be found. Whereas, trade routes have largely been determined by the *provenance* of the minerals most useful or most sought after at the time. Within historical times this means the metals—the precious metals primarily, and secondarily that one of the useful metals which has for the time chiefly served the industrial arts. Today it is steel and coal. In the early times, before navigation developed, the trade routes lay overland, chiefly between the east and the west of Asia; and where these overland routes converged the ancient cities and the ancient monarchies grew up—as Egypt, Babylonia, or Persia—and power shifted from the one to the other as the path of commerce shifted. Later, when great improvements in navigation had taken place, the sea routes gradually supplanted the land routes, and the question of empire became a question of the convergence of the routes of maritime commerce. Today these routes cross and blend within the domain of the United States, and radiate from this as a center, at the same time that this domain contains the largest, most valuable, and most available supply of the mineral wealth upon which the fortunes of commerce ultimately hang. Mr. Adams also finds that in some way, mysterious so far as his discussion goes, energy springs up where the trade routes cross, and slackens abruptly when the routes depart. So that now, for some half-a-dozen years past, America holds over all competitors in point of energetic and sagacious administration.

Cogent as Mr. Adams's presentation of the case is, it has an air of one sidedness, in that it neglects other than geographical factors; and even within the range of geographical factors it places the emphasis almost exclusively on the circumstances which condition commerce, as contrasted with other economic factors. It may be noted, for instance, that the element of race is left out; whereas it would not be a hopeless task to construct an equally plausible theory of the facts considered by Mr. Adams on grounds of race alone. It may also be noted that so striking a case as that of China does not come within the explanation offered. China has all the mineral resources on which Mr. Adams throws emphasis; her territory lies also at the meeting of the overland and the maritime routes of the East; the Chinese people have from time immemorial been highly skilled and diligent workmen; but, great as China has been, she has never taken the leadership except locally; the industrial revolution did not come through Chinese initiative; the development of navigation and the expansion of modern commerce are not due to Chinese enterprise and ingenuity, although the material circumstances have, on Mr.

Adams's theory, for some thousands of years apparently favored the rise of China to the position of an all-dominating world-power.

***The American Political Science Review* (review date 1914)**

SOURCE: A review of *The Theory of Social Revolutions,* in *The American Political Science Review,* Vol. VIII, No. 1, February, 1914, pp. 131-32.

[*In the following excerpt, the reviewer finds Adams's methodology in* The Theory of Social Revolutions *flawed but intellectually stimulating.*]

This work [***The Theory of Social Revolutions***] while filled with errors and hasty generalizations, possesses the quality of stimulating thought. Mr. Adams' primary contention is one against judicial authority in political matters. He contends that "no court can, because of the nature of its being, effectively check a popular majority acting through a coördinate legislative assembly. . . . The only result of an attempt and failure is to bring courts of justice into odium or contempt, and in any event to make them objects of attack by a dominant social force in order to use them as an instrument. . . . Hence in periods of change, when alone serious clashes between legislatures and courts are likely to occur, as the social equilibrium shifts the legislature almost certainly will reflect the rising, the court the sinking power" (pp. 76, 77).

Mr. Adams regards the courts as properly a group of passionless persons administering a body of abstract principles (pp. 76, 81), and insists that our system has made the courts largely bodies for the registration in law of the dominant economic and social interests of the community (pp. 89-131). "In fine," he says, "whenever pressure has reached a given intensity, on one pretext or another, courts have enforced or dispensed with constitutional limitations with quite as much facility as have legislatures, and for the same reasons." In this view the author is to a large extent right, as he is also in the position that courts must in the long run fail whenever they seek to interpose constitutional barriers against legislation approved by the better judgment of the community (p. 111).

The author assumes that "those who, at any given time, are the strongest in any civilization, will be those who are at once the ruling class, those who own most property, and those who have most influence on legislation" (p. 132). Capitalism, in his view, has been this dominant force in the community, and now as it is losing its power, seeks to entrench itself behind political courts. Mr. Adams thinks that such a policy may prove disadvantageous to capital, in that with a change of power, the political court will be employed as an instrument against capital itself. This contention he seeks to illustrate by a lengthy discussion of political tribunals during the French revolution.

Mr. Adams is probably correct in his contentions that our courts have too much political power and that such power will tend to be employed in the manner approved by the dominant sentiment of the community at any one time. But he seems to be clearly in error in regarding law as properly a body of abstract principles divorced from political principles and administered by a group of passionless persons. So long as society is developing, law also must develop, and in any system of government those who administer the law will be influenced by social changes and will themselves serve to some extent at least as instruments for the adaptation of law to those changes. A system of courts absolutely free from political and social influences would be equally as harmful as a system dominated by such influences.

Stuart P. Sherman (essay date 1920)

SOURCE: "Evolution in the Adams Family," in *The Nation,* New York, Vol. CX, No. 2858, April 10, 1920, pp. 473-77.

[*In the following excerpt, Sherman examines the genealogy of political and historical thought among members of Adams's family.*]

Brooks Adams apologizes for the inadequacy of his introduction to his brother's philosophical remains on the ground that the publishers hurried him, saying that if he did not get the book out within the year it would have lost its interest. Of course the readers who take up *The Education of Henry Adams* because it is the sensation of the hour will soon drop away, perhaps have already done so; but interest in the Adamses, so long quiescent, so piquantly reawakened at the end of the fourth eminent generation, is likely to hold more serious readers for some time to come. Henry has thrown out challenges which the indolent reviewer cannot lightly answer nor easily ignore. What shall be done with that profoundly pessimistic theory of the "degradation of energy"—a degradation alleged to be discoverable in the universe, in democracy, and even in that incorruptible stronghold of pure virtue, the Adams family? Every one who has sat blithely down to read "The Education," much more to review it, must have discovered that it is only the last or the latest chapter of a "continued story." It is a lure leading into a vast literary edifice, built by successive generations, which one must at least casually explore before one can conceive what was the heritage of Henry Adams, or can guess whether the family's energy suffered degradation when it produced him.

One who wishes to measure the decline from the source must begin with *The Works of John Adams* in ten volumes, edited by his grandson Charles Francis Adams I, and including a diary so fascinating and so important that one marvels that American students of letters are not occasionally sent to it rather than to Pepys or Evelyn. One should follow this up with the charming letters of John's wife, Abigail, also edited by Charles Francis I in

1841—a classic which would be in the American Everyman if our publishers fostered American as carefully as they foster English traditions. For John Quincy Adams, we have his own "Memoirs" in twelve volumes, being portions of that famous diary of which he said: "There has perhaps not been another individual of the human race whose daily existence from early childhood to fourscore years has been noted down with his own hand so minutely as mine"; also a separate volume called *Life in a New England Town,* being his diary while a student in the office of Theophilus Parsons at Newburyport. One may perhaps pass Charles Francis I with his life by Charles Francis II. Then one descends to the fourth generation, and reads the *Autobiography* of Charles Francis II, published in 1916, a notable book with interest not at all dependent upon reflected story. Of Brooks Adams one must read at least ***The Emancipation of Massachusetts*** and the introduction to *The Degradation of Democratic Dogma;* and then one is tantalized on into ***The Law of Civilization and Decay, America's Economic Supremacy,*** and ***The Theory of Social Revolutions.*** Finally one approaches Henry's *Education* not quite unprepared and not overlooking the fact that, besides biographies of Gallatin and Randolph, he wrote what has been called "incomparably the best" history of the administrations of Jefferson and Madison in nine volumes distinguished by lucid impartiality, "Mont Saint Michel and Chartres," an interpretation of the twelfth century as impressive in height and span as the great cathedral which Adams takes as the symbol of his thought.

Historians, of course, are familiar with all these paths; I should like, however, to commend them a little to gentler and less learned readers. Taken not as material for history but as the story of four generations of great personalities, living always near the centre of American life, the Adams annals surpass anything we have produced in fiction. One may plunge into them as into the Comédie Humaine of Balzac or Zola's Rougon-Macquart series and happily lose contact with the world, which, if we may believe Brooks Adams, *ultimus Romanorum,* is going so fatally to the dogs. Perhaps an Adams of the present day must come forth from the study of his heredity, environment, and education with a conviction that he is an automaton, moved forward by the convergence of "lines of force," and that he is a poorer automaton than his grandfather. But for my part, I have emerged from these narratives much braced by contact with the stout, proud, purposeful Adams will, and with an impression that their latest pessimistic theories are poorly supported by their facts.

The Adams pessimism has a certain tonic quality due to its origin in the Adams sense for standards. The three Adonises, Charles Francis, Brooks, and Henry, have humiliated themselves all their lives by walking back and forth before the portraits of their statesman ancestors and measuring their altitude against that of the friends of Washington. An Adams should always be in the grand style. So history presents them to the young imagination: Plutarchan heroes, august republicans, ever engaged in some public act or gesture such as Benjamin West liked to spread on his canvases—drafting the Declaration of Independence, presenting credentials to George III, signing the Monroe doctrine, fulminating against the annexation of Texas, or penning the famous dispatch to Lord Russell: "It would be superfluous to point out to your lordship that this is war."

For an Adams, who needs a bit of humility, it no doubt is wholesome to dwell on the superiority of his forefathers; but for the democrat, who needs a bit of encouragement, it is equally wholesome to reflect that John Adams represents a distinct "variation" of species. The family had been in America a hundred years before the grand style began to develop. In the words of Charles Francis I, "Three long successive generations and more than a century of time passed away, during which Gray's elegy in the country churchyard relates the whole substance of their history." If we can only understand the processes by which John was transformed from a small farmer's son to President of the United States, the evolution of the rest of the family will be as easy to follow as the transmission of wealth. Now, John's emergence is singularly devoid of miraculous aspects, and it is therefore of practical interest to the democrat.

John abandoned the pitchfork and varied his species by taking two steps which in those days were calculated to put him in the governing class. He went to Harvard—a course which may still be imitated, but which in 1755, when the total population of the colonies only equalled that of one of our great cities, set a man far more distinctly in a class by himself than it does today, and marked him for a professional career. Second, after an insignificant interval of school teaching, he studied law in the office of Rufus Putnam, and thus entered a still smaller class, carefully restricted by limitation of the number of apprentices that could be taken in any office. At the same time he began keeping a diary, a habit which it is now the custom to ridicule.

What strikes one about John's diary in his years of adolescence is that he uses it as an instrument for marking his intellectual progress and getting himself in hand, neither of which is a morbid activity. He notes that he is of an amorous temperament and that his thoughts are liable to be "called off from law by a girl, a pipe, a poem, a love-letter, a Spectator, a play, etc., etc." But *studia in mores abeunt;* and year after year he is digging away tenaciously and purposefully at studies which communicate a masculine vigor to the mind; and he is reading, with instant application to his own future, authors that are still capable of putting a flame of ambition in a young man's vitals.

The breadth and humanity of an old-fashioned program of reading for the bar may be suggested by one of his entries at the age of twenty-three:

> Labor to get distinct ideas of law, right, wrong, justice, equity; search for them in your own mind,

> in Roman, Grecian, French, English treatises of natural, civil, common, statute law; aim at an exact knowledge of the nature, end, and means of government; compare the different forms of it with each other, and each of them with their effects on public and private happiness. Study Seneca, Cicero, and all other good moral writers; study Montesquieu, Bolingbroke, Vinnuis, &c., and all other good civil writers.

He enjoins it upon himself to observe the arts of popularity in the tavern, town-meeting, the training field, and the meeting-house, though it must be added that none of his line mastered these arts. He frequents the courts, converses with successful men, records a public-spirited act of Franklin's, and surmises after an hour's talk at Mayor Gardener's that "the design of Christianity was not to make men good riddle-solvers or good mystery-mongers but good men, good magistrates." After a bit of dawdling, he tells himself that "twenty-five years of the animal life is a great proportion to be spent to so little purpose." He vows to read twelve hours a day. He cries to himself: "Let love and vanity be extinguished, and the great passions of ambition, patriotism, break out and burn. Let little objects be neglected and forgot, and great ones engross, arouse, and exalt my soul." Such temper issued from that diet of lion's marrow, that energetic digestion of law and classical literature!

The only miraculous aspect of the variation effected in this generation was that such a man as John Adams should have found such a wife as Abigail Smith, a woman descended from the religious aristocrats of New England, and her husband's equal in heart and mind. Her descendants of the present day would say that predetermined lines of force—theological and legal—converged here to strengthen the social position of John and to insure the production of John Quincy; but that is not the way most men think of their wooing. Abigail had no formal schooling; yet, as "female" education went in those days, it mattered little. She was obviously the "product" of that family culture and social discipline which, at their best, render formal schooling almost superfluous. She had the gaiety of good breeding, the effusion of quick emotions, and that fundamental firmness of character which is developed by a consciousness that one was born in the right class. From books, from table-talk, from the men and women who frequented her home, not least from her lover, she had derived the views of the classical mid-eighteenth century, with just a premonitory flush of romantic enthusiasm; she had become familiar with public affairs; she had acquired the tone and carriage, she had breathed in the great spirit, of such a woman as Cato would have a Roman wife and mother.

Emerson cherished the thought of writing an American Plutarch. In such a book we should have a picture of Abigail managing her husband's estate in Braintree while he is at the Congress in Philadelphia—through pestilence, siege, battles, and famine-prices not venturing to ask a word of his return, lest she perturb a mind occupied with public business. We should have her reply at a later period to one who asked whether she would have consented to her husband's going to France, had she known that he was to be absent so long:

> I recollected myself a moment, and then spoke the real dictates of my heart. "If I had known, sir, that Mr. Adams could have effected what he has done, I would not only have submitted to the absence I have endured, painful as it has been, but I would not have opposed it, even though three years should be added to the number (which Heaven avert). I find a pleasure in being able to sacrifice my selfish passions to the general good and in imitating the example which has taught me to consider myself and family but as the small dust of the scale when compared with the great community."

We should see her called from her farm to be the first American lady at the English Court. We should remark that she finds the best manners in England in the home of the Bishop of St. Asaph, old friend of her adored Franklin, where, by the way, she meets those dangerous English radicals Priestley and Price. And with the warmth of fond native prejudice, we should adore her for writing home:

> Do you know that European birds have not half the melody of ours? Nor is their fruit half so sweet, nor their flowers half so fragrant, nor their manners half so pure, nor their people half so virtuous; *but keep this to yourself, or I shall be thought more than half deficient in understanding and taste.*

In the jargon of Brooks and Henry, as I have remarked, irresistible "lines of force" converge for the education of the second generation. More humanly speaking, the ambition of John, the tenderness and pride of Abigail, unite above the cradle of John Quincy, and most intelligently conspire to give him what he later was to recognize as "an unparalleled education." "It should be your care and mine," John writes to his wife, "to elevate the minds of our children, and exalt their courage, to accelerate and animate their industry and activity." It is the fashion nowadays to assert, against the evidence of history, that great men in their critical hours are unconscious of their greatness; but these Adamses assuredly knew what they were about. With the fullest recognition that her boy's father and his friends are living classics, she writes:

> Glory, my son, in a country which has given birth to characters, both in the civil and military departments, which may vie with the wisdom and valor of antiquity. As an immediate descendant of one of these characters, may you be led to that disinterested patriotism and that noble love of country which will teach you to despise wealth, pomp, and equipage as mere external advantages, which cannot add to the internal excellence of your mind, or compensate for the want of integrity and virtue.

Of course John Quincy was to use the "external advantages" which his mother a little hastily urged him to despise. By working twelve hours a day at the law, John Adams had raised the family from the ground up to a

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