

THE  
AMERICAN IMPACT  
ON  
GREAT BRITAIN

1898-1914

*A Study of the United States in World History*

By

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ON  
GREAT BRITAIN

To

WILLIAM E. LINGELBACH

## PREFACE

**I** CLING to the illusion that it is vitally important that the United States understand itself as a factor in world civilization. Historians have not given sufficient attention to the part we have had in European life and opinion. Quite rightly, they have studied European contributions to the United States, but have neglected, either as a problem of cultural history or as a matter of daily increasing national importance, the impact of American civilization abroad. This volume, one of a projected series *The United States in World History*, was designed to be a brief part of the story of American influence on the Old World, a contribution through national history to the study of international history, and a supplement to the familiar diplomatic chronicle. The pages should contribute to many aspects of British and American personalities, and to domestic history, and add to the history of such subjects as technics, science, education, medicine, and the law. It is probably one of the first efforts on a broad scale to see how one nation gets its ideas about another, and what use one nation makes of another's experience. This should prove stimulating to the propagandists.

I do not share the common belief that Anglo-American studies are complete or that the relationships are such that nothing more need be said about them. Nearly everyone will commit himself with startling authority to an opinion on Anglo-American affairs; such is probably the disadvantage of a common language. One is almost tempted to conclude that our historical scholarship has done more well-rounded work on our relations with other foreign countries. It is easier to be safe about the psychology governing cousin and cousin or a poor relation than that affecting a mother and an illegitimate daughter. Consequently, I hope the volume will add more reality to Anglo-American discussions.

Not all the implications of the study can be described and argued at every instance. But something of value can be said of America's impact without pretending to follow such influence in all the in-

numerable phases of human effort and thought to a definite resting place in British civilization. The archaeologist may not be satisfied in chronicling the diffusion of culture unless he is able to handle a concrete object or trace a distinctive motif. But, where material is so abundant and rapidly merging unidentified into the national culture, must we restrict ourselves to these palpable evidences? I think not, even though archaeologists rambling over the remains of the two countries some millennium hence may think otherwise.

Further, had this volume been labeled "America in British Public Opinion" many criticisms could have been forestalled and fertile points of attack sacrificed. But I intended that the volume should be put forward as more than a study in public opinion. While I can see some reasons for informing another country what we have meant to it, I see no reason to belittle the multitude of ideas and attitudes which was its heritage or the result of stimulation from a complex world. I believe the true significance of a volume such as this for international history will become clearer when we have similar works covering almost countless relationships.

By the very nature of the study a chapter would be needed to record the advice, encouragement, and time given to the author, who has been left with a feeling of disproportion between the results of the study and the delightful obligations incurred in carrying it on. My thanks go to some thousands of Britons who were disturbed in one way or another, to scores of those gentlemen of state who unburdened themselves under the inevitable pledge of anonymity, to American diplomatic representatives and members of the American colony in the British Isles, and to teachers and scholars on the interchange scheme. In Great Britain I recall with pleasure the help given me by the Chambers of Commerce, Rotary, the American University Union, the English-speaking Union, and the Foreign, Home, Colonial, and General Post Offices. Scores of organizations coöperated in the friendliest fashion, and I have drawn upon the Immigration and Naturalization Service, U.S. Department of Labor, and the U.S. Department of Commerce, the State Department, and numerous publishing houses. Among the many personal obligations, I wish to record the kindnesses of Viscountess Bryce and the Marquess of Lansdowne for permission to quote from collections in their possession, and to recall the aid given by

the Marquis of Salisbury, H. G. Wells, Professor H. Hale Bellott, Sir Michael Sadler, Sir Philip Hartog, Thomas Stephenson, "Augur," Willard Connely, Ferdinand Kuhn Jr., Donald Gill, F. A. Southard Jr., Harwood L. Childs, C. Mace Thomas, and especially Miss Elsie Fisher. A fellowship from the Social Science Research Council and the Penfield Fellowship in International Law, Diplomacy, and Belles Lettres of the University of Pennsylvania gave me time to complete the study. I want to note the co-operation of the staff at the British Museum, the Royal Society, Royal College of Surgeons, Royal Astronomical Society, the London School of Economics, the Institute of Historical Research, the Library of Congress, the Mercantile Library, and the Library of the University of Pennsylvania. My colleagues at the University have been patient and helpful, and throughout the years the assistance of Professors A. C. Howland, Conyers Read, Roy F. Nichols, Richard Shryock, A. P. Whitaker, Leonidas Dodson, Thomas Woody, and the Hon. Roland S. Morris has meant much. To Professor William E. Lingelbach, unsparing in time and unselfish in the promotion of scholarship, any merits of this volume are due. The coöperation of Elizabeth Calvert Heindel, a joyous companion in all my studies, made even footnotes a pleasure.

This manuscript was finished June 1938. The outbreak of the Second World War strengthens my suspicion that we have reached an epoch in which Americans and foreigners must consider seriously the United States in World History.

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*May 1940*

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# I

## INTRODUCTION <sup>1</sup>

IT is too early in the history of the United States to expect that much has been done to estimate the American impact upon other countries. The possibilities of the subject have been only touched. Journalists have for the greater part made the most of the sensational aspects; novelists have become swamped in the psychological complexities brought about by the interrelations. Some of the most brilliant and unsatisfactory history has been written in the study of the impact of one race upon another, nation upon nation, and all the other groupings that come quickly to mind. A study of the American impact can escape none of the difficulties.

Henry James, who toyed with this subject, and some of whose complicated prose may be due to the subtleties such a topic is likely to inspire, expressed the problem in his volume on W. W. Story (1903):

The old relation, social, personal, aesthetic, of the American World to the European . . . is as charming a subject as the student of manners, morals, personal adventures, the history of taste, the development of a society, need wish to take up, with the one drawback, in truth, of being treatable—but in too many lights. The poet, the dramatist, the critic, would alike, on considerations, find it to bristle with appeals and admonitions. It has, in short, never been “done” to call done, from any point of view.

Despite the suggestion thrown out by the famous imperial historian J. R. Seeley in his *Expansion of England* (1883), “There is no topic so pregnant as this of the mutual influence of the branches of the English race. The whole future of the planet depends upon it,” very little has been attempted in studying the American influence upon Great Britain. Seeley himself, perhaps not completely non-insular, dismissed the problem by making a lesson of the American Revolu-



tion for contemporary imperial discussions, intimating the conclusion of a broader vision by saying that the United States "exerts a strong influence upon us by the strange career it runs and the novel experiments it tries." Actually he complained of the irrational historical treatment of the American Revolution which made that event less pregnant for the British than it really was.

James Bryce has warned:

Now and then we may directly claim transatlantic experience as accrediting or discrediting some specific constitutional device or the policy of some enactment. But even in these cases he who desires to rely on the results shown in America must first satisfy himself that there is such a parity of conditions and surroundings in respect to the particular matter as justifies him in reasoning directly from ascertained results there to probable results in his own country.

Yet Bryce does say: "America has in some respects anticipated European nations. She is walking before them along paths which they may probably follow." One must record, as Bryce did, a useful caveat: While there may be a parallelism between the two countries, the correspondence may rather be due to the "simultaneous action of the same causes than to any direct influence," one country upon another.

"American" has been broadly interpreted to include all the emanations of influence or stimuli coming from the United States, and it has been used to describe the activity, outlook, and experience of, and contributions by, the people of the United States. These developments may not be original with us. Placed as we have been within the tradition of Western Europe, as part of Atlantic civilization, America's career did not, except in details here and there, thrust itself upon Britain as a mighty force completely alien to her own tradition. There are many instances where an American would deny vehemently the homogeneity of American life, and yet the foreigner may, in his simplification of observation, designate as "American" that which we would prefer to describe as an importation, as local, or as atypical.

It is convenient, and only what can be expected, that at a mental and spatial distance, the term and the country it covers are treated as a unit, and the term may be loosely applied, becoming less meaningful as one turns, for example, from diplomacy to the complexities of social life. What is important is to see what and how traits, values,

objects, or activities described as "American" have been received abroad. The changes or applications of a descriptive adjective may not be momentous, but one can observe that they have an accumulative effect of some value in estimating the reception by one nation of another's methods, styles, or ways of life; and an adjective, as when loosely applied to such things as "American business morality," helps to build up a British mental image of our civilization which may give us more credit for originality and distinctiveness than is our due.

Under the word "impact" this study deals with three things: the knowledge of or interest in the United States, the opinions and attitudes about it, and the imitation, modification or use of the American example. Impact includes slow, subtle permeation as well as the more startling spasms of influence which the British press has loved to call "the American invasion." An impact (as broadly defined) may exist without influence, hence the word is usually to be preferred to "influence." "Collision," an overtone inherent in the word, has not been unduly stressed. It would be folly to presume that the American impact meant many startling changes in the history of the United Kingdom, but it has been more significant than the author anticipated. British readers need not assume that I am trying to prove that the impact was and is entirely dependent upon American initiative or conquest; it may well be related to a state of mental breadth which exists in Great Britain. Further, such impact, although frequently not free from evil, may imply a desire to profit from another's experience. Indeed, it is important for America to know whether the impact has been for good or evil. Whether the phrase "American impact" may possess more significance and originality in the future rests with the Fates.

The United States has been a frontier to Great Britain, and just as the significance of the frontier in American history has been a fertile clue, *mutatis mutandis*, one may reflect that meditations on the hypothesis may well wander eastward, beyond the seaboard states, on across the Atlantic Ocean, and, in point of time, on beyond the first century and a half of plantations in America, perhaps the more obvious period of European repercussions. Even though the American frontier in its special sense of available free land (which likewise possessed Old World importance) had disappeared by 1890, the conception of the American nation as a frontier influence affecting Great

Britain, at least up to the World War, contains just enough meaning to make it tolerable history. One is not surprised to see G. K. Chesterton, William Archer, and G. B. Shaw in cowboy dress cavorting on an Essex field. However, I am impelled to add here the extreme observation made by P. A. Sorokin: "Racial, national, geographic, and other differences of the groups that are the bearers of the culture rarely change the essential nature and destiny of the culture. They call forth and lead to many variations in the *secondary* characteristics of the culture."

It would have been misleading in this specialized topic to confine attention to England, and just as confusing not to recognize that differences exist in Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland. The emphasis that is given to England is excusable, partly because the material so warrants and partly because Parliament and London are the natural focus of international movements. The shades of difference within England itself, Lancashire and Cornwall for example, in response to something as foreign as the United States cannot be constantly differentiated; but the reader will keep in mind the possibility of such niceties which are not often of paramount importance unless there is a crisis, such as occurred during the Civil War when Lancashire mills suffered from the cotton blockade. In the pre-war period, what is now the Irish Free State can hardly be completely omitted, for there is no doubt that it was Ireland which directed much British attention to America, and Americans who made Ireland a world problem. However, the American impact on Ireland and by way of Ireland must await another volume. More important than the geographical distinctions are the stratifications in social life.

One may legitimately doubt whether "public opinion" should be used to describe the general or specific expressions made by the British upon the United States over a long period of time. The reaction of Britain to America, usually centering upon episodes, has a body of symbols, prejudices, and traditions which it is hard to call public opinion inasmuch as it may not be generally expressed at each episode. For that reason I have frequently preferred to speak about the knowledge of or interest in the United States rather than speak only of public opinion. Until we know British attitudes (a term much battered about), we cannot learn how American influences might have come in. Perforce, it is impossible to say as much as one should

about the slumbering impressions which have got into the inarticulate masses.

Some early American travelers once advanced the amusing theory that the interval of space which separated the two countries might function as an interval of a century, and that American judgment was therefore in some respects a prophecy of the judgment of posterity. This statement, if reversed to English judgment on American civilization, would contain the same amount of untruth. Yet foreign opinion of our country is vital to us for many reasons, because it modifies the influence or prestige we may have in the world, is a clue to the study of national characteristics, and furnishes a stimulating guide to our own domestic problems. The cynic might decide that at the most the intervening space of the Atlantic Ocean encouraged harsh British expressions which in time became more general in our own country.

A word may be said about the period selected for study. Historical analyses that have been made which would directly, but usually indirectly, impinge upon the subject of the American impact center mostly on the American Revolution or the Civil War. These usually emphasize diplomatic relations or the state of public opinion in Great Britain. The years from 1865 to 1898 (which the author plans to treat elsewhere) are not unimportant; indeed, that period conditions the mental outlook as it is to be found at the outset of the present discussion. The years 1898 to 1914 form a logical block of time. The Spanish-American War stimulated attention to the United States in many fields besides diplomacy. The World War years, with their special stress and strain, are better treated as the foundation for a contemplated study of the American impact since 1918. The time division does not have the same validity in all the fields of activity that are discussed here, but this is true of any topic like the present which is somewhat tangent to the life and being of a nation.

To make the complexity of history comprehensible, events have been given causes, and the influence of one civilization upon another has often been cited with marvelous courage. If we ask the question, what impact the Occident has had upon the Orient, it is assumed because of their dissimilarity that it is easier to identify reciprocal influences. But with utter disregard for the greater difficulties of working within a more common heritage, historical pages have been

filled with the impact of ideas, geographical environment, and so forth. Such pages devoted to the interweaving of influences usually inflame the imagination and never quite satisfy the critical intellect, either because the sweep for material has not been very broad or because there has been a tendency—frequently made vicious by a motive of boosting or depreciating a hero or nation—of confining attention to smaller and smaller units until we get an analysis of the response of a third-rate English writer to a fourth-rate Frenchman.

The dangerous leanings of these studies may be summarized: excessive nationalism or racialism, over-generalization, a confusion between opinion and imitation, the excusable inability to isolate one stimulus from another, the use of over-specialized historical sources, an assumption of static or mature or dead civilization or civilizations, an emphasis on material objects (e. g., the spread of gout in England because of a change in Anglo-Portuguese trade relations), a disregard of the fact that the origins of methods or ideas may soon be forgotten, and too much stress on the crises or major events of history. Perhaps in order to avoid the pettifogging pitfalls that a social scientist thinks he sees in many advanced studies of literature, he turns in despair to analyses of public opinion. Such analyses, while part of the story of reaction to stimuli, are still only part of the larger problem of the reception and adaptation of another's aims, thoughts, and achievements.

What are the guideposts for writing about impacts? There is a subtlety in such research which comes as a relief from a strict narrative of action. Placing one object in relation to another allows for closer approximation to the real nature of each separate object, no matter whether the object be a nation or a philosopher. Such epics developed in bygone ages in order to glorify the home folks. So it is that in this very day when internationally minded workers gather material for the relationships and interacting (no matter how feebly) unity of mankind, the chauvinist can turn the same material to his own desires, to whip or crown his fatherland. The fact that one or both civilizations appear to have passed an apogee usually inspires efforts to evaluate influence or contributions. But perhaps the very entrance of America into the British horizon, even apart from the chance that it has been too busy to develop a rounded

culture, exerted an influence which was so strong that nothing we may do in centuries to come could equal it.

Partly in the belief that most stimuli are personal, the individual thinker or traveler has been given almost unwarranted attention. This has given rise to bibliographies and analyses of travelers to the States, and to a lesser degree, to the study of an American abroad, whether Cooper, Emerson, or a missionary in China. The constant speeding up of international communications may diminish the need for such studies; but it is not likely, with the vastness of physical and mental oceans, and the barriers of hatred and ignorance, that we shall ever lack variety, and the airplane and the radio will merely produce a different methodology, not an abolition of the problems themselves. But to return to the matter at hand, to estimate American contributions abstractly is not enough. Charles W. Eliot's *American Contributions to Civilization* (1898) may be logical and entirely correct for domestic consumption, but are these contributions convincing without estimating their permeation to other countries?

The contacts and channels of information existing between the two countries are basic to the nature of our influence, consequently I have devoted much time to an evaluation of their present effectiveness. A field program was designed as supplementary to the more orthodox historical research, setting the problem of how one may obtain a broad perspective of the public opinion or attitude of one country regarding another. Inquiry as to the strength of the channels which aid in forming British opinion about the United States naturally combined an analysis of contemporary British attitudes toward the States. Such contemporary examination, besides fortifying historical caution, furnished comparisons to illuminate many problems of the earlier period, and helped to explain the content of the concepts. The very changes in the channels of information, once the differences are estimated, account for much.

It is difficult to decide when opinion becomes public opinion, but not so difficult to include everything which might form it. As Stuart Rice has defined it, opinion need not be the result of a rational process, need not include an awareness of choice, and must be sufficiently definite to create a disposition to act upon it under favorable circumstances. British opinion may be definite, but opin-

ion on such a subject as the United States is usually acted upon through diplomatic channels unless we descend to the disposition which prompts the reading of an American book, a walk to Bond Street to see an American cartoon, or the purchase of an American typewriter. The term "attitude," of which opinion may be the verbal expression, is a useful postulate for classification of human behavior.

Particularly in this study it has been desirable to proceed quantitatively, but such quantitative measurements were not always possible; however, the effort to proceed quantitatively brought about useful conceptual reformulation of the subject matter. L. R. Thurstone's elaborate quantitative measurements were not easily used for gaining knowledge from England, especially since it is difficult with them to distinguish between factual-judgment opinions and attitude-representation opinions. The latter no doubt predominate in international relations. The American heritage in Britain—the element in the composite picture which was pre-existent and stored up for our own period—may be called the stereotype and shall be duly considered. All this governs the infiltration of things American, which, it is true, may be used or resisted by the British without an expression of opinion.

As a practicable approach, this study began as an attempt to analyze British reaction to American imperialism, but it was felt increasingly that what could be said thereon must be related to a more general picture, a synthesis which would be full of fertile explorations. Without the aid of many monographic studies, there can be no pretensions of exhausting the many topics discussed. Among the vital subjects that have not been given proper attention here are the rôles played by members of the Empire, the useful contrast between the American impact upon the Empire and upon the United Kingdom, and the essential meaning of a German or a Colonial impact upon Great Britain as compared with the picture drawn in these pages.

Wandering about in Britain with a special purpose is always a pleasure, but especially so since the repeated inquiries were thought to be of doubtful usefulness and strangely American. By innumerable conversations, questionnaires, and surveys, an effort was made in some seventeen thousand miles of British travel to draw upon

ten thousand British, a "sampling" (including over eight hundred selected and pre-arranged interviews) in such a way as to exploit the variations in the social and economic structure, pressure groups, and territorial divisions. Both the knowledgeable and the innocent were approached, questions respecting the channels of information and America being modified to fit the immediate circumstances.

The abundance of commonplace nonsense concerning the alleged characteristics of the Briton and the American, and the peculiar idiosyncrasies of Anglo-American relations make it difficult for a personal study to avoid the traditional claptrap. The gentle art of being insular is no prerogative of the British, and if such does govern the attitude to America, it also affects the British Empire, or Yorkshire's views on Cornwall. No matter what may be the envious accusations of Continental diplomatic opinion respecting British machinations, the more subtle art of being gentle with a sting is not pertinent to this study except in so far that an American, at the end of interviews or speeches, constantly finds himself forced to defend American civilization. This may be turned to value for the study of stereotypes. The regional differences of Britain are startling, and it is difficult for the American to believe that the British cannot understand the sectional variations of the United States. Many difficulties exist because of the heritage that has been left by interminable discussions of racial and lingual unity; even if taken seriously up to a point, the verbiage is most confusing. The date of the field work, August 1936 to August 1937, was as satisfactory as any one year could be, and as typical. The abdication of Edward VIII, exaggerated by Americans as an Anglo-American event, did not fundamentally distort the results of the field program.<sup>2</sup> More to the point was the increasing political tension in Europe, and the alignment of fronts of Fascism and Communism. Such developments stimulated an interest in the function of the United States.

The British belief has been growing that the English and American democracies have a united duty in preserving a common civilization. This approach, which is presented with many variations, now supersedes the appeals of race or language. One suspects that the English desire to improve their understanding of American history and literature depends more upon the belief that



the political understanding of democracies must be fortified on the cultural side than upon any advance since 1914 in the culture or refinements of American life. The contemporary interest (which naturally affected the field work), one may fear, relies too heavily upon a surge of political feeling. Substantial improvement to knowledge will come only when the British feel that American civilization must be appreciated as a subject of knowledge and world history, without any dependence upon a feeling which national interests might conceivably destroy. So many British efforts to reach a better non-political understanding have impressed Americans more than the British. There is an expectation of substantial American contributions. And it seemed that talking and thinking about America have become, even amid the distracting realities of the Continent, a katharsis for the British. The interest reminds one of the attraction exerted by some mystifying writing on the wall. Herr Hitler decided in *Mein Kampf* that England differed from any other state in Europe if only because of her linguistic and cultural communion with us.

<sup>1</sup> Henry James, *William Wetmore Story and his Friends* (Edin. & Lond., 1903), I, 5-6; J. R. Seeley, *Expansion of England* (Boston, 1901), p. 150. Bryce, *American Commonwealth* (1927 ed.), I, 9; II, 656, 847, 851; cf. his *Social Institutions of the U.S.* (New York, 1891), 270. Note J. B. Botsford, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century, as Influenced from Oversea* (New York, 1924); it is not always easy to see the connection between the society and overseas in this interesting volume. A detailed study of the allusions to Colonial experience in 19th and 20th century England would be useful. Stuart A. Rice, ed., *Statistics in Social Studies* (Philadelphia, 1930), 177, 179-80, 194; also Rice's *Methods in Social Science* (Chicago, 1931) and *Quantitative Methods in Politics* (New York, 1928). L. R. Thurstone, "Attitudes can be measured," *Amer. Journ. of Sociology*, 1927, 33:529-45. For other methods see G. B. Neumann, *A Study of International Attitudes of High School Students* (Teachers College, *Contribution to Education*, No. 239, Columbia Univ.); J. L. Woodward, *Foreign News in American Morning Newspapers* (New York, 1930). Woodward prefers the term "Public Attitude" to "Public Opinion"; of 40 individual papers, each weighted by its own circulation, the proportion of space devoted to foreign news was 5.15%—the A.P. furnishing 58.5%. The attention-compelling value of that space must also be considered. J. D. Whelpley, *British-American Relations* (Boston, 1924), impressionistic. P. A. Sorokin, "Socio-Cultural Trends in Euro-American Culture during the last hundred years," address at Duke University, 1938.

<sup>2</sup> The gentleman's agreement of the British press was remarkably effective; direct circulation of American newspapers and news magazines can be discounted as a mass force in this instance. Provinces were in more darkness than London; surprise increased as one descended the social scale. When American clippings were