

## Book Reviews

*Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy.* By Ella Lonn. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952, pp. viii, 725. Appendix, index, and bibliography, frontispiece portrait of Carl Schurz. \$8.50.)

This book is a sequel to the same author's *Foreigners in the Confederacy*. Together they show how many pages are needed for a comprehensive treatment of what might seem to some a minor question.

The decades preceding the Civil War had seen a great immigration into the northern states, the 1850's having been especially notable for the influx of Germans and Irish. Miss Lonn begins her book with a well-balanced and interesting treatment of the foreign population in the North in 1860, based upon the census for that year. The figures will probably surprise most readers. More persons had come from England, from Canada, and from France than is generally supposed, while no less than ten minor groups had begun to arrive.

How did the great multitude of foreigners react to the crisis that finally led to the outbreak of civil war in the country to which they had come? The question makes the theme of the second chapter, and it is answered largely by an appeal to the foreign press, especially the German papers. Although there was a notable drift toward the new Republican party, in spite of the fact that it contained antiforeign persons formerly in the Know-Nothing party, there was not an *en masse* desertion of the Democratic party. Copperheads in fact soon appeared among the Germans quite as well as among the native born. Nevertheless, the *Washingtoner Intelligenzblatt* charged that native Americans did not fully appreciate their country, and said, "They do not understand free institutions, because to them the difference between freedom and despotism is unknown. To us immigrants it is reserved to save this land from destruction. And we will do it!"

Miss Lonn finds that the leaders of the foreign groups were actuated by a great variety of motives. Many Germans were opposed to states' rights, fearing that the principles would lead to the breaking up of the Union into a number of rival countries, such as they had known in central Europe. Others felt slavery was a reflection on a country dedicated to freedom. A Canadian on his part wrote, "Is not the cause of

the United States the cause of civilization and free government?" Many men enlisted out of a sense of gratitude for the opportunities they had been given in their new home, for immigrants had felt a welcome even during the decade of the Know-Nothings. The spirit of adventure was not lacking, and some Turner societies enlisted in a body. A spirit of rivalry developed between different nationalities, and it was urged that men could show the superiority of their racial qualities by loyalty to their new country. Mercenary motives also intruded; there was a bounty for enlistment, in addition to the pay, food, and clothing—and the opportunity for travel. With some leaders, ambition played a part, for a man who raised a regiment for the Union cause was potentially started on a career which would not otherwise have been readily open to him. But so far as the men in the ranks were concerned, Miss Lonn concludes, "Probably the motive which usually swayed the common soldier among the foreigners as a whole was the desire to extirpate slavery; this gave the struggle a moral aspect and turned the war in a sense into a holy crusade. The contact of the foreign-born soldier with slavery during the war only deepened his feeling against it."

After discussing the largely German and Irish character of the regular army that numbered some fifteen thousand enlisted men in 1861, Miss Lonn considers in detail the foreign-born volunteer units, and then passes to the foreign-born generals, colonels, lower officers, knights-errant, and soldiers of fortune. Many sources had to be drawn upon and the chapters make an important and authoritative contribution to Civil War literature, as does also the one devoted to the special services.

It was natural that different nationalities should carry their characteristics into the service, and manifest them in military behavior, in recreations, and in food and drink. The Germans could not soldier without beer, and Miss Lonn writes: "The sutler of a German regiment was expected to achieve the impossible in order to supply lager, Rhine wine, and bologna. Whenever he appeared with a fresh stock of these goods, the crowd around his tent gathered in numbers greater than those at a parade of that regiment. Naturally, the other regiments regarded the presence of a German regiment in the brigade as highly desirable." The Irish went in for theatricals and steeplechases, while the Swiss seemed satisfied with sharpshooting contests, where the winners were

rewarded modest trophies. The Scandinavians were distressed over the absence of brandy, and only reluctantly settled for smoking and chewing tobacco.

Immigration continued heavily during the war and many citizens of foreign countries entered the Union army and navy. In June of 1864, Secretary of State Seward replied to an inquiry by the Senate as to whether the government was engaged in illegal procedures in the matter of forwarding enlistment. Most of the immigrants, Seward insisted, went immediately into industry, while some voluntarily entered service, the Secretary saying "There is no law of nations and no principle of international comity which requires us to refuse their aid in the cause of the country and of humanity." Miss Lonn writes a penetrating chapter "to test the exact accuracy of these statements made by Seward." There was unquestionably some actual recruiting done abroad, but Miss Lonn states that "Seward was careful to stay within the bound of international law," and that it is unthinkable that he and Lincoln countenanced the practice of some unscrupulous agents representing "fictitious firms or associations" that induced immigrants to come to the United States. The chapter concludes with the statement that "the Federal government enlisted in its army nothing comparable to the foreign legion organized by England on the Continent for the Crimean War."

The ministers of most European countries complained of kidnapping and browbeating, the greatest number of complaints having to do "with the luring of Canadians across the border by false promises of work at high wages." Considerable friction with the British government was caused by the army order which provided that a minor who had enlisted without the consent of his parents or guardian would not be discharged if the parents or guardians were not domiciled in the United States. Lord Lyons, the British Ambassador, received many distressing letters on this subject, and some parents made a long trip to bring additional pressure for the discharge of a son. The ambassador admitted later that discharges were given in all cases where sufficient evidence was furnished. After her full examination of the draft and abuses in recruitment, convincing on account of the multitude of specific cases discussed, Miss Lonn sets down the conclusion: "Foreigners who were enticed, kidnapped, or bludgeoned into the army could hardly make good soldiers. Either they spent their

time in prison, or they performed their service sullenly or indifferently. Despite all the strenuous efforts of the government and the bounty workers, the conscripts were relatively few. The product secured was clearly not worth the enormous sums expended by the government."

The inevitable question is: What was the battlefield contribution of the foreign-born? Since units of foreigners were widely distributed, the answering of the question requires an examination of most of the campaigns and the more important battles of the war. Errors and misconceptions are found in this part of the book.

It is stated that most of Kentucky came into Union hands as a result of the Battle of Mill Springs, fought on January 19, 1862. This is hardly correct, for Mill Springs was close to the Tennessee line, and it was the capture of Fort Henry on February 6 that really caused General Albert Sidney Johnston to withdraw from his important position at Bowling Green. Nor is it true that General George Thomas had moved to the attack on learning that Zollicoffer had crossed the Cumberland at Mill Springs. He had been ordered by Buell to drive the Confederates from a position they had occupied for about two months, and General Crittenden, who had recently superseded Zollicoffer in command, moved northward and attacked Thomas when the latter was some ten miles from Mill Springs. The bayonet charge of the Ninth Ohio, a German regiment (I accept Miss Lonn's statement as to this), was indeed the stroke that precipitated the Confederate rout, but it is not true that the victory "opened the Cumberland Gap and East Tennessee." The Confederates were forced to abandon that position on the eighteenth of the following June, by a difficult and skillful maneuver of General George W. Morgan; but no advance was made into East Tennessee. Furthermore, Morgan found it necessary to retire three months later because of Confederate operations, especially those of John H. Morgan, which threatened the Federal communications. It was not until September, 1863, that Cumberland Gap was finally secured as a result of Burnside's penetration to Knoxville by gaps to the south.

The fine performance of the Thirty-second Indiana at Shiloh is appropriately mentioned, but the impression is left that the regiment belonged to Lew Wallace's division of Grant's army, when it in fact was in McCook's division of Buell's army. Its colonel August Willich (he did not sign his

report as von Willich which is the style Miss Lonn uses) was not made a brigadier on the field, as she states, and his promotion dated from July 17, 1862, which was three months later.

The difficult task of treating the foreign-born officers seems in general to have been well accomplished, but dissent can be made to some statements about Franz Sigel, one of the controversial figures of the war. Miss Lonn speaks of his peculiarities and says, "It is difficult to comprehend the exalted position in which his fellow countrymen insisted on placing him. His name lives even yet in German circles, while one hears almost nothing of the other German generals." Miss Lonn herself, however, gives Sigel completely unwarranted credit for the Federal victory at Pea Ridge, and goes much too far in excusing his failure in the Shenandoah Valley. Grant had explicitly told him he did not want him to move farther south than Cedar Creek, and Sigel himself later clearly assumed responsibility for the advance that led to his defeat at New Market on May 15, 1864.

After a chapter devoted to the "Foreign-born in the Navy," Miss Lonn ends her study with a penetrating chapter which leaves the reader well impressed not only with her ability as a historian but with her skill as an interesting writer. She sets forth how in their service the different racial groups revealed their characteristics, both their weak ones and their strong ones. Her researches have put her in a unique position, for no historian has looked so painstakingly and so objectively at the problems of both sides in the war. When she finished her first book, she marvelled "that the Confederacy could sustain the struggle for four long years." Now with a full grasp of the difficulties that faced the North, she is ready to marvel that it could "sustain the war for four long years to the point of victory." She points to the fact that "on account of the heavy Federal detachments needed to protect the rear against treason at home and to serve on the frontier, the forces *actually* engaged in fifty important battles were almost equal." The volume closes with a question to which too little attention has been given: "What was the effect of the war on the foreign-born soldier in his relation to the United States as an American citizen?" There is no simple answer applicable to every case, but Miss Lonn says: "The word 'Americanization' was probably not in common usage by 1865, and yet that proc-

ess is exactly what happened, in greater or less degree, to each foreign-born participant in the war. Friendships between men of differing European races and of foreign-born with American were cemented." Another aspect of the question is answered by the sentence, "All the various racial groups in the population of the North presented to the world a striking and thrilling example of devotion and loyalty to the government which had welcomed the exiles of the world, as well as fidelity to political principles which they had embraced."

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*Correspondence of Governor Samuel Ward, May 1775 - March 1776, with a Biographical Introduction Based Chiefly on the Ward Papers Covering the Period 1725 - 1776.* Edited by Bernhard Knollenberg. *Genealogy of the Ward Family—Thomas Ward, Son of John, of Newport and Some of His Descendants.* Compiled by Clifford P. Monahan. (Providence: Rhode Island Historical Society, 1952, pp. ix, 254. Notes, bibliography, index to *Genealogy*, index to *Correspondence*. \$7.50.)

In the story of securing and consolidating American independence, Rhode Island too generally is featured as an obstructionist, blocking the way to a more perfect union. The tone of Madison's reproachful question at the Virginia ratifying convention in 1788—"Would the honorable gentleman agree to continue the most radical defects in the old system, because the petty State of Rhode Island would not agree to remove them?"—tinges many a later discussion of the climax of the Revolutionary Era.

The *Correspondence of Governor Samuel Ward*, skillfully and painstakingly edited by Bernhard Knollenberg, features a significant segment of the life and times of a Rhode Islander who helped to bring the American republic into existence. By so doing it enriches and clarifies the record at many points and assists its readers to a better balanced view of "That little member" which Madison later charged had "repeatedly disobeyed and counteracted the general authority."

Appropriate selections from the Ward Papers (a major acquisition by the Rhode Island Historical Society in 1945) furnish the main part of the present volume, supplemented by