

posite ends of a log.⁷ In citing the Orwellian paradox about all being equal but some being more so, he locates it in 1984. Professor Manne, who also cites it, attributes it correctly to *Animal Farm*, but was incautious enough to refer to a former and famous president of Columbia University as *William Murray Butler!*

¹Abraham Flexner, *Universities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1930).

²Giovanni Sartori, *Democratic Theory* (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1962).

³Tape-recorded interview with Robert W. Glasgow, *Psychology Today*, December, 1973.

⁴Nisbet *loc. cit.*

⁵*Wealth of Nations*.

⁶By A. E. Housman.

⁷This conceit is generally credited to President James A. Garfield. He is supposed to have told a gathering of Williams College alumni that his notion of a university was "Mark Hopkins on one end of a log and a student on the other," an allusion, evidently, to Dr. Hopkins' method of Socratic questioning.

The Argot of England

British Self-Taught: With Comments in American, by Norman W. Schur, *New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1973. xxi + 438 pp. \$6.95.*

THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT that the present offering is the best and most complete to have come our way since H. W. Horwill's *Anglo-American Interpreter* of 1939. This is said with full recognition of the fact that completeness can never be achieved in a work of this type. Yet in his more than 450 pages Mr. Schur gives us a comprehensive view of the words, expressions and constructions that are likely to stump the American in Britain. He could have perfected his achievement by adding an index of American words and expressions used to translate

his Britishisms. This would have enabled the British user to ascertain the meaning of American equivalents for some of his own stock phrases, and the American user to find British equivalents for his. In a later edition, perhaps?

The treatment is altogether delightful, and the author gives evidence of a sly, dry sense of humor that charms the reader. His stated aim is amply fulfilled: "to give people a little pleasure, occasionally a little enlightenment, and especially to prevent even the tiniest bit of Anglo-American misunderstanding."

It is generally recognized that an American reading a book by a British author will, if he is linguistically alert, discover the author's nationality before he ends the first page. Subtle differences of spelling, even of punctuation, the choice between words common to both languages ("chap" as against "guy," "lad" as against "boy," for instance) are enough to supply the clue. Also, there are numerous cases where the context suffices to clarify the meaning: "panda car" for "police car," "cab rank" for "taxi stand," "engaged tone" for "busy signal," even "stream" for "lane" of automobile traffic. The situation becomes slightly more sticky in the case of "council flats" for "public housing," "accident tout" for "ambulance chaser," "afters" for "dessert" (which in Britain, by the way, means a fruit course), or, more colloquially, "to get one's head in one's hand" where the American would "catch hell" from someone in authority.

But there is a series where you are confused by radically different meanings: "snob" for "shoemaker," "lame duck" for one in difficulties, financial or otherwise, "adopt" for "nominate," "block" for an individual large building, the "Charlie" of our "checkpoint Charlie" or "Charlie Company" for "damned fool," "cheesy" for "swanky" (itself originally imported from Britain, which later devised "posh," also imported by us), "dinky" for "cute," "to clobber" for "to get up," "davenport" for "writing table," the "degree day" of our

weathercasters for "commencement day," "humane society man" for "lifeguard" (the British Life Guards are a crack cavalry unit), "life preserver" for "blackjack," "to manhandle" for "to handle by hand," "to shake down" for "to put up for the night." And what of those cases where terms are used in reverse, like "chickory" and "endive"? Or where the meaning is the opposite, like the theatrical "to bomb" which in Britain means to have a smash hit, in America a dismal flop? Or, in the same field, "posting notices," which in Britain means to mail reviews, in America to announce the closing of the show?

One of this book's greatest merits is to put the reader on his guard against those words and expressions which have obscene or embarrassing connotations in only one branch of the common tongue. The American in Britain should beware of "bum," which in Britain means the posterior (the British usage goes back to legitimate Middle English, while the American was borrowed in the nineteenth century from German *bummeln*, "to loaf," and its derivative *Bummer*). He should be even more on his guard against using the colloquial "fanny," which in Britain refers not to the *derrière*, but to the vulva. "Bloody," a contraction of "by our Lady," is a low-class adjective in Britain, while we use it in its literal sense. Avoid "sod," which is a British shortening for "sodomite"; "grind" and "roger," which have connotations of sexual intercourse in Britain; but don't get ideas if someone complains of having "mis-laid a housewife," which is a sewing gear kit. On the other hand, the Britisher in our midst might be wary of "pimp," which to him is a small bundle of kindling, "imperial balls-up" ("a sorry mess"), "keep your pecker up" (we use "chin" instead of "pecker"), "to knock up" (British for "to awaken somebody"), "screw" (salary or wages).

Mr. Schur does not give "naughty" as a separate item, but brings it in under the heading of "raid," which means, among other things, a burglary committed by

"naughty" persons; this gives the British "naughty" a more serious connotation than the American (it might be added that the Australians speak of "a naughty" with reference to an illicit love affair).

The British "public convenience" for "comfort station" will not seriously mislead anybody, but the use of "cloak room" in the same connotation will. Even worse is "closet," in the sense of "bathroom" or "water closet." What we call a "john" the British are more apt to call a "jerry" or a "loo." Cute (or should we say dinky?) is "to spend a penny" for "to go to the ladies' room," or, more euphemistically, "the powder room."

There is one division of language, the interjection, where the individual is more likely to give himself away than in any other. I once asked a young lady who had perfect native-speaker ability and accent in English, French and Spanish, having learned all three as a child and practised them constantly thereafter, whether she had ever gotten herself confused. "Yes," she replied after some thought, "At one time, on a Spanish beach, someone stuck me with a pin, and I cried out 'Ouch!'" ("*Ay!*" is the standard Spanish interjection for sudden pain). Here we find a British "coo!" as the equivalent of "gee!"; "lumme!" for "whew!"; "rather!" for "and how!"; "blimey!" for "holy mackerel!"; "blast!" for "damn!"; "super!", "terrific!", "wizard!" for "fine!", "splendid!" (but these are familiar to most Americans). "So long!" is rendered not only by "cheerio!", but also by "bung-ho!"; "tough luck!" by "bad" (or "ghastly") "show!", or by "hard cheese!"; "cheese it!" means "pipe down!", while our "cheese it!" (as in "Cheese it! The cops!") is "nix!" "Cheese off!" means "get lost!" "What a sell!" is "What a let-down!" "All my eye!" is "bo-loney!" "Crickey!" is "Good heavens!", and "Good show!" is "nice work!" "Go to bath!" is "Go to hell!", while "Go to bed!" means "Shut up!" (but "Pack up!" and "Belt up!" are also used).

Differences in syntactical usage are rela-

tively few. But in Britain you "fill in" a form rather than fill it out, and you "look up someone" rather than "look someone up" (Mr. Schur does not tell us how it goes when the object is a pronoun; we can't bring ourselves to believe in "I looked up him.").

Occasionally British usage reminds us of foreign languages. The British "blind road" for "dead end" brings to mind the Italian *vicolo cieco*, while their use of "half twelve" in the sense of "12:30" is reminiscent of German or Russian, though in those languages it would mean "half an hour on the way to twelve; 11:30."

Mr. Schur, who has lived long years in Britain, occasionally makes a slip on American usage, as where he attributes to his native country (p. xxx of his Introduction) the use of "parking (or "rear") lamps," where all Americans would say "lights." He gives as exclusively British the use of "works" for "factory"; yet, from the long-gone days of my boyhood, I remember a popular New York song about what went on "down by de winegar woiks."

No book of this kind can be complete. Offered not in a spirit of criticism, but of helpfulness for future editions, are a few extra British forms that require American explanations: the "Holy Saddlebag! What a bit of bangtail!" reported in the British translation of Feydeau's *There Is One in Every Marriage*; "turn-up" in the sense of American "upset" (what happened to the Labor Party in the last British election); "midwifery" (with instructions for its proper British pronunciation, with "-wife-" as in "whiff"); "pantaloone sheaths" for our "panty hose"; "demo" for "demonstration" and "aggro" for "aggravation"; "just now!" for "right on!"; "glory hole" for a repository for useless objects; "granny bashers" for teen-age girls who mug and prey upon elderly women; "bean" in the sense of "pound sterling"; "greasers" and "ruddys" to go along with "skinheads" (juvenile gangsters); "mods" replacing the older "Teddy Boys"; "darbies" for "handcuffs"; "to cosset" for "to

pet" (but this is literary). "Kiosk" is given for a phone booth, but not in its older meaning of "newsstand." In "gone for a burton" in the R.A.F. sense of "to be killed," we wonder what the meaning and origin of "burton" may be (Oxford gives it only as "a piece of tackle").

Not only should every American planning a trip to Britain provide himself with this practical and useful language guide; the author should also be encouraged to revise it and bring it up to date every few years, so that we may have an everlasting "Anglo-American Interpreter" at our disposal, both for reference and for actual use in the field of operations.

Reviewed by MARIO PEI

The Contrarious Temper

People of Paradox, by Michael Kammen, *New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1972. 316 pp. \$8.95.*

AMERICA IS A NATION of paradoxes. It is ironic but true that Americans are at once religious and secularistic, spiritual-minded and materialistic, highly principled and pragmatic, puritanical and hedonistic, peace-loving and warmongering, utopian and deeply cynical. James Russell Lowell pointed to this phenomenon when he sardonically observed:

A strange hybrid, indeed, did circumstances beget, here in the New World, upon the Puritan stock, and the earth never before saw such mystic-practicalism, such niggard-geniality, such calculating fanaticism, such cast-iron-enthusiasm, such sour-faced humor, such close-fisted generosity.