

## Honesty is Statesmanship

THE AMERICAN SPEECHES OF THE EARL OF HALIFAX. Geoffrey Cumberlege. The Oxford University Press.

FEW Englishmen have been so well received in the United States as was Lord Halifax during his war-time ambassadorship. Yet few Englishmen embody in their own persons so much that many Americans find objectionable in Englishmen—eminence based on birth rather than on personal exertion, the background of the right school and the right university, the stuffiness of high Conservatism, and the impeccable good manners which become almost a provocation when practised among those who occasionally forget them. An English reviewer of this book found the key to this paradoxical American popularity of Lord Halifax in his ardent Christianity. I am content to echo this opinion, and I would add only that his simplicity of character must also have appealed to our Allies, a simplicity not of a dupe but of a man whose aims are utterly sincere and true to label. In one of these speeches he engagingly repeats a remark made to his son by a prominent American: "I always thought the British were apt to outsmart us until I listened to Lord Halifax. Now I know it is not true." This story against himself has as much truth as humour in it. Just as Winston Churchill achieved a moral ascendancy when the Germans plainly held the military ascendancy by admitting losses and difficulties, so Lord Halifax, playing the diplomatic game without subterfuge and with all his cards on the table, won a confidence which could not have been obtained by art.

IT would give a wrong impression of these addresses and speeches to imply that they are simply sincere and honest and nothing else. They are nearly all exceedingly adroit. Often when he spoke to large public gatherings in the United States Lord Halifax had a most awkward and uncongenial task. The war provided plenty of disasters to dismay

(continued from previous page)

combined masses, and inversely as the square of their distance apart. The attraction of gravitation might better be called the repulsion of gravitation under this theory.

It is impossible to discuss adequately the implications of this theory in the pages of this journal and the limits of this article, but may I introduce a personal touch and place myself on record as the first one, however unworthy, to state his belief that the new theory of Gifford's is an epochal verity. It will be seen that Gifford ends his life, as Bickerton did, with a brilliant but unproven world theorem issuing from his lips but, alas, with perhaps no Gifford following on to devote his life to its solution.

As a personal friend and humble admirer of Gifford for more than a generation I lament his passing, but in a broad sense his time was come, his work completed and his end was peace. So much, with all that it implies, can be said of few men, but can be truly said of Gifford of Wellington.

(See photograph on front cover)



LORD HALIFAX  
"Utterly sincere and true to label"

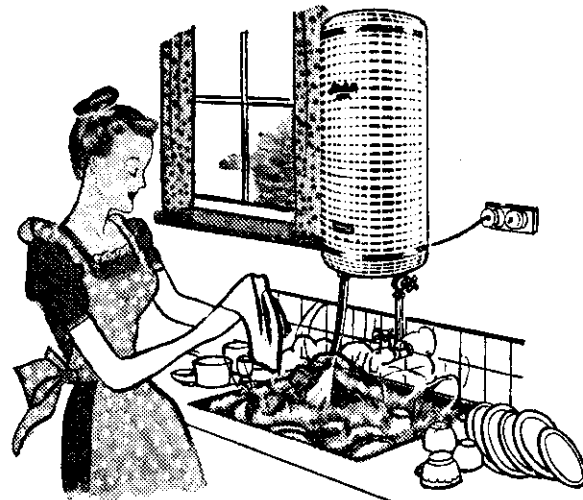
friends and gratify enemies. He had continually to show that Britain was not letting herself get her tail down, however tough things seemed, and to give solid reasons (as opposed to the admirable but rhetorical emotion of Churchill) for continuing support to what must have appeared to many a losing cause. Again he had to rebut anti-British jibes, and even after Pearl Harbour to show how Goebbels was anxious to convince the Americans that they were dying for the British Empire and the British that they were dancing to America's tune. In plain diligence England can have had few better representatives; Lord Halifax was the first ambassador to visit every state of the Union, and his courteous consideration for his hosts is shown over and over again in these speeches—he invariably gave himself the trouble of looking up the history of the places and institutions where he spoke and even pleased his hearers by using from time to time, naturally and without ostentation, their native idioms. His frequent quotations from American sources (George Washington: "The history of war is a history of false hopes and temporary expedients") and the honour he paid to United States tradition, all contributed to an impression of genuine attentiveness to American susceptibilities. The fine characterisation of Lincoln beginning, "A tall, shy, somewhat awkward man . . ." is in many ways a character sketch of Halifax himself, and his American hearers must have made this comparison. But Halifax, with his deeply-felt personal religion, was closer to American tradition by nature than any assiduity, however unremitting, could ever have made him.

MANY of these speeches will be of ephemeral interest; but their very closeness to events gives them value as a commentary on the progress of the war, being in effect a sort of moral barometer illustrating the pressure of enemy successes first on neutral and then on allied opinion. Some touches are oddly prophetic. In 1944 Lord Halifax quoted these words

(continued on page 19)

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