

A SHELF OF RECENT BOOKS

OPEN DIPLOMACY

By Maurice Francis Egan

THE revelations of Mr. Page and Mr. Lane, taken together, are as interesting and as shocking as "The Memoirs of the Duc de Saint-Simon" would have been had they been printed during the life of Louis XIV. They both reveal attractive personalities; they are full of charm. Mr. Lane is generally very serious, introspective, and, although he shows an occasional flash of ambition, he seems to have taken the Good Samaritan very seriously as his model. Mr. Page has wit and humor; when he is most serious, he is often most delicately humorous. In fact, foreign students of American literature will find in his pages that delicate chastity of thought indicating a state of mind of many cultivated Americans, for which foreigners seldom give credit.

But Mr. Page's naïveté would seem

almost incredible, as made evident in cold type, if we did not know that his letters were not written to be printed. No student of the psychology of the modern American can afford to neglect these three volumes; and it is doubtful whether in Germany and in France especially they will ever cease to be a handbook of the American attitude of our best educated statesmen during the late war.

The reticence of Dr. Woodrow Wilson in not permitting himself to print his impressions of that terrible time is the more admirable, since he must have much to say that would soften the picture that both these gentlemen, one his appointee as a Cabinet officer, the other his appointee as Ambassador, have given of him. It is evident that he regarded Mr. Page as too greatly affected by the English point of view. In fact, Mr. Page did suffer from that hereditary tendency of some modern Americans who have been

brought up to be tremendously proud of their English ancestors, who never forget that their country is a branch — broken off, it is true — of the great English stem. Not for a moment in these "Letters" does Mr. Page show a touch of snobbishness; but nevertheless the English are so intensely interesting to him that he cannot cast off what may be called an obsession — that they have the greatest superiority over other nations. This not only intrigues him, but at times makes him too nationally introspective.

His "Life" is very well expressed by Mr. Hendrick. If the perfection of style is that it is the man, Mr. Page has in these graphic, expressive, and appallingly frank "Letters" shown himself to be a master of literature.

"The Letters of Franklin K. Lane", taken with "The Life and Letters of Walter H. Page", are looked on by many Americans as premature publications; but this same criticism was made of the books of Mr. Lansing and Mr. Tumulty. In truth, if Dr. Wilson really believed in "open diplomacy" — even to an immoderate degree — he has lived to see it at its worst or at its best, in the writings of these two gentlemen! In these volumes there seem to be no concealments. It must be said that both Mr. Page and Mr. Lane were never hypocritical, and as a corollary it may be added that Dr. Wilson would stand a great deal of talk from his friends without its at all affecting his amiable intention to do as he pleased!

When one has become accustomed, after the first shiver, to the revelations of these volumes, one enjoys them thoroughly. If we have any enemies as a nation, these delightful books leave us perfectly naked to them. They have torn away from modern American diplomacy and statesman-

ship even the vestige of a fig leaf; but it will be a long time before any national enemy of ours can profit by them. If we leave this suggestion out of the question, there are no two books printed in the last twenty-five years more enlightening than these — entirely apart from the personal attractiveness of the authors. As the villager once said, after his first assistance at the play of "Hamlet", these volumes are "full of quotations" — quotations which will become household words to the students and readers of history in the United States. They are full of quotations for the future!

The Life and Letters of Walter H. Page.
By Burton J. Hendrick. Two volumes.
Doubleday, Page and Co.

The Letters of Franklin K. Lane, Personal and Political. Edited by Anne Wintermute Lane and Louise Herrick Wall.
Houghton Mifflin Co.