Geschichte der Päpste seit dem Ausgang des Mittelalters, von Dr. Ludwig Pastor, a. o. Professor der Geschichte an der Universität zu Innsbruck. Erster Band. Freiburg im Breisgau. 1886.

Our Catholic friends have never been satisfied with Ranke's "History of the Popes." It has been impossible to deny the great genius of the writer or the remarkable success of the book, but, in the words of a celebrated living Catholic historian, "ce puissant esprit a pourtant fait des efforts remarquables pour atteindre à une entière objectivité, sans jamais parvenir à se pénétrer du caractère universel de la papauté, et a comprendre l'importance de sa mission historique." It takes a great many things to make up an entire objectivity. This dissatisfaction has shown itself often in works on special points or periods of the history, but in the present we have the first volume of a work which is to cover the whole period of Ranke's and something more.

It must be acknowledged that the time has come for a rewriting of the history of the Popes. While Ranke's work can never be superseded because of the value of its general views and its keen insight, much new light can now be thrown upon matters of detail. The opening to investigation of the vast stores of material under the control of the Pope in Rome makes the present a very favorable time for undertaking this work. Professor Pastor has certainly not neglected his opportunities in this direction. His list of inedited material used, and that upon almost every page, is unusually large even for a German work. An Appendix of a hundred pages contains a number of these new documents, the more important, perhaps, being the confession of Stephen Porcaro and the Bull commissioning Nicholas of Cusa for the reformation of the Church in Germany.

Beginning with a brief survey of the Papacy in Avignon, enlarging slightly the account of the schism and the councils, with more of detail still for the time of Martin V. and Eugene IV., the narrative becomes full and minute with Nicholas V., and the volume closes with the death of Calixtus III. in 1458. A mere glance will perceive the numerous subjects of interest which fall within this period. The Renaissance, the great schism, Wycliffe and Huss, the revolutionary attempt of the councils and the demand for inner reform, the fall of Constantinople and the beginning of the Turkish war, all these are treated more or less at length, and often with the aid of new material.

The Renaissance is treated but briefly and incidentally, as is natural,

but with much of interest. The problem which the relation of the Papacy, at times, to the Renaissance presents to a Catholic writer is solved, as well as it can be, by insisting with much emphasis upon a distinction between a pagan or false and a Christian or true Renaissance. That there was in the movement a tendency towards a revival of pagan ideas and conduct is a fact of importance. That there was a double tendency, Christian as well as pagan, in it as a Renaissance during the fifteenth century is not merely doubtful as a fact, but if proved, of comparatively little value either as a defense of the Papacy or as a fact in the history of civilization. The important influence of the Renaissance upon Christianity does not come within this period nor in this way.

In the history of the Papacy during this time by far the most important event is the crisis created by the theory of the supreme authority of a general council and by the meeting of the councils themselves. It was a momentous crisis not merely in the history of the Papacy but also in the development of the whole intellectual and religious life of Europe. It is of little real use to imagine what would have been the result if any historic fact had been different from what it is, and yet it does aid us to a certain extent in acquiring a just estimate of any great turning-point in events. Had the theory underlying the great councils of the fifteenth century made itself dominant, it is practically certain that the movement towards national church independence, which at the end of the period did obtain so much success, would have been entirely successful. With so much granted, — virtually independent national churches under a constitutional monarchy — an ecclesiastical federal empire, — the inference is easy that the work of Luther, which was inevitable in any case, would have required no revolution for its success, and would have been followed by far different consequences. Is it to be expected that a Catholic writer will perceive the full significance of this crisis? Can entire objectivity be expected to extend so far? Of all the events in the history of the world there is none concerning which complete impartiality of view is more difficult than those in the religious history of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The fundamental standpoint of both Catholic and Protestant is a practical begging of the question. One's objectivity may easily extend to criticising men and measures upon his own side with great severity, and to recognizing the superiority of motives and character upon the other, but when it comes to such large facts as the revolutions, attempted and successful, of these two centuries, it becomes a different matter. Certain it is that this book, while it recognizes the fact that the real thing attempted by the councils was to create a constitutional monarchy, a moment of supreme danger to the theory of papal absolutism, fails entirely to indicate the wider meaning of these events in the general history of Europe.

Perhaps it is not fair to make this a matter of criticism. It is fair, however, to notice that the book throughout displays a genuine German lack of insight, an inability to estimate the wider value of facts. But aside from this the value of the book is very great. We have the clearest possible statement of the papal position as against the councils. The Pope is the absolute head of the Church, appointed not by it but for it. A council has no power over him; indeed, there can be no œcumenical council without the Pope, and the decrees of any council can be annulled by him at any time. Pisa was a most revolutionary assembly, Constance

no council until summoned by Gregory, the general feeling a council mania, and the assembly at Basle council fanatics — almost the only instance of calling names in the book. The objectivity extends to severe criticism of the papal policy in many cases, to deploring the failure of Martin V. and other Popes to undertake a thorough reform, and to very clear and fair statements of opposing views. Keeping in view the fact that it is primarily a history of the Papacy, the historical perspective, the choice of events upon which to enlarge, is extremely good. The style is entirely without ornament, and a very odd effect is produced on one who reads a number of books with this at finding frequent sentences transferred verbatim from other authors without quotation-marks or other warning, though references are made in the foot-notes. That which makes this book indispensable to the student of this period, aside from its being an authoritative statement of the Catholic view, is the new light which is thrown upon numberless matters of detail.

George Burton Adams.

SPRINGFIELD, MO.