

Alexander Hamilton: An Essay on American Union. By Frederick Scott Oliver. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. \$3.75.

The work which Mr. Oliver offers half apologetically is not another life of Hamilton, but rather an appreciation and a commentary. It is written by an Englishman of culture and leisure who ponders deeply upon the great problems now confronting England, and who thinks that Hamilton's life and work teach a lesson to British statesmen. He is frankly a strong admirer of his hero, but is rarely partisan. In political foresight and penetration he thinks it "no extravagance to place him by the side of Burke," and he asserts that Burke "shares with Fox his astounding genius for friendship." Again, "a character less mercenary, and less concerned in any personal advancement, save as a means of rendering better service to the state, has never played a part upon the public stage." Youth, Mr. Oliver thinks, was the distinguishing note of Hamilton's career. "His triumph was the triumph of youth; his failure the failure of youth." It may aid us in understanding the author's view of his subject to note his prefatory remarks on the existing lives of Hamilton. "The only vivid account of 'the man' is to be found in the historical romance by Mrs. Atherton, entitled 'The Conqueror.'" This, he thinks "a most serious and truthful portrait," for Hamilton was not merely a good soldier, a great lawyer, a statesman of rare and exceptional splendor, "but also a figure of deep romantic interest." The explanation of his character, however, is not to be found in the dramatic temperament, for "had he been a better actor, he must assuredly have been a more successful politician," he was incomprehensible to the politicians of his time, who could not believe that he really loved union and order and progress for their own sakes. Enough of Mr. Oliver's estimates of his subject have been submitted to present fairly his attitude toward Hamilton, but there is a moderation in the whole execution of the work which the above quotations do not fairly represent. The plan of the work is novel, and is upon large lines, omitting many minor phases of the life and dwelling long upon Hamilton's part in the War of

Independence, in bringing about the union of the States, organizing the Federalists, fighting the Jeffersonian faction, and making the last desperate struggle with the politicians who were seeking his ruin. The last division of the book discusses the bearing of Hamilton's career and ideas of government upon the present problems of the British state. Tho the book has some marked blemishes, it is so filled with deep and original thinking that it is worthy the careful attention of every student of Hamilton and our early political history. It is written in an interesting, cultured style, which at times becomes brilliant.

