

Perhaps no more disappointing book was issued from the press last year than the volume in the "Cambridge Modern History" devoted to the United States. The great but somewhat elusive reputation of Lord Acton, who planned the series, the prestige of the University whose name it bears, and the favorable impression produced by the volume on the Renaissance, combined to create an expectation that the volume on the United States would prove a valuable contribution to American history. There is no other nation whose history presents so great a variety of interests within so short a period of time, and whose progress from insignificant beginnings to great achievement has been so rapid. There is great need that some single volume should present in strong color and with a broad stroke the underlying forces of this wonderful development. Someway it was expected that the Cambridge History would furnish this picture, but it might have been foreseen that the production of a dozen writers, chosen in large part at long range upon the basis of their general reputation, and working independently of each other and without unity of plan, would not be satisfactory. This at least the event has proved.

The work of the editors seems to have been confined to the division of the subject matter into chapters and their assignment to various writers. The whole period was divided into twenty-one chapters, to which were added two of general review, making a total of twenty-three. This is very nearly the division originally made by Lord Acton. Criticism of the work begins with this division. Its most striking characteristic is the extraordinary amount of space devoted to military history. Seven chapters are filled with the purely military events of the French War, the Revolution, the War of 1812, and the Rebellion, making nearly a third of the whole volume. These

* THE CAMBRIDGE MODERN HISTORY. Planned by the late Lord Acton. Edited by A. W. Ward and others. Volume VII., The United States. New York: The Macmillan Co.

wars were great turning points in American history. What is needed is an explanation of the conditions that caused them, a brief outline of their grand strategy, and a full statement of their objective and subjective results. Instead we have a mass of military details, and no satisfactory statement of causes and results. The details of military events have no bearing upon the study of underlying causes, and could not be sufficiently minute to serve the purpose of the student of military history or of military science. They are therefore useless, and give the book an undesirable "drum and trumpet" cast.

The twenty-three chapters of the volume are divided among thirteen writers, of whom it is stated that but five were chosen by Lord Acton. Of the thirteen, four are English and nine are American. Of the American writers, all but one are connected with colleges or universities, one as president and the remainder as professors. Of the English writers only one appears to be engaged in teaching. As there is no uniform mode of treatment, there is no escape from the tedious process of reviewing the work of each contributor *seriatim*. There are four principal contributors. The colonial period is for the most part covered by Mr. John A. Doyle, the Declaration of Independence and the formation of the Constitution by Professor Melville Bigelow, the period from 1783 to 1850 by Professor McMaster, and the Civil War by the late John G. Nicolay. Ten other chapters, either supplementary or summary, are furnished by the nine other writers engaged upon the volume.

Few men are better acquainted with the history of the English colonies in America than Mr. Doyle, but he lacks the powers of distinguishing between the vital and the accidental and of generalization requisite for condensed statement. His chapters are a mass of details with which he seems himself impatient, but which he fails to show were the small beginnings of great things. There is no attempt to portray the forces back of the settlement of the different colonies or the forces operating within and characterizing them. As a single illustration, instead of showing how Antinomianism, by tending to subvert the Puritan theocracy, provoked persecution and contributed to the New England dispersion, he dismisses it with the statement that "it can only be understood after a careful study of Calvinistic theology." Of the Revolution he says "no one can speak of the colonists as loyal subjects goaded into rebellion

by persistent ill treatment," but does not sufficiently explain the causes that did bring about separation. There is no adequate account of the sacrifice of colonial to British interests, of the operation of the colonial system, and of the gradual differentiation of colonies and mother country. The chapters are not even accurate in details. Franklin's plan of union was not approved by the Albany Congress, but referred to the assemblies with the certainty that it would be rejected; the relation of the North Carolina Regulators to the Revolution is misunderstood; James Warren is confused with Joseph Warren; the provisions of the transportation act and the circumstances of André's capture are misstated; Jay, whose influence was so important, is not mentioned in connection with the negotiation of peace, and Laurens appears as Henry Somers.

The assignment of an historical sketch of the theory of the Revolution and the formation of the Constitution to Mr. Bigelow is not very different from the employment of an historian to try a case in court. In the treatment of the first topic Mr. Bigelow subjects a number of contemporary pamphlets upon both sides to careful legal analysis, the result of which is an interesting essay, that especially develops the extent to which the idea of natural right was embodied in the common law but fails to meet the requirement of a history of revolutionary opinion. The essay conveys the impression that the colonial argument was fixed and stable, whereas it shifted as the struggle advanced and passed through at least four distinct phases. Even less satisfactory is the chapter on the Constitution. Mr. Bigelow begins with a sketch of the formation of the state constitutions, apparently with the purpose of pointing out the connection between them and the Federal Constitution, and then omits to show the relation. His treatment of the latter consists in tracing each one of Randolph's resolutions through the debates in the convention to its final form in the completed Constitution. This labor is performed with painstaking care, and the result is a useful piece of work, but it is the last thing needed in this particular place. Instead of it there should be a careful account of the movement that brought about the convention and a restatement of the compromises between the contending forces within the convention. The chapter closes with but a single paragraph by way of comment, and that an erroneous one. It is

Mr. Bigelow's conclusion that Alexander Hamilton was the master spirit of the convention. This is a tradition, resulting from a confusion of the part that Hamilton played in bringing about the convention and in securing the ratification of the Constitution with his share in the convention itself. Hamilton's ideas were entirely out of harmony with those of the convention, very few of his suggestions met with approval, he was embarrassed by the majority against him in his own delegation, and felt that his influence was so slight that he did not attend a considerable part of the sessions.

Professor McMaster covers the period from the Revolution to the Compromise of 1850 in the well known style of his "History of the People of the United States." He tells the story chiefly for the purpose of giving "local color," but does not undertake the statement of causes and results. Genet appears in his pages as Genest, but more important is the omission of the real purpose of his mission. The statement of the European situation that produced the War of 1812 is not attempted. The story of nullification in South Carolina is told, but the momentous consequences of the virtual victory of the nullifiers are passed over in silence. The style glides smoothly from point to point without accentuation and consequently without perspective. Admirable as this may be for purposes of entertainment, it does not make much impression upon the mind or give much understanding of the subject. An entire volume written in this vein would meet a popular demand, but the method hardly seems suited to the purposes of this history.

The standpoint of Mr. Nicolay's chapters on the Civil War is, of course, that of the Lincoln History. Three of the four are devoted to military events, and about a third of them to the mistakes of McClellan. The single chapter on the political phases of the period is much too short to cover the subject. It is almost entirely devoted to the abolition of slavery. The financial history of the struggle is briefly reviewed; the period of uncertainty at the beginning, the shifting attitude of the North as the struggle advanced, the centralization of government, which was the most important subjective result of the war, and, what is especially surprising, all reference to foreign relations, are omitted altogether. While the proportion of space given to military events and some of the views expressed may be open to criticism, the style of the whole is good.

The shorter contributions must be passed in

rapid review. In the chapter by Miss Mary Bateson, Lecturer in Newnham College, upon the French in America, the material is thoroughly mastered, admirably organized, and well presented. It is a model of the mode of treatment which should have been applied to the whole book. The chapter on the French War by Mr. A. G. Bradley, an English author who lived for some time in the United States and is best known through his "Fight with France for North America," is an accurate but not very picturesque account of a very picturesque contest. Mr. H. W. Wilson, another English writer, covers the War of 1812 and the naval operations of the Rebellion. The particular purpose of President Woodrow Wilson's chapter on the decade from 1850 to 1860 is to explain the point of view of the South, a purpose which is well accomplished, although he finds it necessary to devote half of his space to an earlier period. It is not correct to say that Utah and New Mexico were organized "with nothing said about slavery," and President Wilson seems to have missed the point that Kansas and Nebraska were organized under precisely the same conditions as were Utah and New Mexico. Douglas was the most prominent man in public life during the decade from 1850 to 1860 and received in the latter year a larger vote for the presidency than any Southern man. Here is a phenomenon which President Wilson does not attempt to explain. Supplementary to the chapters on the Civil War, Professor Schwab furnishes one on the South during the War, which is an acceptable summary of his "Financial and Industrial History of the Confederate States." The period since the war is divided between Professor T. C. Smith, now of Williams College, and Professor John Bassett Moore of Columbia. Professor Smith covers the ground thoroughly and systematically to the election of President Cleveland, and is sound and outspoken in his judgments. The reconstruction part suffers from lack of space, but otherwise could scarcely be improved. Professor Moore reviews the recent diplomatic history of the United States, and closes with an account of the peace negotiations at Paris. He is absolutely noncommittal on all vital points, apparently considering that his former official connection with the Department of State bars the expression of individual opinion. Two summaries, one of economic and the other of intellectual development, complete the volume. The former, written by Professor Emery of Yale, sets forth the extraordinary

agricultural and industrial expansion of recent years, and the latter, written by Professor Barrett Wendell of Harvard, presents judicious paragraphs on the progress of law, philosophy, art, science, education, and a somewhat longer sketch of American literature. Professor Wendell supplements the doubtful theory set forth in his "Literary History of America," that the American of the time of the Revolution was a survival of the Elizabethan Englishman, with the contention "that the country to-day is essentially the same which, in the reign of King George III., declared its independence of England," a contention that will hardly bear examination. The bibliography for the various chapters covers eighty pages and is reasonably full.

Taken as a whole it is difficult to see what useful purpose the volume can serve. It is neither a collection of special studies for the student nor a survey of the whole field of American history useful for purposes of instruction or suited to the needs of the general reader. There are a few good chapters, but most of them are condensed from books that are better still. A volume on the United States might have been omitted altogether. The series is a history of modern Europe, and European colonies the world over could have been better treated in connection with the parent state. It was the chief result of the Revolution that the United States was left free to develop its own institutions independently of Europe, and its history is no essential part of that of Europe. As it is, the volume will be placed upon the shelves as one of a notable series, but will be little read.

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