

BOOK REVIEWS AND BOOK NOTICES

George Washington. By Michael de la Bedoyère. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, n.d. [Preface dated May, 1935]. Pp. 310. Illustrations and maps. \$3.00.)

In this volume of about 300 pages, Mr. Michael de la Bedoyère, an Englishman of partly French background, presents a readable and informing summary of Washington's whole life. The little book is a masterpiece of condensation without loss of style. With a newspaper man's sense of the dramatic, Mr. de la Bedoyère has the gift of sketching in a few sentences a scene or an event, together with the capacity of cannily selecting his adjectives—at times not without danger to veracity.

The author makes no claim to original research. Considering the major facts to be well established, he believes that there is still room for interpretations that are new and individual. He thus illustrates one of the theses of M. André Maurois—that biographies may be written as a form of self expression for the author. But Mr. de la Bedoyère's interpretativeness, if one may use such a word, is kept well within bounds. He does not bare his own soul too much in trying to reveal Washington's. Indeed, he claims, and correctly, to have introduced rather more of contemporary history than is usual in short biographies. Moreover, while there is here and there what reads like a "wisecrack," the book as a whole does not give to the reader the impression of an attempt at "debunking." In this respect it shines by comparison, for example, with such a work as that of Mr. W. E. Woodward.

The chief limitation is that which always handicaps the author who writes without an intimate knowledge of all or as many as possible of the contemporary materials. Mr. de la Bedoyère frankly gives his authorities, and sometimes one is led to guess that the "interpretation" is perhaps not entirely original with the author, but depends upon just what previous interpreter he is following. In the case of the present volume, this appears particularly when the name of F. S. Oliver appears in the footnotes, and a thoroughly Hamiltonian account is given of Washington's administrations. The name of Mr. Claude Bowers does not appear in the bibliography which is appended to the book.

Mr. de la Bedoyère writes in a tone of genial cynicism. Greatly impressed with the phrase "dirty world" used by Lady Mary Wortly Montague. Mr. de la Bedoyère finds that America was possessed of a "cleaner air"; but he is far from the enthusiasm of idealism.

Finally, the book is to be commended to Americans because of the author's European viewpoint. One gets a more correct view of the relative importance of the French in the war of the Revolution than in some larger American books. But in general, the chief service of the little volume will be to interpret to Europe the personality and power of George Washington.

University of Pennsylvania

ST. GEORGE L. SIOUSSAT

The Command of the Howe Brothers During the American Revolution. By Troyer Steele Anderson. (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1936. Pp. vii, 368. \$3.50.)

This volume is an attempt to solve the problem of why the Howe brothers failed to suppress the American revolt. It has been based upon a careful study of both manuscript and printed sources. It tries to "see the situation as they (the Howes) saw it" in order to "presume to decide whether the two brothers acted wisely on the basis of what they knew or whether they acted in a fashion that betrayed incompetence or some ulterior purpose" (p. 9).

The political situation in England which led to their appointment is described in some detail, since in it Mr. Anderson finds one of the main reasons for their failure. "George III and his ministry were engaged in a domestic political contest of which the American crisis was an unwelcome sideshow. A victory in America would have been useless if purchased at the expense of political defeat in Great Britain. This fact limited . . . the amount of support the government could . . . secure from the country for supporting the war in the colonies" (p. 61). Howe, who "seems to have had in mind a war of militia wherein the major effort of each colony would be devoted to the defence of its own soil" (p. 113), wished to reconquer each section slowly and carefully, overawing the rebels with the majesty of the British arms. Such methodical conquest was too expensive for the government to support for very long yet, if the conquered areas were to be properly pacified, the British could not proceed rapidly. The development of a regular army under Washington upset Howe's calculations and, by prolonging the war beyond the year on which the English had counted, was an important factor in his failure.

Mr. Anderson takes great pains to reply to the charges of neglect and incompetence brought against the brothers—for example, by using the tidal currents charts of the Coast and Geodetic Survey he has worked out the tidal conditions in the East River in 1776 to prove that purely natural reasons caused the British to delay from August 29 to September 15 before they attacked New York after the American withdrawal from Brooklyn Heights. To other points of criticism he makes less effective replies—i. e., that the New Jersey campaign was not intended to capture Washington's army but only to extend the area of British occupation as far as New Brunswick. In order to absolve Howe of the charge of betraying Burgoyne he elaborates the interesting idea that "the government would have blamed him for inaction had he marched up the Hudson with his main army and spent the summer in meeting Burgoyne and establishing posts to hold the river" (p. 272).

The author concludes that no evidence has ever been found to prove that the Howes were disloyal; that they were competent officers who failed because the situation demanded genius which they did not possess.

The book is interesting, logically organized, and well documented. Of even more significance is a bibliography of both manuscript and printed material. Critical comments, which at times tend to become dogmatic,

add to the usefulness of a work which, in common with most special studies, is of value not so much as an ultimate pronouncement—a masterpiece—as a stepping-stone to a more exact understanding of the period.

Germantown High School

ELIZABETH S. HOOPES

French Opinion on the United States and Mexico, 1860-1867; Extracts from the Reports of the Procureurs Généraux. Edited by Lynn M. Case. (New York and London: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1936. Published for the Beveridge Memorial Fund. Pp. xxiii, 452. \$7.00.)

The subtitle is important for it is the author's contention that the confidential reports from the procureurs généraux, legal agents in twenty-eight districts, to the ministers of justice, hitherto only slightly used, are more indicative of French public opinion than the throttled press of the reign of Napoleon III. Consequently, he is critical of the works by West, Pratt, and Owsley. It was to these reports (edited here only for their reference to the American Civil War and the Mexican expedition) that the government turned when they wished to get special and accurate information.

The procureurs généraux suffered from many personal limitations in accurate observations, however, and the author from his knowledge of the complete reports might well have summarized the idiosyncracies of the individuals who were reporting.

These reports are particularly full on the effect of the war upon the economic life, especially in industries other than cotton, of France. "In their attempt to justify the Emperor's free-trade policy with England they may sometimes have blamed the Civil War too much in the case of cotton" (p. 4).

The reports during 1861 and those of early January, 1862, showed three definite trends of French opinion: sympathy for the North, hostility toward England, and a desire for French neutrality. In 1862, with increasing sympathy for the South, thirteen reports urged immediate action by France either alone or together with the other powers, while only five advised neutrality and non-interference. Between April 1863 and July 1864, the reports revealed a lessening interest in the war. "The novel problem of reconstruction and reconciliation under the unprecedented circumstances existing in post-bellum United States excited the curiosity of Frenchmen and sustained their attention" until 1866. But the editor leaves unanswered the question as to whether the possession of this confidential information changed Napoleon's policy.

It is concluded that intervention in Mexico was not initiated as a result of the pressure of French public opinion, and throughout 1863-1867 there was an overwhelming sentiment for an early withdrawal.

The underscoring by the readers of the reports is carefully given, but it is worth comment that no such notations occur before the report of January 17, 1862, and hence, may indicate merely some minister's flair for underlining. In the editorial comment, less might have been said about the course of events in the United States, and more about the situation in France. This carefully edited source material will please those who are looking for-

ward to the day when the repercussions abroad, accomplished by American life and activities, will have received full and deserved attention.

University of Pennsylvania

RICHARD H. HEINDEL

General Benjamin Franklin: The Military Career of a Philosopher. By J. Bennett Nolan. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1936. Pp. 101. \$1.50.)

Benjamin Franklin: Englishman and American. By Verner Winslow Crane. [The Colver Lectures in Brown University, 1935, Volume 19] (Brown University, Providence, R. I., 1936. Pp. 142. \$1.50.)

Of the making of many books about Benjamin Franklin there is apparently no end. And yet, how little we really know about the man! Among the eleven largely ephemeral items listed in Grace Griffin's *Writings on American History* for 1931 we find the famous Philadelphian variously dubbed "Bourgeois d'Amerique," "The Ingenious Dr. Franklin," "Citoyen du monde," and, with a final burst of hyperbole, "*The Father of all Yankees.*" Such is the fate of some great men. It occasionally falls out, however, that amid the ancient plethora of Frankliniana one can come across something of value. This present year's harvest has been fruitful, for we have two good books on "Poor Richard" to report.

Mr. J. Bennett Nolan's contribution fills a gap in our chronicle of the facts of Franklin's busy and varied life. Here we have a racy account of "General Benjamin Franklin's" six weeks' military career on the Pennsylvania frontier during the winter of 1755-56. With new material gleaned largely from the Moravian Diaries and the Smith Papers the author has carefully reconstructed the route taken by the portly commander and his provincial troops, as also the political background of the expedition. Highly colored contrasts between the serious, terrified frontiersmen and the care-free, luxurious indolence of the provincial gentry and officials at Philadelphia make pleasant reading, but the etching of Franklin as an eighteenth century general hampered by jealous and ambitious politicians, like McClellan before Richmond, hardly accords with the facts. It is well known that the printer-soldier frequently proved a thorn in proprietorial flesh. Well might the Penns and their retainers fear this man on horseback as he added the panoply of war to his many other well-publicized accomplishments.

In his Colver Lectures Professor Crane, too, has added new factual material to the story, and has performed a convincing bit of historical criticism in identifying Franklin as the author of several important pamphlets pertaining to the revolutionary controversy. But the real merit of this volume is a sane and penetrating reassessment of Franklin's social and political philosophy.

The key to an understanding of Benjamin Franklin is to be found in his education and the environment in which he lived. In Boston he acquired, not an antipathy to puritanism, but rather a lively sense of puritan morality and some introduction to deism and rationalism. Upon removing to Philadelphia he escaped the "political particularism" of New England, and gained a vision of the Western problem, which enabled him to become what Pro-

fessor Crane terms a "continental intercolonial." Franklin grew with Philadelphia as it forged ahead of the other colonial towns in population, commerce and cultural attainment. Finally, during his journey to England in 1725-26 the young printer met Sir Hans Sloane (this through an introduction from Cotton Mather, Professor Crane might have added,) and thereby came into contact with the great Englishmen of the "Enlightenment." The notable fact was Franklin's uncanny ability to tune in on the wave-length of his age; this harmony of man and environment can hardly be overstressed.

From this education, formal and informal, derive Franklin's social and political ideas. As a "man of virtue," like all men of the "Enlightenment" he placed great emphasis in his writings on the social origins of property, which, he asserted, was the "Creature of Public Convention." Again, although the finest product of the expanding urban society of the colonies, he deplored the growth of cities and of industry. From this came naturally his concepts of free trade. Intimate contact with the West and a careful study of the increase of American population impelled him to cast his lot with a dynamic America whose future portended more than the static mother country. In the last analysis, it was this fact that led him to abandon his position, tenaciously held from at least 1754 to 1774, as the last great colonial imperialist, and to become one of the first conscious Americans.

Professor Crane's study of the influence of Boston on Benjamin Franklin is highly significant, but the reviewer feels that his greater emphasis on the English environment tends to diminish the importance of this contribution. Was not the result of the English sojourn merely the widening and deepening of views already pretty thoroughly ingrained during Franklin's formative years?

CARL BRIDENBAUGH

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Fifty-five Men. By Fred Rodell. (Harrisburg, Pa.: The Telegraph Press, 1936. Pp. 277. \$2.50.)

Many books that treat various phases of the Constitution of the United States are appearing and will appear within the next year or so. The coming observance of the 150th anniversary of the creation and ratification of the Constitution is largely responsible, although the questions connected with the constitutionality of some of the New Deal measures have also brought much interest that extends even to the ordinary American citizen. Among the first fruits of the present crop is the book called *Fifty-five Men*, by Mr. Rodell, assistant professor of law at Yale University. The work treats briefly the making of the Constitution. Presented in a very simple journalistic style, the writer follows closely the notes of Madison. He has been seriously influenced by the economic interpretation of Charles A. Beard, which he evidently accepts in all its details without question. Since the book has been dedicated to "School Children and Politicians" surely some care should have been taken not to attempt to indoctrinate those innocent human

beings with ideas that are still considered radical by many people, without showing that other views exist on the subject! The chief value of the work lies in its simplicity.

ARTHUR CECIL BINING

University of Pennsylvania

Memorial: Herman Vandenburg Ames. Edited by Edward P. Cheyney and Roy F. Nichols. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1936. Pp. 31. Portrait. \$1.00.)

A record of the addresses made at the memorial meeting, held at the University of Pennsylvania on May 7, 1935, together with letters and resolutions on the death of Dr. Herman Vandenburg Ames, late Professor of American Constitutional History at the university. The memorial closes with "A Fragment of Autobiography Sent to an Amherst Reunion."

The Story of Wheatland. By Philip Shriver Klein. (Lancaster, Pa.: The Junior League of Lancaster, Inc., 1936. Pp. 62. Illustrations. \$1.00.)

In a clear and interesting style, the author presents briefly the history of Wheatland, the Lancaster home of James Buchanan. Outstanding incidents in the life of Pennsylvania's only President in his associations with the Lancaster mansion are portrayed. The book has been published by the Junior League of Lancaster, whose efforts in seeking to preserve the historic home are to be highly commended.