

BOOK REVIEWS AND BOOK NOTES

Edited by LEONIDAS DODSON
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William Penn, 1644-1718: A Tercentenary Estimate. By William Wistar Comfort. (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1944. Pp. vii, 185. \$2.00.)

Of the making of books about William Penn there will be no end, as long as there are Quakers to keep his memory green. On the three hundredth anniversary of his birth some literary memorial was to be expected. However, this volume by the President Emeritus of Haverford College is no eulogium hastily concocted for the occasion, as its modest title, format, and price might suggest. It is a substantial, documented biography, based on an intimate knowledge of Penn's own voluminous writings and other pertinent primary and secondary material. It covers all aspects of Penn's life, though the emphasis is greater on his religious and intellectual activities than on his more spectacular but less happy experiences as a colonial proprietor.

The book begins with a 67-page account of his life. Shorter chapters follow on specific aspects of his career: "The Defender of Quakerism," "The Apostle of Toleration," "The Founder and his Government," and "The Man of Letters." In the concluding chapter the author summarizes Penn's life and place in history. Few will disagree with Dr. Comfort's opinion that Penn was "the greatest of British colonizers because of his just and tolerant insistence upon man's most cherished possessions—his religious and political rights." While philosophers theorized, "Penn alone had the unprecedented opportunity to put his ideas into execution."

The paradox of Penn's life is that it was at once a triumph of public success and a tragedy of personal failure. At a time when the Quakers had few adherents of education and social position and almost no friends at court, Penn was a tower of strength to his persecuted coreligionists. He was their most influential champion in England and the creator of their most important refuge in the New World. But his role as proprietor was an anticlimax, so far as Penn himself was concerned, to his earlier successes as a preacher and defender of Quakerism. Pennsylvania was a haven to the Quakers but a source of endless trouble and unhappiness to its founder. Instead of spending his days quietly in his province he had to stay in England to defend its title. The resulting drain on his resources, the unwillingness of the Quakers in Pennsylvania to contribute to these expenses, and the defalcations of his agent in England, kept Penn in continual financial hot water. The profits which he expected from his colony were realized chiefly by his descendants. To Penn his fellow Quakers in Pennsylvania seemed guilty of ingratitude. They in turn tended to be critical of him be-

cause he never conformed to the strictest demands of Quaker "plainness." Relations improved in time, but too late to give much comfort to Penn, whose mind had become impaired in 1712, though he lived for six years more. Even the satisfaction of passing on his own fervent faith to his children was denied to William Penn. They abandoned Quakerism, and the eldest son, William, grew up to be a wastrel whose behavior brought shame to his father's declining years.

Dr. Comfort is a sympathetic but critical biographer, aware of his subject's weaknesses as well as his greatness. "His financial carelessness, and his failure to judge character in the men he selected, are the two outstanding defects in his own character." "He certainly lost much of his optimism before he was done with Pennsylvania; but he never lost sight of his noble aims and never consciously betrayed his personal integrity. A man of Penn's type will never gain all he seeks; but he will lead men as far as possible toward his advanced position. And perhaps that is all that anyone in his place could have done."

University of Delaware

H. CLAY REED

Steamboats Come True. By James Thomas Flexner. (New York: The Viking Press, 1944. Pp. x, 406. \$3.50.)

In this volume the author traces meticulously the origin and development of early steamboats as one of the progressive stages of modern transportation. The principal projectors, inventors and constructors of steamboats are dealt with at considerable length, notably John Fitch, James Rumsey and Robert Fulton, while others contemporary with the period, such as Henry, Morey, Ormsbee, Roosevelt and Evans, have their appropriate notice. The author has evidently done an immense amount of reading to cover his subject so adequately. However, there is a great deal of word padding in parts, quite irrelevant to the field implied by the title of the book. Notably the early life of Fitch with his adventures and hardships among the Indians. Also in places there is a tendency to flippancy, as when "Watt tinkered with his engine"; the Comte d'Auxiron "tinkering" and "Roosevelt continued to tinker"; surely these diligent and oft-disappointed men rated a better description of their labors.

Though the first part of the book is written in a rather racy style, which the author evidently thinks suitable to the popular taste, as he gets deeper into his subject he gives a stable and dramatic narrative of the trials and obstacles which confronted early steamboat builders that has an emotional grip as well as a historical interest. In the arrangement of chapters (there are twenty-six chapters and a prologue) the overlapping of events is well maintained though there is much extraneous matter included, which at times clouds the full import of the events described.

It is a pity that the author dismisses the work of Oliver Evans in one page, for Evans was the pioneer of the high pressure steam engine in America and was, moreover, a builder of passenger steamboats both in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, and he was also a contemporary of all the steamboat builders recorded by the author in his account. On the whole, the book is not for students of technology and history who like their facts cold

and their evidence unadulterated with literary license, but the work does definitely fulfill its title and as an introduction to American inventors who have contributed so much to world progress, it is valuable reading. The author in his chapter "Who Invented the Steamboat?" shrewdly sums up this controversial point and in his conclusions shows a definite grasp of the subject.

This volume is illustrated with twenty cuts placed in the center of the book. They are not very good reproductions and eight of them have no bearing at all on steamboat history. The author has included a valuable appendix of biographical sources and notes to the text and an adequate index.

Philadelphia

GREVILLE BATHE

Parliamentary Privilege in the American Colonies. By Mary Patterson Clarke. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943. Pp. xi, 303. \$3.00.)

The Englishman who migrated to the seventeenth and eighteenth century colonies thought of himself as remaining an Englishman still. He and his sons and grandsons after him clung tenaciously to that rich legal and constitutional legacy which was the common heritage of colony and mother country alike. The keystone of the "rights of Englishmen" was formed by representative institutions, reflected in America on the eve of the Revolution by some twenty assemblies. The rôle of these bodies as framers of legislation and imposers of taxes is well known. The present volume portrays their activities as upholders of their privileges.

What might seem offhand to be the not so very significant story of insistence upon certain ancient forms and the maintenance of the special privileges of individuals who happened for the time being to compose legislative bodies, proves upon investigation to be vastly more than that. In defending their own privileges the assemblies were vindicating the rights and liberties of the generality of the inhabitants. That this was the view both of legislators and of colonials in general is indicated on the one hand by the sternness with which the assembly punished its own members for breaches of privilege, and on the other by the remarkably consistent popular support which it received in its conflicts over privilege with governor, council, the Crown and the common law courts, not to mention minor officials and private individuals. The conflicts in question are at times ludicrous. Yet they probably did more than any other single factor to bring home to a politically-minded age a realization of the dignity, power and importance of legislative institutions.

As suggested above, the present work takes a broad view of parliamentary privilege. Privileges represented by the five traditional clauses of the speaker's petition, freedom from arrest; freedom from molestation; freedom of speech; access to the governor; and that a favorable construction might be put on the actions of the house, together with others which might be added from time to time, are of course dealt with. But the author goes further, discussing the assembly's rôle as a court and its jurisdiction over disputed elections and over its own membership. Here is the story of a "common law" development. Each colony drew upon its own precedents, upon those established in other colonies, and above all upon those of West-

minster. The legacy from the English parliament is obviously great, many, indeed most, features of privilege being direct borrowings from the "Mother of Parliaments." This helps to explain the remarkably similar development in all the colonies. But one gets the impression that this development, much as it rests upon precedent, receives its prime impetus from the exigencies of local circumstance. After all, in no other way could it have upheld the tradition of a vital political heritage.

Two features make Professor Clarke's scholarly and readable volume additionally useful, even for those who have accorded it the cover to cover reading which it deserves: an excellent index, and the happy practice of placing a summary at the end of each chapter, and then summing up the whole work in a brief conclusion.

University of Pennsylvania

LEONIDAS DODSON

Meet Dr. Franklin. (Philadelphia: Franklin Institute. 1943. Pp. vi, 234. \$2.50.)

Time spent with this entertaining volume, a collection of thirteen talks by twelve contributors, will be an unusual meeting with the man who for many Americans has become a mythological creature. The essays are of uniformly high quality and cover a wide field; they are certain to broaden for general reader and historian alike the conventional picture of Franklin. Several are particularly well organized and obviously products of fresh research. Those by Lawrence C. Wroth, "Benjamin Franklin: The Printer at Work," and by Carl R. Woodward, "Benjamin Franklin: Adventures in Agriculture," are noteworthy. Wroth has shown the importance of Franklin's first trip to England in improving his own proficiency as a printer and in helping to establish a high standard of printing in the colonies. Woodward puts to rest the myth about Franklin's ownership of a farm near Burlington and points to his important leadership in scientific agriculture.

Gilbert Chinard in "Looking Westward," and Robert E. Spiller in "Benjamin Franklin: Student of Life," demonstrate, as has been done by others in this volume and elsewhere, how really American was Franklin. Chinard shows him to be one with those expansionists whose history runs from colonial days to the present. Spiller carefully argues that the unifying features of Franklin's philosophy were in attitude and actions and not theories and that he helped to found the later "pragmatic" school. On the other hand, Conyers Read in "Dr. Franklin as the English Saw Him," stresses Franklin's close connection with the England of his time and Franklin's English qualities. Verner W. Crane, in "Franklin's Political Journalism in England," makes use of Franklin's marginal notes and suggests further uses for them (as does Carl Van Doren).

Other sections are by Robert A. Millikan who deals only with Franklin's work in electricity, which proves sufficient for him to classify Franklin as one of the fourteen most influential men since the birth of Copernicus; by Julian P. Boyd who draws a careful picture of Franklin as an advocate of a realistic Indian policy for America; and by Carl Van Doren whose opening and concluding papers underline the fact that Franklin was more than just a clever inventor.

Few will deny the greatness of Franklin; this volume will help to define that term and to furnish material for a new evaluation of this modern American.

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JOHN J. REED

Land of the Free. By Homer Carey Hockett and Arthur Meier Schlesinger. (The Macmillan Company: New York, 1944. Pp. xxviii, 765. \$4.00.)

Professors Hockett and Schlesinger need no introduction to the ranks of American historians. Each is a noted authority in his field, and together they are widely known as the co-authors of an "old reliable" among American history texts, the *Political and Social Growth of the American People*. The present work, to use the words of the authors, is "based upon, but does not supersede" the older and much more extended two-volume study. Following the plan of the most recent edition of the latter, Professor Hockett has been responsible for the years before 1865, Professor Schlesinger for those since.

Preparing a suitable one-volume survey of the American past has become more and more a major problem of doubts as to where emphasis is to be placed, what is to be deleted, and what organization is to be followed. The task must be a vexing one, and as one answer to these problems, *Land of the Free*, despite its many excellencies, will probably fail to satisfy a number of people.

The pre-Revolutionary period, for example, has been wedged into only forty-three pages, and one will look in vain for any reference to old familiars such as Sandys, John Smith, Roger Williams, Penn, or Nathaniel Bacon. Perhaps the most disturbing characteristic of the work, however, is the dichotomy resulting from the different approaches of the two writers to their periods. Hockett is primarily concerned with the traditional epic of constitutional development and political grappling, while Schlesinger dwells in those broader social and cultural movements which have been his major field of interest. The general excellence of their treatment of these special aspects of our history does not remove the obvious unbalance which inheres in the text.

When they are dealing with problems which are close to their hearts, however, the results are as one might expect. Particularly excellent are Hockett's treatment of the birth of the national government and the development of the west, and his ability to draw with sympathy, understanding, and clarity the figures of such men as Burr, Calhoun, and Webster, without denying them their complexities. Schlesinger is at his best in the chapters on social and cultural trends and in his well integrated analyses of the New Deal and the United States in World War II.

The whole work benefits from a lively style which insures pleasant and easy reading, and there is a generous supply of excellent maps and illustrations. The title, perhaps, is unfortunate, *Land of the Free* having already found place on the title pages of books by Herbert Agar and Archibald McLeish.

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