

NOTES AND QUERIES

Book Notices

FRANKLIN, THE APOSTLE OF MODERN TIMES. With Illustrations. By Bernard Faÿ. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1929. Pp. XVI, 547.

The work under review is conspicuous for merit among the large number of biographies that recently have been coming in an unceasing stream from the press. Moreover, it is safe to predict that this, the latest life of Benjamin Franklin, will take a very high place among the numerous biographies of that illustrious American and world figure. It is in this latter respect that this work notably excels. M. Faÿ, the author, truly says in referring to Franklin: "He dominated the political, scientific and philosophic world of his time"; and he writes, again, "to understand the amplitude and importance of this influence Franklin had to be considered from the international standpoint."

Fortunately, M. Faÿ was especially fitted by both nationality and education to present a broad and comprehensive study of the various phases of Franklin's many-sided career. The author, M. Faÿ, is a well-known French historical scholar. He is a Doctor of Laws of the Sorbonne and Professor in one of the French Universities, who also has had the opportunity to become thoroughly acquainted with the America of the present as well as of the past through his residence for some time in this country, while a graduate student at Harvard University and lecturer at several American Universities. In addition he undoubtedly has made a more thorough examination of the material in the various manuscript collections of Frankliniana on both sides of the Atlantic than any other scholar. The work stands as an excellent example of the application of the scientific method to the writing of biography. It is not only scholarly, but it is interesting and well written, save for a few infelicities in the choice of words and phrases, and is remarkably free from errors. A few such have been noted, but are not serious, being slips in dates or other mistakes probably due to his lack of familiarity with some American conditions and institutions. Examples will be found on pages 215, 280, 503, 505.

In the preface the author justifies his writing a new biography of Franklin on the ground that, "I have discovered innumerable documents unknown to former biographers—between six hundred to nine hundred unpublished letters, for example,—which throw new light on the doctor's life. They have cleared up many obscure points; his religious and moral attitudes, his Masonic rôle, his political and diplomatic activity and the loves of his later years."

He also claims: "Every sentence of this book is based upon a document and generally upon several of them" (p. 512). While we accept this statement as generally correct—except in rare instances, where influenced by the new school of psychological biographers, he imagines the thoughts that may have run through the mind of Franklin or some of the other characters,—we must regret that the author chose to forego the use of footnotes. He justifies this omission on the ground that "they would have taken up more space than the text." This excuse will be far from satisfactory to the scholar who may wish to verify some of his statements. He, however, has atoned, in a measure, for these omissions by adding sixteen pages of bibliography and other information in regard

to the notable manuscript collections, both public and private. In addition to the public collections of manuscripts, he notes as the most important private collections in this country those of W. S. Mason of Evanston, Illinois, the Franklin Bache and Rosenbach collections of Philadelphia and that of J. P. Morgan of New York. Attention is also directed to two new collections, containing some recently acquired English material of value on certain periods of Franklin's career, namely, those of the Huntington Library and the Clements Library. It is of especial interest to members of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, as also to those of the American Philosophical Society that the author graciously recognizes his obligations to these societies "whose archives" he states, "were opened to me with unstinted generosity."

M. Faÿ traces with a wealth of detail and with meticulous care the life of Franklin from his boyhood throughout his unique and varied career as apprentice, printer, journalist, scientist, philosopher, statesman and diplomatist. Possibly no other biographer has given so full a picture of his life in Philadelphia, London and Paris. Franklin's portrait is painted against the background of his times and the author constantly brings out the human side of the man.

The particular contributions that M. Faÿ claims to have made in the quotation given, deserves brief comment. First, as to Franklin's religious and moral attitude, he is convinced that Franklin was a follower of the seventeenth century English Pythagorians and was neither a Christian nor an Atheist, but a Deist. This view, he believes brought him in sympathy with the English Deists and the liberal school of French philosophers like Voltaire.

Secondly, M. Faÿ lays great stress upon Franklin's Masonic connections and the part it played in promoting his social standing in Philadelphia and his political success abroad. He describes the means Franklin took "to force" his way into the Masonic society (p. 145). If the author is correct in thinking that Franklin was received unwillingly, it is clear that he early overcame any prejudice against him as a recently published sketch of his Masonic connections reveals the facts that Franklin was chosen within a year after initiation to an important committee of the St. John's Lodge and two years later was elected Grand Master of the same lodge. In this connection, it may be noted, that besides Franklin, Washington, the Adamses, many other prominent patriots of the Revolution and members of the Continental Congress were Masons and that this connection may have been of more significance than has been generally recognized. The author points out instances of the influence of Masonry on the Revolutionary movement in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania (pp. 335, 396). M. Faÿ claims that his Masonic connection won Franklin the position of Postmaster General of the Colonies, and opened the way for him in England; that later these affiliations were the determining factor in his success in France. Many of the officials in the Foreign Office were Masons as well as the King himself. "Through the Masons he had access to the newspapers which were officially controlled by the Government, but which were really written by the Masons and the philosophers—who were all Franklin's friends" (p. 419). He became intimately identified with French Masonry, being a member of the Nine Sister Lodge and its Grand Master between 1779-1781.

The third of his special contributions M. Faÿ lists as new data in regard to Franklin's political and diplomatic activities. He traces in considerable detail the negotiations with the French Government, surrounded as he was by spies and he points out the various obstacles Franklin had to overcome. Curiously, however, there is one phase of his activity in France, namely the negotiation for peace with England, that seems to the reviewer as the least satisfactory part of the work. For a full account of the negotiations we must look elsewhere. It may be that the author regarded this as belonging rather to diplomatic history

than to biography, but this is one of the few instances of such reserve on his part.

The last of the contributions enumerated are based on letters in several of the newly examined collections of manuscript correspondence and relate to Franklin's sentimental life, especially of his later years. It should be said that while these are presented in considerable detail, that this is not done in the spirit of the sensationalist or the muckraker. These revelations simply confirm the view already held that Franklin was very fond of the society of women and especially during his declining years sought their care and affection. Thus we learn of Franklin's proposal of marriage, at the age of seventy-five, to Madame Helvetius and his platonic friendship with Madame Brillon. While these do not add to Franklin's reputation for dignity or common sense, they reveal his essentially affectionate and human qualities.

The work is illustrated by reproductions of recent portraits of Franklin and various rare political cartoons, both colonial and English, as well as maps, contemporary views of London, Paris, and other places.

To M. Faÿ it appears that of all Franklin's "titles to glory the most outstanding one is that he was the first *bourgeois* in the world." Whether this throws any light on the significance of the subtitle of the volume, "The Apostle of Modern Times," we must leave to the reader to decide. To the reviewer, however, Franklin's chief claim to fame would seem to rest on the solid basis of his long years of unselfish service to his fellow man and to the public weal.

HERMAN V. AMES.

THE COMING OF THE WHITE MAN, 1492-1848. By Herbert Ingram Priestley. New York, The Macmillan Company, 1929.

Although preceded, as to publication, by four other volumes, in point of logic and chronology this is the introductory volume to the series "A History of American Life", edited by Professor Schlessinger of Harvard and Professor Fox of Columbia. The author, Professor Priestley, the librarian of the Bancroft Library at the University of California, is one of the foremost American scholars in the field of Hispanic History, and has recently published a very useful work "The Mexican Nation: a History" which has won high commendation. In common with the others of the "History of American Life" series, the present volume subordinates political history to that of social conditions. Of battles, wars, treaties, kings and statesmen, one hears little: it is the life of the people, religion and morals, education, agriculture, art, which receive emphasis.

Justly to appreciate Professor Priestley's work, one must bear in mind not only the particular scope of the series as it has just been defined, but the part which this volume is to fill in the order of development of the whole plan. The title is unfortunate and confusing: for surely our English forefathers were white men. Yet they are excluded from consideration in this volume, which has to do with the colonial background of those peoples, *other* than the English, part of whose former territory the United States now occupies. Thus the book sketches Spanish, French, Swedish and Dutch colonization in Central and North America and describes New Spain, New France and New Netherlands. By this arrangement not only is there an exclusion of South America, of Mexico after 1848, and of modern Canada, but also a total omission of the English colonies on the Atlantic seaboard. These last are treated, however, in another volume of the series.

As must be evident when one considers the variety of nationalities which come within the scope of the volume, and the range of time from the days of Columbus to 1848, this book is the merest sketch. Of its 350 pages of text nearly two-thirds relate to Spanish America, and of the remainder nearly one half is given to New France, so the Dutch and

Swedish settlements receive but a scant 60 pages. In the Spanish part the author, after running over lightly the results of the early discoveries, presents somewhat more detail in regard to New Mexico, New Spain and Florida. The three chapters which follow and which treat, respectively, of "The Economic Life of New Spain", "The Wards of the Spaniards" and "Spanish Life and Letters" are by far the best in the volume. In these, in contrast with the general condensation, one finds a few pages of selected illustrative incidents, such as the account of the establishment of the Indian city of Tihuacan, the welcome accorded to one Viceroy of New Spain in 1640 and the dramatic obsequies of another Viceroy in 1734. While the whole volume is well written and interesting, the last two chapters "Life among the Dutch and Swedes" and "Our Dutch Heritage" make one wish that Professor Priestley had been able to devote more space to these topics. As in the case of the whole series, this volume is delightfully illustrated and supplied with a suggestive and up-to-date "Critical Essay on Authorities."

ST. GEORGE L. SIOUSSAT.

A HISTORY OF TRENTON, 1679-1929. Princeton University Press, 1929. Two volumes. 8°. Pp. 1115.

The Princeton University Press has recently published a two-volume history of Trenton, New Jersey. The work covers two hundred and fifty years (1679-1929), and was prepared under the joint authorship of fifteen well-known men and women of the Trenton Historical Society. It is illustrated by George A. Bradshaw. The publication is most meritorious and covers almost everything known about Trenton from its Colonial period to the present time.

The sequence of the work is well arranged. The Colonial and Revolutionary periods, together with the landmarks, taverns, markets, fairs, churches, charitable and social institutions, are extensively set forth in the first volume. Industrial, financial, legal, medical, educational, literary, recreational, social, fraternal and late military affairs are segregated in the second volume. The bibliography and indexes are a credit to the work.

The city of Trenton is indeed fortunate to have the Trenton Historical Society place the fascinating life story of Trenton before the Nation in such a scholarly and attractive manner. No library of New Jersey history can be complete without this book on Trenton.

Frank H. Stewart, President of the Gloucester County Historical Society.

THE WHIRLWIND. An Historical Romance. By William Stearns Davis. New York: Macmillan, 1929. Pp. X., 527.

Those interested in the French Revolution will be interested in this romance. It is the story of René de Massac, "Deputy to the National Assembly and General of the Republic", and the narrative shows him as an actor in some of the most important events of the French Revolution. He was present, according to this romance, at the assembling of the States General at Versailles, the capture of the Bastille, the storming of the Tuileries, the decisive battle of Wattignies, the death of Danton, and finally at the overthrow of Robespierre. He survived the Reign of Terror. Some readers may, perhaps, think of him as later becoming Marshal Massac, Duke of Caravelto, one of the Napoleonic commanders. In any event, Louis XVI., Marie Antoinette, Danton, and Robespierre, as pictured in this volume, seem to be in accordance with the histories of the French Revolution.

COXEY'S ARMY. A Study of the Industrial Army Movement of 1894. By Donald L. McMurry. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1929. Pp. VIII., 331. *Illustrated*.

The author, Donald L. McMurry, Ph.D., is Professor of History in Lafayette College. The purpose of his book is to describe and explain the situation which produced "Coxey's Commonwealth" and the "industrial armies"; tell the story of these curious movements of the unemployed, and attempt an interpretation of them. A useful bibliography comprises pages 311 to 323, and an index is provided.

In press. The history and genealogy of the Kress family in Europe and America, by Karl Friedrich von Frank zu Doefering of Vienna, Austria, and Charles Rhoads Roberts of Allentown, Pennsylvania, is now being printed in Vienna and will soon be off the press. It will be in one volume and profusely illustrated. The family is traced back to the year 1291. In 1305, Frederick Kress built the church of St. George near Nuremberg. Christoph Kress (1484-1535), a patrician of Nuremberg, was at the Diet of Worms with Luther, in 1521, and signed the Augsburg Confession, in 1530, as a representative of the free city of Nuremberg. The work will be a fine specimen of the printer's art and one of the best examples of what can be done by genealogical research.