

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Benjamin Franklin.* By CARL VAN DOREN. (New York, Viking Press, 1938. xxii, 845 p. Portraits.)

*Benjamin Franklin in Scotland and Ireland.* By J. BENNETT NOLAN. (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1938. xii, 229 p. Maps, illustrations.)

*Benjamin Franklin's Own Story; His Autobiography Continued from 1759 to His Death in 1790, with a Biographical Sketch Drawn from His Writings.* By NATHAN G. GOODMAN. (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1937. vi, 268 p. Portrait.)

THIS amazing Dr. Franklin has been called the first civilized American: it might be added that he was the archetypal American. He is the classic illustration of the local boy who made good, of the man who lifted himself by his bootstraps. In his life of eighty-four years he climbed the social ladder, made a fortune in business and retired at forty-two, became the first outstanding American journalist and propagandist, founded the science of electricity, was a successful soldier when such professionals as Braddock failed, was a politician of shrewdness and parts, a constitution-maker of permanent influence, and a diplomat who gained the French help that won American independence and yet remained an American in spite of the pull of courtly society.

Yet Franklin's interest to us is not necessarily in these accomplishments. He is the example par excellence of the choice man makes between art and oblivion. Franklin's life was in many ways filled with trouble and disappointment—notably the continual hounding by his political enemies, the lack of affinity between him and his wife, and the defection of his son during the Revolution—yet his life was an artistic success. He had little literary imaginativeness to serve as a shield, and aside from Poor Richard's sayings he was a philosopher not so much in the abstract sense as in the eighteenth-century sense of being a scientist, yet he seems never to have brooded over his troubles nor to have troubled deaf heaven with bootless cries. He succeeded in winning friends and influencing people because he accepted them without quibble as he found them. That was a part of his view of life. Life was a game of chess, absorbing, entertaining, and not too serious, in which success was at-

tained only by compliance with certain definite rules. He complied cheerfully, and posterity has rewarded him by placing him among the half dozen great men of his century.

The idea of supplementing Franklin's *Autobiography* is by no means new, and probably every American high-school graduate has been exposed to the *Autobiography*, with supplement, in one edition or another. The standard of such works for adults is W. C. Bruce's *Benjamin Franklin Self-revealed*, and it is questionable if Mr. Goodman has improved upon it. It would be stretching a point, moreover, to concede with the title that in the work being discussed Franklin told the latter part of the story himself; in addition Mr. Goodman might be hard put, in some cases, to defend satisfactorily his choice of quotations. He has, however, done a workmanlike job with his supplement, without much color or inspiration, but with admirable impartiality. These criticisms are for the eye of the scholar; in the opinion of this reviewer a new treatment of as vital and important a man as Franklin is always in order, and therein Mr. Goodman finds abundant justification for his labor.

This reviewer does not recall having recently read an historical monograph with as much pleasure as in his reading of Nolan's *Benjamin Franklin in Scotland and Ireland*. The book is presumably for the use of research students and readers anxious to broaden their acquaintance with Franklin, and in fact it is likely to be best appreciated by the reader who possesses some general knowledge of Franklin and his times. The author approaches his task in a leisurely manner reminiscent of Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*. He supplements the scanty accounts left by Franklin with bits drawn from dozens of sources and forms a graphic and colorful mosaic picture. The result is even more satisfactory to the reviewer than would be a work in which Franklin loomed larger; a biographer's task is to portray the individual against the background of his times—to show him revolving with his contemporaries around whatever suns were worshipped then, not to show him as a sun around which the times revolved, or a sun that occupied a corner quite apart from the universe of companion stars and planets.

In line with this concept of biography it is possible that some readers will at first feel some disappointment in Mr. Van Doren's *Benjamin Franklin*, for it is possible that more allusion to other men and the times would have deepened and clarified the impression of Franklin. To hackney a stock phrase, the work is two-dimensional, while Franklin deserves, more than any other American, a three-dimensional treatment. This he received at the hands of Bernard Fay, and to a lesser extent Parton.

Beyond this doubt, which may be based upon the reviewer's too partial regard for Franklin as a vital personality, nothing can be said that is not praise. Mr. Van Doren has lived with the Franklin documents for a decade and his work shows this to a marked degree. He has dug up new material and has reset the old with laudable patience and zeal. His admiration and sympathy for Franklin have not made him a partisan. In fact there is an almost Franklinesque absence of comment, and from this and the simplicity, discrimination, tolerance, and straightforwardness of the story one gets an impression that the author must be in many ways like the admirable man he portrays. These qualities have made this a biography that is the most satisfactory full-length portrait yet given of Franklin, certainly from the point of view of the scholar and of the earnest reader, and the prophesy might justifiably be made that it will neither be equalled nor surpassed in this generation.

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*Growth of American Manufacturing Areas* (University of Pittsburgh, Bureau of Business Research, *Monographs*, no. 7). By GLENN E. McLAUGHLIN. (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1938. xxvii, 358 p. Tables, charts.)

By prodigious and laborious effort, Professor McLaughlin has analyzed a mass of statistical data and has produced a real contribution to the industrial and social history of the United States in general and of western Pennsylvania in particular. Making use of the published and unpublished materials of the United States Bureau of the Census and of the United States Bureau of Mines, he has examined the growth of the thirty-three industrial areas of the United States, as defined in 1929. The period studied extends from 1869 to 1930, with considerable emphasis placed upon the development since the industrial census of 1899.

In Part I of the study the author presents the results of a careful examination of the statistical records and establishes the "trends" from which he later draws his conclusions. Comparative tables and statements show the absolute, relative, and proportional changes that are taking place in the whole population, the numbers of gainfully employed workers, and the comparative values added by manufacturing, as well as the relation of these phenomena to the growth of industry as a whole in each of the thirty-three areas of the United States. This alone makes the volume worth while from the point of view of na-