

BOOK REVIEWS

William Penn the Politician: His Relations with the English Government. By JOSEPH E. ILLICK. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1965. Pp. 249. \$5.75.)

William Penn has been the subject of unnumbered articles and books, both scholarly and otherwise. Of the full-length biographies written before 1900, S. M. Janney's *The Life of William Penn* (1852) is without a doubt the most balanced and accurate. Since the turn of the century, there have been numerous biographical works which, for the most part, combine literary excellence with scholarly merit. Foremost of those deserving attention are W. I. Hull's *William Penn: A Topical Biography* (1937) and C. O. Peare's *William Penn: A Biography* (1957). Also of worth, although not a full-life narrative, is the recently published *William Penn's "Holy Experiment"* by E. B. Bronner. To this list of worthwhile studies on the founder of Pennsylvania must now be added Joseph Illick's *William Penn the Politician*.

In this engaging little volume, Professor Illick advances the hard-to-refute thesis that Penn's success was due primarily to his influence with prominent English statesmen. During the 1680's and 1690's when British colonial policy dictated closer supervision and control of corporate and proprietary colonies, Penn was able not only to obtain his proprietary charter but, more surprisingly, was able to maintain the autonomy of his American domain. The author correctly attributes this to Penn's "intimacy with Charles II, his brother, Duke of York, and the courtiers gathered around the Stuart throne." Penn's political machinations are related with candor and skill. As a result the traditional picture of William Penn the benevolent, idealistic humanitarian suffers somewhat. At several crucial periods, Penn emerged as the practical, pragmatic politician who willingly forsook principle for expediency.

Except for his main thesis, which is to be sure both interesting and noteworthy, Illick offers little not already explored by Hull, Peare, and others who have written biographies of the almost universally admired Quaker courtier. The book's principal value is the author's well-documented description of the dualism involved in the founding of Pennsylvania — high ideals and practical politics. One comes away from the reading of this well-ordered volume with the

sudden realization that William Penn, like many great and respected men in history, justified devious means to accomplish desirable ends.

Although he has relied most heavily on manuscript sources located in this country concerning Penn's life, Illick all-too-frequently resorts to summarizing and quoting secondary sources. Thus some of the material presented is already well-known and generally accepted. In addition the professional historian will find fault with the author's compulsion to restate his main thesis at every opportunity. Finally the general lack of serious analysis gives the book an aura of undeserved superficiality.

Despite such minor shortcomings, *William Penn the Politician* has merit for those desiring a lucid, well-developed account of Penn's two great political accomplishments: the founding of a colony "which was distinguished by its autonomy at a time when the home government was bringing other plantations into a position of greater subservience" and the successful defense of this American province for some three decades. Painstaking research, a fluid pen, and a mastery of both primary and secondary sources help to make the reading of this volume both pleasurable and worthwhile.

Waynesburg College
Waynesburg, Pennsylvania

JOSEPH C. MORTON

Benjamin Franklin and Pennsylvania Politics. By WILLIAM S. HANNA. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1964. Pp. 239. Notes, bibliographical note, index. \$6.50.)

Benjamin Franklin: An American Man of Letters. By BRUCE INGHAM GRANGER. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1964. Pp. 264. Bibliographical note, index. \$4.95.)

History in its most comprehensive sense is virtually all-inclusive. There are at least fifty-seven kinds of history as can be listed quickly by consultation of adjectives in a small dictionary. Existence, factuality, knowledge and understanding are features of any good story of mankind.

In any comprehensive history of the United States, Benjamin Franklin must be considered as one of the most important subjects. He made himself famous in his own lifetime. As sage and seer he surpassed his contemporaries, with only one possible exception, namely Thomas