

BOOK REVIEWS

The Coming of the White Man, 1492-1848. [A History of American Life: Volume I]. By HERBERT INGRAM PRIESTLEY. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929. Pp. xx, 411. Illus. \$4.00.)

This book is Volume I. of a series whose reputation has already been established by the publication of other volumes. While the execution of the general plan conceived by Professors Schlesinger and Fox presented many difficulties, it seems safe to assume that none of the collaborators had a harder task than Professor Priestley. *A History of American Life* is a synthetic work, it belongs to the newer type of historical writing, and it may be described roughly as a social history of the United States. Social history is so comprehensive a thing that it includes almost everything from kitchen stoves to kitchen cabinets, and yet as it is now conceived it is so new a thing that there is relatively little monographic material available for synthesis. Although there has been a vast deal of writing about ways of life, most of it is the work of untrained hands, and the social historian of today must be as wary of it as a sociologist grappling with a missionary's account of tribal customs in the Zulu Islands. To take this amorphous mass of materials and give it significant form was no easy matter for any of the collaborators. In addition to this difficulty, which arises out of the very nature of the enterprise, Professor Priestley was confronted by a problem peculiar to his part in the undertaking, which was to give an account of life in the Spanish, French, and Dutch colonies of North America. Here was a subject that not only lacked obvious unity but also required the writer to prove to many a doubting Thomas that such a study has a place in a history of life in the United States. Professor Priestley's success in this arduous undertaking marks him as an unusually gifted historian. None will appreciate the extent of his achievement more fully than his fellow workers in the Hispanic American field.

The character of the book is indicated and its place in the series justified by the editors' statement in their Foreword that it was designed to furnish "standards of comparison" for the study of life in the United States. The design is apparent throughout the book, most

of all in the analysis of Spanish and French colonial life, which are studied not so much in the regions that have become a part of the United States as at their focal points, which were respectively New Spain and Canada. This method entails the omission of much that one would like to know, for Florida, Louisiana, Texas, and even California receive rather scant attention; but given the purpose of the volume the majority of readers will probably agree that the method is sound. The consequences of its application can be seen most easily by comparing the relevant portions of the present work with Professor Bolton's *The Spanish Borderlands*. It is no disparagement of either work to say that they differ even more widely from each other than does *A History of American Life* from *The Chronicles of America*.

Since it was designed to serve as a basis for comparison, this book should be read in conjunction with the two volumes of this series dealing with the English colonies. The reader is expected to make his own comparisons, but Professor Priestley has provided him with many useful hints. The most valuable of these, in the reviewer's opinion, is his brief analysis of the various colonial land systems and their consequences. He says (pp. 228-229):

In Spanish and French America alike, land proprietorship became unavailable to the small worker—in New France because the seigneurs monopolized it; in New Spain because irrigable land was limited and because the system of forced labor encouraged the patriarchal institution. So the "hardy-pioneer" type, characteristic of the English frontier, was less frequent in the two Latin areas because free land did not exist.

Again we read (p. 37), that "the formation of a large element of 'hardy pioneers' " in New Spain was hampered by "the conditions of rural life, the nature of the frontier and the character of the lower classes". These suggestions point the way to a study that would be of great value. The significance of the frontier in American (that is, United States) history would be made clearer by an appraisal of its significance in Spanish American history.

While the chapters on New France and New Netherland are illuminating, they are not of the same quality as those that deal with New Spain. Here the author is perfectly at home. He writes with the authority that comes from long study and with a sympathy that is tempered by understanding. He knows his Spaniards too well to

romanticize about them. While his book provides a complete refutation of the calumnies long directed against Spain, he has not made the mistake of substituting one emotional attitude for another, of attempting to correct calumny by adulation. It is true that like older writers he compares the Spaniards with other Europeans in America—that is indeed the chief purpose of his book, as we have already said—but whereas their antithesis was vice and virtue, his is adjustment and maladjustment. The subject of his study is not morals but functions, and his object is to show what was and how it came about. While he writes with detachment his work does not thereby lose human interest, for his detachment is not Olympian but scientific.

In other words, Professor Priestley has brought to the performance of his difficult task precisely the equipment that was needed. Breadth of vision, depth of knowledge, and the detachment of the critical spirit have made his chapters on New Spain an invaluable contribution to historical knowledge. Some of the chapters (IV. "Economic Life in New Spain", V. "The Wards of the Spaniards", VI. "Spanish Colonial Life and Letters", and VII. "The Last Cycle of New Spain") are little masterpieces. These contain admirable descriptions of the diversified economic life of New Spain, with its fabulous mineral wealth, its mining code that became the basis of the mining laws of the United States, its agriculture whose products were more valuable than those of the mines, and its varied manufactures; of the Indians, who were tortured with the kindness of Christianity; of a flourishing culture that was half a century old at the birth of Jamestown; and of the fresh impulse given to colonial life by the Bourbon reforms of the eighteenth century. This portion of the book is fused with the others and unity achieved through the use of the comparative method.

One occasionally encounters obscure or dubious passages. The statement that "the Spaniards were not the only gold-thirsty men who labored under the misconceptions of the mercantilist theory of economics" (p. 10) is misleading, for it occurs in a chapter dealing with the sixteenth century, and Professor Haring has shown that Spanish policy was not guided at that time by the mercantilist theory. The allusion to "the inflexibility of the Spanish colonial ideal" (p. 138) seems hardly justifiable in view of the extensive modification of the colonial system which was effected under Charles III. and of which Professor Priestley himself gives a brief account. Nor can one subscribe to his statement that "the principal weakness, after all the

notable reforms of Charles III., was his failure to raise up a worthy successor in his son" (p. 208)—a statement that is neither convincing in itself nor in harmony with what seems to be Professor Priestley's interpretation of history.

The character of this review has been determined by the character of the book under consideration. If we have dealt mainly in generalities, it is because the book is doubly a pioneer work, and its novelty necessitates an inquiry into its implications. Despite its pioneer character, Professor Priestley has done his work so well that it will stand the ravages of time and his fellow historians better than most pioneer performances. Numerous illustrations and a critical bibliography add considerably to its value. There can be little doubt that for a long time to come both the specialist and the general reader will turn to this book for the most authoritative and most enlightening account of life in the Spanish colonies of North America.

"This is the way that history ought to be written", said an enthusiastic reviewer of one of the earlier volumes of this series. Without being dogmatic we may at least say of the present volume, "This is one way that history ought to be written."

ARTHUR P. WHITAKER.

Western Reserve University.

The Luna Papers. Documents relating to the Expedition of Don Tristán de Luna y Arellano for the Conquest of La Florida in 1559-1561. Translated and edited with an historical Introduction by HERBERT INGRAM PRIESTLEY, Ph.D. 2 vols. (DeLand: The Florida State Historical Society, 1928. Portrait; map, facsimiles. To Members of The Florida State Historical Society, \$36.00.)

This work of prime sources is No. Eight of the publications of The Florida State Historical Society. Like all other publications of that Society, it does not enter into general trade, the edition being limited to 360 copies, three hundred of which go to the members, while the other copies are held for emergency uses. A few copies might be sold outside the membership but at an advanced price. The volumes were printed by the Yale University Press under the direction of Carl Purington Rollins, and in all respects conform to the best canons of printing and book making. With their excellent typography, hand-made paper, and attractive, durable binding, *The Luna Papers*, from