

he vetoed their bank bill, he was read out of the party, and he returned to the Democratic fold whence he had come.

The policies espoused by the Democrats were more congenial to a man of Tyler's sympathies and constitutional view-points. He had, as President, cast the "Texas Question" into the political arena; and from this resulted war with Mexico, the Wilmot Proviso, the Dred Scott decision and, eventually, the Civil War. The man who uttered the constitutional views quoted above could not honestly hesitate when a choice of allegiance had to be made; he responded to the call of Virginia.

Tyler's biographer has made a thorough study of his subject. He has depicted well the difficulties with which the former President had to contend. He has done Tyler full justice, but his weaknesses are not overlooked or condoned. In one instance only does the biographer strain a point to demonstrate the wisdom of his hero. He quotes from a manuscript in which Tyler advocated a peaceful dissolution of the Union and an alliance between the two confederacies. He adds that:

"No better plan than this was offered at the time for settling the difficulties that had arisen between the North and the South. . . . The tragedy of the situation was that at a time when Tyler's insight into the future was clearest his sane advice, owing to his lack of influence with Northern leaders, fell on their closed ears with the impressionless impact of Cassandra's prophecies." (pp. 456-457)

Holding the views he did concerning the nature of the Union, it was natural for Tyler to think his proposal to be both reasonable and constitutional. It is not so easy to see how a writer of our own generation should think it "unfortunate" that the government at Washington did not sit with folded hands and permit the Union to disintegrate without making an effort to prevent it. Even Robert E. Lee could find no warrant in the Constitution for a dissolution of the Union, and he asserted that "secession is nothing but revolution."

In general, however, the volume is impartial and well written. It does President Tyler the justice which has been too long delayed.

E. I. McCORMAC.

University of California,
Berkeley.

Sutter: The Man and His Empire. By JAMES PETER ZOLLINGER. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939. Pp. xvi, 374. \$3.50.)

John Augustus Sutter was one of the most picturesque figures in California at the time of transition from Mexican to American. Because it was on his domain that gold was discovered in 1848, he has

often been hailed as the foremost hero of the drama of Americanization, though the more careful opinion has been that his significance was by no means so great. He has long been recognized as an aspirant to grandeur, somewhat of a bluffer, an open-handed host, more adept in conceiving grand designs than in carrying them into effect, more successful in getting credit than in paying his debts, and in the end a tragic figure, not merely because of outward circumstance but also because the consequences of certain of his defects caught up with him at last.

The present author has brought to light a modicum of new material on Sutter's unhappy lot before migrating to America. These findings were presented in 1935 in an article in the *California Historical Society Quarterly* and are the central thread of the first sixteen pages of the present volume. Mr. Zollinger uses this piercing of what he calls the "impenetrable darkness shrowding his European years" (p. vii) as the springboard for an interpretation of Sutter's subsequent career. In particular he insists that Sutter's personality was forever warped by resentment against his first-born, whose birth was "forestalled" by but a day (p. 10) by the marriage of his parents. Sutter harbored, we are told, "a deep, primordial, and largely unconscious hatred against this fatal child" (p. 14). The phrase is a sufficient key to the nature of the volume, which, despite the voluminous bibliography of manuscript and printed materials, turns out to be psychography rather than biography. One would have greater confidence in the author's judgment if he did not blunder so often on elementary facts, for example, in setting the number of California missions at eighteen (p. 49) and the number of American immigrants in 1841 at 200 (p. 91). One would have greater respect for the author's opinions if he did not indulge in such unmannerly derogation of California historians in general and of writers on Sutter in particular. The assertions of author and publisher notwithstanding, Sutter's life story has not yet been acceptably presented.

JOHN WALTON CAUGHEY.

University of California at Los Angeles.

Centro América en el congreso de Bolívar: Contribución documental, inédita, para la historia de la primera asamblea americana. By JOSÉ RODRÍGUEZ CERNA. (Guatemala, C. A.: Tipografía Nacional, 1938. Pp. 321.)

This work of Rodríguez Cerna should prove a welcome addition to our Bolivariana. It should be translated into English, for we have far too little material on the Congress of Panamá. And much of what