

was to ours. But such comparisons lack much in representing adequately his services to his country.

The volume has as a frontispiece an excellent reproduction in color of a striking oil portrait of Sarmiento. The format and general mechanical make-up of the volume are good, though it could have been bettered by the addition of an index.

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*Obras completas de Gonzalo Picón Febres (póstumas)*. Edited by EDUARDO PICÓN LARES. Vols. I and II, *Nacimiento de Venezuela intelectual (historia y crítica historia)*; Vol. III, *Don Simón Rodríguez, maestro del Libertador y otros estudios*; Vol. IV, *De tierra venezolana (novelas cortas y semblanzas)*. (Caracas: Cooperativa de Artes Gráficas, 1939. Pp. xvi, 288; 248; 245; xvi, 401).

In appraising a book on the subject of intellectual life of colonial Venezuela, the first thing to do is to search for the author's brand of partisanship. The search in this case reveals intensity of feeling, but not the partisanship one would expect from a poet turned critical historian. Instead of being a partisan, Picón Febres was, to borrow a philosophical term, an eclectic, for he took what he wanted from both factions. The result is absence of organization and a superabundance of quotations. Given absolute criteria of selection, the human frailty of previous authors makes the selections inevitably haphazard. Perfect selection was the aim of Picón Febres, for, whatever else can be said about his work, his intellectual integrity and absolute sincerity make an overwhelming impression.

The essays printed in the first two volumes of the *Obras* appear to be those of a brilliant man written at intervals of several years. There is a certain amount of repetition in Volumes I and II which might be explained in this way, although a plan of organization does not become apparent in any particular book. The key to this contribution of the study of the intellectual birth of Venezuela is to be found in the parenthetical *Historia y crítica historia*. The nearly complete deference to authorities has served a good purpose, for it has resulted in such careful and intensive reading of the historians that their long undetected transmission of errors in a straight line of descent can be perceived. Although he himself lacks support, except such as can be gleaned from his use of internal criticism, he foreshadows (his preword is dated 1917) the conclusions reached through the fine historical workmanship of Dr. C. Parra León in 1934.

He has, by collation of authorities, proved beyond a peradventure that Baralt, Gil Fortoul and the rest, have limited themselves to repeating what Don Juan García del Río published in the *Repertorio* (I, 118-119). He has shown that the basic judgments on the important subject treated have passed from pen to pen without ever having rested once upon a sound documentary foundation. Indeed, one would have to look rather carefully to find any dependence at all upon original documents. The ill-supported thesis thus perpetuated is that peripateticism (the meaning of which, according to the author, these *ignorantes* do not understand), vanquished by Bacon in Europe, took refuge in America where its intransigency was supported behind an impenetrable screen of Latin. This thesis, logically, is based upon two assumptions—first, that authoritarianism was defeated in Europe appreciably before it was in America; second, that Latin could never be a vehicle for modern thought. We have had books on the *Migration of Ideas*. What is needed in Latin-American intellectual history is a *Migration of Errors*.

Occasionally one wonders whether or not fortune has smiled upon the positions assumed by the author. Can he be sure that Marrero, the pioneer of modern thought in Venezuela, was persecuted (II, 83-86) in view of the triumph of Marrero's thought, the statement of Bishop Talavera that he (Marrero) resigned, and the reasoned opinion of the late Dr. Parra León to the contrary? Such jumping from side to side, while it may be a simple pursuit of the tortuous course of truth, appears more likely the result of jumping from author to author. Only the leavening of sources would supply the remedy, but among the materials used in the life of *Simón Rodríguez*, there is no new material. The inedited letters published in the appendix to that book cover the decade or so after the death of Bolívar and are interesting only as they reflect the psychology of the great master. The novels and other literary works of the fourth volume serve, in this connection, only to explain the sensibilities and volatile nature of Picón Febres whose *Obras*, at the very least, are worth acquiring.

*Historia del Protomedicato de Buenos Aires*. By Juan Ramón Beltrán. (Buenos Aires: El Ateneo, 1937. Pp. xvi, 316.)

The history of the *protomedicato* in America had two distinct beginnings. In 1570 the institution was first officially transferred to America. The interest of Philip II in medicinal herbs, and the enormous unexplored possibilities held out in this sphere by America, led to the appointment of the first *protomédico general* in that year. Another period of initiation and activity began with the many