

method are warped to produce the 'good story.' The writer's habit of thrusting a block of 'principal sources' at the reader is an unfortunate one.

In the next study of Balboa—and the career made doubly attractive by the aura of what-might-have-been as well as real accomplishments will inspire other efforts—I hope to see much that is fine in this work, without its faulty premise that Darién was “a small-scale working model, handy and complete, of the whole Spanish conquest in the New World” (p. 1).

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C. HARVEY GARDINER

*Les colons de Saint-Domingue et la Revolution: Essai sur le Club Massiac (Août 1789-Août 1792).* By GABRIEL DEBIEN. Paris, 1953. Librairie Armand Colin. Bibliography. Index. pp. 414. Paper.

Gabriel Debien, a prolific and distinguished student of the history of the French West Indies, has prepared this illuminating essay on the lobbying activities of the Club Massiac during the critical years of the French Revolution. This club, which sought to represent in France the aspirations of the commercial and plantation interests of Saint-Domingue, skillfully influenced legislation in the French Revolutionary assemblies by means of subsidized publications and newspaper articles. Attempting to reconcile the somewhat divergent economic interests of the French planters of sugar, tobacco and indigo with the merchants of the ports, the Club's aim was to formulate a program behind which all the various white elements in the colony could unite. Economic issues were relegated to the background. Political autonomy for the French colonists and militant defense of the social-class-ethnic status quo based on Negro slavery and the inferior status of the *gens de couleur* were the principal planks of the Club Massiac's platform. The climax of the Club's brief history was that on the eve of securing its greatest triumph in France—the granting of a large measure of political self-government for the French colonists—the slaves in Saint-Domingue rose in rebellion during the summer of 1792. The rebellion of the slaves swept away with titanic fury the whole socio-economic order that the Club Massiac desperately desired to preserve.

Gabriel Debien has written a dramatic, lucid and well-documented account of the public relations campaign that a group of French planters and merchants undertook to counteract the much better known proselytizing activities of the *Amis des Noirs* who sought to

apply the humanitarian ideals of liberty and equality to the slaves and the *gens de couleur*.

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JOHN LEDDY PHELAN

*Cosas de la colonia. Apuntes para la crónica del siglo XVIII.* By JOSÉ TORIBIO MEDINA. Santiago, 1952. Fondo Histórico y Bibliográfico José Toribio Medina. Pp. 500. Paper. Second edition.

In the year 1883 Don José Toribio Medina was given the formidable task of classifying and indexing the mountain of *expedientes* in the archives of the Chilean Ministry of the Interior. These documents were correctly considered to be one of the most important sources of information on the colonial period. It was a tribute to Medina that he should be assigned the task but was also tacit recognition of the fact that he was the one man in all the world most qualified to do it.

Surely no one else could have moved the job forward with such celerity. In the incredibly short period of ten months Medina went through 18,104 documents in 1036 volumes and the first of the published indices began to appear, the remainder following briskly.

As a sideline, probably done in his spare time, Don José made the notes for *Cosas de la colonia*, published in two series, 1889 and 1910. It is these two works brought together into one volume that the *Comisión Nacional del Centenario de Conmemoración* decided to publish as one of its acts of veneration for the master.

In his informative introduction to this commemorative work Eugenio Pereira Salas hails the selection as a happy choice because it reveals two aspects of Medina and his work. Much of Don José's work was done with single-minded purpose, but this volume shows him both as a chronicler of minutiae and also something of a potential social historian after the style of John Bach McMaster.

This is not meant to imply that this work is in any sense an organized study of the eighteenth century in Chile. It is just what it is called — "things" about the colony. It consists of an initial series of 373 items, which comprised the first work, and a second set of 313 more, preceded by "Dos Palabras" of Medina's explaining that he had looked upon these notes as background for that great history that he had some day hoped to write but now felt never would be completed.

There are almost as many subjects as there are items. They cover serious matters such as commerce with Peru, Araucanian uprisings, the expulsion of the Jesuits, and the great cathedral fire of 1769. You can find the price of salt, mining information, facts on honey production, or notes on municipal government. Or one can learn that