

which he could reach: and as he reached it, he stopped moving. Truth became the Church of Rome: he attained that truth and rejected every other"? [Waldo Frank]) Under the editor's apt heading "A Victorian Yankee confronts Castile," John Hay subtly and unconsciously epitomizes the Anglo-Saxon reaction to Spain in a description of a Madrid bull fight. To the future secretary of state the spectacle calls to mind Christians burning in the Coliseum, but he is as powerless against its pagan atmosphere as Adam was against the apple.

McGann appears to find the same flavor in Spain, "a flavor compounded of danger, violent contrasts among people and scenery, pathos, high humanity, and mystery." Spaniards are for him "unique among human beings." My own feeling is that these passages reveal more about Anglo-Saxon prejudices and the metamorphoses of the black legend than about the essence of Spain. The writers who stayed long enough and had the capacity to remove their cultural blindfolds discovered that Spaniards are fascinating because they are ordinary human beings first and only secondarily because they are products of a different culture: Gerald Brenan above all, then Ernest Hemingway, George Borrow, and George Orwell. McGann's choice of their texts is superb. They are the true portrait painters. The rest, however readable, hardly get beyond caricatures and tourists' snapshots.

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*Alexander von Humboldt*. By LOTTE KELLNER. London, New York, and Toronto, 1963. Oxford University Press. Maps. Illustrations. Bibliography. Index. Pp. 247. \$5.75.

Lotte Kellner is a lecturer in Physics at the Imperial College of the University of London. She has found in England her second home. It is her intention with this book to acquaint those who speak English with Alexander von Humboldt. This should be easy in the United States as even today Humboldt is well known and after all Humboldt was a great admirer of the United States since from the political point of view—although he was personally cold—he saw the United States as a "dynamic Cartesian whirl." With regard to England, even though he valued her many admirable traits he had many reservations, and as to love for England he placed her after France. And indeed the English have not always understood Humboldt and have not accepted his opinions. It must be stated that hate and contempt have never existed on either side.

I welcome the appearance of the book by Lotte Kellner because the

English biography published in 1955 called *The Life and Times of Alexander von Humboldt* by Helmut de Terras is largely a romantic psychological presentation. It rotates around an unknown homosexuality of Humboldt, and the Kellner book can help erase this impression. But I think that there is still the need to translate Humboldt's works into English to avoid any mistakes. The Kellner book has such errors. Humboldt's mother was not of the nobility (p. 5); Humboldt did not meet George Foster (who is much misunderstood) in Gottingen (p. 12f); but Humboldt received in Hamburg from Johann Georg Busch and Christoph Daniel Ebeling important suggestions and there he regularly undertook studies which the author totally ignores (p. 15). This reviewer does not want to make a list of errors. What is more important is the fact that the volume of geography, that from the traveling point of view cannot be ignored (it is basic for the research trips to America and Russia), has been neglected in favor of geomagnetic discussions with which the author, as a physicist, is more at home. In the end, this book is based on the antiquated Karl Bruhn biography: Alexander von Humboldt, *Eine wissenschaftliche biographie*, 3 vols., Leipzig, 1872 (see pp. 238-241). It is this that makes the Kellner book weak. In sum, the newest literature has not been used. The discussion of geomagnetism and the use of some English sources are noteworthy, but from an overall point of view take up too much space.

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*Prescott's Histories: The Rise and Decline of the Spanish Empire.*

Edited by IRWIN R. BLACKER. New York, 1963. The Viking Press, Inc. Bibliography. Pp. 568. \$7.50.

This volume attempts to offer a balanced selection of the contents of Prescott's four histories, *Ferdinand and Isabella*, *The Conquest of Mexico*, *The Conquest of Peru*, and *Philip II*. Physically this means that what originally appeared in eleven volumes and exceeded 5700 pages of text has been sweated down, as Prescott would say, to less than one-tenth that number. With almost mathematical precision, approximately one-fourth of the selections is derived from each title.

Thematically the histories were many things, but nothing more frequently than biographical sketches and battle-pieces. Honoring the strong biographical bias in the four works, Ferdinand, Isabella, and Gonsalvo de Córdoba—indeed all the greats of that reign except Ximénez de Cisneros—receive their due, as do Cortés and Pizarro in

\* This review was translated by Charles W. Arnade