Reviews and Notices


Since the titles of this book do not make a definite claim that the book is a history, it should perhaps not be measured by historical standards. The preface indicates that it is an attempt to tell the history of the development of American liberty to the Declaration of Independence. To one familiar with the fundamental causes of the American Revolution, the book would seem to omit many important chapters bearing on that subject and to introduce many interesting details only indirectly related thereto. For instance the author devotes, out of 333 pages, 22 to the Columbian voyages, 87 pages to the Elizabethan seamen, 160 to the founding of Virginia and to the first thirty years of her history, 33 pages to the founding of all the other colonies, 14 pages to the history of the colonies from 1640 to 1763 and 12 pages to the preliminaries of the War for Independence. Even in these later divisions much space is devoted to Virginia.

The author’s account of Columbus is a little old-fashioned and not abreast the more recent critical investigations on that subject. In discussing the Elizabethan seamen and the early voyages to Virginia the author is at his best. He has a good understanding of seafaring and has shown admirably how the opening up of the new world was first of all a problem of mastering the Atlantic. The story of the founding of Virginia is quite accurately told in considerable detail. He does not, however, make clear just how the Puritans gained control of the London Company and why the Court of the Company instructed Yeardly to call an assembly. Throughout the remainder of the book the author is apparently less well informed. Errors are rather frequent and there is a lack of understanding.

The book is without footnotes and the critical reader will perhaps wish that the author had cited his authority for some of the following: “A fourth French voyage resulted in the extermination of the Spaniards” (p. 103); “Nova Scotia, . . this
Gallicized island" (p. 105); “Change over to a royal master must inevitably mean a threat to liberty with the certainty some day of a revolt for the acquisition of Independence;” (p. 248); “Maryland created as the first English colony where liberty in matters of faith was eventually to be established by law (p. 273); “Separatists . . . who attended services other than such as were prescribed by law” (p. 276); “Pilgrims came from England with . . . a license from the Plymouth Company” (p. 277); “Seventy-four English non-conformists with twenty-eight women of John Robinson's Church at Leyden formed the historic Pilgrim Father’s Expedition” (p. 276); speaking of events in 1622, “another six years had to pass before the New Plymouth colony was permanently settled” (p. 281); Mason and Gorges in 1629 got a patent for Laconia “embracing Lake Champlain with its vicinity” (p. 287); In 1629, 159 people settled at Charlton (p. 289); In Massachusetts Bay, in 1631, “two deputies being sent from each settlement to advise assistants” (p. 293); “John Winthrop . . . became Connecticut’s Governor in 1635” (p. 298); “Essential to emphasize that the New England policy from the first was distinctly Separatist” (p. 323); “proprietor of Maryland had offered religious liberty” (p. 311); “interference by the Board of Trade had also prevented a plan of confederation” in 1754 (p. 325); Board of Trade in 1752 “obtained complete control over colonial trade” (p. 325); “Virginia had now for offspring, Maryland, North and South Carolina, Georgia” (p. 328).

Occasionally the reader feels that the author after ambling along easily has suddenly remembered that he is supposed to be writing about Liberty and has then dragged the word or idea in by force (pp. 8, 188, 248, 256, 306, 324).

The style is generally clear and simple. Occasionally there are sentences a little too fine to be entirely true. The following may serve as an example: “We have seen the theme of discontent which was running through the whole of the Virginia story and must some day be heard in the final symphony of Independence. Not less discernible is the motif which from the first begins in the primitive New England music, and must at the finale mingle with the clashing Virginia notes” (p. 296).

Albert L. Kohlmeier.