

quite clear that Robert had been in very poor health at the time, and his collapse during the dedicatory service was due to "the combination of emotion and heat exhaustion. . . . it was thought he narrowly escaped a paralytic stroke" (p. 335).

One would expect to find some reference by the author to the widely publicized Lincoln manuscripts that Robert is said to have destroyed at his home in Manchester, Vermont. It is likely that many of Robert's own personal papers and probably some of the personal letters which his father wrote to his mother may have been burned. Mrs. Randall is in agreement with others who can speak with some authority that the famous presidential papers are now intact at the Library of Congress and were carefully preserved by Robert.

The new picture of Robert drawn by Mrs. Randall makes one feel that he "has behaved himself as the son of Abraham Lincoln might be expected to do," as one of the President's friends expressed himself (Amos Tuck to David Davis, copy in Lincoln National Life Foundation files). Any student of Abraham Lincoln who contemplates a monograph of the President touching upon his home life will find *Lincoln's Sons* a worthy supplement to Mrs. Randall's former work on *Mary Lincoln. Biography of a Marriage*.

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Louis A. Warren

*A History of the Freedmen's Bureau.* By George R. Bentley. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1955, pp. x, 298. Appendix, bibliography, and index. \$5.00.)

The basic problem that permeated the Reconstruction Era—how to absorb the Negro into the American body politic—is today more pertinent than at any time since 1877 when a North, weary of radicalism and sympathetic to the plight of the white southerner, agreed to drop the whole unpleasant mess in exchange for acquiescence in the election of Hayes. Since then, the Negro has made monumental gains in all parts of the nation, many of them through his own efforts, and many through federal government intervention on his behalf. But the Supreme Court rulings on school segregation rekindled deep prejudices and created situations that are alarming thinking people everywhere.

George R. Bentley's calm, straightforward account of the Freedmen's Bureau is especially welcome, therefore, as it illuminates the working of an organization that was of central importance in the initial period of adjustment after

emancipation. This is by no means a simple task, for the bureau became immeshed in much of the sordid politics of the day and served as a tool of the radical carpetbag interests who hoped thereby to insure Republican political supremacy, and even to revolutionize the social and economic bases of society in the South. It was idealistic, humanitarian, eminently practical, and also partisan, irresponsible, and corrupt at the same time.

The author begins with the issue of "contraband" as it arose in the early part of the war and traces the increasing need for centralized government control as abolitionist sentiment and military necessity combined to destroy the South's peculiar institution. Organized under General Oliver O. Howard in 1865, the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands had an almost impossible task from the start: limited funds, local officials too few in number and often inexperienced and unsympathetic, a hostile white population, a hostile President, to say nothing of serious doubts as to the constitutionality of the entire undertaking. Yet it was supposed to protect Negro rights, cultivate friendly relations between the races, encourage good work habits, assist in organizing schools, give rations and medicines, operate a bank, and supervise settlement of its wards on confiscated lands.

*A History of the Freedmen's Bureau* is a valuable addition to the literature of the Civil War period and the only thorough study of this aspect since Paul S. Peirce in 1904. It is regrettable that Bentley did not provide a clear picture of General Howard himself, who remains a shadowy figure throughout. The same could be said for other members of the bureau, no one of whom is given anything beyond the briefest possible appraisal. Otherwise, the documentation is excellent, and the delineation of the narrative flows smoothly despite the intricate nature of the various issues involved. Even those most familiar with the main problem will find new insights; and for the general reader, this will prove a book both timely and rewarding.

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Willis D. Boyd

*William Lloyd Garrison and the Humanitarian Reformers.*

By Russell B. Nye. (Boston: Little, Brown and Com-