

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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William Lloyd Garrison and the Humanitarian Reformers.

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

pany, 1955, pp. vi, 215. Note on sources and index. \$3.00.)

The editor of *The Library of American Biography* has made a wise choice in singling out William Lloyd Garrison as the leader whose life and activities were to represent the reform movement of the mid-nineteenth century. This relationship has been portrayed by Professor Nye in a vivid narrative of Garrison's active life and in a careful analysis of his position in American history. With this work the excellent standard of this series of biographical studies is maintained, and the author's reputation as a Pulitzer-prize winning biographer is enhanced.

The heritage of the rationalism of Thomas Jefferson and the active influence of a religious revival and frontier democracy had merged to give the generation before the Civil War confidence in the perfectability of mankind and in man's capacity to remake society in terms of his own blueprints. Of the many reform efforts of the era, Garrison's name is normally associated with the dominant cause, abolitionism, but the fiery editor also took up his pen in behalf of women's rights, pacifism, temperance, utopian communism, and anti-Sabbatarianism. Thus the complexity of this period of ferment, with its sound as well as fanatic facets, is clearly represented in the life of this zealous reformer, who, interestingly, could preach temperance but yet in his obsession over his health, could imbibe generously of nostrums high in alcoholic content, and who, despite his militant approach to the slavery issue, could support non-resistance.

Among Garrison's contemporaries, opinions as to his role in the abolition movement varied between the conclusion of admirers such as Wendell Phillips that Garrison created and largely controlled the movement and the evaluation of a critic such as Henry Ward Beecher, who stated that the New England reformer was "no more than a blister on the anti-slavery movement." Professor Nye cuts through this conflict of opinion and carefully supports the conclusion that Garrison neither began the movement nor contributed to its organization and extension as decisively as such men as Theodore Dwight Weld and Arthur and Lewis Tappan. Even though abolitionism "passed through him, not from him," the author notes that the editor of the *Liberator* drove the slavery evil deep into the country's conscience. In the South he became the symbol of all that was dangerous to its society, and in the North he broke the "conspiracy of silence" and

revealed slavery as the moral problem that it was. Because of his relentless condemnation of the evil, the vehemence of the language he employed, and his criticism of the Constitution for the protection it afforded slavery, he was hated and abused. But public reaction was to turn into respect when the cause he symbolized was eventually vindicated.

In the epilogue of the volume, Professor Nye reveals the mind of the reformer as one that was consistent in its judgment of all things on standards of moral right. The standards he employed were those of natural law as expressed in the Declaration of Independence and of Christian ethics as revealed in the Bible. Following a conscience to which God spoke directly, he opposed all man-made authority, in church as well as in state, and devoted his life to the freedom of the individual. With the integrity of his soul maintained before God, he could enjoy the jeers of the crowd. This self-righteous independence, a characteristic of the seventeenth century Puritan, alienated many but also inspired confidence in others.

The author has not neglected calling attention to Garrison's failings, but, generally, his portrayal is a sympathetic one. In a vivid manner he has also related the bitter factional controversies that took place within the abolition crusade. And for the student of the period he has contributed a clearer understanding of the major role played by the moral controversy surrounding slavery in the coming of the Civil War.

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Daniel R. Gahl

The Life of Matthew Simpson. By Robert D. Clark. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1956, pp. xi, 344. Index. \$5.50.)

It is perhaps a coincidence that a life of Matthew Simpson should appear at a time when great sectional issues are again stirring. For Bishop Simpson became an ardent crusader for emancipation; he was a friend of President Lincoln during the clash between North and South; and he was a staunch Republican even to the extent of becoming one of the closest adherents of the Radicals in their war against President Johnson. Robert D. Clark, who is chairman of the Speech Department and acting Dean of the College of Liberal Arts in the University of Oregon, has undertaken to play the role of biographer of one of the pre-eminent leaders of the Methodist church. His book follows