

better invested in the publication of the Latin texts of the medieval charters.

CHARLES GROSS.

*Machiavelli and the Modern State.* By Louis Dyer, M.A. (Boston, Ginn and Company, 1904, pp. xix, 163.) None of the fundamental problems concerning the great Florentine's thinking is treated in these pages. What we have is a series of remarks, some of them on Machiavelli and none on the Modern State, grouped rather fortuitously about three topics: "The Prince and Cæsar Borgia", "Machiavelli's Use of History", "Machiavelli's Idea of Morals". Mr. Dyer's conclusions on these points seem to be: first, that Machiavelli's inability to judge character accounts for his admiration of the famous brigand; second, that he read his Roman history in the light of the contemporary history of the Swiss; and lastly, that he was willing to resort to atrocious and ignoble means for the redemption of Italy because he was misled by a metaphor—the comparison between a diseased body and a corrupt state.

If all these verdicts were true, they would still leave the question of Machiavelli's own interest in the state and the other question of his influence on the history of politics untouched. Thus, what Machiavelli chiefly admired about Cæsar Borgia was his success, and when that was at an end the Florentine's interest was at an end, also. (Cf. his letters from Rome, October and November, 1503.) Again, why did not the fatal metaphor of the state as an organism similarly mislead John of Salisbury and Nicholas Cusanus, who both employed it with all its pathological implications, with even greater system than Machiavelli. Of course Machiavelli's history is selective, and was so a decade before he became especially interested in the Swiss (see the pamphlet *Del Modo di trattare i Popoli della Val di Chiana Ribellati*, 1502). Why?

The "brilliant allusiveness" of the style, the great number of irrelevancies, and the florid overtranslations are, perhaps, more easily pardoned in three lectures than they would be otherwise.

EDWARD S. CORWIN.

*La Vita di Amerigo Vespucci a Firenze da Lettere Inedite a lui Dirette.* Per Ida Masetti-Bencini e Mary Howard Smith. [Estratto dal vol. XIII e dal vol. XIV della *Rivista delle Biblioteche e degli Archivi*.] (Florence, L. Franceschini e C., 1903, pp. 39.) This collection of seventy-one letters written to Vespucci by his family, friends, and business connections in the years 1483-1491 has been transcribed from the originals in the Medici Archives in Florence. The editors have prefixed a sketch which recounts what is known of Vespucci's early life and incorporates their deductions from these letters. Among their deductions is the conclusion that Vespucci was employed as a kind of steward of the Medici household and not in the banking firm. The letters re-

veal a Vespucci, the authors believe, "Who, if not a hero of the human race or a great genius, was on the other hand no mere adventurer, as some foreign historians, particularly Americans, will have him." Vespucci's name in the address most commonly appears as Amerigo although the spelling Amerigho is not infrequent. It is twice Latinized as Emericus. Almerigho is used once.

Although these letters do not add greatly to our knowledge of Vespucci's life, they may lead to a softened judgment as to his character. In other respects, they are chiefly interesting as illustrating Florentine business and domestic life.

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*The Epistles of Erasmus, from his Earliest Letters to his Fifty-first Year, arranged in order of time.* English translations with a commentary by Francis Morgan Nichols. Vol. II. (New York, Longmans, Green, and Co., 1904, pp. xiii, 638.) This second volume of Mr. Nichols's translation of the letters of Erasmus contains the correspondence of the years 1509 to 1517, that is, from the writer's return to England from Italy to the outbreak of the Protestant Reformation. It maintains the level of excellence set in the first volume, which appeared in 1901 and was noticed in this REVIEW (VII, 548-549). But excellence of translation is not the chief claim of Mr. Nichols to the attention of Erasmian scholars. He is the first person to undertake, upon a basis of wide and accurate scholarship, a chronological arrangement of all the letters for this period which should make them more intelligible to the reader. In this attempt he had for parts of his work, it is true, two German forerunners, whose work he acknowledges and whose results he compares with his own; but his work has been done independently and his results vary considerably from theirs. The principles of his chronological order for all the letters in both volumes were set forth in the first, so that the second now before us is of less importance in this respect. The letters here given are those considered by Max Reich in his dissertation of the year 1896 with a few additions from English sources. They include the most important single letters, for example, that to Prior Servatius of July, 1514, and that to "Grunnius", which Mr. Nichols places as probably written in August, 1516. These two letters, on which pretty much the whole of the traditional biography of Erasmus is based, are brought into serious question by Mr. Nichols's criticism. He admits with hesitation the genuineness of the former and distinctly regards the latter as a genuine fabrication—if we may use the word—that is, he thinks it was written by Erasmus, but to a fictitious person and designedly so constructed as to gain a point in his suit for favor at the papal court. Its weight as serious biographical material is therefore obviously diminished.

The running commentary occupies proportionally less space in this volume, but is sufficiently full to show the relation of the letters to the general course of events which called them forth. An appendix