

of his defects and errors which are few, and of his beneficent achievements for his country and his race which are many.

*Francisco de Miranda and the Revolutionizing of Spanish America.*

By WILLIAM SPENCE ROBERTSON, Ph.D. (Washington: Government Printing Office. 1909. Pp. 189-539.)

THIS essay is noteworthy as an attempt to unravel some part of the tangled skein of intrigues and negotiations in which South Americans and Europeans were involved prior to the war for the emancipation of Spanish America. It deals with a subject hitherto only imperfectly examined; and this fact furnishes the author an opportunity to present topics concerning which few students of history have more than vague and superficial information. The larger question here entered upon is the relation of the European nations to the Spanish colonies in America, in view of the increasing dissatisfaction of the colonists with Spanish rule. The knowledge that Spain's vast American possessions were slipping from her grasp naturally excited a desire in some of the European nations to enter into this goodly heritage; still, as long as Spain's control was not actually repudiated by the colonists or relinquished by Spain herself, no nation appeared to be willing to be known as seeking to supplant Spanish authority. But underneath this outward respect for international conventions both England and France cherished a strong desire to participate in the salvage following the wreck of Spain's colonial system. The author of this essay has examined with care a great mass of documents containing evidence of this desire, and setting forth the work of Miranda in seeking especially to persuade the English government to assist the colonists in their proposed revolt and emancipation. In this part of his book he has brought together a large amount of information not otherwise readily accessible; and the contribution to this phase of Miranda's career is sufficiently interesting to lead the reader on, in spite of a style that in some parts has the crudeness of the notes which one makes directly from documents as a preliminary to a subsequent elaboration into a proper literary form.

The chapters dealing with the career of Miranda in Venezuela are evidently written to complete the story; they do not give evidence that the subject with which they deal is the preferred part of the writer's theme. The figure of Miranda appears here with his personal characteristics clearly set forth, but his background is not sufficiently developed. The excellence of the book would have been increased if the author had presented in clearer outlines the environment of Miranda during his activity in his native country. The Spanish-American hero of the war of emancipation is not properly comprehended except as he is seen against the peculiar conditions under which he lived and worked. In this account, we pass from Miranda's activity in London and Paris to his life in Venezuela without having brought clearly to our minds the thought that he had entered a new social atmosphere as far removed

from that of Europe as the east is from the west. It is not enough to give the series of events in the unfortunate experience of Miranda after his return from Europe. These explain nothing, and throw no important light on his successes or failures. We need to know his relation to the semi-savages who made up the mass of Venezuela's inhabitants; why he failed and Bolivar succeeded, when both had to do with the same unpromising popular elements. In a history of Miranda's diplomatic activity, these considerations might, perhaps, be omitted; but the history of a man who aspired to be a leader of his people ought to make clear wherein his leadership was wanting. The men of Venezuela in the days of Miranda were not different from those who, under Bolivar, left an imperishable record of daring and devotion to their leader.

Of Miranda as the advocate of South-American independence our author gives us an account which makes a strong impression on the mind; but there remains an opportunity and a need for further investigations into the career of Miranda in South America.

BERNARD MOSES.

*Historia Constitucional de Venezuela.* Por JOSÉ GIL FORTOUL. Tomo Primero. *La Colonia—La Independencia—La Gran Colombia.* Tomo Segundo. *La Oligarquía Conservadora—La Oligarquía Liberal.* (Berlin: Carl Heymann. 1907, 1909. Pp. xi, 570; xii, 558.)

AFTER publishing almost annually for ten years volumes of literature and philosophy, Dr. Fortoul brought out in 1896 an interesting work entitled *El Hombre y la Historia*. This was followed by a decade of silence and apparent inactivity. As a matter of fact, his attention having most fortunately been directed to the field of history, he was devoting himself with rare assiduity to the preparation of a history of the Venezuelan republic which should be at once modern, comprehensive, and scholarly. His plan calls for five volumes, commencing with a comparatively brief introduction covering the colonial period and ending with the administration of President Castro.

The two solid volumes which have appeared, bringing the narrative down to 1863, are characterized by qualities so unusual in the works of South American historians that they deserve special recognition and great praise. To find a Latin-American author writing the history of his country in a modest and dignified fashion, basing his results on extensive researches instead of vivid imagination, is not an every-day occurrence. But when the author turns out to be a Venezuelan *littérateur* and his work bears the marks of critical scholarship, the wonder is tenfold greater. The truth is, it has not been customary for us to think that any good thing could come out of the stricken land of Cipriano Castro. Travellers have frequently felt that it would have been far better for that land of magnificent fertile plains, whose agricultural and