

## BOOKS OF AMERICAN HISTORY

*History of Labour in the United States.* In two volumes. By JOHN R. COMMONS, DAVID J. SAPOSS, E. B. MITTELMAN, JOHN B. ANDREWS, HELEN L. SUMNER, H. E. HOAGLAND, and SELIG PERLMAN, with an Introductory Note by HENRY W. FARNAM. (New York: Macmillan Company. 1918. Pp. xxv, 623; xx, 620. \$6.50.)

THE publication of this work marks the completion of one section of the *Economic History of the United States*, a co-operative work planned nearly twenty years ago by the late Carroll D. Wright, working under the auspices of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, and edited by him during his lifetime. After his death the general direction of the institution's Division of Economics and Sociology fell to Professor Henry W. Farnam of Yale University, who contributes the editorial introduction to the present work.

The basis for the present work was laid in the preparation of the *Documentary History of American Industrial Society*, edited by Professor Commons and others and published between the years 1909 and 1911. Although many histories of labor in the United States may be published in the future, it is safe to say that their writers will not need to go for their facts much beyond those revealed by the researches undertaken in connection with the preparation of these two monumental studies.

The *History of Labour* is a co-operative work, carried out by students in Professor Commons's classes and seminars in the University of Wisconsin. The only part written directly by Professor Commons is a twenty-page introduction which gives the philosophy of the American labor movement and indicates the determining factors in the history of the laboring class in this country. These factors Professor Commons finds to be the following: (1) free land which made possible the escape from wage-earning; (2) universal manhood suffrage; (3) free trade within a vast area which gradually brought about the separation of merchant, employer, and wage-earner; (4) the struggle between the modern trade-union and the huge corporation; (5) the vetoing of labor legislation by our courts which has caused labor to rely more on trade-union action than on legislation to accomplish its purposes; (6) the influx of immigrants and the resulting problems of assimilation and Americanization with which the trade-unions have had to grapple; (7) wide fluctuations in prices and wages. The labor movement has followed these closely. Professor Commons thus epitomizes our labor history:

It is the story of how, in the course of three centuries, the wage-earner, as a distinct class, has been gradually, even violently, separating himself from the farmer, the merchant, and the employer, and coming to feel that his standing and progress in society depend directly on wages, and not directly on prices, rents, profits, or interest (pp. 3-4).

The *first* period in our labor industry, that which ended in 1827 and which is covered by Mr. Saposs in the present volumes, shows, of course, only the germs of organization and that in the hand-trades. Contrary to the usually accepted opinions it was not, Saposs concludes, the desire to protect its position as independent producers which led the artisan class first to think of organization, but it was the changes in methods of marketing causing an influx of cheap goods, which led the early mechanics to organize to protect their standard of living from the encroachment of the merchant-capitalists of early days.

The *second* period in our history when viewed from the labor standpoint is that of awakened citizenship, dealt with in this work by Miss Sumner and Mr. Mittelman. Coming into the possession of the ballot during the twenties and thirties, it was but natural that the workers should attempt to secure their ends by political methods. Shorter hours, sought in order to have leisure for improvement, public schools in order to have the opportunity for development, restriction of child labor for the same reason, abolition of imprisonment for debt, and the repeal of the laws requiring military service, were the demands of the period, which were secured in part, at least, because of the participation of the wage-earners in politics. Trade-unionism appeared during this period to have gained a firm footing, but the crisis of 1837 and the opening of the western lands postponed the full development of labor organizations.

The *third* period, described as that of humanitarianism and covered by Dr. Hoagland, brings the history down to the Civil War. It is an era of utopias. The "intellectuals", men like Brisbane, Evans, Greeley, and the Brook Farm group, assumed the leadership and led the labor movement away from class consciousness and into the pursuit of panaceas until it was brought back to the hard realities of life by the revival of trade-unionism in the later fifties.

The era since the Civil War is divided by Professor Commons and his associates into two parts: the *fourth* period, covered by Dr. Andrews, is that of nationalism, in which the strong national unions of to-day took strong root and in which modern methods of labor welfare were developed, and the *fifth* period, described by Mr. Perlman, which begins with the recovery of business from the effects of the crisis of 1873, during which time we have the entrance of modern socialism into this country and the first successful efforts are made to develop the organization of the laboring classes on a national scale. The Knights of Labor and the American Federation of Labor represent the two different modes of accomplishing this purpose and, if the second of these organizations has shown greater vitality and a greater capacity for solving the problems which are the product of a capitalistic organization of industry than did the Knights, it must be admitted that up to the present time it has not met the needs of the unskilled laborers nor has it developed a programme which looks beyond the life of the wage system and sees the possibility of a new social order.

Space does not permit a comparison of the labors of the several writers who have, in collaboration with Professor Commons, produced this monumental work in the field of American economic history. Suffice it to say that while the work suffers in a degree from the usual effects of divided authorship, there is greater unity of style and mode of treatment than is usually found in composite works. One misses the swing and the restrained enthusiasm which are more likely to be present when a single author skillfully traces the rise or fall of some great movement, and is more concerned with historical interpretation than with the mere sequence of events.

Yet it is due to the editor and writers of the *History of Labour in the United States* to say that the treatment of the various portions runs closely parallel to the interpretation of the introductory chapter. This might, of course, mean nothing more than that the editor had waited until the various chapters were written and had then undertaken to point out the significant features, but in view of the fact that the same lines of interpretation run through the explanatory chapters of the *Documentary History*, already mentioned, of which Professor Commons was the editor-in-chief, we must conclude that the editorship of the present work was not of a perfunctory character, but that the several writers had come to accept Professor Commons's interpretation of the events which they chronicled.

M. B. HAMMOND.

*A Social History of the American Family from Colonial Times to the Present.* By ARTHUR W. CALHOUN, Ph.D. Volume III. *Since the Civil War.* (Cleveland: A. H. Clark Company. 1919. Pp. 411. \$5.00.)

THE first two volumes of this work were published in 1917 and 1918, and were reviewed by the present writer in the *American Historical Review*, July, 1918 (XXIII. 860). The criticism there made holds good for the present volume; for the purpose, point of view, character of the sources of information, the general method, and use of evidence all reappear.

Briefly, the author essays to "develop an understanding of the forces that have been operative in the evolution of family institutions in the United States". These forces are mainly (p. 332), "the ascendancy of the bourgeois class, the dominance of a virgin continent, and the industrial revolution". His point of view still leads him to emphasize "pathological abnormalities". His sources still consist, to a large extent, of the *opinions* of foreign travellers or other writers, respecting the status of the family. Articles in popular journals seem to have a peculiar attraction for the author, and he makes large use of such periodicals as the *Independent*, *Outlook*, *Literary Digest*, *Chautauquan*, *Everybody's*, *Delineator*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, and the principal monthly magazines.