

keep the family above the starvation-point, the result must be either a thoroughly neglected home or, more usually, double work for the woman—outside work during the day and housework at night. I will say nothing of the woman who has to care for one or more young children, besides her housework.

Mrs. Parsons mentions the fact that in Europe the wife's contribution to the family income is taken for granted much more than here. It is so for the same reason that it is taken for granted here among the very poor. The difference is that there are more people in Europe on this low economic level. The results in Europe are the same as here: neglect of the home and children and overwork for the woman.

Brooklyn, May 21

DORA C. SHAPIRO

The Sex Equality of Our Ancestors

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: Charlotte Perkins Gilman repeats in *The Nation* the old fiction of man's domination of women by "religion, law, and family authority." But this has occurred only during comparatively brief periods of civilization, ancient and modern. For most of the time nearly all our forebears and nearly all the peoples of ancient states preserved an equality between women and men. In ancient civilization this was the equality of slaves. The proletariat of early Rome and the colonii of the pagan empire and the serfs of the Christian empire from Theodosius onward, constituting by far the most numerous and prolific part of the population, retained complete sexual equality because neither man nor woman had any other status than that of slave or serf. The same thing is true of all medieval Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire. At least five-sixths of the population were peasants and serfs, chained to the soil, but were enjoying complete sexual freedom. They mated naturally and voluntarily. Monogamy was common and was expected and approved, but marriage was unusual and most of the serfs were under legal disability of marriage. The monogamous male was a valuable asset to his mate and she suffered if he deserted her or if he were taken away by a press gang for the navy or by conscription for war or by death. But she was under no legal bonds to him and if she could get along better without him she was quite free to do so. Moreover, there was no such differentiation of tasks, virtues, or duties between the sexes as Mrs. Gilman describes. They shared in common the labor of the fields and the merrymaking of the holidays, and one sex was as chaste as the other. There was no "double standard."

The point is that it is from this stock that nearly all of us are descended, and not from the aristocratic few whose domestic institutions are described by Mrs. Gilman. Strict monogamous marriage augments the nervous organization of posterity, but the groups that practice it for many generations become so unfertile that their numbers tend to decrease. Most of the blood now in the veins of Americans results from the complete sexual freedom of the medieval serfs, modified by a few generations of religious, monogamous marriage. Hardly a trace of it comes from any remote ancestors, whose marriage customs demanded "compulsory motherhood."

New York, June 7

R. H. TOWNER

Clarifying and Interesting

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: That is such a good article of Mr. Krutch's in *The Nation* on Sex and Fiction that I can't keep still about it. I've read it several times. I particularly like his handling of Huxley—his attitude of not blinking the obscenities, but just trying to account for them. And that was a neat phrase about "Adam Bede." Altogether a most clarifying and interesting article. I wish I had written it!

New York, June 25

DOROTHY BREWSTER

Books

Colonies of England

Herbert Levi Osgood, an American Scholar. By Dixon Ryan Fox. Columbia University Press. \$1.75.

The American Colonies in the Eighteenth Century. By Herbert Levi Osgood. Columbia University Press. Vols. I, II. \$5.50 each.

George III and the American Revolution: The Beginnings. By Frank Arthur Mumby, Fellow of the Royal Historical Society. Houghton Mifflin Company. \$5.

NO one should attempt to read Mr. Osgood's volumes on colonial history without first familiarizing himself with the admirably sympathetic and appreciative tribute which Dixon Ryan Fox has written in memory of the author. Suggested originally by certain of Mr. Osgood's students at Columbia University and its cost defrayed by donations from a number of them, this little volume admits the reader to the inner life and purpose of a very lovable man, of great modesty and great ability, who more than any one else has revolutionized the writing of our earliest history. Without other ambition than to tell the truth of the colonial story and to do so under the most exacting self-set limitations of scope and presentation, Mr. Osgood devoted the best years of his life to the single task of interpreting the institutional character and development of the American colonies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Rightly deeming all other comprehensive treatises on the period as faulty and superficial, because based on inadequate information and still more inadequate understanding, Mr. Osgood spent more than thirty years in contributing by every means at his command to a revaluation of the place that the colonies occupied in the British scheme of things and in the evolution of American political and institutional ideas. He brought to his task the powers of a great teacher, an indefatigable investigator, and an interpreter of penetrating wisdom and unbounded zeal. He formulated his own philosophy of the subject, emphasized his own methods and views in the classroom, spread widely his ideas in printed statements and articles, and aided generously and cooperatively the work of those who received their historical training at his hands. Unlike Lord Acton, who, though wise of counsel and stimulating as a promoter of other men's historical work, never wrote a book, Osgood gave permanent form to his conception of colonial history in what will eventually reach a total of seven capacious volumes. These volumes, characterized by fulness of knowledge, fairness of treatment, insight into the deeper springs and processes of historical development, and profound understanding of the influences at work guiding the actions of men, are in themselves a notable and worthy life-work.

Mr. Osgood had no desire to afford entertainment to what is known as the reading public. He wrote for scholars and by scholars will his results be appraised. His volumes were conceived in study and reflection and only by study and reflection can they be mastered. They were not intended to be the play-time companions or solaces of the leisure hour. Though Mr. Osgood had no lack of respect for the public as a reader of history, he believed that the historian should have the subject and not the public in mind.

The first three volumes, which appeared in 1904 and 1907, exposed in elaborate and complex form the plan that Mr. Osgood had already presented in sundry earlier articles. They showed that he had no interest in narration or description as such, but was concerned with the evolution of government and institutional organization, because it seemed to him that the political and constitutional side of the subject should be given first place, inasmuch as only through law and political institutions could social forces become in a large sense operative. Now, in 1924,

six years after his death, appear the first two of the remaining four volumes, which are to carry the subject to 1760, the eve of the pre-revolutionary period. It is not much to the credit of American publishers that the manuscript should have had to be hawked about and finally should have been rejected by all of them. But business is business, and institutional histories that call for mental effort are not among the best sellers. In this country historical scholarship meets with little encouragement and reaps little reward, unless it is expressed in such alluring form as to make it salable for a profit.

The new volumes resemble the others in plan and treatment. They exhibit the same fixedness of purpose and are marked by the same severe limitations. Their content is very substantial, the treatment thorough and methodical, and the results are always dependable. The characterization of the personages dealt with is almost invariably sound and illuminating. In one respect the later volumes differ from the earlier. As Mr. Osgood advances into the eighteenth century, he deals more with action than with form, with operation than with structure. There is less analysis and more movement. This is not as true, however, of the chapters devoted to the British system of colonial management, where no attempt has been made to go beyond an analysis of function and structure and no effort made to study the British boards and departments actually at work in shaping the colonial relationship. These chapters leave upon the mind an impression of remoteness to the British system which in some ways is to be regretted.

Mr. Mumby's work entitled "George III and the American Revolution" is wholly unlike that of Mr. Osgood both in plan and purpose. Yet it, too, is worth while in its way, for it is interesting in that it gives an insight into the working of the human mind in times of crisis. It contains the story of the years from 1760 to 1776 (a second volume is to follow) in the language of contemporary correspondence, British and American, with a running commentary or nexus of events supplied by the editor. The volume will be read with considerable pleasure by many to whom Mr. Osgood's pages would be mentally painful, infinitely more important though they are. The impressions are agreeable, but inevitably of slight significance, and the work as a whole runs along a very narrow surface. The problem of the American Revolution cannot be solved in this fashion. The text is entertaining, but one feels that the method is wrong and that Mr. Mumby himself does not always understand the issues at stake. Else he would not have spoken in his commentary of Pitt as championing the "cause of American freedom," which he never did, or of the colonies in 1766 as a "united nation," which they were not even in the moments of gravest emergency. Nevertheless, Mr. Mumby's work will serve its purpose.

CHARLES M. ANDREWS

A Momentous Voyage

Journal of First Voyage to America. By Christopher Columbus. Albert and Charles Boni. \$3.50.

LONG after the technical historian has abandoned an interpretation, either through increased information or because of a reexamination of materials, the inefficient professional and the casual reader continue in error. Often such a condition is excusable on the ground that the revision is buried in obscure journals or that the weight of tradition militates against a general and rapid acceptance of the new position. These reflections are relevant in connection with the momentous voyage of Columbus. In many of the most excellent textbooks on American history it continues to be axiomatic that Columbus voyaged because the Turks closed the trade routes to the East. Some years ago A. H. Lybyer of the University of Illinois published a paper in both English and American historical journals in which he definitely proved by the study of the fluctuations of prices and supplies of Eastern commodities in the markets of the Italian city states that the Turkish conquests had practically

no influence on the trade. He further cited material tending to prove that the Turks extended courtesies to merchants desiring to cross their territories. He noted that the lack of any sharp rise in prices indicated a steady supply of Eastern commodities and he showed that when the Italian market collapsed it was from a different cause: the coming to power of the Atlantic seaboard commercial states.

This bit of research pushed the genesis of the attitude resulting in the voyage back into the socio-intellectual situation resulting in the expansion of Europe. The Italian city states had a practical monopoly on the trade routes to the Indies via the Near East, and so monopolized the trade. With the rise of Atlantic seaboard cities and nations to commercial prominence the dominance became irksome and they cast about for some way out of the situation. Cultural progress favored a release. The reports, somewhat fabulous to be sure, of travelers were becoming widely circulated. The crusades were not unimportant in stimulating curiosity and generating desires. There was a distinct revival of Alexandrian geography and astronomy (e.g., the writings of Ptolemy and Strabo), and many advances in cartography were made (see the letter from Toscanelli to Columbus, Note I of this volume). There were a series of important improvements in nautical instruments having to do with determining distances and position on the earth. The compass was known in the ninth century. There were important advances in ship-building. Chance and purpose had led to important discoveries.

The total expression of these various forces was the expansion of Europe (cf. Shepherd, *Expansion of Europe. Political Science Quarterly.* 1919). It thus appears that Columbus's voyage was only a part, albeit a very momentous part, of a general movement having its roots deep in European history and resulting in a tremendous release of energy which has not ceased even to our own day. Here, more than in the fabulous Renaissance of Symonds, originated the forces making for modern times. For very directly out of the expansion came the commercial revolution—a response to extended markets—and such intellectual activities as ethnology, ethnography, comparative religion, and all concerns implying a diversity of peoples and customs, and extending even to literature and manners. And it was but a short step to the industrial revolution and its extended influences.

If such a perspective seems to dim the luster of Columbus's achievement it is unfortunate, for to the people of the United States and to Europeans as well it is perhaps the most significant of all the voyages in the general movement of which it was a part. It stands as a beacon in the path of an historical movement. It marks the beginning of white men's activity in North America, and from that place were many important forces set in motion and to it were many of the strengths of the Old World carried. The implications of this man's achievement are astounding.

In this bare, matter-of-fact, but often thrilling record we catch a glimpse of his personality and realize dimly the impact of the new scenes on his curious mind. Columbus was intensely religious and referred all happenings to the will of God and sincerely desired to convert the discovered peoples to Christianity. He was a canny man who, so far as his knowledge extended, noted the commercially valuable products available and tried diligently to locate sources of gold. He was loyal to his backers and never neglected formally to claim each island for Spain. He had ethnological interests in that he set down his observations on the religious practices, property laws, marriage customs, and so on to the best of his understanding. He was kindly, preferring the gentle natives to the warlike ones, and honest, for he prohibited unjust barter between his sailors and the natives, and he forbade plundering. He noted that the natives seemed to practice communism, but he thought that monogamy was the rule except among the chiefs. Though he rather favored the use of clothing he was not blind to the beauties of the naked body, male and female. In fact, setting aside