

Miss King, Pickett, Claiborne and others, to connect the local happenings in the Mobile country with the larger movements of events.

A few errors and defects may be noted. In that portion of the book devoted to the development of the Louisiana settlements, the importance of the explorations toward the west and northwest seems considerably underestimated; the founding of Natchitoches is barely mentioned. The trading expeditions of *Sieur Louis de Saint-Denis* figure only as unsuccessful attempts to open commercial intercourse with Mexico, whereas, in reality, they led to the Spanish occupation of the country west of Red River. Mr. Hamilton has confused this Saint-Denis (as has also Mr. Winsor) with Juchereau de Saint-Denis, who was prominent in the northern part of the French possessions. *Presidio San Juan Bautista* is called *Presidio del Porto* (p. 79). Winsor's *Mississippi Basin* is referred to throughout as the *Basin of the Mississippi*. Penicaut's *Relation* perhaps does not deserve as much confidence as Mr. Hamilton accords it. Finally, the brief description of the civil government of West Florida under the Spaniards (p. 261) is hopelessly confused: the jurisdiction of *alcaldes* was not confined to civil affairs; there was a wide difference between a *pueblo* and a municipality; and Mr. Hamilton's inference from the title of the governor, that Mobile was "partly a presidio but mainly a pueblo," is wholly unwarranted.

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Life and Public Services of Edwin M. Stanton. By GEORGE C. GORHAM. Boston, Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1899. — 2 vols.: xiv, 456; xiv, 502 pp.

It would seem as if a period of thirty years might remove a biographer far enough away from his subject to obtain an all-around view of it, and to give something like proper value to all of its qualities. But such has not been the case in the book now before us. It is substantially a panegyric upon Stanton, the patriot — almost the saint. There is not much doubt that Stanton was the man for his time and place; but the place of secretary of war during civil war is not the place for a saint, though it certainly requires a patriot. With most men civilization quickens the conscience and refines the susceptibilities, at the same time that it enlightens the intellect. But in some instances its whole force seems to be expended in the development of the intellect alone, leaving the conscience apathetic or fanatical, and the instincts brutal. Such was the character of

Stanton. He had great power of mind and will, great energy, great private honesty, entire willingness to sacrifice himself to his country's welfare, as he understood it; but he was brutal in his instincts and his methods, and he was almost entirely wanting in the sense of propriety.

One of Stanton's first official acts manifested the despotic element in his character: I refer to his treatment of Gen. Charles P. Stone. This officer he caused to be relieved of his command, put under arrest and cast into prison without any information concerning the charges against him or any opportunity to refute them, and held for six months in close confinement, all the victim's requests and petitions for a hearing and even for communication with his family being disregarded, until at last Congress forced his release. Mr. Gorham does not even mention this frightful iniquity. From the point of view of an apologist, the omission was certainly politic; but an impartial biographer should feel it his bounden duty to set forth the incident, for the sake of what it fairly indicates as to Stanton's character. While it may be contended that the office held by Stanton, at the time he held it, required mental force and brutal methods for the efficient discharge of its functions, yet in this case that brutality appears so exaggerated as to become cruel injustice, and cruel injustice cannot be made a virtue under any conditions.

The other marked defect in Stanton's character was his utter lack of any sense of propriety in the conducting of public affairs. Those acts of Stanton which most clearly reveal this lack are treated by his biographer as the manifestation of undaunted patriotism. Stanton's preposterous notion that President Johnson and his entire cabinet—including such men as Seward, Stanbery and Browning—would defeat the spirit and purpose of the Reconstruction Acts, unless he, Stanton, should remain in the cabinet, is seriously taken and fully justified by Mr. Gorham; and that, too, in the face of the fact that Attorney-General Stanbery had, no doubt under instruction by the president, warned the Southerners, in his pleas in the cases of *Mississippi vs. Johnson* and *Georgia vs. Stanton*, that the president's opposition to the Reconstruction Acts ceased with the unsuccessful employment of his veto, and that after their enactment he intended to execute them in letter and in spirit. Stanton's resolve to remain in the cabinet, against the president's desire, does not seem to be regarded by Mr. Gorham as any violation of official propriety or of common courtesy towards the president. The fact is, that Stanton, from his place within the administration, did more than any other man to stir up those baseless suspicions against the president and

the other members of the cabinet which culminated in the scandal of impeachment. It is not claimed that Stanton was dishonest in what he did. He was one of those men whose respect for the honesty of their own opinions and purposes is so absorbing as largely to exclude respect for those entertained by others. But it is claimed that it manifested an utter lack of any sense of propriety in Mr. Stanton to insist on remaining confidential adviser to the president, after the latter had given him to understand that he was no longer wanted in the official family. His colleagues, Speed and Harlan, had resigned as soon as they felt that entire harmony of view did not obtain between them and the president; and Stanton should have followed their example, and would undoubtedly have done so, had he possessed the feelings of a gentleman. The extravagant notion that the fate of the country depended upon his holding on to the war department, although entertained or professed by many others beside himself, would not have gained possession of him, had he been animated by that spirit of deference which goes hand in hand with a true sense of the proprieties of life. Mr. Gorham does admit that he appeared at times to be arbitrary, but contends that he could not get through with the daily business of his office without this appearance. No one will deny that Stanton did an enormous amount of business, and that he did it, in most cases, well; but so did Seward and Chase and McCulloch, and they did it without having recourse to arbitrary methods or bad manners.

The truth is that Stanton was one of those men who come to the front, when the civilized methods for the solution of the problems of human existence break down and men revert to the means and forces of barbarism to destroy the barriers which they do not see how to remove or bridge over. But such men are not saints. They are extremely human. They are men of "blood and iron." They are sometimes almost demons. They thrust aside ruthlessly the men who stand for the milder means, and from the outset they put into operation the most radical methods. They do all things with great vigor, and they do many things well. But they do most things coarsely and brutally, and they do some things cruelly and vindictively. Such men serve well, on the whole, their day and generation, but the times to which they are adapted are out of joint. There is nothing ideal about them, and such times and such men are to be rather tolerated as grim necessities than glorified as blessings from on high.

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RECORD OF POLITICAL EVENTS.

[From May 11 to November 6, 1899.]

I. THE UNITED STATES.

FOREIGN RELATIONS. — Negotiations with the British government about the Alaska boundary have been in progress throughout the period under review. While the United States agreed not to establish a new military post, and, on the other hand, the Dominion government resolved that it would grant no more charters for railways, in the disputed territory, a *modus vivendi* was not concluded until October 20. In accordance with its terms, the United States retains control of all the passes leading to the Klondike from tidewater. The cordial relations of the United States with England were further enhanced by the systematic coöperation of the American and British delegates at the Peace Conference. Moreover, at the request of the British government, when war began in the Transvaal, the American consul-general at Pretoria was instructed to take charge of British interests there. — At the same time practically all traces of the popular ill-feeling between the United States and Germany were removed. To this result the arrangements for a cable connecting the two countries, the conclusion of a parcels-post convention (the first of the kind with a European state) and the somewhat unexpected harmony of action shown by the members of the Samoan Commission appreciably contributed. — The protocol of an agreement between Russia and the United States to arbitrate certain claims, resulting from the capture of American sealers off the coast of Siberia, was signed October 24. — The lynching of five Italians by a mob in Louisiana, July 21, occasioned an exchange of diplomatic notes between Italy and the United States. The reason for the lynching was the supposed complicity of the victims in a plot to murder an American, who, however, escaped with a severe wound. An investigation into the citizenship of the victims showed that two of them were Italian subjects. The President immediately sent a note to the Italian government, expressing regret at the occurrence and promising that justice should be done. — **Reciprocity treaties** were concluded with Portugal, July 8; with the British colonies of Barbados, Bermuda, British Guiana, Jamaica and Trinidad, July 22; and with France, July 24. By the agreement last mentioned more than six hundred articles imported into France from the United States were given the benefit of the minimum rate, a reduction of about twenty per cent from the present schedule. — During the summer commercial relations with Spain were formally resumed by the reciprocal appointment of consular officers. The American government also granted to Spain the