

National Ideals Historically Traced. BY ALBERT BUSHNELL HART. New York, Harper & Brothers, 1909.—xvi, 401 pp.

This volume forms part of the history of The American Nation, in 27 volumes, written by associated scholars under the editorship of Professor Hart. With it the elaborate enterprise is brought to a conclusion, for although there is a succeeding volume it is occupied by the index to the series.

The author tells us that his attitude is Darwinian and that he purposes "to show not alone what exists but what it has sprung out of, how it is conditioned by the national experience." That is to say, he holds the view that the history of a nation is essentially an account of the processes of adaptive change by which its activities have responded to the accidents of its career. No concept of historical method could be more attractive to the student of political science, but after a careful perusal, made easy and enjoyable by the strong narrative interest of the work, it seems to the present reviewer that the work is strikingly deficient in this very respect. Instead of an interpretation of our national development, we have a rapid survey of its phases with a recital of the fluctuations that have taken place in popular sentiment. It is written in a loose, journalistic style, abounding in oracular judgments, often in sharp contrast with the accompanying statements of fact.

In the chapter on "Self Government," after expatiating on the "success of the Americans in maintaining liberty," it is later on remarked that "no free people is more subject to the arbitrary will of the man in authority than the Americans." In the chapter on "External Relations" it is observed that "if there be an American ideal of the relations of this country with the outer world, it is that of peace founded on mutual understanding and mutual respect;" but in the same chapter it is declared that "Americans are little accustomed to consider the ideals of weaker neighbors," and that "Democratic simplicity backed up by the force of ninety million people is sometimes brutally frank and explicit, but it carries its points." Sometimes logical incompatibles are joined in the same sentence, as in this instance: "Even where disrespect for law is manifest, law in the abstract is cherished and obeyed" (page 356). Before reaching this remarkable conclusion Professor Hart observed that "in no part of the civilized world are there so many murders and so many unpunished crimes as in the great American cities" (page 338); and further, that "the Americans in general have lost confidence in the courts as a means of protection to life and property from open violence" (page 339). In discussing national ideals in the chapter on

"Theories of Government" Professor Hart notes that there is a "tendency to unify power," and he remarks that "in some Southern cities, the idea of checks and balances has so far gone into oblivion that a commission of three or five men is made mayor, cabinet, aldermen, common council and treasurer, all in one" (page 115). But in a later chapter he declares: "One thing is clear, that Americans prefer a complicated government with various centers of power" (page 176). The term Democracy is apparently regarded as so nearly synonymous with American government as to be freely interchangeable. For instance, "Democracy must meet the current belief that its ideals do not exclude the most scandalous corruption" (page 348). Democracy does not appear to be having trouble on that score in other countries in which the rule of the people has been really established.

Pretence and reality are often thrown into such sharp contrast by Professor Hart's unflinching candor in matters of fact that one might almost suspect him of sardonic intention in his grandiloquent discourse upon abstract ideals continually violated in practice, but the discrepancy is probably due to traditions of style from which Professor Hart has not escaped although he has probably done more than any other living historian to discredit them. As a repository of facts and as a guide to the bibliography of its various themes, the work has great value. Indeed, it is probably the most complete work now extant, as a manual of information on American traits, but it is singularly lacking in the insight that traces effects to their causes.

HENRY JONES FORD.

PRINCETON, N. J.

Histoire de la charité. BY LEON LALLEMAND. Volume III.
Le Moyen Age. A. Picard et Fils, 1906.—375 pp.

So large a book upon what seems at this distance a small but interesting subject gives promise of much enlightenment, but the reader of the volume under review is likely to meet with some disappointment. Innumerable illustrative facts have been brought together with painstaking accuracy. The sources of information are carefully given with many quotations from ancient documents in Latin, archaic French and Italian. The facts are marshaled in a logical order. Yet there is lacking that mastery of the subject that would arrange facts in their causal relationships and that would give the reader an understanding of the interplay of the various social forces which produced and determined the charity work of the middle ages.

The period covered is from the tenth century to the sixteenth.