
Review

Reviewed Work(s): American Commonwealths.--Michigan: A History of Governments. by Thomas McIntyre Cooley; California: A Study of American Character. by Josiah Royce

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REVIEWS.

American Commonwealths. — Michigan: A History of Governments. By THOMAS MCINTYRE COOLEY. 1885.—8vo, 376 pp.—
California: A Study of American Character. By JOSIAH ROYCE, Assistant Professor of Philosophy in Harvard College. 1886.—8vo, 513 pp.—Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston and New York.

The territory now included within the boundaries of Michigan has been subject successively to the governments of France, England, and the United States. Under the last named, it formed part of the great Northwest Territory and of Indiana Territory, before becoming the territory, and then the state, of Michigan. This varied career has induced Judge Cooley to call his contribution to the Commonwealth Series a history of governments. Professor Royce, in view of the peculiar circumstances attending the settlement of California by Americans, has sought to make his work a study of character. Neither author, however, has unduly neglected those phases of state history which are made subordinate. The chapter which Judge Cooley devotes to a broad outline sketch of the people of Michigan, in their general social aspects at the time the state was admitted to the Union, is one of the most enjoyable of his work. Nor, on the other hand, are the important political questions which arose in reference to California's conquest and admission passed by Professor Royce without careful examination.

The early history of both Michigan and California is largely concerned with that spirit of enterprise which found expression in the work of the pioneers. The Americans who settled in the Pacific state before its conquest from Mexico were animated by almost exactly the same motives that led to the settlement of Michigan. Yet a foreigner, reading the two books under discussion, would scarcely suspect that the two sets of immigrants came from the same source. The author who has devoted himself to the study of character has discovered that the Americans in California were, on the whole, a pretty poor lot, with little ambition in life beyond plundering the Spanish settlers of their land, and hoisting the American flag on every conceivable occasion. In Michigan, however, the pioneers appear more nearly as common tradition has represented them — a resolute, hard-working, much-enduring class, with an innate sagacity that would accomplish wonders in the foundation of a free commonwealth. Unless Professor Royce's fine critical instinct has

mised him, the popular conception of the national character in the West will have to be thoroughly overhauled and repaired.

Individuals have fared no better than classes under the survey of the social philosopher. Fremont, Stockton, and the other celebrities of the conquest of California, are compelled to shoulder heavy responsibility for wrong-doing. It is true enough that the general course of the United States in dealing with Mexico and its coveted possessions was not especially creditable to a great and free republic. But doubt may reasonably exist as to the unmitigated brutality and injustice of every measure for the acquisition of the desired domain. Fremont's connection with the conquest has always been involved in more or less obscurity. The famous feat of Lieutenant Gillespie in seeking out Fremont in the wilderness and delivering certain despatches from Washington, has been the subject of endless controversy. Professor Royce has a solution for the mystery. He concludes that Fremont had no authority from the government to undertake the conquest of California. The administration was intent on securing the state by intrigue through Consul Larkin, down at Monterey. Fremont's action in overrunning the country was an unauthorized piece of barbarity, based only on the officer's personal ambition, stimulated by a longing for family glory on the part of his wife and her doughty sire, Senator Benton of Missouri. Commodore Stockton is represented by the amiable Professor as a pompous bully, and Kearny as a quarrelsome martinet. In fact, about the only characters in California's early history that come with any sort of credit through the critic's examination are the Spanish natives. They appear as a simple, harmless people, whose idyllic life is rudely interrupted by despicable interlopers from the United States. If only the excellence of the author's literary style were at all proportionate to the captiousness of his criticism, his book would easily take rank as a classic. An unfortunate devotion to disagreeable mannerisms, however, seems likely to render such a consummation doubtful.

Individual reputations in Judge Cooley's hands are much more fortunate than those treated by Professor Royce. It is dreadful to think what the latter would have done with the unlucky general who surrendered Detroit in 1812. The author of *Michigan*, however, weighs Hull's defence with judicial impartiality, and concludes that the administration at Washington was really about as much at fault as the unhappy commander. In assigning credit for the firm foundation of Michigan's greatness, Judge Cooley ascribes a very large share to Lewis Cass, who was territorial governor after the war of 1812. It seems scarcely possible that the Governor Cass of this book — the clear-sighted friend of popular rights, the persistent advocate of free public education, and the most conspicuous among the strong-headed founders of a great com-

monwealth — is the same man who appears in von Holst's history as a shallow, second-rate politician, with no loftier motive for any public action than an ambition to be President, and no more honorable method of attaining his end than by shameless truckling to a bloodthirsty slavocracy.

Not the least interesting portions of Judge Cooley's book are those chapters in which he glances at the development of the central government, and the consequent modification of the relations in which it stood to the states. The veteran jurist puts on record his mature judgment as to the results of the system of interpretation applied to the constitution during the stress of war. Before now, in his edition of Story, published during the closing scenes of reconstruction, he has indicated an opinion that the positions assumed by the government practically overthrew the old constitution. In the present work he distinctly affirms this view, and points out that the Union into which Michigan was originally admitted is quite distinct from the Union in which she now abides. The eleventh and eighteenth chapters of *Michigan* will afford instructive reading for that school of constitutional law which maintains that the Union was preserved by virtue of the constitution, and not rather in spite of it. It remains to be said that the simple, lucid style of the writer gives an attractiveness to the narrative that, with the masterly arrangement of the subjects treated, puts the work in the front rank of the series.

WM. A. DUNNING.

The History of the Antislavery Cause in State and Nation.

By the Rev. AUSTIN WILLEY. Portland, Brown Thurston, 1886.—
12mo, xii, 503 pp.

This book is one of those contributions to the history of the great contest against slavery in the United States which are the last services that the actors in those events are able to render the public. Like most of these publications, whatever their form or what the plan of their authors, this is essentially a *mémoire pour servir*, an addition to the material for a history not yet ready to be written. The author of this interesting and really valuable contribution to the literature of the subject has not at all times been able to keep in mind that the best work he could do was to state plainly what he had himself seen and known and what he could collect from personal or private sources, but in the main he has done so. Mr. Willey was an active worker in the anti-slavery agitation, editor of an abolitionist organ and in extensive communication with large numbers of similar agitators. What he has been