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Book Reviews

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BOOK REVIEWS

Florida: Historic, Dramatic, Contemporary, by J. E. Dovell, Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Florida. 2 vols., 995 pp. (Lewis Historical Publishing Company, New York [1952])

This handsome set consists of a two-volume history of Florida by Dr. Dovell and two volumes of "Family and Personal History" compiled by the publishers. Although the latter will be of enduring value for biographical reference, they are of no particular interest to the general reader. This review will be confined, therefore, to a consideration of Dr. Dovell's work.

Since George R. Fairbanks published the first history of Florida in 1871, others have followed at fairly regular intervals. Roland H. Rerick's work came out in 1902, George M. Chapin's in 1914, H. G. Cutler's in 1923, W. T. Cash's in 1938, and Kathryn Abbey Hanna's in 1941. The first and the last two may fairly be termed scholarly works, although Dr. Hanna is the only professionally trained historian among the authors. One may reasonably ask, therefore, Why write another history of Florida now when two reliable ones have appeared within the last fifteen years?

The volume of scholarly literature on Florida has increased greatly during that period. It is true that Dr. Hanna issued a revised edition of her work in 1948, but as the revision was confined to re-writing and enlarging the last two chapters and adding another, the results of important research published during the last decade on earlier phases of Florida's history are not incorporated in the volume. The justification for Dr. Dovell's work lies in the fact that he has been able to consult and to draw freely upon materials not available to any of his immediate predecessors.

Dependence upon secondary material is inevitable for the historian who writes of an area as large and with as long a

recorded history as Florida if he is ever to complete his task. Dr. Dovell acknowledges this necessity in his preface, where he states that he resorted to original sources "only as time allowed or where secondary sources and studies do not exist." His use of secondary works is so complete that it actually becomes a virtue rather than a matter for apologetic explanation. His narrative, in conjunction with the copious documentation, constitutes a digest and compendium of the literature on Florida.

Any reader who will take the time to run through the chapter notes will readily perceive that secondary material is still far more abundant for certain periods than for others. In spite of this, Dr. Dovell's allocation of space between the major periods of Florida history, and hence his emphasis, is well balanced. The first volume begins with the early Indians and concludes with the Civil War; the second brings the story up to the administration of Governor Warren. This emphasis on post-bellum and contemporary Florida gives us the most complete history of American Florida that has yet appeared. To round out the picture, there are two appendices: "Natural Setting of Florida" and "The Antiquities."

The appendices deserve more than passing mention for they contain a wealth of information that one would not expect to find in a general history. The first covers topography, geology, geography, paleontology, flora, and fauna. The second gives a historical review of anthropological and archeological research in Florida and a summary of the present knowledge concerning the prehistoric and historic archeology of the area.

The coverage is complete in another way, and one that should give satisfaction to many readers. This is no straight political history, although the political story receives full treatment and is placed, where necessary, against its international or national background. But economic and social life is also treated in detail, and frequently enlivened by illustrative quo-

tations from contemporary observers that convey a sense of the spirit of the times obtainable in no other way.

The effect of Dr. Dovell's numerous quotations from secondary writers is not so happy. In the main, the transitions from his own writing to the quoted matter are smooth, but the frequency of the latter is somewhat disconcerting. Most readers regard quote marks as an invitation to skip. Any one who does so in this book will soon lose the thread of the narrative. More paraphrasing and less quoting would have improved both readability and style.

This stylistic defect is an irritant that does not materially detract from the very substantial worth of the history. As already indicated, it is almost encyclopedic in detail. And that detail is accurate. The few errors in fact that this reviewer noted are inconsequential and far less numerous than one would expect in a work of this magnitude.

Documentation is in the form of chapter notes. In view of the modern publisher's insistence upon concealing, if not actually abandoning the scholarly apparatus, this is an acceptable device. Since full bibliographic information is given only the first time a work is cited, it is sometimes necessary to work back through scores of notes, or even to the preceding chapter, to ascertain the exact nature of the reference. Inclusion of a formal bibliography would have done much to obviate this annoyance. It would also have been in itself a first-rate bibliography of Florida.

The general history and the biographical volumes are separately indexed. It is to be regretted that there is not more analytical indexing in the former, especially with regard to counties and cities. A user seeking a given fact about Key West, for instance, may have to consult fifty-six different page references before finding it or concluding that it is not to be found.

The work is profusely illustrated, but the illustrations leave

something to be desired. Although interesting in themselves, they are placed without regard to context and have lost much of their definition in reproduction. The format is otherwise pleasing. Indeed, in this day of shoddy bookmaking, it is a pleasure to handle such well-manufactured volumes.

Viewed as a whole, Dr. Dovell's work is an impressive contribution to the historiography of Florida. Its appeal is to the historian and the antiquarian as well as the general reader and affords them an opportunity of acquaintance with much of the minutiae as well as the main currents of Florida history. Its greatest value, perhaps, will be found in its use as a reference book. Certainly, it is the most comprehensive authoritative work yet published on Florida.

DOROTHY DODD

Florida State Library

Miranda: World Citizen. By Joseph F. Thorning (Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 1952). pp. 311. \$5.00.

Francisco de Miranda, if not one of the great men of modern history, was certainly one of the most colorful, and Dr. Thorning, in selecting him as a subject for a biography, has provided himself with an opportunity to tell a fascinating story.

Miranda began his career as a cosmopolite at the age of twenty-two when he left his native Venezuela to offer his sword to his king, the able and enlightened Charles III of Spain. As an officer in the royal army he saw service against the Moors in North Africa and against the English in the Caribbean during the American Revolution. Through sheer merit he advanced to the rank of colonel. Then, for reasons somewhat obscure, he left the Spanish service in a rather informal manner although he continued to use the title of colonel and added to it on his own initiative that of "Count." During the next two decades Miranda traveled extensively in the United States where he expressed himself as deeply impressed by the experiments in democracy being conducted

by the young republic, in Russia where he charmed the ageing Catherine the Great, in France where he became a general in the revolutionary armies, and in Denmark, the Low Countries, Germany and England. During this period he kept a diary which reveals the eager and alert but undisciplined character of his mind. No subject, politics, diplomacy, national customs, personalities, was exempt from his curiosity. Nor did he refrain from commenting on his numerous and indiscriminating amorous adventures. Miranda's diaries and correspondence constitute a valuable commentary on European society in an age of change.

At some period during his travels, again the circumstances are not quite clear, Miranda conceived his grand design for the liberation of Spanish America, and in 1801 he returned to England to promote the project. Here, subsidized by the British Government, he and a band of other South American patriots dreamed and plotted. The key to their schemes was British military and financial assistance. His Majesty's government, however, was reluctant to upset its continental diplomacy by open support of revolution in the Spanish colonies, and in 1806, Miranda left for America to take direct action. In the United States, he collected a small vessel and a motley band of adventurers with the intention of invading his native Venezuela. It was confidently expected that the token invasion would touch off a general uprising, but Miranda had been abroad too long to correctly gauge the sentiments of his countrymen. Public sentiment was not yet prepared for independence; Miranda met nothing but indifference and was forced to withdraw hurriedly.

After the Venezuelan fiasco, Miranda returned to London to resume his plotting. Then, in 1810, the Venezuelans themselves struck for independence. Miranda immediately returned to his native land where he was appointed commander-in-chief of the patriot armies, but his glory was short-lived. Mismanagement, dissension, and sheer hard luck defeated the

insurgents; and Miranda himself fell into the hands of the Spanish commander in 1812. After four years of imprisonment, he died in Cadiz in 1816.

Of particular interest to students of Florida history is Miranda's participation in the Spanish siege and capture of Pensacola in 1781, an operation which led to the expulsion of England from her last foothold within the present limits of the United States. During the campaign he was *aide-de-camp* to General Juan Manuel de Cagigal who commanded the Cuban contingent in the forces of Bernardo de Galves. Not only did Miranda distinguish himself in the operations at Pensacola, but he kept a diary of the siege which has survived and is one of the important sources for this episode. This diary has been translated and published by Professor Donald E. Worcester in Vol. XXIX, No. 3 (January, 1951), of the *Florida Historical Quarterly*.

Dr. Thorning has told the story of Miranda's life very well. The work is the product of extensive research and meets any usual test of scholarship. Fortunately the author has not sacrificed readability to meet academic standards. The narrative is lively and colorful and will certainly satisfy the requirements of the general reader. In interpreting the life of Miranda, one suspects that Dr. Thorning tends to overplay such lyrical expressions as "standard bearer of democracy," and "humanity's paladin." In particular, while Miranda was certainly a world traveler and cosmopolite, some leeway is needed to classify him as a "world citizen." However, Miranda's role in history was, is, and probably always will be controversial, and the reader is entitled to make up his own mind. Readers of this review will pardon the expression of the writer's opinion that the format of the book measures up to the high standard of excellence we have come to expect from the University of Florida Press.

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