

## The Book Trail

### THE MORNING OF AMERICA

By Frank J. Klingberg

D. Appleton — Century Co., \$3.00

One of the most encouraging tendencies of the present day is reflected in the new history books—not, perhaps, in text books intended for public school children, but at any rate in historical reviews written for a popular readership. These books are paying less attention to wars and battles than they used to, and are treating the activities of kings and self-styled nobles with less respect. Instead, they are devoting more space to a study of the origins of folkways, especially of those economic institutions which ultimately determine, to a large extent, the political history of nations.

Dr. Klingberg is Professor of History at the University of California at Los Angeles. His book covers the period from 1763 to 1829—the years in which “the foundations of the country as we know it today were laid down.” Reading between the lines, we seem to discern a slight Anglophilic bias; “The Morning of America” can hardly rank as a study of evolution from basic economic and social origins; Adam Smith, who opposed the policy of George III, is introduced as the “founder of the science of business,” a scant honor for the Father of Political Economy. Nor are wars and battles ignored; on the contrary, about a quarter of the text is devoted to the Revolutionary War and its military strategy and tactics.

The discussion of the causes of the Revolution is rather more superficial than that in, for example, Woodward's “New American History.” It follows the traditional plan: tea tax, Stamp Acts, and so on, and neglects the influence of the great smuggling fortunes of New England, and of the commercial and political rivalries throughout the colonies which made capital out of the tax abuses. But Dr. Klingberg reminds us that, in the end, the

Revolution made very little difference. “English leaders, who, ignoring the opinions of Burke and Adam Smith, had forced the Revolution on the Americans largely to gain a monopoly of American commerce, must have been genuinely amazed to see trade flowing steadily in its old channels. The whole organization of American life remained much the same after independence as before.”

One sentence in particular causes a qualm, and makes one want to murmur “So near, and yet . . .” We read, in connection with the lands of the public domain which lay between the Alleghenies and the Mississippi, “New states could be carved out and admitted to the Union, and the sale of the land to individuals or corporations would yield a public revenue.”

If Dr. Klingberg's work is not penetrating, neither is it banal. It is part of a trend toward a new interpretation of history. We cannot do better than attempt to earn for ourselves the praise he bestows upon Franklin, who “never grew old, never talked even in his very last years of the good old times, but instead peeped longingly into the future.” Man shall yet learn to read in history the record of his own wickedness and folly, and (more important) to profit by his past mistakes. Where there is no vision, the people perish; but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.

ALAN FREEMARTIN.

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