

Shuster, W. Morgan. *The Strangling of Persia.* Pp. lxiii, 423. Price \$2.50.
New York: The Century Company, 1912.

Russian interests and British trade explain the passing of Persian nationality. Mr. Shuster's account of his personal experiences as treasurer-general of Persia is an absorbing recital of the eighteenth century methods used by Russia and to a lesser degree by England to assure that Persia's efforts for her financial regeneration should fail. Though the appointment of the group of Americans who were asked to help lift Persia out of the slough of impending bankruptcy and partition was not one backed officially by the United States their departure, work and failure made Persia an object of American interest to a degree never before known. The net of local intrigue, treachery and foreign diplomacy of the Machiavellian order which the author details, shows that the partition of Poland has its twentieth century counterparts. Morocco, Tripoli and Persia, three Mohammedan states, are vanishing under the pretense of the needs of civilization championed by four of the great Christian powers. In the case of Persia the author shows the claim to be the merest pretense. The struggle for a constitution, the reaching out for self-government, the earnest efforts for abolition of official dishonesty, for taxation reform and efficient protection of property made by the Progressive party of Persia showed that the ancient empire had heard the call of the twentieth century and was determined to make for itself an independent place in the world's affairs. But this very advance made Persia dangerous to her powerful neighbors. Russia especially saw in the present weakness of Persia and in the strained relations of England and Germany the opportunity to take one step more in her approach to the Persian Gulf. In these days of the Hague Court and arbitration treaties such incidents as the recent diplomatic moves of Russia in Persia furnish a cynical comment on the depth of our boasted accomplishments in insuring justice and fair dealing among nations.

Except for the failure of the plans of the Americans through foreign interference, Mr. Shuster's account is one of brilliant achievement. To have been able in a short period of less than a year to put down a civil war of dangerous proportions, to reform one of the most corrupt systems of public finance which the world has known, and to change a chronic treasury deficit into a credit balance of almost a million dollars, is a signal evidence not only of Persia's earnestness in reform but of the ability of those whom she called to her aid.

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Simons, A. M. *Social Forces in American History.* Pp. xiii, 325. Price \$1.50.
New York: Macmillan Company, 1911.

It is extremely gratifying to social students that the interpretation of history is claiming the attention of so many writers of the present day.

The dynamic forces of civilization reside in the underlying social and economic conditions. Individuals who have been forced to the front by these conditions and who are the direct product of them have been given undue prominence as history makers. The greater and more important task of tracing the motive forces behind men and movements is, at least, now being undertaken seriously.

The author of this volume has made a valuable contribution to this form of history. He has endeavored to explain the most obvious facts of our American history in terms of social causation. He has not hesitated to rend the mask and expose the same interests behind the discovery, colonization and development of our country, which we find operating to-day, the desire for financial gain. The discovery of America was an accident in the quest for a new commercial route to the Orient. The colonization was motivated by financial corporations who sought to exploit new sources of revenue. Had the London and Plymouth companies been as successful as the East India Company, our history would have been vastly different. The Boston tea party would not have happened if the duty on tea had not been lowered to such a point that it made unprofitable the smuggling business carried on by John Hancock and others.

These are samples of the lack of respect the author shows for our treasured idealism. To many readers the method of interpretation will seem sordid and distasteful. The only question to be raised, however, is the validity of the facts presented. These have been somewhat difficult to secure. They have been gathered not from histories, but from contemporary literary sources and may be subject to the bias either of the writer or of the interpreter. But even if the facts in certain instances may prove to be distorted, the remedy lies in a re-examination of the material rather than in an abandonment of the method. The time has come when we are vastly more concerned with a correct understanding of the historic process than with the preservation of traditions, and the author has accomplished his purpose at least so far as to place the emphasis upon a realistic interpretation.

The book is well written, covers a wide area, embracing most of the important epochs of American history, and deserves a careful reading by all those who prefer historic fact to historic fiction.

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Smith, Justin H. *The Annexation of Texas.* Pp. ix, 496. Price \$3.00. New York: Baker and Taylor Company, 1911.

In historical research, as well as in migration of settlers, recent years have witnessed a veritable Texas-ho! Thus it may be in place to note the relation of Dr. Smith's comprehensive work to other explorations in the same field.

J. S. Reeves, "American Diplomacy under Tyler and Polk," 1909, exploited much of the source material on the Texas question accessible within the United States. E. D. Adams, "British Interests and Activities in Texas," 1910, was the result of similar researches in the Public Records Office, London. Various periodicals, including especially the *Quarterly* of the Texas State Historical Association, have published and still continue to publish worthy contributions based upon materials accessible in Texas and Mexico. Many further studies along similar lines have now been made possible by the publication of the "Texan Diplomatic Correspondence" and the "Secret Journals of the Senate, Republic of Texas."

Dr. Smith has studied much of the above-mentioned source material more