

CURRENT EDUCATIONAL PUBLICATIONS

MISS TARBELL'S NEW BOOK

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE LINCOLNS, by Ida M. Tarbell. New York: Harper and Brothers. 1924. Pp. 418. \$4.00.

Written in Miss Tarbell's interesting style, illustrated with numerous cuts from photographs bearing the stamp of Harpers' art, and dealing largely with persons and places familiar to Virginians, this book will probably make a special appeal to every reader of *The Virginia Teacher*. The volume reports a new pilgrimage in familiar fields, one undertaken to refresh and enlarge the author's previous studies of Lincoln lore. The pilgrimage began in Hingham, Massachusetts, passed thence to New Jersey and Pennsylvania, through Maryland into the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, and so on into Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois.

It is only a year and a half ago since Miss Tarbell, following the Lincoln trail with all the keenness and relentlessness of an Indian on the warpath, but with an intent and purpose altogether benevolent, came to Harrisonburg and Blue Stone Hill. In our library and in our neighborhood she found books and people to whom she was pleased to make acknowledgment, and out by Linville Creek she found the very homesteads where the Lincolns lived, the furniture that their artisans had fashioned, the good land their good judgment had selected, and the graves in which their bodies rest. Not only so, she found in the vicinity many Lincolns still living, and many of their kindred who bear other names.

Miss Tarbell might even have related, though she forbears so to do, how in crossing Linville Creek from one Lincoln farm to another, by the selfsame ford that George Washington used, September of 1784, her automobile engine was "drowned" and she was left waiting in the middle of the stream while the driver went wading out and hunting for a horse to rescue her. No doubt a few of the impressions she received during that adventurous half hour have gone into the book as local color or heightened flavor.

She utterly explodes the long-standing fallacy that Abraham Lincoln's forebears

either in Massachusetts, in Virginia, or in Kentucky were "poor white trash." The land they owned, the houses they built, and the positions of honor and influence that they held are proof enough of their character, intelligence, and social standing. In all probability Thomas Lincoln for a while was limited to the bare necessities that were the rule with most pioneers of his day and locality, but even his poverty and "shiftlessness" have been overworked.

Abraham Lincoln, grandfather of the president, was a man of means and influence before he left the Shenandoah Valley. Records show that he was a captain in the militia, a judge advocate of the court, and that he received a goodly sum for the fertile land he sold in Rockingham County, Virginia, upon his removal to Kentucky in 1782, or thereabouts. In Kentucky he had already taken up large tracts of excellent land. His wife, Bathsheba Herring, was the daughter of one of the first families of the Shenandoah Valley. The Lincolns and the Herrings are still in Rockingham County, and they still maintain their standing and influence. That Abraham Lincoln was a man of unusual endowments is no longer a mystery, neither is his ancestry any longer in shadow, for Miss Tarbell and others have found in Kentucky the documents which show that the marriage of Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks was duly and properly solemnized in Washington County on June 12, 1806. It will be no great surprise to persons who have dug into the facts a little way to learn some day that Nancy Hanks herself was born here in Rockingham County, in the very neighborhood from which the Lincolns and others went to Kentucky and other regions west and southwest. Just recently some very interesting discoveries of old records have been made which may sometime be sufficiently supplemented to make plain other "footsteps" which the "sands of time" have much obscured.

Miss Tarbell's book is a real contribution to the human interest story of growing America. It shows the struggle of the pioneer, the courage of the empire-builder, the vision and devotion of the reformer, and the moral stamina that has given our race its character and beauty and strength. In a

day when luxury is softening our hands and ennui is muddling our souls we need the awakening shock of real life that has made our fathers and our mothers great.

JOHN W. WAYLAND

A BOOK FOR THE TIMES

ETHICS AND CITIZENSHIP, by John W. Wayland. Staunton, Va.: The McClure Company, Inc. 1924. Pp. 251. \$1.85.

"The world must look to good character rather than to intellectual power and learning for release from its ills."—Elihu Root.

Present conditions emphasize only too forcibly the truth of the above statement. Corruptness and lack of moral stamina are prevalent in our national life. Men of ability lack an unselfish love of service and a clear conception of duty and responsibility. The United States is not suffering from ignorance and incompetency as much as it is feeling the effects of low ethical standards and suffering because of the absence of that keen and discerning sense of right and wrong which makes men worthy of faith and trust.

The success or failure of a nation does not rest ultimately upon its material wealth and prosperity, but upon the character of its citizenship. Too often we fail to recognize the importance of ethical and moral standards by which men and women judge their actions. Not a mere knowledge of the duties and privileges of citizenship makes the most desirable citizen; definite and high ideals must reside in the heart and mind of each citizen. Standards of right and wrong, pure and unselfish motives, a desire to live truly, must pervade the man or woman, boy or girl, or else the foundation upon which our citizenship rests will not be permanent.

Dr. John W. Wayland, of the Harrisonburg State Teachers College, presents this idea in an unusually able and inspiring manner. He stresses the importance of a practical study of ethics and right living as being necessary to a proper conception of citizenship. The purpose of the author is to present and analyze the motives that lead men to act as they do. "The state consists largely and essentially in good government. Good government rests upon good citizenship. And good citizenship must have a sure founda-

tion." Among the civic foundation rocks are found love of truth, love of justice, sympathy, sense of duty, courage, and fidelity. These must rest upon intelligence, knowledge, and skill; and all must be quickened by conscience.

"Some things are right; some things are wrong." The ethical content of this assertion is not presented in an abstract and philosophical manner, but a simple and straightforward explanation is given: the concrete examples forcibly bring out the lessons of the text. The origin and growth of ethics is briefly treated, and this is followed by a study of the virtues and vices, those characteristics the living application of which will bring both individual and national happiness or sorrow.

Important as the foregoing may be, the real value and contribution of the work lies in the practical application of ethics to everyday life and living. The names of the chapters suggest the lines of thought which are developed. These chapters are as follows: The Good Citizen at Work, The Good Citizen at Play, The Ethics of Conversation, The Ethics of Politeness, The Ethics of Beauty, The Ethics of Business, The Ethics of Democracy, The Ethics of Humanity, and Incentives to Right Conduct. These chapters are rich in thought and suggestion. Homely and simple incidents and illustrations are used with telling effect. Fundamental truths are presented and taught and become thoroughly lodged in mind and conscience of the reader. The study of ethics found in the first half is made alive and vital in this practical and modern application found in the latter half of the book.

The author includes in his text a few chapters containing valuable suggestions as to the proper and effective teaching of good conduct and strong character, and concludes with these two chapters, the one entitled, Our Debt to the Ideal, the other, Opportunity.

The treatment throughout is simple and straightforward and devoid of abstract ramblings characteristic of many books on ethics and morals. Much philosophical material is omitted, 'tis true, but this is to be commended. The author holds the attention of the reader throughout while at the same time he teaches truth and justice.