

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

Manual for the Arrangement and Description of Archives Drawn up by direction of the Netherlands Association of Archivists, by S. Muller Fz., J. A. Feith and R. Fruin Th. Az. Translation of the Second Edition by Arthur H. Leavitt. (New York. The H. W. Wilson Company, 1940. 225 pp. \$3.50.)

In 1898 three Dutch archivists, S. Muller, J. A. Feith, and R. Fruin, set to devise a logical framework for the archives of the Netherlands, propounded a series of a hundred aphorisms or principles of archival organization. These, after modification by the Ministry of the Interior, were published with discussions and examples for each of the hundred principles. The specific problem attacked was as complex as any that could have been found. As the provinces of the Netherlands emerged from the amorphous feudal and ecclesiastical mass of empire and church, falling under the successive rules of the House of Burgundy, and the Austrian and Spanish Habsburgs, old fiefs divided, part adhering to Germany and part to the Netherlands. Feudal and ecclesiastical authorities were supplanted, the stadtholdership alternated with the commonwealth, and both were finally supplanted by the Batavian Republic and the monarchy. The resulting problems of archival transfers, divisions, and reunions called for the most exact logical approach. Accordingly, archivists throughout Europe studied with enlightenment on their own problems the logic of the three Dutch archivists. It was translated into language after language, translators adding footnote commentaries on their own special problems. Finally it has been left to an American archivist to translate the work into English.

Mr. Leavitt has done his work skilfully. His translation at once gives the flavor of the original, and the substance of irreproachable English idiom. He has been indefatigable in searching out the various meanings of the same technical term and assigning in each case the exact English equivalent. He has selected from the footnotes of earlier translators and has added others of his own; and he has put the profession in the English speaking countries under a heavy debt of gratitude to him.

The book perhaps reveals the reason why English archivists have not deigned the translation, which has been left for an American archivist to achieve. For the Netherlands has problems closely corresponding to those of the United States from which English insularity and persistence of tradition had sheltered them. Archives had been confused, scattered, lost, classified chronologically, alphabetically, or historically. The cloak of charity had been thrown about errant archives finally returned like the errant nun in *The Miracle* to their cathedral home. Whether given up by their captors under compunctions of conscience or as ransomed for money, their essential purity was assumed once they had returned to safety.

The English on the other hand, as the authors point out, sternly assume the unchastity of errant archives on the ground that they can only have left the repository for some evil end, and must necessarily be presumed to return tainted with forgery and alteration. Once they have returned, the archivist can only be responsible for their morals after they have come back to his custody. In the majority of cases, undoubtedly this Victorian strictness is unjust. Myriads of documents kidnapped from British archives retain an absolute unblemished virtue in the hands of successive private captors to this very day.

Space forbids any complete analysis of the delicate logic of Muller, Feith, and Fruin that would not do violence to its exactness. But any English using archivist interested in setting up logical criteria for his decisions will find the reasoning at once a guide and a stimulus to his own thinking. Of it the ruler over archives may well say in Henry VIII's phrase, "This is a book for me and for all kings to read."

THEODORE C. PEASE

Archives Yearbook for South African History, edited by the Archives of the Union of South Africa. Editorial Board: C. Graham Botha, Chief Archivist for the Union, Dr. Coenraad Beyers, Assistant Chief Archivist for the Union, Prof. Dr. J. L. M. Franken, Prof. Dr. H. B. Thom, Secretary: P. J. Ventner, M.A., Archivist. (One volume in two. Capetown. Cape Times Ltd., 1938. x, 239, and xiv, 244 pp.)

This is the first volume of a projected series of yearbooks to be published by the Archives Department of the Union of South Africa. The undertaking of this program of publication was agitated for some years by scholars and archivists, among whom Professor Franken, now a member of the editorial board, was one of the chief promoters. The purpose of the volume which represents the first fruits of their labor is admirably and succinctly stated in a paragraph from the preface:

"The series of this publication will contain matters of interest to the Archivist and to the researcher. It will enable the Archivist to discuss problems, draw attention to new material coming into his custody and to any other matter which may be of assistance to the historical student. It will also serve the research scholar as a medium of giving others the benefit of his work."

Contributions to the *Yearbook* may be submitted in any of three languages: Afrikaans, English, or High Dutch.

Historical studies compose the greater part of the volume. The titles are, for part I: "Het Invoeren van de Slavernij aan de Kaap," by Professor W. Blommaert, "Die Weg na die See," by Dr. D. W. Krüger, "The Destruction of Records in South Africa," by P. J. Ventner; for part II: "Die Geskiedenis van die Lutherse Kerk aan die Kaap," by Dr. J. Hoge. Dr. Krüger's contribution is an exposition of the Dutch migration and the founding of the South African Republic; the other titles are self-explanatory.

Mr. Ventner's article, the only contribution immediately concerning archival policy, is a description and criticism of South African policy in respect to record disposal. In view of the widespread interest in this phase of archival policy, the editor of THE AMERICAN ARCHIVIST is making arrangements to reprint the article in a future issue of this journal.

CHARLES W. PAAPE

The Historical Records of North Carolina, Volume III, The County Records, Nash through Yancey, prepared by the Historical Records Survey of the Works Progress Administration. Edited by Charles Christopher Crittenden and Dan Lacy. (Raleigh, North Carolina. The North Carolina Historical Commission, 1939.)

This is the third and concluding volume of a series, the first two volumes of which were reviewed in THE AMERICAN ARCHIVIST for April and October, 1938. The present volume keeps to the high standards set by its two predecessors. The sketches of the county history are brief, usually averaging about a page for each of the thirty-eight counties included. Then there follow brief and business-like summaries of the records of the various offices, the whole being an achievement in condensation and effectiveness. Copies of the volume will be sent free to persons interested who address the North Carolina Historical Commission with a mailing fee of twenty-five cents.

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