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and understanding of, the human behaviour upon which the success of such discoveries depends. His characterization of the explorers, Knight, Dobbs, Pond, Cook and Vancouver are excellent commentaries of that view of History which holds that, "History is the lives and actions of great men." (Carlyle's romantic theory, which though a half truth, is worthy of appreciation, and which Williams has noted.)

But the real value of the book lies in the understanding it gives of the complex problems that confronted the patriots, geographers, seamen and trade enthusiasts of the 18th century.

With extensive evidence to substantiate his judgments, and comprehensive footnotes (amply illustrating Williams' scholarship), he points out the obstacles in the way of successful exploration. Williams describes clearly the initial opposition of the British Government (who feared to cross swords with the Hudson Bay Company), and contrasts it with their later attitude, after the Peace of Paris, when new strategic and commercial motives became evident. He vividly narrates the physical problems of the ice, inadequate shipping, and disease recurrent on all the voyages. Furthermore, he emphasises the discouragement which the constant threats of war against Spain and France provided. He gives adequate consideration to the question of finance, which clearly would determine the undertaking of the voyages. He points out that the apathy of the British public towards such expeditions, coupled with the disillusionment experienced after the failure of each successive voyage, resulted in only limited finance being available and so provides the explanation for the comparatively few voyages undertaken at that time.

There is an illuminating account of the effect which the then popular geographical theories had upon British opinion. He uses, for example, the then accepted authentic account of the Fuca voyage and the Fonte Letters as a background, and he develops the theme of the explosion of these "myths and fables". He contrasts well the sanguine theories of the speculative geographers with the frustrating experiences of the explorers.

In his description of each voyage, Williams gives a just and reasoned explanation of the causes of their failures, but he does add a critical commentary (Cook's voyage, for example).

Towards the Hudson Bay Company, Williams maintains a severely critical attitude for its blatantly commercial motives and its lack of co-operation with the undertakings made by the explorers, Knight, Moor, Middleton; yet he draws attention to the fact that even the enthusiast Dobbs was in no way motivated by purely scientific zeal. Despite his criticism of the Company, he does present their view, and reveals that the secrecy required of the Company was partially responsible for the widely held view that they were persistently obstructive and entirely unenthusiastic towards the discovery of the Northwest Passage.

In his final analysis Williams explains that the limited achievements of the eighteenth century may be attributed to a lack of drive caused by the obvious conclusion that such a route would be uneconomic for trade purposes. He concludes that it was not till considerations of purely scientific interest, national prestige and sheer zest for exploration became universal, as in the 19th century, that the discovery of the Northwest Passage became a realizable goal.

Criticism of the book is to be found in a certain repetitiveness and dullness, when vivid narration is replaced by a dreary account of the controversy in England. I consider that the work would be greatly improved by a series of well drawn, clearly illustrated maps showing the development of knowledge of the Northwest Passage from the 16th century onwards, and including a map of the Northern coastline of America as it is known today. This would best clarify certain confusing facts detailed.

This book will appeal to a limited reading public, but as a reference book for the specialist, I would give it my warmest recommendation. Williams has revealed himself as an excellent narrator. But more important, his schoarship, his mastery of the facts, his complete study of the background motive and his strong evidence and supporting statements to corroborate the unbiased and fair judgments he makes, rank him as an historian of great merit.—C.E.K.

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