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THE CONFEDERATE CABINET

Jefferson Davis and his Cabinet. By Rembert W. Patrick. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press. 1944. 401 pp. \$3.75.

Florida had but one member of the Confederate cabinet ; but, in a way, that was more than her share. For in man-power, in military resources, and in wealth of every kind she had but a fraction of what her neighbors possessed ; yet Stephen R. Mallory was Secretary of the Navy from the beginning to the end of the war, and Dr. Patrick has this to say of him:

“Truly Mallory made an extraordinarily able Secretary of the Navy. His temperament enabled him to work in harmony with the President, and generally with his fellow cabinet members and with naval commanders. He had imagination and the initiative to strike out on new paths. He was industrious and kept the business of his department well in hand. . . . For four years fraught with almost insuperable difficulties he directed the Navy Department brilliantly.”

This opinion of Mallory and his services is shared by Douglas Southall Freeman, biographer of Robert E. Lee, and, where is there a better judge. In a review of Professor Patrick's work (*The Saturday Review of Literature*, October 21) Dr. Freeman ranks Mallory as one of “the three men who did most in the cabinet. . . .” But he says, “if there had been forty-eight hours in a day Jefferson Davis probably could have dispensed with a cabinet. . . .” hence: “the Confederate cabinet is less known than that of Lincoln. Dr. Patrick's book consequently in-

troduces to American readers about a dozen unknown men among the eighteen he presents.

"All of them are well portrayed, though Dr. Patrick has been tempted by the abundance of material on Toombs and Hunter to give them a larger place in his book than they held in Confederate councils. Some members of the cabinet were neither capable nor interesting. . . . Until his transfer from the War Office to the State Department, Judah Benjamin was the leading figure in the cabinet. The extent of his subsequent influence on Davis and the policy of the Confederate States is not easy to determine.

"As the cabinet jack-of-all-trades, Benjamin commands a separate chapter. Other members are treated chronologically by departments. If this seems at first glance to be an artificial arrangement, it must be said that Dr. Patrick could not have put the sketches together in a history of the cabinet. Except for a few weeks in Montgomery, there could be no cabinet history because there was no cabinet. There simply was a group of departments of somewhat doubtful cooperation.

"Davis appears in Dr. Patrick's pages with the hard lines somewhat softened. Treatment is tolerant and on most pages is admiring. Perhaps too little is made of Davis's intense personal loyalties and of his quick response to chivalrous gestures. . . ."

Dr. Freeman continues: "The whole story has not been told by Dr. Patrick and could not be compressed in a single volume ; but he has written well and has selected wisely from the materials. He has used his sources, particularly the contemporary newspapers and magazines, with so much skill that one hopes that this fine first book will be followed by others in the same field."