

Alice Hamilton: A Life in Letters. Edited by Barbara Sicherman. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984. Pp. xiv, 460. Illustrations, notes, sources, index. \$25.00.)

Dr. Alice Hamilton was an extraordinary person whose accomplishments in the field of industrial medicine in the first half of the twentieth century have generally been recognized. But surprisingly little attention has been given to her equally extraordinary career outside medicine in the arenas of social welfare, the peace movement of World War I and the 1920s, postwar socialism, and the Cold War. Still less attention has been given to Alice Hamilton as a person.

Her autobiography, *Exploring The Dangerous Trades* (1943), has until now been the only published source for understanding this remarkable woman. But this self-effacing work tells little about the person and shields us from her other endeavors. Barbara Sicherman's collection of Dr. Hamilton's letters does much to remedy these omissions and introduces us to the profound richness of Hamilton's century-long life.

Sicherman's book is not a complete collection of the letters of Alice Hamilton: only 132 of her more than 1,300 extant letters, written over a period of 76 years, are published. Specialists in the various movements in which Hamilton became closely involved will be disappointed at having only a sampling, but Sicherman has sought to produce "a readable volume rather than a definitive textual edition." In this she has been quite successful, and if her purpose was also to encourage renewed studies into Alice Hamilton (and her extraordinary kin) she has succeeded in this, too.

Each of the carefully selected letters is complete. They are grouped according to chronological periods in her life and illustrate the principal themes of her endeavors. Sicherman gives pertinent sections of other letters when they illuminate or help in making a transition. Among the most interesting are the letters touching on Hamilton's medical training in the 1890s, her years at Jane Addams's Hull House (1897-1907), her first struggles with the previously unknown "science of industrial medicine," and her tenure as Harvard Medical School's first female faculty member (1919-1927).

Raised in Fort Wayne as but one of a host of precocious Hamiltons descended from Dearborn County's Emmerine Holman and Allen County's first sheriff, Allen Hamilton, Alice was the sister of the famed classicist Edith Hamilton and the cousin (and lifelong confidant) of social activist Agnes Hamilton. Alice, like others of the clan in the "Hamilton compound" in Fort



ALICE HAMILTON, 1869-1970

Courtesy of the Allen County-Fort Wayne Historical Society.

Wayne, was tutored at home until she could be sent east. In 1890 Alice studied at the "third-rate" Fort Wayne College of Medicine but soon entered the first-rate program at the medical department of the University of Michigan, from which she graduated with an M.D. in 1894.

The early letters, from 1890 to 1919 (nos. 1-59) illustrate Alice's attraction to science and her equally deep compulsion to throw herself into social reform. Hers is a superb and intimately drawn example of that first great generation of college women who were to contribute to so many varied fields.

Never able to reconcile herself wholly to the ward and the clinic, even through her social service opportunities at Hull House, Hamilton was drawn at last to combine her skills as a laboratory scientist with her compassion for social reform as a

member of the Illinois Commission on Occupational Diseases. Here she began the long process of giving form to her unique profession, industrial medicine, though it was not until 1915, while in her forties, that she admitted she had at last found her vocation (p. 180).

A proven and respected scientist firmly committed to social reform, with a compelling style marked by her belief in the powers of persuasion instead of confrontation, Hamilton had become an international figure by the end of World War I. The letters of the last half of her life, 1919-1969 (nos. 60-132) are most stirring when they touch on the petulant treatment she suffered in the presence of her (all male) colleagues at Harvard and in her replies to being labeled a subversive in the McCarthy era.

The selected letters in this edition are engagingly tied together by Sicherman in succinct, informative commentaries, which often include information and some text from the unpublished letters. The short essay that serves as a bibliography is strictly limited to works by and about Alice Hamilton; other works used by Sicherman must be gleaned from the separate pages of notes.

Sicherman has provided an enduring portrait of one of the twentieth century's most important reformers and one of Indiana's most brilliant figures. What is especially attractive in this book is that the portrait is created very largely by the subject herself.

*Allen County-Fort Wayne
Historical Society, Fort Wayne*

Michael C. Hawfield

The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians. 2 volumes. By Francis Paul Prucha. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984. Pp. xxxii, 1302. Notes, maps, tables, illustrations, appendixes, bibliographical essay, index. \$60.00.)

There is much to admire in this well ordered, heavily documented culmination of Francis Paul Prucha's years of research upon the United States government's relations with Indians. Subsuming his own numerous works on various aspects and periods up to 1912, Prucha "boldly" (his own, quite accurate assessment) carries the study to 1980, notwithstanding the paucity of accessible materials on many aspects of twentieth-century Indian affairs.

The result is an analytical chronology, managed by topical treatment within periods, which is probably the only way to impose order upon such a welter of complexities and contradictions