Reviews


In spite of all that has been said and written about the over-emphasis upon military and political history, present day textbooks and courses of study still give over forty per cent of space to war and politics. Social, economic, intellectual, and religious history have not yet been given due recognition. Before the religious history of the American people can receive proper recognition much work remains to be done in a scientific spirit. What has been done has too often been done to defend, extenuate, or glorify a particular church or denomination. Much local work needs to be done before the larger story can be properly told.

It is from such a point of view that The Early Days of St. Gabriel's should be approached. It tells the interesting story of the founding and development of the Catholic church in Connersville, Indiana, a town of about 9,000 inhabitants. Incidentally, it makes a real contribution when other phases of local history are touched upon; among these the following may be mentioned: the French regime, Indian traders, Governor William Henry Harrison, John Conner, the founder of Connersville, and the establishment of the first courthouse, schoolhouse, and stage in Connersville. The heroic and self-sacrificing labors of the Methodist circuit rider in pioneer days in Indiana have been well described in historical literature, but the equally difficult labors of the early Catholic priests have not yet been adequately told. Hence a description of their labors in this one local community is welcome.

The proof reading for this book could have been more accurately done (see tenses of verbs on page 2, for example). The statement on page 1 that the "vast region of America south of the Great Lakes first became known through the
labors of Catholic missionaries” would be more accurate if there were added the phrase “and Frenchmen interested in the Indian trade and in enlarging the French colonial empire.” It would be interesting and significant to know more about such topics as the relation of St. Gabriel’s to the Irish laborers upon canals; about the particular way in which the American or Know-Nothing party developed locally and how it affected the life of St. Gabriel’s and Connersville and, vice versa, how St. Gabriel’s affected this party; about the effect that the temperance movement in this church had upon building up a sentiment for local option and later, for county option; and about the development and changes in the curriculum of the parochial school attached to St. Gabriel’s and the relations it had to the state in such matters as taxation and textbooks.

It is not easy to write local history in the light of larger national movements, but only thus does it reach the highest excellence. An index and bibliography would increase the usefulness of this work. A description of the nature and location of the manuscripts used would be more valuable than some of the notes printed as appendices.

St. Gabriel’s Church is fortunate to have its historian, and should profit in many ways from his work. Most churches are not so fortunate. Such histories of local churches will assist in making possible due recognition to religious history in the story of the development of the American people.

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This is the fourth cooperative volume issued by the society in its “Applied History Series.” The county has been called “the dark continent of American government” because nowhere in the country has it been more than casually explored. This epithet can no longer be applied to the county in Iowa, for the cooperators in this volume have left no corner of the