

Reviews and Notices

The Schramm Letters. Written by Jacob Schramm. Translated and edited by Emma S. Vonnegut. The Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, 1935. Pp. 81 (221-302), fifty cents.

This pamphlet is No. 4, Vol. XI, of the Indiana Historical Society *Publications*. Sixty of the eighty-one pages are taken up with a single letter of Jacob Schramm, dated April 10, 1836, and written in Hancock County, Indiana. This long letter, which the writer completed at the end of two months after he began it, was addressed to his brother-in-law and sister-in-law in Saxony. It was designed to furnish a detailed account of the trip to America and of the experiences of Schramm and his family on the Indiana frontier, where they had lived for the greater part of the period since leaving Bohemia, which was almost a year when the letter was completed. Besides this lengthy epistle, there are but three short letters in the collection; one from Mrs. Schramm's father to his children, friends, neighbors, acquaintances and brother; one from Mrs. Schramm to her sisters; and one from Jacob Schramm and wife to a friend in Bohemia, bearing the date, June 20, 1836.

There is a "Preface to the Translation" by Dr. Christopher B. Coleman, Secretary of the Indiana Historical Society, and a "Note to the Translation" at the end which includes nearly five pages quoted from the translator. Mrs. Vonnegut furnishes information relative to the Jacob Schramm family and home during the generation following 1836. The mother of Mrs. Vonnegut was Marie Mathilde Schramm, second daughter of Jacob Schramm, who married Henry Schnull of Indianapolis.

The Schramm letters fell into the hands of C. C. Kutschera soon after reaching relatives and friends in Saxony who published them at Saaz in 1837. It was this old German booklet of that date which Mrs. Vonnegut translated for her children and grand-children. A copy of the original publication together with her translation in manuscript, Mrs. Vonnegut presented to the Indiana Historical Society. To her and to the Society, all who read the pamphlet under review are under great obligations.

The account of his coming to America and of his experiences in Hancock County, Indiana, from the date of departure from Bremen, August 3, 1835, to the date of the last letter, June 20, 1836, is full of interesting detail from beginning to end. The language is good, the intelligence of the writer is manifest, and no reader can doubt his sincerity. Many students of Indiana history have read numerous first-hand descriptions of life in the frontier period, quite a few of which are as valuable and interesting as this by Jacob Schramm. It seems too bad that he did not write a new account of his pioneer experiences ten or twenty years after his arrival in Indiana. While he had not been in his new environment, when he wrote in 1836, long enough to properly evaluate his opportunities, he did present a good picture of what the first year on a frontier farm was like. In regard to the sea voyage, the canal passage, and the journey from Portsmouth to Cincinnati on the Ohio, it is hard to see how his story could have been improved. Indeed there is so much in Jacob Schramm's tale of his long journey from Bremen to the new lands of Indiana and of his early experiences in his crude home and in connection with his wilderness farm which is unusually fine, that we strongly recommend *The Schramm Letters* to everyone who has any interest in the colonization of the old northwest by emigrants from the East or Europe.

WILLIAM O. LYNCH.

In the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* for June, 1935, there appeared an article by Richard Lyle Power, entitled "Wet Lands and the Hoosier Stereotype." The portion of this article that deals with the influence of the flat divides of northwestern Ohio and northern Indiana, which areas were handicapped by very poor natural drainage, on the colonization of the Hoosier state is valuable. Not only was the level belt that constitutes the divide between the St. Lawrence and Mississippi drainage basins wet, but it is also true, as the author discovered, that the highest lands between the drainage areas of any particular tributary and another of the Wabash in north central Indiana were likewise wet and difficult to drain. In the period from 1835 to 1860, when the rush to other areas of the Northwest from the New England states and New York was so great, it is certainly correct that