

were not all published by John G. Nicholay and John Hay and the student will want to know where to find the more recently discovered items and the trustworthiness of the various editors and compilers.

The task of writing an adequate life of Lincoln has been too difficult for the biographers, each of whom had their deficiencies, but many of whom had their virtues. Angle treats them fairly and points out their strong and weak points. Nicholay gives us "excellent summaries of all the major problems of the war and Lincoln's attitude towards them . . . [p. 41]." Barton "is still the best source for the ancestry of Lincoln, both maternal and paternal . . . [p. 49]." "Beveridge's account of the Indiana period of Lincoln's life is unrivalled . . . His is by long odds the best and most exhaustive treatment of Lincoln's eight years in the Illinois legislature, and of his one term in the national House of Representatives. In fact, Beveridge's account of Lincoln's entire political career, including party management as well as office holding, is unsurpassed, and not likely to be excelled [p. 55]."

The special studies and monographs are also treated in similar manner. One work is evaluated thusly: "A compilation that could have been enormously valuable to the general reading public is actually often misleading . . . [p. 97]." Where to go to learn about constitutional matters, personal finances, or any of a number of special phases of his life, is answered in the discussion of these works.

The bibliography at the end of the volume includes the studies which the author has evaluated. It, therefore, includes some eighty-one items and constitutes "A Shelf of Lincoln Books" about which the student of Lincoln should be well informed.

This excellent guide and the inclusive *Lincoln Bibliography* by Jay Monaghan places the student of this period at a point of tremendous advantage and under a great debt to these two Lincoln scholars.

John D. Barnhart

Theory and Practice in Historical Study: A Report of the Committee on Historiography. (Bulletin 54, Social Science Research Council, New York, 1946, pp. xii, 177. Index and Bibliography. Paper \$1.75, Cloth \$2.25.)

This report is a composite reaction to the historical phi-

losophy of Charles A. Beard. The early pages are quite Beardian, but the committee, apparently, was not in complete agreement, for there is at least a thread of inconsistency throughout the volume. The second chapter is highly critical of the early historians who introduced to this country scientific methods in history and seems to assume that the historical profession has advanced beyond scientific history to the conscious propagation of hypothesis of human conduct. The third chapter, if not the remainder of the book, does not possess this slant and seems to hold fast to scientific ideals.

Beard, in the first chapter, wrote an excellent statement of the importance of studying and writing history, with which historians are not likely to find fault. He desires a reconsideration of our methods and the context of our work, but leaves the further development of his ideas to others.

These ideas, as stated by the authors of the second chapter, involve the assertion that historians have not and cannot assume an objective attitude. Since this is true, they should choose their bias, their "principle of selection," and proceed to choose and organize their facts upon this basis. Since each period writes its own history, and since the Beardians are not satisfied to write for their own generation, they must peer into the future and choose their "principle of selection" by guessing what the future is to be. "The historian must thus choose among the various possibilities of the present that tendency, that predicted future, which he judges to be dynamic or controlling Since the future is not foreseeable in detail—though many elements in it can be predicted, . . . the historian's choice of a principle of selection necessarily involved a choice of allegiance, an act of faith in one kind of future rather than another." To be logical, the authors of the second chapter should have proposed university chairs of historical prediction to assist historians in their knowledge of the future in order that they might write about the past.

The conscious choice of a "principle of selection" is treated as though it would overcome the demonstrated frailty of the poor historian to be biased, but it is more likely to add one more bias. The emphasis placed upon his inability to escape his prejudices, hardly seems to be the best method of overcoming them. How, may we ask, will the historian be helped in writing the territorial history of Indiana by guessing that the United States is about to adopt *laissez faire*

or communism as a national policy? Is it not better to study the records and write in as detached a manner as possible what the records seem to reveal? Can we of the twentieth century write a history of the past that will be acceptable to the twenty-first century?

When we turn to the third chapter, we come to something very different. It is a review of historical writing about the causes of the American Civil War. It demonstrates the frailties of historians, but it also reveals a growing realization of the complexity of causation, the broadening content of history, and a more mature understanding of the problem. It also indicates that some historians have been able to overcome the peculiar bias which they might be expected to show. The author, Howard K. Beale, concludes "This study has encouraged the present writer . . . to believe that the repeated efforts to discover the 'truth' about causes of the Civil War have been fruitful and that both the methods and quality of history have improved in the period analyzed." Additional studies of this type should be encouraged.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters are valuable. They contain a discussion of "The Need for Greater Precision in the Use of Historical Terms," a series of propositions on historical procedure, and a reading list. The propositions scarcely embody the Beardian ideas.

Whether the report justifies the labor of such eminent historians, as the committee members and the authors, and the backing of such distinguished societies as the national associations of the anthropologists, economists, historians, political scientists, psychologists, sociologists, and statisticians, in addition to the Social Science Research Council, each reader may decide for himself.

John D. Barnhart

Notes on General Ashley, The Overland Trail, and South Pass.

By Donald McKay Frost. (American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts, 1945, pp. 159. Map and Index. \$2.00.)

Information concerning the activities of many of the American fur traders remains scattered, conflicting, and vague. In view of this, the volume under review is most welcome because Donald McKay Frost, the editor, has here brought together a number of items concerning the fur trad-