

INDIANA MAGAZINE OF HISTORY

Volume XLVIII

MARCH, 1952

Number 1

The Theory of the History of an American Section and the Practice of R. Carlyle Buley

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From time to time, and never at regular or predictable intervals, there will appear upon American bookstands some work from an historian's pen which by manifesting some special merit or combination of merits warrants the most careful, extended consideration. Such a work was the late Clarence W. Alvord's *The Mississippi Valley in British Politics*, and such a work is the one now under review, by Professor Buley, *The Old Northwest: Pioneer Period, 1815-1840*.¹ In dealing with works of the kind it is not enough to appraise and estimate them from the point of view of their content alone; it becomes also necessary to treat them against their proper background in the field of historical scholarship, to show where they tie up with earlier valid trends and movements in American historical writing, where and how they depart from these, and wherein they offer new points of view as well as new data and new techniques of presentation. When the present volumes are treated in such a perspective, it will then be seen that *The Old Northwest: Pioneer Period* is a work of scholarship that compels the attention of historians, and deserves their sharpest, most sympathetic scrutiny.

The perspective in which Professor Buley's volumes require to be studied is a perspective of almost three quarters of a century in length. If the condition of affairs that obtained about 1880 is taken into consideration, American historical writing appears to have been dominated by the generalist, the

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¹ R. Carlyle Buley, *The Old Northwest: Pioneer Period, 1815-1840* (2 vols., Indianapolis, 1950).

historian who undertook to compose long narratives, often very long indeed, on the history of the country as a whole. The prince of these generalists was, of course, old George Bancroft, then full of years and honors, the immensity of whose reputation exerted a powerful attraction over the minds of the oncoming generation. Thus it was that John B. McMaster, James F. Rhodes, and Edward Channing, young men on the way up by 1890, easily fell into the path already traced by Bancroft, and set themselves to the planning or the execution of works conceived on very large lines. Between 1883 and 1913, McMaster issued eight volumes of *A History of the People of the United States, from the Revolution to the Civil War*; Rhodes, during the years 1893-1906, brought out seven volumes of the *History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850*; and Channing brought out six volumes of his *A History of the United States*, during the years 1905-1925.

It did not escape the attention of thoughtful men here and there that in telling the history of the country as a whole, and in recounting that history from the point of view (unconsciously held or not) of Congress and of Washington as the nation's capital, there was a danger that the several parts of the federal system, the states themselves, should have their histories forgotten. Before the Revolution, and for a while thereafter, historians in this colony and state or that, had risen up to record the progress of notable events in their separate commonwealths. A respectable if small literature had thus been produced by their efforts. By the middle of the century, however, the writing of state histories was not a form of endeavor that, as a rule, appealed to literary men of the first quality. So the form languished, till it all but disappeared.

A reaction against the rule of the generalists made an initial appearance about 1876 when Professor Herbert B. Adams of the Johns Hopkins University saw fit frequently to set his fledgling doctors at work on aspects of the history of this or that Atlantic Coast State. That there was an uncultivated field in state history two publishing houses soon saw.

The Boston firm of D. Lothrop planned a series under the general title of "The Story of the States." First to be published was *The Story of New York*, by Elbridge S. Brooks (1888). Few indeed of those who contributed to this series are remembered today; an honorable exception is Rueben G. Thwaites, who produced *The Story of Wisconsin* (1890).

Of considerably more importance was the project worked out by Houghton Mifflin's Horace E. Scudder, as general editor of the series, "American Commonwealths." In 1883 that firm announced this series, the volumes of which were not "to give in detail the formal annals of each member of the Union, but to sketch rapidly and forcibly the lives of those States which have had marked influence upon the structure of the nation, or have embodied in their formation and growth principles of American polity." The announcement recognized (and this is not a little surprising in view of the earliness of the date [1883] that there were to be considered not only those "older commonwealths," planted on the Atlantic coast in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but as well the *newer* states: "The migration from the Atlantic to the Pacific will be studied in the records of the several commonwealths which have registered that migration and added their characteristics to the national type."

The general editor expounded his reasons for thinking that such a series was both useful and necessary. "The commonwealth," he asserted, "has always been a positive force in American history, and it is believed that no better time could be found for a statement of the life inherent in the States than when the unity of the nation has been assured; and it is hoped by this means to throw new light upon the development of the country, and to give a fresh point of view for the study of American history."

Virginia, A History of the People, by John Esten Cooke came forth in 1883; it was the first in the series. William Barrows' *Oregon*, William H. Browne's *Maryland*, and Nathaniel Shaler's *Kentucky*, as well as still other volumes, speedily followed. So a worthwhile venture in American historiography was hopefully launched.

It may be presumed that taken in their entirety the volumes on states written by the better authors on Houghton Mifflin's list exerted a seminal influence. Yet this influence never manifested itself to the extent that the popularity of the form was raised to a high level, at least in those days. There was something deprecatory about the task of chronicling the development of a state; over such enterprises, more likely than not, hung an air of the apologetic. The ambitious, enterprising man was all too apt to dismiss these ventures with the charitable observation, "local history, mere local history!"

The composition of state histories had various imponderables to cope with, various psychological obstacles to meet. And at a critical moment in the middle nineties before state histories were thoroughly well rooted there appeared on the scene a new figure, Frederick J. Turner, one who stood out as the young champion of a novelty, the history of the *section*. For a century and a half Americans had been talking in terms of American sections.² Now a younger American historian, Turner, emerged to plead that a most fruitful field for historical cultivation was the study of the several sections, the West, the South, and so on. In still another way young Turner gave American historical writing a strong push in another novel direction. Political and institutional history had long been considered the norms in writing. Turner urged the claims of economic history, then all but ignored, and spoke of social history, too. By 1906, after almost half a generation's work on preliminary studies in the new fields of interest as detailed above, he was enabled to offer a finished specimen of his new point of view, a specimen which in *The Rise of the New West, 1819-1829* (1906), exhibited a balanced fusion of his concerns for general history (i.e., what goes on in Congress), for sectional history (i.e., New England, the Middle States, the South Atlantic, the Mississippi Valley, and the Far West of those days), and for social and economic history, as well as for political, institutional and constitutional history. This volume has a pivotal importance, and it may serve in several respects as affording points of departure for various new developments in American historical writing. Thereafter, at least two distinct trends become visible in our subject. First, histories of this, that, or the other American section are composed. Second, the earlier "unity" of history disappears, giving way to a process of fractionalization. For example, economic history breaks off, becomes more and more self-conscious and separate. The tendency toward separation is soon manifested again, when a similar trend sets in in social history. Somewhat later intellectual history breaks off on its independent course. Each of the developments mentioned here will require a further few words.

In the history of American sections, Ulrich B. Phillips,

² Fulmer Mood, "The Origin, Evolution, and Application of the Sectional Concept, 1750-1900," in *Regionalism in America*, ed. Merrill Jensen (Madison, Wisconsin, 1951), 5-98.

working as a consequence of Turner's direct influence, originated courses on the history of the Ante-Bellum South, and eventually published *Life and Labor in the Old South* (1929), which was planned as the first volume in a proposed trilogy on the Old South. Carl Russell Fish, likewise at work as a consequence of Turner's suggestions, developed at Madison some courses on the history of New England and a sectional treatment of the Civil War. He wrote no book on the northeast but left behind him a manuscript which was posthumously published as *The American Civil War; an Interpretation* (1937).

The utility of the sectional point of view in the treatment of historical data was further exemplified in the following: James Truslow Adams, *The Founding of New England* (1921), *Revolutionary New England, 1691-1776* (1923), and *New England in the Republic* (1926); Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains* (1931); John Walton Caughey, *History of the Pacific Coast* (1933); and Oscar O. Winther, *The Great Northwest; a History* (1947).

The interest in economic history flowered in numerous volumes. The writer leaves it for others to say, whether any of these published during the period 1900-1930 can take rank as a classic within the subfield of economic history. The concern with social history was given large expression a little later, in a long series of volumes edited by Professors Arthur M. Schlesinger and Dixon R. Fox, which reached publication commencing with the middle nineteen twenties. And finally, in 1948, Merle Curti published *The Growth of American Thought*, the pioneer, balanced, and comprehensive work on the intellectual history of this country. Its qualities were at once recognized, and the award of a Pulitzer Prize in history fittingly followed.

That American historical scholarship has infinitely benefited by these specializations and fractionalizations which have drawn new sections to our attention, unknown happenings in economic history, and also forgotten events in social and intellectual history, needs no arguing. We *are* the richer for these masses of new work. The spirit, however, in which such valuable studies, such appreciative and appreciated studies, have been conducted (and perhaps necessarily so) has often been a spirit of almost willful insulation. Social history can be so divorced from political history that the social data as such end up by wearying or confusing the reader, who sees no path

or pattern through the jungle of particulars spread out before him. Economic history has been, at its worst, treated in a vacuum. Sectional history has been at times so divorced from the general history of the country that the special rôle of the section in the political Union has not been clearly set forth, or even indicated.

Consequently, there has grown up a feeling, felt in more than one quarter, that the specializations and fractionalizations have led to a frustrating state of affairs, that a clear sense of the chronology of historical events has been disappearing from historical studies, and that relevant and organic connections between one kind of historical specialty and the other kinds have often been left out of the literary reckoning. There is current among more than a few a species of discontent, a stirring and an uneasy questioning. And it is at this very time of hesitation, that Professor Buley's book is offered with its sheaf of positive and constructive suggestions for the historical writer, who is being forced to ponder and to reflect on his craft's several technical problems that urgently call for consideration.

Professor Buley, of Indiana University, writes the history of a section, presumably his own. Between Turner and Buley's Indiana, where history along sectional lines is concerned, there may exist a pretty clear if indirect connection. As far back as January, 1907, Turner lectured on invitation at Bloomington, choosing as his theme "Sectionalism in American History." As reported in the *Daily Student*, the lecturer showed by means of a large number of maps the natural boundaries, the geographical, the isothermal, agricultural, and economic sections of the United States. He gave reports of congressional action on tariff and internal improvements which showed sectional influences. In summing up, Turner said, "The significance of all this is that all American history has been a contest of interests representing the various sections; that the United States could and will hold together as long as these interests are intertwined, that geographical, climatic and agricultural conditions have much to do in deciding the interests of any section, as do ancestry and former home. . . . Sectional distinction will always dominate in the future as in the past, modified and limited only in such measure as political parties shall rally to their standards classes of people, and offset sectional partisanship by class distinction."

With this lecture Turner personally may have planted a seed for the study of an American section at Indiana University. To this occasion with its possible long-time influences on departmental thinking, one must add the influences derived and acknowledged by Buley from a study with Frederic L. Paxton, Turner's successor at Madison. The two splendid volumes before us are the harvest, or at least a part of the harvest, of those early plantings. They show to what revelatory and illuminating lengths sectional history can be pushed, and still without forcing or unnaturally expanding the concept. They show, too, that the author has found means to integrate and fuse those several historical specialties which latterly have been suffering from the processes of fractionalization. He has seen that, by taking historical thought, unified, meaningful presentations become possible, in spite of the circumstance that the quantity and the variety of particular facts, levied upon or used by the author, are numerous in the extreme.

Buley's area for study he defines thus: "To the north of the Ohio, stretching from Pennsylvania on the east to the Mississippi River, and bounded on the north by the Great Lakes, lies a region known in American history as the Old Northwest." And he delimits his period in clear manner: "This work presents an outline of the history of the Old Northwest from 1815, the beginning of the 'Great Migration,' to 1840, the date which roughly marks the end of the Pioneer period." His purposes he declares to be three and we may use his own words to state them: "first, to present a balanced summary of the record, without emphasizing the interesting and dramatic at the expense of the prosaic but important; second, to introduce the reader to the rich contemporary historical literature of the period and region; and third, through this literature to capture something of the attitudes and beliefs, struggles and way of life—what Timothy Flint called the 'material of poetry'—of the time and place." It is the opinion of the reviewer that the author has accomplished his three purposes, and has accomplished them superlatively well. One rises from a reading of the work with a respectful and enthusiastic admiration for Buley's masterly control of the materials, his quiet skill in presenting the results, and his ability to transmit the feel, the very sense, of the actualities of a vanished time. One does not linger here to praise the writer for his extensive bibliographies, his industrious foragings

among dozens of scattered files of old newspapers, and for other obvious literary assets expectable in a work of this scope and high seriousness. In these pages the reader will find the unified story of the Old Northwest, the authentic story, reliable and thoroughly documented.

Granting at the outset, then, that the work is a success, one is led to ask, how in general has the success been contrived? What are the skills in the analysis of the data, and in the setting forth of the facts, that result in the excellence of the finished product? And the reader may be reminded that in treating of the history of the Old Northwest during the given years, the author was working with an area or a space mostly unsettled at the opening of his period, and not entirely populated at its close. His problem was thus more complex than if he had been studying the history, during identical years, of a mature, well-settled section, say New England or the Middle Atlantic States.

It is, first of all, because of the thoughtfully worked-out underlying structure of the book that, in the reviewer's opinion, the author has brought off his success. The fundamental ordonnance of the volumes is of importance for understanding the nature and quality of the achievement. One, therefore, calls attention to its expression in chapters, in order to be enabled afterward to comment on and interpret the structure thus revealed. The two volumes between them contain fifteen chapters, making up to a little more than twelve hundred pages. The first chapter, "New Homes in the West," offers a description of the area about 1815, and discusses immigration to the West. The second chapter, "Two New States: Indiana and Illinois," deals with territorial and statehood matters of these two jurisdictions bordering on the Ohio River. "The Settler and the Land," chapter three, brings before the reader the acres, the squatters on them, and the laws which govern these folk in relation to the land, etc. Already he is close to the settlers, hewing out homes on credit or otherwise. In the fourth chapter he comes still closer to the people themselves, for "Pioneer Life—The Material Side" is replete with concrete details and specific information. Dwellers in a new land, the pioneers were subject to diseases and ailments characteristic of countries being brought under cultivation. With entire relevancy, then, the author offers his fifth chapter, "Ills, Cures, and Doctors." These men of the West created a

society of their own and in the sixth chapter, "Pioneer Life—Social and Cultural Backgrounds," Buley particularizes their societies. The pioneers had to import and export, had to travel to and fro. In the seventh chapter "Trade, Travel, and Transportation" are dealt with. Naturally, trade leads to problems of money and credit, and in the eighth chapter, "Money, Banking, and State Finance, 1815-1836," the author supplies a comprehensive narration of such problems. From economic issues the transition to their expression as political issues is an easy step and the ninth chapter registers the advance under the title "Personal Politics and Republican Solidarity, 1815-1825."

This does not make up the full roll of chapters; the others will soon be mentioned. But here one may halt momentarily to comment on the ordonnance thus far revealed, and especially upon the skillfulness with which the author has solved problems of analysis and synthesis.

One notes that the author has written of an entire, and a many-sided social entity. He deals with the individual settler, the ways of making livings, the cure of ills, the hardships of travel and trade, the quests for financial expedients and solutions, the programs of politics. These many and diverse aspects of the life of the men of the time he has presented with sufficient detail and in so plausible, so natural a sequential order, that his achievement is almost lost from sight: he has fused and integrated the several aspects of life inside a given section of the country and has fitted them together with a most laudable logic and artistry. The specialties, the "fractions," when so treated, strengthen and support each other. And the support is the stronger because the coverage of the several elements is so conscientiously comprehensive. Thus Buley's plan, to this point (end of the ninth chapter), has shown how economic, social, and political strands can be harmoniously and tellingly interwoven. The example is one which can be profitably studied by other historians who have similar problems to grapple with.

So far the narrative has paid most attention to the Ohio Valley sectors of the Old Northwest. But now the author means to bring under his focus the upper regions of his area. Hence, chapter ten is devoted to the wilderness that is being brought under cultivation. This he accomplishes in "The North Settles, 1825-1840—Michigan and Wisconsin Territory." In the following chapter he is then in a position to con-

tinue his political narratives for all five jurisdictions, which he does for the period 1825-1840. In the twelfth chapter, "Economic History, 1836-1840," the author discusses the crisis of '37 and its aftermath in the Old Northwest. These large events out of the way, he then rounds out his study with three chapters on cultural matters: "Schools, Teachers, and Education"; "Religion"; "Literature, Science, and Reform." Thus he completes, for his chosen section of the country, a pattern that rises (so to speak) from a basis in materialism to a flowering in ideas and spiritual culture. Altogether, it is a plan broadly conceived with admirable calculation and realized in excellence. Loose ends there are none; all elements chosen for inclusion fit neatly together. A gratifying unity in the finished work thus results.

Now the main concern is to observe by what particular methods or precise contrivances in craftsmanship it is that Buley makes his contributions toward resolving doubts and difficulties, at this moment of a much-felt sense of fractionalization and fragmentation among the historical specialties. Already it has been seen that he has shown how the economic, social, and political strands, *in the large*, can be harmoniously and tellingly interwoven. Now it is interesting to see how he makes contributions in the handling and fusing of units of less than chapter length. Two instances of his practice will be cited. The first of these will show how Buley unites and fuses facts relating to the practices of surveying (a branch of the *agrarian* history of the Old Northwest) with facts relating to the art and theory of surveying (a branch of the *intellectual* history of the section). The second instance chosen for study will make plain how Buley interrelates and fuses agricultural practices and operations with agricultural periodicals, their content and teaching in theory and practice, and with the work of agricultural fairs. In this unit Buley combines data drawn from three "fractions" and merges them into one. He unites chosen aspects of social history with chosen aspects of literary or intellectual history, and links both with the broad field of contemporary farming operations as such. Thus are fractions totaled up to form an historical integer. And now to our first example. The actual processes of surveying the wild lands, always important in new parts of America, are well handled by Buley. The law of 1796 which governs the function is cited, with its maximum amount per acre for the expense. The work

of the deputy surveyors with their crews is given an actual, painstaking behavioral description, that is, the literary effort aims to mirror the contemporary objective process. The reader learns from it how the congressional township was laid out. This is a bit of the history of civil engineering, particularized. The crews of surveyors, the actual workers, are taken account of, and as their work has importance, so too does their way of life as they performed have interest. What they ate, where and how they bunked while in the field, and to what extent the general government protected them against obstructive tactics as they worked, are all points given space in the author's account. By an easy step he then advances to frontier surveying as an art and a profession. He learns of the education (principally the self-education) of the surveyors. Then is related the current literature of that subject, the authors, their titles, and the dates of publication of these manuals.

The passage that has just been discussed covers four and one-half pages (vol. I, 119-123). Now, looking back over it a second time, it can be seen with a flash of comprehension the difficult thing that Buley has quietly accomplished in these few pages. Preserving his proportions and an admirable sense of movement, he has contrived to interrelate and fuse the diverse facts of technology, social history, and intellectual history. There is a lesson of wide import here, one that is available for many applications by other historians. The vice of fractionalization can be overcome, and by the analyzing of Buley's method, the secret of the method can be found out.

The objection may be uttered that this one instance of fusing facts of diverse orders proves nothing, that the author by some fortunate chance stumbled upon the arrangement that led to such happy effects. To this an adequate reply will be to cite another similar case, where the author uses different data, and fits them into a larger and more ambitious pattern. The selected case relates to ways of farming life. Here Buley begins (vol. I, p. 167) by distinguishing between the hunting farmers or the farming hunters, on one hand, and on the other the "true husbandmen." The case of the first is soon disposed of, by the citing of selected facts, the most relevant facts. The character of pioneer agriculture in the area is discussed, with initial comments on the nature of the adjustments which the incoming settlers had to make to the new terrains. Then come in order information on the grains habitually planted by the

farmers, the methods of breaking virgin lands, together with the tools used in that tough labor; the treatment of the soils for planting, the cultivation of the crops, and their protection from pests and dangers, the techniques of harvesting, including the tools used, and the manual as well as the mechanical methods employed.

The grains having been disposed of, Buley next deals briefly with the grasses, native and imported, the root crops, specialties such as hemp, flax, tobacco, in each case particularizing the data presented with a few well-chosen details as to place, or date, or technique. The viticultural and the horticultural interests of the area are dealt with, the vegetables that were grown are discussed, and a transitory "silk craze" is given due attention. The raising of cattle, and the kinds of stock favored, the sheep interest, horses and improvements in breeding, then follow. The veterinary practice of the day is summed up, and judicious comments are offered on the state of the agricultural arts, and the attitudes toward agrarian innovations.

From actual practices and the informal comment of the men of the era on those practices the author leads the reader, by an easy step, into the related department of the agricultural periodicals. Here, under his guidance, is made the transition from farming to the related theory of farming. Various principal titles of the agricultural magazines are given, and the quality of the influences they radiated is characterized in informing fashion. The weight of these influences is assessed: "It was to require another generation for the farmer generally to begin to respect science as distributed by way of the printed page" (vol. I, p. 198). From the farm journals one passes on to the record made by the agricultural societies and fairs, with their addresses, prizes and the like. Here he deals with a specific branch of social history. Finally, the weather in relation to agriculture and to human life generally, is discussed, curious and interesting details being presented. With this topic the author terminates his passages on the farming of the time, and advances to the treatment of pioneer clothing. Shelter has earlier been dealt with.

Here one may offer his own comments on the passages by Buley that have just been conned over. It is to be observed that the author controls a wealth of particular facts, a mass that is beyond measure copious. This richness of data makes it un-

necessary for him to indulge in vague or merely general statements; sharply edged propositions, on the contrary, are with him the rule. What controls his presentation of those facts chosen for inclusion is not an empty and abstract principle of judicious selection as such, but a principle of selection that is tied to a concept of historical processes at work. Buley has a regard for the facts as facts, but he also has a reverence for the operation of the processes. The account we have just gone over is an account not in terms of conventional narrative, or "story," but in terms of specific temporal processes. The facts are patterned together in such a way as to mirror "the taking-place," so to speak, of the processes. As a consequence of such patternings, two results flow: the first, that the accounts inevitably convey a sense of movement, of striving for "forwardness" in time, as it were; the second, that because in historical reality all co-existing social phenomena are somehow inter-related and are inter-dependent in rigorous organic fashion, so then in a literary statement like Buley's, and one based upon a reverence for process and processes, the literary product effortlessly conveys, at least to the perceptive reader, this same sense of the organic connection between the parts of the literary structure. It was earlier pointed out that the ordonnance of the work as a whole was designed with great care, and that this successful design provides first of all the reason for the intellectual success of the work. This ordonnance exhibits, to repeat what was said earlier, a principal pattern for the work as a whole, which is "a pattern that rises . . . from a basis in materialism to a flowering in ideas and spiritual culture. Altogether, it is a plan broadly conceived with admirable calculation and realized in excellence."

Now one is in a position to take note that this spirit of admirable calculation extends through and down into the separate parts of the work and its least details. And as the parts on study reveal their organic connections with one another, so the parts and the whole are informed by reverence for the operation of processes.

Proceeding originally in his laborious and time-consuming search for the facts, Buley at length amassed them, and then reflected upon them with what must have been a prolonged and concentrated thoughtfulness. Whether he entertained any concepts of a sociologically theoretical cast during the periods of cerebration and planning is a tantalizing query which oc-

curs to the reviewer, who will, however, give no answer to it. The even, the masterly handling of social entities, whether large or small, hints at some such acquaintance, as does the comprehensive coverage of human activities recorded. Yet the strict and never-ending concern for knowledge that is empirically arrived at, tends to hint strongly that the vision held is the vision of an historian. What he has produced will, however, most certainly attract and hold the attention in times to come of *historical* sociologists. A conscious emphasis is introduced with the italic.

Buley, to sum it up in a few words, controls empirical facts, concrete processes of social life, and effective historical fusions. He has ability to give satisfying literary statement of the facts and the processes organically interrelated in outer social reality, so that in his book they combine to teach important, much-needed lessons to American historians of today. How to overcome the blights of fragmenting and fractionalizing practices in historical writing is a pressing need in historical craftsmanship. Buley's pages, over and beyond the examples cited, provide numerous examples and solutions of the sort that will yield up their valuable corrective principles to the attentive reader. He has seen some of the current difficulties and with quiet power has specifically shown how to resolve them.

What bearing does Buley's work have as an encouragement to laborers in the department of state history? This query arises in the perspective supplied by facts earlier detailed, that state history as an historical form was being but slightly pushed just before 1900, at which time, or thereabouts, it underwent partial eclipse. The new rallying cry, persistently urged, came from Turner, at Madison. It was the call that was to rally young writers to undertake sectional study, sectional histories, and biography, sectionally interpreted. A potent force behind Turner's rallying cry was, the writer believes, the unrecognized force of Hermann von Holst whose massive work, translated into English and published at Chicago in eight volumes between 1881 and 1892 as *The Constitutional and Political History of the United States*, formed a hidden stimulus of no mean magnitude upon young Turner. In the eighties a good knowledge of United States history from 1789 to the Civil War was about equivalent to a good knowledge of von Holst. Turner made the earlier pages of von

Holst his own (say, down to 1844, to cite a date), and then vigorously reacted against them. One might venture the remark that as a youngster he grew in historical stature, by criticizing and assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the expatriated German. Of emphatic relevance at this place is the sole proposition that Turner the youth strongly dissented from von Holst's special grasp of American sectionalism. The German writer saw the unfolding of that history in terms of sections, *two* sections, the North and the South. The young man from Portage and Madison, Wisconsin, knew in his bones that a third section existed, the West. The first major rectification that he made on von Holst, was to insist upon a conception of United States history that made room for the West, and the study of the history of that third section. In his individual thinking Turner had attained to this point of view before ever he left Madison to study at Baltimore. Just how he was to work in Western history was not yet thoroughly clear to him. But that was to come. He was, however, in his own mind already committed to a study of American history in terms of its sections.

The Baltimore year of Turner (1888-89) introduced him to another trend in historical writing—the investigation of phenomena within the framework of a limited jurisdiction, either province or state. Herbert B. Adams put many graduate students on these “state” or “province” topics. The cultivation of an interest in these jurisdictional entities (without regard for the specific “internal” problems worked upon by Adams's men) was indeed a healthy sign. Turner, as a seminarian, cooperated with Adams in such work but took an early opportunity, after he had returned to Madison, to reflect adversely upon research work in state history. He deprecated it. On what grounds he did so is not exactly known, nor in detail, because he later mutilated his own manuscript which set forth his opinions on these points. It would seem to be clear, however, that by the mid-nineties he had reached the point where he thought one could write the history of a section without having to know, *item* after *item*, the histories of the several jurisdictions comprehended within the particular section being studied. The approach to be followed involved, first, he thought, an analysis of the votes in Congress on leading bills and policies, in terms of the multi-sectional origins of the congregated legislative policymakers. Next, the “interests” of the

sections themselves were to be inspected in terms of the broad economic, etc., underlying realities of the historic moment. The concept of the section *qua* section was well known to Turner. It does not seem that it ever occurred to him to question the *reality* of sections as such, and so, secure in his belief, he planned and completed *The Rise of the New West* (1906).

It was the first of the sectional histories, and perforce covered but a limited block of time, since it undertook to treat of all the then existing sections, 1819-1829. The point of singular interest about this book, for the present discussion, is that Turner planned to write, and did write of the history of sections, without much attending to the individual histories of the several states and territories composing a given section. The truth of this proposition becomes apparent on a close re-reading of *The Rise of the New West*. There is not, in that book, a recognition that state history as such had a principal creative and revelatory function in relation to sectional history. This is not the place to enter into an extended discussion as to how Turner handled his data in relation to the interior of a section, how he chose and how he excluded categories of facts. It will be sufficient to say that, in the present writer's opinion, he daringly attempted to write the history of a section by offering upon its historic course and character a set of generalizations that were partially premature, because they left out of the researcher's reckonings an entire order of significant facts.

It may be, too, that Turner consciously and in good measure by-passed state history because in his day the number of reliable, comprehensive state histories needed for his special years (1819-1829) was far from large. Such would have been the case for the South and the West, perhaps for other parts of the country, too. Whatever the explanations, however, the fact remains that in the interest of a sectional treatment he minimized, in practice, the rôle of the states and territories, as such, which together add up into a section. In other words, he undertook to write of the politics in Congress, a Congress which represented the states in a federal Union or general government, without giving due and proper weight to the special politics and special programs within individual states. Some weight he gave here or there, and put it on this state or that. But as the historian of a federal Union he seems, to the writer, consciously to have slighted the component elements in

that Union, the confederated states. For him the treatment of the sectional realities was the meaningful treatment.

All the foregoing offers a contrast of the broadest character, where Buley's practice is concerned. One could venture the remark that Turner's is a preliminary, and Buley's is a mature, historiographical doctrine, as to states (and territories) in relation to a Union. Buley, with abundant space at his disposal, with adequate materials for the histories of states and territories to hand, and with an ingrained regard for each one of the jurisdictions that falls within his ken, pays due and proper regard to these component elements. No jurisdiction is omitted, none is skimpily treated. Each receives what would seem to be its fair proportionate amount of attention. Thus the section he is studying is studied in terms of its parts (jurisdictions) as well as in terms of its entirety. The respect that Buley has for these several jurisdictions strengthens and enriches his volumes, giving them through and through a certain firmness of substance and texture. Furthermore, Buley has shown the way for others. He demonstrates how to put the pieces together in a convincing, organic fashion, so that the included data cohere in easy, unforced ways.

Now his treatment of these "State" problems may be examined. His second chapter deals with "Two New States: Indiana and Illinois." Ohio (by 1815) has for some years been a state, so the territory to the west, Indiana, comes under consideration. The territorial status is chronicled, the movement for Indiana's statehood is outlined, attention being paid to the constitutional convention, its personnel and its handiwork. The author traces the admission of the state into the Union, and the operations of setting up the new state's government. The discussions are everywhere precise, well particularized. A feeling of the special circumstances of the time and place is transmitted to the reader. The history of the separation of Illinois Territory is then given, and the transition to the status of statehood is carefully and judiciously traced. Again may be noted the same precision, the same careful delicacy in generalizing upon the Illinois situation, which makes it Illinois and no other set of localities, at this moment in time. Some interesting incidental comparisons are given (p. 82) between early Indiana and early Illinois, in respect to the two movements for statehood. With the end of the chapter before him, the reader comes to the realization that he has followed the

political fortunes of two forming commonwealths from territorial times to admission, and that the author has skillfully and in a balanced fashion given him the particulars that count in relating these segments of history. There is, by the way, no sense of condescension in dealing with the data, no air of the half-apologetic as though to say, "All this is, of course, local history, mere local history." The upshot of the narration is, that the reader learns the precise content of the politics of the time.

In Chapter IX, "Personal Politics and Republican Solidarity, 1815-1825," Buley covers the politics of the three states, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and the Territory of Michigan. With a good deal of skill and neatness he weaves together a narrative of particular strands. Each jurisdiction is so dealt with as to convey to the reader the special quality of the political life and political movement of that jurisdiction. The author's sure command of his material enables him to generalize with insight and penetration. He points out the processes by which "district" politics and personal politics give way to party politics, and he emphasizes that for long years these states in their political concerns did not tie up with congressional issues.

In Chapter XI, "Political History, 1825-1840," Buley devotes one hundred pages of narrative to recounting the political story of the Northwestern states and territories from the election of Adams to that of Harrison, favorite son of the section. It is a long, difficult, confused, chaotic, and mobile period, filled with cross-currents, eddies, and all manner of minor surprises. Yet if the politics of the section are to be understood, these old-time confused and chaotic political situations must be reconstructed, and if possible, must be interpreted as to their meanings for those days. It took an immense effort, it took great patience. Buley was equal to these claims on him. In turn he studied each state and territory, and brought out what was of importance and significance in their politics. So it can be seen, in a slow phase-by-phase account, how personal politics grow into party politics, and how at last, state issues (local in background) become linked and connected with national issues. By the end of the period the weight of the section, with good Whig electioneering techniques in vogue, had seated a son of the Old Northwest in the White House.

Referring to an earlier historian's work, Buley says "Dunn . . . saw little else in the early history of Indiana besides

the slavery issue." One can twist this remark around a little to assert, that what there *is* in the politics of early Indiana and her sister states and territories, Buley *sees*. He has isolated and straightened out its content and can tell with definiteness what that content is. So have we of today arrived at a comprehension of old-time political realities, which fifty years ago were probably for the most part unknown, and likely enough, almost unsought for.

These three chapters on politics which have been rapidly gone over combine to make a sterling contribution in method. Thereby Buley shows that when one undertakes to write of the history of a section, he needs to write of all the component parts of the section—each state, each territory. As a result of this kind of analysis and treatment, the reader comes into possession of historical knowledge that is sharply edged, well particularized, and free from doubtful generalizations. The methodology that Buley exhibits here is a mature one, and marks a definite and a long advance over the practice of Turner in 1906. Buley leaves for future sectional historians a high standard of attainment toward which to aspire. But his practice will have, ought to have, a stimulating influence on workers in state and local history everywhere. His work shows the value, the utility of studies in local and state history, and how desirable it is that they be done well, scientifically, when they are done at all. They need to be done reliably, not only because some future synthesizer may use them for a work of large scope, but also because as particulars forming part of the vast American historical panorama, they have their own unique value and unique interest as such. They are worth attending to on their own account. Buley's pages reinforce this lesson again and again. He ignores speculations or guesses, brushes away half-truths or premature propositions, digs down and uncovers the actual data themselves. It is a powerful thrust of work.

As a most helpful consequence of Buley's recognition of the jurisdictions, he finds himself in possession of a very illuminating principle of arrangement. Since he makes use of this principle more than once, it is patent that the historian is quite aware of what he is about. Now for a case in point by way of illustration. In his Chapter XII, "Economic History, 1836-1840," the author takes up the subject of the distribution of the surplus revenue. The law of June, 1836, provided for the

distribution to the several states. Then, state by state, Buley relates how the states planned to use the promised *largesse*. The order of the states that he follows is the order of admission to the Union: Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan. This is also the order of the historic "maturity" of this series of states, for Ohio was now the most populous, and Wisconsin, the least populous of the jurisdictions, was still a territory. Underneath the particulars lies a latent appreciation of the frontier and its work. The frontier had passed beyond Ohio and Indiana, it still lingered in parts of Illinois and Michigan, while in Wisconsin it was even then manifesting itself starkly and strong. The relative "maturity" of these several jurisdictions, as to the programs and performances they severally exhibited in canal building and in banking during these years, is in great detail brought out, state by state, in Buley's discussions of what they proposed and what they accomplished. And the well-rounded, informative accounts furnished by the author, make it possible for the reader to *compare* the results in the states with each other, and to *interpret* the comparisons both in terms of the programs and administrations as such, and also in terms of the nearness to or the remoteness from, an original frontier era, which was an experience common to all of them. This principle of arrangement, the order of decreasing social complexity, to give it a name (that is, the order from "old" Ohio through Illinois, and "young" Michigan to the "infant" and unadmitted Wisconsin), is an order of arrangement that enables the thinking historian to extract new values from the hallowed doctrine of the frontier. It is indeed putting that doctrine to work, to very good purpose indeed. Chapter XIII, "Schools, Teachers, and Education," provides additional illustrations which serve to show how the order of decreasing social complexity can be used to excellent effect. (See the development of the topic, "Movement for public schools," vol. II, pp. 348-369; and the topic, "Academies," vol. II, pp. 338-341.) Once again the reader is impressed by Buley's skill and aptness in making meaningful arrangements of his facts.

It may be that one principal error into which historians using the sectional pattern can fall is the error of insufficiently heeding the *fact* of the interior heterogeneity of a section, the *fact* that within its borders exist differing zones, differing belts, differing "regions," which (by whatever name they may be called) effectually give internal diversity to a

section. Against such an error Buley is proof. His soundness as a guide follows as a consequence of his willingness to face fully the fact of state (or territorial) particularism, political, etc., etc., and the fact that all the jurisdictions composing a section have prime interest for that section's historian. Thus conscious of diversity in the large, Buley with ease and heightened perceptiveness is aware of the districts, the zones, the localities—shall we say—that comprise his section. Fully to discuss Buley's admirable handling of the rich show of quite concrete information on the localities of his section, information readily at his command, would require an extended literary tour, but one which cannot be taken. Let it be observed here, however, that if there be a historian of a section who exceeds Buley in grasp of and acquaintance with the localities, the parts, the zones, and the belts of a section, then the writer of these lines will be much taken by surprise. Where localities, districts, even neighborhoods are concerned, Buley has an artist's feelings for the distinguishing differences, and a scientist's regard for the facts of the locales themselves. In a historian these are rare endowments indeed.

And so to come to a conclusion. Three-quarters of a century ago the scientific method in history was brought to these shores and given harborage at the Johns Hopkins. Ideas of scientific history slowly took root in the universities and colleges. Solid work came to be published by American-trained historians, work that was a credit to the intellectual powers of Americans. These historians knew their technical stock in trade, the scientific methods of history. And it seemed as though they invariably used those methods in their work. But what if it should one day appear, when the scholars of this and the next generation are done with examining Charles Beard and Channing and Rhodes, for example, as they have already examined McMaster, that the earlier exponents of scientific methods in history were not always thoroughly scientific? Surely, then, in the future, there will be some revaluations in reputation. As literary figures they may still hold on, but as scientific scholars worthy of credence, they may be adjudged as less than completely "scientific." The future will tell the tale—one must wait for the reports to be rendered, the verdicts to be lodged.

The final, and in the light of the three-quarters of a century perspective, the most searching observation about Buley's

work that can be offered here in conclusion is that he has made large and unremitting efforts always to be the historian as scientist. He took over the dogmas of the older men, his predecessors, and took them seriously. He has used them in his work universally and so earns and must receive our respectful homages as an historian who is scientific all of the time. Such men are rare, and so are their books. What a satisfaction, then, to the aspiring members of the guild of historians, to today's uneasy practitioners of Clio's craft, who ask themselves if all is now well inside the circle of adepts, that this solid and epoch-marking historical work should have been awarded a Pulitzer Prize! The prize was well bestowed, but in the awarding of it the judges, too, did themselves much honor, since thereby they manifested that rather uncommon power of seeing a work truly great, at the moment when it was set before them to pronounce upon.