

Pressly deserves praise for his accomplishment in presenting this survey of intellectual history, and for providing the student and general reader with a useful summary of the major literature of the Civil War. And, considering the world in which Pressly writes, it is a matter of moment to have this important reminder that honest men may differ in their interpretations of events.

Earlham College

Harold M. Hyman

The Writing of American History. By Michael Kraus. (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953, pp. x, 386. Index. \$5.50.)

American historiography began with the Norse sagas but with the Spanish historians there began a chain of narration that links with our own day, and Richard Hakluyt was to write volumes about imperial expansion before the English began their colonization of America. With this introduction Michael Kraus takes up the historians of the first settlements—John Smith, William Bradford, John Winthrop, and on through the Mathers. The chapters that follow, in the main, proceed chronologically: The Era of Colonialism; The Growing National Spirit: 1750-1800; Gathering the Records—Awaiting the National Historian; Patriots, Romantics—and Hildreth; Francis Parkman; The Rise of the "Scientific School"; Henry Adams; The Nationalist School; The Imperial School of Colonial History; The Frontier and Sectional Historians; Biography; and Contemporary Trends.

In 1891 James Franklin Jameson published a sketch of American historical writing, carrying his study to the 1880's. In 1917 John Spencer Bassett published his *The Middle Group of American Historians*, chiefly concerned with Sparks, Bancroft, and Peter Force. Not until 1937 when Michael Kraus published his *A History of American History* was any survey of the whole field of American historical writing available. *The Writing of American History* incorporates all the materials of Kraus's 1937 volume and with revision and expansion brings the study to date.

To this reviewer the book seems an indispensable reference for the student of American history. It is intentionally selective but covers the whole sweep of our history, concentrat-

ing on the writings that deal with American history in a comprehensive manner. The book is distinguished by a broad and intensive knowledge of American historiography, a comprehension of the mind and outlook of its writers, and critical evaluations of their contributions. It is imperative that the readers of history should understand the writers of it. Thus has Kraus made the backgrounds and the climates of opinion of its writers of as much concern as their writings.

The title of Kraus's first book might have been retained, *A History of American History*, but the revised title carries a further thought. *The Writing of American History* also suggests the historian in action. One senses process and ever-changing outlook. Each new generation of historians is confronted with a new environment, social, political, and intellectual. Little wonder that each generation must write its own history. Change is constant, so much so that if a historian lives too long, as did George Bancroft, he is outdated before his death.

Kraus's book will be cataloged as historiography, but it is also a fruitful chapter in American intellectual history. The author has tracked down the idea and the practice of history and the interplay between the mind of the historian and the social, political, and intellectual factors in his environment. The book is a chapter in the growth of the American mind. From this angle many earlier professors of Clio rise in significance and one senses the heavy indebtedness of the present day historians to the earlier ones.

Kraus adopted a selective principle for this study, giving space to the shapers of our history writing and to those writings of fundamental importance. To illustrate, spatially, Parkman, Henry Adams, and George Bancroft are given a dozen pages each; Edward Channing and Turner, eight each; Hildreth and Beard, seven each; Sparks and Von Holst, six each; three to Thomas Prince; and two to Parson Weems. Many others fall into place with fewer pages or from one to a dozen lines. A sampling of the author's appraisals follow: Thomas Prince, though "aridly factual" was "an American pioneer in scientific historical writings." Thomas Hutchinson's "work ranks above that of all other colonial historians." Peter Force "was a focus of the historical interests of the country." Of Parson Weems: "Despite his many inaccuracies, his simple writing was so warm with enthusiasm that it

brought to life figures already grown austere and remote"; and it is "not too much to say that generations of historical scholars have been unable to modify seriously the popular picture Weems created of our Revolutionary heroes." Sparks's visit to England "made him one of the earliest Americans to examine the British side of the Revolutionary struggle. . . . The vast range of his activity altered completely the character of our historical literature." Of the significance of George Bancroft, Kraus notes his idea of continuity which, said Bancroft, "gives vitality to history. No period of time has a separate being." Answering those who are critical of Bancroft's lack of objectivity, Kraus observes that "he wrote at a time when history was more than investigation into the past—it was supposed to give instruction." Of Hildreth, "many writers in after years owed a large debt to Hildreth for the organization of his material and the philosophic grasp he displayed." The "romantics" said Kraus, "were usually as careful in the use of sources as were their self-styled 'scientific' successors—they were attracted to different types of materials. The 'scientific' historians won out, only to lose the wide public devoted to the 'romantics.'" "Parkman's scrupulous care in using sources has not been surpassed by later writers, while his literary gifts have been the envy of a host of historians." Kraus devotes an entire chapter to Henry Adams who "may well be said to have inaugurated" the "scientific school" in American historiography, but his philosophy of history based on the second law of thermodynamics "has been fairly discredited." Though not unchallenged (see Irving Brant's *Madison*) his *History* marks "one of the highest achievements in American historiography." John Fiske, "a literary, philosophical historian" with some flair for the "scientific," ardent follower of Spencer and Darwin but with no great originality, was "an amateur in history . . . with a zest for life." Woodrow Wilson, "a successful popular historian" who thought he found the key to the nation's history in spiritual forces, "was not much of a believer in 'scientific' objectivity." Though his main interests were political, "his contention that there was no American nation until after the Civil War profoundly affected historical interpretation." McMaster's *A History of the People of the United States* was to have "a remarkable influence on his own and the next generation." It was "the real precursor of the

social-history school in America." "He was, perhaps, the first to emphasize the place of the West in America's history and in stressing economic factors he was a predecessor of Beard as well as of Turner." He had a terrific appetite for historical facts but "for him they were all created equal."

The American Nation, A History "represented the work of the first generation of trained American historians" who were "almost entirely academicians." In the main its twenty-seven volumes "followed conventional lines of political history." Edward Channing was "one of the earliest and finest products of the 'scientific school.'" His "treatment of the colonies as part of the English imperial system was a novel and important feature for the time." There is little if any philosophy in his volumes although he "carried over into them beliefs in evolution and the idea of progress. . . . In the main his history was for historians." Herbert Osgood "was among the first to see that a large part of American colonial history must be told with reference to the British imperial system." Charles M. Andrews went farthest in reconstructing the view of the colonial past from the vantage point of the English homeland. Lawrence Henry Gipson, disciple of Andrews, has published to date seven volumes of his *The British Empire before the American Revolution*. Less felicitous than Parkman, he is reminding scholars of problems the latter never considered.

A chapter on the frontier and sectional historians runs to forty-three pages of which twenty are devoted to the West; of these, eight and a half are concerned with Turner. Godkin, McMaster, and Bryce understood the meaning of the frontier in American development but "not until Turner began writing was a clearly formulated expression of the place of the frontier in American life presented." He thought of himself, says Kraus, as a "truly nationalist historian . . . less interested in the West as a region in itself than as an illustration of the process of American development." Shortly after Turner's death came a flood of criticism of his frontier thesis. It came from various angles and must be reckoned with, but "even if Turner did exaggerate the role of the frontier in the promotion of democracy, his general thesis that the movement westward profoundly affected the course of American history and greatly influenced the formation of traits of the national character was valid." Many historians of the West are given

place in this chapter. The chapter treats also the sectional historians of New England and the South, featuring for the former Charles Francis Adams, James Truslow Adams, and Samuel Morison, and for the latter, Bruce, McCrady, Dunning, Phillips, and Dodd, plus recent historiography of the Civil War and Reconstruction. "In no field of study is there greater vitality than in the history of the South, and her own universities are contributing largely to its vigorous growth." A chapter of thirty pages on biography devotes twenty-two of them to Beveridge, Nevins, and Douglas Freeman.

Kraus concludes his book with a chapter on contemporary trends which is chiefly concerned with economic interpretations and a history of American life. Charles Beard is given the place of distinction: "No American historian in the twentieth century had a wider influence, with a large audience among scholars and a larger one among the general public." At Columbia, he "became a freshening breeze that swept away academic staleness." He made "two significant contributions of original research with his *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution* and the *Economic Origins of Jeffersonian Democracy*" and while he later admitted that he had overstated the case, his work left a lasting impression on historiography. Beard believed that historical writing was to be the instrument for the advancement of social reform and "more than anyone else stimulated scholars to recognize frankly the functional nature of historical knowledge."

The history of American life we are only now feeling our way into. "Its proper scope is a matter filled with controversial elements." Surveying the thirteen volumes of *A History of American Life*, Kraus finds that most of its volumes "lack comment on what the facts mean." Of Vernon Parrington, Kraus writes, "after everything unfavorable was said, there remained an important body of achievement. . . . and no student of America should forego the joy of reading him."

At the end of his book Kraus says that "erudition, interpretation, artistry—these are required in the historian." In *The Writing of American History* he has demonstrated his right to so prescribe. His book is the rich fruit of long research, skillfully organized and delightfully presented. However the proofreader allowed Washington's name to stand where apparently Jefferson's was supposed to be (p. 330) and missed page 341 entirely. The index contains reference

to the name of nearly every historian mentioned and of persons, subjects of their writings. Von Holst and Lawrence Gipson escaped the indexer. Some subdivisions of the table of contents are in the index, some are not. The names of magazines and journals and of historical associations are included and the name of but one book, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. These slips are trivial and this reviewer is more than ready to underwrite the blurb of the jacket flap: "For the teacher, student, or lay reader of American history, there is no other single volume anywhere which will direct, stimulate, and enlarge the appreciation and perspective of American historical writing in the fashion of *The Writing of American History*."

Rutgers University

Irving Stoddard Kull

History of Martin County, Indiana. By Harry Q. Holt. (Paoli, Indiana: Published by the author, 1953, pp. ix, 366. Illustrations and index. \$5.00.)

This latest volume in the series of Indiana county histories deserves to rank with the best of those previously published. Martin County, somewhat off the beaten track of early Indiana history, naturally lacks the glamour and romance that characterize the histories of those counties that actively passed through the French and British periods. Harry Q. Holt has nevertheless produced an interesting and detailed study that furnishes Martin County with the most up-to-date history of any county in Indiana.

Fluent writing and attention to detail are such an integral part of this study that the reader immediately has a feeling of confidence in the scholarly ability of the author. An intense desire for accuracy and completeness is evident on every page, often to the extent of listing insignificant material. As commendable examples of the author's research one can list his diligence in attempting to find the origin of the county name, his well-drawn account of the difficulties involved in locating a permanent county seat (it changed nine times, a record in Indiana), and his interesting account of the attempts to increase or decrease the county area, even to recent attempts to dissolve the county altogether. His striving for completeness, however, sometimes clutters the text with unimportant