

impure food products and for defeats that public health programs have met in the state legislature.

In *The People's Health* the reader is given a uniquely comprehensive view of what is taking place in the field of public health generally and what is on the threshold. People are becoming aroused, and part of their concern, identified as a facet of their search for security, is a fear of private medical practice on the one hand or a fear of government intervention on the other. Between these polar positions, according to a statement quoted from a recent federal study on health, "group hospital programs offer the only satisfactory solution." The author sees the federal government as one of the main opportunities to increase the number of physicians, dentists, nurses, health institutions, and hospital beds; and to make these health essentials available to all who need them. Certainly the rapid appearance of hundreds of hospitals and thousands of hospital beds in the last few years seems to justify his viewpoint. The writer takes special note of a recent report made by eight hundred distinguished national leaders which stated "that only a combination of the efforts of local, state, and federal units could possibly result in a major improvement in public health."

The monograph is a desirable departure from the technical pattern of public health history which prevailed until the First World War. *The People's Health* is wide in scope and high in reader interest. Its influence will doubtless be very significant as it is a much-needed instrument in behalf of a valuable social program which is dependent upon public appreciation.

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The Social Sciences in Historical Study: A Report of the Committee on Historiography. Social Science Research Council, Bulletin 64. (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1954, pp. x, 181. Index. Paper \$1.75; Cloth \$2.75.)

Historians have made a practice to don the hairshirt periodically to force themselves to re-examine the nature of their craft, or is it their art? In 1946, under the auspices of

the Social Science Research Council, Bulletin 54 appeared: *Theory and Practice in Historical Study*. It stimulated much discussion and spurred further self-examination. The present cooperative project has for its purpose the "exploration of how historians and other social scientists can better attain profitable intellectual cooperation through more effective knowledge and use of ideas and methods dominant in the various social sciences." From such exploration the authors of the bulletin are hopeful that the boundaries of historical thought will be extended, its purposes clarified, its perspectives sharpened.

Historians are urged to make more use of the concepts of other social sciences to reorient their own interests and to re-examine their procedures. "Training in thought about history," say the authors, is "as important as training in any particular type of analysis." But the historian is enjoined to make himself more proficient by levying upon specialized studies of economists, sociologists, statisticians, psychologists, anthropologists, etc. The more the historian concerns himself with interpretation the more needful will be his understanding of the social sciences. Here this bulletin is reaffirming an injunction made familiar to historians these many years through well justified repetition.

The Bulletin reminds historians that "the central problem of history is the analysis of change," its rate, volume, and direction. And it is their writings which "furnish the materials to guide or at least to justify policies, opinions, and predictions." Historians perform this latter function because they are committed to the belief that "history is not exclusively chaos or chance: a degree of observable order and pattern, of partially predictable regularity, exists in human behavior."

There will probably be substantial agreement with most of what is presented in this provocative volume. There may be bewilderment, as the authors themselves concede, over the meaning of many of the terms and concepts they have referred to, but the historian is comforted by the observation that in this respect "he is in no worse situation than other social scientists." It seems to this reviewer that insufficient consideration has been given to this problem: how is a historian to gain enough mastery of other fields to be able to distinguish between the sound and the unsound? A little

knowledge is a dangerous thing, for historians as for others.

There is an inclination (at least on the part of one contributor) to be too cavalier in dismissing "mere narrative history." He granted its value as "entertainment" but doubted its contribution "toward building a body of scientific knowledge about human behavior." Though Parkman and Henry Adams (to take two of the best of the "narrative" historians) were without benefit of advantages enjoyed by later social scientists, can we truly say our volumes display greater knowledge about human behavior than theirs? Desirable as it is to increase our scientific knowledge about human behavior let us not depreciate the artist to whose vision is often revealed human secrets locked against the tools of the social scientist.

Many years ago Carl Becker, himself a strong supporter of "the new history," suggested to a colleague in a tone of mild irritation it was time to produce some of it instead of proposing to one another how it should be written. Possibly the same thought occurred to participants in this enterprise. Indeed some of them have attempted to practice what is preached. Bulletins such as this will surely prompt historians to study their respective fields with greater penetration. More and more the tendency will be to study problems rather than periods. But eventually the effort must be made to synthesize separate studies into a comprehensive narrative. When that work is produced, will our familiar landmarks—the American Revolution, the French Revolution, etc. etc.—look very different than they do now? It will be worth waiting for.

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Stories on Stone: A Book of American Epitaphs. By Charles L. Wallis. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954, pp. xv, 272. Illustrations and indexes. \$5.00.)

Largely uninscribed in history books is the variety of beliefs and experiences which make up the lives of ordinary people. Out of the innumerable lives and events of this unrecounted history, a single life or a particular event may be illuminated, partially and arbitrarily, by the inscription on a grave.