

Book Reviews

Recording America's Past: An Interpretation of the Development of Historical Studies in America, 1607-1884. By David D. Van Tassel. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960. Pp. xii, 222. Appendix, selective bibliography, index. \$6.00.)

The development of historical writing in the United States has long needed a new interpreter—an individual who could see and comprehend the various and divergent attempts made by Americans to bring meaning to their heritage. The historiographer's task has not been easy, for both Old World traditions and New World novelties have influenced him. In addition, he frequently was caught between the forces of parochialism and nationalism. And his point of view altered as the country changed. The product from the pen of the trained historian differed, both in philosophy and in method, from that of the annalist, the antiquarian, the chauvinistic chronicler. Yet the fabric of written history is woven from all these strange strands and multi-colored threads.

Mr. Van Tassel seeks to pick away each of the braids, to hold them to the light of scrutiny, to explain the origin and the impact of the inkles of popular history, documania, local narrative, and national history. His contribution starts with three chapters devoted to the colonial origins of local history (1607-1776), in which is stressed the fact that "the first impetus to historical writing in colonial America came of the desire to promote settlement and investment in particular colonies, to defend or explain colonial administration, and to answer the demand for information about the new world" (p. 9). Then follow five chapters which set forth the roots of national historical writing, discuss the new role of local history, trace the rise of societies, treat of the creation of national heroes, and examine efforts to promote a Republican view of national history.

The struggle between nationalism and localism began with the close of the War of 1812 and terminated in 1850. In presenting this theme, the author, in addition to describing a growing appetite for the "materials of history," weighs the labors of the romantic nationalists such as Bancroft, Irving, and Parkman. He assesses the work of local historians imbued with the critical spirit, including individuals such as John Gilmary Shea. A final section, in five chapters, demonstrates the effect of the Civil War upon historical writing, the place that local history played during the war years, considers the "reunion" of the national past, emphasizes the culmination of the critical spirit, and terminates with the year 1884 and with what the author conceives to be the triumph of national history.

"Thus in the waning days of the old year [1884]," writes Mr. Van Tassel, "as Grover Cleveland and the victorious Democrats made preparations to assume control of the new national state, the professional historians prepared to assume the task of recording America's past. The long age of the amateur historian had ended." There is, no

doubt, more than a sliver of substance in this hallelujah. Yet one wonders if, indeed, the day of the amateur historian had come to a close and if "local historians henceforth would defer to the professional" (p. 179).

All in all, *Recording America's Past* is marked by careful research, balanced judgment, and sound interpretation. No doubt not all historians would agree with all the conclusions, but this is only natural, and many controversial questions hang on the delicate scale of semantics. One could wish that the bibliography had included at least a few references to the inception and maturing of foreign historical societies and scholarly associations, for it is surprising, as the author makes apparent, how organizations in the United States leaned upon across-the-Atlantic counterparts. Such titles as Joan Evans, *A History of the Society of Antiquaries*, or the volume edited by Levi Fox, *English Historical Scholarship in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, might have provided stimulating background. But Mr. Van Tassel makes perfectly clear that his bibliography is selective. The Appendix, a list of historical societies arranged chronologically according to date of founding, provides a handy and valuable check list. Professional historians, graduate students, and innumerable amateur historians should, indeed, be grateful for this handbook.

University of Minnesota

Philip D. Jordan

Marquette Legends. By Francis Borgia Steck. Edited by August Reyling. (New York: Pageant Press, Inc., 1960. Pp. xix, 350. Tables, notes, bibliography, facsimiles, index. \$5.00.)

The Capture of Quebec. By Christopher Lloyd. *British Battles Series.* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1959. Pp. 175. Numerous illustrations, maps, note on sources, index. \$4.50.)

Historians are constantly applying the correctives of fact and logic to the romanticism, dubious legends, and downright hoaxes which clutter the annals of all countries, including Canada and the United States. In this tradition, Father Steck's work, a summary of his earlier and voluminous writings, exposes what he considers to be the exaggerations and fabrications in the accepted accounts of the career of Jacques Marquette.

The author's major points are his contentions that Marquette probably did not accompany Jolliet on the famous exploration of the Mississippi in 1673 and was not the founder of the famous Kaskaskia Mission. He was, rather, a humble missionary whose undistinguished career was falsely inflated into importance by his superior and others to advance the interests of the Jesuits in their struggle with the State for power in the West.

Father Steck employs various evidence to establish his theses. Negatively, he points out that Marquette was never officially appointed to accompany Jolliet, nor does the latter mention him in the records of the expedition, surely a peculiar omission. Father Steck also seeks to establish, by a critical examination of many documents, that the accounts