

HISTORICAL SCHOLARSHIP IN AMERICAN CULTURE ¹

Although often presented with antiquarian fervor, the history of history reveals the pattern of culture. John Dewey's conception of philosophy as an integral aspect of human striving and its development as an instrument for understanding is no less appropriate to historiography, but this has received more assent than application.² Historical literature is a documentary source for the study of ideas and a tool for social analysis. The history of historical writing in the United States reflects the course of European

¹ The references cited are not intended to be inclusive. Wherever possible the most convenient source is given. The best survey of the early period which this article surveys is, J. F. JAMESON, *The History of Historical Writing in America* (Boston and New York, 1891). Originally composed for lecture purposes at Brown University and elsewhere, it is brief but suggestive. The most recent survey which covers the entire field, *A History of American History* (New York, 1937) by MICHEL KRAUS is accurate and helpful. For biographical data on individual writers consult the *Dictionary of American Biography*. The sketches are often written by qualified experts and are referred to specifically when of major importance.

² For the most recent statement of this viewpoint see, JOSEPH RATNER, "Dewey's Conception of Philosophy", *The Philosophy of John Dewey*, Paul Arthur Schilp, ed., *The Library of Living Philosophers* (Evanston and Chicago, 1939) I, 49 ff; JOHN H. RANDALL JR., "Dewey's Interpretation of the History of Philosophy", *ibid.*, 77 ff; Dewey's own approach is exemplified in *The Quest For Certainty* (New York, 1929); the word "in" rather than "and" preceding the phrase "American Culture" in the title is intentionally employed; for the justification of the procedure see, JOSEPH RATNER, ed., *Intelligence in the Modern World. John Dewey's Philosophy* (New York, 1939), 3-9; for Dewey's own statement, *ibid.*, 245 ff.

thought and roughly parallels the growth of society in America.³

The original narratives of the seventeenth century record the activities of men engaged in bold and hazardous adventure. They depict the initial clash of man and nature in the new world. The literary expressions of the first Americans reveal the pioneer mind, but they also disclose the human motives which created it. The quest for God and the quest for gold, the lust for power and the passion for tranquility, the building of an empire, and the search for a home joined in subtle combination to stimulate colonial men to action. While early historiography supplies an inventory of individual drives, it likewise furnishes insight into the social configuration.

The earliest contributors to American literature were of two types. Native Hakluyts, like scores of later promoters, spun shimmering webs of enticement designed to lure the dissatisfied from the old world to the new. Weaving the perennial yearning for fame, fortune, and future into a glowing prospect of opportunity, they whetted desire, en-

³ The development of historiography in America divides itself into five major stages. The first, roughly coincident with the seventeenth century, is noteworthy for propagandistic and autobiographical writing. The second, beginning before the end of the century (about 1688) and continuing to the Revolution, illustrates the rising tide of secularism in part a reflection of economic maturity. The waning of theological influence is represented by the Mathers; the growing rationalism by Prince and Hutchinson. The third, dating from the Revolution to the second decade of the nineteenth century, is a period colored by the attainment of independence and the establishment of the federal government. Nationalism is the underlying theme. Fourth, the era of cultural awakening extending from about 1820 or 1830 to the end of the Civil War, is distinguished by the cultural renaissance in New England and the dominance of what is now called romanticism in historiography as in other areas of thought and expression. Finally, from the end of the Civil War to the present, the modern schools of historical interpretation came into being. Influenced by science, industrialism, urbanism, and their derivative implications, history emerged as a recognized profession and redefined its objectives. The present essay deals with the first four stages. The fifth is reserved for subsequent treatment.

couraged hope, and stimulated ambition. Drab lives were fired with the glow of adventure; London merchants already fingered the gold from bursting money-bags, and petty shopkeepers imagined themselves as lords of broad Virginia acres. These writers offered freedom of conscience to the oppressed as well as stellar imperial parts to restless patriots who had long awaited their cue. No less practical were self-conscious autobiographers and chroniclers who, mindful of their obligation to posterity, set forth the leading events in what they regarded as the noblest of ventures. Pilgrim, Puritan, and Anglican, deeply impressed with their rôles in furthering the kingdom of Christ or Britain, recounted their trials with devil, native, and misguided papist in wresting His Majesty's dominions from their grasp.

At the very threshold of American historiography stands the redoubtable figure of Captain John Smith, soldier of fortune, explorer, sailor, and gentleman adventurer. More characteristically than any other writer, he represents the literature of promotion and autobiography in the grand manner. That American annals should commence with the romantic captain is singularly fitting. He is the epitome of Elizabethan grandiloquence, the swashbuckling hero as anxious to singe the beard of the King of Spain as to amass wealth and power. But clashes with Castilian cavaliers on the Spanish Main, important though they were, contributed less to the building of America in the first years of colony planting than the less glamorous occupations of stalking the beaver and tending the crops.

The career of John Smith, fantastic for his own dashing age, is stirring enough to goad the envy of the sophisticated. The excitement which marked his Virginia days was simply a climax to a youth crowded with unbelievable escapades. Born less than a decade before the defeat of the Spanish Armada, he started his adult life conventionally by serving as a tutor in a noble household. Soon thereafter, however, circumstances drove him half over Europe and the

Levant. He saw service in the armies fighting the Turks (in the course of which he is said to have overcome three Turkish nobles—one is almost compelled to say single-handed), and was sent into slavery from which he fled after a number of thrilling exploits. Yet when finally he arrived in England he was scarcely twenty-four. That he should have taken an interest in Virginia is hardly surprising if only because life in England must have seemed rather dull in comparison with Constantinople and Varna.⁴

When Virginia was but a year old Smith wrote the first of two books which have ever since engaged historical attention. *A True Relation*, a brief pamphlet composed in the colony in 1608, tells more of Smith than of Virginia, but is valuable for its account of exploration and tilts with the Indians. Modesty was not one of Smith's characteristics, and the bold assertiveness of his style together with frontal attacks upon his colonial enemies tends to detract from the value of his work. Whatever the conclusions of internal criticism, the pamphlet is a living seventeenth-century document which attests the dominant hopes of his class. "In after times," he wrote in conclusion, we may expect "to see our Nation to enjoy a Country, not onely exceeding pleasant for habitation, but also a very profitable for commerce in generall; no doubt pleasing to almightie God, honourable to our gracious Sovereigne, and commodious generally to the whole Kingdome".⁵

⁴ JAMES T. ADAMS, a distinguished contributor to colonial history, has written the brief sketch in *Dictionary of American Biography*, XVII; JAMESON, *Historical Writing*, is skeptical of Smith; for the view of an accomplished English student of the American colonies see, J. A. DOYLE in *Dictionary of National Biography*; a notable account in a classic work is, MOSES COIT TYLER, *A History of American Literature* (New York and London, 1909) I, ch. ii which together with the companion volumes may be consulted with profit at all points.

⁵ *A True Relation of Such Occurrences and Accidents of Noate as Hath Hapned in Virginia since the first Planting of that Collony* (London, 1608); the best edition of Smith's works is by Charles Deane

More important is the volume entitled *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-england and the Summer Isles*,⁶ a tome of two hundred and fifty pages the greater part of which consists of reprints both from his own writings and the works of others. While *The Generall Historie* contains little that is new, it does contain enough bragadoccio and partisanship to cause a distinguished critic to conclude that "what is historical is not his, and what is his is not historical".⁷ Nevertheless the fourth part of the book preserves Smith's lively annotations on the conclusions of his contemporaries, important regardless of their truth. Here, too, appeared the first full account of the Pocahontas incident upon which much labored ingenuity has been expended.⁸ None can dispute that Smith was violently antagonistic toward his critics or that he was, at least openly, far too much concerned with himself, but modern research has in large measure vindicated his judgment. Comparison with other sources indicates that he was correct in his portrayal of colonial conditions as well as in his estimation of the Virginia Company.⁹

Energetic quills dedicated to the glories of New England matched the eloquence of Captain Smith. William Wood's *New-England's Prospect*, published in London in 1634, described the natural beauties of the physical scene and celebrat-

(Boston, 1866); for an interpretation which does not agree with that given above see JOHN SPENCER BASSET, "The Historians, 1607-1783", *Cambridge History of American Literature*, William P. Trent and others, eds., (New York, 1917) I, 16; the quotation has often been cited, see, KRAUS, *op. cit.*, 25.

⁶ (London, 1624); see references cited above.

⁷ JAMESON, *Historical Writing*, 11; one of the recent biographies of Smith does not endorse this view, E. K. CHATTERTON, *Captain John Smith* (New York and London, 1927).

⁸ On Pocahontas *et al*, JAMESON, *Historical Writing*, 11 ff; CHATTERTON, *Smith*, 141 ff; for the minor historical works of Virginia and the South see the bibliographies in *Cambridge History*, I, 365 ff.

⁹ KRAUS, *op. cit.*, 29.

ed native habits and government.¹⁰ An earlier account, written jointly by Edward Winslow and William Bradford and known as *Mourt's Relation*,¹¹ recounted the first year of Plymouth plantation. Written by men who took part in the journey, the drafting of the Mayflower Compact, and the first permanent society in Massachusetts, it possesses much more than a sentimental interest. Winslow, who later became governor of Plymouth and the agent of Massachusetts Bay in England, continued the narrative in *Good News from New England* (1624) with candor and circumspection.¹²

If many responded to the glittering prospects of the New Eldorado, others placed their faith in the prospects of the New Canaan. William Bradford, an American Herodotus, was leader of the Pilgrim band and easily the leader among early colonial literary craftsmen. Written in simple, cadenced English prose, *Of Plimoth Plantation* bespeaks Bradford's intimacy with the Bible as its unadorned forthrightness bespeaks his undeviating belief in the mission he had undertaken to fulfill. He charted the course of the Separatists from their initial persecutions abroad to the year 1646, and it is still the best source for a study of the Plymouth group.¹³

Bradford's manuscript itself had a curious and interesting career. Used by scholars in this unpublished form for

¹⁰ (London, 1634). KENNETH B. MURDOCK contributed the life of Wood in the *Dictionary of American Biography*, XX. The book is exceptional in promotion literature as it treats both the good and bad features of New England, and was the best description written up to that time, see TYLER, *American Literature*, I, 170-179.

¹¹ *A Relation or Iournall of the beginnings and the proceedings of the English Plantations settled at Plimouth in New England* (London, 1622). Mourt was the name of the London printer. Smith used the information for his *Generall Historie*.

¹² (London, 1624).

¹³ SAMUEL ELIOT MORISON, one of the leading authorities in the field of colonial history, has written the article in *Dictionary of American Biography*, II. It is to be observed that the Bible with which Bradford was so familiar was the Geneva Bible rather than the King James version. On his style, E. F. BRADFORD, "Conscious Art in Bradford's History of Plymouth Plantation", *New England Quarterly*, I (April, 1928), 133.

over two hundred years it was not actually printed until 1856. The manuscript was believed to have been deposited in Boston's Old South Church, but during the occupation of that city at the time of the Revolution, the British converted the church into a riding school. Since the manuscript was not heard of again until it was discovered in London, it can only be inferred that the officers of George III had something to do with its disappearance. In any case, an unknown reader with a footnote eye while consulting a volume by Bishop Wilberforce, found references to a manuscript history of Plymouth which the Bishop averred he had read in the Library of the Bishop of London. Finally it was discovered that the history there referred to was indeed the work of Governor Bradford, and following the intervention of members of the Massachusetts Historical Society, arrangements were made to publish it.¹⁴

Virginia had its John Smith, Plymouth its William Bradford, and Massachusetts Bay its John Winthrop. While Puritan and Pilgrim differed widely in temperament and outlook, they were more closely related to each other than to the rollicking captain of Jamestown. Winthrop exerted an abiding influence on the Massachusetts project and kept a faithful record of the events he helped to shape. His *Journal* has none of the conscious artistry of Bradford's style, but it is a detailed exposition of life in the settlement from 1630 to 1649 for which students have never ceased to be grateful. The *Journal* not only discloses the erstwhile lord of Groton and the vicissitudes of the colony, but it is a revelation of the upper-class Puritan mind.¹⁵

¹⁴ Edited by Charles Deane in 1856. A better edition with critical notes was prepared by Worthington Chauncey Ford in 1912. The story of the manuscript is recounted by JAMESON, *Historical Writing*, 14, 15. He neglects to mention, however, that Book I of Bradford's *History* was printed from a copy in the Plymouth Church records in 1841.

¹⁵ On Winthrop and other New England leaders, S. E. MORISON, *Builders of the Bay Colony* (Boston, 1930) is one of the most penetrating volumes ever written on this period; ROBERT C. WINTHROP, *Life*

Although the seventeenth century had but reached its meridian when John Winthrop died,¹⁶ the forces which were to change America were already remoulding colonial perspective. Before Winthrop left his native Suffolk, Virginia acres were yielding half a million pounds of tobacco for annual export. If the economy of the southern region was not yet reared upon foundations of smoke, as one contemporary asserted, plantations manned by slave or servile labor were discernible through the haze. The distinguished governor of Massachusetts Bay was still alive when an iron foundry operated in New England, and mills appeared in the wilderness of Maine and New Hampshire. Only forty years after he had launched the good ship *Blessing of the Bay*, Massachusetts was producing over seven hundred vessels during a twelve-month. What were once straggling outposts of empire, lonely fishing villages, and rude dwellings clustered on the fringe of the forest had become seventeenth-century towns. The starving time was over. Tobacco piled on southern wharves, and the white sails which put out from Salem and Newport symbolized the changing culture reflected in social organization and mental outlook. The dominance of the supernatural was challenged by the advance of the secular traceable in the Halfway Covenant of 1657 as well as in the counting-rooms of Boston merchants. With the new royal charter of 1691, banning religious qualifications for the franchise, the Puritan theocracy felt a seventeenth-century gust of the winds of eighteenth-century doctrine.¹⁷

and Letters of John Winthrop (Boston, 1864, 1867) is still the best biography of which the first of two volumes covers the years till 1630; STEWART MITCHEL, ed, *The Founding of Massachusetts . . . 1628-1631* Massachusetts Historical Society, *Proceedings*, LXII (Boston, 1930); the first two volumes of Winthrop's *Journal* were published in 1790. After the third was discovered JAMES SAVAGE edited the whole (Boston, 1825-26, 1853) in two volumes under the title of *The History of New England*.

¹⁶ In 1649.

¹⁷ GEORGE H. HAYNES, *Representation and Suffrage in Massachusetts, 1620-1691* (Baltimore, 1894); BROOKS ADAMS, *The Emancipation of Massachusetts* (Boston, 1886); T. J. WERTENBAKER, *The First*

Increase Mather, mightiest of theocrats and fearless spokesman of the orthodox opposition, watched these events with deep foreboding.¹⁸ With regret he saw the work of the founders reformed by the profane hands of a secular generation who conspired to secure his removal from the presidency of Harvard.¹⁹ A scholar in the best Puritan form, he was the author of more than a hundred and fifty separate items, ranging from religion to history and science. Profoundly solicitous of the future of New England, he was also concerned with preserving its hallowed past. He attempted to insure the writing of New England history and himself made significant contributions to this end.²⁰ The completion of this task, however, was reserved for Cotton Mather, his son and successor, who inherited his father's

Americans, ARTHUR M. SCHLESINGER and DIXON RYAN FOX eds., *A History of American Life*, II (New York, 1929), chs. v, vi, x, xiii; JAMES T. ADAMS, *Provincial Society*, ARTHUR M. SCHLESINGER and DIXON RYAN FOX eds., *A History of American Life*, III (New York, 1927), chs. ii, v, ix; VERNON L. PARRINGTON, *The Colonial Mind* (New York, 1927) is a basic study and a landmark in American historiography; much light is also shed by SAMUEL H. BROCKUNIER, *The Irrepressible Democrat: Roger Williams* (New York, 1940); PERRY G. MILLER, "The Half-way Covenant", *New England Quarterly*, VI (December, 1933).

¹⁸ PARRINGTON, *Colonial Mind*, 98 ff; KENNETH B. MURDOCK, *Increase Mather* (Cambridge, 1925), the same author prepared the sketch in *Dictionary of American Biography*.

¹⁹ MURDOCK in *Dictionary of American Biography*. Actually Mather fought against the encroachments of the crown and for greater degree of home rule. Though he was against the Halfway Covenant, he later was forced, as a practical matter, to accept it. Like his son, he also favored inoculation for smallpox.

²⁰ Increase Mather's historical venture is an account of King Philip's War. For a comprehensive bibliography of Mather see, *Cambridge History*, I 398; V. L. PARRINGTON's "The Puritan Divines, 1620-1720", *ibid.*, 31 contains a number of illuminating insights. Increase Mather had a rival in William Hubbard (1621-1704) a Member of Harvard's first graduating class and later its president. Hubbard was the author of *A Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New-England* (Boston, 1677) which served as important material for Cotton Mather, Prince, Belknap, and others. Two other things distinguish it; it was partly subsidized by the General Court and its narrative description was of a very high order.

position as leader of the conservative party and his standing as scholar extraordinary.

Cotton Mather, unquestionably the greatest of Puritan scholars, was doomed to a life of disappointment. He failed to become the leader of his age because he failed adequately to represent it. When his father left for England in the year of the Glorious Revolution, Cotton Mather was elevated to the pulpit of the North Church, but the issuance of the new charter three years later deprived the ministers of much of their prestige if not their power. In the witchcraft frenzy of 1692, an episode intimately related to the decline of theocracy, Cotton Mather's reputation was pitted against the trend of the times.²¹ While in theology he lagged behind his era,²² in science he was ahead of it. He espoused the cause of inoculation for smallpox only to meet with vociferous popular disapproval and general disdain. When the elder Mather lost the Harvard presidency, the younger Mather tried desperately to obtain it, and was twice refused. He was too conservative to have faith in the people and too orthodox fully to please the rising bourgeoisie who had become unsympathetic toward the intensity of primitive Puritanism.

Cotton Mather was more successful as trustee of his father's historical ambitions than as his intellectual executor. He quadrupled the literary output of his prolific parent who would have offered profuse and reverent thanks for the *Magnalia Christi Americana*; or the *Ecclesiastical History of New England* which, after much tribulation, ap-

²¹ RALPH and LOUISE BOAS, *Cotton Mather, Keeper of the Puritan Conscience* (New York, 1928); BARRET WENDELL, *Cotton Mather* (New York, 1891); *Magnalia Christi Americana* (Hartford, 1820); *Cambridge History*, I, 407 for bibliography.

²² K. B. MURDOCK in *Dictionary of American Biography* for an incisive brief sketch, and references cited above.

peared in 1702.²³ The *Magnalia* was not simply a history of ecclesiastical affairs. In addition to a chronology of governors, magistrates, and distinguished clerical leaders, a record of "remarkable providences", and an analysis of the place of Harvard in the realm of learning, the book essayed to prove that the theocracy of the founding fathers was worthy of preservation. Mather ascribed the origin of the Puritan state to the holiest of religious motives. He ignored the economic interests of the past perhaps because economic interests were everywhere so apparent in his own day. Mather was neither tyrannical, narrow, nor bigoted. He was a great man whose genius was squandered in the conflict of generations.²⁴

The import of the literary patriarchs is not lessened by a recognition that their works are sources for our knowledge of the first century of life in British North America. They constitute the materials of history rather than history itself. While historical writings are always an index of their time and place, it was the followers of the learned pioneers who were the progenitors of American historical tradition. Thomas Prince, William Stith, and Thomas Hutchinson laid the foundation for historical scholarship in the period between the Mathers and the outbreak of the Revolution. Contemporary theorists would doubtless label their concepts of causation confused, but they imply none the less that the motivations of human life are to be found in the theater of human events. Rejection of direct, supernatural inter-

²³ JAMESON'S comments are suggestive, *Historical Writing*, 51; PARRINGTON, *loc. cit.*, 50. It is suggestive to note, at this juncture, the work of CAPTAIN EDWARD JOHNSON, *The Wonder-Working Providence of Sion's Saviour in New England* (London, 1654) which may be said to represent at a lower social and cultural level what the Mathers represent for the upper-class Puritan mind. While important because it fulfills the promise of its title, it possesses in addition other factors which make it worthy of mention. Written partly in prose and partly in doggerel, it contains important facts on social life and the founding of towns. See BASSETT, *loc. cit.*, 23.

²⁴ PARRINGTON, *Colonial Mind*, 98 ff.

vention, so characteristic of the age of reason, is not the only factor which distinguishes them from their forebears. They are the American counterparts of European craftsmen with whom they shared an erudite concern for the specific and the precise. Almost antiquarian, they severely delimited the frontiers of interest. They exchanged the large canvas appropriate to the artistry of high purpose for a photographic reproduction of the particular.

The Reverend Thomas Prince, minister of the Old South Church in Boston, merits a high place in the records of scholarship. An assiduous collector, he assembled manuscripts, documents, and printed works for his New England Library which became the nucleus for the Prince Collection, now one of the precious possessions of the Boston Public Library. His own opus, *The Chronological History of New England*, is as annalistic as the title implies. Since he emulated the renowned Bishop Usher in beginning with the creation, he failed to carry his story beyond 1633. Despite this limitation, his standards are highly significant. "I would not," he insisted, "take the least iota upon trust. Some may think me rather too critical. . . . I think a writer of facts cannot be too critical. In short, I cite my vouchers to every passage; and I have done my utmost, first to find out the truth, and then to relate it in the clearest order."²⁵

In sympathy with this viewpoint, William Stith, president of the College of William and Mary, balanced Prince's *New England* with a study of Virginia. No more comprehensive chronologically than Prince, extending only to 1624, its value lies in its elaborate detail, enhanced by the use of the records of the London Company in the second part of the book.²⁶

²⁵ Cited in BASSETT, *loc. cit.*, 28; TYLER, *American Literature*, II, 146.

²⁶ BASSETT, *loc. cit.*, 26-27 who considers it the most modern of colonial histories methodologically.

The *History of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay* by Thomas Hutchinson is practically in a class by itself. A native of Boston and a graduate of Harvard, Hutchinson served in the Governor's Council during the turbulent years which began the imperial controversy. He opposed the Sugar Act (1764) and the Stamp Act (1765), but stoutly maintained the right of Parliament to enact them. Becoming royal governor in 1771, his career was abruptly curtailed by the Boston Tea Party (1773), and a year later he followed many other Tories into exile. Two of his three volumes were published before the imperial clash became the Revolution, while the third, covering developments from 1750 to 1774, was not printed until 1828. The latter parts, notwithstanding the harrowing personal consequences suffered by Hutchinson, were temperate in tone and reasonably judicious. But they bear the stamp of the crisis. *The History of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay* is the first full-length survey of the province and provides the best insight into Tory mentality.²⁷

Nationalism suffused all activity in the post revolutionary period. The yearning for intellectual and cultural independence was matched only by the previous desire for political liberty. Patriotism was the dominant note in music as it was the underlying motif of drama. Artists with brush and pen found inspiration in native legends and in the epochal transformation from colony to commonwealth, while

²⁷ He was, says BASSETT, "the best American historian of his time.", *ibid.*, 30; the most illuminating comments are by PARRINGTON, *Colonial Mind*, 194 ff; for bibliographical information on Prince, Stith, and Hutchinson see the references to the *Cambridge History I*, already cited. Some brief mention should be made of other eighteenth century writers excluded from the text because of space limitations. William Byrd (1674-1744), reputed to have owned the most extensive library in the colonies, served as commissioner to survey North Carolina boundary, wrote *History of the Dividing Line betwixt Virginia and North Carolina*, see J. S. BASSETT, *Writings of Colonel Byrd* (New York, 1901). Byrd and the Mathers provide a revealing contrast. Consult KRAUS, *op. cit.*, 68 ff for additional writings as well as references given previously.

religion likewise responded to the prevailing spirit. Noah Webster strove to make the English language American, and others attempted to purge the nursery rhymes of alien influence.

Americans were as conscious of their present as of their past. Participants in the struggle for independence and the movement for the constitution, apprehensive lest their motives be misinterpreted, called attention to the fragility of documents and the frailty of human memory. John Adams bemoaned the ignorance of his compatriots on these sacred subjects and constantly stressed the need for preparing a trustworthy account. Students have always regretted that his threat to do it himself never materialized although his voluminous correspondence makes it possible to reconstruct his basic attitudes. Fearful that the passage of time would dim the brightness of accuracy, Dr. Benjamin Rush of Philadelphia, leading American physician and successor to Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson as president of the American Philosophical Society, strongly urged the advisability of historical research. The zeal of nationalism was translated into actuality before the Civil War by the creation of libraries, the formation of historical societies, the compilation of sources, and the writing of much significant history.

Historical production from the War of Independence to the second decade of the nineteenth century was undistinguished. America was culturally impoverished by the exodus of the Tories, the natural patrons of art and science. Added to the loss of support and scholarly potential was the absence of the physical and social accoutrements of learning. Leisure, always at a premium in undeveloped countries, awaited the coming of the industrial revolution as did the progress of education, the growth of libraries and a more broadly cultivated intellectual awareness. Yet during the lifetime of this generation the basic social elements devel-

oped, permitting the cultural flowering of New England in the thirty years before the Civil War.

If the output of the United States before the literary awakening of New England fails to satisfy the rigor of present day standards, it was neither unimpressive nor unimportant. Some of the writers during this transition stage were impassioned, but their volumes provide relatively accurate barometers for gauging the attitudes of men. Others were biased, but they furnish a key to the riddle of prejudice. In short, the very reasons which detract from their historical worth, in the narrow sense, are precisely the reasons which make them invaluable to the student of ideas.

The Reverend William Gordon was an active participant in American affairs although he came to the new world after the conflict with the mother country began. He sent his four volumes on *The History of the Rise, Progress and Establishment of the Independence of the United States* to George Washington in 1789.²⁸ Gordon was very active in gathering material and even returned to England to escape the turmoil of partisanship, but the results were hardly commensurate with the effort. John Adams, who again met Gordon in London, testifies that pecuniary considerations caused him to scrap his original manuscript and to rewrite it in terms of British preferences. A later American critic, undeterred by the sanctity of reputations, discovered that Gordon had borrowed copiously from an English publication without benefit of quotation marks. This devastating exposure destroyed the standing of a study highly prized for a century.²⁹

The fate of the monograph of David Ramsay is distressingly similar. A well-known physician and historian of South Carolina, Ramsay was state legislator, senator, member of the Continental Congress, and an army surgeon during

²⁸ KRAUS, *op. cit.*, 126 gives the most succinct statement of the rise and fall of Gordon.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, and references cited.

the Revolution. Because of his intimate knowledge of men and affairs, his volumes on the battle for national selfhood were long regarded as authoritative.³⁰ Instead of drawing upon his own rich experiences, however, Ramsay, like Gordon, chose to appropriate materials from other less well-informed sources.

Much more consequential than either Ramsay or Gordon was the great historian of New Hampshire, Jeremy Belknap.³¹ Critical, rational, tolerant, he exhibited the best scholarly traits of his age. Belknap also served the historical craft by helping to found the Massachusetts Historical Society and became one of its most loyal members. He communicated his enthusiasm to his associates and was largely responsible for the publication of the Society's *Collections* in 1792, a landmark in cooperative historical effort.³²

Jedidiah Morse, minister at New Haven, Connecticut, adequately represents the strain of nationalism. Famed as "the Father of American geography" and the father of Samuel F. B. Morse, he revised the geography of the United States by publishing *American Universal Geography*, branching in the field of history with *The American Gazetteer* in 1797. By far the most interesting of his works is the *Annals of the American Revolution* which appeared in 1824. Part six of this study contains a section on the causes of the conflict in which are to be found a number of letters from John Adams written to Morse in answer to queries.³³

The patriotism induced by the revolution and the creation of the federal republic is nowhere better evidenced than in the adulation of George Washington. Magazines immediately took up the refrain and local versifiers strained their

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 128.

³¹ J. S. BASSETT, *The Middle Group of American Historians* (New York, 1917).

³² For other matters pertaining to Belknap as well as for this special point, JAMESON, *Historical Writing*, 86.

³³ KRAUS, *op. cit.*, 155.

ingenuity in search of ample adjectives.³⁴ Typical of these rhymed tributes was the following from the *Massachusetts Magazine* for 1793:

Illustrious patriot, hero, sage,
Ordained to save a future age
Before Columbia's birth; . . .
Grand base of freedom's fed'rate dome,
More glorious far than Greece or Rome,
The noblest man on earth,³⁵

Nor did interest in the father of the country in any way diminish during the next generation. A famous life of Washington, now more noted because of its author than because of its subject, was written by John Marshall, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. Marshall intended his biography to be a history of the country because he believed the history of Washington and the history of the nation to be one. When the five volumes³⁶ published between 1804 and 1807 appeared they supplied a real need, but they aroused strenuous criticism. The Chief Justice had not violated the standards of academic propriety, but many thought the life of Washington was a federalist polemic, and even Thomas Jefferson felt that something should be done about it.³⁷

The most notorious item of Washingtoniana was the work of Mason Locke Weems. Familiarly known as Parson Weems, he started life as a medical student, switched to the Anglican ministry, and ended as an itinerant vendor of books. When he published his life of the first president he tapped a literary field thereto unexploited and made money

³⁴ FRANK LUTHER MOTT, *A History of American Magazines 1741-1850* (Cambridge, 1938), 183, 48, 52, 53.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 53.

³⁶ KRAUS, *op. cit.*, 155 ff., but compare JAMESON, *Historical Writing*, 84. Despite this high praise, few now regard MARSHALL'S *Life* as significant scholarship.

³⁷ Jefferson called it "that five-volumed libel.", cited by KRAUS, *op. cit.*, 159.

for himself and the publishing firm he represented. His *Washington* was intended for juvenile readers, but it possessed an appeal for their parents as well. Weems deserves a place in American history as the author of the cherry tree legend which outlived him by many a year.³⁸

The glorification of George Washington was but one of the historiographical expressions of national patriotism. Pride in America, heightened by the War of 1812 and the westward expansion of population, stimulated serious interest in the records of the nation's past. Avid collectors and editors made available to later scholars documents which broadened the scope of understanding and opened the portals of criticism. Private literary treasures and local self-consciousness were supplemented by the activity of famous editors whose names have long sparkled in monographic footnotes. Hezekiah Niles, who earned a somewhat dubious immortality by giving his name to two mid-western towns, edited the *Baltimore Evening Post* during the major portion of the European crisis of the Napoleonic period, founded *Niles Weekly Register*, and was responsible for the appearance of *Principles and Acts of the Revolution*.³⁹ Jonathan Elliot prepared an edition of the debates of the federal constitution convention, familiarly known to students as *Elliot's Debates*.⁴⁰ No less well known are the *American Archives*, edited by Peter Force, with the financial assistance of the government and the collaboration of the clerk of the House of Representatives.⁴¹ But the editorial crown must be awarded to Jared Sparks.

Befitting one whose public career was largely identified

³⁸ The standard biography is by L. C. WROTH, *Parson Weems* (Baltimore, 1911).

³⁹ BASSETT, *Middle Group of American Historians*, is the most convenient source of information for these individuals; on Niles, in addition, MOTT, *op. cit.*, 268-270; KRAUS, *op. cit.*, 172.

⁴⁰ KRAUS, *op. cit.*, 172 ff; JAMESON, *Historical Writing*, 86.

⁴¹ *Ibid*; BASSETT, *Middle Group of American Historians*, ch. v.

with Americana, the epochs of Sparks' life coincide with the epochs of American history. Born together with the Republic in 1789, he was graduated from Harvard when the United States concluded its second war with England; he died in the crucial year 1866, a date signalized by the congressional victory of the radical reconstrucionists which placed them at the wheels of control and ushered in a new era. Remembered less for his writing than for his editing, Sparks immersed himself in the sources, made a tour of the state archives, and was one of the first to seek light on American affairs in European depositories.

Sparks' record of activity is almost without parallel. After his archival pilgrimage here and abroad during the twenties, he secured permission to examine George Washington's correspondence, and in 1827 he went to Mt. Vernon to begin his study. Two decades after this event, more than fifty volumes bore his name, and his career had by no means ended. Meanwhile, he was connected with the *North American Review*, and in 1839 he became McLean Professor of American History at Harvard—the first chair devoted to this subject in the United States. Washington, Franklin, Gouverneur Morris, and the diplomatic correspondents of the revolution all came under his editorial sway, yet it was as an editor that he has been most severely censured. Francis Wharton's subsequent analysis of the diplomatic papers revealed Sparks to have been something less than accurate, but it was his care for the reputations of the great that has aroused the greatest suspicion. While the biographical account of Benjamin Franklin was said to have changed his reputation from a mean, scheming politician to a kindly sage, Sparks took liberties with the manuscripts to make his subjects conform to his own ideals and those of his generation.⁴²

⁴² HERBERT B. ADAMS, *Life and Writings of Jared Sparks* (Boston, 1893), is a two volume study undertaken at the request of the Sparks family.

Admirable progress in the collection of sources had indeed been made, but hardly more than a hundred years ago there was no adequate treatment of American development in print. Sparks attempted to bridge this gap by *The Library of American Biography*, attesting his faith in biography as a medium for historical analysis. Students of colonial evolution turned to the work of a Scotchman; for the revolution, to the volumes of an Italian. That there was no satisfactory account from an American pen is suggested by the popularity of Charles W. Botta's *History of the War of Independence* and the favorable comment which greeted James Grahame's survey of colonial history from the era of discovery to the revolution.⁴³ Partly to fill this void Abiel Holmes, noble progenitor of a noble line, wrote his *American Annals*, designed to give a comprehensive view of America's story.⁴⁴

The career of Jared Sparks echoes the resounding changes taking place during his life. If America had not yet fully matured, it was growing intellectually at a pace much faster than a comparison with the rapidity of material expansion indicated. Time and the gradual acquisition of the social elements upon which the cultivation of the arts and sciences depend, mellowed both the mind and the spirit. While Americans in Ghent were signing a treaty of peace, other Americans in Göttingen, Heidelberg, and Berlin entered into spiritual covenants with scholarship. Beginning what was later to become a migration to German universities, James G. Cogswell, George Ticknor, Edward Everett, and George Bancroft carried the inspiration of learning and the passion for inquiry back to their beloved New England. Not long thereafter, James Marsh of the University of Vermont in-

⁴³ This aspect of the subject is superlatively covered by KRAUS, *op. cit.*, 190 ff.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 183; note also Timothy Pitkin (1766-1847) graduate of Yale (1785) and Federalist Congressman from Connecticut (1805-19) discussed briefly, *ibid.*, 187.

initiated a period of American thought by introducing German philosophy to receptive minds.⁴⁵

In the northeastern section of the United States, the earlier industrial development and its urban counterpart quickened scholarly traditions. New England, ready to yield its second fruits, flowered in a resplendant renaissance—not, however, confined to letters. Emancipation from European imperialisms was celebrated by the end of the war of 1812, but another kind of emancipation was indicated when, in 1818, the *American Journal of Science and Arts* was founded by Benjamin Silliman, a pioneer scientist at Yale.⁴⁶ In the Puritan Acropolis, William Ellery Channing submitted Christianity to a searching critique and contrasted its claims with those of Unitarianism.⁴⁷ Channing's declaration of human independence (for the most part uncongenial to New Haven) signaled the breach between Augustinianism and mid-nineteenth century Americanism and opened the New England dykes to the oncoming Transcendentalist surge. Soon after John Lothrop Motley graduated from Harvard, Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Essay on Nature* furnished supercilious European critics with a yardstick for the measurement of American breadth, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, freshly ensconced in a Harvard professorship,

⁴⁵ JOHN DEWEY, "James Marsh and American Philosophy", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, II (April, 1941), 131; on the increase of interest in German *belles-lettres*, MOTT, *op. cit.*, 192, 401 ff; OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES, *Ralph Waldo Emerson. John Lothrop Motley. Two Memoirs* (Boston and New York, 1892), 114.

⁴⁶ MOTT, *op. cit.*, 302-305 is an excellent sketch; GEORGE PARK FISHER, *Life of Benjamin Silliman* (New York, 1866), 2 vols.; EDWARD S. DANA and others, *A Century of Science in America, with Special Reference to the American Journal of Science, 1818-1918* (New Haven, 1918), 13-59; for this whole period VAN WYCK BROOKS, *The Flowering of New England* (New York, 1937), is fundamental.

⁴⁷ HOLMES, *Emerson*, 113; H. R. WARFEL, R. H. GABRIEL, and S. T. WILLIAMS, eds., *The American Mind* (Chicago and Boston, 1937), reprints pertinent selections from Channing, 511, 512; from Emerson, 532.

was about to furnish them with others.⁴⁸ By the time Bancroft returned from Germany, Washington Irving's *Sketch-Book* was already a classic model, while James Fennimore Cooper and James Bryant had earned a place for American letters in the firmament of recognition.⁴⁹ Horace Mann, a sagacious Boston lawyer, was remoulding American education, the Lowell Institute had opened its doors, and Nathaniel Hawthorne had published *Twice-Told Tales* before William H. Prescott was even out of college.⁵⁰ Edgar Allen Poe and James Russell Lowell were names enshrined in the halo of print previous to the historical advent of the great Francis Parkman, and George Bancroft had stores of energy still unspent after Herman Melville and Walt Whitman had freed themselves from the literary inhibitions of the past.⁵¹ American historiography came of age with George Bancroft because America itself had passed its adolescent stage. William H. Prescott, John L. Motley, Francis Parkman, and George Bancroft were hitched to the rising New England star.

Altering values of social science have shifted the position of George Bancroft on the curve of historical objective.

⁴⁸ For important information on Emerson abstracted from contemporary journals, MOTT, *op. cit.*, 410-411; HOLMES, *Emerson*, 142, 307; the essay "Emerson", by PAUL ELMER MORE, *Cambridge History*, 349 is by one of the outstanding authorities as is the essay on Transcendentalism by HAROLD C. GODDARD, *ibid.*, 326 where full bibliographies for these subjects (as well as for others mentioned below) are given.

⁴⁹ See the references cited above; in 1835, Edward Everett wrote in the *North American Review* that Irving was the best writer of English prose, MOTT, *op. cit.*, 408; *ibid.*, 174, 408-409 for praise of Cooper, Bryant, and Irving. Interesting to note that these writers together with Longfellow and Poe were considered good enough to be pirated by London publishers, *ibid.*, 392.

⁵⁰ The Lowell Institute opened in 1839. For Hawthorne, MOTT, *op. cit.*, 412; *American Mind*, 597 ff; Horace Mann became the chairman of the Massachusetts Board of Education in 1837.

⁵¹ For Poe, Lowell, Whitman, Melville, *American Mind*, 653, 722, 823, 631; for contemporary evaluations of Poe, MOTT, *op. cit.*, 498; of Lowell, *ibid.*, 412; for Melville, *ibid.*, 416.

Definitive histories have succumbed to monographic exactitude, florid rhetoric has gone out of fashion, devotion to a point of view no longer accords with prevailing historical convention, and painstaking care (which includes fidelity to quotation marks) has become the first rule of craftsmanship. Yet Bancroft's place in the log-book of American intellectual development cannot be seriously questioned. An early worshipper at the German shrine, he was influential in breaking down academic provincialism in the United States. He himself brought the earlier historical ideals of his German tutors to this country, directly as well as by application. The first volume of his monumental history was almost immediately acclaimed. Within ten years (1844) the first volume went through a like number of editions and reached the twenty-sixth by 1878. Not many historical works have enjoyed so long and so steadfast a popularity. Methodological foibles, since detected, must be balanced against the fact that few, up to that time, had laid so many sources of information under contribution. Scholars have matched the extent of his output, if not the number of years expended in preparation, but none has matched his activity. Rare indeed is the American who fulfilled the dual rôle of productive scholar and man of affairs; rarer, too, is the man who fulfilling both, lived to the age of ninety. Actively concerned with political affairs, member of President Polk's Cabinet, and minister successively to London and Berlin; constitute a career of which few historians, at any rate, can boast.⁵²

⁵² WALT STEWART, "George Bancroft", WILLIAM T. HUTCHINSON, ed., *The Marcus W. Jernegan Essays in American Historiography* (Chicago, 1937), 1; M. A. DEWOLFE HOWE, *The Life and Letters of George Bancroft* (New York, 1908), 2 vols; JAMESON, *Historical Writing*, 100 ff, asserts that fifty years were expended on the *History* which, he affirms, constitutes "an experience unexampled in the annals of historical literature."; for comparative estimates of rate of speed in production and amount of output, STEWART, *loc. cit.*, 13 note; see the same writer's "George Bancroft: Historian of the American Republic", *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XIX (June, 1932), 77-86; on Bancroft's popu-

Hermann Von Holst's famous prediction that subsequent historians in America would stand on the stalwart Bancroft shoulders may safely be dismissed, but none can dismiss Bancroft as a mirror of mid-nineteenth century thought. His undeviating belief in the watchfulness of an all-comprehending providence is as indicative of the romantic faith of America of the middle period as his nationalism is the counterpart of a world-wide ideology. Bancroft's volumes describe in historical terms the progressive development of democracy as exemplified in American experience. Not without justification has it been said that all the volumes of the *History* voted for Andrew Jackson just as they continued to cast ballots for Old Hickory long after Lincoln had passed from the White House and the mortal scene. Bancroft not only represented the ripening of American thought, but because he so finely represented the basic spiritual drives of his age, he revealed Americans to themselves.⁵³

George Bancroft revealed Americans to themselves, but William H. Prescott, John L. Motley, and Francis Parkman revealed the potential of America to the world. Sufficient in themselves to have created a flourishing republic of letters, the three historians shared a common background. They stemmed from the same social roots, from New England and Massachusetts Bay. Prescott was born on its northern shore, in tranquil Salem; Motley and Parkman were Boston-

larity, BROOKS, *Flowering of New England*, 126; JAMESON, *Historical Writing*, 104, 105; Bancroft estimated that he spent between \$50,000 and \$75,000 in procuring source material, STEWART, *loc. cit.*, 15; note the opinion of William H. Prescott, GEORGE TICKNOR, *The Life of Prescott* (New York, n. d.), 410, 415, 440.

⁵³ There is a convenient and stimulating summary of Bancroft's philosophy in BROOKS, *Flowering of New England*, 126-134. The fame of Bancroft tended to dwarf the figures of his contemporaries. John G. Palfrey (1796-1881), historian of New England, and Richard Hildreth (1807-1865), a New England historian, are two who deserve particular mention. Attention will be given to these men (and to Bancroft) in a succeeding essay. See, however, BROOKS, *Flowering of New England*, 327; ALFRED H. KELLY, "Richard Hildreth", *Jernegan Essays*, 25.

nians. All were members of ancient families with interlocking genealogies, and all received their early training at Harvard. Freedom from material cares permitted them to indulge their tastes and cultivate their talents, and such barriers as fortuity interposed were overcome by an active New England conscience.⁵⁴ Relatively unconcerned with the philosophical implications of societal change, they saw in history a medium for literary expression. They etched the contours of personalities as well as civilizations with broad, sweeping strokes, but they etched them sharply and dramatically.

The conflict of civilizations was their province. For Prescott it was the idyl of Spain, for Motley the epic of the Netherlands, for Parkman the clash between European culture and the natives of the wilderness. A thread of subtle relationship connects the three. Prescott traced the shadow of the Catholic cross as it gathered darkly over the Moorish crescent; Motley charted the deepening Protestant threat to Catholic supremacy; and Parkman narrated a later stage of the contest between Catholic and Protestant legions in the North American forest. Motley stands between Parkman and Prescott schematically as well as chronologically. Just as the rise and fall of Spain in the pages of Prescott precedes Motley's depiction of Dutch liberation from Castilian dominance, so Parkman's study traces the succeeding

⁵⁴ On Prescott, TICKNOR, *op. cit.*, is doubly valuable because written by an intimate, but BROOKS, *Flowering of New England*, 135, ff, contains the most incisive comments to be found anywhere; for Bancroft's connection with Prescott, TICKNOR, *op. cit.*, 107; for the influence of Washington Irving, *ibid.*, 182-189; an excellent study of Motley is by OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES, *op. cit.*; for Prescott's view of Motley, *ibid.*, 387. Irving yielded to Prescott when he discovered that they had both been working on Mexico and Cortez; both Motley and Prescott were independently working on Philip II, Motley offered to yield. They divided the field instead. *Ibid.*, 310 ff; BROOKS, *Flowering of New England*, 323; the most recent essay on Parkman is JOE PATTERSON SMITH, "Francis Parkman", *Jernegan Essays*, 43; for adequate bibliographies of Prescott and Motley, *Cambridge History*, II; for Parkman, *ibid.*, IV.

phase climaxed by the victory of England over France. Parkman and Prescott divided the western hemisphere; the latter recounted the conflict of cultures in the southern half of the new world, the former recounted the parallel struggle in the northern section. Parkman painted imperial portraits of Frontenac, Pontiac, and the missionary princes of the Roman Church; Prescott's sketches of Ferdinand, Isabella, and Philip II were no less regal, while Motley's analysis of John of Barneveld is as brilliant a characterization as it is a disclosure Motley's mind.

Prescott, Motley, and Parkman achieved the tribute of posterity. Prescott's treatment of the Catholic kings of Spain is still standard for English readers. Motley's knowledge of Dutch history was so extensive that it warped his general perspective, and though many have since traveled along the path that Parkman blazed, no one has ever undertaken a study of similar scope.

Bert JAMES LOEWENBERG.

University of South Dakota.

(To be continued).