

Comment by the Editor

THE ART OF HISTORY

The historian, in some respects, is as much of an artist as the poet or sculptor. His materials are essentially the same, for he too depicts the spirit of man and carves from the solid mass of human events an image of the times.

History is a "Tower of Experience, which Time has built amidst the endless fields of bygone ages." It is a various structure, composed of infinite details. The archeozoic rocks form its foundation, while the story of life is the superstructure. It contains the joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, thoughts and deeds of all mankind. Nor is the trivial conduct of the least of these to be ignored, for the career of each is the experience of the race.

It is for the historian to vitalize the past. Let him people again the land and sea, the cities and farms and highways with the men and women of yesterday. Let him tell of their goings and comings, of their manners, amusements, apparel, and customs no less than their vices and glorious exploits. The pageant should be viewed in perspective. Let the apparent confusion and discord be symphonized into the harmonious trend of events.

The dictionary declares that history is devoid of romance. If that is true then history portrays

falsely the course of human affairs, for comedy and tragedy, adventure, love, and character building are the substance of every-day life. The story of each frontier village and latter-day city, the affairs of any rural countryside, the lives of men and women both great and humble—the history of Iowa—abounds in romance. Here is the stuff of which fiction is made, and the historian may revel in the knowledge that fact is as thrilling as fancy.

If the past is to live the writer of history must take note of the romance that governs the facts. He must perceive and appraise with the skill of an artist, for he writes the drama of truth. He may catch the high lights, but he must not distort them. It is a difficult task. It involves clear thought, steady purpose, broad comprehension, quick imagination, and the capacity to impart the vision to others.

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