

Comment by the Editor

HISTORICAL STYLES

History is a continuous process. The daily course of events, the affairs of potentates and common folks that transpire before our very eyes, compose the fabric of history. Out of the doings of the present some future chronicler will weave the story of the past. History is always being made. Inexorably the wheels of time revolve, the world with all that's in it spins a web of life, and the pattern, ever changing, is composed of silk and shoddy threads that have no end. In the process of creation, history is an eternal now.

And who knows better what is happening than he who shares the exploits of his day? The witness of events is capable of bearing worthy testimony. No one else, indeed, has quite as vivid knowledge of the times, albeit those who see the same events may differ in their recollections. Thus reminiscence has a special value in the records of the past.

As one generation recedes and another takes its place, the activities of the preceding period lose something of their reality but gain perspective. And so it becomes the purpose of historical research to segregate essential facts and reconstruct the outlines of the for-

mer ages. Monographic history is the counterpart of scientific experimentation.

But after old soldiers have described their favorite battles and statesmen have recounted their glorious achievements, after contemporary newspapers and other dusty records have yielded all their resources, still further work is necessary to vitalize the past. Treatises and recollections need to be interpreted and synthesized. With keen discernment and literary skill, the artist of history gives unity, significance, and life to miscellaneous reports.

Reminiscence, research, interpretation — each holds a worthy place in the literature of history. As an agency for the dissemination of the true story of our Commonwealth, the State Historical Society of Iowa has published all of these varieties. In the first series of the *Annals of Iowa* following the Civil War, men wrote informally about their friends and neighborhoods. The *Iowa Journal of History and Politics* is devoted to the products of thorough research. And now, in *Ioway to Iowa*, Irving B. Richman has selected significant phases of Iowa history and presented a brilliant panorama in a delightful literary manner. The book is a splendid example of the ultimate style of historical writing.

J. E. B.