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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

Latin America; a History. By Alfred Barnaby Thomas. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1956. Pp. xiii, 801. \$6.50.

This textbook for college and university classes is the mature work of a scholar who has written several works of research and has devoted many years to instructing university classes in the subject.

The book's organization follows the more or less orthodox plan: (1) Colonial Latin America, 218 pages; (2) The Wars for Independence, 54 pages; (3) Modern Latin America, 422 pages; and (4) Inter-American Affairs, 24 pages. The remainder of the work consists of Bibliography and Index.

The reviewer finds no serious fault with the proportions of the book, though some textbook writers have devoted more space to the survey of Indian cultures than does Professor Thomas. After all, descendants of the native populations who developed those cultures form a great part of the population of some half of the Latin American nations. The Bibliography is one of the superior portions of the book; it is excellent both for its fullness and for its subject arrangement.

Though the maps included are helpful, one could wish for more than seven of them. A few well chosen illustrations would have added to the attractiveness of the book and the effectiveness of the text materials. Considerations of economy no doubt determined policy here.

The author's approach is admirable: it is both widely and positively liberal in its emphasis on democracy as desirable and on the whole optimistic as to its ultimate achievement. Mention of literary figures is the rule when their writings have been of significant influence. Nor is the artist forgotten; some two and a half pages (675-677) are devoted to discussing the work of Mexico's great ones in this field. Likewise, the author is careful to indicate the steps that have, in most of the countries, led the people gradually to a greater degree of democracy.

The attainment of absolute accuracy in a work of this character is, perhaps, an impossibility. The reader is left

with the impression that the "Christ of the Andes" faces Argentina (p. 290), while in actual fact — as the reviewer has noted with his own eyes — it faces northward, properly neutral as between the two former boundary disputants. Speaking of the four chief cities of Costa Rica's Meseta Central (p. 616), Professor Thomas asserts that they are situated "within a stone's throw" of one another. This may be regarded as a sort of "poet's license," because the two extreme cities (Alajuela and Cartago) lie twenty-five miles apart. On the same page he states that Costa Rica's volcanic range "in places rises as high as 6,000 feet," when actually its height is in the 10,000 feet range. Here and there other inaccurate statements can be found. They are, perhaps, unavoidable and detract only slightly from what is in the main an excellent textbook.

The language of the work, while it does not sparkle (indeed, few textbooks have sparkle), is yet workmanlike, clear, and to the point. One is never compelled to reread a sentence because it is so involved as not to present clear meaning. On the whole, this is a fine piece of work, and many teachers of the subject will in the future find reason to be grateful to Professor Thomas for performing the onerous task of producing it.

State University of New York,
State College for Teachers, Albany

WATT STEWART

When Grass Was King: Contributions to the Western Range Cattle Industry Study. By Maurice Fink, W. Turrentine Jackson, and Agnes Wright Spring. Boulder Colo.: University of Colorado Press, 1956. Illustrations, bibliography, index. Pp. xv, 465.

This well-designed and amply illustrated publication is a trilogy by prominent western historians about the range cattle industry as it existed in the heart of the plains grazing country between 1865 and 1895. The principal area studied is New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, and the Texas Panhandle. *When Grass Was King* was produced under the auspices of a Rockefeller Foundation grant administered by

the State Historical Society of Colorado. The study represents the first major economic work of its kind since Ernest Staples Osgood's *The Day of the Cattleman* (1929) and E. E. Dale's *Range Cattle Industry* (1930).

Part I is the work of Maurice Fink of the State Historical Society of Colorado and concerns itself with the founding, early development, and decline of the industry. The basic techniques of ranching were developed in a small way in the pre-Civil War Southwest. After the war nomadic herds were brought into the semi-arid treeless region of the northern plains and soon burgeoned into big business. The herds fanned out and thrived on the vast open range and men who had known poverty a few years before became cattle barons overnight. The bonanza was on as beef prices rose and profits compounded. Feed, land, labor, and housing were either free or dirt cheap, and as long as bulls felt the way they did about cows the herds showed no signs of diminishing.

The cattle industry followed various forms in its organizational structure, but to a great extent it was built upon borrowed capital and high interest. Taxes were negligible and in the early days the cattlemen were not bothered with nesters and sheepmen. The railroads gradually spread their network throughout the cattle kingdom, and allied industries sprang up rapidly. Within two decades the cattle industry evolved from a large scale adventure to almost complete collapse as ranges became overstocked and the market flooded. Then nature delivered the *coup de grace* in the form of droughts and blizzards. Eventually, reorganization came along sounder business practices, better management, and more scientific methods.

Fink restricts himself almost exclusively to American companies. The last three of his five chapters contain excellent syntheses of the important developments each year from 1865 to 1895. W. Turrentine Jackson uses very much the same chronological approach in Part II in tracing the British interest in the range cattle industry from 1883 to 1895. During a Fulbright lectureship in Scotland (1949-50), Jackson availed himself of the opportunity to collect heretofore un-

published materials on Scottish and English cattle companies. These companies made enormous profits and later lost some seventeen million dollars on the American ranges. The story of how they did it, how they recouped some of their losses, and how they retreated is presented for the first time in documented details.

The last part of the trilogy departs somewhat from the approach of the first two. It is the story of John W. Iliff as told by a prolific writer and student of the West, Agnes Wright Spring. Iliff was one of the most famous cattlemen of his time and perhaps the most successful that the West ever produced, although the reviewer must confess that he had not previously run across the name until this volume came to hand. Undoubtedly, the story of Iliff's activities is presented in order to demonstrate that not all of the early cattle barons died poor as a result of their reckless folly in a very unstable business.

The bibliographies at the end of each section are most impressive. The various narratives sometime get lost in statistics and repetitious details. But this study — especially Part I and Part II — will be referred to by particular scholars for a long time.

University of Oklahoma

W. EUGENE HOLLON

Observations on California 1772-1790. By Father Luis Sales, O.P. Translated and edited by Charles N. Rudkin. Los Angeles: Glen Dawson, 1956. Pp. xiii, 218. \$10.

The *Noticias de la Provincia de Californias* of P. Luis Sales, consisting of three long letters written *ca.* 1790, is the earliest Dominican account of the Christian mission in Lower California. Charles N. Rudkin now presents the first complete publication since the original edition of 1794 and the only translation into English.

A fair observer, Sales was at the time of writing a practical missionary of nearly twenty years' experience in Lower California. His narrative is replete with eye-witness details of his surroundings and experience. Especially is this

true of the first letter, concerning the geography and ethnography of the Dominican area, and of the third, on the Dominican mission itself. The second letter, on the antecedent Jesuit and Franciscan history, while essential to the presentation, is on the whole less original and less reliable than the other two. None of the letters betrays any perceptible prejudice against the rival orders, for Sales held the "apostolic missionaries" of all orders in the highest esteem, characterizing them as the most distinguished, useful, and noble of the subjects of the king. The Dominican achievement fell short of the Jesuit achievement even in the late 1780's, and Sales attributed this to the availability of the troops that had accompanied the Jesuit "conquests" and to the private endowments that had financed them. Dominican "endowments," by contrast, consisted of meager disbursements from the royal treasury, and it is notable that Sales refrained to the extent that he did from casting the Dominicans in the role of poor but loyal servants of the crown, and the Jesuits, recently expelled, as their foil.

What emerges most clearly from the Sales letters is the humdrum existence of the frontier missionary in late colonial times. The half-Christianized Indians under his charge he regarded as the poorest, most unfortunate, most intellectually deficient, and most cowardly persons in the world, and he expressed his only real enthusiasm at the end on receiving his orders to return to Spain ("You cannot imagine how many thanks I gave to God for such a special blessing"). Indeed one of his principal purposes in writing was to demonstrate the error of the belief that missionaries led materially profitable lives. "All that there is here in California is starvation, nakedness and misery." In addition to the other points of interest it is the circumstantial demonstration of these qualities that gives character and importance to this work.

The translation by Charles N. Rudkin is excellent. The edition includes explanatory and bibliographical notes and an index.

Harvard University

CHARLES GIBSON

The Mexican Government Today. By William P. Tucker. Pp. xii, 484. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1957. Bibliography and Index. \$6.50.

Dr. William P. Tucker, Professor of Political Science at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota, has contributed the first extended treatment of the political structure and institutions of Mexico which should prove an invaluable aid to students of political science as well as to students of Mexican affairs generally. The author has effectively utilized a very extensive and comprehensive bibliography which included not only published materials, but also relevant theses and dissertations prepared both in Mexico and in the United States.

After a brief exposition of the environmental and historical background the author presents, in varying detail, sections on the organization and structure of the Mexican government, agencies of internal administration and external relations, public utilities, agriculture, social services, and governmental subdivisions. The historical background, because of limitations of space, tends to be routine and cursory. However, additional specialized background material, with emphasis on the most recent decades, has been incorporated within each subordinate section of the volume.

As a description of the legal provisions, organizational forms, and jurisdictional responsibilities of Mexican governmental elements, Professor Tucker's study is an excellent and dependable source. Regarding the contrast between appearance and reality, legal forms and practise, the volume is more suggestive than definitive. Professor Tucker is aware of and clearly indicates the large element of personalism in Mexican political practise, the predominance of the executive on governmental processes, and the nonexistence of true federalism or state sovereignty. He laments the scarcity of published materials on public administration, state and local government, and on the actual operating details and methods of policy formation. However, there are areas in which some evidence is available. For example, the number of interventions in state government by federal authorities can be documented as well as the instances in which the president has

declared industries "saturated." In addition, the author is inclined on occasion to attribute exclusively to tradition and custom practises which might more properly be assigned to necessity or to historical experience.

Throughout the volume, and even extending to the publisher's comments on the jacket flaps, there is a running comparison with the governmental system of the United States. For the uninitiated layman this approach has the merit of making the unfamiliar intelligible in terms of the familiar. However, there is danger of establishing this country's system as a yardstick against which to measure the accomplishments and shortcomings of our neighbor. This assuredly was not the author's intention. In fact, sharing the conviction of other contemporary observers, Professor Tucker views Mexico as a developing democracy within the framework of her own history. While noting the factors militating against the development of democratic institutions, he describes the establishment of democratic ideals, the growth of personal freedom, the progress toward representative governmental structure including the broadening of representation within the official party, the development of opposition parties, the decline of the dependence on the military element, and, most recently, the effort to achieve integrity in government.

The errors which this reviewer caught are few (i.e. describing Madero's party as the "Liberal Opposition Party" on page 41 and the misspelling of Ixtaccihuatl on page 3) and unimportant in the face of the comprehensive nature of the volume. The inclusiveness of Professor Tucker's coverage of Mexican governmental agencies is most impressive and merits for the volume inclusion in every Mexicanist's library.

University of Nebraska

STANLEY R. ROSS

Law West of Fort Smith; A History of Justice in the Indian Territory, 1834-1896. By Glenn Shirley. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1957. Pp. xi, 333. Illustrations, appendices, bibliography, and notes. \$5.00.

In *Law West of Fort Smith* author Glenn Shirley takes the reader down what must by now be a well-worn trail through the career of the famed "hanging judge," Isaac C.

Parker. This is the third book within the last six years devoted to the life of Judge Parker and the exploits of the outlaws who infested the Indian Territory. However, since Americans seemingly never tire of tales of the lawless west, this book should prove a good seller.

Judge Parker presided over the Federal District Court at Ft. Smith, Arkansas, from 1875 until 1896. His jurisdiction extended over western Arkansas and the Indian Territory, an area of over 74,000 square miles. Together with 200 deputy marshals and George Maledon, his hangman, Parker did his best to bring law and order to this turbulent area. For twenty-one years he meted out a stern justice and made his name one to be feared among frontier hoodlums. The judge sent 79 men to the scaffold and Maledon became famed throughout the west as the "Prince of Hangmen." Another 81 escaped the gallows only by virtue of Presidential clemency or after 1889 through intervention by the Supreme Court. Until 1889, when Congress provided for review by the Supreme Court, there was no appeal from a sentence of Judge Parker's court.

Mr. Shirley presents a sympathetic picture of Parker as a dedicated and courageous man who worked against tremendous odds to bring criminals to justice. Judge Parker was not one to allow maudlin sentimentality to interfere with his mission. In fact, he frequently seemed too eager for convictions. His zeal often led him to aid the prosecution, intimidate defense witnesses, and exercise undue influence over juries. In his last years on the bench, his often-times high-handed conduct brought him into frequent conflict with the Supreme Court.

Mr. Shirley also relates the exploits of a host of outlaws who came before Parker's famous Ft. Smith court. He wastes little time in glorifying the frontier bandits. Belle Starr, the Dalton brothers, Cherokee Bill, Cole Younger, the Bucks gang, and others appear not as western heroes, but as sadistic villains and wanton killers.

The book is based upon thorough research and is entertainingly written. It should appeal to western enthusiasts.

University of Houston

RICHARD D. YOUNGER

A Pictorial History of the American Indian. By Oliver La Farge. New York, N. Y.: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1956. Pp. 272. Index. \$7.50.

Mr. La Farge has prepared a brief comprehensive history of the Indians in the United States. He deals with them in regional cultural groupings, comparing and contrasting their way of life. It is laid bare in all its simplicity and complexity.

The white man has spoken of himself as civilized, the Indian not so. The author is a traditionalist: no Indians were fully civilized; some were "semi-civilized"; but all were on the way to the white man's status until interrupted by his invasion of their country. The mere use of this word created and creates a mental block in understanding the Indian. It reveals the superiority complex of the white man; although I suspect that all peoples have been similarly affected, including the Indian.

The reviewer sees all the qualities of the white man among the North American aborigines; the two races differed only in the details of material culture. The Indian was a lover, a father or mother, warrior, teacher, philosopher, farmer, hunter, artist and craftsman — and he sought an answer to the question, what existence follows life on earth?

There is not and was not an Indian people in the sense of a single group or culture, as Mr. La Farge makes clear. *The* Indian language never existed. On the contrary, these people varied in the details of their "civilization," even as the white people. Some groups had a more comfortable material life than others. Wherever they lived, they adapted themselves to the environment. Although economic motivation was prominent in Indian life, psychological values were also strong. Their spiritual beliefs ranged from magic to a concept of a divine spirit.

In the heyday of the Indians' independent life, the reviewer is inclined to believe that they were better educated for their time and place than white men are today. The individual was well acquainted with his environment and knew the traditions of the tribe. Few white men have a comparable education; theirs is atomized by over-specialization.

The white man ruined the Indian's way of life. Some groups were wiped out by the invader; others were pushed onto a reservation in a foreign part of the United States; and a few retained substantial land holdings in their homeland. The details of the story present a sad picture. Some Indians were debauched by the white man's liquor and others succumbed from new diseases. Those who survived alternately fought and accepted peace. The white man's conscience bothered him and he developed two historical schools of thought: the one taught that the Indian was a savage, the other that he was a noble red man. The author believes that the truth lies in between. This is the truth.

There was not a feature of Indian behavior that did not have its counterpart in the white man. *Savagery*, for instance, existed among both groups. The white man's self-revelation in this respect is too recent to need further elaboration — the Indian's can be buried with the past. The common bond between the two races on the debit side is man's inhumanity towards man.

Mr. La Farge points out that human sacrifice, torture, and a love of war existed among the Indians in the southeastern part of the United States, but were notably lacking in the southwest. He attributes the origin of these practices to the Mexican Indians, indicating a northward movement of cultural influence. The southeasterners called war their "beloved occupation." Peace was idleness.

In a subject of such magnitude, there are bound to be some questionable statements. The horse was the white man's greatest contribution to the Indian's culture. This may be true, but the reviewer is confused by contradictory statements concerning the time of arrival of the horse in the High Plains culture (pp. 148, 159). I doubt that the Pawnee Indians with French allies ever raided the Spanish settlements in the Rio Grande valley (p. 147); that the Kiowas invaded Navaholand in western New Mexico in the 1860's (p. 161); and that Yankee traders often bought slaves in California and traded them in Alaska (p. 203). The theory that the Indian acquired the horse by capturing those that had escaped

from the white man into a life of freedom is a moot point (p. 147). The Pueblo folk did not attain "perfect concerted action" in their war for independence in 1680 (p. 141). Kit Carson trounced the Navahos in 1863, not in 1868, the year of their return home (p. 144).

Mr. La Farge places too much stress on the theory that the concept of "government by consent of the governed" had a North American Indian origin (p. 28); it was well rooted in Europe. I feel far more charitable toward General Carleton's policy of moving the troublesome Navahos to the Bosque Redondo than the author, who attributes the plan to "wild theorists" (p. 144).

One of the many interesting revelations of Indian life is the story of the Sioux Indian soldiers returned home from World War I. They requested membership in the tribal Soldier Society, and were denied. Killing at a distance with rifle fire might be necessary, the Elders admitted, but it did not make a warrior according to Sioux custom (p. 156). Another tidbit is the statement that east coast Indians had a lighter skin which turned a reddish color under the sun's rays, hence the term "red man."

About two thirds of the book is a wonderful assortment of pictures of Indians and Indian life: sketches by early travelers, reproductions of museum models, photographs, and paintings. A few are in color. Among the paintings are works of present-day artists of Indian ancestry. Incidentally, the artist Al Momaday claims Kiowa descent, not Chiricahua Apache (p. 140).

All told, Mr. La Farge has performed an excellent service in telling the story of our citizens of Indian ancestry. In word and picture the reader will find not only useful information and entertainment, but much food for thought about the relations among the peoples in this world.

The book is also a tribute to the art of printing.

F. D. R.

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