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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

The March of Empire: Frontier Defense in the Southwest, 1848-1860. Averam B. Bender. Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1952. Pp. xii, 323. Illustrations. \$5.00.

Vast deserts, strange plants and peoples, unique physiography, weird varieties of climate, magnificent distances, and a mysterious archaeology insure an ever romantic Southwest. All significant books on this region reflect this invigorating spirit of romance. Dr. Bender in *The March of Empire* has written what essentially stands as a series of valuable essays on the frontier defense of this region in the years 1848-1860. Long a student of the Southwest in the period immediately following the Mexican War, he has made available in this volume his valuable research, and the romance of the Southwest saturates its pages.

The book is composed of fourteen chapters, all of which represent real spadework in many centers of research, much of the material coming from government archives in Washington. Chapter III is reprinted from the *Pacific Historical Review* and Chapter VII from the NEW MEXICO HISTORICAL REVIEW.

In the opinion of this reviewer some of the chapters are considerably more interesting than others, but the value and high standard of the work is found throughout. Dr. Bender appears to be at his best in matters touching the life of the soldier on the frontier.

Several chapters of the book explain how exploration and surveys—both land and water—were vital factors in effecting an initial system of defense. He discusses the establishment of forts throughout the region and gives major emphasis to the evolution of an Indian policy for the far flung Indian tribes of the region. The analysis of frontier pressure groups and their power in the establishment of a system of defense is excellent. Many obscure but important personalities—Indians, politicians and settlers—are resurrected from an undeserved obscurity. The importance of

their work is set forth with vigor. Stimulating vignettes dot the pages.

The Indian policy and the subsequent *defensè* policy of the government simmer down to one of monotonous expediency—the usual one in pioneer days—with always a design of noble intention and high idealism, but an end result of confusion, frustration and bureaucratic inefficiency, shared rather equally by the military and civilian authorities. It is amazing how the American Indian has survived with the character and spirit which still characterizes him, subjected as he was to this tragic and fateful experience. Anyone who has studied the Indian problem doubts, however, that any better system could have been devised at the time, especially with conditions which then prevailed in the far American west.

Dr. Bender's volume will appeal more to the student and specialist than to the general reader and litterateur. It is an excellent summary of a vast field and will prove to be a valuable reference that should be found in all libraries on the far west. Throughout, it is a rather handsome volume with a copious set of references and notes and an admirable index. Several detailed maps would have enhanced the interest and value of this important book.

R. H. OGLE

Phoenix High Schools and Phoenix College System

Iturbide of Mexico. William Spence Robertson. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1952. Pp. ix, 361. \$6.00.

Iturbide, like most of the outstanding men of Mexico, has long needed an adequate biography. Certainly scholars will use Professor Robertson's well documented book for years to come when they study the period 1808-1823, for in presenting the biographical material on Iturbide the author has developed the other great figures and factors of the period. Even though he is rather pro-Iturbide, he still does justice to the opposition.

The author describes the early life of Iturbide and his

moves up the conservative military ladder during the period when Hidalgo and Morelos were attempting to overthrow the Spanish rule in Mexico. One then watches Iturbide gradually turn toward the idea of independence with himself as the new leader. Here Robertson has done a good job in demonstrating that Iturbide had a much broader popular support than has been previously imagined.

The Plan of Iguala is examined carefully and Robertson does an especially skillful job in developing the genesis of that famous plan. The author then describes the events leading up to the establishment of Mexican independence and the proclamation of Iturbide as emperor. The reader is left with no doubts that Iturbide, as emperor, had many drawbacks.

Probably the weakest part of the book is to be found in the reasons given for Iturbide's overthrow. In the reviewer's opinion this final section could have been strengthened by checking Dr. Nettie Lee Benson's article on the Plan of Casa Mata in the February, 1945 issue of the *Hispanic American Historical Review* which evaluates the influence of states rights on the ultimate success of the revolt against Iturbide. But even granting this deficiency the work will certainly stand up as a good biography.

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