

Chief of the Oglalas

CRAZY HORSE, THE STRANGE MAN OF THE OGLALAS, A Biography. By Mari Sandoz. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1942. 413 pp., with chronology and bibliography. \$3.50.

Reviewed by STANLEY VESTAL

HERE we have the first full-length biography of the famous Sioux chief (1842?-1877) who led that band of Oglalas, which fought and hunted with the Sitting Bull Indians after the rest of their tribe had surrendered and settled upon reservations. The publication of such a book has long been devoutly wished for by all who care about our Western history, and a number of writers have busied themselves to bring it to pass. In particular, Miss Eleanor Hinman made long and careful research among the old-timers once intimate with Crazy Horse, and all historians in the field were well aware of her skill in obtaining the confidences of old warriors, and of the authentic nature of her materials. But now she has graciously relinquished her prior claim to the project, and has given her aid to Miss Sandoz. The result is a full-bodied and historically accurate book, which seems likely to remain the standard work on its subject. Competent research and skilled writing combine to make a most readable volume.

The author herself was reared in Sioux country, and knows Indians firsthand. She tells us the story of her hero from his first winters near Fort Laramie (where he may have seen Francis Parkman gathering matter for "The Oregon Trail"). She shows the light-complexioned, serious-minded, laconic youngster with his wavy hair (he was dubbed Curly by his pals) growing up against the background of the rising storm of white invasion. We read of his early adventures, his frustrated first love, his great vision, his qualification as a warrior, and of how he gained his famous name. As the wars grew and spread with the infiltration of white men, we see Crazy Horse truly shown as the leader of the Sioux at the so-called Fetterman Massacre, at the Wagon-Box Fight, and in other battles. We learn how he earned the high rank of one of the four Shirt-Wearers of his people, only to lose it in a brawl over the woman he loved, whom he had stolen from her first husband. And we hear how he struggled to weld the reckless, show-off individual fighters of his people into a disciplined team, fit to cope with the organized war machine of the U. S. Army.

The part of Crazy Horse in the Custer fight is well described, and it is

gratifying to find the old white men's lies about Sitting Bull scotched again. For Sitting Bull is shown as taking his part in the Custer battle on the Little Big Horn. Also, the whereabouts of Crazy Horse during the Reynolds fight are made clear. Many lesser controversial points are disposed of, often without comment. The book trails on through the troubled months that followed that great, disastrous victory over Custer, as Crazy Horse hastened through a cloud of jealousies and conspiracies to his betrayal and death.

Though, of course, not including an account of every skirmish in which the Chief is known to have taken part, the book is a very well-proportioned, comprehensive biography, with the emphasis where it belongs. Some will wish

to be assured that all the words put into the Chief's mouth were actually his own; others may wish that more proof of his alleged generalship had been provided; at times one regrets that more thumbnail portraits of his rivals and companions have not been crowded in. The author's Indians, too, seem to have lost the gayety which all early travellers noted in them, and it is hard to believe that Crazy Horse felt so little gusto in his fighting. But the book is crammed with fine things, and every scene where women appear is first-rate. We have the picture of a great-hearted, brave, doomed man going, in spite of a cloud of misgivings, to his all too early death.

The book has two omissions. There is no index, and the bibliography does not include the titles of published sources—even those on which the author obviously drew.

Biography of a River, 1864-1937

OLD MAN RIVER. By Robert Hereford. New Orleans: Caxton Printers, Ltd. 1942. 301 pp. \$3.50.

Reviewed by ROARK BRADFORD

THE Mississippi is a very special river in America and few are the outlanders who have been able to do more than feel dimly her witchery.

The United States engineers spent years of scientific study and followed with years of prodigious mattress building, cut-off dredging, and levee raising. Finally, General H. B. Ferguson, who supervised this enormous task of flood control, announced the river was safe from flood and that another overflow was impossible. Simultaneously, Dr. I. M. Cline, the great meteorologist, turned his attention from hurricanes to flood crests, and developed a system for scientific predictions of river levels.

This was in the spring of 1937. Remember?

That was the year the Mississippi provided Pare Lorentz with a "set" for

his picture that Hollywood could not even imagine:

Coast guard patrol needed at Paducah!

200 boats—wanted at Hickman!

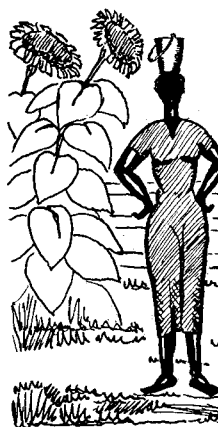
Levee patrol: men to Blytheville!

It was predicted the river would get higher. It didn't. It simply got wider.

We who live on the river understand it and we like it. We understand each other, too. Outlanders come and write the river and the river people. We don't mind; we just laugh. But occasionally an outlander comes and writes about the river with understanding and we like that, too.

Comes now Robert Hereford with a book called "Old Man River." Since Mr. Hereford was born in the Philippine Islands but grew up in St. Louis this makes him a near miss of an outlander. I feel certain that Mr. Hereford was secretly pleased—just a little pleased—that the River always fools the big-shot engineers. And that Captain Louis Rosché was none too sorry the River couldn't be harnessed.

Mr. Hereford's book is sub-titled "The Memories of Captain Louis Rosché, Pioneer Steamboatman," which Mr. Hereford has taken the liberty to write in the first person. It covers the big fine robust era of Mississippi River life from 1864 to 1937: river gamblers and Yankee soldiers; roustabouts and romance; war and peace. Captain Rosché was enough of a riverman never to allow a few facts to spoil a good yarn and Mr. Hereford is gifted enough not to check too closely. There's no social significance here, no economic theories. It's simply what Lyle Saxon calls "a good readin' book," and mighty pleasant readin' it is.



Mormon Folklore

MORMON COUNTRY. By Wallace Stegner. New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce. 1942. 349 pp., and index. \$3.

Reviewed by MAURINE WHIPPLE

THIS is a potpourri of tales, legends, and impressionistic sketches—a sort of literary salad composed of many unrelated ingredients from the humble spud of the Salmon River country to the exotic pomegranate on the banks of the Gila.

Few modern writers have Mr. Stegner's talent for the apt and telling phrase and in writing about the earth he so obviously loves—this Western earth of the Mormons—he makes you actually hear the “grassy guggle” in the irrigation ditch, see Monroe Mountain “smoke with moonrise,” and smell the “scorched ground” of this “country that calls for wings.” Moreover, in handling his characters, whether fictitious people like Milton and his girl in the first chapter, or historical people like Uncle Jesse and Everett Ruess, Mr. Stegner has a tenderness and a sympathy that not only create flesh and blood but make you love the result no matter how many laws they transgress.

In fact, it seems a waste to beget such completely lovable folk as Milton and his girl only to snuff out their haunting vitality in one chapter. You end up a little exasperated at Mr. Stegner. Apparently it is a favorite device—this using of creative writing as a come-on to lure the unsuspecting reader into comparatively dry expositions of the theme. Inevitably the book leaves you with the feeling of betrayal you knew as a child when you were presented with a luscious piece of molasses candy which you learned afterward had been well spiked with senna.

However, “Mormon Country” fascinates you to the end and anyone interested in the Western scene will want to finish the book at one sitting. Mr. Stegner has undoubtedly done American folklore a fine service in preserving a few of the more “Bunyanesque” of the old legends while they are still available. Much research has gone into the book and some of his material, geologically as well as historically speaking, will be new even to scholars of the country. His point that Gentiles such as Father Escalante, Jed Smith, and Powell were as devout and unselfseeking pioneers as the Mormons, themselves, is well taken. I wanted to cheer when I read what he had to say about the Gentile scientist, Earl Douglass, and the Mormon Apostle, J. Golden Kimball—and for precisely the same reason.

It is my opinion that there are some

inaccuracies in the book, although, perhaps, they would be apparent only to one who was born among these people and subsequently spent a lifetime studying them. Also, in spite of “Milton and his girl,” I had the occasional impression that Mr. Stegner regarded the Mormons as a whole from the typical “outsider's” viewpoint; that in spite of his fifteen years' residence, he never really understood or “got next” to the people. He wrote up all the scandals like great comets blazing across the sky but he never even saw the daily folk-life, the little stars which lighted the heavens night after night. He says in one place that the Mormons are not a colorful people; perhaps that is because he never really knew them; or, perhaps, as a collection of Mormon Country tales, this book is doomed to leave the reader dissatisfied because, in the author's own words, it is written about a country “that breeds the Impossibles.”

Add Ozark Tales

AND GREEN GRASS GROWS ALL AROUND. By Marguerite Lyon. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill. 1942. 307 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by PHIL STONG

THE adventures of a city couple on an Ozarks farm have already been told in part by Mrs. Lyon in “Take to the Hills.” Readers of that book will be pleased to know that the author's mountaineer neighbors did not lynch her when the book appeared using their real names; on the contrary, they were amused and even flattered to find that they were literary material.

It is also pleasant to know that Mrs. Lyon's homemade jam factory is still prospering; that after thirty years Uncle John has finally got those new splits on the roof and Aunt Lizzie has thus been enabled to clean the spare room—that snake that fell through the roof into the mess must have gotten away through the chink at the chimney. Aunt Lizzie doesn't have to set pans under the holes any more, but the cessation of the drip into the tin didn't help Aunt Lizzie's sleep—the first night it rained Uncle John had to sit up all night tapping on a dishpan so she could get her rest.

This is the general texture of the incidents and anecdotes the author has gathered. A little anthropology and philosophy are thrown in and some cookery with Ozarks recipes that sound worth trying.

The materials are genial and amusing, without exception; very much in the warm vein of the late Della Lutes.

New Mexico Story

THE COMMON HEART. By Paul Horgan. New York: Harper & Bros. 1942. 398 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by STANLEY VESTAL

THIS novel, by the author of “The Fault of Angels” and “A Lamp on the Plains,” is about New Mexico, where Paul Horgan has made his home and his reputation. In particular, it has to do with the State's principal and most typical Anglo-American city, Albuquerque. The author is sensitive to environment in all his work, and New Mexican country has a way of becoming a factor, even almost a person, in any story for which it is the background, so that we find that strange and beautiful region, so relentlessly itself, so unchangeable, playing a large part in the book. The sky determines most things there, with the result that the people often seem smaller and of less account—even to themselves—than they do elsewhere.

Horgan writes with skill, subtlety, and a beguiling simplicity, as always. He can make us forget that most of his characters are hardly of a calibre suited to the country, or to the patterns of really great novels. There is good in all of them, a good which gives them and the story value; but adolescents and shallow women do not give a writer of Horgan's power enough matter to show what he can really handle. Where he takes hold of a strong, various character, he puts us to admiration. His work is excellent; all I would say is that it is not here as good as he is. A novelist, even less than a biographer, dares not work with people who are his inferiors as subject-matter; there is always the danger that they will bring him down, even as an artist, to their own level,—worse, they acquire a false simplicity, and may end by being simply false, because of the apparent ease of handling them. In this moving, well-written book, there are strong characters. Paul Horgan has presented them ably. And now that he is a Captain in the U. S. Army, we may confidently expect that he will gain experiences which will encourage him to tackle even tougher problems with even greater success.

Doubleday, Doran & Co. and Curtis Brown Ltd. announce that this year's prize of \$400.00 for the best novel by a student at one of the writers' conferences has been awarded to Joyce Horner of Frederick, Maryland, for her book, “The Resultant Rhythm.” Miss Horner was a student at the University of New Hampshire Writers' Conference, at Durham, N. H. Her book is planned for Spring 1943 publication by Doubleday, Doran.