

malice, of harmless, innocent women. Mr. Williams gives us genuine witches, men and women, devoted to the clandestine worship of the Dia, or Devil, in what they call "the old religion." Whether or not they had strange powers, they believed they had them and sought to apply them. There is much that is cryptic in the study of these matters, and Mr. Williams is content to leave it so.

Politics mingle with witchery in this story. Martin Vinolàs, a Huguenot, has dwelt first in England, then Scotland, since the terrible massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day drove him from France. A fencing master by profession, he has also some skill and experience as a secret agent. The Privy Council of Scotland entrusts to him the ferreting out of suspected conspiracy against Scotland's James VI, later England's James I.

Martin goes to the village of Haddington, not far from Edinburgh. The ring of supposed political conspirators, presumed Catholic foes of a Protestant king, proves instead to be a coven, a gathering of witches. His duties draw Martin into this orbit, compelling him to assume a fellowship with them, an experience filled variously with terror, lust, and dread for the welfare of his soul. There is indeed a conspiracy against James, centered in the figure who comes to the Sabbats in guise of the Devil himself. The unmasking of this personage is so important that I leave it to Mr. Williams.

The diabolism is evoked vividly, with a rich body of authenticated lore. Its horror and obscenity, its true demonic quality, are set forth. But Mr. Williams is concerned, too, to show the varying types and motives involved, and to trace the tenacity of a primitive, dark-toned, nature religion. Prominent in his cast is the seductress, Euphemia MacCalyan, a possessed woman her fellows believe to be the body of their goddess, Mother-Sister-Bride of the Dia.

Most impressive of many characterizations is the gentle, scholarly Catholic, Bernard Seton, who becomes best friend to Martin. His counsel, "do not let your reason stand in the way of loving charity," helps Martin bind himself to the Scottish girl, Bess, in true love.

Mass trials bring the book to its climax. Most of those first convicted were guilty, but then, in familiar pattern, spreading fears dragged in the innocent. As Mr. Williams concludes, "the danger to men lies not in destroying the guilty, but in such frantic terror that a hundred innocent are destroyed lest a single guilty man escape."

Variety Package

"A Pause in the Desert," by Oliver La Farge (Houghton Mifflin. 235 pp. \$3.50). *is a collection of sixteen short stories, half a dozen of which deal with a section that the author has made peculiarly his own, the Southwest.*

By Donald R. Bensen

OLIVER LA FARGE's sixteen stories, published as "A Pause in the Desert," are for browsing, to be dipped into now and again by a reader who relishes a quiet variety and occasional oddity. Such readers will probably find remembered favorites—some remembered from quite a way back, since almost all the stories have been picked up from magazines dating as far back as 1935. They are an unevenly entertaining group, including a couple of conventional Moments of Truth as well as perhaps six first-rate pieces. At his best, which is usually when he is dealing with his beloved Southwest, Mr. La Farge writes with his own combination of clarity, sense of character, and affection.

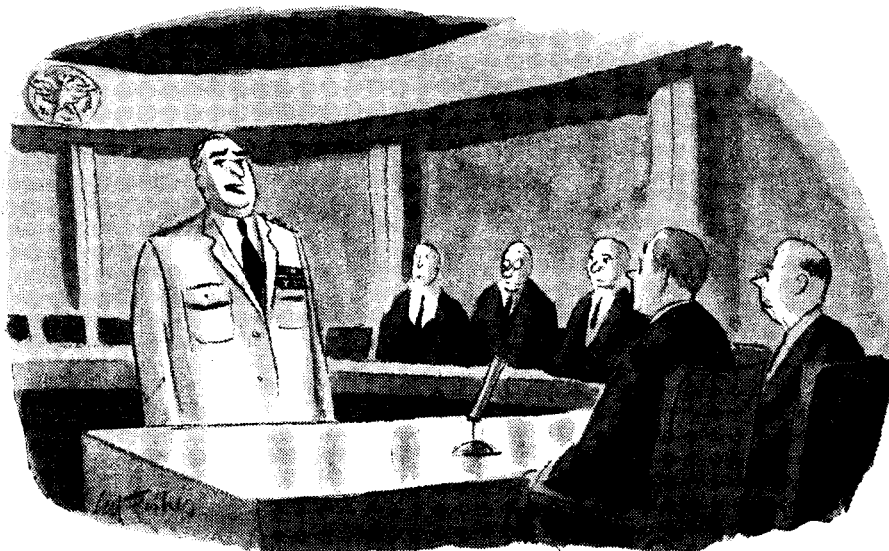
The title story is one of the really successful ones. The pause in the desert (to refresh a brand-new car which has gone a little mad with the heat) reveals the Southwest country and its men to a Californian and his wife. The old men at the crossroads store—aged from sixty-eight to seventy-three, and still good for a day's rid-

ing—are gentle, proud, and supremely self-possessed. The young wife is drawn to them, enchanted; the salesman husband, appalled by anything outside his city limits, is lost in defeat and hatred. The main point isn't in this minor domestic tragedy, but in the chance it gives for a loving portrayal of an ordinary afternoon in a barren country that has "the quality of howling."

To my mind, the gem of the collection is "The Resting Place," which is sure to be showing up in the anthologies before long. Another Southwest story, it is a genial fantasy of an anthropologist's reward for having loved his work, and for the perfect sympathy he has achieved with the culture he deals with—a sympathy which allows him years of fine conversation with the long-buried Old Men.

In "The Brush of the Wings," the author's focus is smaller—a sick child's bedroom in which his father, oppressed by a sense of death in the very season, falls into a deadly spiral of fear and foreboding. In this story, a long, wandering exposition builds to a single page of beautifully rendered tension. This is the most interior of the collection, and certainly well up among the best.

Another Southwest story deals again with sympathy between Indians and whites; but (perhaps because it isn't a fantasy?) the bond breaks for good when "The Happy Indian



"And until further funds for the purpose are granted, we've cut out defending the country on Saturdays!"

Laughter" sounds falsely and horribly in a visiting girl's ear. In this one, Mr. La Farge has accomplished the hard job of allowing the reader to understand the Indian viewpoint while still being distinctly apart from it.

The rest of the book contains a varied lot indeed: a science-fiction piece; two fantasies, including the beginning of the strangest gunfight ever seen; two stories of a boys' school, something like a dry-cleaned "Stalky & Co."; two murders, one farcical; and stories of children, parents, and young love.

Not all of the stories collected here are memorable; many are, and all are just a little more than entertaining, at the least.

TROUBLE IN WEST AFRICA: John Wyllie's explosively titled novel "Riot" (Dutton, \$3.50) doesn't go off with as satisfying a bang as one might wish. It deals with three panic-filled days of native insurrection in a city in British West Africa ruled uneasily by colonials of a government which has been busily relieving itself of the white man's burden during recent years; but despite its violent theme it is a curiously static book.

Sufficiently aware of the social and political complexity of his subject to avoid treating it in simple blacks and whites, Mr. Wyllie makes the mistake of introducing us so briefly to so many representatives of the various shadings in between that we hardly have time to get their names straight, much less to know them as human beings who are something more than an ideological cross-section. As a result, though the destinies of some of the characters are radically altered by events (some collapse permanently, others are reborn from their

(Continued on page 31)

THE PERIPATETIC WRITER

Day of the Dude

"In Search of the Golden West," by Earl Pomeroy (Knopf, 233 pp. \$5), is a history of the tourist in the western United States. It is reviewed by Robert L. Perkin, book editor of the Denver Rocky Mountain News.

By Robert L. Perkin

BACK in 1893, only three years after the continent officially had been declared filled, the alert and prescient historian Frederick Jackson Turner began voicing his belief that the westward-moving West—the frontier—has been the dominant influence in the shaping of American history and culture. Of late, the Turner thesis has come under searching re-examination by contemporary scholars and found to be, by and large, still a sound analysis.

Now in a book called "In Search of the Golden West," Dr. Earl Pomeroy of the University of Oregon, who exercises at times a delightfully antic eye, introduces another factor: the much-maligned, much-courted tourist. The tourist, Dr. Pomeroy says, not only helped shape the West but was in turn shaped by it. And since the tourist, statistically, is you and me, we can blame or thank Pike's Peak, the Yellowstone geysers, and the Del Monte Hotel for some of our habits, particularly our restless urge to travel and see the sights.

There are, of course, superficialities

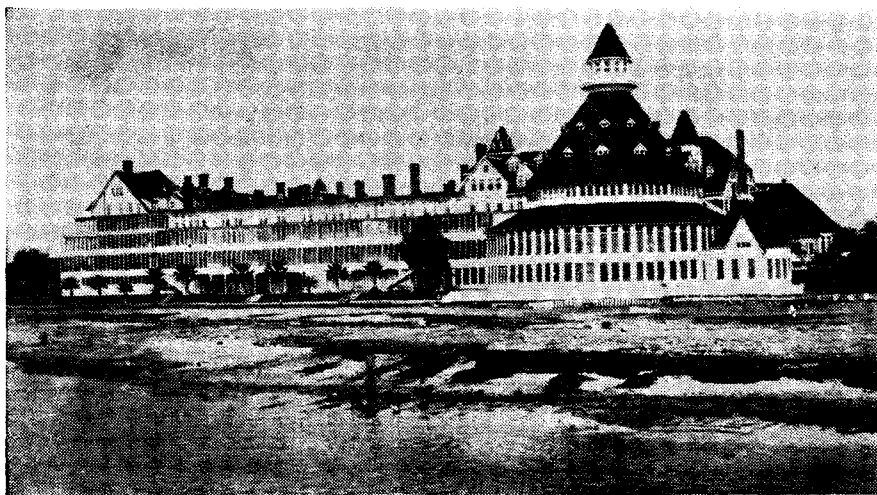
in this theme. The dude ranches and the "middle-aged businesswomen" of Western cities who sport "buckskin jackets and skirts such as only a fancy woman in her cups would have been willing to be seen in, dead or alive, three quarters of a century ago" are not just clowning aberrations. They make, as Dr. Pomeroy notes, "sound economic sense," but they also are no more synthetic than the hacks in New York's Central Park or, going back farther, Greek soldiers in ballet skirts. Cultivation of the Wild West legend is not *all* self-consciousness and dollar-catching. The atavistic impulse runs deep, and, as far as I can see, always has been exploited in all places to add color to life.

But this objection aside, "In Search of the Golden West" remains, to my knowledge, the only serious study of the American tourist in his most popular habitat and is a perceptive examination of the interplay between traveler and geography. The book has much to commend it. Not the least of its merits lies in the fact that it is serious without being deadly. There is, indeed, nostalgia and some laughter here.

"In Search of the Golden West" agreeably combines the formal history of our most recent and continuing westward movement with that amusing brand of social history which Dixon Wecter and Cleveland Amory have practiced so successfully. The pleasant net effect, akin to riffling an old family album, is much enhanced by thirty-two pages of delightful contemporary photographs: derby hats in the Garden of the Gods, swathed bathing beauties at Long Beach, knee-length cotton stockings on small boys wearing sailor straws.

Dr. Pomeroy takes a brief glance at such truly pioneer tourists as George Ruxton, Sir William Drummond Stewart, and Sir George Gore, who read Shakespeare to the trapper Jim Bridger and traveled with forty servants, 112 horses, six wagons, and twenty-one carts. The bulk of the book, however, deals with tourism since completion of the transcontinental railroads.

The golden spike scarcely was in place at Promontory Point in 1869 before wealthy Eastern tourists were rolling west by palace car and chartered train. They came seeking new



—From "In Search of the Golden West."

Hotel Del Coronado in Coronado, California—"seeking new Saratogas and Newports."