

Battle of the Beef

"The Cattlemen," by Mari Sandoz (Hastings House, 527 pp. \$6.50), is an account of the American frontier and frontiersmen, in the days when cattle roamed the ranges. It is reviewed by J. Frank Dobie, author of "On the Open Range," "The Longhorns," and other books about the West.

By J. Frank Dobie

OLD Jules, father of Mari Sandoz (about whom she wrote that biography of pitiless realism), located and surveyed homesteads out of the public domain. This was in the sand-hill country of Nebraska—the Sandoz country—notable for grass and for illegal fencing of the range by cowmen. Old Jules was against the illegal fencers. His brother, a squatter, was murdered by some killer hired by the fencers.

"The Cattlemen," by Mari Sandoz, is another essay, following Paul Wellman's "The Trampling Herd," at summing up the whole drama of cows and cow people—women excluded—on the ranges of western America. It begins

with a good deal of fancifulness over the first Spanish cattle and ends with the contemporary "ritual" of rodeo riding and roping. The best part of the book is laid in the part of the country with which, despite dutiful reading, Mari Sandoz is most familiar—Nebraska, the Dakotas, Wyoming, Montana—the setting for the stronger parts of her books on Crazy Horse, the buffalo hunters, the Cheyennes, and Old Jules, her masterpiece.

Miss Sandoz uses the word *dedicated* over and over in subtitles and as a kind of Homeric epithet for certain cowmen. In her sense, Silas Marnar could be called a "dedicated" man. She herself seems particularly dedicated to killings in Kansas cow towns and to the lot of smoke and comparatively little blood-letting of the so-called Johnson County War (by big cowmen and politicians against homesteaders and thieves) in Wyoming. Some of her chapters are easily recognizable rewrites of standard books on the range. It would be interesting to have the sources specified for a rather extended account of Print Olive—a tough cowman from Texas who got tougher in Nebraska. I don't think any authority could be cited for statements that Texas granted a syndicate 500,000 acres (actually 40,000 acres) to survey what became the 3,000,000-acre XIT Ranch, and that brush poppers in lower Texas leap from horses to bulldog outlaw steers in the way Bill Pickett bulldogged for the 101 Ranch Wild West Show. Although she uses the word, Miss Sandoz surely knows that "cowpoke" is recent journalistic jargon. No real range man has ever called himself a cowpoke.

Miss Sandoz is very hard on John Clay, who managed vast ranges and herds for British investors. She's rather against all British investors in cattle and land—all vanished long ago. John Clay did represent hard money; he also represented the civilized elements that entered into the cow business, mostly in the Northwest. And Clay's "My Life on the Range" has an urbanity and a sense of the beautiful that few other books on the cattle country show any awareness of.

"The Cattlemen" is uneven both historically and stylistically. One of the high spots is the description of the big die-up of 1886-1887, some of the best of the description taken without a thank you from Granville Stuart's "Forty Years on the Frontier," though that excellent book is listed in a Mother Hubbard kind of bibliography. Maybe I have read too many books about cows and cow people. I'm looking for something fresh in treatment. I'm tired of the same old dance to the same old tune.

Personal History

Continued from page 16

Publications, \$6), a unique biography of a young man who wanted to be the William Allen White of his generation. Had his life not been cut short in a boating accident at the age of forty, John McClane Clark might well have achieved this goal. As editor of the Claremont, N.H. *Eagle*, and the possessor of that rare combination of small-town folksiness and the world view, Clark was just what postwar New England needed.

A graduate of Dartmouth ('32), he started his career at the top and worked down—deliberately. At twenty-three he was writing editorials for the *Washington Post*. He became, in succession, a Nieman fellow at Harvard, aide to John G. Winant in the International Labor Office, troubleshooter for Nelson Rockefeller in South America, and (during the war) an OSS "agent" in Europe. In 1946, the *Boston Herald* offered him its editorship. He refused. "John discovered that while there were many newspaper empires there was only one Emporia," Mr. Bradley writes.

"Journey of a Johnny-Come-Lately" is the title of a column Clark wrote in the *Eagle*, and there is no doubt that he "came lately" to a way of life that appeared to satisfy him immensely. What he attempted to do, and what he succeeded in doing, within limits, was to impose his personality on the *Eagle*, to restore the vanishing quality of personal journalism in the small-town daily newspaper.

There is a temptation to the biographer of a "memorial" volume of this kind to glorify his subject. Mr. Bradley writes with restraint, letting Clark's career speak for itself—for that matter, letting Clark himself speak whenever possible. He did not have a great mind nor did he pretend to; what he did have was the spirit of an incorruptible human being, with the courage to be himself.

Weighing on him throughout—and it is implicit in every page of Mr. Bradley's book—was the burden of a generation that had been called upon to do more than any generation of American young men in our history. I have a feeling that John Clark never completely resolved the conflicts in himself that this imposed. It was in attempting to do this that he became the representative "man of conscience" who is worth remembering.

—DAVID DEMPSEY.

LITERARY I.Q. ANSWERS

Column Two should read: 6, 20, 2, 5, 12, 16, 3, 10, 17, 4, 9, 11, 19, 7, 14, 18, 13, 1, 15, 8.

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**Sun in the
Hunter's Eyes**

by MARK DERBY

Viking

Art

Continued from page 21

"formal unity" or the repeated "compulsion and poetic urgency" become utterly meaningless.

In Sig. Ballo's rather detailed chronological table no mention is made of the American pavilion in the 1950 Venice Biennale, which provided Italian artists with their first opportunity to examine a large group of paintings by Pollock, Gorky, and de Kooning. That is a curious omission in view of the acknowledged influence of American abstract painting on the contemporary Italians. Our abstract expressionism is the main inspiration of the new dynamism and freedom apparent in the recent, excellent paintings of Scialoja, Vedova, Afro, and others, who now seem to represent the brightest hopes of Italian painting.

ART, ARTISTS, AND AMERICANA: Alexander Eliot's "Three Hundred Years of American Painting" (Random House, \$13.50) is a superb contribution to all-America's grasp of its artistic heritage. The works represented are splendidly reproduced. The selection of artists is intelligent and logical, even though this reviewer would wish, wistfully perhaps, for fewer Catlins and more influence-bearing academicians such as Bridgeman, Wayman Adams, and Follinsbee.

Taken by themselves, Mr. Eliot's excursions into the personal lives of American painters are fascinating and instructive. They reflect an awesome amount of research and speak well for the author's scholarship. But, if there is any place to cavil it is here. Mr. Eliot, in indexing American art for middlebrow America, has overlooked the most elementary axiom of the graphic dimension: a single picture is worth a thousand words.

Too much attachment to painter personality tends to predispose or even prejudice the picture-viewer's pure sense of empathy and evaluation. We should not, unless we are working members of the paint and palette clan, be on intimate terms with the great creators. It is their work by which we should know them. Their motivations should be left to limbo. Were this monumental work aimed only at painters and the community of painting, there would be no quibble. The anecdotes are delightful, revealing, and skilful. But the presentation is broader. Mr. Eliot's thesis is being promoted by his publishers as an educational volume—as an art-appreciation vehicle. As such there might be greater emphasis on picture analysis

and criticism than on the virtues and foibles of the mortals who painted them.

To this reviewer's mind the canvas is the thing. The yet-unsophisticated, undedicated, and uncommitted student or casual appreciator should see each painting as a portrayal in paint executed by an individual with a compulsion to say something for all time. The reader's judgment of triumph or failure should not be influenced by the artist's personal life as the reader interprets it.

Having stated the single negative it is doubly important to say again that this is an over-all excellent work

which deserves a prominent place on the shelves of anybody with an abiding interest in art, artists, and Americana.

Altogether, Mr. Eliot has done American painting a service. The only carp is that his splendid volume could have been more analytical and less anecdotal. Or to put it more succinctly, "Three Hundred Years of American Painting" is fetchingly illustrated, but overtexted, a criticism which Mr. Eliot, as art editor of *Time*, will understand, I am sure. Still, good marks to him and to *Time* for making this handsome book possible.

—ANDERSON F. HEWITT.



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