

BOOK REVIEWS

APACHE. By Will Levington Comfort. New York, E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1931. Pp. vi, 274. \$2.50.

In this short fictional biography, Mr. Comfort, a novelist, turns his attention to the writing of Southwestern history. APACHE is an effort to describe the life of Mangus Colorado, the great chieftain of the Apache nation.

Comfort's approach to his subject is psychological. He endeavors to imagine the feelings and thoughts of the typical Apache as the white man encroached upon his hunting grounds. Mangus Colorado (Red Sleeve), the chief of the Mimbreno Apache tribe which occupied the Santa Rita copper mining district, won his name fairly by deadly personal combat with his fellow-tribesmen; but he did so only after a life spent in long thought and meditation which won him the contempt of his fellows. To quote Comfort's preface:

"The exact time of Mangus Colorado's birth is not known, but in 1863 he was said to be seventy years old, and at that time the most celebrated physically and mentally, the rim-rock Apache, of his race. 'The King Philip of the Apache nation,' wrote Captain Cremony in 1868. 'Beyond all comparison the most famous Apache warrior and statesman of the century.'"

Such being the case, we are to infer that the celebrated Geronimo and the savage Victorio learned the art of Apache warfare under the tutelage of Mangus Colorado. How much of this, Comfort's assumption, is true, we cannot well say, for the annals of the Apache do not enlighten us on this point. But it is fairly certain, from other records, that Mangus Colorado was a close ally and friend to Cochise of the western Apaches; and he may have imparted to the latter some of his skill in combatting the relentless hordes of advancing whites, skill which in the long run was wasted.

Comfort would have us believe, as many another fiction writer has told us, that the Spaniards and Mexicans were utterly faithless and merciless in all their dealings with the Apache nation, and that while many American pioneers were quite as faithless as the Mexicans, yet some Americans might be trusted. The records, however, do not bear out this impression, for the Spanish-speaking people of the southwest were quite as honest in dealing with the desert tribes as the Americans.

So much for the impressions that Comfort would leave with us. For the rest, his story is reasonably based upon the facts as we know them; only the interpretation varies. Perhaps the most interesting and valuable feature of the book is its effort to express Apache Indian thoughts in a medium familiar to us. The book should not be read as serious biography, but rather as a historical novel which, with all its

mistakes, does help to make alive for us many scenes of the early southwestern frontier.

RUFUS KAY WYLLYS.

SIX HORSES. By Captain William Banning and George Hugh Banning. With a Foreword by Major Frederick Russell Burnham. New York, The Century Company, 1930. Pp. xix, 410. \$4.00.

The epic of the western stage-coach is the theme of this popularized history. The opening lines give an idea of the style and subject:

"Stages, with their teams of six, are backed up in long rows, sweating porters and baggage-masters in front and behind. John Chinaman, with long tail wound at the back of his head, is running distractedly through the crowd in search of a lost bundle; anxious women, prolific in crinoline and gorgeous in silks and satins, are fretting and scolding over crushed handboxes; and stern-looking men of an official cast are shouting fiercely:

"This way, gents! Over here with your baggage! Bring it along if you want it weighed; if you don't, it won't go—that's all!"

Thus the breezy style which characterizes the entire book and revives for us the days of the Overland Mail. The work is divided into four parts, each bearing the name of one or more great organizers of stage-coach lines, James E. Birch, John Butterfield, Ben Holladay, and others. "An Afterword," by Captain William Banning, consists of "Commentaries of a Stage Driver," written by this veteran of the trails.

Although the book does not deal exclusively with stage-coaching in Arizona, Part Two is largely devoted to a description of the stage lines which ran across the state from east to west. Of these the most famous was the San Antonio and San Diego Mail, "popularly known as 'The Jackass Mail' which was organized in the late fifties, partly to accommodate government troops stationed along the trail through central Arizona and the Gadsden Purchase, and which later became the route used by Butterfield and Company, the longest of all the stage lines to the Pacific Coast. Because of the description of way-faring along this early line, this portion of the work should become known to Arizona readers.

Even a casual examination of the book impresses one with the amount of material consulted and compiled in preparation of the manuscript. Enough research was devoted to this end to justify a scholarly approach to the subject; instead, we have a popular and intriguing discussion of one of the most picturesque phases of western history. This is history culled not so much from manuscripts as from moldering newspapers of a bygone day; and it is fascinating. Yet the statements are substantiated by a multitude of facts, and further supported by a fairly complete bibliography on the subject of western stage-coaching. **SIX HORSES** well repays a reading.

RUFUS KAY WYLLYS.

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STARRY ADVENTURE, by Mary Austin. \$2.50. New York: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Mrs. Austin has re-created the Southwest so faithfully and so admirably in a dozen fine volumes, that her place in the literature of America is firmly and indisputably established. So secure is this position, that even so trivial a piece of fiction as "STARRY ADVENTURE" cannot threaten it.

The only strength of Mrs. Austin's new novel lies in its magnificent picture of New Mexico. For the rest, it is overplotted, sentimental, and lacking in reality. Its characters are idealized; its style is trying. To create a more intimate atmosphere, a more personal communion between her readers and Gard Sitwell, her hero, Mrs. Austin writes almost throughout the book in the second person. For instance, to choose a paragraph at random:

"It was, you privately supposed, just that tiny carping prick coupled with your fatigue, and your realization that you were among the two or three men guests without dinner jackets that started you off with a vague antagonism for the rest of the company . . ."

The effect adds nothing to the charm of the tale, and, moreover, it makes Gard appear a very immature young man, and slightly stupid.

"STARRY ADVENTURE" presents a group of people etched against a background of New Mexico. The Sitwells hold the center of the scene, and until his death, the life of the household revolves about Professor Sitwell, whose ill health has brought the family to the ranch in the shadow of the Sangre de Christo range. Into the country come the Hetheringtons whose destinies touch and mingle with the destinies of the Sitwells. The war catches up with them and affects them all, even Grampaw Gardiner, who never seems quite plausible. Then the war is over, and the countenance of the world has changed; but New Mexico remains untouched and still holds fast the spirit of Gard Sitwell. Into Gard's Eden comes beautiful, sophisticated, worldly Eudora Ballantin, exciting to look upon and dangerous to know, and from her Gard learns about life and love and disillusion. But Jane Hetherington comes back in time to support his tottering universe, and together they set out upon Gard's starry adventure.

In the end everybody marries or is about to marry, and there is a rightness and a glow about all the world.

To those who wish to know Mary Austin at her best I recommend "The Land of Little Rain," "Isidro," "The Arrowmaker," and almost anything she wrote before "Starry Adventure." And at her best, and in her particular field, she has not been touched.

GOLDIE WEISBERG.

GUN NOTCHES. *The Life Story of a Cowboy-Soldier.* By Captain Thomas H. Rynning, as told to Al Cohn and Joe Chisholm, with

a foreword by Rupert Hughes. Frederick A. Stokes Company, New York, 1931. 332 pp. \$3.00.

Novel and history alike pause and fail before this book. There is no way to record the western plainsman except in his own language and in the vein of his peculiar rectitude. In this volume the dialect is valid, the peculiar rectitude is made apparent. It is difficult to believe that a man who has passed such a life as Tom Rynning's is, at the age of sixty-five, healthy and vigorous in the California city of San Diego. He belongs to a race which we already consider historical: Wild Bill Hickok, Clay Allison, Bat Masterson, who chased Rynning and a cowboy companion on a three hundred mile ride out of Dodge, Kansas, after Rynning's outfit had shot up the town. In addition to Rynning's career as an Indian fighter and lieutenant of Rough Riders, new material is presented; there is told for the first time the history of the Arizona Rangers, of whom Rynning was captain. Cattle-rustling and killing had become so prevalent in Arizona about 1900 that the Arizona territorial legislature as a last resort created, in March, 1901, the Arizona Rangers, consisting of a captain, a sergeant and twelve privates. They had 113,000 square miles to cover. They actually ranged from Colorado to hundreds of miles below the border in Mexico. Rynning, secretly, held a captain's commission from his friend, General Luis Torres, military governor of Sonora, which enabled the ranger leader to trail law-breakers past the border. Torres, now eighty-seven, lives in Los Angeles, a revolutionary exile and close friend of Captain Rynning. The performance of the Arizona Rangers was more spectacular than that of the Texas Rangers. These existed in companies, although their tradition was that one Texas Ranger was sufficient for one riot. The Arizona body never had over twenty-five members. They recovered stolen horses on the north of the Grand Canyon in Colorado and brought murderers from the Sierra Madre of Mexico. Rynning's men were Spanish-speaking, southwesterners, former Rough Riders, top hands, Texas rangers, and ex-sheriffs. He had a Choctaw Indian and his "Tonto Basin warriors," as he calls them, punchers from under the Mogollon Rim where the Tonto Basin ranchers' war, which Zane Grey uses in his novel, *To the Last Man*, was fought. They stood "slanchways" from the accustomed weight, from their boyhood, of a forty-five six-gun on one hip. Five of them defeated and disarmed an army of 400 Mexicans during the miners' strike at Clifton in 1903. They could ride and rope better than the rustlers, and understood the ways of cattle and horses. Rynning himself was unique in that he could mount a running horse without using his hands, a feat for exhibition of which Buffalo Bill offered to take him to Europe. It was an ordinary thing to trail the hoof-marks of a wanted man's horse two hundred miles, watching the "sign" and avoiding ambush at the same time. Under such surveillance, law

emerged out of the chaos for the remedying of which President Roosevelt had urged his friend Lt. Rynning to give up his contracting business in Tucson and assume command of the Arizona Rangers. Although their number varied from fourteen to twenty-five, their convictions averaged a thousand a year, none of them minor. The sheriffs then operated under the fee system. Rynning thus appeared to take away part of their income. However, for the most the sheriffs could not have made his captures, with the exception of such an officer as Sheriff John Slaughter of Tombstone. Many of the deputies were in league with outlaws. Rynning did not hesitate to tell them so. Bitter enmity grew between the rangers and the sheriffs, who were instrumental in the political maneuvering which resulted in the abolishment of the rangers by the Arizona legislature in 1909. However, the rangers faced the sheriffs down as they did the outlaws. When the sheriff of Cochise County tried to arrest a ranger for killing a man in the line of duty, Rynning told the sheriff he couldn't protect himself, much less a prisoner, that, further, half of his deputies were killers. Rynning took the ranger to court himself. A judge helped the sheriffs by fining another ranger for performance of duty, a fine which the governor remitted. But Rynning's rangers were of his own blood, men who had handled guns until they shot from instinct, each a genius in any immediate situation which demanded not only courage but an eminent force of character. Ranger Timberline Bill Sparks furnished the ultimate showdown between the two opposing forces for law and order. "A little while after that when Timberline Bill Sparks was in a courtroom at Clifton, Sheriff Parks and thirteen of his deputies filed into the room. It was sure plain they was after the ranger, but he stepped to the door when the last of them had come in, locked it, and stuck the key in his pocket.

"'What are you doing that for?' asked the Sheriff.

"'So's none of you-----will get away if you start anything with me,' says Bill, and they changed their minds."

If Rynning had to get himself out of a tight place in Mexico by promising a pair of bandits "to call his dogs off" by going back to the line so that the outlaws could have a fresh start, he kept his word. Bravery and truth in a man, bottom in a horse, ready and firm adjustment of laws to circumstances, these were the kind of things admired of the plainsman and entering his peculiar code and rectitude. The authors made a fine decision when they choose Tom Rynning's speech for the conveyance of the book. Cohn is a scenario writer and Chisholm a newspaper man and author. The incidents of the book are smoothly chosen and coordinated. The regrettable portions of the work are those in which they have attempted to adorn Rynning's tale. On the first page, the collaborators have forced forward a best foot, or what they think is, saying "our outfit's roaring guns painted flam-

ing streaks of death across the dark . . . that's my whole life's reddest picture of fierce fighting men," etc. If Tom Rynning ever talked like that he wasn't a plainsman. One has only to turn anywhere inside *Gun Notches*, where Rynning is in the thick of a tale, to discover his language. In the future editions the book deserves, it may be hoped that Messrs. Cohn and Chisholm can reduce the whole to the terms of their subject, the unmistakable idiom of the plains. The book is the best of its type published in years, that is to say, of the personally adventurous existence of the American frontiersman.

Of interest to Arizonans is that half the book deals with events and people in this state, many of those mentioned being still alive and residents of Arizona. Outside of scientific works, *Gun Notches* further is one of the few good books, fiction or otherwise, which has been written about the state.

SIDNEY KARTUS.

MEXICO: *A Study of Two Americas*. By Stuart Chase in collaboration with Marian Tyler. Illustrated by Diego Rivera. The Macmillan Company, New York, 1931. \$3.00.

The two Americas are the United States and Mexico. Mr. Chase, as poet-professor, stands offstage pulling the strings which dance his two puppets, the machine as the United States, and the handicrafting Aztec as Mexico. In its structure the book resembles an economic survey; it does not fail throughout for 1, 2, 3 listings. But in the writing Mr. Chase dribbles into italics as he discovers that Mexico, too, has a past: buried pyramids, gold hidden from Cortez, Aztec sorcerers, herb charms, tombs of Zapotec kings. These he finds good to consider in their color and glitter, human sacrifice and constant war. Apart from this archeological indigestion of the poet, Mr. Chase offers useful information and comment on Mexico. He compares the slow-moving handicraft culture of the Mexican peasant with the hurried factory organization of the United States. The habits, pleasures, food and drink, shelter, clothing and health of the "machineless men" of Mexico are described as well as they are pointed by the illustrations of Rivera. Mr. Chase renders plain the contrast between the Mexican who makes and sells a beautiful bowl for two cents, but has mud with which to build his house and corn for his stomach from his garden, and the American industrial worker devoid of art, of work, of *fiesta*, of idleness and satisfaction. In addition, he has found room for Mexican history, ancient and modern, as well as current politics. His delving into the Mexican national life is painstaking and *muy simpatico*.

SIDNEY KARTUS.