BOOK REVIEWS


Under the above title the public, and particularly that portion who dwell in this Northwest country, are favored with another contribution to local history from the handiwork of one who has already done a great deal to enrich it with the fruit of his labors. The present work, however, differs materially from its predecessors by the same authority. With the exception of one chapter, it is a compilation pure and simple. It gives in full, or in their essential parts, the authentic reports or writings of those who have visited or explored the Mountain since its discovery by Vancouver, and who have left records worthy of public confidence. For the most part these records are given verbatim, and in the chronological order of their occurrence.

But the book is more than a record of exploration. The first twelve chapters (except the fourth) satisfy this description perfectly; but Chapters XIII to XVI are rather in the nature of monographs upon the various physical aspects of the Park and Mountain. While these monographs are all based upon exploration and study, they are not records of the explorations themselves except in a purely incidental way. Chapter XVII is an account of the creation of the Rainier National Park, and Chapter XVIII is a statement of methods and results in the final determination of the altitude of the Mountain. Chapter XIX is a monograph on the Place Names of the Park from the pen of Professor Meany himself. The scope of the work is thus seen to be more comprehensive than the title itself would indicate.

The mechanical execution of the book is excellent, as one would naturally expect of any work put out by The Macmillan Company. The type is clear and large, and the technique throughout is thoroughly up to date. There are twelve pages of preliminary manner, 325 pages of text, and four pages of advertisements. There are sixteen full page portraits, all, except that of Admiral Rainier, being portraits of the contributors, and all beautifully done. There is an appropriate frontispiece in the form of a reproduction of the fascinating "first picture of the mountain" which dates from Vancouver's time. There is no map and there is no index.

Upon the whole, the book presents a very attractive appearance, and contains a fund of information which should be of positive
value to students of Northwest history, and of genuine assistance to
visitors to the Rainier National Park.

With this general view of the work, some of its outstanding fea-
tures will now be more particularly noted.

The writer is unable to determine whether the author of Chapter
IV made any exploration of the Mountain or not. If he did, no nar-
rative is given, and the chief value of the contribution lies in its beauty
as an example of highly imaginative word painting. The writer is
quite unable to discover in the Hamitchou Legend anything of suffi-
cient importance to justify the prominence given it in this compilation.

A most interesting historic coincidence is suggested by the account
of General Stevens' ascent of the Mountain in 1870 (Chapter VI).
He reached the summit on August 17th. At that time, in a far-dis-
tant field, a party of explorers was on the eve of starting on one
of the famous expeditions of discovery in American annals; and twelve
days later, August 29th, this party stood upon the summit of Mount
Washburn in what is now the Yellowstone Park. It was the real
entrance of the white man into the mysteries of that wonderful region.

Chapter XIII contains a touch of true romance and self-sacri-
fice in devotion to a scientific purpose. That, in pursuit, of such pur-
pose, a life should have been sacrificed upon the treacherous slopes
of the Mountain where that purpose was being carried out, only serves
to hallow the act of devotion itself. And surely it is most remarkable
that these interrupted efforts should have yielded a result so near to
the final official determination of the altitude of the Mountain. Not
least astonishing is the fact that this close approximation (120 feet)
was obtained by barometric estimates.

Of the descriptive monographs, Chapters XIII-XVI, the writer
would particularly mention the admirable paper by F. E. Mathes on
the Glaciers of Mount Rainier, and Professor Piper's exhaustive List
of Species of the Flora of Mount Rainier. It would have been of
great advantage to the large majority of visitors to the Park if Pro-
fessor Piper could have selected about one hundred of the more com-
mon varieties which fall under ordinary observation and have devoted
some especial treatment to them.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of the book to the writer
is Professor Meany's chapter on the Place Names of the Park. This
interest arises in part, no doubt, from the writer's extensive similar
work in the Yellowstone Park; but it has a far deeper meaning—one
going to the very roots of local history. In his book on the Yellow-
stone the writer has enunciated in the following terms what seems
to him an underlying principle on the subject of geographical nomenclature:

"In common experience, the importance of geographical names lies in their use as a means of identification. To describe an object there must be a name, and for this purpose one name is as good as another. But if the reason be sought why a particular name happened to be selected, it will generally be found to arise, not from this practical necessity, but from some primary fact or tradition, or from some distinguished character, in the annals of the community where it occurs. In its mountains and valleys, its lakes and streams, and in its civil divisions, the cradle history of a country may always be found recorded."

It is, of course, not all names that have this deeper significance; far from it. In the Yellowstone there are upward of 360 place names, not including those of geysers, etc. Yet the writer found barely one hundred (and he was successful in getting at the origin of practically all) which were entitled to mention for any other reason than their "use as a means of identification." In the Rainier Park there are, by rough estimate, 112 personal names, the origin of only about half of which is known. There are about 140 names which may be styled characteristic, but of these the origin of about eighty per cent seems to be unknown. From such casual survey as the writer has been able to make of Professor Meany's list, he questions if there are more than fifty names which have any significant interest; that is, serve any other purpose than that of identification.

The writer dwells somewhat at length upon this subject because it reveals a tendency which ought to be held in check. In the Yellowstone Park there is only about one name on the average to every nine square miles; in the Rainier Park there is very nearly one to every square mile. The impulse to give personal names in token of friendship is well-nigh irresistible; but any such criterion is unjust both to the past and to the future. Service, in some form, should be, with very few exceptions, the sole criterion. There must be some check to the contrary tendency. In the Yellowstone that same tendency was very manifest in the early days of exploration; but there has been a wholesome weeding out since.  

H. M. CHITTENDEN.


The author of this interesting little book was the first American white child born in the Pacific Northwest who reached maturity. She