

## BOOK REVIEWS

A PICKED COMPANY. By Mary Hallock Foote. (Boston, Houghton, Mifflin Co. 1912. Pp. 416. \$1.30.)

This story has to do chiefly with the journey of a band of immigrants to Oregon in 1842 and with their settlement in the valley of the Willamette. Much of the journey was made without expert guidance and through numberless perils and difficulties. Little has been written of it, so much has it been overshadowed by the larger and more important immigration of 1843, for which it paved the way. Says Medorem Crawford: "The departure of our company for Oregon was extensively published and commented on throughout the western states and our safe arrival here was reported by Dr. Whitman, who returned that fall and winter, hence the next emigration had the knowledge that one company had safely preceded them."<sup>1</sup>

That this most interesting expedition should have been made the subject of a novel by Mrs. Foote naturally arouses a considerable degree of anticipation. A disappointment awaits the reader, however, for he speedily discovers that the historical background is of the slightest. Nearly a fourth of the book is taken up introducing the principal actors in their New England home. The account of the journey across the plains is just full enough to furnish a vehicle for the story, following closely the authentic record, the diary of Medorem Crawford.<sup>2</sup>

Few known historical characters appear. Doctor Whitman blows in and out of the tale in a single chapter, a bluff and breezy man, portrayed most excellently, like all the characters, by what he says and does. The plot does not directly involve the political questions of the day, and they are left so far as possible out of the story. Occasionally, when a few historical facts are needed, they are put in, neatly condensed into a paragraph convenient for skipping.

The reader of the author's earlier books will look here in vain for the poetic charm that characterized such stories as *The Chosen Valley* and *A Led Horse Claim*, stories which cast over the reader the spell of great empty plains and wildernesses. Perhaps the author is less at home in the Oregon country than on the plains of Colorado. At any rate, her appreciation seems that of an outsider, and her slight descriptions give no feeling of intimacy.

<sup>1</sup>Occasional Address. Ninth Annual Meeting, Oregon Pioneer Association, 1881, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>Journal of Medore mCrawford. Sources of the History of Oregon, Vol. I., No. 1, Eugene, Ore., 1897.

The primary purpose of the writer seems to have been the production of a popular novel. Except for an occasional dull conversation, anything that might be expected to weary a reader impatient for the next development of the tale has been carefully eliminated.

Of plot there is little. The play of character upon character furnishes the chief motive force of the story. It is indeed in its drawing of types of character that the chief merit of the book consists, both from the standpoint of the historian and from that of the casual reader. There is here a careful and just appreciation of the qualities of those strong men and women who settled and held the Northwest for the nation. The influence of the missionaries and of those they drew after them is given its full due. To have helped to an appreciation of the services of these early pioneers is in itself justification enough for the book. A story as popular in character, and put out by so well known an author and publisher, is likely to have a considerable circulation and will help, no doubt, to call attention throughout the country to an interesting period in our history.

CHRISTINA DENNY SMITH.

---

ALASKA, AN EMPIRE IN THE MAKING. By John J. Underwood. (New York, Dodd, Mead & Co. 1913. Pp. 440, \$2.)

In this book the author paints, in very bright colors, a picture of Alaska as he sees it and as others like him will see it in the future. He grows quite eloquent over the resources of that country and the wonderful possibilities of that region. (Incidentally, the Puget Sound country, and especially Seattle, comes in for a share of boosting.) The book has its value in that it shows how certain people regard Alaska; its defect consists in not giving the other side of the story. For the impartial historian the book has no value. The author has not taken pains to consult the best historical books on Alaska, and his chapters on the history of Alaska are very misleading.

FRANK A. GOLDBER.

---

ANTOINE OF OREGON: A STORY OF THE OREGON TRAIL. By James Otis Kaler. (New York, American Book Co. 1912. Pp. 149. 35 cents.)

Under the pseudonym of James Otis, Mr. Kaler has written the story of a supposed trip over the Oregon Trail in the year 1845. While the narrative is fictitious, it is carefully based upon known historical and geographical facts and furnishes a useful supplementary reading book for