

BOOK REVIEWS

MARCUS WHITMAN, PATHFINDER AND PATRIOT. By Myron Eells. (Seattle, Harriman, 1909, pp. 349, \$2.50.)

ACQUISITION OF OREGON AND THE LONG SUPPRESSED EVIDENCE ABOUT MARCUS WHITMAN. By William I. Marshall. (Seattle, Lowman & Hanford, 1911, pp. 450; 263, \$10.00.)

WHY OUR FLAG FLOATS OVER OREGON. By Leavitt H. Hallock. (Portland, Me., Smith & Sale, 1911, pp. 77, \$1.00.)

WINNING THE OREGON COUNTRY. By John T. Faris. New York, Missionary Education Movement, 1911, pp. 241, \$.50.)

No other topic hrelating to the history of the Pacific Northwest has produced so extensive a literature as the question, "Did Marcus Whitman save Oregon?" A bibliography published in this magazine for October, 1908, listed over 500 books and periodical articles dealing with various phases of the Whitman controversy. Since that time two books of first importance have been added to the number, both of them posthumously published in Seattle by the subscriptions of individuals wishing to hear the last word upon the subject. Eells' "Marcus Whitman, Pathfinder and Patriot" sums up the case for the affirmative and gives by all odds the strongest presentation ever made for this side. Marshall's "Acquisition of Oregon" recapitulates the whole controversy, adds new evidence and closes the case for the negative.

Myron Eells approaches the subject from the biographical standpoint. A son of the Reverend Cushing Eells, who was an associate of Whitman in the Oregon Mission, he writes sympathetically as of a family friend. For many years a contestant in the controversy, Mr. Eells collected a large amount of testimony to prove that Whitman rendered important political services. While not entirely overlooking contemporaneous sources, it is upon the testimony thus acquired that the author mainly depends. It is to be noted that out of seventeen witnesses cited to prove that Whiman went East with a national purpose in view, thirteen gave their testimony after 1880, or more than thirty-five years after the event and more than fifteen years after the publication of the story that Whitman saved Oregon.¹

¹Eells, Marcus Whitman, pp. 164-175.

As a partizan upon the negative side, Marshall undertakes the more thankless task of removing a popular hero from his pedestal. He early became interested in Whitman when a lecturer upon topics relating to the West he heard and believed the saved-Oregon story. In 1887, he made a careful examination of the extensive correspondence between Whitman and his associates and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. He here found in the archives of the American Board, evidence which convinced him that Whitman's journey to the states in 1842-43 was purely on missionary business and that as a man Whitman had been greatly overrated. As a school-principal, Mr. Marshall made an active campaign to secure a revision of those text books on American history that had made incorrect and misleading statements in regard to Whitman. The antagonism which he met in this work from parties personally interested in the glorification of Whitman led him to make a most exhaustive search for all possible evidence tending to refute their claims. The present work, completed shortly before his death in 1906, is the result of this persistent and thorough investigation. Taking the history of Oregon as a starting point, he traces the events leading to its acquisition by the United States. He discusses with great fulness the action of the United States Government relating to Oregon and amasses a surprisingly large amount of evidence to show that there had been no thought of abandoning Oregon to the British and that Whitman could have given no essential information in 1843 not already in the hands of the Government at Washington.

In contrast to the able contributions of Eells and Marshall are two books bearing the imprint of 1911, each lauding Whitman without regard to facts. Mr. Faris, in his absurd "Winning of the Oregon Country," cites the arrival of one hundred and fifty British emigrants as the inciting cause of Whitman's ride, which he alleges to have been made for the sole purpose of saving Oregon to the United States.

Mr. L. H. Hallock's book raises the question, "Why does our flag float over Oregon?" and states in reply: "There is but one answer: Because of Marcus Whitman." One may overlook the panegyrics of former years written when Spalding, Gray and Barrows were still regarded by many as writers of authentic history, but what excuse can be offered, in the light of recent years, for such perversions as these of Hallock and Faris evidently written to find a market among the biased and uninformed?

The publication of the works of Marshall and Eells should go a long way toward finally disposing of the Whitman dispute. It is now possible, at least, to discard much controversial rubbish. Marshall on behalf of the negative admits Whitman's visit to Washington. Eells on the

other hand admits the following mistakes made by Spalding and Gray and repeated by many advocates on the affirmative side²:

1. That the taunts and boasts at Fort Walla Walla were the prime cause of Whitman's going East.

2. That these boasts were made because of the announcement of the Red River Immigration.

3. That an express from Canada arrived at that time, for witness the statement of Archibald McKinley, a friend of Whitman, then in charge of Fort Walla Walla, "No taunt, no toast, no York Factory Express, no New Caledonia boats, no factors, no traders, no clerks, no bishops, no priests, no political discussion, no fishery negotiation, ever heard of at Walla Walla October 2, 1842"³.

4. That Mr. Webster stated to Dr. Whitman that he had about traded off Oregon for the New Foundland fisheries to go into the Ashburton treaty.

5. That Messrs. Applegate and others who had once intended to come to Oregon had given up the idea because of the representations of the agents of the Hudson's Bay Company, but that through Dr. Whitman they were induced to come.

6. That Whitman originated the immigration of 1843.

The admission of these mistakes is the admission of a Whitman legend. Eliminate these fictions from the account of Whitman's ride and little remains of the dramatic story once so widely copied.

We have left unquestioned the fact that Whitman was an enthusiastic and self-denying missionary to the Oregon Indians, that he visited the Atlantic States in the Spring of 1843, "being called thither by the business of the mission,"⁴ and that he fell a victim of Indian superstition and treachery in the massacre of November, 1847. While in the East Whitman visited Washington and called upon the Secretary of War. The encouragement of Protestant emigration to Oregon was clearly a part of his missionary program and he endeavored to secure governmental aid in safeguarding the emigrant route. It is contended that the object of the Washington visit was, in part at least, to prevent the government from compromising the American claim to Oregon. This contention it is probably impossible either to prove or disprove. It has been shown, moreover, that Oregon was not in danger, and that whatever might have been its object this visit could not have affected the diplomacy of the Oregon question. A revised estimate of Whitman must rest his title to fame not upon any political services ren-

²Eells, *Marcus Whitman*, p. 233-38.

³Eells, *Marcus Whitman*, p. 237.

⁴*Missionary Herald*, 44:237, July, 1848.

dered, but upon his work as a pioneer and a missionary. In the history of the Westward Movement, Marcus Whitman deserves an honored place among the sturdy pioneers who advanced the frontier of American civilization across the Rocky Mountains.

CHARLES W. SMITH.

THE NEZ PERCE INDIANS. By Herbert Joseph Spinden. *Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association, Volume 2, Part 3.* (Lancaster, Pa., New Era Publishing Co., 1908, pp. 165-272, price \$.95.)

Mr. Herbert J. Spinden's paper upon the Nez Percé Indians is based upon field work in the Nez Percé region conducted by the author during the summer of 1907 under the direction of the Peabody Museum of Harvard University and continued in 1908 under the auspices of the American Museum of Natural History. The work seems to have been prosecuted in accordance with the most approved scientific methods and the results are written up in plain, straight-forward fashion. The arrangement is logical and the treatment at once full and condensed. The important topics covered are, habitat and history, archeology, mythology and material culture. Under the latter head is included data upon weaving, houses, furniture, food and its preparation, fishing and hunting, clothing, ornaments, travel and transportation, musical instruments, art, population, sociology, games, medicine and religion. The author has limited himself in the main to brief presentation of facts and has devoted but little space to comparative discussion or conclusions. The principal conclusion drawn is that the culture exhibited by the Nez Percé tribe is purely a transitional culture, and that it has been derived in about equal proportions from the Plains and from the Pacific Coast. Students familiar with the Indian tribes of the North Pacific Coast will question if the author has not overestimated the influence of the Plains Indians.

While the subject has been approached from the archeological and ethnological side, the information should prove of great value to the student of history. But little reliable material relating to the Nez Percés has been hitherto obtainable and the present contribution is an important one. The value of the paper is enhanced by illustrations, foot-notes and a bibliography of sources.

CHARLES W. SMITH.

THE CONKLING-PROSCH FAMILY. By Thomas W. Prosch. (Seattle, Privately printed, 1909, Pp. 141.)

In writing the history of the Conkling-Prosch family, Mr. Thomas W. Prosch has traced the lineage of his father and mother, following the records back to Revolutionary and Colonial days. Although the work is