

PIONEER TALES OF THE OREGON TRAIL. By Charles Dawson. (Topeka, Crane and Company, 1912. Pp. 488.)

This book relates almost entirely to the Oregon Trail and other matters and people in Jefferson county, Nebraska. In fact, Jefferson county is made a secondary part of the title. It is full of incidents connected with the early settlements of that locality, in the 1850s, 1860s and into the 1870s. It goes back of those dates in telling of the coming of the Spaniards in the 1500s, of the French in the 1700s and of the Americans in the first years of the 1800s. The wars of the Indians and with the Indians occupy considerable space, and also the lawless acts of the white frontiersmen. The Trail is mentioned continually in connection with these events, and with the great movements of immigration to Oregon, Utah and California before the completion of the Union Pacific Railroad. The book contains a great number of short biographies, and slightly illustrations, chiefly portraits. No doubt this work is highly prized in its home locality, and in future years will there be looked upon as a first service historical authority.

The reviewer somewhat depreciates the use of "Trail" in connection with the magnificent highway referred to. "Trail" is a recent day appellation. It was the finest and greatest road in the United States, and probably in the world, being two thousand miles in length; of great width, six or eight teams driving abreast; of easy grades and of good, surface—in no wise resembling the ordinary understanding of a trail.

How truthful and reliable these Nebraska tales are it is, of course, impossible for one at this distance to say. We will suppose they are all right. Some other statements are not. What will be thought, for instance, of this sentence, taken from page 22: "Prior to Dr. White's band of colonists, a Dr. Whitman, who was a missionary in the Puget Sound country, where he had settled in 1835 with a colony of Americans, and where there were only about 150 white people living at this early date, was sent to Washington, D. C., to place the situation of that section before Congress, setting forth the fears of the American residents that England had intentions of forcibly adding this vast country to her domain."

THOMAS W. PROSCH.

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CONTEMPORARY HISTORY, 1877-1913. By Charles A. Beard, Associate Professor of Politics in Columbia University. (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1914, Pp. 397.)

Professor Beard, whose work in opening new paths in historical study ranks him among the most virile writers and thinkers, breaks another