

BOOK REVIEWS

The Romance of the Rails. By AGNES C. LAUT. (New York: Robt. M. McBride and Co. 2 vols. 1929. Pp. XV. 307; IX. 312-590. \$7.50.)

Agnes C. Laut, well known as a writer of Western history and historical literature, in these two interesting volumes tells "The story following the four centuries of Exploration in North America of that 'pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night,' which led man in all his wanderings to a realization as far exceeding his dreams as an astronomer's telescope outreaches the feeble grasp of a baby's hand at the stars." This pillar of cloud by day, pillar of fire by night is the locomotive "with its headlight illuminating the way before and its tail light semaphoring the way open to all behind."

These volumes are not a history of railroads but as their title indicates deal with the romance of the rails.

Beginning with early transportation by stage coach the first volume carries the story up to the Civil War: The second continues the narrative to various endings, in some cases, down almost to the present.

The literary style is most befitting romance. Everything moves with the rapidity of the pictures on the movie screen; nobody ever walks, with jumps, or jumps into something. Some of the chapter headings convey no meaning until the chapter is read at least in part, for instance, "Polly puts the Kettle on," "Where did Polly put the Kettle on," "The Milk that Walked," "Boston steps with Dignity," and "Legal Rascality, Loaded Dice."

The Romance of the Sante Fe Trail occupies 29 pages; The Panic of 1873 and The Northern Pacific, and that of the Great Northern are given substantially equal space; but the Hill-Harriman struggle furnishes 39 pages of Romance. Forty excellent full page illustrations set forth the evolution of transportation and its pioneers in Capital fashion. The volumes are well printed, and well bound, and there is an adequate index.

EDWARD MCMAHON

Beyond the Rockies. By LUKIN JOHNSTON. (London and Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons Limited, 1929. Pp. 212.)

The far reaches of British Columbia are described by this travel diary, in which the author sets down in chatty detail a record of many personal interviews with the settlers of the province.