

BOOK REVIEW

Oklahoma: The Story of a State. By Edward Everett Dale. (Evanston, Illinois: Row, Peterson and Company, 1949. Index. Ill. Pp. 448.)

Someone has said there is no history, it is all biography. This statement has been attributed to Emerson. Whether it be Emerson or some other thinker, it is the truth. Either the reading of history or the presentation of history should be so construed. It is axiomatic that men and women have made and will continue to make the history of the world.

It shows that history writing and history teaching must be filled with the rich red blood of the deeds of a people. The man or woman who can take a pen or use a tongue and tell the progress of mankind must be able to fortify both pen and tongue with ardor, zeal and enthusiasm. This may arise only when such writers and teachers will by nature or by training be able to drop into their emotions the bare facts of history and send them forth with sympathy, understanding and color until the reader or hearer is moved with earnest and genuine feeling and understanding.

Another poet gives an essential ingredient of history. Tennyson says:

“Yet I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns.”

History must present always the ever increasing purpose and plan of mankind. Only when you seek the motives and understand the purposes and ideals of a Washington, a Jefferson, a Truman or a Stalin, can you thoroughly appreciate and secure the tang of interest which will develop in the reader a thirst for history, which should always be the goal of author and teacher.

Another thing should be said when presenting history in books, lectures or in any form. History is the mother of all knowledge. Any teacher who would be so ignorant as to teach Junior or Senior High School history or collegiate history with only a single book or text, has no worthy conception of his work and should not be permitted to appear before a class dealing with a historical subject. It is better to teach the life of Andrew Jackson using five reference books for one month than it is to teach that subject using one book for five months.

Writers and speakers in the realm of history who have believed that facts, mere facts, can enlighten a mind about a man or a woman, or the deeds of men and women, are responsible for thousands of

youths going out of our schools with no disposition to take up books again dealing with the great lives and actions of the world's heroes and heroines. A well written text or history should be as colorful and enticing to the mind of a child as a splendid cinema.

These paragraphs are but a preliminary approach to the tribute which the book, *Oklahoma: The Story of a State*, has developed among the teachers, literary critics and many among the general public since its recent issuing from the press. Dr. Edward Everett Dale, Research Professor of History, the University of Oklahoma, whose life has been a very part of the wonderful birth and growth of the State of Oklahoma through fifty and more years, is the author of this book and it has been adopted as a text in the senior High Schools of the state. It is a neat volume of 448 pages, and in its printing and illustrations, it is inviting and attractive. Especially, too much tribute cannot be paid to the copious illustrations of Oklahoma life and the happy selection of each picture. If any High School youth or any reader of history of any age could do nothing more than turn through the book, and view the portraits of Oklahoma life as found from the beginning with the beautiful and striking portrait of the Pioneer Woman statue, they would receive a remarkable impression and high understanding of Oklahoma's development. But far and beyond that of course is the approach of the author to the history of his state. His sentences, while strictly factual, reveal a warmth of devotion, a righteous, happy pride in the thought that he is talking about his beloved Oklahoma. In effect, he says in every paragraph, "This is not an ordinary Commonwealth. This is not just any sort of people; these are not just the 'mill run' of historical deeds; these are a peculiar people developed under extraordinary conditions; a mixture of the best bloods of the Anglo-Saxon and other races placed in the most compelling area of nature and behold the results," an interesting story which can be told in righteous pride.

The table of contents reveals that Dale, with proper perspective, saw the story of his state in the whole, reaching from Oklahoma, the Indian state, to the present hour or the last subject, "The Spirit of a State." Wisely, he broke it into units, calling them in turn, "Oklahoma, a Part of Louisiana," "Indian Era in Oklahoma," "Pioneer Era of Oklahoma," "The State of Oklahoma," and "The Welfare of Oklahoma."

While dates and facts are well stressed, yet the whole book is a story of flesh and blood in action. The list of maps is excellent, consisting of seventeen in number. If there be any weakness in the book, it may lie in Dr. Dale's effort to make it as easy to teach as possible. This may not be a fault, yet at the same time it may be said by the writer who has had an experience of teaching and writing history through some sixty years, that observation through

that time in the schoolrooms of America has developed the severe idea that very few teachers know how to fire the youth—and fire is the word—with a love and zeal for his birthright. If the teacher cannot do that, as a history teacher, he has no value. This demands an independent mind infused by blood or training with the proper appreciation of the worth of history to a child or youth throughout all the coming years of his life. He or she must get a proper perspective of the worth and the dignity and the beauty of a story of a people, his or her people, and be able to transfer it.

The author's childhood and youth were a very part of that picturesque period of cattle ranges of the Northern Texas country and Old Greer County, once Texas but now a part of Oklahoma. "Bookish" from the first and, even as he is "bookish" now, he moved into the country schools as teacher and superintendent. He holds a B.A. degree from the University of Oklahoma, and a master's and a doctor's degree from Harvard University. Because of his profound interest and individual power in the realm of history, he was called by the University of Oklahoma in 1914 as instructor and from 1924 to 1942 he was head of the History Department. His long life in his chosen field will prevent a complete list of his authorship and range of lectures, the latter taking him to all parts of the United States. A few of his books however, are: *The Range Cattle Industry* (1930), *Territorial Acquisitions of the United States* (1912), *Tales of the Teepee* (1920), *The Prairie Schooner and Other Poems* (1929). A recent work of Dr. Dale was in collaboration with Dr. M. L. Wardell, of the Department of History in the University of Oklahoma, and its title is, *History of Oklahoma* (1949).

This book, *Oklahoma: The Story of a State*, is heartily recommended to the general public as well as to the schools of Oklahoma for a clear, brief, colorful and accurate tale of the origin and development of one of the most remarkable states in the Union.

—Charles Evans.

Oklahoma Historical Society.