

BOOK REVIEWS

Buffalo Bill: King of the Old West. By Elizabeth Jane Leonard and Julia Cody Goodman. (Library Publishers, New York, 1955. Pp. 320. Illus. \$4.95.)

One of the authors of this book, Julia Cody Goodman, William F. Cody's sister, was closely associated with her brother for many years, and as a result, was in a position to present a detailed and immediate account of her brother's many adventures, his feelings, defeats, and successes without the exaggerations of press agents and the many legends that have been developed regarding his adventures. The book is well documented with many reproductions of old photographs, paintings, and prints.

William F. Cody is still associated in the public mind with his Wild West Show, which bore his name, and is vaguely identified with the slaughter of the buffalo. The public generally believes he got his name, "Buffalo Bill" from the slaughter of thousands of buffalo to supply meat for the newly constructed Kansas Pacific Railroad which was pushing westward at the time. It is true he contracted to furnish this meat, but, instead of shooting the buffalo himself, he employed regular experienced buffalo hunters to do the job. It seems he acquired this title soon after his first attempt to shoot a buffalo out on the range where his hunters were shooting, skinning, and preparing the meat for the Railroad. The wounded buffalo chased him to the new town of Hays City, Kansas, which was located a short distance from the hunting ranges. One of his buffalo hunters came to his rescue and shot the buffalo, referring afterwards to William F. Cody as "Our Buffalo Bill" because of this incident with the wounded buffalo. From then on he was referred to as "Our Buffalo Bill" by the buffalo hunters in and around Hays City more in derision because he lacked courage in killing the wounded buffalo instead of running from it. Later on Ned Buntline and other fiction writers, seeking to popularize William F. Cody as a great hero, dropped "Our Buffalo Bill" and gave him the title of "Buffalo Bill" the great buffalo hunter of the Plains. And today we have that myth of William F. Cody.

What the modern reader lacks is an understanding of William F. Cody as famous for being: at the age of fourteen years the world's youngest pony express rider (he set a record of carrying the mail 322 miles without rest, averaging 15 miles an hour and exhausting 20 horses on the way); scout and guide for the U. S. Army (he traveled 365 miles through Indian-infested territory); chief of scouts of the Fifth Cavalry (he devised the grand strategy

that led to the great victory over the Indians at Summitt Springs); and his ranching and transforming the barren far western country into fertile, irrigated farms, making it possible for the building of towns and cities and bringing modern culture to this section of our country (he was the first to start Dude Ranching in America and his TE Ranch located near Cody, Wyoming was, and is today, without doubt the most famous Dude Ranch in this country). His greatest contribution is to be found in his leadership in winning the far west for modern civilization and culture. More than anyone else, he was foremost in the developing of our western tradition of today. Perhaps, this book's greatest contribution is along these lines, but more could have been said about his ranching, the building of towns and the great irrigation system in opening up of the barren ranges of the far west to farming, homes and towns.

—Ellsworth Collings

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And Satan Came Also. By Albert McRill. (Oklahoma City: Britton Publishing Company, 1955. Pp. 264. Illus. \$3.95.)

As with other things, the writing of history may be specialized into any number of fields or limited to a certain interest. One area of historical inquiry oftentimes neglected is any forthright approach to the influence of the smoke-filled room and its politico occupants, whether on a local or national level. Often these same worthies upon close scrutiny are found to be in close harmony with the seamy side of society and with the area of the community known colloquially as the "bon ton" or "tenderloin" district.

Human nature being what it is, or for that matter if human nature were different than what it is, any objectively written book of history with such subjects as its principal theme is worthy of close attention and more than passing interest. Particularly if the volume is the careful and studied product of one whose entire life has been devoted to municipal improvement, civic betterment, and local government at the working and practical level. This book meets all of such tests.

Judge McRill has packed between the covers of this book many names that, except for the volume, would live on only by word of mouth, tradition, and smoking room after dinner story. They all come alive and seem back in business once again—Two Johns, The Turf Exchange, The Southern Club, Big Anne, Old Zulu, Noah's Ark, The Red Onion, and all the rest. We of today's

generation are fortunate that it may all be recorded for us in this fashion, so that even though the insatiable march of time has precluded a more intimate introduction, we are not to be deprived of such acquaintanceship altogether. Thanks to Judge McRill for giving our generation a reference book on something that heretofore the only reference has been eavesdropping in the club room when it is filled with old-timers.

—George H. Shirk

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